



**UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG**
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

The Visegrad Countries in the European Union
Understanding the Identity-Solidarity Nexus in the Context of
Migration and EU Enlargement

By Martina Vetrovcova, M.A.

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Inauguraldissertation

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades eines Dr. rer. pol.

an der

Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften
der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
Institut für Politische Wissenschaft

vorgelegt von

Martina Vetrovcova

Im Grund 9

69118 Heidelberg

vetrovcova.martina@gmail.com

Erstgutachter: Prof. Dr. Sebastian Harnisch

Zweitgutachter: Prof. Dr. Rick Fawn

Heidelberg, April 2020

Acknowledgements

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have received a great deal of support and assistance, for which I am immensely grateful.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my esteemed supervisor, Professor Sebastian Harnisch, for his invaluable supervision, guidance, and constant support throughout the course of my PhD. The research project would not have been possible without his continuous encouragement and the extraordinarily valuable input he provided me with. I cannot imagine having a better advisor and mentor in my life.

Furthermore, I would like to say a special thank you to Professor Fawn for generously agreeing to review this thesis as well as for his valuable insights and comments on my research project.

My appreciation further goes out to all the interviewed experts from the Visegrad states for their willingness to impart their knowledge and contribute to this study.

I am deeply grateful to my dear friends, who have stood by my side throughout the whole process and provided me not only with valuable feedback but also emotional support. I would like to thank the following people: Thejasvi Ramu, Tsesa Monaghan, Asra Shakoor, Maxwell Lacey, Sonia Patel, Grace Mhlahleli-Moyo, Yasmine Sabek, Michael Valdivieso Muñoz, Samantha Winn, Angelina Pienczykowski, Lauren Kiser, Mia Saint Clair, Julia Šimáčková, Jana Doušová, and Tijana Lujic. I would especially like to thank my dear friends Andrea Wong, Jasym Mireles, and Maya Kazamel, whose editing skills are beyond reproach and helped me to improve my own writing style.

No words can adequately express my deepest gratitude to my family and my partner. Finishing this thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic was not easy, but their unconditional love and unwavering support kept me going and motivated. I would like to thank my parents, Vilma and Zdeněk, for never stopping believing in me and always supporting me in everything I do. Without their tremendous understanding and encouragement, it would have been impossible for me to successfully complete my PhD thesis. And my biggest thanks to my partner Max, who was by my side through easy and hard times of my PhD journey. His patience, love, and tireless support are worth more than I can express on paper.

Abstract

The European Union (EU) is often hailed as one of the most successful peace projects in the history of humankind. Indeed, since its inception more than 70 years ago, the EU has made unparalleled contributions to the advancement of peace and reconciliation on the European continent. Despite these successes, the EU integration process faces increasing challenges, including the unprecedented departure of one of its members. Further, one of the greatest tests to European cohesion has proved to be the refugee and migrant crisis, which has revealed fault lines over not only migration but also broader issues of identity, norms, and values. In the wake of this crisis, the Visegrad Group—comprised of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic—presented viewpoints that deviated from those held by most Western European states and EU institutions, thus prompting debates about the emergence of a new East–West divide within Europe.

Intrigued by whether the notion of solidarity has a different meaning for those who were present at the birth of the EU as opposed to those who joined more than half a century later, this study strives to uncover the Visegrad countries’ understanding of and approach to European solidarity. Making the case that states’ behavior is a result of varying national characteristics deeply rooted within their national identities, it develops an analytical framework for investigating the nexus between identity and solidarity. Applying this framework to the Visegrad states’ responses to the refugee and migrant crisis and their positions and preferences regarding further enlargement of the EU yields three pivotal conclusions.

First, the Visegrad states’ identification with the European project as well as their interpretation of the EU’s norms and values, such as that of solidarity, are contingent upon their respective national identities and historical experiences. Second, the particular composition and interaction of identity elements activated in political discourse can explain varying solidarity profiles among different states as well as possible variances in a single state’s behavior across multiple policy areas. And third, the Visegrad states share a great number of similar identity elements, yet often differ in their manifestation or degree of expression. By taking a more nuanced look at the Visegrad cooperation, this study challenges the widespread impression of the Visegrad Group as a homogeneous bloc. The findings make clear that even the same identity element with a slightly different manifestation can lead to different decisions. At the same time, geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and shared historical experience function as a “magnet” that draws the Visegrad states closer together, unites them in their policy preferences, and ensures the continuation of the Visegrad cooperation. In sum, the present study advances the understanding of the process of European integration and the Visegrad Group’s multifaceted role in it.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vii
List of Tables	viii
List of Acronyms	ix
PART I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
Chapter 1: Introduction	3
1.1 Solidarity-Identity Nexus.....	6
1.2 The Visegrad States’ “Return to Europe” and Prospects of Differentiated (Dis)Integration ...	9
1.3 National Identities and European Integration	12
1.4 Sub-regionalism and European Integration	14
1.5 Outline and Relevance of the Study	16
Chapter 2: Central Europe and the Visegrad Group	21
2.1 History of the Visegrad Cooperation	26
2.1.1 Foundation and Purpose	26
2.1.2 Evolutionary Stages of the Visegrad Cooperation.....	28
2.1.3 Current Relations among the Visegrad Group Members.....	35
2.2 Mechanisms and Key Areas of the Visegrad Cooperation	37
2.3 State of Research on the Visegrad Cooperation	40
2.3.1 The History of Studying Visegrad.....	40
2.3.2 Thematic Focus Areas	47
2.3.3 Knowledge Gaps and Research Needs	49
PART II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN	53
Chapter 3: Solidarity in International Relations	55
3.1 The Evolution of the Concept of Solidarity and its Different Interpretations	57
3.1.1 Solidarity from a Sociological Perspective.....	58
3.1.2 Solidarity from the Perspective of Political Science	61
3.1.3 Solidarity in International Relations Theory	64
3.1.4 Solidarity in the Context of Regional Integration.....	66
3.2 Solidarity in the EU	68
3.2.1 Legal Foundations of Solidarity in the EU Treaties	69
3.2.2 Forms of Solidarity in the EU.....	71
3.3 Definitions of Solidarity	78

3.4 Case Selection.....	88
3.4.1 Solidarity within the EU Migration and Asylum Policy	91
3.4.2 Solidarity and Further Enlargement of the EU	96
Chapter 4: Identity in International Relations.....	101
4.2 Identity Research at a Glance	102
4.3 Definitions and Types of Identity	107
4.4 National Identities.....	113
4.4.1 National Identities: Change versus Continuity	114
4.4.2 National Identity and Agency.....	116
4.4.3 Working Definition of National Identity	117
Chapter 5: Research Design.....	119
5.1 Operationalizing and Measuring Identity	119
5.1.1 Discursive Construction of Identity.....	120
5.1.2 Mixed-Methods Approach to Identity	123
5.1.3 Qualitative Content Analysis.....	129
5.1.4 Expert Interviews.....	143
5.2 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	150
5.2.1 Operationalization of Solidarity	152
5.2.2 Discourse Analysis	156
5.3 Structure of the Empirical Chapters.....	163
PART III: NATIONAL IDENTITIES OF THE VISEGRAD STATES	167
Chapter 6: Czech National Identity.....	169
6.1 Formative Events	169
6.2 Significant Others	176
6.3 Main Identity Elements.....	178
Chapter 7: Hungarian National Identity.....	185
7.1 Formative Events	185
7.2 Significant Others	193
7.3 Main Identity Elements.....	196
Chapter 8: Polish National Identity.....	203
8.1 Formative Events	203
8.2 Significant Others	213
8.3 Main Identity Elements.....	220

Chapter 9: Slovak National Identity.....	229
9.1 Formative Events	229
9.2 Significant Others	235
9.3 Main Identity Elements.....	239
Chapter 10: National Identities of the Visegrad States (Summary).....	245
PART IV: THE V4 & THE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS	253
Chapter 11: Introduction to the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe	255
Chapter 12: The Czech Republic & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis	261
12.1 Solidarity Behavior	261
12.2 Motives of Solidarity	266
12.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	279
Chapter 13: Hungary & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis.....	287
13.1 Solidarity Behavior	287
13.2 Motives of Solidarity	293
13.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	308
Chapter 14: Poland & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis	315
14.1 Solidarity Behavior	315
14.2 Motives of Solidarity	322
14.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	333
Chapter 15: Slovakia & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis.....	337
15.1 Solidarity Behavior	337
15.2 Motives of Solidarity	345
15.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	358
Chapter 16: The V4 & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis (Summary)	365
16.1 Intergovernmental Solidarity	368
16.1.1 Motives of Solidarity	368
16.1.2 Hierarchy of Solidarity Principles & Identity-Solidarity Nexus	370
16.2 Solidarity with Refugees and Migrants	374
16.2.1 Motives of Solidarity & Identity-Solidarity Nexus	374
16.2.2 Hierarchy of Solidarity Principles	377

PART V: THE V4 & FURTHER ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU	381
Chapter 17: Introduction to the EU's Enlargement and Neighborhood Policies	383
Chapter 18: The Czech Republic & EU Enlargement	393
18.1 The Czech Republic and the EU's Enlargement Policy	393
18.2 Motives of Solidarity	403
18.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	410
Chapter 19: Hungary & EU Enlargement.....	417
19.1 Hungary and the EU's Enlargement Policy	417
19.2 Motives of Solidarity	424
19.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	430
Chapter 20: Poland & EU Enlargement.....	435
20.1 Poland and the EU's Enlargement Policy	435
20.2 Motives of Solidarity	442
20.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	449
Chapter 21: Slovakia & EU Enlargement.....	453
21.1 Slovakia and the EU's Enlargement Policy	453
21.2 Motives of Solidarity	464
21.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus.....	471
Chapter 22: The V4 & Further Enlargement of the EU (Summary).....	477
22.1 Motives of Solidarity	480
22.2 Hierarchy of Solidarity Principles & Identity-Solidarity Nexus	482
PART VI: CONCLUSION	487
Chapter 23: Conclusion and Outlook.....	489
23.1 The Visegrad Cooperation between Pragmatism and Shared Identity	492
23.2 The V4 and European Solidarity from the Angle of National Identities	494
23.3 Outlook: The Visegrad States' and the Future of European Integration	505
23.4 Reflection and Implications	508
Bibliography.....	511
APPENDIX.....	589

List of Figures

Figure 1: Country distribution based on the level of and attitude toward integration	11
Figure 2: Intergovernmental and international solidarity types in the European context.....	80
Figure 3: Simplified overview of identity research	103
Figure 4: Constitutive relationship between national identity and (foreign policy) behavior	106
Figure 5: Constitutive relationship between national identity and (foreign policy) interests.....	107
Figure 6: Ideational life-cycle model.....	115
Figure 7: Identity and discourse.....	120
Figure 8: Identity and discourse formation.....	121
Figure 9: Triangulation	127
Figure 10: Procedural model of qualitative content analysis.....	134
Figure 11: Interrelation of categories, coding rules, and coding examples	136
Figure 12: Identity matrix organized along the temporal and geographical axes.....	139
Figure 13: Solidarity principles	156
Figure 14: Main historical and current <i>significant others</i> (the Czech Republic).....	182
Figure 15: Main historical and current <i>significant others</i> (Hungary).....	200
Figure 16: Main historical and current <i>significant others</i> (Poland).....	226
Figure 17: Main historical and current <i>significant others</i> (Slovakia).....	243

List of Tables

Table 1: Forms of solidarity within the EU multi-level system.....	73
Table 2: Typologies/Forms of solidarity in the European context.....	78
Table 3: Overview of the conducted interviews in the Visegrad states	146
Table 4: Identity-solidarity nexus	164
Table 5: Methods used in the empirical chapters.....	165
Table 6: Summary of the main identity elements (Czech national identity).....	182
Table 7: Summary of the main identity elements (Hungarian national identity).....	200
Table 8: Summary of the main identity elements (Polish national identity).....	227
Table 9: Summary of the main identity elements (Slovak national identity)	244
Table 10: Summary of the main identity elements (the Visegrad States).....	250
Table 11: Identity-solidarity nexus (the refugee and migrant crisis & the Czech Republic).....	285
Table 12: Identity-solidarity nexus (the refugee and migrant crisis & Hungary)	312
Table 13: Identity-solidarity nexus (the refugee and migrant crisis & Poland).....	335
Table 14: Identity-solidarity nexus (the refugee and migrant crisis & Slovakia)	363
Table 15: Main justifications of solidarity behavior in the Visegrad states' reaction to the refugee and migrant crisis (intergovernmental solidarity).....	373
Table 16: Main justifications of solidarity behavior in the Visegrad states' reaction to the refugee and migrant crisis (solidarity with refugees and migrants).....	379
Table 17: Identity-solidarity nexus (EU enlargement & the Czech Republic)	414
Table 18: Identity-solidarity nexus (EU enlargement & Hungary)	432
Table 19: Identity-solidarity nexus (EU enlargement & Poland)	451
Table 20: Identity-solidarity nexus (EU enlargement & Slovakia)	474
Table 21: Main justifications of the Visegrad states' support for further EU enlargement.....	484
Table 22: Stages of V4-EU relations	489
Table 23: Identity-solidarity nexus on the example of the two case studies.....	500
Table 24: Summary overview of the principal discursive legitimation strategies	504

List of Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CEI	Central European Initiative
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CMR	Centre of Migration Research
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
ČSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party (<i>Česká strana sociálně demokratická</i>)
CVVM	Czech Public Opinion Research Center
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFSM	European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
Fidesz	Alliance of Young Democrats (<i>Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége</i>)
GAERC	General Affairs and External Relations Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
IIR	Institute of International Relations Prague
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IVF	International Visegrad Fund
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

ODA	Official development assistance
ODS	Civic Democratic Party (<i>Občanská demokratická strana</i>)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PiS	Law and Justice (<i>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość</i>) party
PISM	Polish Institute of International Affairs
RC SFPA	Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association
SKAD	Sociology of knowledge approach to discourse
Smer–SD	Direction-Social Democracy (<i>Smer – sociálna demokracia</i>)
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
V4EaP	Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership program
WKDA	Vienna School of Critical Discourse Analysis

PART I:
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Chapter 1: Introduction

Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.

—Schuman Declaration (1950)

The founding fathers of the European Union (EU) realized early on that building solidarity and trust would require lasting political commitment. Mindful of the horrors of the Second World War, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Schuman, along with his compatriot and advisor Jean Monnet, pleaded for the pooling of coal and steel production, which would render another war between France and Germany “not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible” (Schuman Declaration 1950). They argued that “de facto solidarity” between the two states would gradually spread and thus contribute to building a peaceful, united Europe one step at a time. These ideas, enshrined in the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, laid the foundations for the process of European integration.¹

It remains unknown whether Schuman and Monnet knew how arduous this development of de facto solidarity would be. Throughout its existence, the EU has faced challenges to the integration process as well as to its basic values and principles.² Notably, the last ten to fifteen years have witnessed the most profound of these challenges, including the Eurozone crisis, the Ukraine crisis (which can be partially considered as a crisis of the EU’s neighborhood policy), the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union (commonly termed *Brexit*), the arrival of unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants in Europe, and the COVID-19 pandemic with its presently unknowable consequences. Within the same timeframe, the EU has contended with the rise of populism and nationalism across Europe and the systematic erosion of democratic principles in some Member States. Numerous scholars have subsequently questioned whether continual expansion and increasing heterogeneity among Member States might jeopardize European cohesion and precipitate the disintegration of the EU (Jones 2018; Öniş and Kutlay 2019; Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2017; Vollaard 2014;

¹ On 18 April 1951, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg signed the Treaty of Paris, which created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC, the European Economic Community (EEC), and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) were the predecessors of today’s EU and were collectively known as the European Communities.

² A plethora of studies has examined the impacts of various crises on European integration (see, e.g., Berend 2017; Brack and Gürkan 2020; Habermas 2012; Hooghe and Marks 2019; Jones 2012; Lehman 2018; Matthijs 2020; Pausch 2020; Radice 2017; Schimmelfennig 2014b, 2018b; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2018).

Zielonka 2014). They have hypothesized that the geographical *widening* of the Union has come at the expense of further *deepening* of the integration process. Recent debates concerning the future of the EU have underscored the traditional conflict between supporters of an “ever closer Union” and those favoring a “Europe of nation states.” The latter group has been dominated mainly by Central and Eastern European leaders who favor a more intergovernmental vision of European integration that preserves national sovereignty. Amidst the enduring tensions within European politics, it is relevant to ask whether and to what extent such demands for more sovereignty have affected European solidarity, one of the founding principles of the European project.

One of the greatest tests of European solidarity was the refugee and migrant crisis,³ which refers to the large influx of asylum seekers into Europe that peaked in 2015.⁴ The crisis had an uneven impact on individual EU Member States in terms of numbers and consequences. While asylum seekers arrived in record numbers at the borders of frontline countries such as Greece, Italy, and Malta; transit countries such as Hungary; and destination countries such

³ Some human rights advocates and scholars have criticized the use of the term *crisis* in connection with the arrival of migrants and refugees in Europe. They have argued that framing the phenomenon as a crisis is stigmatizing because it constructs a negative image of migrants and refugees, presents them as a danger, and neglects their vulnerabilities and personal experiences. They have further asserted that the notion of crisis adds an unnecessarily alarmist element to the migration discourse and may thus be (mis)used to legitimize measures to protect “Fortress Europe” (Carastathis et al. 2018; Gabrielli 2017; Krzyżanowski et al. 2018). However, *refugee and migrant crisis* has been widely used in political and media discourse, public debates, academic literature, and official communications and documents issued by the EU. This study will follow suit for consistency with common usage and with the words of Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who described this precarious situation as both “a crisis of European solidarity” and a humanitarian crisis (UNHCR 2016b).

⁴ Throughout the study, the terms *migrants*, *refugees*, and *asylum seekers* will be used. While the terms are frequently used interchangeably in media and public discourse, they in fact possess distinct meanings with distinct implications. This study will observe the definitions proposed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention. A *refugee* is a person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951). An *asylum seeker* is “an individual who is seeking international protection ... [and] whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every recognized refugee is initially an asylum seeker” (IOM 2020). The term *migrant* is not defined in international law, but it is used as an umbrella term to describe a person “who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons” (IOM 2020). The people coming to Europe were, by definition, both refugees and migrants, and it is therefore appropriate to refer to the phenomenon of increased migration to Europe as the *refugee and migrant crisis* (see also Guterres 2015).

as Germany and Sweden, other states were only marginally affected by the increased flows.⁵ The situation prompted highly polarized reactions across the EU (Grosse and Hetnarowicz 2016; Kluknavská et al. 2019; Votoupalová 2019). Unable to reach consensus on a common course of action, Member States instead acted unilaterally to implement widely varying measures that ranged from tightening border controls and erecting fences along their frontiers to temporarily suspending the Dublin Regulation to allow Syrian refugees to apply for asylum in states that were not responsible for processing their claims (Bruneau et al. 2018; Lehne 2016). Despite the EU's efforts to find a collective response to the crisis, the effectiveness of the proposed measures proved to be limited.

The main point of contention was the question of how to assist countries receiving disproportionately high numbers of third country nationals and ensure a fair distribution of responsibility among Member States. The four Central European countries comprising the Visegrad Group (also known as the Visegrad Four or simply V4)—Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic—espoused a particularly controversial position. The Visegrad states' refusal to participate in EU schemes for relocation and resettlement was characterized by many leaders in Western Europe as a breach of European solidarity. Moreover, although the rise of the radical right was not endemic to the Visegrad region, the strong anti-immigration rhetoric embraced by leading Visegrad political figures caused the group to be labelled as a nationalist, populist, and xenophobic “bunch” (Kořan 2017).⁶ The once obscure Visegrad Group soon became widely recognized for representing “still immature” post-communist Europe as a counterpoint to “the liberal West” (Kořan and Juzová 2016).⁷

In this context, the migrant and refugee crisis has been viewed as a catalyst for the re-emergence of an East–West divide in Europe (Bendiek and Neyer 2016; Kazharski 2018; Nyzio 2017). The crisis exacerbated existing—even if sometimes overlooked—normative ruptures within the EU and revealed fault lines over not only migration but also broader issues

⁵ EU Member States that were hardly or not at all affected by migration flows include the Czech Republic, the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Slovakia (Fóti and Fromm 2016).

⁶ Reflecting on the rise of populism, xenophobia, Euroscepticism, distrust in political elites, and other structural weaknesses that can be observed in European politics and society at large, Michal Kořan emphasizes that “these pathologies were not invented in Central Europe, even though the Central Europeans were among the first people to propel representatives of these currents to the highest executive offices” (Kořan 2017).

⁷ Observers less familiar with the specifics of the Visegrad cooperation mistakenly equated the actions of the individual governments of the V4 countries with the position of the Visegrad Group as a whole.

of identity, norms, and values, such as that of solidarity (see also Börzel and Risse 2018). Intrigued by the uncertainties surrounding the future of European integration, this study pursues three main objectives: First, it strives to uncover the Visegrad countries' understanding of and approach to European solidarity. Contending that states' behavior is a result of varying national characteristics deeply rooted within their national identities, the study develops an analytical framework for investigating the nexus between identity and solidarity, thus contributing to the advancement of solidarity research. Second, it seeks to provide novel insights into the process of European integration and the Visegrad Group's role in it. And third, by taking a more differentiated look at the Visegrad Group and its individual members, the analysis aims to illuminate both similarities and differences in the Visegrad states' positions, determine the degree of intra-Visegrad coherence, and advance knowledge on sub-regionalism in Europe.

1.1 Solidarity-Identity Nexus

The Treaty of Lisbon, which amended the founding Treaties of the EU—the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)—mentions solidarity more than twenty times, thus pointing to the lasting centrality of the concept to the process of European integration (EU 2009b). Less clear, however, is whether the notion of solidarity, as originally envisioned in the Schuman Declaration, has a different meaning for those who were present at the birth of European integration than for those who joined the European project more than half a century later.

A first look at political debates during the migrant and refugee crisis lays bare competing narratives on solidarity. Western European states such as Germany associated solidarity with the fair distribution of responsibility among Member States, as epitomized by the emergency relocation mechanisms. In contrast, the Visegrad states insisted that they were acting in the spirit of solidarity by supporting other measures agreed at the EU level that were aimed at securing the external borders, dismantling smuggling and trafficking networks, and

addressing root causes of irregular migration (Grosse and Hetnarowicz 2016; Nyzio 2017).⁸ It seems that while nearly all European leaders invoked solidarity at some point, they interpreted its meaning and implications differently (Grosse and Hetnarowicz 2016; Votoupalová 2019).

Although solidarity has become a buzzword in political and public discourse, it remains an elusive concept with a multitude of theoretical conceptualizations and country-specific interpretations (Bayertz 1998; Grimmel and Giang 2017b; Höffe 2002; Lahusen and Grasso 2018; Scholz 2008; Stjernø 2005; Wallaschek 2020b). This study aims to narrow the identified conceptual gap and explore understandings of solidarity specific to Central Europe. It operationalizes the concept of solidarity by refining the framework developed by Siegfried Schieder et al. (2009, 2014a, 2015) and introduces four principles of solidarity action: *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*. The study hypothesizes that the relative argumentative weight attached to these solidarity principles in political discourse reflects states' underlying motivations for solidarity. The specific mix of solidarity principles and their hierarchical relationship can help explain varying approaches to solidarity espoused by states as well as possible variance between various policy fields.

To account for the expected variance in hierarchization and prioritization of solidarity principles, the present study contends that analyzing any state's understanding of solidarity is impossible without considering its national identity. In other words, examining the nexus between identity and solidarity is essential to understanding the motivations behind states' decisions. The expression of solidarity is highly dependent on which identity elements are represented in the political agenda. Accordingly, this study will examine the effect of national identity constructions on the Visegrad countries' identification with the European project, willingness to show solidarity with others, and support for further integration efforts.

The analytical framework underlying the identity-solidarity nexus will be applied to two case studies. The first concerns the response of the Visegrad Group and its members to the migrant

⁸ One notable example of such measures was the Visegrad states' joint project with Italy on the prevention of irregular migration from Libya to Europe (Gotev 2018; Government of the Czech Republic 2017a). The V4 states pledged 35 million euros for EU activities aimed at reinforcing Libya's border security (Visegrad Group 2017b). As Rick Fawn found in his analysis, this initiative and financial support provided by the V4 went largely unreported in English-language news and thus escaped the notice of Western European politicians (Fawn 2018, 72-73).

and refugee crisis, which sparked intense, emotional discussions about their commitment to European solidarity. The second analyzes the Visegrad states' position on potential further enlargement of the EU to Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, which has thus far been discussed only seldomly in relation to solidarity (cf. Tulmets 2011, 2012, 2014).⁹

During the migrant and refugee crisis, the Visegrad Group firmly rejected the proposed automatic relocation mechanism and was consequently accused of being selfish, lacking solidarity with both asylum seekers and EU Member States, and building an *opposition bloc* within EU institutions. Yet in other contexts, the Visegrad states have plainly demonstrated that they are in fact keen to act as *agenda setters* within the EU. The clearest example of their proactive and agenda-setting role is their continued advocacy for further enlargement of the EU. The V4 states have shared their historical experience of post-communist transition and accession to Euro-Atlantic structures with countries aspiring for EU membership and managed to shape the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) to include the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Their consistent support for the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan regions challenges the general assumption that the Visegrad states are unable or unwilling to show any signs of solidarity toward others. Rather than drawing hasty conclusions about the nature of the V4's (non-)solidary behavior, this study strives to uncover the rationale behind the positions of the Visegrad Group and its members on European solidarity by developing and applying a novel analytical framework.

⁹ Reflecting on the comparability of the chosen case studies, it should be noted that while EU enlargement is commonly seen as an ongoing process, experts still debate whether the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe should be considered “over” or not. Some see the factsheet issued by the European Commission in March 2019, which states that “Europe is no longer in crisis mode,” as the EU’s acknowledgment that Europe’s migration crisis has come to an end (European Commission 2019c). However, it is important to note that the factsheet was published with the aim of debunking myths about migration and the work of the EU and containing the spread of “misinformation, untruths and fake news” across Europe (European Commission 2019c). In this context, the assertion that “Europe is no longer in crisis mode” refers mainly to the considerable decline in migrant arrivals since 2015. However, the factsheet also recognizes that there are still refugees and migrants in countries neighboring the EU, and, in a press release from March 2019, the Commission acknowledged that “key problems in Greece” remained unresolved (European Commission 2019b). Taking stock of the progress made by the EU to address migration challenges, the European Commission’s First Vice-President Frans Timmermans commented that “Europe is no longer experiencing the migration crisis we lived in 2015, but structural problems remain” (European Commission 2019b). Therefore, considering the volatility of the situation and the persisting differences among the EU Member States in their approaches to migration, this study does not consider the migrant and refugee crisis as a finished process.

1.2 The Visegrad States' "Return to Europe" and Prospects of Differentiated (Dis)Integration

Once hailed as frontrunners of post-communist transition, democratization, and Europeanization, the Visegrad states were hardly expected to gain the reputation of an obstructionist bloc refusing to share the burdens associated with migration. The Visegrad Group was established in 1991 by Czechoslovak, Hungarian, and Polish leaders who sought to facilitate their countries' political and socio-economic transition from communism into the Western world, which they embedded in a narrative of "returning to Europe." They utilized Milan Kundera's metaphor of a "kidnapped West" to support their claim of *returning* to the West after more than 40 years of communist rule rather than merely *joining* it. In his seminal essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe," published in 1984, Kundera argued that historically and culturally, nations such as Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia had been an organic part of the West prior to being artificially separated from it by the "East" (the Soviet Union) (Kundera 1984). In an effort to prove their "Western nature," the four Central European states undertook comprehensive transformation and Europeanization of their national policies. In the years following their successful accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU in 1999 and 2004 respectively, the Visegrad Four countries tended to accept the general EU agenda and align their positions with the EU "mainstream" (interviews 1P & 4G).

However, after going largely unnoticed within Euro-Atlantic structures for nearly two decades, the Group started to show signs of shifting away from post-Cold War normative conformity toward a more emancipated behavior (Kazharski 2018; Tabosa 2020). According to Aliaksei Kazharski, a political scientist and an expert on Central and Eastern Europe, the Visegrad states have recently tended toward "a culturalist and particularistic interpretation of European nations, with increased preference for national sovereignty and rejection of liberal universalism advocated by the Western mainstream" (Kazharski 2018). Notably, Hungary and Poland have advanced a rival interpretation of Europe with different normative underpinnings based on cultural conservatism (Ágh 2016a; Foy and Buckley 2016). In September 2016, during the Economic Forum in the Polish town of Krynica, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Poland's governing Law and Justice (Prawo i

Sprawiedliwość, PiS) party leader Jarosław Kaczyński vowed “cultural counter-revolution” to reform a post-Brexit EU (Foy and Buckley 2016).

Moreover, both Hungary and Poland have been subjected to the Article 7 procedure of the TEU for breach of the fundamental values enumerated in Article 2 of the TEU: “values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities” (TEU 2009). In December 2017, the European Commission initiated the Article 7 procedure against Poland in response to its controversial judicial reforms. In the case of Hungary, the Article 7 procedure was triggered by the European Parliament in September 2018 out of concerns about judicial independence, freedom of expression, corruption, the rights of minorities, and the situation of migrants and refugees (European Parliament 2019). Although similar investigations into the state of democracy and rule of law have not been undertaken in the other two Visegrad states, populist inklings and increased political control of the media have been observed in the Czech Republic and Slovakia as well (Bakke and Sitter 2020; Lorenz and Anders 2021; Stanley 2017).

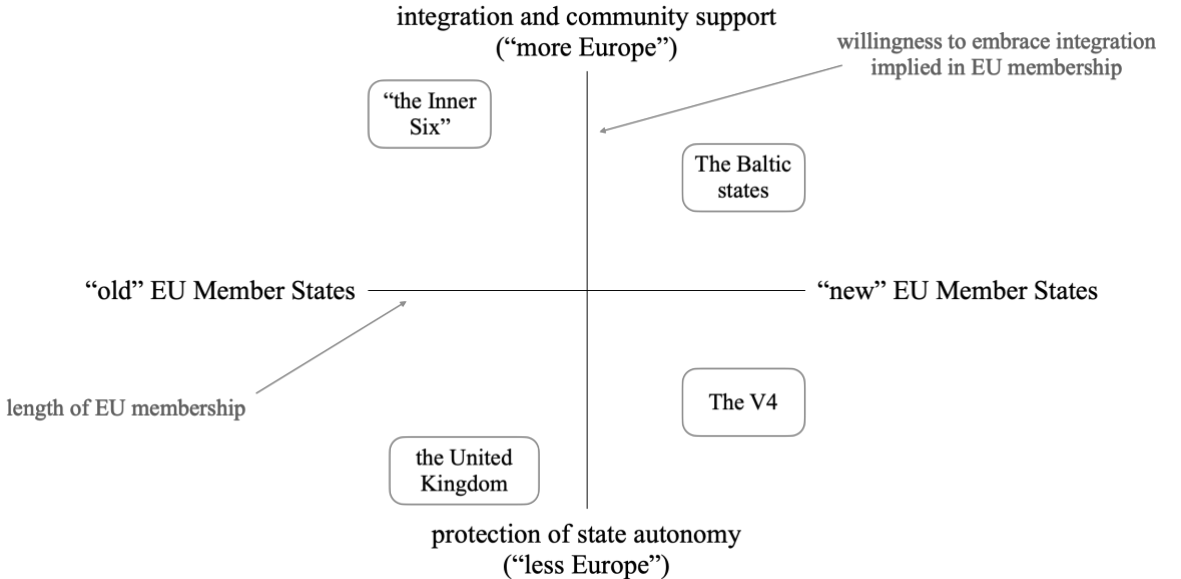
The rise of illiberal tendencies and signs of democratic backsliding in post-communist Europe, together with the Visegrad Group’s tarnished image in the wake of the migrant and refugee crisis, have undermined the region’s story of successfully “returning to the West” (Cabada and Waisová 2018; Kazharski 2018; Tabosa 2020). Frustrated with what they perceived as a lack of solidarity on the part of the Visegrad countries with regard to migration, some EU leaders have suggested that committed Member States should work toward closer integration without being slowed down by more reluctant members.¹⁰ Such visions of a multi-speed Europe correspond with the idea of *differentiated integration*, which refers to a process in which not all Member States (fully) participate in further integration (Schimmelfennig 2020).¹¹ Connoisseurs of EU affairs contend that in the history of the EU, “differentiation has generally been a companion of progress in integration. It has enabled and facilitated the EU’s widening and deepening” (Gänzle et al. 2020; see also Schimmelfennig et al. 2015).

¹⁰ See, for example, French President Emmanuel Macron’s speech on the future of Europe, delivered in September 2017 at Sorbonne University in Paris (Macron 2017).

¹¹ For literature on differentiated integration, see, for example, Andersen and Sitter (2006); Holzinger and Schimmelfennig (2012); Kölliker (2001, 2006); Leruth and Lord (2015); Leuffen et al. (2013); Schimmelfennig (2014a); Schimmelfennig et al. (2015); Schimmelfennig and Winzen (2014, 2017); Walker (1998).

In the contemporary EU, Member States differ with regard to their participation in certain policy areas. The simplified matrix below attempts to position the Visegrad states as well as other selected EU countries and country groups based on their current level of integration and their attitude toward further integration efforts (see figure 1).¹² Assuming that length of EU membership is a crucial factor in assessing a state’s level of identification with the European project and support for further integration, the horizontal axis reflects the distinction between “older” and “newer” members of the EU. The six founding Member States of the European Communities (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) are accordingly positioned farthest to the left, and Member States joining the Union in the last three enlargement rounds in 2004, 2007, and 2013 are farthest to the right.¹³ The vertical axis represents the extent to which Member States are willing to embrace the economic and political integration implied in EU membership. In simple terms, it differentiates between states that favor “more Europe” and states that favor an EU of strong nation states.

Figure 1: Country distribution based on the level of and attitude toward integration



Source: Own depiction

¹² The matrix depicts also the already “departed” United Kingdom.
¹³ In 2004, ten states acceded to the EU: the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and the Slovak Republic. They were followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

The six founding members, also called “the Inner Six” or simply “the Six,” are considered to be the most integrated members of the EU (Schimmelfennig 2017). Similarly, members of the Eurozone and the Schengen Area are pursuing deeper integration in specific policy areas. Accordingly, the three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—which have all adopted the Euro, are found in the upper-right quadrant. In contrast, the United Kingdom was always regarded as the least integrated Member State because it chose to opt out of many EU policies (Bongardt and Torres 2021; König 2015). The United Kingdom’s unprecedented vote to leave the EU in June 2016 therefore prompted many scholars to rethink the parameters of European integration (Chopin and Lequesne 2016; Leruth et al. 2019; Majone 2017; Oliver 2017; Rosamond 2016; Sampson 2017).¹⁴ Frank Schimmelfennig introduced the concept of *differentiated disintegration*, which he defines as “the selective reduction of a member state’s level and scope of integration” (Schimmelfennig 2018a). It can take the form of shallower integration within the EU (internal differentiation) or, in an extreme case, withdrawal from the EU (external differentiation). As the United Kingdom once was, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary are among the least integrated Member States, and they consistently seek to tip the balance of power away from Brussels in favor of individual nation states, which raises questions about what role the Visegrad Group will ultimately play in the process of European integration.¹⁵ This study assesses whether the Visegrad states’ varying levels of opposition to deepened integration could lead to further disintegration of the EU.

1.3 National Identities and European Integration

Recent studies have examined European (differentiated) (dis)integration mainly through the lens of *postfunctionalism* (Braun 2020; Schimmelfennig 2018b). Developed by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2008, 2019), postfunctionalism is considered to be one of the “grand theories” of European integration.¹⁶ It adopts a multi-level governance approach to

¹⁴ Vollaard (2014, 2018) and Webber (2014, 2019) were among the first authors who sought to conceptualize European disintegration from diverse theoretical angles.

¹⁵ None of the three countries is a member of the Eurozone, and Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic are often characterized as the least integrated EU members (Bongardt and Torres 2021; König 2015).

¹⁶ Other grand theories of European integration include *neofunctionalism*, which views European integration as an interplay of interests realized by societal actors, and *intergovernmentalism*, which theorizes European integration as a process and outcome of bargaining by Member States (Haas 1958; Hoffmann 1966; for an overview see Hooghe and Marks 2019; T. Kuhn 2019). Liberal intergovernmentalism postulates that national governments weigh the costs and benefits of cooperation mainly in the light of economic interests (Kleine and Pollack 2018; Moravcsik 1998; Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009; Schimmelfennig 2018c).

European integration and posits that the politicization of national identities constrains the integration process (Hooghe et al. 2019; Hooghe and Marks 2008). Consequently, in a postfunctionalist understanding, differentiated (dis)integration is more likely to be favored by Member States with comparatively higher rates of exclusive national identity and sovereigntist inclinations (Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2017).¹⁷ The Visegrad states have traditionally placed high value on the protection of national sovereignty and national identities (Kazharski 2018; Strnad 2018). Moreover, the Central European region has witnessed the electoral success of nationalist, Eurosceptic parties in the wake of the migrant and refugee crisis, which Schimmelfennig and others identify as another enabling condition for differentiated disintegration tendencies (Schimmelfennig 2018a; see also Braun 2020).

In summary, postfunctionalism suggests that national identities can be mobilized for or against European integration and determine both its speed and direction. Postfunctionalists have focused primarily on public opinion as a factor in European politics and the study of national identities from a bottom-up perspective, in other words, how identities are constructed by citizens (Hobolt and Wratil 2015; Hooghe and Marks 2008; T. Kuhn 2019; Verhaegen 2018). While this study agrees with the postfunctionalist proposition that *identity politics* can provide valuable insights into European integration, it takes a different approach to the study of national identities by following the tradition of social constructivist identity research (Hansen and Waever 2002; Jepperson et al. 1996; Marcussen et al. 1999; Risse 1999). A social constructivist account of identity allows for the exploration of how national identities are constructed and reconstructed in light of shifting historical, sociopolitical, and other contexts, in addition to enabling connection and comparison with other social constructivist concepts, including that of solidarity.

Constructivist approaches to the study of Europeanization expect states entering the EU to gradually internalize the values, principles, and norms of the community through socialization (Börzel and Risse 2003; Checkel 1999; Cowles et al. 2001; Risse-Kappen 1996;

¹⁷ The Eurobarometer approximates the measurement of European identity by asking the following question: In the near future, do you see yourself as “national only,” “national and European,” “European and national,” or “European only?” Respondents who select “national only” are regarded as having an exclusive national identity (see also Garry and Tilley 2009; Verhaegen 2018).

see also Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005).¹⁸ Socialization processes are also supposed to increase identification with the community and contribute to the development of a “we-feeling” among EU Member States.¹⁹ In the same line of thought, a sense of community and togetherness is often considered as a prerequisite for the emergence of (European) solidarity (Bayertz 1999b; Ferreira-Pereira and Groom 2010; Folz et al. 2009; Höffe 2002; Mau 2005). As a result, the Visegrad states’ alleged lack of solidarity in response to the refugee and migrant crisis has led some authors to claim that the new democracies of Central Europe have failed to “internalize the basic principles of European integration” (Kořan 2015). This study challenges this notion and argues that the understanding and interpretation of the EU’s values are contingent on national identity and historical experience and can therefore differ from one state to another. Furthermore, it contends that different conceptualizations of “being European” should not preclude solidarity among EU Member States because solidarity is not necessarily predicated upon a sense of community and shared identity.

1.4 Sub-regionalism and European Integration

This study aims to add a new dimension to the study of the future of European integration by analyzing one of the sub-regional forms of cooperation in the EU—the Visegrad Group. The existing literature on sub-regionalism in Europe has treated sub-regional cooperation formats as complementary to the European integration process (Braun 2020, 926). Even without the aspiration to act as a substitute for European integration, sub-regional groupings such as the V4 can still influence negotiations, policies, and future directions of the EU. The empirical findings of this study will therefore help illuminate the extent to which the strengthening of

¹⁸ Europeanization emerged as a distinct research area within European integration studies in the mid-1990s (Graziano and Vink 2013; Sedelmeier 2011). For a number of years, the Europeanization literature was dominated by Claudio Radaelli, who defined Europeanization as “processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies” (Radaelli 2000; 2003, 30). In simple terms, Europeanization studies initially focused on the impact of EU membership on the domestic political systems of Member States. Later studies acknowledged the mutual influence between the EU and its Member States and developed a typology encompassing various Europeanization processes, including *downloading* (the adaptation of domestic policies and structures to EU standards), *uploading* (the transfer of national preferences and policy suggestions to the EU level), and *cross-loading* (the exchange of best practices among Member States) (Dosenrode 2020).

¹⁹ Karl W. Deutsch, one of the founding fathers of integration theory, also believed that European integration would require a shared “sense of community” (Deutsch 1957b).

sub-regional cooperation formats poses a risk to the European integration process and enables further fragmentation within the EU.

The Visegrad Group is far from the only form of regional cooperation in Europe. In fact, the number of sub-regional cooperation formats has increased as a consequence of previous enlargements of the EU as well as the greater importance attached to intergovernmental decision-making procedures in times of crisis (European Parliament 2020). Kai-Olaf Lang and Nicolai von Ondarza distinguish between *geographical* cooperation formats, which bring together neighboring states that typically share a common history and culture, and *functional* cooperation formats, which provide a platform for individual Member States to forge common positions on various issues (Lang and Ondarza 2018). Examples of geographical cooperation formats include the Benelux Union (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), the Baltic cooperation (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), the Nordic Council (Denmark, Sweden, and Finland), and the newer Three Seas Initiative (Janulewicz 2018).²⁰ Functional cooperation formats are found mainly in the realm of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and include group formations such as the EU-3 (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom), which participated in negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program, and the Normandy format (Germany, France, Russia, and Ukraine), which is working to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine.²¹

Members of sub-regional arrangements can exchange views on European policy issues at the intergovernmental level, coordinate common positions prior to EU-wide meetings, and implement joint cooperation projects. Through the collective influence of their members, sub-regional groupings can significantly affect the EU's decision-making processes (Janulewicz 2018; Végh 2018b). Therefore, group formation in the EU is regarded as an ambivalent phenomenon. On the one hand, groups within the EU can positively contribute to the functioning of the Union, whether by setting agendas, helping to pre-negotiate compromises, assuming a "bridging function," or providing their expertise in specific policy areas. On the other hand, they can develop a disruptive potential and generate fragmentation

²⁰ The Three Seas Initiative brings together 12 EU Member States between the Adriatic Sea, the Baltic Sea, and the Black Sea: Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

²¹ The Normandy format is not an institutionalized form of sub-regional cooperation in the EU but rather an informal association of EU and non-EU states.

if they decide to pursue an uncompromising policy and counterbalance the majority position. Either way, the existence of sub-regional cooperation formats has consequences for the integration process and the functioning of the EU. In this context, this study seeks to identify the factors that determine whether the Visegrad states decide to act as a “building block” or as a “stumbling block” within the EU. To this end, the notion of solidarity will be considered not only in the relationship of the Visegrad Group with the EU but also in the relationships that the V4 states have with each other.

While seeking to advance knowledge on sub-regionalism in Europe, this study also challenges the characterization of the Visegrad Group as a homogeneous bloc within the EU. More specifically, in the aftermath of the migrant and refugee crisis, numerous politicians and researchers started to treat the V4 as a monolithic group with overlapping interests. Due to their geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and common (post-)communist past, it can be tempting to assume a high level of congruence between the four countries. Numerous key actors in the Visegrad region have themselves attempted to convey an impression of unity. However, describing the Visegrad Group as an invariably unified coalition would be too simplistic, especially considering its informal nature and the non-binding character of its decisions. This study takes a more nuanced look at the Visegrad cooperation. It not only highlights similarities among the Visegrad states but also examines differences between their preferences and interests to determine the degree of coherence of the Visegrad Group’s positions and actions.

1.5 Outline and Relevance of the Study

To address the research goals outlined above, the study comprises a number of theoretical, methodological, and empirical chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the subject under investigation, the Visegrad Group. It discusses its purpose in the context of other cooperation formats in Central Europe, elaborates on the formation of the Visegrad Group, provides an overview of its evolutionary stages, and explains its mechanisms of cooperation. The latter part of this introductory chapter contains the most comprehensive and up-to-date synthesis of the current state of research on the Visegrad cooperation to date, identifies gaps and deficiencies in current knowledge, and synthesizes the study’s key contributions to the research on the Visegrad Four.

Chapters 3 and 4 in part II lay out the theoretical foundations and key concepts of the study, namely the ones of solidarity and identity. Chapter 3 explores the historical roots and the evolution of the concept of solidarity, juxtaposes definitions and conceptualizations of solidarity put forward by different disciplines, and uses these various perspectives to formulate the definition of solidarity for this study. Mindful of the fact that multiple forms of solidarity exist in the EU context, the study draws on the theoretical framework for conceptualizing solidarity within the multi-level system of the EU developed by Michèle Knodt and Anne Tews (2014a, 2014b), and chapter 3 explains the decision to focus on the *intergovernmental* and *international* types of solidarity.²² The last part of the chapter elucidates the rationale behind the case selection for this study, which aims to account for the potentially different manifestations of and limits to solidarity in different policy fields.

Following the assumption that solidarity is an interactionist, relational concept that cannot be sufficiently explored without knowing the identities of the participating actors, chapter 4 elaborates on the social constructivist concept of identity. Similar to the chapter on solidarity, it examines the different notions, types, and conceptualizations of identity and, based on a critical evaluation of existing research, proposes a definition of national identity resting on a few core premises. To enhance conceptual clarity, the chapter distinguishes identity from other theoretical concepts of social constructivism, in particular *role*, and discusses whether and under which circumstances national identities are prone to change and transformation.

A reference to the possibility of (re)activation of identity elements in political discourse provides a transition to chapter 5, which presents the research design of the study and the operationalization of the central concepts of identity and solidarity. It starts by introducing a multi-method approach to identity that combines a mix of inductive and deductive techniques to explore the multifaceted nature of national identities and their impact on foreign policy decision making. It proceeds with discussing the methods of data collection and data analysis, including qualitative content analysis and semi-structured expert interviews, followed by the development of a categorization matrix for analyzing national identities. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to explaining the nexus between identity and solidarity and the operationalization of solidarity. Building on the analytical framework developed by Siegfried

²² Knodt and Tews's typology contains four forms of European solidarity, namely *transnational*, *supranational*, *intergovernmental*, and *international* (Knodt and Tews 2014a, 2014b; Knodt et al. 2014).

Schieder et al. (2009, 2014a, 2015), the study formulates four solidarity principles—*proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*—used to empirically examine the Visegrad states’ motivation for (non)solidary action.

The matrix developed in chapter 5 serves as a basis for the empirical analysis of national identities of the Visegrad states, which follows in part III. Contending that identity change mostly happens during so-called “critical junctures” when national identities are contested and renegotiated in political discourse, the analysis focuses on the most formative events in the history of every V4 state, seeking to uncover and specify the main *significant others* and key identity elements for every country. Creating the most comprehensive overview possible of identity elements that can be invoked depending on specific contexts serves as a basis for examining the nexus between identity and solidarity later in the study.

After the elaboration of the main identity elements inherent to the national identities of the four countries under investigation, the two case studies follow in parts IV and V. They are structured according to the same logic. Each case study starts with a detailed description of the solidary behavior of the Visegrad countries during the refugee and migrant crisis (case study I) and in relation to further enlargement of the EU (case study II). In the second step, using the method of discourse analysis and building upon the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*, the study elaborates on the specific understanding of solidarity in the Visegrad states. The purpose of the third and last step is to delineate the interaction and hierarchization of the solidarity principles and determine whether and to which extent the discursive justifications of (non)solidary behavior reflect the respective national identities of the Visegrad countries identified in part III (identity-solidarity nexus).

All three empirical parts—the one on national identities and the two case studies—assess the individual Visegrad states as well as the Visegrad Group as a whole. Accordingly, after the illustration of the national identity of every Visegrad state, a summary section juxtaposes the four cases with the aim of identifying shared or converging identity elements. Similarly, both case studies start with a general description of the “solidarity performance” of the Visegrad Group, then establish specific “solidarity profiles” of the individual Visegrad states, and end with a summary of the similarities and differences in the Visegrad states’ approaches toward the migrant and refugee crisis and further EU enlargement.

Part VI summarizes the main findings and outlines perspectives for further research. In addition, it discusses the theoretical and policy-relevant implications of the study.

There are several areas where this study makes substantial and original contributions to the current state of research. The theoretical value of this study stems from at least three ingredients. First, it contributes to the advancement of the solidarity research in the International Relations field as well as the Europeanization literature. Recognizing insufficient applicability of existing conceptualizations and operationalizations of solidarity, the study refines the systematization of solidarity principles introduced by Siegfried Schieder et al. (2009, 2014a, 2015) in a way so that it is applicable across various policy fields. Second, this study makes the case for an inductive-deductive exploration of identity and applies an original and innovative mixed methods research design to analyzing the multifaceted nature of national identities, which serves to increase the reliability and validity of the findings. And third, the study develops a state-of-the-art analytical framework for investigating the nexus between identity and solidarity.

The study further offers novel empirical insights. The emergence of the Visegrad Group as a collective actor in European politics in the wake of the migrant and refugee crisis has stimulated research on regional establishments within the EU (Braun 2020; Kazharski 2018; Lang and Ondarza 2018; Stepper 2016). However, research on sub-regionalism in the EU remains scant, and this study therefore seeks to shed light on one of the principal sub-regional cooperation formats in Europe. It undertakes the most thorough and up-to-date review of the principal research concerning the Visegrad cooperation. It also provides the most exhaustive account of national identities of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia to date, drawing on an extensive analysis of the available secondary literature and 78 interviews conducted with experts from the Visegrad states. Moreover, the study advances scientific knowledge on the topic of solidarity of the Visegrad states, which has so far remained a much underresearched area of academic enquiry. By focusing primarily on the motives and discursive justifications of the respective solidarity behavior, this study offers a deeper understanding of the Visegrad states' reactions to the refugee and migrant crisis and the different underlying reasons for seemingly similar responses. In a similar manner, the study provides novel insights into the Visegrad states' positions and preferences in the context of further enlargement of the EU.

Overall, the findings are relevant not only for the fields of International Relations, Foreign Policy Analysis, and European Studies, but also for all students, scholars, and policy makers interested in the region of Central Europe and the process of European integration.

Chapter 2: Central Europe and the Visegrad Group

Trying to delineate “Central Europe” is not an easy undertaking. In fact, there is no uniform definition of what territory is to be associated with Central Europe (Okey 1992; Šabič and Drulák 2012b; Šabič et al. 2019).²³ Tomasz Zarycki suggests that, in Central Europe, “Eastern Europe starts just behind the eastern border of any country, while the nation itself prefers to be identified as ‘Central European’” (Zarycki 2014, 603). Apart from this self-perception, there have been various conceptualizations of Central Europe, varying in dependence on the theoretical framework and thematic focus of analysis (Antonyuk 2018; Iordachi 2012; Volgy et al. 2012).²⁴ In geographical terms, Central Europe lies in the center of the continent, in between Eastern and Western Europe. However, authors differ in their assessments of which countries belong to this area. Some prefer a narrow geographical vision, encompassing the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and sometimes also Austria and Slovenia. Others favor a wider definition, including, besides the already listed countries, Germany, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Northern Italy, as well as the southeastern part of Europe (Croatia and Serbia) or Western Ukraine.²⁵ Despite a great number of contending definitions, scholars seem to agree on one thing, namely that Central Europe cannot be defined simply by its geography (Šabič and Drulák 2012b, 8).

Historically, the origins of Central Europe are believed to date back to the 1815 Congress of Vienna and the demarcation of Central Europe as a “space in-between” the Western and Eastern great powers of Europe (at that time these were Great Britain, Prussia, Austria, Russia, and France) (Cabada 2018, 165; Kissinger 1956, 267; Zenderowski and Janák 2018, 232).²⁶ After the Second World War, the European continent was divided into the Western and Soviet spheres of influence and the concept of Central Europe experienced a certain

²³ The volume titled *In Search of Central Europe*, edited by George Schopflin and Neal Wood, comprehensively explores the definition of Central Europe from various historical, political, cultural, as well as economic perspectives (Schopflin and Wood 1989).

²⁴ Historian Timothy Garton Ash remarks that in, German-speaking lands, the word *Mitteleuropa* was commonly used, but the term “seemed to have died with Adolf Hitler” (Garton Ash 1986).

²⁵ For an overview of different conceptualizations, see, for example, Baranov (2018), Iordachi (2012), Kořan (2012), and Šabič and Drulák (2012b).

²⁶ The Congress of Vienna strived to lay the ground for a peaceful coexistence of European nations after the long period of international conflicts stemming from the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars. Presided by the victorious great powers (Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain), the Congress worked out a plan for the postwar territorial settlement in Central and Eastern Europe.

decline. During the Cold War period, the term “East-Central Europe” was often used to denote the countries’ Soviet dependence (Antonyuk 2018; Baranov 2018).²⁷

Numerous authors argue that the idea of Central Europe was revived in the late 1970s and the 1980s, mainly due to political reasons and emancipatory tendencies of the respective Central European countries, which strived to define themselves in opposition to the Soviet Union (see, e.g., Fawn 2001; Garton Ash 1999; Iordachi 2012; Šabič and Drulák 2012b; Schopflin and Wood 1989). Historian Timothy Garton Ash attributes the “rehabilitation” of the concept of Central Europe mainly to Milan Kundera and his famous essay “The Tragedy of Central Europe” published in 1984 (Garton Ash 1986, 1999).²⁸ Kundera’s concept of Central Europe was cultural-historical rather than geographical, defining the region as occupying an intermediate position between the great powers of the geopolitical East-West axis (Drulák 2013; interview 2P).²⁹

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Central Europeans strived to distance themselves from Eastern Europe and the Balkans and assert their rightful belonging to Euro-Atlantic integration structures (Iordachi 2012, 49; Šabič and Drulák 2012b, 6). In this context, Zlatko Šabič and Petr Drulák define Central European countries as those,

“whose parts used to belong to the Austrian empire before the 1WW, which experimented with communist models of society after the 2WW and which, after the end of the Cold War, were faster than some other post-communist countries in making the transition to a liberal society and also in joining the EU” (Šabič and Drulák 2012a, 310).

In other words, they add transitional success to the historical dimension as another key factor connecting the countries in Central Europe.

It follows from the above that Central Europe is an “imagined community,” a socially constructed space defined by historical, geographical, geopolitical, cultural, religious, and

²⁷ The Cold War order created a dichotomy between Western and Eastern Europe and the current Visegrad states became part of the latter. In consequence, the term Central Europe vanished for several decades (Garton Ash 1986, 1999).

²⁸ Not only Milan Kundera but also other intellectuals from the Visegrad region, such as György Konrád and Czesław Miłosz, were instrumental for the revival of the idea of Central Europe (Garton Ash 1999; Iordachi 2012, 46).

²⁹ In “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” Milan Kundera avoided the delineation of specific geographic boundaries of Central Europe by pointing to the social construction of the concept: “Central Europe is not a state: it is a culture or a fate. Its borders are imaginary and must be drawn and redrawn with each new historical situation” (Kundera 1984).

other boundaries (see, e.g., Šabič and Drulák 2012b). There are several sub-regional groupings that emerged in post-communist Central (and Eastern) Europe, the most important of which are the Visegrad Group, the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the Central European Initiative (CEI), and, from the more recent ones, the Slavkov Triangle, the Bucharest Nine, and the Three Seas Initiative (CEFTA 2016; Janulewicz 2018, 5).³⁰

CEFTA, which exclusively focused on economic cooperation, played an indispensable role in reviving the Visegrad cooperation, as will be explained later. Nevertheless, when the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary entered into the EU, they had to abandon their CEFTA membership. EU membership stands for customs union, meaning that, in addition to the elimination of all custom duties among its Member States (as in the case of CEFTA), the countries also have to unify their custom policies with the rest of the world (Štiblar 2013, 50; Törö et al. 2014, 365). The Visegrad states' withdrawal from CEFTA, however, did not mean an end to the organization, since it had already expanded between 1996 and 2006 beyond the original Visegrad membership (Fawn 2008, 681; Jeszenszky 2006).³¹ The current CEFTA format includes seven members from Southeast Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on behalf of Kosovo (Štiblar 2013, 50). Consequently, CEFTA has changed its regional focus toward the Balkans and can no longer be regarded as a representative of Central Europe.

In addition to the Visegrad Group and CEFTA, the CEI was established in 1989. Originally, the CEI included only Austria, Hungary, Italy, and Yugoslavia (Fawn 2001, 59). It later expanded to include Poland and Czechoslovakia, so that all Visegrad countries were and remain simultaneously also CEI members (CEI 2017a). Similar to the Visegrad Group, the CEI has also been committed to supporting its Member States on their path toward European integration (CEI 2017b). However, contrary to the V4, the CEI has expanded its membership and currently includes eighteen member states ranging from Ukraine to Italy and Albania (CEI 2017a; Rhodes 1999). This has led authors such as Rick Fawn to comment that the “grouping grew much too large to claim historical commonality” (Fawn 2001, 60).

³⁰ Other, potentially less known regional cooperation formats, which were established in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, include the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, and the South East European Cooperation Process (Rotaru 2018, 13).

³¹ In 2006, a new agreement was adopted by the new members (Törö et al. 2014, 365).

Some authors have emphasized fundamental structural differences between Poland and the three smaller countries, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, and even proposed different formats of cooperation in the Central European region. For example, Jiří Pehe claimed that Poland has different interests from the other three countries and that Austria and Slovenia would therefore be a better fit for the group due to a common historical and cultural heritage (Pehe 2004, 2006, 2011). This view was also reflected in the establishment of the so-called Regional Partnership, which included the V4 countries plus Austria and Slovenia (Lang 2006, 8). The Regional Partnership concept was presented by Austria in 2000 with the aim of intensifying cross-border cooperation and coordinating shared interests inside the EU (Cabada 2018, 170; Kiss et al. 2003, 57). Austria invited primarily its Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, and Slovenian neighbors to join but later extended the invitation also to its “cultural neighbor” Poland. Although the Czech Republic and Slovakia were particularly suspicious of the Austrian proposal and feared that Austria would create an instrument to strengthen its influence in Central Europe, the Regional Partnership was eventually initiated in Vienna in 2001 (Kiss et al. 2003, 64-66; Růžička and Kořan 2006, 34). However, it was met with only lukewarm engagement by the Visegrad states and formally came to an end in 2012 (Walsch 2014).

Since 2015, regional cooperation in Central (and Eastern) Europe has experienced a revival and several new initiatives have been launched, including the Three Seas Initiative, the Slavkov Triangle, and the Bucharest Nine. The Three Seas Initiative is a new regional cooperation format, which is led by Poland and focuses on issues such as infrastructure building and energy security (V. Józwiak 2018; interview 2G). It brings together 12 countries located between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic seas, concretely Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (Three Seas 2020). The Three Seas Initiative was initiated by Polish President Andrzej Duda and Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović in 2015 and the first summit of all member states was held one year later in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Poland, together with Romania, also stood behind the launch of another regional initiative, the Bucharest Nine. This alliance, in existence since 2015, brings together nine states that are located at the Eastern flank of NATO (the four Visegrad states, the three Baltic states, Bulgaria and Romania) with the aim of improving the security situation in the region (Rotaru 2018, 11). In fact, its establishment is inferred to be a direct reaction to the recent Russia’s aggressive

policy actions, including its annexation of the Crimean peninsula and its support for separatist forces in Ukraine’s Donbass region (Gerasymchuk 2019; Terlikowski et al. 2018). Finally, the Slavkov Triangle—also known as the “Austerlitz cooperation”—was also created in 2015. Building upon the shared historical experience of living within the Habsburg Monarchy, Slavkov promotes economic cooperation between Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Concretely, it aims to enhance infrastructure connectivity and strengthen cross-border cooperation between the three countries (Šlufińska and Nitszke 2017, 24; Stuchlíková 2018, 29).

Despite the plethora of cooperation frameworks in the Central European region, there is a broad agreement that the Visegrad Group remains the most effective form of regional cooperation and the most appropriate representative of Central Europe due to the following characteristics that the four countries share:

1. Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic are located in the geographical center of the European continent;
2. Geopolitically, the Visegrad partners share the notion of being an intermediate zone between Europe’s East and West, particularly between Western Europe and Russia;
3. The four countries share the experience of communist governance under the Soviet rule;
4. All Visegrad states experienced successful transition from planned to market economy, democratization, as well as integration into Euro-Atlantic structures (V. Bilčík and Strážay 2006; Šabič and Drulák 2012b).³²

Moreover, even though—or perhaps because—the newer cooperation formats contain at least one V4 country, they do not seem to constitute a “rival” to the Visegrad Four (V. Bilčík and Strážay 2006; Cabada 2018; Duleba and Strážay 2006; interview 2G; Janulewicz 2018).

³² For example, although Austria clearly belongs to Central Europe in terms of its culture and geography, it has never experienced the communist rule typical for the Visegrad countries (Šabič and Drulák 2012a, 311). Slovenia, on the other hand, existed as part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between the end of World War II and 1992, and the country also shares a common cultural ground with the Visegrad states. However, owing to its geographic location, Slovenia is often considered as both a Central European and Mediterranean country (Brglez et al. 2015; Rahten 2015).

2.1 History of the Visegrad Cooperation

2.1.1 Foundation and Purpose

Seven centuries ago, in 1335, the Czech King John of Luxembourg, the Hungarian King Charles Robert of Anjou, and King Casimir III of Poland met in the Hungarian city of Visegrad to negotiate better trade relationships and a deeper cooperation among their countries (Gawlas 2006; Gyárfášová 2013, 100; Krno 2013, 117).³³ 656 years later, on 15 February 1991, the statesmen of these three Central European states—Czechoslovak President Václav Havel, Polish President Lech Wałęsa, and Hungarian Prime Minister József Antal—reconvened in Visegrad to further their cooperation regarding their countries’ aspirations for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures (Dienstbier 2006; Visegrad Group 2017a). The “return to Europe” (or “return to the West”) was a dominant theme in the post-communist Central and Eastern European countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the East-West conflict (Kavický 2012, 14).

Political scientists differ in their assessment of whether the intention to cooperate was an autonomous process initiated by the leadership of the Visegrad countries or whether the push for cooperation came from outside (Dangerfield 2008, 636; Törö et al. 2014, 368). Václav Klaus, the presidential successor of Václav Havel, once described the Visegrad cooperation as an “artificial creation of the West” (Dawson and Fawn 2002, 56; Fawn 2003b, 214). Rick Fawn agrees with this statement insofar as that only due to the reluctance of the EU and NATO to take any steps leading to the admission of new Member States, the three Central European countries realized that they must cooperate with one another if they wanted to join the Western European structures (Fawn 2013, 342). Martin Dangerfield argues that it was especially the Soviet crackdown on the Baltic States in 1991 that accelerated the process of rapprochement of the Visegrad states with the EU and NATO (Dangerfield 2008, 644-645; see also Meiklejohn Terry 2000, 12-13). It follows from the above that the new leadership of the three states—driven by security, political, and economic uncertainties—decided rather autonomously to establish the Visegrad Group (Dangerfield 2008; Jeszenszky 2006; Mazowiecki 2006). Their aim was the transition toward liberal democracy and market economy as well as the NATO and EU accession, which were regarded as guarantees for

³³ The meeting also served the purpose of discussing how to ensure peace in the region (Gawlas 2006).

security and prosperity (Beneš and Handl 2014, 228; Střítecký 2012b, 162; Střítecký and Hynek 2009, 20).

Several versions of who was the driving force behind the idea of the Visegrad cooperation circulate in academic circles. The initiation of the Visegrad Group has been attributed to various individuals. While for example Géza Jeszenszky (2006) and Attila Pók (interview in 2019) claim that it was József Antall who invited the leaders of Poland and Czechoslovakia to the Hungarian city of Visegrad, most authors agree that it was Václav Havel who came up with the idea of regional cooperation between the three countries (Fawn 2003b; Rhodes 1999; A. Schmidt 2016a; Vondra 2006b). In his address given in front of the Polish Sejm and Senate in January 1990, Havel stated:

“For the first time in history, we have a real opportunity to fill the great political vacuum that appeared in Central Europe after the collapse of the Habsburg empire with something genuinely meaningful. We have an opportunity to transform Central Europe from what has been a mainly historical and spiritual phenomenon into a political phenomenon” (Havel quoted in Ślufińska and Nitszke 2017, 11).

President Havel then convened an informal meeting in Bratislava on 9 April 1990, in which he appealed to the Central European countries to assist each other instead of competing with each other for admission into the Euro-Atlantic structures (Dienstbier 2006; Vondra 2006b). The Bratislava summit is now considered as the inauguration meeting of the Visegrad cooperation, because it paved the way for the subsequent high-level meeting in Visegrad in February 1991 (Grabíňki 2006; A. Schmidt 2016a).

The Visegrad Declaration, signed on 15 February 1991, stressed the need for close political cooperation of the Central European states on their “road to Europe” (Dangerfield 2008, 635). The two key objectives of the newly founded initiative were, first, to achieve the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Central Europe and the decommunization and desovietization of the region, and second, to serve as an instrument supporting the Visegrad countries in their EU and NATO accession endeavor as well as helping them with the establishment of democracy and market economy (Figel 2002, 7-8; Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 79; Marton 2012, 14). Moreover, numerous authors and observers add that there was also a deeper element to the cooperation, which reflected the shared historical experiences (especially the Kunderian narrative about “a kidnapped West”), cultural kinship, as well as the desire to prevent the repetition of past rivalries (Fawn 2003b, 214; Jeszenszky 2006; Kwaśniewski 2006; Vondra

2006b; interview 1C).³⁴ The newly created initiative, called the Visegrad Three, was changed to Visegrad Four after Czechoslovakia divided in 1993 (Gyárfášová 2013, 117; Krno 2013, 117; Marton 2012, 14).

2.1.2 Evolutionary Stages of the Visegrad Cooperation

The Visegrad cooperation experienced numerous oscillations in its dynamics since its official birth in 1991 (Fawn 2013, 339; Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 79). The evolution of the V4 can be divided into a pre- and a post-accession phase, while the pre-accession period can be further split into three distinct phases (1991-92, 1993-98, and 1998-2004) that reflect the intensity of mutual cooperation and the level of activity (Dangerfield 2008). Compared to the years after the four countries' accession to the EU, the pre-accession phase was quite volatile, oscillating between close cooperation of the Visegrad states and relative inactivity raising doubts about the viability of the V4 Group (Brusis 2002, 67; Dangerfield 2008, 637).

The Initial Years (1991-1992)

The first years after the establishment of the Visegrad Group were marked by an enhanced cooperation of the three states. The countries' representatives held unsystematic but frequent meetings at various levels (Fawn 2013, 342). They worked closely together and achieved the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the three countries and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (Veselý 2013, 32-33). Apart from that accomplishment, the agenda was largely dominated by the pursuit of common policies leading to the desired EU and NATO membership (Dangerfield 2008, 630; 2009, 1738). The biggest achievement of this first phase was the creation of CEFTA in Krakow on 21 December 1992 (Veselý 2013, 33). The early Visegrad cooperation was characterized by a strong commitment to economic cooperation and the

³⁴ In his personal reflection on the establishment of the Visegrad cooperation, the former Czech politician and diplomat Michael Žantovský described the founding declaration with the following words: "It reflected the almost identical initial positions of the three countries that had been recently liberated from the bear hug of the totalitarian East, and that were determined to work their way back to the democratic West. It also reflected an older affinity between three countries whose destinies had been linked for a long time, in part or in whole, to that of the Habsburg Empire, through similar cultures, languages, creeds, and problems. And to some it even spoke of the ancient mythological past of the Danube-Carpathian region, in which the same term - Visegrád, Vyšehrad or Wyszogród, meaning a castle or a city on the hill - was to be found in Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, Transylvania" (Žantovský 2006). As regards more recent affinities between the four countries, several authors as well as politicians from the Visegrad region suggest that the beginnings of Czech-Hungarian-Polish-Slovak cooperation go back to the period of dissent and the mutual solidarity of the repressed dissidents (interview 1H; Vondra 2006b).

establishment of CEFTA aimed to foster intra-regional trade, consolidate market economies of the member states, and so help them integrate into European structures (Jeszenszky 2006; A. Schmidt 2016a, 116; Sobják 2012, 131).

In the initial phase, the key aspiration was the achievement of EU and NATO membership rather than the establishment of an intra-regional cooperation *per se* and the cooperation took place almost exclusively on an elite intergovernmental level (Dangerfield 2008, 639; Sobják 2012, 123). This aim was partially accomplished by signing the Europe Agreements in December 1991. Authors such as Martin Dangerfield accredit the acceleration of the whole process to the collective approach (Dangerfield 2008, 638).

The Decline (1993-1998)

After a good start and intense collaboration during the first few years, the Visegrad cooperation was undermined by several events that ultimately led to the decline of the group after 1992. First, the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993 and the related domestic political developments can be regarded as one of the main factors, which hampered the cooperation. Indeed, the leaders of the newly independent Czech and Slovak Republics lacked strong commitment to regional cooperation (Rhodes 2003, 7; Sobják 2012, 123).

In the Czech Republic, the Czech right-wing ruling coalition headed by Prime Minister Václav Klaus became overly skeptical toward the Visegrad Group, claiming that the regional cooperation only hindered Czechs from a speedy catch-up with the EU (Druláková 2007, 9; Leška 2003, 11; Pehe 2011; Vykoukal 2006, 23). Then Czech government officials felt better prepared than their Visegrad partners and believed that individualism and “go-it-alone policies” would bring their country benefits in the accession process (Rhodes 2003, 9-10). Prime Minister Klaus regarded CEFTA as far more important than the Visegrad Group and was against any kind of political interdependence. Accordingly, his government focused mainly on economic cooperation and sent inappropriately low-ranking officials to V4 meetings (Fawn 2001, 56; 2008, 683).

In Slovakia, it was Vladimir Mečiar’s autocratic regime between 1992 and 1998 that brought about the reorientation of Slovak foreign policy away from Euro-Atlantic integration toward Russia and the East and caused the country’s exclusion from V4 meetings (Fawn 2001, 55;

Gawrich and Stepanov 2014, 7; Vykoukal 2006, 23). Out of fear of losing a favorable position in the Euro-Atlantic integration process, the other three leaders did not want to be associated with the regime in Slovakia (Dangerfield 2008, 640; Rhodes 1999, 64).

Among the underlying causes for the stagnating cooperation were also bilateral disputes between Slovakia and Hungary. They occurred in the 1990s first in relation to finishing the works on a massive hydroelectric project on the Danube River, the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Dam, and then also in relation to the citizenship rights of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia (Dangerfield 2008, 640; Druláková 2007, 9; Fawn 2001, 55).³⁵

“Visegrad 2” & V4 Cooperation During the EU Accession Negotiations (1998-2004)

After a few years of sluggish cooperation, the Visegrad Group reinvigorated again in 1998 (interviews 2M & 4D). The rebirth happened partially due to governmental changes in the Czech and Slovak Republics and especially due to the acceleration of the NATO and EU accession processes (Dangerfield 2008, 642; Fawn 2003b, 215). The resignation of Václav Klaus in 1997 and the installation of a more pro-V4 leadership as well as the electoral defeat of Vladimír Mečiar in 1998 were regarded as positive developments contributing to the “Visegrad revival” (Dangerfield 2008, 643; Fawn 2013, 342). More importantly, the new Slovak government led by Mikuláš Dzurinda was more acceptable to the West, advancing Slovakia’s prospects for NATO and European integration (Rhodes 2003, 15; Sobják 2012).

While the original establishment of CEFTA would not have been possible without the Visegrad cooperation, CEFTA in turn played an important role in the reinvigoration of the Visegrad Group (Fawn 2008, 681). The regular CEFTA meetings of the Visegrad Prime Ministers helped to rebuild confidence in sub-regional cooperation (Dangerfield 2008, 642). As already mentioned, even the very skeptical Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus saw a potential in economic cooperation and was therefore a vocal supporter of CEFTA (Sobják 2012, 131).

The first step to formally reconvene the Visegrad Group was taken during the September 1998 CEFTA summit in Prague (Dangerfield 2008, 644). A few weeks later, the Prime

³⁵ The Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Dam project was initiated by the communist regimes in Prague and Budapest in 1977. It was designed to prevent catastrophic floods and generate hydroelectricity. However, Hungary decided to withdraw from this project due to environmental and economic concerns (Fawn 2001, 55).

Ministers of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary called upon Slovakia to rejoin the Visegrad Group and participate in their meeting in Budapest in October 1998 (Bukalska and Bocian 2003, 18; Fawn 2001, 62). The inaugural meeting of “Visegrad 2” was held in Bratislava in May 1999, where the four countries adopted the program document titled “The Content of Visegrad Cooperation” (Dangerfield 2008, 644; Veselý 2013, 34). They created a quasi-institutionalized structure for the intergovernmental cooperation with regular meetings on different levels, agreed to cooperate with third parties within the “V4 plus” format, and expanded the scale and scope of their mutual cooperation (Dangerfield 2008, 645-646; Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 80).

By the end of 2002, the goal of securing Slovakia’s catchup was more or less accomplished (Dangerfield 2008, 647). However, the final stages of the EU accession process were marked by competition rather than cooperation of the four countries, which hoped that individual, bilateral bargaining would bring them pre-accession advantages (Cottey 2009, 14; Dangerfield 2009, 1737).³⁶ Moreover, the V4 countries did not want the Visegrad Group to be perceived as an alternative to full integration into the EU and NATO (Cottey 2009, 14). As a consequence, the political relations and the solidarity and trust between the four Visegrad states eroded significantly (Törö et al. 2014, 368).³⁷

After EU Accession (after 2004)

In 2004, Slovakia joined NATO and all four countries became members of the EU. This triggered a debate about whether the Visegrad Group had a future after the completion of EU accession negotiations (Dangerfield 2009, 1737). Since the “raison d’être” of the group, namely the Euro-Atlantic membership, was successfully achieved, numerous observers predicted a “clinical death” of the initiative (The Economist 2005).³⁸ To dispel such views, the Prime Ministers of the four countries met on 12 May 2004 in Kroměříž to discuss their

³⁶ This kind of rivalry was evident especially during the so-called “race of negotiators” at the EU summit held in Copenhagen on December 13, 2002 (Bukalska and Bocian 2003, 17).

³⁷ The year 2002 appeared to be particularly problematic for the Visegrad Group. In February 2002, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held a speech at the European Parliament meeting, where he suggested that the Beneš decrees were incompatible with EU laws and should therefore be annulled before the Czech Republic would enter the EU (Bukalska and Bocian 2003, 17; Leška 2003, 12; Strážay 2005, 55-56). In protest to his remarks, the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland refused to take part in a Visegrad Four meeting held in Budapest later that year (Veselý 2013, 34).

³⁸ For more on this topic, see, for example, Dangerfield (2008); Duleba and Strážay (2006); Fawn (2013); Kořan (2012); Marušiak (2013c); A. Schmidt (2016a); Sobják (2012) & Žantovský (2006).

future relations (interview 1C). The lessons learned during the pre-accession period helped them to determine further direction of the Visegrad cooperation in the post-accession period (Dangerfield 2008, 657; Törö et al. 2014, 370).

In the adopted Kroměříž Declaration, the four countries asserted their firm intentions to continue developing the Visegrad cooperation and strengthening the identity of the Central European region (Visegrad Group 2004). In the statement attached to the declaration, they specified four concrete dimensions of cooperation: cooperation within the V4 area itself (such as Schengen cooperation and fight against terrorism, organized crime, and illegal migration), cooperation within the EU, cooperation with other partners (including individual countries as well as organizations with experience of sub-regional cooperation within the EU), and cooperation within NATO and other international organizations (Visegrad Group 2004). However, as opposed to the key objectives set in the 1991 Visegrad Declaration, no strategic priorities were defined in 2004 (Törö et al. 2014, 370). The Kroměříž Declaration has therefore been viewed as a political document confirming the interest of the involved countries to maintain consultation and coordination of their common interests rather than a landmark decision and departure from what was already in place (Dangerfield 2008, 651).

Contrary to the skeptical assumptions that the group would lose its purpose, the number of meetings at especially ministerial levels has risen sharply after the 2004 enlargement of the EU (Kořan 2012, 207; Růžička and Kořan 2006, 28). Personal networks, which emerged between the ministries and other authorities in the four countries, have developed over many years of regular meetings and serve as an anchor of stability of the Visegrad cooperation (Lucas 2014). However, at higher political levels, tensions generated by competitive attitudes and national ambitions have not fully disappeared, and the Visegrad Group has experienced numerous breakdowns and setbacks, which have repeatedly raised doubts about the likelihood of the group's survival (A. Schmidt 2016a). The following paragraphs look into the main obstacles that have constrained a closer cooperation of the V4 states in recent years.

The developments in Ukraine since the Euromaidan revolution in 2013 have demonstrated that Russia remains the “greatest common divisor” for the Visegrad Group (A. Rácz 2012, 2014b). Although all four countries condemned the annexation of Crimea and the Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine, they were unable to take a unified, coherent position regarding sanctioning Russia (A. Rácz 2014a; Šuplata et al. 2015). The individual policies of the

Visegrad countries and their attitudes toward Russia are influenced by their different geopolitical concerns, trade relations with and energy dependence on Moscow, as well as normative differences (J. Kiss 2015; Onderco 2014, 66; A. Rácz 2015).³⁹ Finally, the domestic political situation of the Visegrad countries and the pro- or anti-Russian orientation of the respective governments must also be taken into account (V. Bilčík and Strážay 2006; A. Rácz 2014a, 6; Šuplata et al. 2015).

Although there are many similarities between the four Central European states regarding their common historical experience of occupation by the Soviet Union after World War II and four decades of isolation from the West, the varying perceptions of the security environment stem largely from a distinct communist past and different internal situations (Samson 2011, 14; Stratfor 2014). Due to its very “exposed” position regarding potential Russian revisionist advances, Poland is more preoccupied with the United States’ diminishing military presence in Europe and the growing Russian assertiveness than its three partners (CEPA 2011, 27; Dangerfield 2012, 970; Šuplata et al. 2015, 1).

Different threat perceptions, reinforced by structural factors such as the size of the countries and their populations as well as their resources and capabilities, affect the cooperation among the V4 countries (Gehring and Kirchner 2012). Due to its disproportionate size among the Visegrad countries, its large economy and its capabilities, Poland is often alleged to have the ambition of assuming the regional leadership of Central Europe. However, the remaining Visegrad countries seem not willing to accept these aspirations of Poland (Bukalska and Bocian 2003, 27; Kugiel 2012, 115; Samson 2011, 14). As a consequence of the existing imbalance between Poland and its three V4 partners, some authors put forward that Poland might want to act independently or seek cooperation outside the Visegrad Group, for example with the Baltic and Nordic countries, which share similar geopolitical priorities, or within the

³⁹ Regarding the normative differences between the four Visegrad countries, Poland and, to a lesser extent, the Czech Republic have traditionally demonstrated very strong transatlantic commitment, which is reflected in their Russia-critical postures (Hamberger 2011). In addition, the Czech Republic’s long-lasting focus on human rights in foreign policy also made them critical of Russia in the past (A. Rácz 2014a, 5). On the other hand, Slovakia and Hungary have favored a more pragmatic approach toward Russia over normative considerations and emphasized the economic aspects of cooperation with Russia (Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 95; J. Kiss 2015, 344; Lucas 2014). This stance is mainly driven by their energy dependence on Russian oil and gas supplies (Binhack and Tichý 2012; Hirman 2009; Wyciszkiewicz 2009). Among the Visegrad countries, Poland has the closest trade relations with Russia. However, the geopolitical concerns are of even greater importance to Poland than economic considerations and, in spite of potential economic losses, Poland has assumed the toughest position on Russia (A. Rácz 2014a, 3).

Weimar Triangle with Germany and France (CEPA 2011, 32; Dangerfield 2009, 1748; Stratfor 2014). Whether there is too much or too little ambition on the part of Poland, both seem to have a destabilizing effect on the internal relations of the V4 (Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 90; Vykoukal 2006, 25).

Autonomous cooperation of the Visegrad countries with third parties or “go-it-alone” policies are not a new phenomenon (CEPA 2011, 32). As already mentioned, during the accession process to NATO and the EU, the V4 governments often preferred to act and negotiate individually in order to gain advantages (Knutelská 2011, 2; Samson 2011, 39; Vykoukal 2006, 23).⁴⁰ Similarly, the four partners continue to compete against each other for investments, such as in the automotive sector (interview 2N). The often-cited problem of the Visegrad Group is that it was established as a goal-oriented cooperation and, hence, the willingness of its members to cooperate is driven by different motives and national interests (Lang 2006, 12; Madej 2013, 6; Vykoukal 2006, 22). When the four partner states are unable to reach a consensus or when it appears more beneficial, they tend toward solitary approaches (V. Bilčík and Strážay 2006; Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 87). A consensus of the V4 therefore often seems to be limited to the lowest common denominator (interview 1C; Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 88).

As a matter of fact, this is how the Visegrad Group functioned for some time. The four partner states learned “the art to disagree” and strived to adopt a more proactive and consistent approach toward promoting the goals of their cooperation declared in the wake of their accession to the EU. These included, on the one hand, the support for the Eastern Dimension of the ENP as well as for the Western Balkan states’ integration efforts and, on the other hand, the common focus on energy security (Kořan 2011). Besides introducing the practice of holding regular consultations ahead of Council meetings since 2009, the exchange has taken place mainly at lower levels of government. Notably, this gradually evolving network of contacts at the working levels has since constituted an important pillar of regional cooperation in Central Europe. Another learning experience came in the form of the first Czech, Hungarian, and Polish EU presidencies (in 2009, 2011, and 2011 respectively) and

⁴⁰ For example, Václav Klaus saw the Czech Republic as the pioneer of economic transformation and highlighted Czech distinctiveness from other post-communist countries. As a consequence, he was more than once criticized by other Visegrad states for putting his country’s aims ahead of the common interest (Fawn 2003b; A. Schmidt 2016a).

the related sense of serving as agenda setters and policy shapers rather than policy takers of EU policies (Nič 2016).

The interviewed experts put forward that a major breakthrough in the cooperation came with the migrant and refugee crisis, which united and revitalized the Visegrad Group (interviews 1B, 2M, 2X & 4K). The V4 has certainly gained bigger awareness, yet the external perceptions of the group have grown mostly negative. There have even been individual attempts to break away from this negative image, mainly by Slovakia and, to some extent, the Czech Republic. The two countries have tried to distance themselves from the group and the Eurosceptical governments in Hungary and Poland, leading many observers to label the new constellation as “V2+2” instead of “V4” (interviews 1N, 2C, 2Q, 3J, 4E & 4K).

2.1.3 Current Relations among the Visegrad Group Members

Historically, relations in Central Europe were affected by mutual rivalries, border disputes, ethnic tensions, conflicts over national minorities, and other animosities (Jeszenszky 2007; Loth and Paun 2014). However, the establishment of the Visegrad Group after the downfall of communism has helped overcome historical burdens and grievances of the past and contributed to the development of amicable relations (interviews 2G & 2P). It has strengthened political, economic, and cultural bonds between the four partner countries and fostered their mutual friendship, solidarity, and lasting regional stability. Nevertheless, the relations between the individual Visegrad partners continue to have different quality, as the following simplified summary of the bilateral constellations shows.

Czech-Slovak relations have been good regardless of political parties in power. According to the interviewed experts from both countries, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic are now closer partners than under the previous regimes when they were living in one state (interviews 1G, 4E & 4K).

Cooperation between **Slovakia and Poland** is marginal but, seen politically, their bilateral relations are problem-free and friendly (interviews 4J & 4K).

Hungarian-Czech relations used to be very problematic. After the First World War, the Czechs were sympathizers of the Little Entente, which was an alliance formed with the purpose of coordinating a common defense against Hungarian domination in the Danube

River basin and preventing the Habsburgs from returning to power. After the Second World War and the Beneš decrees, which caused retribution against the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia, Czechs were again perceived by Hungarians as a kind of “counterpoint” (interview 2P). Throughout the socialist period, perceptions of Czechs have changed and become less negative, and events such as the Prague Spring had a positive echo in Hungary (interview 2H).

Relations between **Hungary and Slovakia** used to be very tense. The Slovak identity developed against Hungarians, who were perceived as the greatest oppressors. Moreover, in the 1990s and 2000s, Hungary accused Slovakia of violating the rights of the significant Hungarian minority living in Slovak territory close to the Hungarian border (interviews 2H & 2P). However, under the governments of Robert Fico and Viktor Orbán, bilateral relations improved and have been based mainly on pragmatic considerations (interviews 2Q & 4E).

The affinity between **Poland and Hungary** in recent years has been focused on domestic politics, but also historically, Hungarians and Poles had traditionally strong relations (interviews 2K, 2N & 2Q). Both Polish and Hungarian politicians often tend to portray their nations as the historical “defenders” of the European civilization against the “barbarian East” (interview 2H). Reportedly, good relations between the two countries date back to the Middle Ages and remained sound throughout much of history. During World War II, Hungary allowed Polish troops and refugees to enter the country so that they could flee from the Nazi occupation. The precursor for the 1956 revolution in Hungary was an earlier uprising in the Polish city of Poznan (interview 2N). The Polish-Hungarian link has grown stronger in recent years against the background of the Article 7 TEU procedures launched against them.⁴¹ However, there have also been some internal frictions between Poland and Hungary with regard to the conflict in Ukraine and the countries’ approach to Russia (interview 2U).

Although several historical events, such as Poland’s participation in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, caused tensions between the two neighbors, **Polish-**

⁴¹ In line with Article 7(1) TEU, one third of the Member States, the European Parliament, or the European Commission can refer cases to the Council where they observe a “clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of the values referred to in Article 2,” which are “values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities” (European Union 2009b). The Article 7 procedure was initiated by the European Commission against Poland over its reforms of the judiciary in December 2017 and against Hungary over a breach of the EU’s founding values in September 2018.

Czech relations have been respectful and amicable in the last decades. The two countries especially like to remember the cooperation of the Czechoslovak and Polish underground movements throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Dostál 2010, 2017).

2.2 Mechanisms and Key Areas of the Visegrad Cooperation

The Visegrad Group can be best described as a sub-regional partnership of four states (three small or middle-sized—the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia—and one large—Poland), whose main purpose is the formation and promotion of coordinated positions in various policy fields. However, contrary to other regional groupings such as Benelux or the Nordic Council, the Visegrad cooperation is neither founded on any legally binding treaty nor has it a permanent council or secretariat (Törö et al. 2014, 365).⁴² Apart from the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) established in 2000, which represents the sole permanent institution of the Visegrad Group, the level of institutionalization is very low (IVF 2016).

Nonetheless, procedures for cooperation and regular interactions of the four states have developed over more than 25 years of existence of the Visegrad Group (Wołek 2013, 88). The structure includes regular high-level meetings of V4 presidents as well as meetings on lower intergovernmental levels, including two regular meetings per year of heads of government and of foreign ministers, meetings of other ministers, meetings of V4 parliamentary representatives, and ministerial cooperation at expert level (interviews 1C & 4D).⁴³ In addition, Visegrad leaders hold meetings and coordinate their positions ahead of key EU summits (CEPA 2011, 39; Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 82). Within the EU institutional structures, such as the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), the Political and Security Committee (PSC), and the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), the V4 has developed a common practice of drafting joint position papers with the aim of advancing their national interests and shaping the final decisions (interview 1C).⁴⁴

⁴² Géza Jeszenszky, who was the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs when the V4 was established, recalls that, especially in its early phase, Visegrad was an alliance *in pectore* (“in our hearts”) based on “the personal affinity among the leaders of the countries involved, and the common purposes that they championed” (Jeszenszky 2006).

⁴³ To strengthen the coordination at the level of officials, the Visegrad states decided to establish the position of national V4 coordinators, who are usually at the same time directors of Central European departments at the respective Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Dubský and Kočí 2020; interview 1C).

⁴⁴ András Rácz and others call this practice of consulting each other on various policy issues the “Visegrad socialization” (A. Rácz 2014c).

The agenda for discussion and coordination is set and managed by the member state holding the Visegrad Group Presidency, which rotates on an annual basis (Bukalska and Bocian 2003, 27; Törö et al. 2014, 368). The presiding country coordinates both the external and internal dimensions of the Visegrad Group cooperation, preparing a presidency program at the beginning and issuing an annual presidency assessment report at the end of its mandate (Fawn 2013, 343; Gehring and Kirchner 2012, 81).

The distinct character of the Visegrad formation has led to many discussions about its functioning (Törö et al. 2014). While some observers have praised the flexible nature of the V4, claiming that this is what stands behind its dynamism and longevity, others dubbed it as the greatest weakness of the group every time the four countries were unable to come to a mutual agreement (Bukalska and Bocian 2003, 27-28; Fawn 2008, 684). Looking at the Visegrad Group in a realistic, not maximalist, manner, it is important to stress that the group has not been established with the aim to always adopt common positions, but rather to enable its members to cooperate when their interests are concurrent (see, e.g., Bukalska and Bocian 2003, 18; Dangerfield 2008, 657; Hamberger 2006, 92; Král 2003). As a consequence, since the Visegrad countries are not formally obliged to reach consensus on every issue, the V4 should not be expected to always act as a compact block inside the EU (Dangerfield 2008, 652-661; Törö et al. 2014, 391). Where agreement is lacking and in cases when a mutual cooperation does not appear beneficial, the countries tend to follow their national interests individually; yet it does not mean an end to the Visegrad cooperation (Fawn 2008, 684; Kořan 2012, 206). When significantly different positions or even conflicts occur, they are pushed aside and the Visegrad states focus on issues where they can find a common ground (interviews 2K, 4D & 4M).

In summary, the interviewed experts from all four Visegrad countries are in agreement that it is important to distinguish between high-level politics versus “daily business.” On the one hand, on the intergovernmental level, the V4 usually function as an ad hoc coalition within the EU, and their approach is the result of how much their domestic interests align. On the other hand, there is a noticeable continuity with regard to the rather invisible yet intensive cooperation on lower, more technical levels, including cross-border cooperation and everyday consultations.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ For more on this topic, see interviews 1B, 1C, 1D, 1F, 2C, 2G, 2K, 2Q, 3J & 4M.

Although the Visegrad Group is opposed to any expansion of its membership, it has developed close cooperation with other states in the so-called V4+ format (A. Rácz 2014c; Törö et al. 2014).⁴⁶ The traditional V4+ partners are Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Austria, but the Visegrad Group has also supported broader collaboration with the Baltic states and the Balkans (Dostál 2016, 7; Růžička and Kořan 2006, 34). The ad hoc V4+ format has further enabled the Visegrad states to cooperate with political and economic partners from further afar, such as Japan. It has become an established practice that Visegrad Prime Ministers and ministers invite guests to their meetings (interview 1C).

The Visegrad countries have developed cooperation in a wide array of areas and policies. The most common response given by the interviewed experts to the question in which policy area(s) the V4 have been able to successfully coordinate their activities and potentially assume an agenda setting role within the EU was the Visegrad Group's advocacy for further enlargement of the EU toward Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.⁴⁷ Not always, but often enough, the Visegrad states have been able to formulate joint positions on EU cohesion policy, energy policy, and security and defense cooperation. In addition, the Visegrad Four have been working together on a number of regional topics, such as infrastructure interconnection, double food quality and consumer protection, and cooperation in science, innovation, and research.⁴⁸ Finally, a few experts mentioned the refugee and migrant crisis as an event during which the Visegrad states shared mutual stances in negotiations within EU institutions but also agreed that migration is not an issue that the V4 coordinate on a daily basis (interviews 2K & 4E). The Visegrad countries' positions on the potential further enlargement of the EU and their migration policies will be covered in great detail in the two case studies in the empirical part of this study. Further insights on the V4 states' cooperation in other policy fields can be found in Appendix A.

Before proceeding with the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study, the remainder of this chapter synthesizes the current state of research on the Visegrad cooperation, identifies gaps and shortcomings in the existing literature, and demonstrates the key contributions of the present study to advancing knowledge on the V4.

⁴⁶ According to the interviewed experts, the worry has been that additional members might potentially destabilize the well-functioning cooperation (see, e.g., interview 2G).

⁴⁷ See interviews 1A, 1B, 1C, 1O, 2G, 2I, 3K, 4D, 4E & 4J.

⁴⁸ See interviews 1A, 1F, 1P, 2L, 2Q & 4J.

2.3 State of Research on the Visegrad Cooperation

This overview of the current state of research on the Visegrad cooperation draws in part on the bibliography published by the IVF to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Group in 2011 and complements it with additional works published in the Visegrad region and beyond, which mainly cover the period post-2011.⁴⁹ The synopsis focuses mostly on edited volumes, monographs, book chapters, journal articles, reports, and policy papers.⁵⁰ The purpose of this literature review is not to be exhaustive but to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the principal research concerning the Visegrad cooperation. It encompasses only materials devoted to the V4 Group as a whole and not to its individual members.⁵¹ In terms of structure, this chapter consists of a chronological and a thematic literature review followed by a discussion of the research gaps that this study seeks to fill.

2.3.1 *The History of Studying Visegrad*

In the 1980s, discussions on the return of “Central Europe,” both as a theoretical concept and a political idea, started to gain momentum in the academic community. Titles such as “The Tragedy of Central Europe” (Kundera 1984), “Does Central Europe Exist?” (Garton Ash 1986), and “In Search of Central Europe” (Schopflin and Wood 1989) suggest that it was not an easy undertaking for scholars to define Central Europe against the background of the East-West dichotomy. With the end of the Cold War and the establishment of the Visegrad cooperation in 1991, V4-specific publications started to emerge. Nevertheless, throughout the 1990s, the Visegrad Group continued to be discussed mainly within the broader literature on Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., Àgh 1998; Cottey 1999a; Henderson 1999a).⁵²

⁴⁹ Appendix B contains a bibliography of the most relevant works on the Visegrad cooperation.

⁵⁰ Only a few carefully selected newspaper contributions published by experts on the Visegrad region, which provided insightful perspectives on the subject topic, were included in this literature review.

⁵¹ Specific literature dealing with individual Visegrad states’ national identities, migration policies, and positions on further enlargement of the EU is included in the empirical section of this study.

⁵² It is not the purpose of the present literature review to explore all sources relating to Central Europe, because their scope cannot always be equated with the four countries that compose the Visegrad Group and are the primary target of this study. Nevertheless, it should be noted that despite the lack of consensus regarding the definition and demarcation of “Central Europe”—or perhaps precisely because of it—the literature on Central Europe is quite abundant. Various chapters of the present study refer to contributions reflecting the various notions and definitions of Central Europe, its historical origins, geographical delineation, and political understanding, as well as its complex relationships with the East and the West. The academic debate about Central Europe, which was reinvigorated in the 1980s, continued throughout the 1990s (Àgh 1998; Garton Ash 1999; Henderson 1999a; Hroch 2000; Lord 2000; Neumann 2000; Okey 1992), the 2000s (Fawn 2010; Gerhardt 2008; Kořan 2010a; Vykoukal 2006), the 2010s (Antonyuk 2018; Baranov 2018; Eberle 2018; Šabič and Drulák 2012b; Zenderowski and Janák 2018), and is expected to carry on also in the 2020s and beyond.

One key topic throughout the 1990s was the V4 security and defense cooperation in the wake of the disintegration of the USSR, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and its implications for Central European security. Researchers examined the evolution of the Visegrad states' national security policies as well as the V4 relations with security institutions such as NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Cotter 1999b; Dunay 1994; Kamiński and Kościuk 1993; Matějka 1997; Nagy 1999; Novotný 1999). Apart from regional cooperation in the security and defense sector, contributions in the 1990s focused mainly on the topics of democratic transition and consolidation, socio-economic transformation, and the pre-accession process (Bunce 1997; Henderson 1999a; Poláčková 1994; Shumaker 1993). In the late 1990s, while some authors continued to study the historical and intellectual roots of cooperation in post-communist Central Europe, others had already started to question the viability of the Visegrad Group against the background of its loose structures and internal competition (The Economist 1999; Inotai 1995; Rhodes 1998, 1999).

Similarly, in the years immediately preceding the Visegrad countries' accession to the EU, most authors reflected on the historic evolution of the Visegrad Group, including its ups and downs, and discussed the prospects of this regional cooperation format in an expanded EU (Brusis 2002; Bukalska and Bocian 2003; Dangerfield 2001; Fawn 2001; Král 2003; Leška 2003; Lukáč 2001; Rhodes 2003).⁵³ Concretely, they questioned whether the V4 was capable of a successful transition from pre-accession to post-accession cooperation and speculated what its future purpose should be. This discussion continued in the years following the Visegrad states' successful accession to the EU, with no clear consensus. Some prognoses were outright pessimistic and did not foresee a future for the V4 after it had accomplished its goal of Euro-Atlantic integration (The Economist 2005; Pehe 2004, 2006), others were ambiguous in their assessment of the further continuation of the V4 within the framework of the EU (V. Bilčík and Strážay 2006; Duleba and Strážay 2006; Gniazdowski 2005; Lang 2004; Plíšek 2004), and still others were cautiously optimistic, outlining new possibilities for the Visegrad cooperation on both intra-regional affairs as well as within the broader EU context (Dangerfield 2008; Plíšek 2004; Růžička and Kořan 2006). One of the seminal, most informative works in this regard was the edited volume by Andrzej Jagodziński entitled *The*

⁵³ The rising interest in the Visegrad formation was also reflected in the publication of special issues devoted to the topic of Visegrad, including the 2002/11 issue of the journal *Medzinárodné otázky* titled "Foreign Policy of Visegrad Countries" (e.g., Baňacká 2002; Deubner 2002; Rusnák 2002; P. Weiss 2002) and the 2003 issue of the journal *Integrace* (e.g., Bukalska 2003; Novák 2003; O. Pešek 2003; Šlosarčík 2003).

Visegrad Group – A Central European Constellation published on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Visegrad Group. It collected contributions by leading Visegrad politicians, diplomats, and political scientists, who shared their thoughts, opinions, and memories related to the creation and functioning of the Visegrad Group and evaluated the prospects for the group's future existence (see, e.g., Dienstbier 2006; Jeszenszky 2006; Kwaśniewski 2006; Mazowiecki 2006; Vašáryová 2006; Vondra 2006b; Žantovský 2006).⁵⁴

In 2011, the Visegrad Group celebrated 20 years of its existence, which once again sparked a lively debate about its viability.⁵⁵ The fact that it had managed to exist uninterruptedly for two decades did not stop some authors from doubting the ability of the V4 to serve as an effective tool for the promotion of regional interests vis-à-vis the EU and suggesting the replacement of the Visegrad Group by alternative arrangements of regional cooperation (Lucas 2012; Pehe 2011). The skeptics pointed to the group's asymmetry, be it in terms of size (Poland versus its three smaller partners) or differing perspectives on European integration (Slovakia's decision to join the Eurozone, Czech Republic's inclination toward Eurosceptic attitudes, Hungary's emphasis on sovereignty, and Poland's aspirations to regional leadership). They predicted that the Visegrad Group would ultimately face disintegration or fall into insignificance.

Nevertheless, the majority of authors came to the conclusion that, over the two decades of its existence, Visegrad had developed into a meaningful regional entity that had contributed to the stability and prosperity of the Central European region (Fawn 2013; Gostyńska and Parkes 2012; Kavický 2012; Knutelská 2011; Kořan 2011, 2012; Marušiák 2013c; Strážay 2014). While they also recognized the differences among the V4 members and acknowledged that cooperation during the first ten years of EU membership had not always been smooth, they claimed that the potential of the Visegrad cooperation had not diminished but increased (Gehring and Kirchner 2012; Gostyńska and Parkes 2012; Strážay 2011b). To support their case, they highlighted both internal and external accomplishments of the Visegrad Group,

⁵⁴ See also the review article "Visegrad: The Study and the Celebration" published by Rick Fawn, who described the volume as a landmark publication that "contains a range of perspectives and even controversies" (Fawn 2008).

⁵⁵ The online journal *Mezinárodní politika* published by the Institute of International Relations Prague devoted its 03/2011 issue to the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Group's existence. The issue, titled "Visegrad: Historic and Contemporary" (Visegrád: Historický i Současný), gathered contributions from a great variety of authors who shared their views on the meaningfulness and sustainability of the Visegrad cooperation (Ehl 2011; Kořan 2011; Pehe 2011; Strážay 2011a).

such as the introduction of regular consultations ahead of European Council meetings and the creation of the Eastern Partnership in 2009 (Fawn 2013; Strážay 2011a; Walsch 2014).

At the beginning of the 2010s, the debate revolved mainly around the pros and cons of the low degree of V4 institutionalization. More and more voices, mainly from within the Visegrad region, started to call out the flexible nature of the cooperation as its greatest asset (Marušiak 2013c; A. Rácz 2014c; Törö et al. 2014). The deliberate focus on policy areas with shared interests, while circumventing more controversial issues, coupled with the possibility of holding ad hoc meetings and the ability to flexibly adapt to changing circumstances, were presented as major advantages of the Visegrad cooperation. Some authors also praised the development of a dense network of contacts at the working, administrative, and departmental levels, which were seen as an essential ingredient for the longevity of the cooperation (Kořan 2010b, 2011). By contrast, other scholars believed that the non-institutionalized structure of the Visegrad Group could prove problematic, making the cooperation dependent on individual Visegrad leaders in power and rendering it vulnerable to changes in government as well as bilateral tensions (Gehring and Kirchner 2012; Knutelská 2011).

Overall, it can be concluded that, until 2014/2015, the academic interest in the Visegrad Group, its specific features and internal functioning, and its role in the EU was only moderate. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that the year 2015 represented a turning point in many ways. The Visegrad states' reaction to the refugee and migrant crisis, especially their opposition to mandatory EU quotas for the redistribution of asylum seekers and the prevalence of anti-immigrant sentiments in the region, caused shock across Europe and brought about an "explosion" of news articles, commentaries, and opinion pieces on the V4. International newspapers and magazines, such as the Economist, the Guardian, or the Financial Times, which had hitherto been rarely concerned with the Visegrad Group, published highly critical pieces on the emergence of the V4 as an opposition bloc within the EU (e.g., Buckley and Foy 2016; The Economist 2016; Rankin 2016). The German media were particularly concerned with the Visegrad states' resistance to the EU course on migration and their reluctance to act in solidarity (e.g., Heinlein 2016; Lang 2015; Meier and Scheffer 2016; Zeit Online 2016; H.-J. Schmidt 2016b). In fact, the journal *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APuZ)* dedicated its 2015/47–48 edition to the topic of Visegrad and the

question why the once-pioneers of transformation processes turned into Europe's *enfants terrible* (E. Inotai 2015; H.-J. Schmidt 2015; Segert 2015; Segeš Frelak 2015).

The reactions from within the region were less clear-cut. Many experts were also quite critical, lamenting that “the leading political figures in Central Europe failed to internalize the basic principles of European integration” (Kořan 2015) and that the V4 were “turning heads in Europe’s refugee crisis” (Zalán 2016b). Others took a more moderate tone, yet still arguing that the V4 should have pursued a more constructive approach (Hokovský 2016; Markovic 2015). Overall, the European refugee and migrant crisis produced an abundance of articles trying to decipher the reasons behind the Visegrad’s controversial stand on migration (Bauerová 2018a; Bonansinga 2016; Pachocka 2016; Podgórzan ka 2017; Segeš Frelak 2017b).

The refugee and migrant crisis from mid-2015 without doubt got the four countries more media coverage than at any other time of the Visegrad Group’s existence. Yet the alleged lack of solidarity and commitment to burden sharing earned the V4 the reputation of a troublemaker and raised questions about their “rightful belonging” to Europe, as elucidated in several studies and expert opinion pieces (Kořan 2015; Michelot 2015; Nič 2016; Segert 2015). In addition, numerous scholars concerned themselves with the prospects of the Visegrad cooperation in the changing European landscape against the background of the group’s transformed image as well as other developments such as Brexit (Fawn 2018; Foy and Byrne 2016; Janulewicz and Merheim-Eyre 2017; J. Kiss 2015; Lang 2016; Túry 2015).

The Visegrad states’ controversial positions in the debate about a solidarity-based refugee and asylum policy of the EU also overshadowed the celebratory mood around the Visegrad Group’s establishment a quarter century ago. A report prepared by an “independent panel of eminent personalities” from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia on the occasion of the 25th anniversary strived to reverse the narrative of the Visegrad Group being the EU’s “troublemaker” and formulate a future positive role of the V4 in European affairs:

“The 25th anniversary of Visegrad comes as the European Union is confronted with an unprecedented set of political, economic and security crises. The sustainability of European integration and Euro-Atlantic security - the very frameworks that have made our cooperation possible - is now at risk. Visegrad is called upon to assume greater responsibility for the future of Europe as a whole. Its founding objective of a unified and peaceful continent remains as pertinent as it did 25 years ago” (MFA of the Czech Republic 2016a).

Yet, despite these public declarations, experts have continued to contemplate and discuss whether Visegrad would remain a protest group acting as a counterbalance to the core EU or whether it would try to repair its damaged image and prevent the emergence of a new “East-West divide” (A. Schmidt 2016a; Walsch 2018). These analyses have been accompanied by debates about the emergence of an “illiberal turn” in Central Europe, including the attempted concentration of power, corrosion of democratic institutions, and political control over public media (Bustikova and Guasti 2018; Greskovits 2015; Kazharski 2020). Moreover, recent studies have been concerned with allegedly mounting divisions within the group with regard to the Visegrad states’ respective European policies. Many experts and observers have claimed that, while Budapest and Warsaw have embarked on a more confrontational course, waging a (conservative) “cultural counter-revolution” against the (liberal) EU institutions, Bratislava and Prague have tried to pursue a more moderate and pragmatic pro-European line (Ágh 2016b; Bayer 2017; Foy and Byrne 2016; Milo and Hajdu 2018; Nič 2016; Végh 2018a).

The overview of existing sources indicates that the Visegrad Group is no longer an unknown phenomenon but that it also resonates beyond the Central European region. However, looking at the types of sources, it becomes clear that the number of books and peer-reviewed journal articles is significantly outweighed by the amount of news articles, opinion pieces, and policy papers.⁵⁶ Moreover, most studies, reports, policy briefs, discussion papers, and scientific essays have been published by research and policy institutes from the region, such as GLOBSEC, the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (RC SFP), and the Central European Policy Institute in Bratislava; the Institute of International Relations (IIR), the Association for International Affairs (AMO), and EUROPEUM – Institute for European Policy in Prague; the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) and the Polish Institute of

⁵⁶ Among (peer-reviewed) journals covering the Visegrad cooperation are, for example, *Central Europe, Politics in Central Europe, East European Politics and Societies, Mezinárodní politika*, and *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*. The majority of them are published in one of the four Visegrad states. In this context, it is also worth mentioning the bi-annual magazine *Visegrad Insight*, which describes itself as “an analysis and opinion journal led by accomplished editors from the Visegrád Group countries” that strives to “provide a platform for high profile debate on the perspectives and challenges for cooperation of the Central European governments, business and communities” (Visegrad Insight 2020). In addition, articles on Visegrad sometimes appear in journals with a wider geographical scope, usually covering the broader communist and post-communist world (e.g., *Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Central and Eastern European Review, Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, New Perspectives: Interdisciplinary Journal of Central & East European Politics and International Relations*, and *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*). These journals usually contain analyses of the individual Visegrad states’ policies, but, since 2015, have also increasingly covered topics related to the Visegrad Group as a single entity.

International Affairs (PISM) in Warsaw; and the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy (CEID) and the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (IFAT) in Budapest.⁵⁷

In contrast to the growing number of studies, policy papers, and online articles on Visegrad-related topics, books and edited volumes that have been published about the Visegrad Group can be, figuratively speaking, counted on the fingers of one hand, especially those written in English.⁵⁸ The Visegrad cooperation, but primarily the situation of the individual Visegrad countries, has often been explored within monographies and edited volumes devoted to the broader region of Central and Eastern Europe (Àgh 1998; Cabada 2008; Cottey 1995, 1999a; Henderson 1999a; Lord 2000; Šabič and Drulák 2012c; Wolchik and Curry 2015). Only a few monographs and anthologies carry “Visegrad” in their name and serve as an important source of information for scholars interested in this particular regional grouping (Balazs and Griessler 2020; Jagodziński 2006; Marušiak 2013a; Šťastný 2002; Túry 2015).⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Most of these institutes and think-tanks are members of the network “Think Visegrad” (Think Visegrad 2020). Moreover, in many cases, the publications are outcomes of research projects supported by the IVF.

⁵⁸ Only a moderate number of books on the Visegrad cooperation have been published in the Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, or Polish languages. One such example is the historical monograph *Visegrád 1335* by György Rác, which describes the course of the meeting of the Czech, Hungarian, and Polish kings in the Hungarian town of Visegrad in 1335, where they formed an anti-Habsburg alliance (G. Rác 2009). Another example is the edited volume *Visegrád: možnosti a meze střeoevropské spolupráce*, which, drawing on historical analysis and comparison with other regions, explores possibilities and limits of Central European cooperation (Vykoukal 2003). In two volumes published by Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia, Svetozár Krno and his co-authors compare political developments in the V4 states before and after their accession to the EU and NATO (Krno 2004, 2006). In a book *Visegrádská skupina a její vývoj v letech 1991-2004*, Libor Lukášek evaluates the development of the Visegrad Group against the background of domestic political developments in the individual member states (Lukášek 2011).

⁵⁹ One such publication is the book *Visegrad Countries in an Enlarged Trans-Atlantic Community* edited by Marek Šťastný, in which the authors attempted to define the region of Central Europe, decipher its westward orientation, and assess the current and future position of the V4 in the Euro-Atlantic structures (Šťastný 2002). Another notable contribution to the research on the origins of the Visegrad cooperation is the previously mentioned book published by the IVF on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the V4’s existence titled *The Visegrad Group - A Central European Constellation* (Jagodziński 2006). In 2013, Juraj Marušiak from the Slovak Academy of Sciences gathered an interdisciplinary team of historians, political scientists, economists, sociologists, and geographers, who took stock of the internal cohesion of the Visegrad Group, including the quality of mutual relations of the member countries and the prospects for the construction of a shared regional identity. The declared intention of the volume *Internal Cohesion of the Visegrad Group* was to determine the sustainability of this regional cooperation structure and its potential to serve as a source of destabilization in the EU (Marušiak 2013a). A similar research project conducted under the auspices of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2015, which was also supported by the IVF and brought together contributors from all four Visegrad countries, resulted in the book *Prospects of the Visegrad Cooperation – Identifying Converging and Diverging Factors* (Túry 2015). The authors involved in the project investigated internal and external challenges in the political, economic, and security realms that could influence the future development of the EU and therefore also the future of the Visegrad cooperation. In 2020, Adam Bence Balazs and Christina Griessler co-edited a book titled *The Visegrad Four and the Western Balkans: Framing Regional Identities*, which contains case studies examining comparable characteristics of both regions as well as the interplay between the sense of regional belonging and the existence of distinct national identities (Balazs and Griessler 2020).

Before proceeding with the next section, which delves into the thematic focus of the existing literature on Visegrad, two additional important sources must be highlighted. The first is the yearbooks of Czech, Polish, Slovak, and Hungarian foreign policy, which usually contain sections specifically dedicated to the Visegrad cooperation.⁶⁰ The second is the presidency programs of the Visegrad Group, which are published annually and outline the presidency's objectives, priorities, and activities to be pursued in internal and foreign affairs (for an overview of all presidency programs, see Visegrad Group 2020).

2.3.2 Thematic Focus Areas

As illustrated above, existing research on the Visegrad Group has so far focused on two broad topic areas: the *internal*, concerned with its origins, evolution, and prospects for further cooperation, and the *external*, focused on its foreign policy. With regards to the internal view, a great number of studies have inspected the historical determinants of the Visegrad cooperation and explored sources of its internal cohesion as well as tensions. Such works have appeared mainly in the form of recollections by former dissidents turned politicians and diplomats from the Visegrad region (e.g., Dienstbier 2006; Jeszenszky 2006; Kwaśniewski 2006; Mazowiecki 2006; Vondra 2006b) as well as more profound analyses by historians (e.g., Gawlas 2006; Kopeček 2002; G. Rácz 2009, 2013; Veselý 2013). A substantial body of literature has also dealt with the nature and functioning of the V4 cooperation as well as the sources of its (foreign) policy making (Fawn 2013; Marton 2012; Strážay 2014)

As for the external view assessing Visegrad states' foreign policies, the main reference points have been the EU, Russia, the United States, and increasingly also China.⁶¹ Naturally, this body of literature has been dominated by analyses of the V4 states' approaches to European integration and the Visegrad Group's role in the EU (Bauerová 2018b; Dangerfield 2008; Dostál and Végh 2017; Druláková 2007; Garai 2018; Walsch 2014; Zelenická 2009). Moreover, a number of authors have concentrated on exploring which factors unite the Visegrad states in their relations vis-à-vis Russia and which drive them apart (Dangerfield 2012; A. Rácz 2012). Many such studies have emerged especially after the eruption of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict in 2014, which sparked interest in investigating the drivers behind

⁶⁰ The present study draws on yearbooks of Czech, Polish, and Slovak foreign policy published by the IIR, PISM, and RC SFPFA respectively.

⁶¹ Marton (2012) and Onderco (2014) provide general insights into Visegrad foreign policy making.

the intra-Visegrad divisions over Russia (Gniazdowski et al. 2014; Lucas 2014; Nič 2016; A. Rącz 2014a, 2015).⁶² The Visegrad countries' relationship with the United States has been another recurrent topic of interest. While some authors focused on studying the origins and evolution of Atlanticism in the Visegrad area, primarily in Poland and the Czech Republic (Hamberger 2011), others analyzed the quality of the relations under various United States administrations (Kałań 2012; Rogowska 2017; Zgut et al. 2017). The establishment of the 16+1 (now 17+1) Cooperation between China and 16 Central and Eastern European countries in 2012 has stimulated not only the development of economic and political relations between the V4 countries and China but also the academic study thereof (e.g., Liu 2016; Turcsányi 2014b; Turcsányi et al. 2014; Wojtyczka 2017). The V4-Chinese relations are usually discussed within the broader framework of the 16+1/17+1 Cooperation.⁶³ Nonetheless, a few policy papers have explicitly explored Chinese interests, intentions, and activities in the four Central European countries and probed the possibilities of the Visegrad states' engagement with China within the V4+ format (Dubravčiková et al. 2019; Jabłońska 2020; Lagazzi 2018; Turcsányi et al. 2014).

Over time, researchers have started to look more into the development of sectoral cooperation among the four countries. As mentioned above, one policy area that has attracted significant scholarly attention is the Visegrad Group cooperation in the security and defense sector. Initially, the topic raised considerable scholarly interest in the first years of the group's existence, that is, when the main aim was the quick withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Visegrad states' territories and their integration into transatlantic security structures (Cottee 1999b; Dunay 1994; Khol 2002, 2003; Lang 2000; Nagy 1999; Zięba 2002). Numerous scholars later studied the gradual intensification of the V4 defense and security cooperation, including the formation of the first joint EU Battlegroup in 2016 (Cabada and Waisová 2018; Gawron-Tabor 2015; Madej 2010, 2013; Nad' et al. 2010; Paulech and Urbanovská 2014; Pulišová 2010; Samson 2011; Ślufińska and Nitszke 2017; Střítecký 2012a, 2012b; Šuplata 2013; Törö 2011). And, finally, the most recent body of literature has been concerned with

⁶² According to most experts, the Ukraine-Russia crisis revealed considerable divisions within the Visegrad Group, with Poland favoring a strong anti-Russia stance, Hungary disputing the sanctions against Russia, and the Czech Republic and Slovakia standing somewhere in between.

⁶³ For further information on relations between China and the broader region of Central and Eastern Europe, see, for example, Auer and Stiegler (2017); Kaczmarek and Jakóbowski (2015); Karásková et al. (2018); Karásková et al. (2020); Kowalski (2017); Pavličević (2014, 2015, 2016a, 2016b); Pepe (2017); Song (2017); Szunomár et al. (2017); Turcsányi (2014a, 2015); Vetrovcova and Harnisch (2018); Vou (2020); Zeneli (2016).

the V4's defense and military adaptation following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2014 (Kucharczyk and Mesežnikov 2015; Kufčák 2015; Ślufińska and Nitszke 2017; Šuplata et al. 2015).

A number of authors have focused their attention on the economic dimension of the Visegrad cooperation, including the period of socio-economic transformation after the fall of the communist regimes in Central Europe and the Visegrad region's gradual convergence with the more developed parts of the EU (Horridge and Rokicki 2018; Keese 2020; Roháč 2017; Štiblar 2013; Szabo 2020; Tvrdoň and Skokan 2011). Other studies have explored the Visegrad countries' cross-border cooperation and mutual trade (Kawecka-Wyrzykowska 2009; Marková 2003; Richter 2009). In recent years, several analyses have also been published on the Visegrad Group's position during the negotiations of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework and the allocation of cohesion funds (Sadecki 2018; Šitera 2019; Zgut et al. 2018).

The 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas dispute sparked scholarly interest in the state of energy security of the V4 countries (Bocian 2010; Deák et al. 2013; Nosko 2010; Nosko et al. 2010; Rusnák 2010; Świątkowska 2011). Accordingly, experts from the Visegrad region have since been focused on investigating the Visegrad states' approaches to the EU energy policy as well as their energy relations with Russia. Among frequently researched topics have been the V4 states' stance toward the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and other infrastructural projects in the natural gas sector, their vulnerability with regard to their dependency on energy supplies from Russia, and their efforts aimed at enhancing regional energy security (Deák and Kulda 2015; Jirušek 2019, 2020; A. Rácz 2014b; Tichý et al. 2020). Global action against climate change and the EU's endeavors in this regard have also prompted increased research into the Visegrad states' perspectives on energy transition and climate policy (Březovská and Bokša 2020; Káposzta and Nagy 2015; Mišík and Oravcová 2021; Zapletalová and Komínková 2020).

2.3.3 Knowledge Gaps and Research Needs

The migrant and refugee crisis brought unprecedented visibility to the Visegrad Group. Paradoxically, for quite a long time, migration was a topic that enjoyed very limited attention in the Visegrad region, within both politics and academia. The Visegrad-related migration

research in the 1990s and 2000s was merely concerned with potential migration pressure faced by the EU-15 following the Union's enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe, the impact of post-accession migratory outflows on the V4 labor markets, and the Visegrad states' desire to be integrated into the Schengen zone (Black et al. 2010; Kahanec and Kureková 2011; Kaźmierkiewicz 2005; Okólski 2004). A significant turning point occurred in the wake of the increased migratory flows to Europe from 2015 onwards. Apart from the plethora of news articles thematizing the V4's reluctance, or rather resistance, to accept a common burden-sharing strategy at the EU level, only a modest number of analyses focused on a more profound understanding of the Visegrad states' response to the migrant and refugee crisis. Some of them discussed the reaction of the Visegrad Group members in the context of EU intergovernmental solidarity, explored the reasons behind their strong opposition to any form of compulsory refugee relocation, and reflected on the V4 concept of "flexible" or "effective solidarity" (Bauerová 2018a; Nyzio 2017; Pachocka 2016; Segeš Frelak 2017b; Végh 2016). Others were more interested in the societal aspects of migration, analyzing the right-wing political discourse around migration and the presence of xenophobia and Islamophobia in the region, as well as acts of solidarity with asylum seekers performed by civil society actors (Bernát 2016; Daniel 2020; Kazharski 2018; Narkowicz 2018; Simonovits 2016; Stojarová 2018). Most of these contributions treat the Visegrad Group as a coherent bloc with a unified position or point to differences in reaction without further exploring their origin. Hitherto, however, there have only been very few attempts to theoretically problematize the substantial variance in the Visegrad states' reaction to the migrant and refugee crisis and the different underlying reasons for seemingly similar responses. Therefore, this study presents a conceptual framework for understanding why the four Central European states chose to pursue a strategy of non-compliance with the EU's proposed approach and investigates the degree of each state's contestation and opposition.

In contrast to the relatively scarce amount of comparative research on migration policies of the Visegrad countries, literature discussing the V4 states' contribution to shaping the EU enlargement agenda and their assistance to the neighboring regions is quite extensive. Many researchers have investigated the Visegrad states' role in the advancement of the EU's Eastern policy, specifically their part in establishing the Eastern Partnership (Albrycht 2010; Bartha et al. 2014; Dangerfield 2009; Duleba et al. 2013; Kałan 2013; Walsch 2014). Similarly, a number of analyses have been undertaken with the aim of reviewing the V4

states' policies and actions toward the Western Balkans, including their support for democratization and transformation processes in the region (Griessler 2018; Juzová 2019; Juzová et al. 2019; Köles 2011; Orosz 2017; Strážay 2012). However, these studies tend to be more descriptive and less analytical. A notable exception and an important contribution toward understanding the V4's motivation behind their advocacy for countries aspiring for EU membership has been provided by Elsa Tulmets, who, in a special issue (2011), an edited volume (2012), and a monograph (2014), investigated the link between identity and solidarity in the foreign policies of selected Central European EU members toward post-communist regions of Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans (Tulmets 2011, 2012, 2014).

Overall, research on the Visegrad cooperation has usually taken a group perspective, omitting the differences between the individual states. Apart from Tulmets' contributions, there are no theory-driven comparative studies of the Visegrad states' positions on migration or further enlargement of the EU and the underlying motives thereof.⁶⁴ Building on the theoretical nexus between identity and solidarity, this study makes a strong case that specific responses of the involved states are a result of varying national characteristics, deeply rooted in their national identities. In this context, it must be pointed out that publications on national identities of the Visegrad states are rather rare and comparative studies of Visegrad states' identities are, apart from a few exceptions, almost non-existent.⁶⁵ One such exception is the special issue of the *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* coordinated by Rick Fawn and entitled "Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Policies" (Fawn 2003a). This issue offers a comparative perspective on national identities and ideologies of eight post-communist states, namely Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Russia, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. The collection has a broad geographical focus, covering cases from Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics, Central Asia, and Russia, but discusses only two of the four Visegrad states. Other exceptions are the previously mentioned contributions by Elsa Tulmets and her co-authors, investigating "the

⁶⁴ Markéta Votoupalová explored how solidarity was understood and constructed in the Polish and Czech discourse during the migration and refugee crisis by means of the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Votoupalová 2019). Although her analysis focuses on the discursive construction of solidarity and related argumentative strategies and is therefore relevant for the present study, it covers only two of the four Visegrad states.

⁶⁵ In an article titled "Postfunctionalism, Identity and the Visegrad Group," Mats Braun proposed a theoretical framework for analyzing regional identity-building and examined the development of a shared V4 identity (Braun 2020).

relation between identity and solidarity on the example of East Central European foreign policies” (Tulmets 2011, 6). However, Tulmets et al. concentrated only on those aspects of foreign policy identities relevant to the states’ engagement in the Eastern neighborhood.⁶⁶

Reflecting on the identified research gaps, the scientific contribution of the present study is fourfold: First, it provides a comprehensive account of the Visegrad states’ responses to the migrant and refugee crisis and their positions on further enlargement of the EU, while, contrary to most previous analyses, focusing on the motives and discursive justifications of each state’s respective actions. Second, by taking a more differentiated look at the Visegrad Group and its individual members, the analysis will illuminate differences and overlaps in the Visegrad states’ positions and determine the degree of intra-Visegrad coherence. Third, this study contains the most extensive and in-depth elaboration on national identities of the Visegrad states to date, drawing on both secondary literature and expert interviews. Finally, by developing and applying a state-of-the-art analytical framework for investigating the nexus between identity and solidarity, the study will both theoretically and empirically advance scientific knowledge on the so far largely understudied topic of solidarity of the Visegrad states.

⁶⁶ In fact, the monograph *East Central European Foreign Policy Identity in Perspective: Back to Europe and the EU’s Neighbourhood* included only three of the four Visegrad states (Tulmets 2014). The special issue covered the four Visegrad countries and included also other Central and Eastern European states, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovenia (Tulmets 2011).

PART II:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND
RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter 3: Solidarity in International Relations

Solidarity has become a buzzword, frequently employed in everyday language and omnipresent in political discourse. It is used in personal relationships (solidarity in the family or among friends), at the national level (welfare state solidarity), and also increasingly at the supranational level (e.g., in the form of development policies) (Kunig 2015, 61; Schieder 2009, 11). Political actors often resort to using the term solidarity to legitimize various policies, such as redistribution of financial resources by the state, but also to mobilize mutual support and burden sharing (Bayertz 1999a, 21; Gaitanides 2015, 85; Kneuer and Masala 2014a, 8; Monar 2015, 1029). The burden-sharing argument is regularly brought up especially in the European context. In recent times, solidarity has been requested in the wake of the financial, banking, and sovereign debt crisis in the EU, disputed during the migrant and refugee crisis in Europe, and intensively discussed in the context of terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels, and other European cities (Calliess 2013; Kneuer and Masala 2014a, 8; Wallaschek 2016, 93).

Despite the popular usage of the term solidarity, the concept remains theoretically under-defined (Bayertz 1999a, 4; Kolers 2016, 2; Sangiovanni 2013, 215; Wallaschek 2016, 93). Already in 1999, Kurt Bayertz, a German philosopher, pointed to a “wavering, inexact and often suggestive use of the term” (Bayertz 1999a, 4). Five years later, Herfried Münkler called it “the stepchild of moral philosophy and social theory,” and Steinar Stjernø argued that solidarity “is sometimes used as a nebulous concept that is not defined at all” (Münkler 2004, 15; Stjernø 2005, 2). More than fifteen years after the publication of Bayertz’ volume, Avery Kolers acknowledged the theoretical development of the term in the past two decades, but at the same time lamented that “solidarity has been a great neglected subject of recent political philosophy” and concluded that the term still remained unclear (Kolers 2016, 4).

Scientists from various disciplines continue to describe the concept of solidarity as diffuse, fuzzy, nebulous, ambiguous, and controversial (i.a. Höffe 2002, 89; Stjernø 2005; Wallaschek 2016, 101). The obvious struggle to conceptualize solidarity lies, on the one hand, in the complexity of the concept, and, on the other hand, in the difficulty to observe and measure such a moral phenomenon (Durkheim 1988 [1893], 111). There is an overall consensus within academic literature that the understanding of solidarity is contingent not

only on the given context but also on the specific approach. Depending on the context, authors speak for example of “social solidarity” (Durkheim 1988 [1893]), “welfare state solidarity” (Baldwin 1990; Ewald 1993; Ferrera 2005; Marshall 1992 [1949]), “cultural solidarity” (Karagiannis 2007a), or “human solidarity” (Rorty 1989). In addition, different disciplines, ranging from sociology and (social) philosophy to political and legal science (e.g., Calliess 1999; Kneuer and Masala 2014a; Kotzur 2017; Scholz 2008) to the Catholic social doctrine and social ethics (e.g., Beyer 2014; Große Kracht 2014), have tried to address the notion of solidarity with the aim of its conceptualization and, since each discipline has its own *modus operandi*, definitions of solidarity often vary.

As a result of a long “theoretical neglect” (Bayertz 1999b) and the non-diminishing challenge of how to operationalize the concept, the term “solidarity” is still used in many different and sometimes even contradictory ways, from unity to fraternity (brotherhood) to sympathy to opposition against an out-group (Bayertz 1999a, 3; Kolers 2016, 2; Radtke 2009, 118-119; Stjernø 2005, 11; A.E. Taylor 2015). The onomasiological aspect of the concept of solidarity is problematic insofar as it might entail distinct normative commitments (Stjernø 2005, 11; A.E. Taylor 2015). When the substance of the concept is unclear and ambiguous, it is hard to determine what consequences result from acts of solidarity (Morgen 2014, 203). Sometimes, solidarity is understood solely in descriptive terms as a mutual attachment between individuals; sometimes it also encompasses a normative level of mutual obligations (Bayertz 1999a, 3). Sometimes it is comprehended as an act of altruism; sometimes it implies the expectation of reciprocity (Hondrich and Koch-Arzberger 1992). In addition, its unexplained theoretical status may lead to a misleading and sometimes even deceptive use of the term “solidarity” in political rhetoric (Bayertz 1999b, vii; Stjernø 2005, 2). Indeed, in political practice, solidarity seems to be used as a justification for all kinds of behavior (Morgen 2014, 202).

The lack of conceptual clarity implies that further theoretical as well as empirical examination of the concept of solidarity is of utmost importance. The following sections will unveil the origins and evolution of the concept of solidarity as well as compare the approaches by different disciplines, which will inform the formulation of the definition of solidarity used in this study.

3.1 The Evolution of the Concept of Solidarity and its Different Interpretations

The historical roots of the concept of solidarity can be traced back to ancient times, concretely to the Roman law of obligations (Metz 1998, 172). Etymologically, the term “solidarity” comes from *obligatio in solidum*, which referred to a special form of unlimited liability of all members of a given community, mostly family, to pay common debts (“one for all, all for one”) (Bayertz 1999a, 3; Brunkhorst 2002, 10; Fiegle 2003). During and in the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789, the term *solidarité* slowly acquired a more political meaning, when it was linked to another term—“fraternity” (Brunkhorst 2002, 9; Fiegle 2003). From a socio-political perspective, solidarity then gained particular prominence during the first half of the nineteenth century when it was used as a political slogan in the course of the international labor movement (Stjernø 2005, 1; Wildt 1998, 203-205).⁶⁷

At the same time, Auguste Comte and (later) Émile Durkheim elaborated on the term of solidarity and helped it become a subject of theory (Bayertz 1999a, 3; Schieder 2009, 25). Durkheim, who wished to explain stable social order, differentiated between two types of societies and related forms of solidarity: *mechanical* and *organic* (Durkheim 1988 [1893]). In simple, less differentiated archaic societies, similarities as well as common traditions and values play a major role and there is a low degree of division of labor. Those societies are segmented and not very interdependent. Accordingly, this kind of social order is based on *mechanical solidarity* (Durkheim 1988 [1893], 118-161). In contrast, complex modern societies are characterized by functional differentiation and a high division of labor. The strong interdependence creates a sense of community and trust among members of the society and results in social integration (Aschauer and Hofmann 2016, 3; Schieder 2009, 27). Somewhat paradoxically, this form of society simultaneously displays a strong ideology of individualism. According to Durkheim, such modern societies are dominated by *organic solidarity*. The high level of interdependence guarantees that the pursuit of self-interests can only be satisfied in cooperation with other members of the society (Durkheim 1988 [1893], 162-184). In this understanding, self-interest and solidarity are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Steffen Mau calls this type of solidarity *self-interest solidarity* (Mau 2009).

⁶⁷ Solidarity then became increasingly connected with economic and social support and turned into the cornerstone of the emerging concept of the welfare state in Western Europe (Grosse and Hetnarowicz 2016, 39).

Subsequently, as already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the understandings, or more precisely, the definitions of solidarity have developed and differentiated depending on the particular discipline. Accordingly, there are many different concepts of solidarity, ranging from purely descriptive to more normative ones and from utilitarian to altruistic ones (Bayertz 1999a, 3; Karagiannis 2007c, 18). The following subchapters discuss the evolution of and the approaches to the concept of solidarity from the perspectives of sociology, political science, and International Relations theory. A closer examination of the sociological approach to solidarity with its focus on individuals is essential for this study because, to cite Siegfried Schieder, “the transfer and applicability of the concept of solidarity to international matters requires, first and foremost, a more profound understanding of solidarity on the interpersonal and social level” (2009, 15; translation by author).

*3.1.1 Solidarity from a Sociological Perspective*⁶⁸

The classical conceptions of solidarity have most often been limited to smaller communities and national contexts (Ciornei and Recchi 2017, 469; Knodt and Tews 2016, 3). It therefore comes as no surprise that solidarity has become one of the central concepts of sociology (Beckert et al. 2004b, 9; Stjernø 2005, 20). Émile Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of sociology, emphasizes that solidarity is an essential condition for society (Durkheim 1988 [1893], 107). Most sociologists agree that social order requires a certain amount of self-sacrifice, to put aside one’s own interests in favor of the community, and cannot be based solely on the individual pursuit of self-interests (Tranow 2012a, 13). On the micro level, solidarity can relate to family bonds, friendships, as well as neighborly relations. In this perspective, the expectation of reciprocal behavior forms a basis for trust and creates a sense of relatedness (Aschauer and Hofmann 2016, 4).

As will become apparent below, the sociological literature has discussed solidarity in the spirit of morality and interest (Schieder 2009, 29). While from the perspective of morality, the decisive motivational basis for solidary behavior is the sense of togetherness, underpinned by shared norms and values, in the other mode, the driving force is the self-interest of the individual members (Schieder 2009, 27-28; Thome 1998, 238). Émile Durkheim’s

⁶⁸ For a profound elaboration of solidarity as a key concept in sociology and its operationalization for theoretical and empirical investigations, see works by Ulf Tranow (2012a, 2012b).

elaboration of the concept of solidarity in his book *The Division of Labor in Society* (1988 [1893]) has made a major contribution to anchoring solidarity as an analytical category in sociology. It should be emphasized that Durkheim uses the term “solidarity” largely congruently with the term “morality” and treats both concepts as purely descriptive categories. He accentuates the importance of mutual attachment for the development of altruistic motivations among members of society but, at the same time, seems to assume that these are not always sufficiently developed and remain reliant on sanctions and social control (Durkheim 1988 [1893]). Ulf Tranow criticizes that such a broad interpretation leads to the fact that the concept of solidarity remains too abstract and without contour (Tranow 2012a).

In the theoretical conceptualization introduced by Michael Hechter in his book *Theory of Group Solidarity* (1987), solidarity is based on the interaction of two factors, namely obligations and compliance. Accordingly, solidary action is understood by Hechter as conformity with obligations, no matter the underlying motivations. In this context, he emphasizes that feelings of connectedness or altruistic motivations, which play a central role in other solidarity concepts, are not necessary for the fulfillment of obligations and therefore the manifestation of solidarity (Hechter 1987). In other words, by understanding solidarity as factual compliance with group commitments, Hechter treats rational utility maximization as a single motive for action. Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, on the contrary, orientates himself against the notion of egoistic pursuit of interests and defines the subordination of self-interest as the core of solidarity (Kaufmann 1984, 2002). He aims to construct solidarity as a type of action by introducing four “typical manifestations” of solidarity: loyalty, altruism, extended reciprocity, and collectivity-oriented behavior (Kaufmann 1984, 2002).

With their book *Solidarität in der modernen Gesellschaft (Solidarity in Modern Society)* (1992), Karl Otto Hondrich and Claudia Koch-Arzberger have also made a significant contribution to the sociological concept of solidarity. Hondrich and Koch-Arzberger conceptualize solidarity as a special type of social bond that manifests itself in the willingness to provide voluntary support due to feelings of togetherness, common interests, as well as reciprocity claims (Hondrich and Koch-Arzberger 1992). However, as Tranow pointedly remarks, while a sense of connectedness may in many cases be the motivating factor behind voluntary support, solidarity actions can also occur without any sense of attachment, as exemplified by assistance after accidents or catastrophes (Tranow 2012a, 19).

Jens Beckert and his co-authors explored the chances and boundaries of transnational solidary relations and networks, such as between non-governmental organizations (NGOs), armed groups, and Islamic networks (Beckert et al. 2004b). They argue that, in the tradition of sociology, social integration of societies is dependent on the willingness of their members to stand up for one another, which is why solidarity is to be found primarily in the context of nation states where the individuals share the socially constructed idea of common origin, history, culture, and ideals. In this respect, they maintain that globalization has led to denationalization and anonymization of societies, which might impact their willingness to act in solidarity with each other (Beckert et al. 2004a, 12).

Johannes Berger argues that, in sociology, there are two different approaches to defining the concept of solidarity: an individualistic and a structuralist one. While the structuralist approach considers only institutionalized forms of solidarity, such as the amount of social contributions, the individualistic approach breaks down further into two streams, where one considers solidarity as behavior and the other as a feeling or attitude (J. Berger 2005, 14). Berger concludes that a clear advantage of viewing solidarity as behavior lies in its better operationalization, since deeds can be more easily observed than attitudes. Nevertheless, he also notices a potential gap between attitudes and behavior. Neither does a solidary attitude always translate into appropriate action, nor does solidary behavior always require solidary feelings as a motivational basis. In other words, Berger recognizes that the decision to act in solidarity can be made for a variety of reasons (J. Berger 2005, 14).

In *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* (2005), Steinar Stjernø studied different concepts and definitions of solidarity as they have developed from the early nineteenth century to the present. In the first part of his book, he elaborates on three traditions of solidarity: in Christian religious doctrine, in Marxist theory, and in classic social theory. The second part follows the changes in the ideas of solidarity in politics in Western Europe (Stjernø 2005). By tracking the development of the concept of solidarity in eight different European nations, he makes the case that the multifaceted nature of the concept allows for country-specific interpretations of solidarity (see also Schieder 2009, 16).

While there has certainly been an increased sociological interest in the concept of solidarity in recent years, the subject matter has not yet developed into a well-defined analytical concept. Solidarity represents a cross-cutting theme and field of research in sociology. It is,

for example, studied within the sociology of the family, but also as part of the sociological research of labor organizations, the welfare state, transnational networks, and international relations (Tranow 2012a, 11-12). The result are heterogeneous conceptual understandings. Durkheim formulates solidarity very broadly and in rather unspecific terms, identifying it generally with social cohesion and morality. In contrast, the concept of solidarity by Hondrich and Koch-Arzberger is considered too narrow by some authors (see, e.g., Tranow 2012a). Noticing such inconsistencies, Ulf Tranow (2012a) set himself the goal of developing a consistent concept of solidarity for further theoretical and empirical investigations and clarifying the constitutive conditions of solidarity. In his interpretation, solidarity norms form the core of the concept, which he understands as “ought to” expectations (“Sollens-Erwartungen”) that in certain situations require actors to make sacrifices in favor of (other members of) the community (Tranow 2012a, 36). Following the afore-presented tradition by Berger (2005), Tranow differentiates between two levels of solidarity: an actor level and a system level. While the individualistic concept sees solidarity as a personal characteristic of actors, the structuralist concept, which concentrates on the system level and is essentially determined by Hechter’s (1987) definition of group solidarity, highlights the compliance with universal solidarity standards. In this context, Tranow contends that solidarity norms must be followed in practice, since the sole existence of solidarity standards by no means implies that they are also fulfilled. At the same time, he underscores that the reasons why actors follow solidarity norms are ultimately irrelevant (Tranow 2012a, 41). Tranow’s approach, which has its roots in other sociological studies, illustrates that normative expectations are a key element of the sociological understanding of solidarity.

3.1.2 Solidarity from the Perspective of Political Science

A lack of systematic investigations of the concept of solidarity has been detected especially in the fields of political science and International Relations, despite the popular and frequent use of the term in political debates (Kneuer and Masala 2014a, 8; Radtke 2009, 118; Schieder 2009, 22).⁶⁹ Except for a few contributions in an anthology *Solidarity* (1999b) edited by Kurt Bayertz and the book *Solidarity* (2002) written by political sociologist Hauke Brunkhorst,

⁶⁹ Marianne Kneuer and Carlo Masala expound that there have been hardly any theory-based or empirical-analytical approaches in the political science sub-disciplines that would systematically deal with solidarity as a political and political science category (Kneuer and Masala 2014a, 8).

political science for a long time lacked both theoretical and empirical investigations of the concept of solidarity.

Sally Scholz (2007, 2008, 2013) is considered to be one of the first authors to develop a typology of political solidarity and fill it with content. As Scholz puts it, “political solidarity is political” because it unites individuals with the common goal of bringing about political change, mostly to challenge social and other forms of injustice (Scholz 2013, 84). Political solidarity is therefore based on a shared commitment to a political cause, rather than a shared identity. At the same time, political solidarity rests upon unity between the individual and the collective and implies certain moral ties between those in solidarity (Scholz 2007, 39). Scholz distinguishes political solidarity from social and civic solidarity. While social solidarity refers to social ties between members of a group who share a common identity, a sense of community and the like, civic solidarity implies the relationship between the state and its citizens. Civic solidarity is accordingly associated with the welfare state, in which state structures are required to carry out their solidarity-based tasks toward citizens (Scholz 2008). More importantly, Scholz goes even further with her attempt to analytically distinguish true from false solidarity. Genuine solidarity is here understood as a reciprocal process, whereby the “donor” of solidarity does not try to obscure other interests and the “recipient” of solidarity uses the received solidarity to bring about change (as opposed to act as a free rider and benefit from collective goods). Scholz suggests that such mutuality should contribute to the formation of a real or imagined community (Scholz 2013, 86).

Another attempt to explore the concept of solidarity from a political science perspective was made by Marianne Kneuer and Carlo Masala in the volume *Solidarity: Political Science Approaches to a Complex Concept* (Kneuer and Masala 2014b). The contributions collected in the volume aimed to close the gap in the admittedly rudimentary political science research landscape by exploring what the core of solidarity is, how it emerges, what its limits are, and under what conditions it ends.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, as acknowledged by the editors themselves,

⁷⁰ The first few contributions in the volume approach solidarity from a national perspective; the remaining articles focus on European and international solidarity. While Michèle Knodt, Anne Tews, and Nadine Piefer (2014) discuss the different forms of solidarity that exist within the EU context, Siegfried Schieder (2014a) touches upon a non-interest-driven form of solidarity in EU external relations—development policy. Sven Morgen (2014) works with the sociological solidarity concept developed by Ulf Tranow (2012a) and applies it to Alliance solidarity within NATO, while analyzing both the mechanisms and the limits of interstate solidarity. And Christoph Herrler (2014) focuses on the limits of individual solidarity in relation to climate protection.

their volume was also unable to provide definitive answers to these four questions (Kneuer and Masala 2014b).

Franziska Dübgen explored the manifestations of transnational solidarity in a postcolonial world. In her monograph *What is Fair? Characteristics of a Transnational Policy of Solidarity*, she links post-colonial theory perspectives with the global justice discourse and also touches upon the difference between transnational justice and solidarity (Dübgen 2014). Dübgen differentiates between *universal solidarity*, which requires solidarity with every person in the world; *destiny-related solidarity*, which rests on shared experiences (e.g., European solidarity); and *reflexive solidarity*, which indicates solidarity only with selected actors (e.g., national solidarity). In her book, the main focus lies on transnational justice, and Dübgen conceives solidarity as a practice of justice (Dübgen 2014).

Stefan Wallaschek has criticized the ambiguous use of solidarity in academic research, which, in his view, oscillates between materialist-institutional, individual-ideational, and discursive-ideational approaches, and suggested a definition based on three criteria: a) belonging/we-feeling; b) demarcation; and c) reciprocity/mutuality (Wallaschek 2015). In his later works (2019, 2020a, 2020b), Wallaschek proposes a new “meso” approach to solidarity, which he situates between macro-structural and micro-behavioral approaches. While the former approaches investigate solidarity from a structural perspective, the latter deal primarily with individual behavior and attitudes (Wallaschek 2020a, 76-78). The meso-discursive approach is concerned with how solidarity is discursively constructed in communicative practices and interactions of actors, as well as which framings of solidarity become salient in the discourse and why. Wallaschek distinguishes between two dimensions of solidarity: meaning and scale. The meaning represents the content of solidarity as it is presented by various actors in public statements. He suggests seven different meanings of solidarity: *political*, *cultural*, *social*, *legal*, *economic*, *monetary*, and *misuse of solidarity*.⁷¹

⁷¹ In his earlier analysis, Wallaschek included only five meanings of solidarity and only later added also the *legal* and *misuse of solidarity* types. With *political solidarity*, he refers to the concept put forward by Kneuer and Masala, which presents solidarity as a source of legitimacy for political actions and highlights the importance of establishment of political-institutional settings that serve to foster cooperation. *Cultural solidarity* focuses on shared norms, values, and the sense of common identity to which actors can relate to when they justify solidarity actions. *Social solidarity* includes redistributive, especially welfare, policies as examples of solidarity actions. *Economic solidarity* highlights supportive actions for economies, such as through public investments. *Monetary solidarity* refers to mutual financial liability among members of a community. *Legal solidarity* involves all legal agreements and resulting rights and obligations among actors. And, finally, the last type describes situations when the call for solidarity is wrongfully misused (Wallaschek 2020a, 79-80).

The scale, as the second dimension, indicates who is encompassed by solidarity. Typical solidarity types in terms of scale are, for example, *intergovernmental* or *transnational solidarity*. Empirically, Wallaschek analyzes the discursive construction of solidarity through the examples of the Euro crisis and Europe's migration crisis and studies how solidarity is linked to other concepts in public discourses (Wallaschek 2019, 2020a, 2020b).

3.1.3 Solidarity in International Relations Theory

If there has been a certain reservation on the subject of solidarity in the field of political science, it is hardly surprising that the International Relations sub-discipline has had an even harder time dealing with this concept. Siegfried Schieder (2009, 13) argues that the relative scarcity of solidarity research in the International Relations subfield is remarkable because, from the 1990s on, more and more sociological approaches have found their way into the International Relations research agenda (see Kratochwil and Snidal 2008). In contrast to norms (Finnemore 1996), roles (Holsti 1970; Kirste and Maull 1996), morality (Hasenclever 2001; Hattori 2003), or collective identity (Wendt 1994, 1999), solidarity still cannot be counted among the established theoretical concepts of the International Relations discipline (Folz et al. 2009, 92; Schieder 2009, 13). Challenging this status quo, the author of this study shares the opinion of Siegfried Schieder and Martin Weber that solidarity deserves to be understood as a category in its own right and have an autonomous explanatory status in the International Relations theory (Schieder 2009; Weber 2007).⁷²

The main difficulty lies in the fact that solidarity originally referred to individual feelings and moral obligations, while the International Relations discipline deals primarily with collective actors, such as states or international organizations (Morgen 2014, 203; Preuß 1999, 287; Tulmets 2011, 5). In addition, when trying to apply the concept of solidarity at the international level, the question arises as to how far it is possible and also plausible to compare relatively compact domestic societies with a culturally heterogeneous and politically fragmented world (Schieder 2009, 34).

The two classical International Relations theories, realism and liberalism, are unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for this "dilemma." In realism, states are perceived as

⁷² However, to use the words of Siegfried Schieder, "it would be premature to declare solidarity an additional variant of constructivism" (Schieder 2009, 43; translation by author).

central actors, not individuals, and, more importantly, the anarchic structure of the international system implies that there is no supranational authority that could demand or sanction a particular behavior of states (Waltz 1959, 2008). Liberalism, on the other hand, claims that the external behavior of states is determined by their social order. In Andrew Moravcsik's liberal theory, individuals and social groups are at the center of attention and states' preferences are derived primarily from "*societal ideas, interests, and institutions*" (Moravcsik 1997, 513). Stefan Seidendorf adds that solidarity in international relations requires an existing community of interests or a group's sense of togetherness, which neither realism nor liberalism can comprehend (Seidendorf 2009, 162). It was therefore the "constructivist turn" in the International Relations theory that allowed for the study of social factors, such as collective identities and ideas, in addition to material factors, and directed the attention of political scientists to the spectrum of non-hostile international relations that have long stayed undertheorized (Schieder 2009, 43). This has opened the way for a comprehensive conceptualization of solidarity (see also Folz et al. 2009).

Within the International Relations discipline, some theoretical traditions emphasize the feeling of community or togetherness and can therefore be linked to the idea and concept of solidarity to a certain degree. The concept of "security community," developed by Karl W. Deutsch, postulates that people in a security community are bound by the shared sense of community, common interests, or even trust (Deutsch 1957a). Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, who explored this concept from a constructivist perspective, highlighted even more the aspects of shared identity within a security community (Adler 1998). References to solidarity can be further found, at least implicitly, in the constructivist identity research (Wendt 1999), the work of the English School (Buzan 2004), and the international socialization research (Schimmelfennig et al. 2006).⁷³

The volume *Solidarität und internationale Gemeinschaftsbildung (Solidarity and International Community Building)*, edited by Sebastian Harnisch et al. (2009), was the first attempt to conceptualize the notion of solidarity from the International Relations perspective

⁷³ Martin Weber (2007, 696-697) establishes an explicit connection to the English School of International Relations, where norms and values play an important role and represent the "cement" that holds the world together and makes it to an "international society" (see also Dunne 2008).

and substantially explore the different facets of international and transnational solidarity.⁷⁴ The authors of the volume declared their intention to operationalize solidarity to make it a fruitful concept for the empirical analysis of international relations (Schieder 2009, 14). The contributions are arranged into three groups: the first one evaluates the viability of the concept of solidarity for the analysis of international and transnational relations; the second group focuses on community-building processes in the EU, NATO, and the field of development policy; and the third group explores the relationship between solidarity and related concepts, such as morality, interest, respect, and international law. The editors explicitly emphasize the added value of a theoretical, methodological, and substantive dialogue between the disciplines of sociology and International Relations for the study of solidarity, which reinforces the argument made earlier in this study (see Harnisch 2009, 362).

3.1.4 Solidarity in the Context of Regional Integration

The concept of solidarity has become especially relevant in the context of regional integration (Kunig 2015; Tulmets 2011, 62). In recent years, particular attention of academic publications has been directed at solidarity within the EU. It was first the Eurozone crisis and, a few years later, the migrant and refugee crisis that have sparked debates about the state of solidarity in Europe. The scholarly attention regarding European solidarity has since then skyrocketed, resulting in the publication of several volumes and a number of journal articles. The volume *Solidarity in the European Union: a fundamental value in crisis* (2017) by Andreas Grimmel and Susanne My Giang looks at the concept of solidarity and its practical implication in the EU from multiple angles of different research disciplines and strives to determine whether solidarity has developed into a fundamental value in the EU or whether it remains only an “empty signifier” (Grimmel and Giang 2017b). The contributions are devoted mainly to the refugee and migrant crisis and the Eurozone crisis, which, according to the contributing authors, showcase the conflicting and even opposing interpretations of the concept of solidarity on the EU level and reveal a lack of commonality in terms of what it means to act in solidarity in actual cases (Eriksen 2017; Knodt and Tews 2017; Segeš Frelak 2017b; Wihtol de Wenden 2017).

⁷⁴ Apart from this volume, there have only been a few attempts in the International Relations tradition for a systematic, theoretical investigation of the concept of solidarity. (Beckert et al. 2004b; Olesen 2005). One exception is the typology developed by Katrin Radtke, who explored solidary actions that cross national borders and distinguished between forms of *sub-*, *trans-*, and *international solidarity* (Radtke 2007).

European solidarity and its limits in European migration policy were also explored in the volumes *Solidarity Mobilizations in the 'Refugee Crisis': Contentious Moves* (Della Porta 2018) and *Solidarity and the 'Refugee Crisis' in Europe* (Agustín and Bak Jorgensen 2019). Both volumes focus on the emergence of solidarity movements across Europe. While the former book edited by Donatella Della Porta is written from the perspective of social movement studies and uses in-depth interviews and protest event analysis to investigate the solidarity practices during the so-called “long summer of migration of 2015,” the latter volume edited by Óscar García Agustín and Martin Bak Jorgensen develops a comprehensive analytical model to capture the engagement of the civil society during the refugee and migrant crisis (Agustín and Bak Jorgensen 2019; Della Porta 2018).

Sociological insights into the crisis of solidarity in Europe in general are provided in the volume *Solidaritätsbrüche in Europa (Solidarity Breaks in Europe)* by Wolfgang Aschauer, Elisabeth Donat, and Julia Hofmann (2016). The authors illustrate the occurring tendencies of eroding solidarity, or “solidarity breaks,” in Europe, which are manifested in the social (dis)integration of societies and demonstrated by problems and tensions in different policy areas during times of crisis. The authors distinguish between three levels of solidarity. At the micro level, solidarity refers to close relationships, such as within family or between friends, and can be interpreted as “predictable reciprocal behavior” (Aschauer and Hofmann 2016, 4). The assumption that the one stands for the other serves as a valuable basis of trust in interpersonal relations. Consequently, *micro level solidarity* represents a sense of connectedness. *Mesosolidarity*, which describes solidarity between social groups, accentuates the importance of the common good. And *macrosolidarity* generalizes those notions of the common good and extends them beyond the borders of nation states. According to Aschauer and Hofmann, *macrosolidarity* can be best understood as a way of setting aside one’s own interests for the sake of the common good. In terms of solidarity among EU states, this would mean a policy of fair compensation, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages for each Member State (Aschauer and Hofmann 2016, 6).

Similarly interested in the manifestations of solidarity at the level of individual citizens is the 2018 published volume *Solidarity in Europe. Citizens' Responses in Times of Crisis* by Christian Lahusen and Maria Grasso, which explores the state of European/transnational solidarity in times of the different crises in Europe, including the Euro crisis, the migration

crisis, and the Brexit (Lahusen and Grasso 2018). To analyze the various civic and interpersonal forms of solidarity, the contributions use data from a cross-national survey conducted within the EU Horizon 2020 project TransSOL “Transnational Solidarity in Times of Crisis” in eight European countries (Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Poland, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, and France) and draw a comparative picture of civic solidarity within and across the EU Member States. The authors also differentiate between several target groups, such as refugees/migrants, disabled persons, and unemployed people, with the aim of finding out which segments of society are the strongest supporters of European solidarity and which are marked rather by distance to the idea of solidarity (Lahusen and Grasso 2018).

It is widely agreed that the EU is an international organization *sui generis*, and this characteristic applies also to solidarity (Mau 2009). In the eyes of many observers, political and economic integration—in other words, forms of “cold integration”—are not sufficient to underpin the commitment to collective goals and legitimize further integration steps (Mau 2009, 63). This is precisely when solidarity comes into play. The above-discussed studies provide an excellent insight into how multifaceted the concept of solidarity is in the EU context. The following section will explore the legal underpinnings of solidarity in EU law and outline the different forms of solidarity that can be detected within the EU.

3.2 Solidarity in the EU

Solidarity seems to play a far more important role in the national rather than regional or international contexts. Schieder also purports that national borders commonly mark the “natural” boundaries of solidarity (Schieder 2009). A traditional assumption is that a nation state is supposed to perform certain functions, including lessening social inequality and developing safety nets afforded by state welfare policies, and that the related sacrifices of redistribution would contribute to the development of solidarity within a population (Ferrera 2005). The welfare state can therefore be considered a form of institutionalized (social) solidarity. In the EU, there is no such institutionalization of solidarity as in the case of nation states. Nevertheless, solidarity has become one of central values underpinning European integration and, after its introduction into the primary law of the EU under the Treaty of Lisbon, it is viewed as a constitutional principle of the EU as well (see Calliess 2013; Menéndez 2003; Sangiovanni 2013).

3.2.1 Legal Foundations of Solidarity in the EU Treaties

Solidarity has served as a guiding principle since the very beginning of European integration after the Second World War (Knodt and Tews 2017, 47). Over the years of the European community-building process, a gradual codification of solidarity in the EU treaties has taken place. Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira and A.J.R. Groom note that the idea of solidarity was already present “in the minds and hearts of the European Communities’ architects” (Ferreira-Pereira and Groom 2010, 599). In his famous declaration from 9 May 1950, the then French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, spoke of *solidarité de fait* that should create the basis for mutual attachment and become the guiding principle for uniting the peoples of Europe (EU 1950). Accordingly, the Preamble to the Treaty constituting the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) acknowledged that “Europe can be built only by concrete actions which create a real solidarity and by the establishment of common bases for economic development” (Schuman et al. 1951). The following Treaties of Maastricht (1993), Amsterdam (1999), and Nice (2003) also included the term “solidarity” in their preambles (EU 1993, 1999, 2003).

The Treaty of Lisbon (2009b), amending the founding Treaties—the TEU and the TFEU—further expanded the understanding of solidarity by framing it both as a value binding together Member States as well as citizens of these Member States (Sangiovanni 2013, 214).⁷⁵ The Preamble to the TEU expresses the desire of the signatories “to deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions” (EU 1993, 2009b). In Article 2, solidarity is listed as one of the core values that the Union was founded upon. Furthermore, in paragraph 3 of Article 3 of the TEU, the signatories set the promotion of solidarity not only between different social groups, genders, and generations but also between Member States as one of the main objectives (EU 2009a):

“The Union shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States” (Art. 3,3 TEU, EU 2009a).

⁷⁵ The TEU is an updated form of the Maastricht Treaty (1993) and the TFEU originated from the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community in 1957 (EUR-Lex 2019).

In addition to mentioning the principle in general terms in the Preamble, the TEU and TFEU link solidarity with policy areas more than 20 times (EU 2009a; Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014, 83; Knodt and Tews 2016, 2).⁷⁶ Solidarity is mentioned as an indispensable principle guiding the Union's external action, and the CFSP should accordingly be conducted "in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity" (Arts. 24, 31, and 32 TEU, EU 2009a). Similarly, a common policy on asylum, immigration, and external border control should be governed "by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility" (Arts. 67 and 80 TFEU, EU 2009a). The clauses dedicated to the economic policy of the EU also call for a spirit of solidarity among Member States, especially in the energy sector (Arts. 122 and 194 TFEU, EU 2009a). Most importantly, the Treaty of Lisbon newly contains a Solidarity Clause in Article 222 TFEU, which states that Member States "act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster" (Art. 222 TFEU, EU 2009a).⁷⁷

Similar to the TEU and TFEU, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union specifies in its preamble that the Union "is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity" (EU 2007). The Charter of Fundamental Rights contains a whole section entitled "Solidarity," which is devoted to such issues as workers' rights, social security, health care, and environmental protection (EU 2007).

In summary, the notion of solidarity can be regarded as an integral part of the EU genetic code, having a prominent place in the primary law of the EU (Bieber 2013; Calliess 2013). However, a precise definition of solidarity is still lacking in EU law (Knodt and Tews 2014a, 7).⁷⁸ As a consequence, although the European Treaties place large emphasis on the solidarity efforts of the EU Member States, these demands leave much space for interpretation and are thus not always directly translated into concrete policies (see also Bendiek and Neyer 2016, 1; Bieber 2013, 69; Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014, 83).⁷⁹ The idea of solidarity has become even more contested after the three latest rounds of enlargement in 2004, 2007, and 2013.

⁷⁶ The table in Appendix C lists all references to solidarity in the TEU and the TFEU.

⁷⁷ In 2002, the EU established the EU Solidarity Fund, which expresses European solidarity by providing financial assistance to regions within Europe affected by major natural disasters (European Commission 2019a).

⁷⁸ Due to the manifold references to the notion of solidarity in the Lisbon Treaty, authors such as Markus Kotzur argue that the concept remains ambiguous in its content (Kotzur 2017).

⁷⁹ In this context, authors such as Charlotte Gaitanides warn that, without solidarity between the Member States, the EU can neither exist nor cope with its specific objectives (Gaitanides 2015, 87-88).

Along with the accession of 13 new countries since 2004, there has been a growing diversity of national interests among Member States, which is hypothesized to have implications on their willingness to show mutual solidarity (Ferreira-Pereira and Groom 2010, 607). Simultaneously, following Durkheim's thesis on the existence of organic society, it can be assumed that, as the degree of interdependence among the EU Member States increases with advanced integration, connections based off of solidarity between these Member States and their societies increase as well (Mau 2009, 85).

This ambiguity has created a situation where some skeptics claim that the EU suffers from a "community deficit" (Etzioni 2007), while other scholars contradict this view, arguing that a solid "culture of solidarity" has long developed at the European level (Kneuer and Masala 2014a; Schieder 2009). Steffen Mau recommends breaking away from the nationally centered idea of solidarity, which, if viewed comparatively, makes European solidarity appear as a rather desperate project, and taking a more unbiased view of the different manifestations of European solidarity (Mau 2005, 246). In line with this argument, the following paragraphs will explore the various forms of solidarity that can be found in the EU context.

3.2.2 Forms of Solidarity in the EU

Conceptualizing solidarity within the multi-level system of the EU has appeared as quite a challenging task, leading to disputes whether a sense of community or a common identity are a prerequisite for solidarity or not (Knodt and Tews 2016). While some scholars (see, above all, Münch 2001; Offe 2001) question whether solidarity in the EU is possible at all and consider European identity as an indispensable precondition for European solidarity, Michèle Knodt and Anne Tews (2016) convincingly argue that shared identity is not needed to construct solidarity within the EU. They build upon Durkheim's (1988 [1893]) concept of organic solidarity and adapt the concept to the EU multi-level system. They explain the logic behind their approach with the following words:

"Only if we eliminate pre-solidarity sine qua non conditions, such as community feelings or a sense of a shared identity as a basis for the connectedness of the individuals, we can interpret solidarity as a window of opportunity for a mode of action, which promotes integration in the European multi-level context" (Knodt and Tews 2016, 4).

Different opinions on such a fundamental question have prompted numerous authors to examine what motivates European states and/or citizens to act in solidarity with each other. The most differentiated framework was brought forward by Steffen Mau (2009). Mau identifies five forms of solidarity that can be identified in the European context: *self-interest solidarity*, *attachment solidarity*, *civil solidarity*, *movement solidarity*, and *compassion solidarity*. The criteria distinguishing the five forms are not the actual effects of solidarity, such as its scope and intensity, but rather the motivational background (Mau 2009). The first type, *self-interest solidarity*, elucidates that even actions aimed at satisfying one's own interests can be considered as solidary (Mau 2009, 71). Other authors speak in this context of *solidarity in self-interest* (Baurmann 1998) or *instrumental solidarity* (Baum 1975). In the EU, the interdependence of interests allows for this mutually beneficial approach, where actors cooperate with each other in order to produce certain social goods (Mau 2009, 68). A prime example of self-interest solidarity, according to Mau, are the Structural and Cohesion Funds, which aim at fostering convergence between richer and poorer regions within the EU. The second type refers to those forms of solidarity that arise from notions of commonality. *Attachment solidarity* emphasizes the feelings of togetherness and trust among the members of a certain group, which are otherwise typical only for families and small groups. Mau postulates that the smaller, the more coherent, and the more homogeneous in its values a group is, the more likely feelings of solidarity can be expected between its members (Mau 2009, 72; Preuß 1998, 401). Most critical opinions on the lack of solidarity within the EU point to this kind of solidarity (Etzioni 2007). The third type of *institutionalized civil solidarity* refers to the Union citizenship, which was introduced by the Maastricht Treaty (Mau 2009, 76). *Movement solidarity* relates to social mobilization for the achievement of overarching collective interests. Typical examples of movement solidarity can be traced back to the French revolution and the social movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Mau 2009, 78). The last type, *compassion solidarity*, is sometimes also referred to as "solidarity among strangers" (Brunkhorst 1997) because neither mutual attachment nor existing cooperation frameworks are necessary preconditions for this kind of solidarity. Compassion solidarity is instead based on humanitarian considerations and mercy toward people in need, therefore relatively independent of any specific ties (Mau 2009, 81-82).

Another major obstacle to transferring classical solidarity conceptions to the European multi-level system has long been the nature of actors, be it addressees or carriers of solidarity.

While Durkheim and others considered individuals as the primary actors of solidarity, Knodt and Tews (2014a) extended the concept to include collective actors, such as Member States of the EU. They have developed a theoretical framework for constructing solidarity within the EU context by combining the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the European multi-level system with two actor categories. The authors differentiate, on the one hand, between European solidarity pertaining to individual or collective actors and, on the other hand, between horizontal and vertical solidarity (see table 1).⁸⁰ The established typology of four forms of European solidarity—*transnational*, *supranational*, *intergovernmental*, and *international*—can be used as an analytical tool to explore different forms of solidarity in various EU policy fields (Knodt and Piefer 2014; Knodt and Tews 2014b, 2016; Knodt et al. 2014).⁸¹

Table 1: Forms of solidarity within the EU multi-level system

	horizontal	vertical
individual actors	transnational solidarity	supranational solidarity
collective actors	international solidarity	intergovernmental solidarity

Source: Knodt and Tews (2014a); graphical illustration by the author

Transnational solidarity represents cross-border non-commercial cooperation, where individuals with similar living conditions join forces in order to defend their common interests (Knodt 2015, 1025). This can take a form of labor, women, or ecological movements, but also encompass other transnational social movements and even institutionalized forums, such as the European Works Councils and the European Trade Union Confederation (Knodt and Tews 2016, 5). While the driving force behind transnational solidarity is the shared desire to achieve a common goal, Knodt and Tews also highlight the importance of shared identity and commonality among the members of the group and the related demarcation against outsiders (Knodt and Tews 2017, 51).

⁸⁰ While horizontal solidarity occurs within one government level, vertical solidarity extends across several levels. The authors argue that the vertical dimension has been largely neglected by most approaches aiming at constructing solidarity in the European multi-level system (Knodt and Tews 2016, 12).

⁸¹ Knodt and Tews have empirically applied the four-fold matrix in their further articles and book contributions (Knodt 2015; Knodt and Tews 2016; Knodt et al. 2014). Most notably, in the 2016 published working paper, Knodt and Tews analyzed the boundaries of European intergovernmental solidarity between Member States using the examples of two EU policy fields—migration policy and energy policy—which, in their own words, have been both characterized by a significant lack of solidary actions (Knodt and Tews 2016).

Supranational solidarity refers to solidarity among citizens as individuals of the European multi-level system and aims at the creation of equivalent or at least converging living conditions for everyone (Knodt et al. 2014, 117). It addresses the issue of European citizenship and the related rights citizens acquire in addition to their national rights. The authors maintain that it is the sense of belonging to a political community with its specific rights and duties that creates solidarity among European citizens (Knodt and Tews 2014a, 13). Furthermore, this form of solidarity is to be found in policy areas where the EU shows its supranational character of deepened integration and where it provides compensation measures. This notion of highly differentiated societies within the EU corresponds to Durkheim's organic solidarity (Knodt 2015, 1025-1026).

Just as in case of supranational solidarity, *intergovernmental solidarity*, sometimes also called "membership solidarity," is oriented at the vertical dimension, but instead focusing on individuals, it addresses national Member States as collective actors (Knodt et al. 2014, 113). Intergovernmental solidarity presupposes common action and burden sharing of Member States in various policy fields (Knodt and Tews 2017, 52). The most recent examples of intergovernmental solidarity, or a lack thereof, have been the Euro crisis and the migration crisis in Europe (Knodt 2015, 1026).

Finally, *international solidarity* describes the external dimension of European solidarity, where the EU as a whole deals with collective actors, be it societies or nation states, in the international arena beyond European borders (Knodt and Tews 2014a, 17). This type of solidarity is explicitly mentioned in Article 3.5 TEU: "In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights" (Art. 3,5 TEU, EU 2009a). A classic example of international solidarity is humanitarian aid (see, e.g., Radtke 2007; Tannous 2014).

While exploring the multi-level system of the EU, the authors come to three main conclusions: First, European solidarity in no case replaces existing national solidarity but complements it instead. Second, the type of intergovernmental solidarity dominates within

the European multi-level system.⁸² And third, intergovernmental solidarity oscillates between two fundamental principles of the EU, which is the promotion of community on the one hand and the protection of national autonomy on the other hand (Knodt et al. 2014, 107). To find the right balance between these two principles, which shape the decision-making processes at the EU level, political decisions should be both autonomy-protective and beneficial for the community (Knodt et al. 2014, 113). At the same time, intergovernmental solidarity is closely linked with the subsidiarity principle, which grants the Union the right to act on behalf of Member States even in areas in which it does not have exclusive competence if the respective action cannot be sufficiently achieved at national, regional, or local level (Calliess 1999).

The volume *Solidarity in the EU*, edited by Michèle Knodt and Anne Tews and published in 2014, gathers contributions that explore all four types of solidarity contained in the above-mentioned matrix and empirically prove that there is indeed not only one form of European solidarity but several.⁸³ Most contributions in the volume focus on the type of *intergovernmental solidarity* and prove empirically that solidarity can be found in almost every policy field.⁸⁴ For example, Heinz Kleger and Thomas Mehlhausen (2014) present a concept of three-dimensional European solidarity. In addition to the directional dimension (horizontal versus vertical solidarity) and the actor dimension (individual versus collective actors), which are also accounted for by Knodt and Tews, they add a third dimension, asking

⁸² Their latest analyses confirm that this has not changed over time (see for example Knodt and Tews 2017, 53).

⁸³ While Hermann-Josef Große Kracht (2014) draws attention to the evolution of the *transnational solidarity* discourse in Europe and the role of the Catholic Church in this context, Stefanie Börner (2014) examines the EU social policy as a classic example of *supranational solidarity*. Isabelle Tannous (2014) outlines the development of the EU's relations with the developing countries, in particular with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, and illustrates this form of *international solidarity*. Markus Klamert (2014) analyzes the role of solidarity as a legal principle in Union law and in the case-law of the European Court of Justice and compares it to other principles, such as subsidiarity and loyalty.

⁸⁴ Friedrich Heinemann (2014) analyzes the causes of the European debt crisis and discusses possible solutions. He maintains that effective measures for solving the crisis should lie between the extremes of unlimited solidarity and a complete denial of solidarity. The ideal solution would be, according to him, the adherence to *conditional solidarity*, that is, providing solidarity only when certain conditions are fulfilled. Jürgen Bast (2014) discusses in his contribution the concept of solidarity and responsibility sharing under the Dublin System and sheds more light on conflict areas concerning interstate solidarity in European immigration and asylum policies. Jale Tosun (2014) examines the possibilities as well as the limits of solidarity among Member States in the EU environmental policy. Another policy field where intergovernmental solidarity is practiced is EU energy policy, which is based on the following three standards: competitiveness, sustainability, and security of supply. This specific area is covered in the volume by Michèle Knodt and Nadine Piefer (2014). Finally, examples of intergovernmental solidarity can also be found in the CFSP as well as with regard to natural or man-made disaster control and counter-terrorism, as illustrated in the contributions by Carolin Rüger (2014) and Nicolai von Ondarza (2014).

what the motivation behind acts of solidarity is—the sense of community or self-interest.⁸⁵ Although Kleger and Mehlhausen also differentiate between international, intergovernmental, transnational, and supranational solidarity, they further focus on the type of solidarity between the Member States. They develop three ideal types of intergovernmental European solidarity—*federal*, *organic*, and *distributive solidarity*—which differ primarily with respect to the motivation of the solidarity actors and orientation of solidarity acts (Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014, 84).

Federal solidarity, which resembles the idea behind the French Revolution and German workers' movement as well as Durkheim's mechanical solidarity, emphasizes the existence of emotional bonds and the ensuing obligation to provide assistance. In the context of the EU, federal solidarity is to be found in the form of police cooperation among Member States aimed at preventing and combatting cross-border serious crimes and terrorism (von Ondarza 2014). The type of *organic solidarity* is also inspired by Émile Durkheim (1988 [1893]) and highlights the division of labor, interdependence, and selfishness of the actors (Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014, 94-95). The third type, *distributive solidarity*, is associated with the concept of liberal egalitarianism as developed by John Rawls (1999 [1971]), according to which societies should be fair and natural inequalities should be compensated by state institutions, leading to the formation of a permanent redistribution mechanism. Since there is a lack of shared collective identity on the international level, John Rawls confined his concept to the context of national states (Rawls 1999 [1971]). Against this, Kleger and Mehlhausen provide two arguments as to why the concept of vertical solidarity can also be applied to the EU: First, the Union shows some of the classic characteristics of a state. And second, the EU Member States share fundamental values that are embedded in documents such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and that enable the emergence of distributive solidarity. The authors further underscore that the three models of intergovernmental European solidarity are complementary and can therefore occur simultaneously (Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014, 96).

⁸⁵ In their conceptualization, horizontal solidarity, understood in the sense of *fraternité*, occurs when actors with similar living conditions form a group to pursue a common goal. Vertical solidarity, on the other hand, appears when the more prosperous community members assist the more distressed ones because of a feeling of connectedness (Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014, 87). The focus on the motivational background evokes the classification developed by Mau (2009).

So far, no other publication has discussed solidarity within the EU in such breadth and depth as Knodt and Tews. Nevertheless, other authors have also noticed that it would be unsuitable to model European solidarity in the same way as national solidarity and endeavored to develop distinct typologies of solidarity within the complex European context. Ines Hartwig identifies a double dimension of European solidarity: a collective one, such as in the context of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), and an intra-EU solidarity mechanism, such as in form of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund (Hartwig 2005). Andrea Sangiovanni introduces a framework with a threefold character of European solidarity: *national solidarity* (obligations among citizens of a state), *Member State solidarity* (obligations among Member States), and *transnational solidarity* (obligations among EU citizens) (Sangiovanni 2013). He argues that these three sets of principles can capture the complex nature of European integration (Sangiovanni 2013, 217-220). And Irina Ciornei and Ettore Recchi distinguish between solidarity among EU citizens (*transnational solidarity*) and among EU Member States (*international solidarity*) (Ciornei and Recchi 2017).

In his theoretical account of solidarity, Schieder (2009) argues that the multifaceted nature of the concept allows for country-specific interpretations of solidarity (Schieder 2009, 16). Following this line of reasoning, Annegret Bendiek and Jürgen Neyer (2016), who have taken a critical look at the European solidarity during the migrant and refugee crisis, contend that three non-compatible understandings of solidarity “compete” in Europe: *nationalist*, *European*, and *cosmopolitan*. From the perspective of a *nationalist* understanding, solidarity is conceivable only within a nation with shared history, culture, and values. According to Bendiek and Neyer, this understanding prevails in many Central and Eastern European countries that do not regard the EU as a community of shared values. Conversely, countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden continue to insist on *European solidarity*. In this understanding, Member States have committed themselves to respect the fundamental values of the Union and are therefore connected by a special bond (Bendiek and Neyer 2016, 3-4). The third group, the *cosmopolites*, reject any acts solidarity that are based on criteria such as nationality or European membership and call instead for universal solidarity (Bendiek and Neyer 2016, 4). Table 2 below summarizes the different typologies of forms of solidarity that can be identified in the European context.

Table 2: Typologies/Forms of solidarity in the European context

Author	Forms of European solidarity	Typology criteria
Steffen Mau (2009)	self-interest solidarity attachment solidarity civil solidarity movement solidarity compassion solidarity	motivational background
Andrea Sangiovanni (2013)	national solidarity Member State solidarity transnational solidarity	actor dimension (citizens versus Member States)
Michèle Knodt and Anne Tews (2014a)	transnational solidarity supranational solidarity intergovernmental solidarity international solidarity	directional dimension (horizontal versus vertical solidarity) actor dimension (individual versus collective actors)
Heinz Kleger and Thomas Mehlhausen (2014)	transnational solidarity supranational solidarity intergovernmental solidarity and its three ideal types: - federal solidarity - organic solidarity - distributive solidarity international solidarity	directional dimension (horizontal versus vertical solidarity) actor dimension (individual versus collective actors) motivational dimension (motivation behind solidarity acts – sense of community or self-interest)
Annegret Bendiek and Jürgen Neyer (2016)	nationalist European cosmopolitan	country-specific understandings of solidarity
Irina Ciornei and Ettore Recchi (2017)	transnational solidarity international solidarity	actor dimension (citizens versus Member States)

Source: Own summary of different typologies

3.3 Definitions of Solidarity

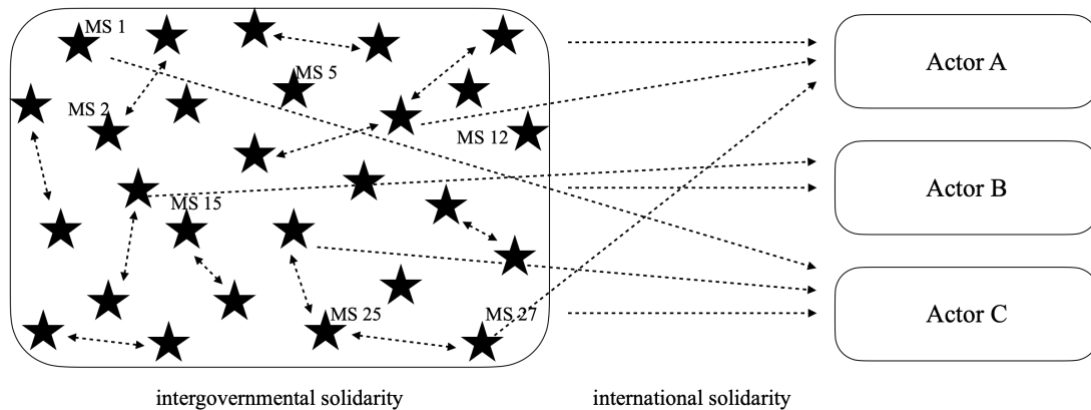
Do individuals and entities act in solidarity as a result of obligations stemming from their group membership, because of the existence of a special bond and common identity, or with the aim of pursuing self-interest? Who are the providers and who are the recipients of solidarity? Does solidarity require reciprocity? These are some of the questions that have significantly shaped the research on solidarity. In answering some of these questions, scholars have been able to achieve consensus; with others, fundamental differences of opinion remain. As mentioned earlier, solidarity can be detected in a variety of social

environments and the concept has been accordingly studied by different disciplines, ranging from moral philosophy, sociology, and social psychology to political science, law, and Catholic social teaching. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the understanding of what solidarity is and how it should be conceptualized can vary considerably. The research on solidarity has offered a multiplicity of perspectives and a variety of definitions, which only exacerbates the fact that solidarity is often applied with different meanings and connotations in everyday discourse.

The present study is interested in the exploration of solidarity within the EU context. Knodt and Tews (2014b) have made a valuable contribution to the solidarity research by decomposing the multi-level structure of the EU and distinguishing the four different types of solidarity. As opposed to most sociological studies that explore solidarity relationships at the societal level, the study at hand places its focus on states as collective actors. Referring back to the matrix developed by Knodt and Tews, the spotlight will accordingly be on the *intergovernmental* and *international solidarity* types. While the former deals with internal solidarity within a group (among the EU Member States), the latter tackles solidarity of the EU toward an “outside” group, i.e. toward non-EU states and territories (see figure 2). Due to the variety of the target group (fellow Member States versus non-EU members), it is possible that states act differently depending on who they are supposed to be in solidarity with. Against this background, the present study will analyze the EU migration and asylum policy as an example of *intergovernmental solidarity* within the Union and further enlargement of the EU as an example of *international solidarity*. What distinguishes the present approach from Knodt and Tews’ and similar classifications is that the international solidarity type is conceptualized as encompassing both intergovernmental elements, i.e. the direct bilateral relations of the EU members toward candidate countries and other neighboring states and at the same time the willingness of those EU members to participate in EU-wide policies—in this particular case the Eastern Partnership and the ENP more broadly. The juxtaposition of “inward” and “outward” solidarity types by means of the two case studies can test whether a community feeling and shared identity constitute a necessary prerequisite or favoring factors for the emergence of solidarity.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Considering the exclusive character of solidarity (“us” versus “them”), one might assume that *intergovernmental solidarity* between EU Member States should still be higher than *international solidarity*.

Figure 2: Intergovernmental and international solidarity types in the European context



Source: Own depiction

To model European intergovernmental and international solidarity, this study draws on four analytical questions introduced by Steinar Stjernø in his book *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea*, but expands them further to encompass all relevant aspects relating to the concept of solidarity (Stjernø 2005, 16). The definition of solidarity between EU Member States will be derived from the following questions while building upon the existing research on solidarity:

1. Who are the carriers and addressees of solidarity and how inclusive is the concept?
2. Is solidarity a purely descriptive concept or does it also entail normative implications?
3. Do solidary actions require reciprocal commitments?
4. What are the objectives and functions of solidarity?
5. What is the basis or foundation for solidarity?

First, solidarity is determined functionally, temporally, and spatially (Seidendorf 2009, 167-170). Applied to the EU context, the geographical dimension is defined by the EU external borders, the temporal dimension by simultaneously participating in the Union's internal as well as external developments, and the functional dimension by sharing and working toward common goals.⁸⁷ This threefold delimitation implies inclusion and exclusion, understood as

⁸⁷ The functionally specific characteristics of solidarity are defined in the EU treaties and differ from one field to another, as will be shown on the example of the chosen case studies.

the distinction between “us” and “them” (see, e.g., Bayertz 1999a; Mau 2009; Stjernø 2005). Consequently, this characteristic of solidarity as a particular value serves to distinguish this concept from universalist values such as mercy, charity, or justice (Beckert et al. 2004b, 9; Kersting 1998, 415; Maull 2009, 376).⁸⁸

Second, there is an overall agreement that the concept of solidarity includes both a descriptive and a normative component (Bayertz 1998, 11; Capaldi 1998, 86). While the former mainly describes existing social bonds, the latter points to the related duties requiring reciprocal action, toleration, or omission (Hatje 2015, 75; Karagiannis 2007b, 228). The concept of solidarity unfolds its normative dimension through the following three characteristics that are crucial to distinguish it from other normative concepts: a) the sense of a common bond and the related obligations lead to mutual assistance, which can take the form of a transfer of material resources but also of behavioral constraints; b) there is a specific legitimacy of the community and its objectives; and c) the solidarity link between the members of the group is not a given fact, but it is regarded as important by the involved actors (Bayertz 1998, 12; Karagiannis 2007a, 156; Mau 2009, 64; Schieder 2014a, 172-173). In relation to the normative implications, Rachel Folz et al. maintain that the act of solidarity is both voluntary, because it cannot be enforced or demanded, and obligatory, because the infringement of the norm of solidarity and reciprocity can lead to sanctions (Folz et al. 2009, 92; Streeck 2004).

Third, related to the normative expectations is the widespread notion of solidarity as a reciprocity-related concept and an antithesis to the “free-rider” phenomenon (Beckert et al. 2004b, 9; Brunkhorst 2002, 10; Capaldi 1998, 86; Khushf 1998, 111).⁸⁹ The assumption that one vouches for the other serves as a valuable basis of trust in interpersonal relations (Aschauer and Hofmann 2016, 4). Similarly, states engage in solidary acts also partly because they believe in future reciprocity that will contribute to the fulfillment of their self-interests (Knodt and Tews 2016, 6-7). An initially one-sided support does not have to imply expectations of immediate reciprocity. It is important, however, that the voluntary commitment to unilateral support is coupled with the expectation of the same support from

⁸⁸ In this regard, Hanns W. Maull (2009) also stresses the necessity to delimitate solidarity from related political and moral concepts, such as interest, justice, morality, and altruism, in order to establish solidarity as an autonomous motivation to act (Maull 2009, 375).

⁸⁹ The free-rider phenomenon as a collective action problem comes from economic theory and describes those who benefit from goods or services even though they do not contribute to their provision.

the other party as soon as the situation is reversed (Gaitanides 2015, 89-90; Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014, 85; Kneuer and Masala 2014a, 14). In this context, Helmut Thome draws attention also to “negative norms of reciprocity,” where actors feel entitled to revenge on past wrongs (Thome 1998, 252).

Fourth, most scholars conceptualize solidarity as lying on the continuum between self-interest (frequently connoted with individualism or egoism) and altruism (see also Folz et al. 2009; Harnisch 2009). While solidarity and altruism are sometimes used interchangeably, what distinguishes the former from the latter is that solidary relationships are based on equality, where both A and B have the same reciprocal rights and duties.⁹⁰ Altruism, on the contrary, implies a hierarchical relationship between a giver and a receiver and an asymmetrical help with no expectations of quid pro quo, as is the case, for example, with organ donation (Thome 1998, 249-254). Regarding the relationship between solidarity-driven policies and interest-driven policies, it follows that solidarity results in the subordination of the pursuit of self-interests with regard to collective interests (Khushf 1998; Mau 2009; Offe 2004). Siegfried Schieder talks in this context of “enlightened self-interest” (Schieder 2009, 57-58). Also, when discussing the objectives or functions of solidarity, it should be stressed that solidarity should not be conceived as morally good per se. To quote Avery Kolers, Nazi solidarity “is morally wrong, but it is still solidarity” (Kolers 2016, 6).

Fifth, and this is where scholars disagree the most, the question is whether community feeling is a necessary precondition of solidarity or not. One group of authors claims that a special bond, a “feeling of belonging together,” is a prerequisite for solidarity (Bayertz 1999b; Ferreira-Pereira and Groom 2010; Folz et al. 2009; Höffe 2002; Mau 2005), while the other group lists other motivational grounds for acting in solidarity with others as well (Ciornei and Recchi 2017; Immerfall 2016; Kneuer and Masala 2014a; Knodt and Tews 2014b; Kolers 2016).⁹¹ This contentious issue deserves a more detailed elaboration and the juxtaposition of counterarguments offered by both groups.

It is mainly sociologists and social psychologists who belong to the camp highlighting the importance of “social cohesion,” “feelings of togetherness or compassion,” “sympathy,”

⁹⁰ Needless to say that this is a normative assumption and the actually practiced reciprocity is “quantitatively variable,” i.e. there are different degrees and manifestations of reciprocity (Thome 1998, 252).

⁹¹ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary also describes solidarity as “unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards” (Merriam-Webster 2019).

“affinity,” and similar phenomena (Wildt 1999, 216). Kurt Bayertz offers a broad definition of solidarity, framing it as a reciprocal relationship between members of a certain group that are tied to each other by a shared perception of commonality and are willing to vouch for each other. He calls this type of solidarity *community solidarity* (“Gemeinschaftssolidarität”) (Bayertz 1998, 1999a).⁹² Otfried Höffe goes even further and argues that solidarity communities are *communities of common destiny* (“Schicksalsgemeinschaften”), which share the sense of being all in the same boat and whose members accordingly develop emotional bonds with each other (Höffe 2002, 90). Most of the recent works on solidarity refer to the following definition by Steffen Mau: “Solidarity is a link between individuals or social groups characterized by a particular form of mutual attachment and reciprocal commitment” (Mau 2005, 247; translated by author). According to Mau, the sense of specific attachment to a group suggests restraining self-interests in favor of collective goals (Mau 2009, 64).

Rachel Folz, Simon Musekamp, and Siegfried Schieder follow the logic of the gift and reciprocity, concepts widely used in sociology (see, e.g., Mauss 1990), and frame solidarity as a mutual fulfillment of moral rights and duties stemming from a community feeling (Folz et al. 2009). Specifically for the EU context, Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira and A.J.R. Groom highlight the importance of a “we” feeling and denote solidarity as “spiritual cement” binding together EU Member States with distinct cultures, historical backgrounds, and social and economic traditions (Ferreira-Pereira and Groom 2010, 597). Similarly, Stefan Wallaschek designates the existence of an exclusive identity of the group, which shares a common history, values, interest, and goals, as well as a resulting solid social and emotional bond between the members of the group as inherent defining attributes of solidarity (Wallaschek 2015). And also Christian Calliess, who studied the specificities of the solidarity principle in the EU, claims that solidarity is not a simple transaction based on reciprocity but must be grounded in the recognition of common goals and interests (Calliess 1999, 187-188).

Steinar Stjernø offers a more differentiated approach, defining solidarity as “the preparedness to share resources with others by personal contribution to those in struggle or in need and through taxation and redistribution organised by the state” (Stjernø 2005, 2). He distinguishes four aspects of the concept of solidarity—the foundation for solidarity, the objective of

⁹² At the same time, Bayertz identifies also other forms of solidarity, which do not necessitate the “emotional” dimension. In other words, a community spirit may well exist, but it is not a required precondition. He refers to those forms jointly as “combat solidarity” (“Kampfsolidarität”) (Bayertz 1998, 1999a).

solidarity, the question of inclusion versus exclusion, and the tension between individual freedom and collective orientation—and concludes that either belonging to a larger group and feeling of interdependence (foundation) or the realization of certain personal interests (objective) can constitute the basis for solidarity (Stjernø 2005, 16-17). At the same time, Stjernø asserts that the *self* and its identifications with a “we,” as well as the related distinction between “we” and “the others,” form the basis for feelings of solidarity (Stjernø 2005, 17-18).

Avery Kolers denounces the “moralized” conceptions of solidarity, which describe sentiments or shared attitudes, for being too narrow and conceptualizes solidarity as a type of action (Kolers 2016, 7). He argues that solidary groups come together to pursue shared political aims, and that solidarity within a group is robust against “incompletely shared interests.” In Kolers’ understanding, solidarity occurs notwithstanding disagreement about the group’s chosen ends and means (Kolers 2012, 367).

Michèle Knodt and Anne Tews, inspired by Durkheim’s conception of organic solidarity, define solidarity within the EU’s highly differentiated multi-level system as a “unity, which is based on or creates a community of interests, objectives and standards” (Knodt and Tews 2016, 3). According to them, shared identity and common feelings are a possible aspect or outcome, but not a necessary condition for solidarity (Knodt and Tews 2014a, 10; Knodt et al. 2014, 111). This distinguishes their approach from the one represented by other authors who consider some kind of attachment (Mau 2009) or a “we-feeling” (Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014) as an essential prerequisite for solidarity. Similarly, Irina Ciornei and Ettore Recchi argue that “given that identities can themselves be only ‘thin’ expressions of group membership, we consider identity as a factor that can favor solidarity, rather than the substance of solidarity as such” (Ciornei and Recchi 2017, 470). Stefan Immerfall also contends that solidarity does not presuppose a common identity, let alone an overarching sense of community, but solely the admission of shared responsibility that originates from a growing sense of interdependence (Immerfall 2016, 48).

This study recognizes that existing research on solidarity may contain different and sometimes even contradictory conceptualizations and definitions. Classic approaches to solidarity were limited to smaller communities. As they expanded to capture national and later also international contexts, the definitional conditions have inevitably changed.

Consequently, while solidarity between individuals or social groups usually requires a certain degree of mutual attachment, solidarity between the EU Member States does not. It has been empirically proven that solidarity behavior also occurs without an existing feeling of togetherness or shared interests (see also Thome 1998, 219). This study therefore contends that a community feeling or shared identity are generally favorable conditions for the existence of solidarity but not a necessary prerequisite. EU Member States can just as well be motivated to contribute to the European project and practice solidarity in the pursuit of their own self-interests. It follows that self-interest and solidarity are not inherently mutually exclusive.⁹³ Regardless the underlying motivation, as long as a Member State is ready to subordinate the pursuit of its own national interests to collective interests and goals, its actions can still be considered solidary. The self-imposed commitment to provide assistance, if need be, requires an acknowledgement of the specific legitimacy of the community and its objectives (Schieder 2014a, 172-173).

Building on the aforementioned theoretical foundations, this study offers the following definition of *intergovernmental solidarity* in the EU context:

Intergovernmental solidarity is a functionally, temporally, and spatially construed link between EU Member States characterized by reciprocal commitment and acknowledged legitimacy of the community and its objectives.

To account for the external dimension of European solidarity, this study, following the provisions of Articles 3, 21, and 24 TEU, proposes the following definition of *international solidarity* in the EU context:

International solidarity is a functionally, temporally, and spatially construed link of the EU and its Member States toward collective actors beyond European borders.

It is the understanding of the present study that EU-specific international solidarity extends beyond humanitarian assistance and the CFSP of the EU and indeed encompasses all political, economic, social, legal, security, and other relations of the Union and its Member States with the wider world.

⁹³ This recognition helps overcome the "norm-versus-interests" dichotomy (Diez 2005: 624).

Before proceeding with the case selection, the remainder of this section briefly outlines potential limitations of solidarity among EU Member States. One key determinant is the national context, such as when different interest groups strive to influence the respective government's European-level decisions (Knodt and Tews 2017). In the tradition of new liberalism developed by Andrew Moravcsik (1997, 2003), state preferences are formed as a result of ongoing competition between interest groups as well as individuals within a state. Depending on which social group is able to assert itself and gain influence on governmental decisions, resulting state behavior can be more or less solidary.⁹⁴ Since dominant groups and societal preferences within states as well as contextual factors are constantly shifting, states' willingness to act in solidarity with others is prone to change too.

The emergence of crises can aggravate tendencies of national demarcation and related "desolidarization." It can be argued, on the one hand, that calling for solidarity can be difficult when it is hard to assign responsibility for the given crisis. On the other hand, following Ulrich Steinvoth, who understands solidarity as "the virtue of equals who help one another in misfortunes they are not responsible for," it can be contended that members of a community are required to help each other even in emergencies that they have not contributed to (Steinvoth 2017, 10).

Reluctance toward solidarity can further emerge when (assumed) costs of engaging in a solidary action outweigh (assumed) benefits now or in the future. To put it differently, it can be hypothesized that if a state expects some benefits in return, such as in form of future reciprocity, it is more likely to act solidary (Knodt and Tews 2017). Knodt and Tews (2016) see the limitations of solidarity especially during crises, when countries calculate only in short-term horizons, without having a medium- or long-term perspective in mind.

Reciprocity certainly contains a temporal dimension, yet most authors have conceptually only been concerned with the future. However, reciprocity and the related willingness to act in solidarity with others are not only oriented toward the future but are also conditioned by

⁹⁴ Following the variant of *ideational liberalism*, state-internal conceptions of national identity, political ideology, and social order would be the main decisive factors influencing processes of preference formation within states. *Commercial liberalism* emphasizes the realization of economic interests as the primary factor and causal mechanism lying between national preference formation and state behavior. And *republican liberalism* highlights the institutional procedures through which social interests are aggregated and flow into state preference formation (Moravcsik 1997, 524-533; 2003, 167-176).

past experiences (see also Eriksen 2017). Against this background, this study argues that *historical solidarity*, mostly in the form of a painful or disappointing experience of not having received solidarity as expected, can result in reciprocal non-solidary behavior.

Other limitations of solidarity within the EU can originate from the failure of states to calculate their costs and benefits across different policy and issue areas. They plea for solidarity in one policy area but refuse to act in solidarity with their fellow Member States in a different policy field. Nevertheless, as Knodt and Tews point out, such cross-issue calculation is essential for ensuring mutuality and reciprocity in the EU system (Knodt and Tews 2017, 54).

Although a strong sense of community or shared identity are not necessary conditions of solidarity, it is not unreasonable to assume that their existence does favor solidarity. Corresponding to Durkheim's theory of the division of labor and his definition of organic society, it can be surmised that, with increasing degree of interdependence, solidarity bonds between different societies intensify (Durkheim 1988 [1893]). Accordingly, the European integration process and the related increase in interconnectedness and interdependence between EU Member States and their societies would mean that solidarity connections become stronger too. Steffen Mau, however, identifies a problem facing internal European solidarity, which has its origin in various waves of territorial expansions, as these were accompanied by a redefinition of goals and perspectives for integration and brought with them an increase in intra-European heterogeneity (Mau 2005, 263).

Finally, solidarity relationships are supposed to be non-hierarchical and symmetrical, no matter the actual or perceived power of the individual actors involved (Thome 1998, 249-254). A potential factor limiting solidarity between EU Member States would therefore be the existence of a certain hierarchy within the EU. Considering the persistence of dividing lines between the old and new Member States, where the latter ones often feel underappreciated and treated as second-class citizens, the existence of even an informal or unofficial hierarchical setting might prove as a crucial solidarity-hindering factor for the EU.

The proposed definition suggests that solidarity is determined functionally and can differ from one policy area to another. This is very important to the current study, which argues in favor of a more differentiated view on solidarity as exercised by EU Member States. A state

can show solidarity in one policy area and deny solidarity in another area. More importantly, it can decline solidarity even in the same policy area in which it previously acted in solidarity if the contextual circumstances have changed. It follows that scholars should avoid the adoption of a black-and-white lens for the analysis of solidarity and aim for a more nuanced understanding of the underlying reasons, while simultaneously taking into account the aforementioned limits of solidarity. The following section explains the rationale behind the case selection for this study, which aims to account for the potentially different manifestations of and limits to solidarity in different policy fields.

3.4 Case Selection

References to intergovernmental solidarity at the EU level can be found in diverse policy areas, which largely correspond with the mentions of the solidarity principle in the Lisbon Treaty. Accordingly, scholars have studied the empirical reality of intergovernmental solidarity and its possible limits in policy fields such as fiscal and economic policy (Callies 2013; Eriksen 2017; Heinemann 2014; Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014; Schelkle 2017; Schieder 2014b; Wallaschek 2019, 2020b); energy, climate, and environmental policy (Knodt and Piefer 2014; Knodt and Tews 2016, 2017; Tosun 2014); the CFSP (Ferreira-Pereira and Groom 2010; Rürger 2014); and increasingly also migration policy (Bast 2014; Bendel 2011; Knodt and Tews 2016, 2017; Monar 2015; Segeš Frelak 2017b; Wallaschek 2019, 2020a; Wihtol de Wenden 2017).

International forms of solidarity, i.e. in EU external relations, have received much less scholarly attention. One author who has extensively studied European solidarity toward Europe's "outside" is Siegfried Schieder (2014a). In his contributions, he explored the role of solidarity in the "special relations" of the EU and selected EU Member States, concretely Germany, France, and Sweden, toward the Central and Eastern European countries and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) (Folz et al. 2009; Schieder 2009; Schieder et al. 2011). Another author concerned with international solidarity is Elsa Tulmets, who investigated the link between identity and solidarity in the foreign policy of selected Central and Eastern European and Baltic EU Member States toward the Eastern neighborhood (Tulmets 2011, 2012, 2014).

As mentioned above, the commitment to solidarity shows its limits especially in times of crisis—and the EU is no exception. While for example social solidarity through fiscal redistribution seemed to be working well on the EU level, the heated political debates during the financial crises as well as the disputed nature of the common management, burden sharing, and mutual solidarity during the latest migration and refugee crisis seem to counter this (see Ciornei and Recchi 2017).

European solidarity was put to a hard test during the European sovereign debt crisis, which began in Iceland in 2008, then spread to other European countries, primarily Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, but basically affected the whole EU. Solidarity was invoked by both the debtors and the creditors, yet with different intentions and understandings of what the concept implies on a practical level. While the debtor countries presented solidarity as a form of financial burden sharing that they were entitled to, the donor countries portrayed solidarity not only as a right but also as a duty of the indebted countries to implement reforms and austerity measures aimed at reducing the level of their sovereign debt and restoring their creditworthiness (Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014, 99). Accordingly, the discussions on how to tackle the European debt crisis were, *inter alia*, focused on finding the right balance between solidarity and individual responsibility (Heinemann 2014).

On the one hand, the more affluent members of the eurozone offered financial help to heavily indebted countries to consolidate their public finances and support the banking sector. The financial support measures, such as through the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM), which in 2012 transformed into the permanent rescue funding program, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), can be regarded as a manifestation of solidarity by the lenders (Barbier and Colomb 2014). At the same time, these loans and bank guarantees, initiated by the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (jointly called the “Troika”), were subject to strict conditions imposed on the indebted countries.

On the other hand, the fairness of the bailout packages was debated. The question was raised by some Member States as to why the better-off countries with lower debts should be obliged to help the heavily indebted countries, especially when some of them, such as Greece, had long been misreporting their government budget data (Eriksen 2017; Münch 2014). Slovakia, being one of the poorest countries of the Eurozone and at the same time having one of the

lowest debt burdens in the EU, rejected paying its share of the international Greek bailout. Slovakia's politicians questioned the fairness of such arrangement and asked why Slovak taxpayers, who had been "tightening their belts" for decades and went through painful self-imposed economic reforms, should demonstrate solidarity with nations far wealthier than themselves (Auer 2014; Eriksen 2017).⁹⁵ EU Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner, Olli Rehn, rebuked Slovakia for their decision, saying "I can only regret this breach of solidarity within the euro area" (Reuters 2010). Then Finance Minister Ivan Mikloš replied by also referring to the principle of solidarity: "I do not consider this as solidarity if it is solidarity between poor and rich, of the responsible with the irresponsible, or taxpayers with bank owners and managers" (Reuters 2010).

Most observers have come to the conclusion that solidarity among European countries during the European sovereign debt crisis represented a form of conditioned solidarity, i.e. creditor states offering help to partners who abide by the commonly agreed rules and thus "earn" solidarity (Gerhards and Lengfeld 2014). Siegfried Schieder frames the interplay between solidarity and self-effort as a "solidarity versus solidity" paradigm (Schieder 2014b). Jürgen Gerhards and Holger Lengfeld argue that the willingness to participate in the debt payments of EU crisis countries increase sharply when these countries show budgetary discipline and reduce their spending levels. This, they contend, is why solidarity with Greece was significantly lower than that with other countries—because of its below-average compliance with legal rules and the lack of budget discipline (Gerhards and Lengfeld 2014, 222). Western European leaders such as former European Council President Herman Van Rompuy or former German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble stressed that solidarity was not "a one-way street" and pointed out that Greece's lax national policy was contrary to the spirit of solidarity (Immerfall 2016).

The crisis of solidarity during the European sovereign debt crisis has been extensively studied, which is one of the reasons why it will not be one of the empirical case studies here (see Calliess 2013; Eriksen 2017; Heinemann 2014; Kleger and Mehlhausen 2014; Schieder 2014b). In addition, Slovakia is the only Eurozone member among the V4 and its involvement in the management and resolution of the crisis was therefore fundamentally

⁹⁵ At the time of the bailout negotiations, the monthly minimum wage in Slovakia was less than half of the one in Greece (€308 compared with €863) (Reuters 2010).

different, a factor that would inevitably diminish the comparability between the four cases. This study will therefore examine two other policy fields, one of which has attracted a lot of scholarly attention with regard to solidarity and the other that has not been extensively studied under the solidarity lens. First, solidarity has been recognized as a guiding principle of the EU Migration and Asylum Policy, and the recent migration and refugee crisis provides a perfect case to study solidarity among EU Member States. The second case study will illuminate how the principle of solidarity, underpinning European integration from the very beginning, is reflected in the current enlargement policy of the EU and the individual Member State preferences on enlargement. EU enlargement is not a single-issue policy but rather permeates and draws on almost all of the EU's issue areas, which makes the case even more intriguing to examine.⁹⁶

3.4.1 Solidarity within the EU Migration and Asylum Policy

Intergovernmental solidarity in the migration and asylum domain is enshrined in Articles 67-80 TFEU, as part of the “Area of Freedom, Security and Justice” chapter (Arts. 67-80 TFEU, EU 2009a). Article 67.2 TFEU sets out three principles that should guide the EU migration and asylum policy: absence of internal border controls; fair treatment of third-country nationals; and solidarity between Member States. However, these guiding principles—freedom of movement, fairness, and solidarity—are rather vague in their respective formulations, from which no concrete policy can be legally claimed (Bast 2014, 146).

The solidarity principle is reinforced in Article 80 TFEU, which states that the EU migration policy, which covers asylum, immigration, and border controls, “shall be governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between the Member States” (Art. 80 TFEU, EU 2009a). This Article is legally more substantial than Article 67 (see Bast 2014). The EU serves in this regard as an instance that should make sure that the burden-sharing principle is put into practice and that the responsibilities as well as financial and administrative burdens are fairly redistributed (EU 2009a). However, the operationalization of Article 80 TFEU and the specific mechanisms of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility are highly contested (Küçük 2016). Therefore, it is useful to take a look at the secondary law that implements the asylum policy.

⁹⁶ Ulrich Sedelmeier calls it a “composite policy” (Sedelmeier 2005, 402).

The EU is an area of open borders and freedom of movement. In light of the refugee movement from former Yugoslavia during and after the Balkan wars, the Member States recognized the need for common asylum system with harmonized policies in order to avoid inefficiencies and duplications (Fullerton 2016, 65). Following the adoption of the Schengen Agreement in 1999, which eliminated border controls between signatory states, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) was put in place to ensure same provisions for granting asylum to people fleeing persecution or serious harm, as enshrined in the 1951 Geneva Convention on the protection of refugees (European Commission 2017b).⁹⁷ The CEAS has developed over time and is composed of several directives and regulations harmonizing common minimum standards for asylum: the Asylum Procedures Directive, Reception Conditions Directive, Qualification Directive, Dublin Regulation, and Eurodac Regulation (European Commission 2017b).⁹⁸

The central directive guiding the EU migration and asylum policy and especially the allocation of responsibilities among Member States is the Dublin regulation No. 604/2013, also known as the Dublin III Regulation, which defines the criteria for deciding which state is responsible for examining asylum applications within the area without internal frontiers (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2013b).⁹⁹ The Dublin procedure shall ensure that only one country is responsible for processing an asylum seeker's application, which should ideally prevent asylum seekers from the so-called "asylum shopping," that is, individuals moving from one jurisdiction to another and submitting their asylum applications in multiple countries (Brekke and Brochmann 2015, 147). At the same time, the clearly determined Member State cannot deny processing the asylum claims it is responsible for. This again protects asylum seekers from "orbiting" throughout Europe, with governments ignoring their asylum requests and sending them back and forth (Bast 2014, 149; European Commission 2017c; European Commission 2017d).

⁹⁷ Until then, migration- and asylum-related matters were left to the discretion of Member States (Fullerton 2016, 64).

⁹⁸ Another directive, the Temporary Protection Directive, allows for reallocation of displaced persons among EU Member States in case of large-scale refugee movements (Council of the EU 2001). This directive, considered as an emergency measure, should provide refugees with immediate temporary protection (Council of the EU 2001). However, the Temporary Protection Directive, which should also promote solidarity and burden sharing among Member States, has never been activated so far (European Commission 2017h).

⁹⁹ The original Dublin Convention was adopted in 1990 and further amended in 2003 (Dublin II), when it became an integral part of the Common European Asylum System, and in 2013 (Dublin III) (Fullerton 2016, 67). The Dublin III regulation forms part of EU law and is valid also in four countries outside the Union: Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland (Bergmann 2015, 1448; Lyons 2015).

The “default” rule under the current Dublin regime is that the state of first entry, meaning the European country where an asylum seeker first entered the Union, is responsible for examining the respective asylum claim (European Commission 2017d).¹⁰⁰ This state is supposed to register asylum applications and take fingerprints, which are recorded, together with other personal data of asylum seekers, in an EU-wide database called EURODAC (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2013a). This system enables tracking of asylum seekers, since immigration authorities can access the database at any time and see whether an individual has already applied for asylum in other European countries (Brekke and Brochmann 2015, 147). In the case that an asylum seeker moves on to another Dublin country after having already been registered, he or she can be automatically returned to the country of first entry. This procedure is called “Dublin transfers” (European Commission 2020). The current system operates under the assumption that the asylum laws and practices and hence also the level of protection for asylum seekers are similar, if not the same, in each and every Member State (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2013b). In reality, however, significant differences exist as to national asylum legislation and reception policies, living standards, access to welfare goods, and labor market conditions (Brekke and Brochmann 2015, 146; European Parliament and Council of the EU 2013b). This motivates refugees’ refusal to be fingerprinted and registered, so that they can move on from the first country of asylum to other EU countries where they wish to settle (European Commission 2017d; Fullerton 2016, 60; Lyons 2015). These secondary movements can lead to additional asymmetries in the EU-wide distribution of asylum seekers (European Commission 2017d).

The Dublin Regulation has been viewed as the cornerstone of the CEAS, providing clear allocation of responsibilities among the EU Member States for processing asylum claims (Bast 2014). However, the challenges posed by the migratory and refugee crisis pointed out significant structural deficiencies of the Dublin regime, as recognized by the European Commission in its 6 April Communication (European Commission 2016). The “country of first entry” rule has the consequence that, in the event of a large influx of refugees, a disproportional burden is placed on the countries through which asylum seekers enter the joint area, i.e. those Member States that form the external border of the EU (Brekke and

¹⁰⁰ Although the main rule remains the first country of entry, there are some exceptions, such as family ties, reunification of families, protection of unaccompanied minors, or recent possession of visa or residence permit in a Member State, that are also considered when deciding on the state responsible for processing the claims of asylum seekers (European Commission 2017c).

Brochmann 2015, 148; Fullerton 2016, 68). This means that only a small number of Member States are responsible for the vast majority of arrivals, which stretches the administrative and financial capacities of their asylum systems (European Commission 2017d). In the recent case, it was especially Greece and Italy who were put under immense pressure by the exceptional influx of refugees and migrants. Both countries were overwhelmed by the situation and unable to comply with the obligations to ensure fair asylum procedures and prevent asylum seekers from moving to other European countries (Knodt and Tews 2016, 10; Küçük 2016, 453). As a reaction, some states reintroduced internal border controls, which not only created frictions among the EU Member States but also undermined the idea of borderless Europe under the CEAS (Lyons 2015). This has led some authors to conclude that, instead of providing a solidary burden-sharing mechanism, the Dublin system rather reinforces existing inequalities among EU Member States created by different geographical contexts and established migration routes (Bast 2014, 148-150). Jürgen Bast and Esin Küçük argue that the Dublin system is neither solidary nor sustainable because responsibility is unevenly allocated within the EU area, overburdening states on the southern and eastern periphery of the Union as well as some transit countries (Bast 2014; Küçük 2016). While these countries bear a greater burden and carry high costs of examining asylum applications and integrating recognized refugees, other countries are left almost unaffected (Bast 2014, 148-150). According to the authors, the system is largely unfair and ineffective as regards responsibility sharing (Bast 2014; Küçük 2016).

Another persistent problem of the Dublin regime is the dysfunctional mechanism for allocating responsibilities among the EU Member States (Küçük 2016). The European Commission acknowledged this shortcoming, saying that the Dublin system “was not designed to ensure a sustainable sharing of responsibilities for asylum applicants across the EU” (European Commission 2017d). Evidence from the recent refugee crisis has shown that fairness and solidarity in asylum responsibility sharing within the EU is not always existent (Bergmann 2015, 1448). At the height of the refugee crisis, the Commission issued two emergency proposals for the relocation and resettlement of asylum seekers.¹⁰¹ In the first

¹⁰¹ While relocation proposals were aimed at moving asylum seekers from EU countries that were under extraordinary pressure to other EU Member States that were able to grant similar protection, resettlement was a tool used to provide durable international protection to refugees. The UNHCR defines resettlement as involving “the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them - as refugees - with permanent residence status” (UNHCR 2011).

round, it envisaged a temporary and exceptional redistribution of 40,000 people in clear need of international protection (Council of the EU 2015c). This proposed measure, which was intended to relieve Italy and Greece, was adopted by consensus on 20 July 2015, when the Justice and Home Affairs Council agreed on the relocation of 32,256 asylum seekers from these two affected countries as well as on the additional resettlement of 22,504 persons from outside the EU (Council of the EU 2015c; Le Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 2015). The second round in September 2015 foresaw 120,000 relocations to further alleviate the pressure on Greece, Italy, and other affected Member States (European Commission 2015c; Council of the EU 2015b). Based on the Commission proposals, Home Affairs Ministers adopted two Decisions in September 2015 to relocate 160,000 people in clear need of international protection from Italy, Greece, and, if relevant, other affected Member States and assist them in managing the pressures of the refugee crisis. While the first emergency relocation was carried out on a voluntary basis, the second decision was legally binding and envisaged mandatory quotas (Grimmel 2017). In the respective Decision 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015, the situation in the Mediterranean and the associated migratory flows were classified as exceptional and the Council accordingly referred to Article 78(3) TFEU, which affirms that:

“In the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterised by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission [and after consulting the European Parliament], may adopt provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned” (Art. 78(3) TFEU, EU 2009a).

Pointing to the emergency situation in the frontline Member States dealing with significant migration and asylum pressure within their territories, the Decision further cited Article 80 TFEU, which highlights the principle of internal solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between the EU Member States (Council of the EU 2015b). In quantitative terms, the term “solidarity” was mentioned eight times in the document and “fair sharing of responsibility” five times. Despite this unequivocal call for solidarity, four Member States—Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and the Czech Republic—rejected the proposal of fixed quotas and an automatic relocation of refugees and voted against the adoption of this Decision (Lang 2015). After the four countries were outvoted in the Council and the Decision was adopted by a qualified majority vote, Slovakia and Hungary decided to challenge the legality of the Decision before the Court of Justice of the EU. They questioned the applicability of Article

78(3) TFEU, claiming that the situation did not classify to be an emergency (Grimmel 2017; Küçük 2016, 453-466). Furthermore, Hungary argued against the implementation of the relocation decision on the grounds of its alleged unfair nature because the Decision imposed obligatory quotas on all Member States instead of taking into account the burdens faced by countries such as Hungary, which had already been disproportionately affected by increased migratory pressures (Küçük 2016, 466).

While the Court of Justice of the EU eventually dismissed the case in 2017, the numerous legal and political disputes pointed to the ineffectiveness of instruments based on voluntary participation of the Member States who are free to decide the level of their contribution. The disputed content of the two specific provisions on solidarity (Arts. 67(2) and 80 TFEU) and the Dublin regulation have made it clear that solidarity within the EU should be understood more in a political rather than in a legal sense, since there is no mandatory or enforceable requirement of solidarity (Monar 2015, 1032).¹⁰²

3.4.2 Solidarity and Further Enlargement of the EU

While the nexus between solidarity and migration has recently dominated the EU solidarity debate in both political and academic circles, the question of how solidarity, a fundamental principle of European integration, translates into EU Member States' actions toward its immediate neighborhood has not been much explored yet. Against this backdrop, this study makes a strong case for analyzing whether and to what extent the notion of solidarity has been a factor in the Visegrad states' enlargement preferences. Interestingly, although there are almost no studies assessing the EU's current enlargement policy under the solidarity perspective, the 2004 "big bang" enlargement as well as other pre-2004 enlargement rounds were undertaken with reference to the principle of solidarity and inspired a stream of both theoretical and empirical academic publications (Jileva 2004; O'Brennan 2001).

Every enlargement bears not only benefits but also some potential costs and risks to European integration efforts, and it therefore depends on the individual as well as joint willingness of

¹⁰² Member States are not obliged to assist their fellow Member States if these are exposed to a particular pressure on their asylum systems (Monar 2015, 1032). Similarly, pursuant to Art. 80 TFEU, "whenever necessary," the EU should adopt appropriate measures to uphold the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, but it is not further specified what can be regarded as necessary circumstances (Monar 2015, 1032).

the EU Member States to extend the EU membership to (potential) candidate countries. The fundamental question, therefore, is what drives the motivation of the EU to enlarge and what accounts for the enlargement preferences and priorities of the individual Member States. Earlier theoretical works on European integration, and implicitly also enlargement, were dominated by rationalist theories of international politics and international institutions (O'Brennan 2001, 177-179; Schimmelfennig 1999, 3). For example, in his seminal and often-cited work *The Choice for Europe*, Andrew Moravcsik applied the rationalist-institutionalist approach of liberal intergovernmentalism to the study of European integration (Moravcsik 1998). However, it must be emphasized in this context that his analysis focused on the major turning points in the history of European integration and was therefore primarily concerned with “deepening” instead of “widening” of the European Community (Moravcsik 1998).¹⁰³ Other theoretical analyses of the EU’s association policy, especially toward the Central and Eastern European candidate countries, were also guided by rationalist assumptions (Friis 1997; Guggenbuhl 1995; Haggard et al. 1993).

By the time of the “big bang” enlargement round of 2004, it became clear that rational choice approaches, postulating that actors are primarily driven by material self-interests, were insufficient in explaining the EU’s enlargement policy and state preferences on enlargement (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2002, 524; Sedelmeier 2001, 18). As a consequence, a growing number of authors have scrutinized and questioned the rationalist premises and stressed the importance of non-material, ideational factors in order to explain the EU’s decision to enlarge toward Central and Eastern Europe. These studies use predominantly constructivist approaches to investigate what role identities, norms, and principles play in the EU’s motivation to expand its membership (Fierke and Wiener 1999; Schimmelfennig 2001; Sedelmeier 2001; Sjursen 2002).

Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier have embedded their analyses of enlargement between rationalist and sociological or social constructivist approaches to reflect the then ongoing “great debate” in the International Relations discipline (Schimmelfennig 1999, 2001; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2002). In his often-cited contribution *The Double Puzzle of EU Enlargement: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Decision to Expand*

¹⁰³ According to many authors, enlargement was always an integral part of the integration process and both “deepening” and “widening” processes were therefore often studied simultaneously within the theoretical literature on European integration (Pollack 2005; Sedelmeier 2005).

to the East, Schimmelfennig compared the premises of rationalist paradigm and sociological institutionalism and found both approaches insufficient to explain both actor preferences and their interaction as well as the collective decision of enlargement (Schimmelfennig 1999). To provide the missing link, he introduced the “rhetorical action” approach, arguing that the Central and Eastern European states and enlargement advocates were able to persuade those opposed to enlargement and achieve their goal of accession through the strategic use of norm-based arguments (Schimmelfennig 2001, 76).

Helene Sjursen has also investigated the arguments behind the EU’s decision to expand and found that while some justifications of enlargement stress the sense of community belonging and reflect the logic of appropriateness, others follow cost-benefit calculations and the logic of consequence (March and Olsen 1989, 1998). Accordingly, Sjursen suggests that the EU’s motivation for further enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe should be considered under the different integrationist modes—*political*, *economic*, and *cultural*—together with the modes of rationality that can be *instrumental*, *contextual*, or *communicative* (Sjursen 2006b, 1). Based on this, the volume *Questioning EU Enlargement: Europe in Search of Identity* outlines three ideal types that depict the EU as a mere problem-solving entity, a value-based community, or a rights-based post-national union (Sjursen 2006c). According to the first mode, which resembles a means-ends type of rationality, the EU would offer membership only to states that it would ultimately benefit from. The second hypothesis points to the existence of common identity and a “we-feeling” in the EU and suggests that enlargement is also a matter of values. It follows that the EU would primarily welcome states toward which it feels a particular sense of attachment. And, finally, the third notion portrays the EU as a rights-based post-national union and postulates that the EU would prioritize enlargement to those states that uphold the principles of human rights and democracy. Sjursen comes to the conclusion that the EU’s decision to enlarge to Central and Eastern Europe can be best explained by the existence of the EU as a value-based community and the presence of a sense of “kinship-based duty” (Sjursen 2002, 508).¹⁰⁴ She also softens Schimmelfennig’s argument

¹⁰⁴ In an article published in 2002, Sjursen adopts a slightly altered typology and distinguishes between pragmatic, ethical-political, and moral reasons or narratives used to justify enlargement. Nevertheless, she comes to the same conclusion that ethical-political reasons, which point to a sense of kinship-based duty, are particularly decisive in explaining prioritizations in the EU’s enlargement policy (Sjursen 2002, 491).

that the enlargement happened mainly as a consequence of “rhetorical entrapment” of those members who opposed further expansion of the Union, arguing that:

“normative arguments were not simply ‘used’ by the promoters of enlargement as strategic instruments to shame more reluctant member states into agreement. In the case of Denmark, the support appears to have been established on the basis of a sense of solidarity towards the applicants in CEE” (Sjursen 2006a, 204-205).

She underscores her argument by referencing statements made by various politicians in the 1990s, who stressed the sense of a shared destiny, solidarity, and “special responsibility” of Western Europe toward the Central and Eastern European states (see also Sedelmeier 2001: 16-17).¹⁰⁵

In an article from 2004, Elena Jileva investigated what role the norm of solidarity played in the enlargement policy of the EU toward the Central and Eastern European countries aspiring for EU membership (Jileva 2004). She argues that the EU’s decision regarding Eastern enlargement was norm-driven and that the EU leaders invoked the principle of solidarity right from the beginning of the accession negotiations with the Central and Eastern European states in 1998 (Jileva 2004, 5). Jileva cites then Austrian President Thomas Klestil, who stressed that enlargement was not only about removing border controls, but also, and more importantly, about breaking “barriers in our mind. There’s no longer any room for narrow-mindedness. Solidarity is the key word of today and tomorrow” (Klestil quoted in Jileva 2004, 6). Similarly, numerous EU documents from the turn of the new millennium, such as Agenda 2000, which was an action program that outlined the European Commission’s vision of a “stronger and wider Europe” and the Commission’s position on enlargement, highlighted the principle of solidarity as a cornerstone of the relations between the EU and the Central and Eastern European countries (European Council 1999).

What is even more interesting is that the Visegrad countries themselves used the narrative of the EU’s historical obligation, “special responsibility,” and solidarity to make the case for their accession (Jileva 2004, 7). By presenting themselves as the “kidnapped West” and

¹⁰⁵ In a speech entitled “Shaping Europe’s future” delivered in Berlin in 1998, then Commission President Jacques Santer declared that “the collapse of the Iron Curtain ended the Cold War and presented us with a unique opportunity to unite Europe in peace and freedom after almost five hundred years. We have a historical and moral duty to seize this opportunity” (Santer 1998). Similarly, French Prime Minister Alain Juppé expressed his conviction that Western Europe had a “duty to solidarity” with the Central and East Europeans (Juppé 1993).

making references to historical events that were supposed to depict the West as abandoning Central and Eastern Europe, they appealed to the duty of the EU to enlarge (Sjursen 2002, 503-505).¹⁰⁶ Schimmelfennig calls this rhetorical strategy of backing up the demand for accession by claiming the ever-present, yet denied, aspiration to belong to the Western European civilization “the manipulation of collective European identity” (Schimmelfennig 2001, 68-69). The “return to Europe” argument was further underpinned by the West’s often-voiced desire to overcome the division of the continent through integration, which the Central and Eastern European states used as a means to stress the “moral imperative” of the EU to accelerate the negotiation process (O’Brennan 2001, 196; Sedelmeier 2005, 407). In addition, the Central and Eastern European states based their claims to membership on emphasizing their strong commitment and adherence to the community’s values and norms (Schimmelfennig 2001, 68). Finally, the Central and Eastern European states used a “historical reciprocity” argument as a rhetorical strategy, demanding the EU treat candidate countries consistently and equally to the states involved in earlier rounds of enlargement (Schimmelfennig 2001, 70). The empirical investigation of this study will, *inter alia*, verify whether the Visegrad states remain true to the aforementioned arguments now that they are sitting on the other side of the table.

Similar to most recent works dealing with the EU enlargement process, this study also follows a constructivist, norm-based approach to enlargement with a focus on solidarity specifically. It differs from other studies by focusing on the underlying motivation and preferences of individual Member States—concretely the four Visegrad states—and not the EU as a whole.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, it makes the case for establishing a theoretical and empirical link between solidarity and identity, reasons for which are explained in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁶ A powerful narrative in this regard was the “myth of Yalta,” symbolizing the failure of the West to prevent the division of Europe at the end of the Second World War and surrendering the Central and Eastern European region to the Soviet sphere of influence. Any attempt to deprive the Central and Eastern European states from the EU membership would have been denounced as an “economic Yalta” or a “new economic Iron Curtain” (O’Brennan 2001, 195; Schimmelfennig 2001, 69).

¹⁰⁷ A similar approach was applied by the 2011 Special Issue of the Journal Perspectives entitled *Identity and Solidarity in Foreign Policy: Investigating East Central European Relations with the Eastern Neighbourhood* (Tulmets 2011). The contributions collected in this special issue used a constructivist lens to study foreign policies of selected Central and Eastern European and Baltic states toward the Eastern neighborhood. This study has a broader geographic scope, covering not only the Eastern neighborhood but also the Western Balkans.

Chapter 4: Identity in International Relations

An actor cannot know what it wants until it knows what it is.

—Alexander Wendt (1999, 231)

Solidarity is an interactionist, relational concept that describes the quality of the relationship between two or more actors or actor groups. Focused on processes of social interaction within a distinct setting, solidarity belongs to the tradition of social constructivism, and its nature depends upon other social constructivist concepts, especially that of identity. The underlying logic is that before relating one's *self* to something or someone else, one must know what the *self* is. In other words, conceptually, one cannot study solidarity without first defining the identities of the participating actors in terms of their understanding of *self* and their relation to (*significant*) *others*. In the context of international relations, before states can formulate and pursue their interests, they first need to be aware of themselves as actors—to know who they are. The characterization and specification of national identities are therefore important prerequisites for analysis of solidarity behavior.

This study follows the tradition of social constructivist identity research. The “constructivist turn” in the International Relations theory in the 1990s and early 2000s, especially the work of the leading constructivist thinker Alexander Wendt (1987, 1992, 1994), situated the identity problematique at the core of International Relations research (Hansen and Waever 2002; Joerissen and Stahl 2003; Risse 1999).¹⁰⁸ The argument for a constructivist account of identity is twofold: first, explanations based solely on positivist and materialist conceptions of international relations and actors' interests, as advanced particularly by (neo)realist and (neo)liberal theorists, are insufficient for the exploration of variation in attitudes, and second, rationalist frameworks have not adequately explained how identities are constructed and reconstructed (see also Jepperson et al. 1996; Waever 2002). While primordialist ontology understands identity as given and fixed, for constructivists, identity is contingent on shifting

¹⁰⁸ Like many other social constructivist concepts, identity was first explored by social psychologists, who were primarily interested in the nature of *self* and personal identity (Erikson 1973). In International Relations literature, the term *identity* first appeared in the 1960s, and several authors attempted to approximate the concept, including Karl Deutsch's elaboration of security communities and the sense of “we-feeling,” Kai Holsti's work on role conceptions, Kenneth Boulding's notion of national images, and Robert Jervis's analysis of the impact of perceptions and cognitive bias in decision making. Felix Berenskoetter, however, argues that none of them made explicit use of the concept of identity (Berenskoetter 2010). It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the concept experienced a revival in the International Relations theory.

historical, sociopolitical, and other environments and on what actors “make of it,” to use Wendt’s famous expression (Cruz 2000, 279; Peters 1998, 20). In other words, rather than being biological or primordial, identity is socially constructed and therefore also prone to change.

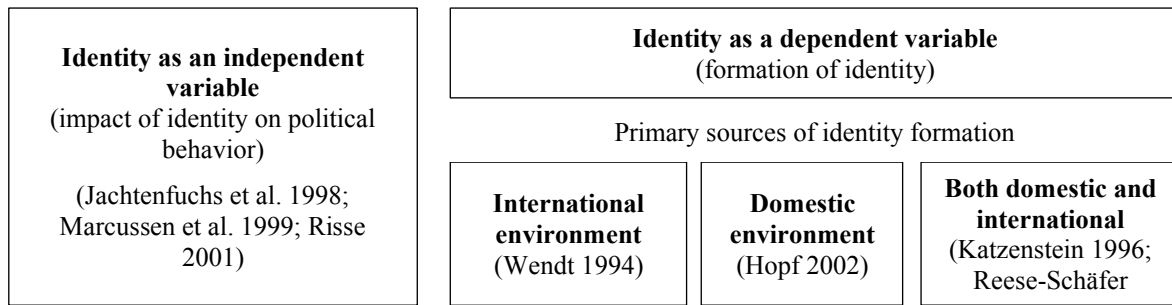
Social constructivism also accounts for the mutual constitution of structure and agency (Checkel 1998).¹⁰⁹ On the one hand, structures constitute and influence actors’ identities (and interests) by both creating and limiting their opportunities for action. Conversely, through their interactions and everyday practices based in their respective identities, actors can reproduce these structures and also fundamentally change them (Risse 1999, 37).

4.2 Identity Research at a Glance

Growing scholarly attention to the social construction of the international system (see Checkel 1998; Hopf 1998; Wendt 1987; Wendt 1992, 1994) has sparked research interest in immaterial factors and introduced identity issues into International Relations theory. However, as Rawi Abdelal et al. observed, the “ubiquitous sprawl of scholarship ... has undermined the conceptual clarity of identity as a variable” (Abdelal et al. 2006, 695). The proliferation of studies on identity has resulted in a wide variety of conceptualizations and definitions, which has led some to conclude that identity is an amorphous concept lacking analytical rigor (Abdelal et al. 2006; Boekle and Nadoll 2003). In social science disciplines, identity has diverse meanings. Originally, philosophical and socio-psychological approaches to identity used the individual human being as the level of analysis. Political scientists later transferred the concept to the state level and designated states as the primary bearers of identity (Reese-Schäfer 1999a, 15). But even within the International Relations discipline, existing identity studies are characterized by a large number of different approaches. Figure 3 offers a simplified overview of existing approaches to the concept of identity, which are explored in more detail below.

¹⁰⁹ According to the *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, “the mutual constitution of structure and agency refers to the dynamic processes through which actors and contexts coevolve and codetermine one another” (Badie et al. 2011). The constructivist approach to the agent-structure problem in International Relations was adapted from the structuration theory developed by sociologist Anthony Giddens (1979, 1984), which highlights the duality in the relationship between structures and agents.

Figure 3: Simplified overview of identity research



Source: Own depiction

In classifying approaches to identity, the first fundamental distinction is whether identity is conceptualized as an independent, explanatory variable or rather as a dependent variable. The identity research has thus taken two different directions. The first group of authors, represented mainly by Jachtenfuchs et al. (1998), Marcussen et al. (1999), and Risse (2001), analyzes the effects of existing identity constructions on political behavior. The second strand of identity research, inspired mainly by the work of Wendt (1992, 1994, 1999), examines the social construction of identities and their change over time (see also Bach 1999; T.U. Berger 1996; Katzenstein 1996). Each approach has its own set of specific challenges.

The first category of approaches, which consider identity as an explanatory variable predicting political behavior, faces two problems in particular: the first is conceptual, and the second is definitional. The conceptual problem lies in the treatment of identity as predetermined. Studies that follow this path tend to ignore, for the most part, the social construction processes underlying the formation and transformation of identity over time. This tendency leads directly to the definitional and operational problem because, lacking a precise definition, identity has often been intertwined with other social constructivist concepts such as foreign policy roles (Harnisch 2011c), discursive layers (Hansen and Waever 2002), and constitutional ideas ("Verfassungsideen", Jachtenfuchs 1999). The underspecified and ambiguous relationship between identity and other theoretical concepts of constructivism, be it roles, culture, or norms, occasionally results in these concepts being used interchangeably (see also Boekle and Nadoll 2003, 163).

Studies that treat identity as a dependent variable are interested in the formation of identity. Within this strand of literature, a second distinction can be made depending on the processes

through which identities are understood to be constituted. While some constructivists view the international environment and interstate relations as the primary determinants of state identity, others consider the domestic environment to be the most significant factor.

Wendt, in line with a systemic theory of international relations, highlights the importance of the international environment in shaping state identities and argues that conceptions of *self* and *other* emerge primarily from interactions between states (Wendt 1994). In his *Social Theory of International Politics* (1994), he distinguishes between *personal* or *corporate identity* and *social identity*, which corresponds to the distinction between the “I” and the “me” in symbolic interactionism as developed by George Herbert Mead (1934).¹¹⁰ In Wendt’s conceptualization, a state’s *corporate identity* exists prior to any interaction with other actors in the international system. It is comprised of intrinsic qualities found at the domestic level that reflect an actor’s individuality. *Social identities*, in turn, are constructed through social interaction at the international level. Wendt defines social identities as “sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others” (Wendt 1994, 385). Social identities provide a framework through which agents relate to each other, thus representing a key link in the mutual constitution of agents (states) and structures (the international system) (Wendt 1987). It follows that, while actors have only one corporate identity, they can possess multiple social identities. Wendt further argues that interests are dependent on identities and the notion of *self* in relation to *others* and that both identities and interests are endogenous to the interaction between states (Wendt 1994, 384).

Wendt takes a state-centric perspective and considers domestic politics “ontologically prior to the states system,” implying that state identity is not created through domestic social interaction (Wendt 1999, 198). His approach has been subjected to significant criticism, especially by Maja Zehfuss (2001), one of whose main points of critique refers to Wendt’s

¹¹⁰ *Personal* or *corporate identity* distinguishes the *self* from the *other* and is constituted exogenously and independently from that *other*. It requires a formation of a sense of “we” or “group self” (Wendt 1994, 224-225). Wendt further differentiates between three distinct kinds of *social identities*—type, role, and collective identities—which exist only in relation to *others* (taking the others’ perspective). *Type identity* refers to a social category of actors who share some commonalities in appearance, values, attitudes, knowledge, experience, or history. These shared characteristics are partly intrinsic to their holders and partly dependent on the understandings and perceptions of others. In the international system, type identities correspond to regime types or forms of state, such as democratic, monarchical, theocratic, or communist (Wendt 1994, 225). In contrast to type identities, *role identity* exists only in relation to others who possess relevant “contradicting identities” or “counter-identities” (Wendt 1994, 227). In that respect, Wendt argues that there are strong connections between the two conceptual categories of role and identity. Finally, *collective identity* makes use of both role and type identities and blurs the distinction between *self* and *others* to form a single identity (Wendt 1994, 229).

anthropomorphic treatment of states as the primary bearers of identity. She argues that his view of states as unitary actors ignores the complexity of collective identity construction, which is a product of human communication and interaction. In this context, Zehfuss asserts that Wendt's "exclusion of domestic processes of articulation of state identity ... reduces identity to something negotiable between states" (Zehfuss 2001, 28). Wendt himself recognizes this limitation in his approach, stating, "I shall limit my focus to factors at the systemic level, even though domestic factors may matter as well" (Wendt 1994, 388). However, despite acknowledging the potential shortcomings of his approach, he does not consider state interaction with sub-state actors in his analyses.

Peter Katzenstein chooses to follow a different path. He not only understands state identities as a product of interstate interaction but also posits that "the identities of states emerge from their interactions with different social environments, both domestic and international" (Katzenstein 1996, 24). In his conception, Katzenstein accommodates both domestic and international sources of identity formation. Moreover, instead of focusing solely on the level of states, he contends that national identities are constructed by a great variety of actors, including political elites and society (Katzenstein 1996, 4; Katzenstein et al. 1998). Through his departure from a strictly state-centric systemic international relations theory and his conceptual opening to domestic, identity-constituent structures, Katzenstein seeks to understand how national interests are defined and how these processes affect states' behavior in the international system. Nevertheless, his approach has also not avoided criticism. According to Christoph Weller, in Katzenstein's conceptualization, it remains unclear who the holders of state identity are (Weller 1999, 6).

Ted Hopf proposes a third approach that does not see identity as interactive in the international system. Instead, he holds that state identities can be "entirely domestically driven" and that the scientific debate should therefore focus primarily on domestic processes that articulate state identity (Hopf 2002; see also Breuning 2011, 21).¹¹¹ Furthermore, he contends that identities that are continuously renegotiated by competing domestic visions have a profound effect on foreign policies (Hopf 2002, 281-294). In other words, Hopf postulates that international politics begins at the level of domestic society.

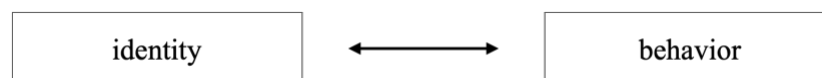
¹¹¹ Prizel (1998) and Hendrik Larsen (1999), for example, have taken similar approaches that highlight the impact of domestic backgrounds and different understandings of the state/nation on foreign policy.

At present, the dominant view in social science is that state identities are constructed as an outcome of social processes (rather than given exogenously by human nature) and are a product of an interactive dynamic between domestic and systemic levels (Jepperson et al. 1996; Reese-Schäfer 1999a). In this context, Weller adds that these two means of state identity formation can differ significantly, compete with each other, or even conflict with one another (Weller 1999, 13).

Notably, the above-presented distinction between treating identity as an independent or dependent variable points toward the positivist science tradition, which is why some social constructivist authors completely reject such “variable talk” and strict cause-effect conceptualizations.¹¹² This study supports the view that the question of the relationship between national identity and (foreign policy) interests and behavior cannot be answered by using a linear causal logic and that the influence is mutual (see figures 4 and 5).

On the one hand, embedded national identities are consequential for the articulation of state interests and the regulation of their behavior in interstate relations (Katzenstein 1996, 22; Weller 1999, 249-250). According to Jörg Nadoll, national identity provides boundaries within which behavior is accepted by all members of a group as legitimate and appropriate, and this “frame,” which is rather broad and flexible, allows for different foreign policy practices depending on specific situations (Nadoll 2003, 170).¹¹³ On the other hand, the causal arrow can also run in the other direction, meaning that identity can be reproduced and altered by behavior and, in turn, become a dependent variable (Risse et al. 1999, 157). In other words, identity is not causal but constitutive in Wendt’s sense (Wendt 1998). It can be understood as a source as well as a product of both domestic and international interaction, which corresponds to the previously mentioned constructivist assumption of the mutual constitution of agents and structures.

Figure 4: Constitutive relationship between national identity and (foreign policy) behavior



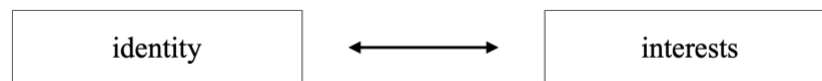
Source: Own depiction

¹¹² These authors can be classified as “thick constructivists” or “postmodernists” (Harnisch 2010, 106-107).

¹¹³ Decision makers can also leave the identity-given framework for action, as long as they are able to credibly justify such a deviation in front of their populations (Stahl and Harnisch 2009, 46).

In the same sense, interests affecting behavior are not formed outside the interaction context but are identity-contingent and endogenous to interaction (Wendt 1994, 385). Earlier authors claimed that “identities are the basis of interests” (Wendt 1992, 398) or that “identities both generate and shape interests” (Jepperson et al. 1996, 60). Their underlying argument was that “an actor needs to be aware of itself as a subject before it is able to formulate and pursue its interests” (Berenskoetter 2010). However, rather than conceiving of identities as part of the causal chain preceding interests, this study contends that identities and interests are also mutually constituted. Wendt argues that the former is motivational while the latter is cognitive and structural and, “as such, [they] play different roles in explaining action” (Wendt 1994, 385).

Figure 5: Constitutive relationship between national identity and (foreign policy) interests



Source: Own depiction

4.3 Definitions and Types of Identity

Despite the centrality of the identity concept to constructivist research, many authors have pointed to its vagueness and lack of conceptual clarity (Berenskoetter 2010; Fearon 1999). The great diversity of definitions and conceptualizations of identity across social science disciplines has prompted some to reason that “identity is so elusive, slippery, and amorphous that it will never prove to be a useful variable for the social sciences” (Abdelal et al. 2006, 18). A more precise definition of national identity requires a close examination of the notions of identity and identity types that have been distilled in political science literature. In the most basic reading, identity is used in two broad terms, referring either to an individual’s sense of *self* (how actors define who they are) or to a social category (answering the question of who we are collectively). The former can accordingly be characterized as “individual” or “personal” identity and the latter as “collective” or “social” identity.

Individual and Personal Identity

Generally, identity first refers to the specific characteristics of a person in relation to and in isolation from others. Concepts of identity differ insofar as they emphasize either the self-

attribution or the external ascription of identity-forming elements. If the self-reflection of individuals about their traits forms the basis of the construction of identity, it can be spoken of *individual identity*. By contrast, *personal identity* refers to those characteristics that individuals internalize in the process of socialization within their social environment. However, as Henning Boekle and Jörg Nadoll rightly point out, both of these aspects of identity are very much interlinked, and the construction of identities is always a consequence of the communication and interaction of individuals within their environment (Boekle and Nadoll 2003, 159). In addition, people have an intrinsic emotional need to identify and bond with other human beings and social groups, which is how their collective *social identities* develop alongside their individual or personal identities (Boekle and Nadoll 2003, 159).

Collective Identity

Every social group distinguishes itself from other social groups through its specific *collective identity*. In this context, Bernhard Peters stresses that collective identities should not be understood as a mere aggregation of properties of individuals; instead, they have characteristics of their own that are embodied in social practices (Peters 1998, 13-14). Conceptualizations of collective identities usually draw a parallel with conceptions of individual identities, which is why authors often make use of socio-psychological approaches, including theories of social identity, self-categorization, and social representation, when examining collective identities (see for example Risse et al. 1999).¹¹⁴ It is possible to single out three main defining elements of collective identity.

First, social groups are united on the basis of shared self-images, ideals, symbols, meanings, and understandings of the common past, present, and future (Marcussen et al. 1999, 615). In other words, groups of individuals form an “imagined community,” to use Benedict Anderson’s evocative phrase, by recognizing that they have something in common (B. Anderson 1991).

Second, collective identity is relational in nature, which means that its content is based on references to and juxtapositions with other communities and their collective identities

¹¹⁴ In relation to this “state as person” approach, Brian Greenhill notes that it is “tempting to treat states as if they were people because of the fact that, unlike many of the other things that we commonly tend to anthropomorphize, states are actually governed by people in the form of their individual leaders” (Greenhill 2008, 346).

(Abdelal et al. 2006, 698; Waever 2002, 24; Weller 1999, 260).¹¹⁵ Hedetoft defines collective identity as a “social construction, which is an unintentional and intentional outcome of social interaction that creates similarity and solidarity between insiders and that makes them differ from outsiders” (Hedetoft 1998, 170). His definition accentuates the difference, distinction, or otherness between members and non-members—between an “in-group” and an “out-group.” According to the self-categorization theory, collective self-images are generally linked with more positive evaluations, pointing to a certain exclusivity of the in-group (Flockhart 2005, 261; Peters 1998, 5). From a psychological perspective, an endorsement of one’s group with respect to others is important for the achievement of a positive social identity and in-group solidarity (Lebow 2008; Turner et al. 1987, 42). Social identity theory in turn hypothesizes that the perception of an in-group identity tends to provoke competitive behavior and a level of hostility toward out-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1986). However, although processes of othering are by definition relational, the relationships involved are not always oppositional. Collective identities can also be defined through positive identification with other groups (Lebow 2008; Siddi 2018). Similarly, the *other* can be constructed as the *self*’s own past (Risse et al. 1999, 155). Sonia Lucarelli concludes that in the process of identity formation, *others* can be treated in three broad respects: through recognition, distinctiveness and otherness, or external labelling (Lucarelli 2008, 32-35).

To account for the fact that “not all others are equally significant” (Wendt 1999, 327), constructivist scholarship is interested mainly in the interactions of the *self* with *significant others*. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, George Herbert Mead introduced the concepts of the *significant* and *generalized other* into the social sciences (Mead 1934).¹¹⁶ Since then, the concepts have been utilized especially by symbolic interactionists in the field of sociology and by role theoreticians in the field of political science. In interpersonal relationships, a *significant other* denotes “a primary socializing agent, such as parents or siblings, or a specific actor who holds sway over another actor through their material or

¹¹⁵ Wendt defines identities as “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self” that are “inherently relational” (Wendt 1992, 397).

¹¹⁶ Symbolic interactionism differentiates between a significant, generalized, and organized other. A *generalized other* serves as an abstract reference point for the “I.” The *self* that appears upon viewing itself from the standpoint of and taking on the perspective of the specific *generalized other* is referred to as the “Me” (Mead 1934). A generalized other, be it an organized community or social group, can take many specific forms. An *organized other* refers to a narrowly defined community of actors, which usually involves a degree of institutionalization or membership and functional specification. Examples of an organized other are regional organizations or the international community (Harnisch 2011a, 52; 2011c, 11).

immaterial resources” (Harnisch and Beneš 2015, 150). In international relations, a *significant other* is a nation or another entity with which a state has a “formative relationship.” It can be a former colonial or occupying power, a powerful neighbor, or even a historical experience that has notably influenced the development of the state. The selection of *significant others* therefore does not happen randomly but depends on past experiences (Harnisch 2011c, 12). *Significant others* can be identified when studying the domestic political discourse and therein the expressions of the *self* together with evaluative orientations vis-à-vis the *significant others* (Siddi 2018).

Third, there is wide consensus about the empirical possibility of individuals holding multiple collective identities that are mostly context-bound and may or may not overlap (Boekle and Nadoll 2003; Peters 1998; Risse 2001). The possible coexistence of multiple identities was discussed especially in the context of Europeanization of national identities of EU Member States (Marcussen et al. 1999; Risse 2001). Ever since the process of European integration was set in motion in the 1950s, a lively political and academic debate has emerged on the relationship between national and European identities (Ichijo and Spohn 2005; Mansfeldová and Špicarová Stašková 2009). After the Treaty of Maastricht and the introduction of EU citizenship, the concept and the phenomenon of a European identity have become even more salient. On the one hand, Euroskeptics and Europessimists have maintained that the process of European integration might result in the dissolution of national identities and the creation of only one strong European identity (Šabič and Brglez 2002). Another position presupposes that European identity can exist alongside national identities and even help reinforce rather than undermine them (Boekle and Nadoll 2003; Cram 2009). It is evident that, depending on historical developments and other contextual factors, the way in which national and European identities are intertwined differs for every state.¹¹⁷

Under the assumption that overlapping identities do not have to be mutually exclusive but rather can coexist, several authors have proposed different conceptualizations of multiple identities, including the “marble cake” model (Risse 2003, 2005), “entangled identities” model (Ichijo and Spohn 2005), and “nested identities” model (Medrano and Gutiérrez

¹¹⁷ Holly Case also asserts that West and East Europeans often have differing understandings of European identity, which can be attributed to the specific historical experiences of individual nations (Case 2009).

2001).¹¹⁸ Regardless of the specific conceptualization of multiple identities, a large body of empirical evidence suggests that European and national identities are complementary rather than rivalling (Bruter 2005; Citrin and Sides 2004; Duchesne and Frogner 2008).

National Identity

National identity is a specific form of collective identity pertaining to the nation state.¹¹⁹ In addition to a shared territory, national identity is based on the self-definition of the collective as a nation with a common history, culture, and political and social values and principles (Cerutti and Lucarelli 2008; Risse 2001, 201). The common political organization of the nation—the state and its institutions—is of particular importance for the identification of the individual members with the nation. The specific national characteristics and peculiarities not only bind the “imagined community” together but also help distinguish one’s own nation from others (Boekle and Nadoll 2003, 160).

Some authors differentiate between a political and a historical dimension of collective nation-state identities, while also acknowledging that these two dimensions are in reality closely interwoven. Bernhard Peters analytically separates collective self-images referring to the current political (as well as constitutional, legal, etc.) order from ideas or images relating both to the collective past and to the future (Peters 1998). In his conceptualization, the *political dimension* highlights the specific political order and related values and normative principles that are circulating within the society. The *historical dimension* comprises, on the one hand, interpretations of the past, such as collective memories, narratives about a common history, and the specific historical distinctiveness of the nation and, on the other hand, hopes and aspirations for the future (Peters 1998; see also Weller 1999). Similarly, Elsa Tulmets also considers foreign policy identities in duality as consisting of a political and a historical self that relate to one or several others (Tulmets 2012). She highlights the role of history in

¹¹⁸ The “nested identities” model postulates that national identity—the “core”—is enclosed in the European identity—the “periphery”—thus resembling a Russian nesting doll (matryoshka). This model suggests a certain hierarchy, and, in the European context, it would mean that national identity takes precedence over European identity. In contrast, the “marble cake” model theorizes that the various components constituting the European and national identities blend together and reciprocally influence each other (Risse 2003, 490-491).

¹¹⁹ Admittedly, there is a difference between state identity and national identity, as there is a distinction between a state and a nation. While the former refers to a politically organized entity of people inhabiting a defined territory, the latter describes a group of people who share a common culture, religion, race, and historical experiences but not necessarily the same territory. Nevertheless, these two notions often overlap to a certain degree and are used interchangeably by most authors.

the construction of national identity (*historical identity*), which interacts with dominant political priorities based on a set of common norms and values (*political identity*). Since historical events can be interpreted in different ways and political priorities change in relation to the dominant political parties and influential societal groups, Tulmets concludes that identities are continually negotiated and renegotiated and that foreign policy behavior depends on the specific constellation of political and historical identities (Tulmets 2012). She further postulates that foreign policy behavior marked by solidarity can be attributed more to political identity, while historical identity and past relations between states create the sense of (moral) responsibility that in turn influences foreign policy behavior (Tulmets 2012, 22).

Identities and Roles

Due to the existing kinship between identity and other social constructivist concepts such as roles, norms, culture, or (self-)images, greater specificity is required regarding the definitions and interconnections between these concepts (see also Breuning 2011; Nabers 2011). In particular, the social categories *identity* and *role* are often interrelated in the work of most social constructivists. However, the theoretical nexus between these two concepts is not always properly defined (Harnisch 2011c, 9; McCourt 2012).

In an interactionist role theory, international roles are defined as “social positions ... that are constituted by ego and alter expectations regarding the purpose of an actor in an organized group” (Harnisch 2011c, 8).¹²⁰ It follows that roles are relational entities that can be defined in terms of their temporality, functionality, and obligation (Harnisch 2015). In contrast, identities are self-descriptions. They develop in the process of self-identification and are not formed by alter expectations.¹²¹ Consequently, while roles always define the *self* vis-à-vis the *other* or *others*, identities use the *other* only “for demarcation purposes” (Wendt 1992, 398; see also Abdelal et al. 2006).

Sebastian Harnisch posits that Mead’s model of self-identification helps illuminate the nexus between role and identity (Harnisch 2015). Mead distinguishes two parts of the *self*, the “I” and the “Me” parts, which correspond to the distinction between the ego- and alter-part of

¹²⁰ While the concept of role originated in sociology, it has since been adapted and applied to states. Most scholars studying roles in foreign policy and international relations have followed in the footsteps of Kalevi Holsti and his seminal 1970 article *National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy* (Holsti 1970).

¹²¹ Presuming that reference to and comparison with other actors in the international system is not required, Hopf posits that identity shows “who we are” and not “what role we play” (Hopf 2002, 263).

roles. The ego-part (the “I” in the Meadian conception) represents the “impulsive, biologically irreducible and creative part of the self” (Harnisch 2011a, 39). The alter-part (the “Me”), in turn, reflects the actors’ self-perception when regarding themselves through the eyes of others. The “Me” does not encompass the “expectations of others” attribute; rather, it represents the internalized expectations of the *other* as apprehended by the *self* (Harnisch 2011a, 39-40; 2015, 10). It follows that, from a discourse perspective, ego-dominated narratives are self-referential, while alter-dominated discourse reproduces and reinterprets the (perceived) expectations of others (Beneš and Harnisch 2015, 149)

The relationship between identities and roles is understood as reciprocal and co-constitutive, reflecting the co-emergence and co-determination of agents and structures (Nabers 2011, 83). Identities involve actors’ conceptions about their position in a society. However, that self-definition is contingent upon comparison with other social categories (Breuning 2011, 25). Depending on the nature of as well as the relationship with those *others* as well as the specific social context of mutual interaction, roles can differ. In other words, individuals as well as states can take on multiple roles (Harnisch 2011b, 1). Furthermore, it is contended that an identity is a set of meanings that provide an actor with “a standpoint or frame of reference in which to interpret his or her social situation and the expectations of appropriate behavior that come with it” (Nabers 2011, 83). Wendt calls this intersubjective representation “role identity” (Wendt 1999). The activities that actors carry out within the boundaries of their roles, which also encompass the expectations and actions of others, consequently shape their identities (Nabers 2011, 82). In summary, on the one hand, identities supply roles with meaning, and identity change can lead to role change. On the other hand, roles provide the basis of identities and identity change, as these incorporate the self-understandings and expectations associated with a role into the *self*.

4.4 National Identities

Before proceeding with the operationalization of national identity, this section will discuss whether and to what extent identities are solid and permanent or, conversely, fluid and prone to frequent changes.¹²² It will also explain whose identity discourse is to be studied and why. Finally, it will introduce the working definition of national identity used in this study.

¹²² For more on the topic of identity change, see also Neumann (1996) and Risse (2001).

4.4.1 National Identities: Change versus Continuity

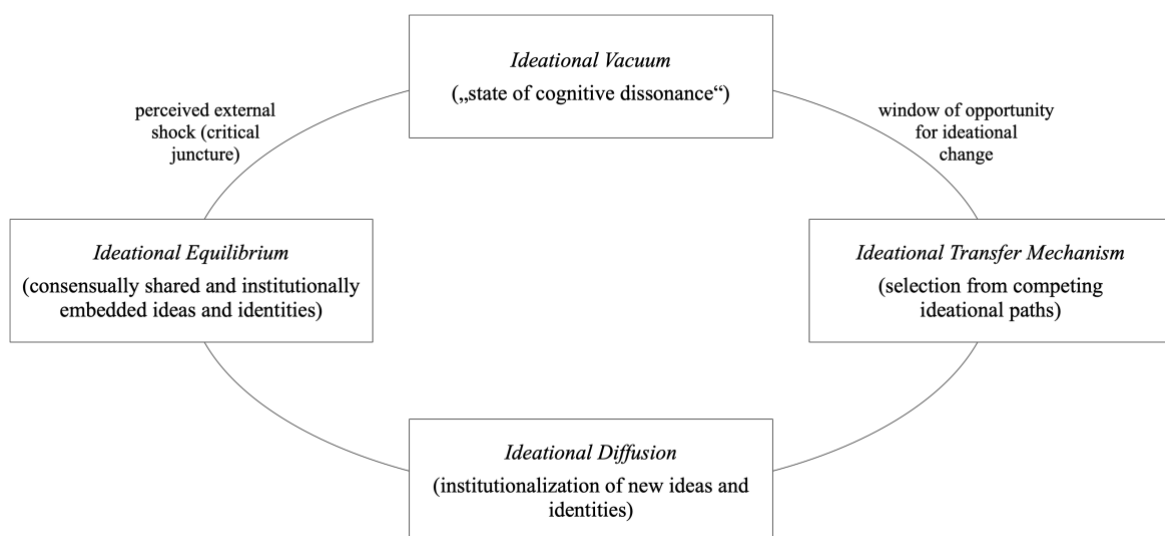
Most identity researchers agree that nation-state identities are likely to remain relatively stable over time as they become embedded in national institutions and political culture (Marcussen et al. 1999, 614; Weller 1999). Nevertheless, the assumption of relative stability does not imply that national identities are completely unchangeable (Nadoll 2003). As Wendt pointedly puts it, “identities may be hard to change, but they are not carved in stone” (Wendt 1999, 21). National identity is a social construct, which means that both its formation and its eventual modification are always a product of social interaction and communication (Hedetoft 1998, 171; Nadoll 2003, 168). In the same sense, Rawi Abdelal et al. put forward that the content of national identity ensues from the processes of social contestation, which they describe as “the degree of agreement within a group over the content of the shared identity” (Abdelal et al. 2006, 695). At the same time, they acknowledge that processes of contestation within groups do not take place in a vacuum and that identities are also influenced by interaction with out-groups (Abdelal et al. 2006, 700). In other words, both the domestic and international environments in which states are embedded shape their identities (see also Katzenstein 1996, 22-24).

Following the premises of social psychology theory, individuals are unlikely to adapt their cognitive schemas in response to new information and knowledge (Marcussen et al. 1999).¹²³ Rather, schemata tend to remain unchanged, even in the face of cacophonous and contradictory signals generated by a rapidly changing environment. Similarly, transformation of collective identities usually does not occur on a daily basis. Rather, national identities, which are incorporated in institutions and a country’s political culture, change more gradually because the processes of socialization and social learning require some time (Risse 1999, 43; Zehfuss 2001, 12). In addition, for a change to occur, any new ideas about political or social order must resonate with pre-existing identity constructions to be considered legitimate and appropriate (Marcussen et al. 1999, 627-628). The “resonance assumption” also means that, in other cases, new ideas about political order can simply be rejected from the outset if they are commonly perceived as irrelevant or seem incongruent with pre-existing identity constructions and worldviews (Marcussen et al. 1999).

¹²³ Schemas are cognitive structures that help individuals automatically organize new knowledge and guide information processing (Rumelhart 1980).

In exceptional circumstances, nation-state identities can be subject to sudden change. This happens notably during so-called “critical junctures,” situations of uncertainty triggered internally or externally that significantly contradict or challenge existing identity constructions (Risse et al. 1999, 156). Critical junctures often provide a window of opportunity for the reconstruction and reformulation of existing nation-state identities. Such immediate identity change can be explained by applying the premises of Marcussen’s ideational life-cycle model (Marcussen 2000; see figure 6). According to this concept, a state of consensually shared (uncontested) and institutionally embedded ideas and identities is called *ideational equilibrium*. In the event of a perceived external shock—a critical juncture—that challenges the validity and adequacy of prevailing institutionalized norms and ideas, an *ideational vacuum* emerges. The resulting “state of cognitive dissonance” serves as a catalyst for ideational change. In the next step, one of several competing ideational paths is selected through *ideational transfer mechanisms*, and these new ideas become embedded in existing structures and subsequently institutionalized. This process of ideational diffusion creates a new, uncontested *ideational equilibrium* in which a new narrative replaces the old narrative (Marcussen 2000, 1-31). Empirical examples of such critical junctures for Central Europe include the Second World War, the end of the East-West conflict, and accession to the EU.

Figure 6: Ideational life-cycle model



Source: Own depiction based on Marcussen (2000)

4.4.2 National Identity and Agency

Prior to operationalizing and measuring identity, clarity is also required with respect to who possesses agency in the construction process of national identity and whose identity is to be analyzed because, after all, the bearers of national identity are all members of a nation. Identities are undeniably debated, shaped, and (re-)interpreted in public discourses, and distinct social groups can have their own separate identity constructions, which in turn can lead to the aforementioned contestation of national identity (Wangler 2012).¹²⁴ However, it is analytically impossible to account for all such representations of national identity, and the vast majority of identity scholars therefore concentrate empirically on the discourses among political elites (see for example Göncz and Lengyel 2016a; Marcussen et al. 1999; Reese-Schäfer 1999b; Risse 2001; Šabič and Brglez 2002; Segatti and Westle 2016).

Decision makers, entrusted by the state's constitution with specific powers, can be described as "privileged storytellers" (Milliken 1999: 236). They have the capacity to construct and spread dominant narratives on the national level and selectively and instrumentally employ particular discourses to achieve specific policy goals (Siddi 2018, 38). More importantly, political elites and their identity discourse also possess a higher degree of legitimacy because, at least in democratic systems, they are required to represent the interests of their constituents and constantly justify their decisions and actions in order to retain voter support (Marcussen et al. 1999, 615; Risse et al. 1999, 177). Without dismissing the possibility of a "mass–elite gap" (Flockhart 2005) or the existence of contradictory interpretations of national identity, this analysis will focus on political elites as major actors in a political discourse.

Political elites utilize the identity elements available to them either subconsciously or instrumentally to serve their political interests. Determining how elites select or discursively (re)activate certain identity elements will be especially important when analyzing justifications for (not) acting in the spirit of solidarity. Focusing on an elite discourse also allows for a more structured comparison of the selected cases. Last but not least, the present investigation is not a sociological study; rather, it is written in the context of political science. Consequently, while consideration will be given to the societal perspectives that undeniably

¹²⁴ Michael Bruter, for example, analyzed the gap between the discourse of (media and political) elites in the EU and the identity of European citizens (Bruter 2009).

inform political action, the primary focus will be on the political level and the actions of policy makers.

4.4.3 Working Definition of National Identity

Based on a critical evaluation of existing research, this study will operate with a definition of national identity that is rooted in the following four core premises:

- a) National identity is a social construct whose formation and transformation are always products of social interaction, communication, and (re)negotiation on both domestic and international levels. Its discursive, social construction means that national identity is amenable to contestation and transformation, most notably during critical junctures.
- b) National identity is not only a fluid but also a complex social construction consisting of active and inactive elements. Depending on the specific context, different elements can be evoked and re-activated.
- c) National identity is a relational concept that involves images of the *self* as well as references to various *significant others*.¹²⁵
- d) National identity is most accurately and effectively revealed by studying the discourse of political elites.

These theoretical premises provide the basis for the operationalization of identity discussed in the following chapter.

¹²⁵ In a similar manner, Ronald Jepperson et al. define identity as “images of individuality and distinctiveness (selfhood) held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant others” (Jepperson et al. 1996, 59).

Chapter 5: Research Design

This chapter outlines the research design of this study. It consists of two major parts. The first part contains the operationalization of the concept of identity and discusses the used methods of data collection and data analysis, including qualitative content analysis and semi-structured expert interviews. The second part is dedicated to clarifying the nexus between identity and solidarity and the operationalization of solidarity, including the presentation of four principles of solidarity action that are used as a category system for the discourse analysis in the empirical chapters.

5.1 Operationalizing and Measuring Identity

Similar to the notion of solidarity and other social constructivist concepts, identity is a complex and elusive social construct that is difficult to grasp and, above all, operationalize. It can be postulated that a nation has only one national identity, which, however, consists of a multitude of different facets, which can be referred to as *identity elements* (Boekle and Nadoll 2003). A state can identify itself as a Christian or a Muslim country; as part of the East or the West; as a small state, a middle power, or a great power; as an independent or a dependent, “vassal” state; and this list of possible identity elements could go on and on. Identity elements can be either *active* or *inactive* because not all identity elements are necessarily relevant in all political contexts and subject areas. Rather, different elements of national identities are invoked depending on the specific situation (Marcussen et al. 1999, 616; Preston 1997, 4).¹²⁶ The identification of all identity elements is therefore not an easy endeavor (Boekle and Nadoll 2003, 165). International Relations scholars have availed themselves of a number of methods and investigative techniques to gauge how identity can best be approximated and measured, including discourse analysis, (quantitative) content analysis, surveys, experiments, a computational methodology of agent-based modeling, and cognitive mapping (for a more comprehensive overview see Abdelal et al. 2006).

¹²⁶ To give one example, EU Member States can emphasize their distinct national identities when interacting with each other within the Union but then perceive themselves as fellow Europeans when dealing with third parties.

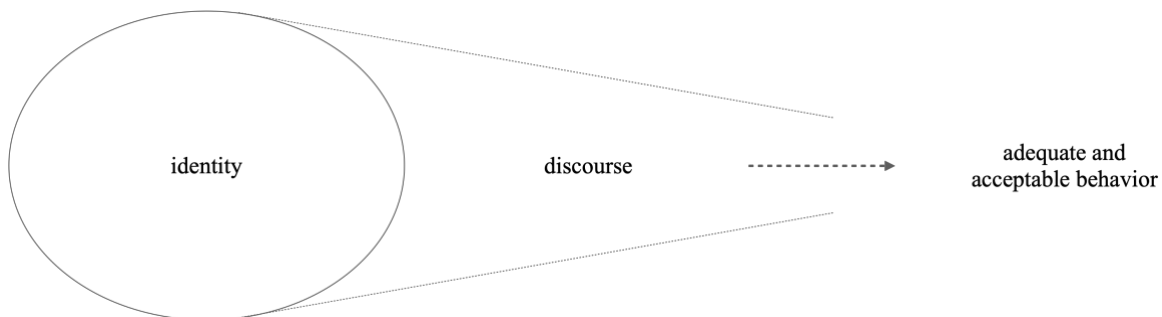
5.1.1 Discursive Construction of Identity

Collective (and therefore also national) identities are intersubjective social constructs that “cannot exist without meanings ascribed to them by their members” (Abdelal et al. 2006, 702). Consequently, their construction and reconstruction are ultimately always a product of human communication and interaction, which primarily happens through language. Many constructivists have therefore emphasized the central methodological significance of discourse analysis for the exploration of identity and its relation to (foreign policy) behavior (Hansen and Waever 2002; Hedetoft 1998; Joerißen and Stahl 2003; Zehfuss 2001).

Discourse Analysis in Identity Research

A viable approach to identity research using discourse analysis has been presented by the so-called “Copenhagen School” around Lene Hansen and Ole Waever (2002). In their conceptualization, identity represents the “deepest discursive layer” on which all argumentative legitimizations of foreign policy behavior are based (Hansen and Waever 2002). Discursive processes further narrow down the framework for action, which is already predetermined by national identity, and create well-structured boundaries for adequate and acceptable behavior (Waever 2002, 26-30; see figure 7).

Figure 7: Identity and discourse

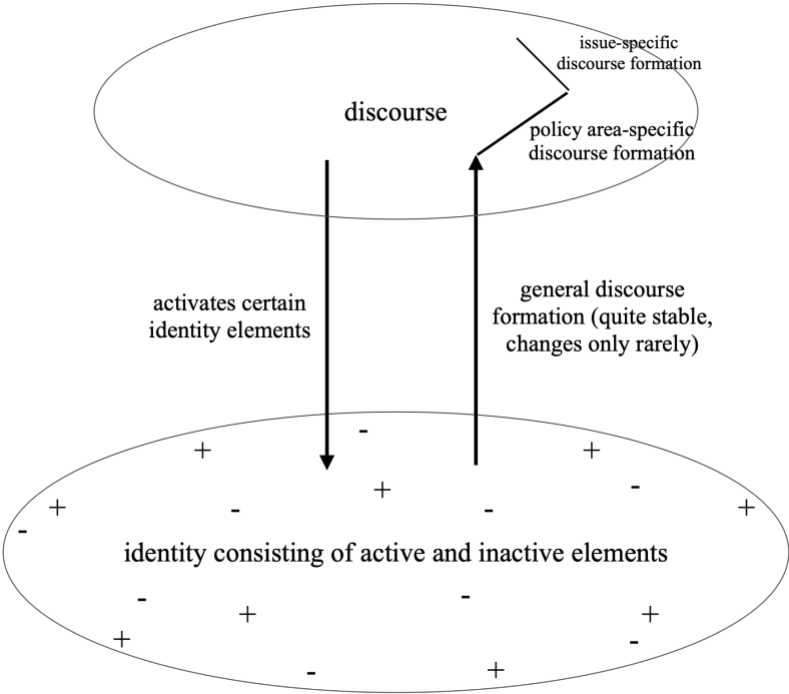


Source: Own depiction

Contributions in the volume edited by Britta Joerißen and Bernhard Stahl (2003) use the term *discourse formation* to describe an identity-influenced, action-guiding pattern of argumentation. Discourse formations reflect basic elements of the identity construction of a society, which are confirmed communicatively in the course of past discourses and are therefore quite stable. Discourse formations become increasingly ramified over time, so that

more specific discourse formations can emerge, depending on the particular policy field, the concrete issue, and the current context (see figure 8). In methodological-theoretical terms, the term *discourse formation* describes a further operationalization of identity (Nadoll 2003, 180). Moreover, national identity is not only expressed in (foreign policy) discourses but these in turn also reflect and shape the substance of national identity (Jepperson et al. 1996; Joerißen and Stahl 2003). The relationship between national identity and discourses can therefore be viewed as “dialectical and mutually constitutive” (Siddi 2018, 38).

Figure 8: Identity and discourse formation



Source: Own depiction based on Joerißen and Stahl (2003)

Discourse analysis, concerned with the situatedness of language use as well as its social-interactive nature, proves to be a useful instrument not only for the analytical identification of dominant identity constructions but also for making a plausible connection between identity and foreign policy. Within the communicative framework, various (but not all) behaviors are possible. The possibility of coexistence of competing narratives allows for some flexibility in policy responses and the choice of concrete behavior then depends on the specific situation. In other words, same identity elements can be argumentatively used in different ways, so that completely different policy actions may stem from the same element (Nadoll 2003, 172-176).

Henrik Larsen or Ole Waever went so far as to regard the discourse analysis itself as a theory that makes it possible to explain foreign policy behavior (Henrik Larsen 1997; Waever 2002). However, this assumption is somewhat problematic because, as Lene Hansen rightly noted, discourse analysis deals with the justifications rather than the causes of certain foreign policy behaviors in the context of identity (re)construction (Hansen 2002, 8). Discourse is the medium through which identity is given its specific meaning in a concrete situation. It reveals which identity elements are “active” in the sense of being used as a reference for legitimizing behavior and which remain “inactive” (Nadoll 2003, 172). Moreover, discourse allows for previously inactive identity elements to be given new meanings—be “reactivated” again—and find expression in different social contexts (Nadoll 2003, 176).

Inductive Historical Discourse Analysis in Identity Research

When pondering which methods are most suitable for measuring the content and contestation of identity, International Relations scholars have come to the conclusion that identity cannot be determined in a purely theoretical-deductive way (Nadoll 2003, 180). Rather, inductive analysis seems better suited to illuminate which elements are decisive for the respective national identity construction. The volume by Joerißen and Stahl (2003) applied an inductively hermeneutic approach to national identities and introduced a theoretical concept of foreign policy analysis that combines national identity, discourse analysis, and foreign policy behavior. The authors studied national identities of selected European states by means of historical discourse analysis. Using specific secondary literature, they mapped out the main identity elements and argumentation patterns that emerged as dominant at critical junctures in the history of the respective nations (Joerißen and Stahl 2003).

The historical discourse analysis approach pursued by Joerißen and Stahl (2003), however, faces two major difficulties. First, the selection of only two historical foreign policy discourses per case study for the reconstruction of national identity appears insufficient, given that national identity is subject to change over time. In their contribution to the volume, Boekle and Nadoll (unwittingly) recognize this shortcoming by stating that “not all identity elements are necessarily relevant in all political contexts and subject areas. The identification of identity elements can therefore vary depending on the selection of historical discourses” (Boekle and Nadoll 2003, 165; translation by author). Although the selected historical

discourses are 30-40 years apart, only certain identity elements were (re-)activated during the respective critical junctures, which cannot sufficiently and completely explain the current foreign policy behavior of the analyzed states.

Second, and more importantly, although the authors continue to emphasize the importance of discourse for their empirical analysis, they end up using predominantly secondary literature as the main case material. Following Abdelal et al., discourse analysis is “the qualitative and interpretive recovery of meaning from the language that actors use to describe and understand social phenomena” (Abdelal et al. 2006, 702). To recover meanings from a discourse, scholars usually draw upon a wide variety of texts, including interviews, policy statements, and speeches of political leaders. The volume by Joerißen and Stahl (2003), however, lacks such discursive case material and the analysis rests on only a limited number of secondary sources. The case studies therefore appear more as reconstructions of foreign policy crises rather than exhaustive accounts of national identities.

5.1.2 Mixed-Methods Approach to Identity

To account for the aforementioned shortcomings, this study makes the case for using a mix of inductive and deductive techniques to explore the multifaceted nature of national identities and their impact on foreign policy decision making. It applies a multi-stage approach, combining several methods of data collection and data analysis that together contribute to identifying the most fundamental as well as the less pronounced identity elements and increase the reliability and validity of the findings.

The first step serves to explore the national identities of the Visegrad states and identify as many identity elements as possible. Although the focus of this step lies, similar to Joerißen and Stahl (2003), on the historical reconstruction of identity formation and transformation, instead of limiting itself to only a few selected historical discourses, this study draws primarily on already existing research on national identities of the selected states and complements it with additional empirical evidence. The secondary sources include both elaborated empirical material on national identities of the four Visegrad states and also historical studies that discuss their identities only implicitly. The collected material will be analyzed by means of **qualitative content analysis**.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in the concept of identity, national identities of Central and Eastern European countries are not yet sufficiently researched. Given the limited amount of relevant secondary literature, in the second step, **semi-structured interviews** with political scientists, historians, sociologists, and other carefully selected experts from the Visegrad states will be carried out for the purpose of mapping out further identity elements and developing a more comprehensive representation of identities.¹²⁷ Importantly, interviewing historians also helps to resolve the important question of “historical depth” raised, among others, by Bernhard Stahl and Sebastian Harnisch, namely how far into the history of a nation a researcher needs to go in order to detect the “relevant” identity elements (Stahl and Harnisch 2009). Instead of more or less randomly selecting a limited number of historical discourses, historians can provide helpful insights into which events have been particularly formative for the respective national identities.

The **expert interviews** will work with a semi-standardized guide and a set of pre-formulated questions, and the subsequent analysis will be guided by a categorization matrix developed and refined through the preceding content analysis of secondary literature. The combination of both primary and secondary data sources, together with a systematic, theory-guided approach to text analysis using an elaborated category system, will allow to comprise both active and inactive identity elements. The identification of as many identity elements as possible allows for a precise and comprehensive modelling of a national identity construction for every state, which in turn makes it possible to account for: a) a simultaneous activation of several identity elements; b) a discursive use of the same identity element for different purposes;¹²⁸ and c) the so-called “discursive disappearance.” Discursive disappearance means that certain identity elements do not appear in some discourses, even though they were active in different historical phases, and can thus possibly be “revived” in future discourses (see also Stahl and Harnisch 2009, 41).

¹²⁷ The author of this study has purposefully decided against using surveys for the empirical identity research, although this method has proven useful in exploring public opinions and attitudes (Abdelal et al. 2006). A frequently expressed limitation of survey research is that survey questions may overlook deep-seated beliefs and values as well as feelings, emotions, and hidden meanings. Another often-voiced concern is that the arbitrary design of questionnaires and multiple-choice questions with preformulated answers represent a biased oversimplification of social reality (Behnke et al. 2010, 218; Segatti and Westle 2016). Last but not least, due to their predetermined structure, surveys run the risk of stipulating the answers and interpretations (Segatti and Westle 2016).

¹²⁸ In extreme cases, completely different political recommendations for action can be based on the same identity element.

The purpose of the third step is to establish a connection between identity and solidarity as expressed in foreign policy decisions and actions. Following the premises of the “Copenhagen School,” identity will be treated here as the “deepest discursive layer” determining which behavior in a concrete situation is considered acceptable (Hansen and Waever 2002). The method of **discourse analysis** helps reveal the justifications of certain foreign policy behaviors. In order to convince the public of the superiority of their argument, political elites as “discourse bearers” attempt to link their arguments to active identity elements or discursively reactivate previously inactive elements (see also Stahl and Harnisch 2009, 43). A case-specific discourse analysis will therefore illuminate which arguments—that relate to certain interpretations of identity elements—ultimately prevailed in the legitimation discourse and were used as a reference to legitimize certain solidarity behaviors.

Before proceeding with the inductive-deductive exploration of identity, the research design of this study will be briefly discussed against the background of ongoing debates on method combination and integration.

Method Triangulation

One of the significant developments in the field of empirical research methods has been the trend toward methodological eclecticism (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2010, 5). Charles Teddlie and Abbas Tashakkori wrote that methodological eclecticism requires a scholar who is a “connoisseur of methods, who knowledgeably (and often intuitively) selects the best techniques available to answer research questions that frequently evolve as a study unfolds” (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2010, 9). In the process of applying diverse techniques of method combination and integration, researchers have come up with different terms, the most prominent being “mixed methods” and “method triangulation” (Kuckartz 2014, 29). These two approaches differ not only with regard to their geographical application—triangulation being popular mainly in Germany and mixed methods in English-speaking countries—but also their underlying logics of research (Kuckartz 2014, 29).¹²⁹ Triangulation approaches, with their plea for methodological pluralism, seek to gain a certain independence from existing epistemological stances. On the contrary, at least some strands of the mixed methods research portray themselves as the third methodological paradigm, complementing the purely

¹²⁹ What these two traditions share is the pragmatic approach toward research, i.e. actively using those research methods that appear to be best suited for answering the research question at hand.

qualitative (often brought in connection with the constructivist research tradition) and purely quantitative (often associated with postpositivist worldviews) approaches (Heesen et al. 2019; Kuckartz 2014, 48).¹³⁰ Furthermore, whereas triangulation represents a rather loose setting under which multiple methods can be combined, mixed methods has come up with distinct research designs, such as the exploratory sequential design, explanatory sequential design, convergent parallel design, embedded design, multiphase design, and transformative design (Creswell 2015; Creswell and Plano Clark 2011, 40-43).

John W. Creswell defines mixed methods research as

“an approach to research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (close-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems” (Creswell 2015, 2).

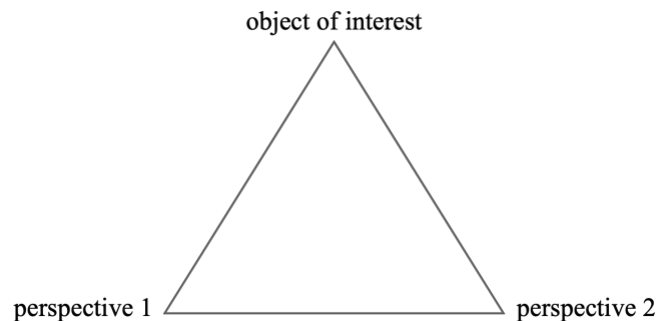
In this understanding, mixed methods research implies the collection, analysis, and interpretation of *both* quantitative and qualitative data. In contrast, triangulation can describe both the use of diverse techniques within the “purely” qualitative/quantitative tradition or occur “across methodological borders” (Hammersley 2008, 32).

In simple terms, the term triangulation refers to a research object being studied from (at least) two different perspectives, together forming a triangle (see figure 9; Flick 2011, 11; F. Wolf 2015, 483). The term goes back to Norman Denzin, who already in the 1970s defined triangulation as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena” (Denzin 1970, 297). Triangulation can describe the inclusion of multiple data sources (*data triangulation*), two or more observers and/or researchers (*investigator triangulation*), various theoretical points of view (*theory triangulation*), and various methods (*method triangulation*) (Flick 2011, 12; Kuckartz 2014). With regard to the last form, Denzin further distinguishes between “within method” and “between method” triangulation, where the former describes a combination of different methodological approaches within one method and the latter

¹³⁰ The term paradigm was first introduced in social science research by Thomas Kuhn in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (T.S. Kuhn 1970). Authors such as David Morgan, however, criticize Kuhn’s definition of a paradigm as too broad and claim that Kuhn’s book actually contains more than 20 different interpretations of the term (Morgan 2007). Morgan, seeking a clearer explication of the paradigm concept, distinguishes four different versions of paradigms—as worldviews, as epistemological stances, as shared beliefs in a research field, and as model examples—and contends that, with regard to combining qualitative and quantitative methods, “paradigms as epistemological stances have had a major influence on discussions about whether this merger is possible, let alone desirable” (Morgan 2007, 52).

denotes a triangulation of different, independent methods (Denzin 1970). The “between method” triangulation can further refer either to the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods or it can combine different methods within qualitative (or quantitative) research (Flick 2011, 41). In addition, the different methodological approaches can be applied in parallel or one after another.

Figure 9: Triangulation



Source: Own depiction based on F. Wolf (2015)

Flick postulates that it is worth using triangulation when the combined methodological approaches open up different perspectives and when complementary results are achieved, which provide a broader and possibly more complete picture of the subject under study as compared to using a single method (Flick 2011, 49). In accordance with this claim, and considering the limited knowledge about the Visegrad states’ national identities, the present study will benefit immensely from using a triangulation approach.

Despite using multiple methods, this study does not enter the debate of compatibility of qualitative and quantitative methods and their underlying ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations because it opts for the use of complementary methods that fall within the same paradigm, namely the one of constructivism.¹³¹ Recalling the

¹³¹ The disagreement about the compatibility of qualitative and quantitative methods resulted, mainly in the 1980s, in the so-called “paradigm-wars,” where some authors asserted that both traditions could (or even should) be combined and integrated while others claimed the opposite (for an overview see Denzin 2010; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba later attempted to reconcile the qualitative and quantitative camps, suggesting that neither research tradition is superior to the other (King et al. 1994). By putting forward the argument that the ontological and epistemological beliefs behind different methodological disciplines were “skins, not sweaters,” Paul Furlong and David Marsh argued against mixing quantitative and qualitative methods (Furlong and Marsh 2010). David Collier, Henry Brady, and Jason Seawright, who reflected on and in parts criticized King et al.’s 1994 book “Designing Social Inquiry,” nevertheless also agreed on the commensurability of the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, while highlighting the need for acknowledgement of the strengths and weaknesses of diverse methodological tools (Collier et al. 2010). Despite the numerous attempts to breach the qualitative-quantitative divide, debates about whether and how to combine both approaches are still ongoing and are likely to continue (Denzin 2010).

aforementioned distinction, this study follows the “between method” triangulation approach. In the empirical chapter of this book, data will be triangulated by integrating different material (*data triangulation*) through the use of various methods (*method triangulation*). Concretely, the systematic exploration of secondary sources by means of qualitative content analysis will be complemented by semi-structured interviews. In addition, the triangulation approach will help integrate the deductive and inductive logic for exploring identities, as described in the next section.

Inductive-Deductive Exploration of Identity

German psychologist and sociologist Philipp Mayring distinguishes between two central approaches to qualitative content analysis: inductive category development and deductive category application (Mayring 2000). While the former describes a step-by-step procedure of formulating categories to interpret empirical material, derived from the specific research question and theoretical framework and revised over the course of the analysis through the so-called “feedback loops,” the latter works with prior formulated, theoretically derived categories, which are subsequently assigned to text passages using established coding rules. This study uses a combination of both.

1. First, based on the initial familiarization with the empirical material and the theoretical underpinnings, a categorization matrix will be developed using an *inductive* approach. The initial categories will be formulated “out of the material” and revised through several “feedback loops” (Mayring 2000). Ultimately, the categories will be reduced to main categories, subsumed in a simple categorization matrix, and checked in respect to their reliability and validity.
2. Second, the matrix will be applied to review and code all data gathered from the secondary literature sources using *deductive* qualitative content analysis and the previously identified categories. The coding rules for each deductive category will help structure and interpret the material and at the same time further differentiate the established categories. The outcome of the content analysis is a more nuanced matrix displaying main identity elements. Since, in this step, the qualitative content analysis works with pre-formulated “rough” categories that are further differentiated and concretized over the course of the analysis, it adopts a *deductive approach with integrated inductive elements*.

3. And third, the differentiated matrix will serve as a methodological framework for the analysis of the conducted expert interviews. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews is to gain additional insights into the national identities of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland and possibly identify previously missed identity elements. This last step also follows a *deductive* logic.

Before proceeding with the concrete steps of developing an “identity matrix” with its respective categories, the research method of qualitative content analysis will be presented in more detail.

5.1.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

The goal of content analysis is to analyze material that stems from different sources of communication (Mayring 2010). Bernard Berelson defines the “content of communication” as the “body of meanings through symbols (verbal, musical, pectoral, plastic, gestural) which makes up the communication itself” (Berelson 1952, 13). Independent of whether it is text or other symbolic material, what is important is that content analysis works only with recorded forms of communication. It distinguishes itself from a number of hermeneutic methods through its systematic, rules-driven approach to the analyzed material. The analysis is guided by theoretically derived considerations and hypotheses and the findings are interpreted against the respective theoretical background. Such systematic, rule-based, and theory-driven approach ensures that content analysis meets the social science standards of intersubjective verifiability (Mayring 2010, 12-13).

The origins of content analysis in its present form can be found at the beginning of the twentieth century when it was used in journalism as a systematic method to analyze news articles (Kracauer 1952; Mayring 2004, 266). Initial content analytical studies used predominantly quantitative techniques to systematize large quantities of textual data (mainly material from the mass media). Examples of such approaches are *frequency analyses* comparing the frequency of certain textual elements with the frequency of other elements, *valence and intensity analyses* used to evaluate the material according to predefined dichotomous or multi-level scales, and *contingency analyses* aiming to investigate associations and interrelations (contingencies) between different elements of the text (e.g., central concepts) (Mayring 2010, 13-16).

From communication science, content analysis developed into a universal technique used in different research settings (Becker and Lißmann 1973; Berelson 1952; Franzosi 2007; Merten 1983). One of the first methodological books was written by Bernard Berelson in 1952, who emphasized the use of the content analysis technique “for objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson 1952, 18). Over time, the pitfalls of quantitative content analysis, such as its limitations when it comes to tracing latent meaning contents and the interpretation of text passages, became more evident, and qualitative content analysis has begun to receive an increasing amount of attention from various disciplines (Behnke et al. 2010, 353).¹³²

Philipp Mayring (2010) sets out several advantages of content analysis methodology compared to other text-analytical approaches, which are summarized below:

1. Embedment of the analyzed material within its communicative context
2. A systematic, rule-based, and theory-driven approach
3. Transparent categories in the center of analysis
4. Subject of analysis in the foreground
5. Possibility of integrating quantitative analytical steps
6. Quality criteria

First, the analyzed material is always interpreted within its communication context. Second, content analysis is characterized by its systematic approach and its orientation toward theoretically justified rules. Compared to “free interpretation” approaches, content analysis must be adapted to the respective subject matter and the related research question, and the individual analytical steps must be traceable to pre-defined rules. Third, a solid category system represents the central instrument of qualitative content analysis. Transparent and well-founded categories enable the traceability, comparability, and reproducibility of results and so strengthen the intersubjectivity and reliability of one’s own approach. At the same time, fourth, content analysis is no standard tool and, therefore, the subject under study takes center stage and influences the choice of adequate techniques. And fifth, qualitative content analysis is insofar inclusive as it does not preclude the possibility of integrating quantitative analytical steps if they serve the goal of the analysis.¹³³

¹³² For a brief history of content analysis, see Krippendorff (1980) and Mayring (2014).

¹³³ For example, the frequency of a category may underpin its importance (Mayring 2010).

Qualitative content analysis must, just like any other scientific method, abide by the traditional research quality criteria of *reliability*, *validity*, and *objectivity*. According to Mayring, because the methodological standards used by qualitative content analysis are less rigorous than those applied by quantitative studies, its compliance with the quality criteria is of particular importance (Mayring 2010, 53). Reliability is achieved when research is replicated, and the findings of the replication are consistent with the original findings (Popping 2019, 11). Therefore, to ensure reliability and objectivity in qualitative content analytical approaches, the whole material or relevant excerpts are often coded by several investigators who then compare their results. Nevertheless, many authors question the use of intercoder reliability in qualitative content analysis because of the complex nature of category systems (Lisch and Kriz 1978; Ritsert 1972). Lisch and Kriz consider natural that differences exist between several analysts in their interpretation of linguistic material (Lisch and Kriz 1978, 90). Because of the criticism of the “classical” quality criteria, another set of criteria for qualitative methodological approaches was developed (Flick 1987; Krippendorf 1980; Mayring 2002). Klaus Krippendorf (1980) distinguishes between eight quality criteria, five referring to *validity*—semantic validity, sampling validity, correlational validity, predictive validity, and construct validity—and three to *reliability*—stability, reproducibility, and accuracy (Krippendorf 1980).

Semantic validity addresses the correct reconstruction of meaning from the material and the degree to which words and phrases subsumed under a category reflect that category’s meaning. This type of validity is ensured by the existence of proper category definitions and coding rules. *Sampling validity* assesses “the degree to which available data are either an unbiased sample for a universe of interest or sufficiently similar to another sample from the same sample so that the data can be taken as statistically representative of that universe” (Popping 2019, 18). *Correlational validity* measures the correlation of obtained findings with results from an investigation with a similar research question and subject study. *Predictive validity* can only be used as a quality criterion if reasonable predictions can be derived from the material. *Construct validity* can be checked through criteria such as previous successes with similar constructs or established theories and models. *Stability* is achieved when repeated application of the analytical instrument to the text material under similar conditions generates the same results. *Reproducibility* describes the degree to which an analysis, under different circumstances, leads to the same results. It depends on the clarity of categories and

coding instructions and can be measured by intercoder reliability. *Accuracy*, which requires both stability and reproducibility, indicates whether an analysis meets a certain standard, i.e. whether it is a true representation of what is being observed (Krippendorf 1980).

In summary, *reliability* refers to the consistency and intersubjective verifiability of a research study and its findings, and can be enhanced through the use of clear-cut, unambiguous categories and a well-defined coding scheme (Blatter et al. 2007, 37). *Validity* assesses the “appropriateness” of the utilized tools, processes, and data, i.e. whether the chosen methodology is appropriate for answering the research question and whether the data is valid for the research design. It follows that reliability is a necessary, yet not a sufficient, condition for validity (Popping 2019). In other words, high reliability does not imply that there is also validity of the results. Even if, for example, the selected categories are consistent, it does not automatically mean that they are the most relevant for the particular research question. Moreover, a distinction can be made between *internal* and *external validity*. While internal validity is concerned with how credibly the research findings reflect the reality (whether a researcher assesses what is supposed to be assessed), external validity, also often equated with generalizability, focuses on the applicability of the findings to other cases (Seawright and Collier 2004, 288).

Some authors, such as John Gerring, claim that there is always a trade-off between external and internal validity, with large-N-designs possessing a comparative advantage in terms of external validity and case studies being better at meeting the requirements of internal validity (Gerring 2004, 348). The internal validity in this study has been achieved through triangulation. Cross-checking information from multiple perspectives (in this case, secondary sources and expert interviews) increases the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. As regards the external validity, the interviews and content analysis were conducted with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the national identities of the Visegrad states and the generalizability of research results was therefore not the primary aim (see also Vromen 2010). However, the conclusions—and especially the lessons learned from the newly developed approach to studying national identities—can also be applied outside the context of the present study.

Analytical Steps

Philipp Mayring developed a sequential model of qualitative content analysis, delineating nine individual steps or stages of analysis. This study uses an adapted version of this sequential model. Qualitative content analysis is a method of data analysis that deals with available linguistic material. In order to decide what is interpretable from the material, at the beginning, a precise analysis of the source material needs to take place (1). First of all, it must be clearly defined which material should form the basis of the analysis. In this respect, it must be precisely described where the material comes from and what its formal characteristics are. After the material has been specified, in the next step, the researcher needs to answer the question what he or she wants to interpret out of this material (2). As noted earlier, content analysis is characterized by a rule-based and theory-driven interpretation of text. To this end, the analysis needs to follow a precise, theoretically derived research question. The subsequent step serves to define the specific analysis technique and the procedural model of the analysis (3). The choice of the right sequential model is a critical step because it makes the qualitative content analysis intersubjectively verifiable, as opposed to other methods of interpretation. After the specific technique has been selected, the researcher proceeds with the development of a suitable category system (4). The categories are developed between the theory (the problem) and the concrete material and then re-examined and revised during the analysis. The text is not analyzed in its entirety, but the established categories are assigned to selected segments of text (5). In this respect, Mayring differentiates between three units of analysis. The coding unit determines the minimum text part that can fall under a category and be evaluated. The context unit, on the contrary, determines the largest text component that can fall under a category. And the recording unit comprises all text material for analysis and determines which parts of the text are to be evaluated consecutively (Mayring 2014, 51-52).¹³⁴ Finally, the results are interpreted in relation to the main research question (6) and the significance of the analysis is assessed on the basis of the previously mentioned quality criteria (7). All steps are summarized in figure 10 and elaborated in more detail further below.

¹³⁴ Technically speaking, a single word or even a character can function as the smallest unit for coding (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2019, 136; Mayring 2014, 51-52). Nevertheless, since qualitative content analysis is more concerned with exploring meaning in context rather than the physical linguistic units, in the present study, codes will be assigned to a text passage of any size—a proposition, a sentence, a paragraph—as long as that passage makes sense on its own and can be coded under one criterion category.

Figure 10: Procedural model of qualitative content analysis

1. Specification of the material (including its origin and formal characteristics)
2. Specification of the research question
3. Specification of the sequential model of analysis and selection of the analysis technique (summary, explication, structuring, or a combination thereof)
4. Definition of the categories/category system
5. Definition of the units of analysis (coding, context, and evaluation unit)
6. Interpretation of results
7. Assessment according to the quality criteria

Source: Own depiction based on Mayring (2010)

Specification of the Analyzed Material

The material forming the basis of the qualitative content analysis conducted in this study can be divided into secondary literature sources and the conducted interviews with political scientists, historians, sociologists, and other experts. The secondary literature comprises volumes, book contributions, journal articles, and reports dealing explicitly with national identities of the respective countries or implicitly with the most formative events in those countries' history. The selection of the analyzed texts has been preceded by an extensive research across university libraries and other electronic databases as well as portals developed by different organizations and institutions located in the four Visegrad states.

Techniques of Qualitative Content Analysis

Techniques of qualitative content analysis are procedures of systematic (i.e. theory-driven and rule-based) text comprehension and text interpretation (Mayring 2010, 65). Mayring purports that most techniques of systematic text interpretation have several characteristics in common. Usually, certain parts of the text are selected and analyzed more closely, evaluated in a certain direction, and related to other parts of the text. Also, most analyses intend to achieve some kind of summary of the material. He identifies three basic forms of interpretation: *summary*, *explication*, and *structuring*.

The aim of the *summary* technique is to condense the material by using abstractions in such a way that the essential contents are preserved and still reflect the main ideas of the material.

The abstraction level and the concrete reduction process are set by the researcher. This technique can be used also for *inductive category building*, where categories are derived directly from the material in a generalization process without referring to previously formulated theories.

The *explication* technique seeks to bring additional material to those text passages (be it concepts, sentences, etc.) that are unclear or questionable, which helps to extend the understanding of the subject of analysis.

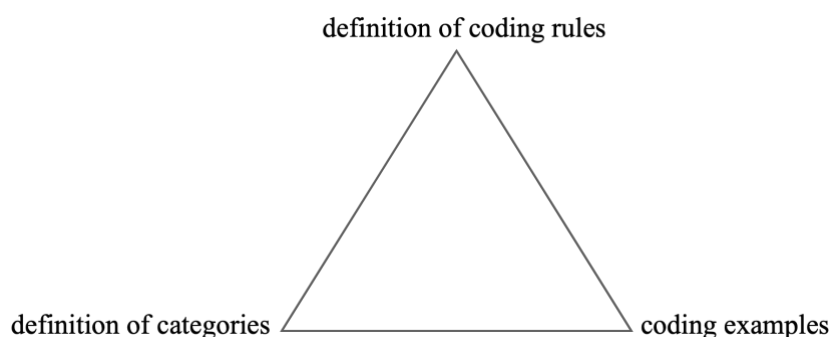
The *structuring* technique serves to filter out a certain structure of the material and evaluate the material on the basis of predetermined criteria and a category system. This technique therefore entails *deductive category building*, with explicit definitions, coding rules, and concrete examples for each deductive category (Mayring 2010). Mayring differentiates between four forms of structuring. *Formal structuring* seeks to structure the material according to defined criteria. *Content structuring* extracts and summarizes data material based on specific topics or subject areas. Which content is to be extracted from the material is decided by theoretically developed categories and, if necessary, subcategories (Mayring 2010, 98). *Typifying structuring* aims to extract and describe particularly striking expressions, expressions that are of particular theoretical interest, or unusually frequently occurring expressions. Finally, the goal of *scaling structuring* is to assess the material on a scale (ordinal scale, as a rule) (Mayring 2010, 99-114).¹³⁵

Depending on the specific research project, research question, and available material, one of these analytical techniques can be selected. This study uses a combination of the *summary* and *structuring* techniques—a mix of inductive category development and deductive category application—and the individual analytical steps therefore require a more detailed elaboration. An essential step of qualitative content analysis is the development of a suitable and workable category system. A category development is mostly driven by theoretical considerations, influenced by preliminary investigations, the current state of research, and/or newly developed theories and theoretical concepts, which are appropriated to the specific material used for the content analysis. To be able to consistently and unequivocally decide which text passage falls under which category, the individual categories and coding rules

¹³⁵ The last form is similar to the previously mentioned *valence* or *intensity analyses* used predominantly in communication science (Mayring 2010, 106).

need to be precisely defined. In addition, concrete examples of passages and their attribution to a certain category can further enhance the transparency of the content analysis. Figure 11 depicts the three important prerequisites of a solid and transparent qualitative content analysis.

Figure 11: Interrelation of categories, coding rules, and coding examples



Source: Own depiction

The following section is concerned with developing a categorization matrix for the empirical analysis of national identities of the Visegrad states. The theoretically derived category schemas and coding rules are subsequently used to systematically structure, code, and interpret all data gathered from the secondary literature sources and conducted interviews, while striving to further differentiate the established categories.¹³⁶ Tables detailing the established categories for the qualitative content analysis of the Visegrad states' national identities, including the coding rules and coding examples, can be found in Appendix D.¹³⁷

Identity Matrix

When analyzing national (foreign policy) identities, most authors coming from the disciplines of International Relations or Foreign Policy Analysis highlight the importance of understanding and conceptualizing the relation between *self* and *other* (Diez 2004; I.B. Neumann 1996; Wendt 1994). This relation can evolve over time, which may result in the activation of different identity elements and the adoption of different policy responses to similar situations. In an effort to explore identity in more depth and better understand the

¹³⁶ The transparent and systematic, theory-guided and methodologically controlled analysis using a category system should enable other analysts to retrace the analysis.

¹³⁷ Appendix D also includes the results of the qualitative content analysis.

essence of the *self* and its relation to (*significant*) *others*, authors have come up with different systematizations and categorizations.

Joerißen and Stahl (2003) differentiate between *elements of the self*, *affective belonging elements*, and *systemic elements*. Elements of the *self* are (mostly positive) self-attributions, such as “bridge-builder,” “role model,” or “responsible power.” Affective belonging elements, *au contraire*, deal with an affective attachment of a country to a larger, usually geographically determined entity (Europe, the West, etc.). And systemic elements are concerned with the role of the country in the international system. Examples of a systemic element can be a “small state” or a “great power” (Joerißen and Stahl 2003, 370).

Tulmets et al. (2011) propose to conceptualize identity in a dual way and differentiate between *political* and *historical self* or, as they frame it, between “first order” and “second order” identity. While they define the former as stemming from a set of common norms, values, and principles and being driven by dominant political priorities, the latter should reflect shared historical memories and experiences as well as prevailing narratives of a common history and long-term development of a nation (Tulmets 2011).¹³⁸ Following this schema, the authors regard the legacies of the Second World War and the Soviet communist era to have had significant impact on the *historical self* of the states in Central Europe but claim that the EU accession and ensuing Europeanization of Central European (foreign) policies have contributed to a redefinition of the *political self* (Tulmets 2011, 7).

Although the authors try to provide a clear distinction between the two manifestations of the *self*, their conceptualization suffers from one major shortfall, which is mixing the temporal (*historical self*) and functional (*political self*) dimensions, whose meanings are largely overlapping. As a consequence, Tulmets et al. leave aside the fact that shared norms and values and resulting political priorities, which they attribute to the dimension of the *political self*, also have their roots in certain historical experiences of the recent or more distant past. Even though past events can be reinterpreted over and over again, and the identity of a nation can change accordingly over time, history still provides an important reference point for present and future actions. Although the authors acknowledge later in the text that “each country’s specific interpretation of values and principles is the result of the shared meaning

¹³⁸ The authors present the *political self* as similar to Marcussen et al.’s (1999) “visions about political order” (Tulmets 2011, 10).

of its history and constitutional and legal practices” (Tulmets 2011, 11), they conceptualize the *political self* as if it existed separately from the *historical self*. They maintain that the temporality of historical identity is generally of a long-term nature, while the temporality of political identity is rather a short term one. This study, however, argues that such division can be misleading because no one can predict for how long certain identity elements will continue to define the national identity and therefore what the temporality of the *political self* will be. Also, it remains unclear where the line between history and present is drawn and why recent events should be understood as part of *political* but not *historical self*.

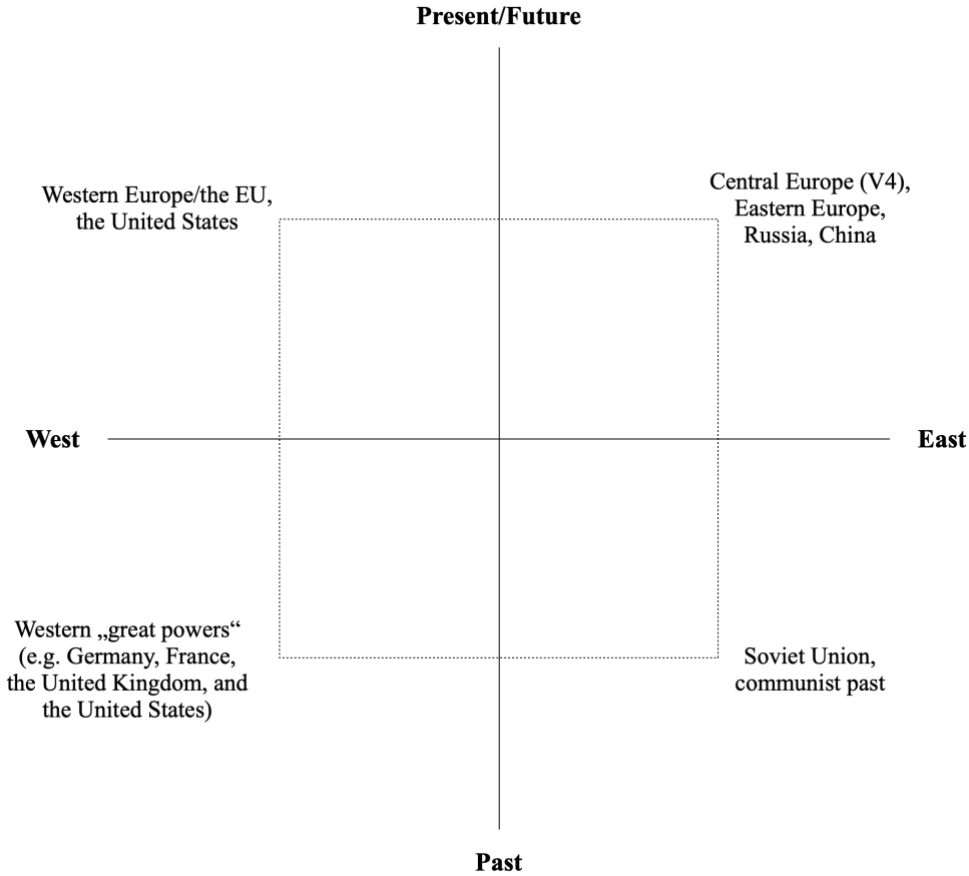
To overcome such conceptual ambiguity, this study proposes to arrange the expressions of the *self* along two main axes: The vertical axis represents the temporal dimension and positions the *self* depending on whether a state makes decisions based on what happened in a more distant past or whether it reflects upon more recent social, political, and economic developments.¹³⁹ Arranging the *self* on a continuum rather than introducing a rigid dichotomy and conceiving the *self* in duality (as done by Tulmets et al. 2011) will help capture recurring identity elements. The temporal dimension consequently includes both the historical and political manifestations of the *self* as put forward by Tulmets et al., since current norms, values, and dominant political priorities of a state, which these authors label as a “short term identity,” are automatically considered. The study chose the year 1991 as the reference point in the matrix, dividing the bottom two from the upper two squares. Not only was the Visegrad Group established in 1991, but the years 1989-1991 also marked the beginning of significant political, economic, and social transformation that fundamentally changed the face of the Central European region and paved the way for the countries’ Euro-Atlantic integration.

To account for the relation between *self* and *other*, the horizontal axis reflects the geographical orientation of a state, spanning the world from the East (with China, Russia, and the region of Eastern Europe being the main representatives) to the West (symbolized especially by the United States, the EU, and other Western powers) and positioning the *self* depending on with whom the Visegrad states identify with or distance themselves from. As mentioned earlier, the process of othering can take the form of both negative differentiation and positive identification (Lebow 2008; Lucarelli 2008). Sometimes both processes can

¹³⁹ The temporal dimension includes also deliberations about what is happening right now or what might happen in the future (conceptualized as “perceived developments in the future”).

even run in parallel and relate to the same one *other*. The spatial dimension, which was considered by Tulmets et al. (2011) only implicitly by defining the *self* in relation to a specific *other* or *others*, is of utmost importance for studies of identity because it enables clear delineation of *significant others*. Combining the two axes provides a matrix of four quadrants, as depicted in figure 12.

Figure 12: Identity matrix organized along the temporal and geographical axes



Source: Own depiction

The temporal dimension on the one hand and the spatial (geographical) dimension on the other hand and the definition of the *self* in relation to one or several *significant others* serve to better explore the complex nature of national identities. A differentiated look at the matrix reveals four combinations, which reflect four main patterns in the manifestation of the *self* and its relation to past and present *significant others*. These combinations, which will guide the qualitative content analysis of the Visegrad states’ national identities, warrant further specification.

Based on the preliminary review of the secondary literature on national identities and historical experiences of Central Europe, it becomes clear that the main *significant others* for the region until the end of the Cold War in 1991, when the Visegrad Group was also established, used to be determined by the East–West divide. This dichotomy should be understood not only in geographical, but also (or especially) in ideological and cultural terms, as a distinction between the democratic Western world and the communist Eastern Bloc with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as its political center.¹⁴⁰ It is important to highlight that, for the present study, the geographical axis also provides a practical tool for the inclusion of those states that do not fit into any of the two ideological blocs. Moreover, looking into a more distant past, the West was not always perceived as a safeguard for democracy, let alone peace, in Central Europe. As a consequence, the geographically (and not ideologically) defined axis allows for the inclusion of the time periods before the beginning of the Cold War.

To give some examples, the 1938 Munich Conference, a failed attempt of appeasement toward Adolf Hitler, and the subsequent occupation of Czechoslovakia by Germany as well as the division of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union following the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939 brought especially painful experiences for the region of Central Europe. In the first case, Czechoslovakia felt betrayed by France and the United Kingdom because it not only lost the strategic area of Sudetenland followed by complete annexation and dissolution of their state, but the Czechoslovak political leaders were not even invited to participate in the conference in Munich. Feeling isolated and betrayed by their own allies, the Czechoslovak government eventually agreed to abide by the negotiated agreement. This event entered the history books under the titles “Munich dictate” or “Western betrayal.” In the second case, a neutrality pact signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union on 23 August 1939 delineated the “spheres of influence” between the two powers, leading to the invasion of Poland by both countries in September 1939. Also here, the insufficient reaction by France and Britain to the invasion, especially the Soviet one, contributed to the perception of Poles being betrayed by their own allies. As noted earlier, the West was not always perceived by the Central European states as a guardian of democracy and human rights.

¹⁴⁰ Borbála Göncz and György Lengyel also note that nation building and state formation, accompanied by the development of specific political, economic, social, and cultural values, differed in Eastern and Western Europe as a result of distinct historical contexts (Göncz and Lengyel 2016b, 32)

Yet it can be preliminarily inferred that the main historical *significant others* for Central Europe during the Cold War era were, on the one hand, the major Western powers, especially Germany, together with the Western values of democracy and human rights, and, on the other hand, the Soviet Union. The relationship toward other Central and Eastern European states during that time remains rather unclear and needs to be further specified in the empirical analysis of this study. In addition, a first look into the available literature suggests that the Visegrad states' own authoritarian, communist past often serves as an expression of the *historical self*.

The geographical pattern described above was largely maintained following the end of the Cold War. However, its manifestation changed to a certain extent. The newly acquired national independence and sovereignty, followed by first the transformation of the countries' political, economic, and social systems, and then the accession to the EU, created a very special context for the Visegrad states' national identities (Göncz and Lengyel 2016b, 34). The cultural-civilizational identity of (Western) Europe, which was largely suppressed during the Cold War period, gained importance in the 1990s as the Visegrad countries attempted to "return to Europe" (Ichijo and Spohn 2005, 4). However, as Atsuko Ichijo and Willfried Spohn note, "joining the EU implies also a conflicting relationship between the just won national sovereignty and the semi-sovereign inclusion in a transnational European polity" (Ichijo and Spohn 2005, 13). The EU has, without doubt, become a *significant other* for the Visegrad states. In this context, the four states' experience with the European integration process and their expectations placed on the EU membership need to be considered if one wants to understand how they view Western Europe and the West in general now.

While the *significant other* in the East is still embodied primarily by Russia, the Central European states increasingly define their *self* also in relation to other Eastern European countries, such as Ukraine, the fellow Visegrad states, and, in the last few years, also China. Consequently, these vectors of the Visegrad states' foreign policies need to be further explored in the empirical parts of this study to determine their effect on the national identities of the V4.

The empirical investigation will deduce the most important identity elements and specify the past and present *significant others* for the individual Visegrad states as well as for the whole

Visegrad region. According to Vít Beneš and Sebastian Harnisch, the “relative importance of historical others vs. current others can be empirically analysed by looking at the salience of historical references in the political debate” (Beneš and Harnisch 2015, 151). *Historical others* may disappear for some time but emerge at another point in the future. Similarly, the *historical self*, which can play the role of the *significant other*, can be found in narratives relating to the historical memory of the nation, regardless of whether it is connoted positively or negatively (Lucarelli 2006, 312).¹⁴¹

The scholarly consensus is that national identities change gradually over time as a result of both domestic contestation and external influences (Marcussen et al. 1999; Risse 1999; Siddi 2018). With a reference to Martin Marcussen’s “ideational life-cycle model,” this study argues that identity change mostly happens through the activation, deactivation, and reactivation of identity elements during “critical junctures” when national state identities are contested and challenged in political discourses (Marcussen 2000). The analysis will accordingly focus on the most formative (historical) events with the aim of exploring how these events have reshaped the identity or added other elements that might be reactivated at some point. The primary purpose of studying historical developments and identifying *historical others* is not to determine the manifestation of historical identity per se but rather to explore the formation and transformation of national identities in their entirety and determine which elements may still play an important role for the current national identity. Since identities are socially constructed and, at least in democratic systems with a plurality of political parties, ideologies, and opinions, constantly contested and (re)negotiated, sometimes different identity elements can “clash.”¹⁴² Similarly, historical events can be interpreted differently by the ruling political elite, which can sometimes lead to conflicting policies and decisions (Tulmets 2011, 13).

Obtaining the most comprehensive picture possible of all identity elements that can potentially be (re)activated depending on specific contexts is not only essential to capture national identities in their entirety but also a necessary precondition for examining the nexus

¹⁴¹ Søren Riishøj is right in pointing out that “interpretation of history and historic events tends to separate national identity from other types of collective identity as each nation follows its own “myths” and “narratives,” folklore, geography, language and national symbols” (Riishøj 2007: 503).

¹⁴² For example, while some political actors may be in favor of their country’s deeper integration with the EU, others may prefer a more sovereigntist foreign policy.

between identity and solidarity. Taking a holistic yet comprehensive approach toward analyzing available secondary literature on national identities along the two dimensions (temporal and geographical) will result in a more differentiated matrix displaying the main *significant others* and an overview of the main elements constituting the national identities of the Visegrad states. In the second step, this categorization scheme will be further refined through the conduct and analysis of semi-structured expert interviews.

5.1.4 Expert Interviews

The national identities of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland have been explored by historians, sociologists, and, to a lesser extent, political scientists. However, the available secondary literature is quite sparse and most of the existing works do not examine the identities in their entirety but only focus on certain identity aspects or on selected periods of identity formation. To close the identified research gap and obtain as complete a picture as possible of the V4 national identities, the author of this study decided to conduct additional interviews with experts from the individual Visegrad states. Interviews are a useful tool to pursue previously unexplored research topics. In addition, there is a good chance of gaining additional background information about the respective processes and events, especially through the narrative passages included in the interview. Interviews are also often used when dealing with complicated contexts that require a differentiated reconstruction and a detailed analysis from multiple perspectives (Blatter et al. 2007, 60-63; Meuser and Nagel 2009, 473). National identities are complex and, in the case of the Visegrad states, under-researched constructs that require investigation from various methodological perspectives, and expert interviews can provide valuable insights in this regard.

There are a number of ways to conduct interviews and every researcher can adapt the interview technique to his or her specific research needs. The interview forms differ mainly in the degree of standardization of the interview situation, i.e. what questions are asked and in which order, how much room for maneuver the interviewer has to vary the content and/or time of the interview as needed, and whether the respondent is more likely to tell his or her own story or whether the interview resembles a question and answer session. It also makes a difference whether the interview is conducted in person, via videoconference, or over phone. Last but not least, the length of the interview can differ significantly (Behnke et al. 2010,

247). Four main forms have developed in empirical research: a *narrative interview*, a *guided interview*, an *expert interview*, and a *group discussion*.¹⁴³ A *narrative interview* is a very open form of interview, in which the researcher gives the interviewee incentives to talk but otherwise lets the interviewee tell his or her own story.¹⁴⁴ The researcher acts primarily as an active listener and, only if necessary, asks further targeted questions that may arise from the interviewee's narrative (Kaiser 2014, 2). A *guided interview* is more structured form of interview than the narrative interview. However, the degree of structuring can again differ greatly. A *group discussion* differs in two aspects from the other mentioned interviews forms: First, instead of an individual interview, a discussion takes place in a group. Second, a group discussion usually combines interview and observation techniques (Behnke et al. 2010, 247-248).

This study employs the method of an *expert interview*, using a semi-standardized guide. Guide-based expert interviews differ significantly from the standardized approach of questionnaire-based quantitative research. They represent a somewhat structured survey tool, where the researcher has a relatively high degree of freedom of choice as to which question is asked in what form and when (Gläser and Laudel 2010, 142). Consequently, while the researcher prepares a set of questions, the order of the formulated questions is not fixed. Rather, the interviewer has the ability to respond flexibly to the conversation, for example, by leaving out questions that have already been implicitly answered or taking up new aspects that he or she had not previously considered. The course of the conversation is therefore largely determined by the respondent (Behnke et al. 2010, 244).

The publications by Jochen Gläser and Grit Laudel (2010) and Robert Kaiser (2014) deal in great detail with the process of creation of an interview guide and the subsequent implementation and evaluation of expert interviews (Gläser and Laudel 2010; Kaiser

¹⁴³ Within these forms, there is again a wide range of variations with regard to qualitative interviewing techniques. Joachim Blatter et al. further distinguish between an *episodic interview*, which seeks to steer the narrative passages through an interview guide to topics or events of particular relevance to the researcher, a *problem-centered interview*, which is often used within a mixed methods design to verify or refine the theoretical assumptions, a *focused interview*, and a *deep/intensive interview*. The authors maintain that, of the different types of interviews, a guide-based expert interview, which is technically a mixed form of episodic and problem-centered interview, is the most suitable for the application in political science (Blatter et al. 2007, 61-62).

¹⁴⁴ Robert Kaiser also adds the type of an *ethnographic interview*, where the goal is to explore attitudes, values, and everyday routines (Kaiser 2014; see also Spradley 1979). Here, too, the respondent ultimately determines the course of the interview situation through his or her answers. Ethnographic interviews often complement a participant observation where the researcher is seeking an immediate experience of his or her research subject.

2014).¹⁴⁵ Their insights formed the basis of the author's own interview preparation and conduct. The individual steps are summarized and further elaborated below:

1. Identification, selection, and contacting of interview partners
2. Development of an interview guide
3. Conducting and recording expert interviews
4. Transcription of interviews/Summary of the main points
5. Theory-based interpretation of the material according to theoretically derived categories

Selection of Experts

Who can be classified as an expert is ultimately decided by the researcher (Kaiser 2014, 39). In other words, the expert role of the interviewee is ascribed by the researcher in accordance with the theoretical considerations and the goal of the study. Selected experts should be well-versed in the topic of interest and possess privileged access to information or special knowledge and experience originating from their functional positions. Also, experts should maintain a certain distance to the topic, which enables them to evaluate it objectively and put it into a larger context (Behnke et al. 2010, 248). Important is that the experts' particular expertise, as opposed to their biographies, personalities, or backgrounds, decides whether they will be interviewed or not.

The experts interviewed for this research project were political scientists, historians, sociologists, ministerial experts, and members of think tanks, who were identified as suitable for providing valuable insights into national identities of the Visegrad states. In addition to a thorough review of secondary literature and additional structured online research, the author of this study used a variation of snowball sampling to identify all key experts in the field. After the relevant experts in all four states according to the set criteria had been selected, an email, including a brief executive summary of the research project and a short biography of

¹⁴⁵ The anthology by Alexander Bogner et al. (2009) also deals with the conceptual foundations of expert interviews and illustrates the application of expert interviews in different research contexts and with different types of actors (Bogner et al. 2009). Although the contribution by Cornelia Helfferich (2009) is not specifically concerned with the type of expert surveys, it contains a helpful practical part on how to conduct (expert) interviews and provides important information on the interaction between the researcher and the respondent in a concrete interview situation (Helfferich 2009). Similarly, the book by Ulrike Froschauer and Manfred Lueger (2019) offers practical tips for interviewing and text interpretation (Froschauer and Lueger 2019).

the author, was sent to all of them.¹⁴⁶ The letter included a clause asking for recommendations of fellow experts that would be eligible for inclusion in the study. Further recommendations were obtained during the interviews.¹⁴⁷

It must be highlighted here that the response rate was extraordinarily high. Of the contacted experts, over 90% replied to the email and agreed to a personal interview. In total, 78 interviews were conducted during six research stays in the Visegrad states—two in Hungary, two in the Czech Republic, one in Poland, and one in Slovakia (see table 3).¹⁴⁸ Where a face-to-face interview was not possible (in less than 8% of the cases), a Skype interview was conducted to ensure maximal comparability of the answers.¹⁴⁹ While the interviews served primarily the purpose of gaining additional background information on national identities, the occurrence of similar statements increased the validity of the findings.

Table 3: Overview of the conducted interviews in the Visegrad states

Country	Research stays	Number of interviewed experts	Number of Skype interviews thereof
Czech Republic	11.02.-15.02.2019 & 04.03.-08.03.2019	20	2
Slovakia	28.01.-31.01.2019	14	1
Poland	12.12.-19.12.2018	19	0
Hungary	29.11.-04.12.2018 & 21.01.-25.01.2019	25	3
Total	ca. 6 weeks	78	6

Source: Own table

¹⁴⁶ The letter of information is to be found in Appendix E.2.

¹⁴⁷ In other words, the snowball sampling technique used in this study involved asking identified experts to nominate other experts who could potentially contribute with their expertise to the research goal of the present study (see also Edwards and Holland 2013a, 6). To ensure that the suggested experts meet the eligibility criteria, referrals made by the interviewees were cross-checked with the experts' "track record" (publications, public statements, and similar).

¹⁴⁸ Appendix E contains an overview of the interviewed experts as well as summaries of all interviews, including a brief description of the interview situation (date, location) and a short biography of each interlocutor.

¹⁴⁹ The growing availability and accessibility of communication technologies, such as Skype, made it easier for the author of this study to conduct interviews with those experts unavailable during the research stays and those facing time constraints. While some authors, such as Layna Mosley (2013), point to the possible limitations associated with virtual interviews, including the lack of personal contact and contextual information needed for subsequent interpretation of the data, the author of this study decided for this method nonetheless because of the crucial expertise of the interviewed persons. To simulate the interview situation as closely as possible to a personal, face-to-face interaction, the author asked the respective interlocutors for a video, instead of an audio, call.

Designing an Interview Guide

Semi-structured expert interviews require an interview guide with pre-formulated questions that are informed by the current state of research, background research on facts and figures, and theoretical considerations. What is especially needed for the development of an interview guide is a clear operationalization of the research question(s), which ensures that information generated from interviews can be reassigned to the theoretical context of the analysis at a later stage of the case study investigation. The translation of the research puzzle and theoretical assumptions into concrete interview questions should happen in a way that enables the questions to be comprehensible and answerable by the experts (Kaiser 2014, 55). The developed interview guide with the set of questions serves as a “rough” framework for conversation because, in semi-structured interviews, the researcher is allowed to deviate from the questions to a certain extent (Behnke et al. 2010, 255).¹⁵⁰ At the same time, it is a useful tool with the help of which the researcher can structure and control the interview situation and in turn ensure certain comparability of information collected in numerous interviews (Kaiser 2014; Meuser and Nagel 2009, 476). Since different types of experts were selected for the interviews, the interview guide contained not only questions that were relevant for all interlocutors but also a small number of specific questions that aimed at extracting specialized knowledge and expertise of the individual interviewees. The interview guide was further adapted for every case study to factor in the distinct national context.¹⁵¹

Conducting and Recording Interviews

At the beginning of each interview, the author presented herself, the research project, and the goal of the interview (the intended use of collected research data for a scientific publication), as well as provided information on the approximate duration and structure of the interview and the confidential treatment of the obtained information.¹⁵² Some of the interviews were

¹⁵⁰ A fully standardized questionnaire often used in closed-ended interviews and surveys, on the contrary, offers a list of possible answers to the formulated questions, which restricts the respondents in their response behavior (Blatter et al. 2007, 61). A rigid questionnaire entails the risk that the respondents no longer respond spontaneously and in accordance with their true views but that their reactions get distorted by the questionnaire’s stimuli (Behnke et al. 2010, 218).

¹⁵¹ The respective interview guide templates as well as summaries of all interviews can be found in Appendix E3-E7.

¹⁵² The interviews took between 60 and 90 minutes, depending on the flow of the interview and time availability of the interviewed expert.

recorded on a tape, however, in a large number of cases, the experts preferred not to be recorded, so that the author took very detailed notes during the interview meetings. Although notes provide a less complete picture than a recorded version of an interview, the author of this study sought to reduce the measurement error by recording the talk in written note form during the interview and completing it with further insights immediately after the interview (Behnke et al. 2010, 253).

Being fully aware of the possible limitations resulting from carrying out expert interviews without tape recording, the author of this study can affirm that the chosen approach in no way adversely affects the research design of this study or the achievement of the desired scientific goal. If expert interviews are to produce information that can in no way be generated by other sources, recording interviews might be not only useful, but essential. On the other hand, Layna Mosley and others underscore that interviews are often used in conjunction with other methods of data collection (Mosley 2013). In this line of reasoning, if expert interviews are mainly used to solidify other empirical material, tape recording is not mandatory (Kaiser 2014, 85). The expert interviews conducted for this research project were used to, first, test the plausibility of the data gained from secondary literature and, second, obtain additional insights that would not be evident by analyzing other sources.¹⁵³ Therefore, taking comprehensive notes served the intended purpose of this study.

Interpretation of Collected Data

For the analysis of the data collected through the interviews, an interpretive approach of qualitative content analysis was used. After the notes for each interview had been sorted, the “coding” of the material proceeded in two steps. First, on the basis of the categorization matrix, the author determined which statements were relevant for which category and assigned them to the respective categories. Second, an evaluation of the meaning of the individual interview statements took place. The category system was further refined and supplemented through new subcategories in the course of the qualitative content analysis of the interview data (see also Gläser and Laudel 2010).

¹⁵³ This approach of guided interviews differs from the so-called *explorative research interviews*, which are often used to gather information about hitherto little researched topics with the aim of hypothesis formation. In that case, the researcher usually works with no theoretical assumptions or reliable empirical data available.

The process of qualitative interviewing and interpretation requires an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomena for the researcher to be able to reconstruct even the most latent meanings. Scholars recognize that a researcher's personality and identity can potentially affect the conduct and interpretation of the evidence gathered in interviews (Mosley 2013; Rathbun 2008). While certain subjectivity is unavoidable, the interviewer (author of this study) strived to not let her own theoretical or political beliefs affect the execution of the interviews and the interpretation of the collected data.

Quality Criteria

It is sometimes claimed that intersubjective verifiability cannot be achieved for qualitative expert interviews, in particular because this specific research technique does not entail a sufficient degree of standardization, which precludes a previously uninvolved researcher from receiving identical information even with the same set of questions and while interviewing the same expert. Moreover, it is argued that, in contrast to quantitative surveys, the data obtained from qualitative expert interviews cannot be meaningfully evaluated statistically due to the breadth of the research questions and the low standardization of the instruments of data collection (Kaiser 2014, 3). In summary, the process of qualitative interviewing is sometimes denounced for being biased, unsystematic, and impossible to replicate.

Nevertheless, a number of arguments can be brought forward, which make it clear that the same quality criteria can ultimately apply to the qualitative method of expert interviews. First, expert interviews use a systemic, theory-led approach to the subject under investigation. The theoretical and substantive knowledge of the author with respect to the issues at hand ensures her asking the right questions and interpreting the interview material objectively according to systematic criteria, which increases the validity of the research (Edwards and Holland 2013b, 72).¹⁵⁴ Second, clearly outlining the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation helps prevent the "observer's bias" and meet the requirement of intersubjective traceability because third parties can more easily retrace the individual steps of the procedure (Kaiser 2014, 6). For this reason, this chapter discussed in great detail the criteria for the

¹⁵⁴ The requirement of neutrality is an important quality criterion, especially for the selection and formulation of the interview questions and the subsequent interpretation of the answers (Kaiser 2014, 8).

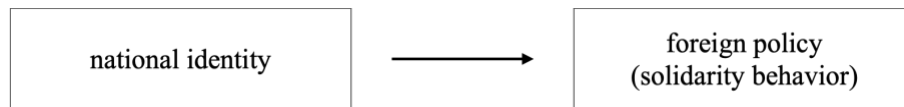
expert selection, and Appendix E contains the interview guides and summaries of all interviews, including a brief description of the interview situation and a short biography of each interlocutor. Third, through a triangulation strategy, the data obtained from the interviews are evaluated in light of the empirical material gained from secondary literature sources (Gallagher 2013, 194). And, finally, despite the limited generalizability of the collected data due to the non-standardized interview situations, certain comparability can be achieved thanks to the use of clearly defined categories and same or similar formulations of the interview questions.

5.2 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

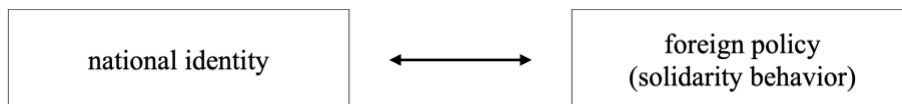
Despite the clear conceptual necessity for treating national identities as a prerequisite for studying solidarity ties between states, such nexus between identity and solidarity has been largely understudied or even ignored in the solidarity literature. So far, only the Special Issue 19/2 of the Czech scholarly journal *Perspectives* edited by Elsa Tulmets (2011) made the attempt to link identity with solidarity. Titled *Identity and Solidarity in Foreign Policy: Investigating East Central European Relations with the Eastern Neighbourhood*, the special issue sought to “complement the research agenda on foreign policy identity” by investigating the relation between identity and solidarity in the foreign policy of nine East Central European members of the EU (Tulmets 2011). In her later works, Tulmets continued to study the relations between the Central and Eastern European countries and their Eastern post-communist neighborhood, focusing on the translation of the countries’ foreign policy identities through two related concepts—solidarity and responsibility (Tulmets 2012, 2014).¹⁵⁵ Tulmets’ research provides without doubt a valuable contribution to the social constructivist research agenda, which has been recently experiencing the trend of a constant development of new theoretical concepts and specific categories with fewer attempts to search for connections between the already existing approaches or to find ways on how to align the new and the existing ones. Countering this trend, this study argues for the importance of “concept integration” in the realm of social constructivism.

¹⁵⁵ Based on the Special Issue, Tulmets published a book titled *Identities and Solidarity in Foreign Policy: East Central Europe and the Eastern Neighbourhood* in 2012, which investigates the link between identity and solidarity in the foreign policy of the following East Central European EU members: Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia (Tulmets 2012).

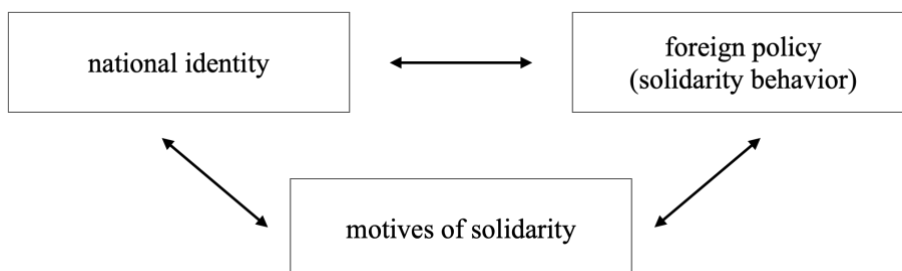
Tulmets et al. consider solidarity as “one of the forms of expression of foreign policy identities” (2011: 5) and use solidarity as a lens to study the link between identity, which they derive from foreign policy concepts and strategies, and concrete national foreign policy decisions and actions. By regarding solidarity, or, more specifically, solidarity behavior, as a form of operationalization of foreign policy identity, Tulmets and her co-authors treat it as a dependent variable.



Seeing identity only as a source of foreign policy behavior, in this case operationalized by the expression of solidarity, evokes the positivist science tradition with its focus on cause-effect relationships between variables. From a social constructivist perspective, the relationship between independent and dependent variables is more dynamic, characterized by their mutual dependence and constant co-constitution. Following the structure–agency debate, it can be concluded that identity, which represents the agents (states), and solidarity, which reflects the structure, are closely interrelated and continuously influence each other.



This study further underlines the necessity of including one additional analytical step, namely the analysis of *motives of solidarity*, which have their roots in the respective national identity and, at the same time, shape the solidarity behavior. By determining which identity elements are activated in a specific case, motives of solidarity serve as an analytical bridge between identity and the expression of solidarity and shed light on how these two are co-constituted. The motives of solidarity will be explored using the analytical categories developed by Siegfried Schieder et al. (2009, 2014a, 2015), as explained in the subsequent section.



5.2.1 Operationalization of Solidarity

Solidarity is not only an ambivalent phenomenon but it occurs in endless gradations and differentiations (Schieder 2009, 12). It therefore makes little sense to draw simplistic conclusions as to whether some states are solidary or not. It would be more suitable to analyze and measure the *degree* of solidarity, which is, however, again not an easy task because understandings and related conceptualizations and operationalizations of solidarity differ. Already Émile Durkheim observed that social solidarity is “a wholly moral phenomenon which by itself is not amenable to exact observation and especially not to measurement” and suggested to use law as a measuring instrument (Durkheim 1933, 65). Intergovernmental solidarity is at least as difficult to observe and measure as social solidarity. The reason for this is that solidarity as a value and principle of collective action is not equally perceived in every state (Folz et al. 2009, 94). Marianne Kneuer and Carlo Masala highlight the difficulty of separating solidarity from other motives of state action and, while validated quantitative measures of solidaristic orientations are generally lacking, from a qualitative perspective, it is possible to at least approximate the term (Kneuer and Masala 2014a, 9).

In social sciences, solidarity is often operationalized through behavior (Radtke 2007; Tranow 2012a). Andreas Grimmel and Susanne My Giang argue that solidarity “has to be practised and made explicit by the deed” or, otherwise, it just remains a hollow word or an empty phrase (Grimmel and Giang 2017a, 2). For Grimmel and My Giang, good intentions are not enough to speak of solidarity. This understanding, however, excludes cases where an actor is willing to express solidarity but lacks the necessary capacity or is otherwise hindered in his or her actions. As Siegfried Schieder rightly observes, solidaristic convictions do not always translate directly into a corresponding action because solidarity often “competes” with other motives, such as security or economic interests. Conversely, solidary behavior does not always require a solidaristic conviction as a motivational basis but can originate from other incentives, such as the achievement of own interests and objectives (Schieder 2009, 27). Therefore, it is essential to explore the motivational grounds behind each action, for which the proxy *motives of solidarity* can be used.

To systematize and operationalize the complex and heterogeneous concept of solidarity and apply it to the research project at hand, this study uses the systematization of the solidarity concept introduced by Siegfried Schieder et al. (2009, 2014a, 2015) and adapts it to the

purposes of this study. Schieder outlines three principles of solidarity action—*ties*, *need*, and *effort*—which, in their adapted form, will serve as a category system for the discourse analysis used in the empirical chapter.

The first solidarity principle, *ties*, describes the quality of the bond between “solidarity donors” and “solidarity recipients.” The nature of the relationship and the strength of ties is often determined by shared history and cultural proximity but can also be a result of, for example, historical guilt (Folz et al. 2009, 95; Offe 2004, 48).¹⁵⁶ In this context, Rachel Folz et al. highlight the special bond of France to its former colonies or the peculiarity of the German past, characterized by the sense of moral guilt for the outbreak of the Second World War and the resulting feeling of historical responsibility toward other states, such as those in Central and Eastern Europe (Folz et al. 2009). In line with the Durkheimian thesis, it is often argued that the deepening of the European integration process and the increasing degree of interdependence should lead to stronger emotional bonds among EU Member States (Mau 2009, 85). It can be further surmised that the stronger the bond between the Member States, the stronger is also their willingness to act in solidarity with each other. Looking at the relationship of the individual Member States toward the EU and its institutions, it can also be hypothesized that the longer they are part of the EU, the more they identify with it and the stronger their solidarity ties toward fellow Member States are. Numerous studies and polls have indeed come to the conclusion that the length of EU membership automatically reinforces European identity of citizens and their support for European integration (Oshri et al. 2016; Thomassen 2009). However, the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the EU is a notable contradiction to this claim, and the effect of the length of EU membership on the states’ readiness to act in solidarity with fellow Member States thus remains unclear.

The *ties* principle closely resembles Steffen Mau’s notion of *bonding solidarity* (“Verbundenheitssolidarität”) (Mau 2005). According to Mau, the sense of belonging, together with the notion of social and emotional closeness and sympathy, form the decisive basis for solidarity of the individual members with each other as well as for the overall cohesion of the group (Mau 2005).¹⁵⁷ In line with this argumentation, most experts argue that

¹⁵⁶ In such cases, the *ties* principle strongly evokes the notion of *significant others*.

¹⁵⁷ Even those who do not consider shared identity as a necessary prerequisite for group solidarity agree that solidarity as a particularistic value is more pronounced among members of a group or community with shared feelings of closeness and togetherness (Ciornei and Recchi 2017; Knodt and Tews 2016).

solidarity diminishes with the increasing size of the group (Beckert et al. 2004a, 10; Preuß 1998, 401). The smaller, the more cohesive, and the more homogenous a group is, the more likely feelings and actions of solidarity among its members can be expected. It follows, for example, that solidarity within the V4 should be higher than within the EU.

The second principle termed *need* postulates that the strength of a solidarity relationship depends on the need of the beneficiary. This motivational factor can be best understood in the context of development policy and humanitarian aid: the greater the plight of a certain country, the more donors feel compelled to help (Schieder 2015, 269). The principle of *need* evokes the type of *compassionate solidarity* (“Mitgefühl solidarität”) established by Steffen Mau (2005) or the idea of *solidarity among strangers* put forward by Jürgen Habermas (1996) and later Hauke Brunkhorst (2002), where no special bond or feelings of attachment are a necessary precondition for a solidary action. This type of solidarity, which usually generates a strong sense of compassion and willingness to help, such as in the event of natural disasters or wars, is rather universalist in nature (Offe 2004, 48). Mau claims that the level of solidarity depends on the degree to which a solidarity donor embraces the fate of those disadvantaged or suffering (Mau 2009, 82).

The third principle called *effort* highlights the importance of the self-effort made by the solidarity recipient (van Oorschot 2000). It is understood as an opposite term to a free-riding behavior. Following the definition established earlier, since solidarity constitutes a reciprocal relationship, it is always conditional. The lower the effort of those wishing to receive solidarity, the harder it gets for the donors to justify their solidary support in front of others, such as the domestic audience (Schieder 2015, 270). In addition, the solidarity relationship can suffer harm if the solidarity recipient does not comply in accordance with the agreed terms and objectives (Folz et al. 2009, 95). The self-effort principle determines, ultimately, who “earns” solidarity. Schieder uses the example of the Euro crisis, during which the debtor states had to “earn” solidarity of the creditor states by increasing tax revenues, reducing government spending, and implementing structural reforms (Schieder 2014b, 386). In theory, every solidarity donor retains the right to decide about the concrete form of self-effort.

A closer look at the principles of *proximity*, *need*, and *deservingness*, as this study chooses to label them, reveals their potential interdependencies. For instance, a particularly close relationship can lead the donor to feel even more compassion for the recipient’s situation (the

level of perceived need is higher) or to require less self-effort on the recipient's part (the level of perceived deservingness is higher). This example indicates that historical ties and the quality of the bond often seem determinant for the other solidarity principles and illustrates why studying national identities is crucial for exploring solidarity ties between states.¹⁵⁸ The empirical chapters of this study will illuminate whether there is a hierarchical relationship between the individual solidarity principles and how such a hierarchy potentially differs from state to state.

The three-tier system of solidarity principles was discussed by Siegfried Schieder and others primarily on the examples of international assistance and development policies (see, e.g., Folz et al. 2009; Schieder 2014a, 2015; Schieder et al. 2011).¹⁵⁹ Accordingly, the authors investigated the feelings of closeness and togetherness between the donor and recipient states, the recipients' plight and related need for support or assistance, as well as the self-effort on the part of the recipients. One key objective of this study is to refine the existing framework so that it is applicable to various policy fields. It therefore proposes to expand the existing systematization and include a fourth principle, namely the one of *self-preservation*. Siegfried Schieder suggested in one of his later works that "creditor states must also have the resources to be able to 'provide' aid in the first place because, in terms of solidarity theory, an 'ought' always presupposes a 'can'" (Schieder 2014: 386). This study agrees that (perceived) capacity can be a critical factor in deciding whether to act in solidarity or not. The underlying motivation here is the preservation of one's own *self*. At the same time, the incentive to express solidarity can also be driven by the desire to bolster one's own *self*. For example, by demonstrating their readiness to show solidarity and assume responsibility for the fate of others, states may seek to overcome a sense of inferiority, become recognized as relevant international actors, improve their image, and prove their rightful belonging to a certain community such as the EU. In sum, the principle of *self-preservation* reflects the solidarity donors' perception of their ability to extend solidarity to others as well as their aspirations to be recognized as solidary actors.

The four solidarity principles are summarized in figure 13 below.

¹⁵⁸ In their empirical analysis, Folz et al. also came to the conclusion that the bonding principle (*ties*) was decisive for the other two principles (Folz et al. 2009, 111).

¹⁵⁹ The 2011 article by Schieder et al. also covers the policy field of enlargement, concretely France's and Germany's policies toward the Central and Eastern European countries in the 1990s (Schieder et al. 2011).

Figure 13: Solidarity principles

		outreach	
		universal	particular
actor	solidarity donor	<p><i>self-preservation</i> (logic: (perceived) capacity of the solidarity donor & desire for recognition)</p>	<p><i>proximity</i> (logic: existence of historical, cultural, emotional, and other ties to the solidarity recipient)</p>
	solidarity recipient	<p><i>need</i> (logic: perceived need/plight of the solidarity recipient)</p>	<p><i>deservingness</i> (logic: self-effort made by the solidarity recipient)</p>

Source: Own depiction

In accordance with Folz et al. (2009), this study assumes that the importance governments attach to solidarity obligations is reflected in the argumentative weight with which solidarity demands are represented and justified in foreign policy discourse. In other words, states legitimize their specific positions and decisions by explicit or implicit references to different principles of solidarity. The method of discourse analysis, which will be presented in more detail in the following section, is therefore an ideal technique to determine the underlying motivation for solidarity action and the relative argumentative weight of the solidarity principles (see also Folz et al. 2009, 94; Schieder et al. 2011, 475). The way how the individual principles are weighted in foreign policy debates not only shows the Visegrad states' underlying motivations behind solidarity action, but the specific mix of the principles and their hierarchical relationship can also explain the possible variance among the V4 states.

5.2.2 Discourse Analysis

The motives of solidarity will be explored by means of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis, which is underpinned by a social constructionist orientation to knowledge, investigates processes of social construction and communication (Keller 2007, 2010). Discourse analysis posits that everything we perceive, experience, or feel is a result of intersubjective construction processes and researchers are therefore reliant on—mostly linguistic—representations of the world (Keller 2005c, 59; Nonhoff 2011, 96). From a

historical perspective, discourse analysis is a very old technique that has its origins in literature and the humanities. In the 1970s and 1980s, Jürgen Habermas with his work *The Theory of Communicative Action* contributed largely to the proliferation of the term “discourse,” especially in German social sciences (Habermas 1981). Further dissemination of discourse analysis took place mainly through the writings of Michel Foucault (Behnke et al. 2010, 351; Blatter et al. 2007, 95; Pieper 2006, 270). Since the turn of the millennium, there has been a lively methodological discussion on the use of discourse analysis as a research approach (Angermüller et al. 2001; Bublitz et al. 1999; Howarth et al. 2000; Keller et al. 2006; Kerchner and Schneider 2006b; Wodak and Chilton 2005; Wodak and Meyer 2009).

Raj Kollmorgen points to several serious theoretical-methodological differences within the discourse research and distinguishes between four main theoretical-methodological currents of discourse analysis (Kollmorgen 2014, 265). The first current developed primarily in the Anglo-Saxon and American (socio-)linguistic and conversational analytical tradition in the 1960s. It understands discourse in the sense of direct communication processes and concentrates therefore especially on the micro-level analysis of language-in-use, i.e. small-scale interactions between individuals, in its empirical studies. The second current originated in France in the late 1960s and developed, especially under the influence of French philosopher Michel Foucault, into the so-called *critical discourse theory* or *critical discourse analysis*. Discourse theorists such as Michel Foucault (1981) or Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) problematize the macro-level connection between society, collective identity, and discourse and emphasize their contingent reciprocal constitution and transformation (Kollmorgen 2014, 266). Current manifestations of critical discourse analysis occur in different variants, such as the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (“Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse,” SKAD) developed by Reiner Keller, the *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) developed by the team around Norman Fairclough from Lancaster University, or the *Vienna School of Critical Discourse Analysis* (“Wiener Kritische Diskursanalyse,” WKDA) shaped, among others, by Ruth Wodak (Fairclough 2013; Keller et al. 2010; Keller et al. 2006; Reisigl 2006; Wodak and Meyer 2009). The third trend in discourse analysis occurred in the context of the linguistic and cultural turn in the social and cultural sciences and has shaped especially the fields of postcolonial, feminist, and cultural studies. Notably, the linguistic turn coincided with the emergence of the social constructivist

paradigm in International Relations (Kerchner 2006, 44; Miller 2016; Nonhoff 2011). And finally, Kollmorgen lists the *socio-philosophical theory of discourse*, as influenced mainly by the work of Jürgen Habermas (1992), as the fourth important current (Kollmorgen 2014).

Considering the wealth and heterogeneity of approaches across a wide range of disciplines, no distinct “technique” of discourse analysis has developed thus far (Bergström et al. 2017, 235; Milliken 1999; Nonhoff 2011, 102). The CDA and WDKA have dealt intensively with the methodological and practical aspects of discourse analysis, but also they cannot be considered a discrete academic discipline with a fixed set of research methods. Rather, they present a myriad of methodological approaches originating from disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, and cognitive science that can be used to studying discourse (Wodak and Meyer 2009). Similarly, the SKAD research program has been used as a theoretical and methodological basis in numerous research projects, especially in German-speaking countries (see, e.g., Keller and Truschkat 2013b; Schünemann 2014b).

In the absence of a uniform social constructivist methodology, the present work essentially follows the SKAD research program put forward by the German sociologist Reiner Keller but creates its own analytical design, tailored to the research topic at hand. Keller himself defines the SKAD as a “research perspective,” a “research program,” or a “theoretical-methodological framework,” as opposed to a standardized method following the “one-size-fits-all” model (see Keller 2005b, 2007; Keller and Truschkat 2013a). It follows that a specific coding system needs to be developed for every case study.¹⁶⁰

SKAD Research Program

The SKAD is embedded in social-constructivist and interpretative traditions of the sociology of knowledge and accentuates the interpretive nature underlying discourse research (Keller 2007, 11; Truschkat 2013, 82).¹⁶¹ It is concerned with the processes of social construction,

¹⁶⁰ The category schema and coding system adapted to both case studies—the refugee and migrant crisis on the one hand and further enlargement of the EU on the other hand—can be found in Appendix G1.

¹⁶¹ The SKAD approach combines two traditions of the “sociological analysis of knowledge,” namely the hermeneutic sociology of knowledge (Hermeneutische Wissenssoziologie) by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) and the symbolic interactionism, with Michel Foucault’s theory of discourse (1981) and adopts an interpretative paradigm (Keller 2005a, 2010). The combination of these different theoretical perspectives and approaches results in a research program that allows both to explore the basic discursive structures and to take into account the predispositions of the participating actors, so that the processes of discursive construction of reality can be analyzed in their entirety (Keller 2005b).

objectivation, communication, and legitimation of meaning, especially at the level of collective actors (Keller 2010, 205). The inflationary use of the concept of discourse in social sciences has created some inconsistencies and ambiguities in terms of terminology (Milliken 1999, 226; Schünemann 2014b, 103). Consequently, discourse can indicate anything from a simple conversation between people to a publicly discussed topic to a specific chain of reasoning (e.g., the neoliberal discourse) (Bergström et al. 2017; Keller 2007, 13; Kerchner and Schneider 2006a). The traditional political science approach to discourse is mainly interested in which argument ultimately wins and why some arguments are more successful than others (Kerchner 2006). Keller defines discourses as “more or less institutionalised structures of knowledge production and circulation” and as “(an ordering device for the observation of) concrete material practices of language in use which constitute the reality that they are dealing with” (Keller 2005b). In one of his later works, he provides a more elaborate definition, according to which discourse represents “a real, manifest, observable, and describable social practice which finds its expression in various documents, in the use of oral and written language, images or more generally speaking, in the usage of signs” (Keller 2011, 53). Accordingly, discourses are realized through communicative actions, from which the researcher aims to reconstruct the intended meanings (Behnke et al. 2010, 352). The SKAD offers quite an open research framework that can be adapted to suit various research needs. At the same time, a rather flexible methodology of the SKAD requires a detailed and transparent explication of the individual methodical steps (Keller et al. 2010, 10).

In this study, as a first step, a detailed category schema and a coding system are developed and adapted for each case study (i.e., migration and enlargement) based on the theoretical premises and review of relevant literature. The codebook, which can be found in Appendix G1, consists of three components: **code names**, which correspond to the four solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*; **code definitions**, which provide an operationalization of the codes and implicitly delineate inclusion and exclusion criteria; and **examples**.¹⁶² In the second step, data is collected and prepared for analysis. It should be emphasized here that the compilation of data is also guided by theoretically reflected criteria. The study will draw on public statements, speeches, and, in selected cases,

¹⁶² The codebook developed for this study does not define keywords for the specific categories because the compiled texts will be analyzed in their entirety and there is no need to use the “search for keywords” function in MAXQDA.

media interviews delivered by Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, and other high-ranking political elites from the four Visegrad states. The entire coding process is conducted using the software MAXQDA. Therefore, in the third step, all sources per case study per country as well as the coding system are imported into the respective MAXQDA files. Fourth, relevant passages of text are coded for correspondence with or exemplification of the categories derived from the theoretical framework.¹⁶³ In the fifth step, after finishing the coding process, the data is interpreted by means of discourse analysis (Keller 2013, 53).¹⁶⁴ The individual steps of discourse analysis, as employed in the present study, are summarized below:

1. Development of a detailed category schema and a coding system (codebook)
2. Identification and compilation of data
3. Import of the collected data and the coding system into MAXQDA
4. Coding of the text material
5. Interpretation of the material according to the theoretically derived categories

Discourse analysis is based on an interpretive evaluation of the data gained in the research process. Similar to qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis operates with theoretically derived and deliberately formulated category systems and codes for evaluating the text material, but instead of using the summary, explication, or structuring techniques, it strives to distill a superordinate meaning scheme—the discourse.¹⁶⁵ The basic assumption of Foucault’s theory is that discourses can be analyzed in a systematic way because they can be broken down into recurring “effective statements” (Foucault 1981, 41). Statements (*énoncé*), which appear in a plethora of so-called utterances (*énonciation*), form the smallest unit of discourse and enable a systematic analysis of discourses (see also Keller 2007, 67; Schünemann 2014b, 78).¹⁶⁶ Over the years, specific discourse-analytical terminology has

¹⁶³ Intercoder reliability tests were conducted during the coding process. An external coder was asked to code randomly selected passages of the analyzed texts, while using the developed coding scheme. The coding results of the external coder were subsequently compared to the coding results of the author of this study.

¹⁶⁴ Appendix G contains a schematized collection of statements for every case study and every country, sorted according to the respective categories (i.e., codes and subcodes). A full list of all analyzed documents sorted by case study and state can be found in Appendix G.2 and MAXQDA results in Appendix G.3.

¹⁶⁵ It should also be mentioned in this context that discourse analytical approaches do not *always* utilize pre-formulated category systems, such as when the research design combines discourse analysis with constructivist grounded theory (see, e.g., Johnson 2014; McAlinden 2018).

¹⁶⁶ This fundamental distinction between statements and utterances constitutes the central analytic point for Foucault’s discourse theory (Schünemann 2014b, 78).

developed within the discourse scholarship. The most prominent concepts used to analyze discourse data are the “patterns of interpretation” (*Deutungsmuster*) and “narrative structures” (Schünemann 2014a). *Deutungsmuster* are understood as socially typified schemes that organize the content of statements. They represent common beliefs or shared knowledge articulated within the discourse and serve to provide the interpretation scheme for occurring events or everyday routines (Keller 2005a; Schünemann 2014a, 89). To reconstruct *Deutungsmuster*, only those passages are selected within the examined text that contain statements on the respective dimension according to the coding. In contrast to the decomposition of text into individual statements as described above, *Deutungsmuster* are concerned with the investigation of the configuration of the specific statement components. Narrative structures can be defined as a combination of statements organized in time, i.e. along a story line or a plot, that essentially tell a story of who is doing what and why. They tie together *Deutungsmuster*, classifications, and other elements of symbolic order and organize both the genealogy and the current manifestation of discourses (Keller 2007, 108-111; Schünemann 2014a, 88).

MAXQDA and Data Selection

Over time, different computer programs have been developed to support the individual steps of qualitative analysis and text interpretation by structuring and organizing textual data (Diaz-Bone and Schneider 2010, 491). There is no discourse analysis-specific program, however, discourse researchers can make use of other qualitative text analysis software programs, such as MAXQDA. MAXQDA is able to manage large quantities of text with quick access to every single document.¹⁶⁷ It organizes the texts according to criteria defined by the user. It allows to construct an own category system, assign categories to selected text sections according to defined coding rules, and visualize the category assignments (and potentially also overlaps of categories). For example, all text segments belonging to the same category or subcategory can be assigned the same color and displayed together. The coding and categorizations not only help interpret the text material but they also increase the consistency and transparency of the analysis, as all steps taken along the way can be easily retraced (Diaz-Bone and Schneider 2010). The line-numbered form facilitates access to

¹⁶⁷ This study analyzed a total of 311 texts.

individual statements, passages of text, and text sequences. It is also possible to search for words and word combinations in the texts. In addition, MAXQDA offers the possibility to use memos and commentaries for individual text passages, which can be an important tool for subsequent interpretation.

This study follows a deductive approach to the development of the coding scheme. Codes used in this study are equivalent to the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* explicated earlier. Throughout the coding process, these codes are further differentiated into subcodes, which may differ from one case study and/or country to another, depending on the particular manifestation.¹⁶⁸ One text passage can be assigned several subcodes.¹⁶⁹ More importantly, later in the process, once it is possible to look over the entire coding scheme and the corresponding text passages, the subcodes can be summarized, combined, differentiated, renamed, restructured, or newly formed (see also Behnke et al. 2010, 365-366). The outcome of the coding process is a hierarchical system with codes and subcodes, which are assigned colors in order to easily differentiate between different categories.¹⁷⁰

MAXQDA is a helpful tool for systematically sorting, coding, and visualizing relevant data for subsequent interpretive analysis of the content. This means that the theory-based interpretation work is done by the researcher, who needs to take into account the different situational, institutional-organizational, and social contexts under which the analyzed statements were made (Keller 2007, 99).¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, as opposed to psychological or cognitive approaches, discourse analysis stays at the level of discourse, which, according to Ole Wæver, constitutes a significant methodological strength:

“Discourse analysis works on public texts. It does not try to get to the thoughts or motives of the actors, their hidden intentions or secret plans. Especially for the

¹⁶⁸ According to Udo Kuckartz and Stefan Rädiker, the first deductive step of the analysis can be followed by a second inductive step, when subcodes are developed empirically based on the material (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2019, 181). Joachim Behnke et al. also underline that, in practice, even with a detailed coding system and a structured approach to the text, new categories may still emerge during the coding process that the researchers have not previously thought of (Behnke et al. 2010, 363).

¹⁶⁹ The length of a text passage is not determinant. Sometimes only one word is assigned a code, sometimes one or two sentences, sometimes a whole paragraph (Behnke et al. 2010, 361-362).

¹⁷⁰ The MAXQDA analysis used in this study used the following color system: green for proximity, red for need, blue for deservingness, and yellow for self-preservation.

¹⁷¹ In this context, it is worth mentioning that a methodological challenge discourse analysts usually face is the need to reconcile the profound analysis of individual cases, which is paramount for the reconstruction of the discourse, with the masses of texts that constitute the database for the analysis (Behnke et al. 2010, 352).

study of foreign policy where much is hidden, it becomes a huge methodological advantage that one stays at the level of discourse” (Waeber 2005, 35).

This is not to deny that public statements can to a lesser or a greater extent be instrumentalized and discourse analysis would in such cases be limited in unveiling potential hidden meanings and motives. Furthermore, as indicated earlier, political elites can also leave the given discursive identity framework altogether if they decide to. However, at the same time, policy makers need to justify their decisions and policy choices and then stick to them in their subsequent actions if they want to appear credible in front of their constituencies. Therefore, the publicly stated justifications should largely reflect the political elites’ underlying motives and interests. In addition, staying at the level of discourse also makes the analysis comprehensible and replicable. To ensure the reliability of the analyzed statements, the data obtained through discourse analysis will be cross-checked through triangulation of information gathered through expert interviews and secondary sources.¹⁷²

5.3 Structure of the Empirical Chapters

The empirical chapter of the present study will be structured as follows. In the first step, it is important to explore the main identity elements inherent to the national identities of the four countries under investigation, since these will serve as the basis for further analysis of the Visegrad countries’ understanding of solidarity, or in other words, for the investigation of the nexus between identity and solidarity. To this end, the author will draw upon already existing research and secondary literature on national identities of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland as well as conducted interviews with experts from research centers, universities, institutes, and think-tanks in the four respective countries.

After the elaboration of the recurring identity elements for every state and for the Visegrad Group, the two case studies will follow. They are structured according to the same scheme. Each case study starts with a brief but detailed description of the solidary (or non-solidary) behavior of the Visegrad countries throughout a particular event or time period (migration and refugee crisis) or in connection to a specific policy field (enlargement of the EU). Not

¹⁷² Keller posits that discourse scientists usually work with available primary sources, such as statements and parliament protocols or archival data, and sometimes combine them with their own surveys (Keller 2007, 99). Similarly, besides analyzing the most important statements from the respective decision-making processes to reconstruct argumentative structures behind the respective discourses, this study will additionally draw on information obtained through conducted expert interviews and selected secondary sources.

only will these subchapters establish specific solidarity profiles of the individual countries, but they will also help assess whether the V4 Group as a whole acted rather as an “agenda-setter/building block” or an “opposition/stumbling block” within the EU throughout that time. After that, each case study will explore how the (non)solidary behavior was justified by the political elites in the Visegrad countries. Using the method of discourse analysis and building upon the solidarity principles established by Siegfried Schieder et al. (2009, 2014a, 2015), adjusted according to the research interests of the dissertation project, the study will elaborate on the specific understandings of solidarity in the Visegrad states. The output of this step will be the illustration of the interaction and hierarchization of these solidarity principles (*proximity, need, deservingness, and self-preservation*) for each country as well as for the Visegrad region as a whole.

In the last step, the study will examine the nexus between the identity elements identified in the first part of the empirical chapter and their reflection in the solidarity behavior of the four countries as problematized in every case study. The purpose of this final step is to show whether and to which extent the motives of solidarity and the justifications of (non)solidarity behavior are reflected in the respective national identity of a given country. The identity-solidarity nexus will be illustrated in the form of a summary table at the end of every chapter based on the example below in table 4.

Table 4: Identity-solidarity nexus

	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
Identity Element 1	x		x	
Identity Element 2		x		
Identity Element 3	x	x		x
...				

Source: Own table

The study seeks to illuminate the identity-solidarity nexus on two distinct levels—the individual and the collective one. On the individual level, the research is driven by the question whether and to what extent specific motives of solidarity, which have their roots in the national identity of a state, influence the expression of solidarity (or lack thereof). On the collective level, the focus lies on the solidarity “performance” of the whole Visegrad Group.

The case studies will illuminate whether the activation and mutual interaction of particular (shared) identity elements reflected in the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* affect the V4's tendency to perform as a building or stumbling block within the EU. The following table summarizes the analytical steps and methods used in the subsequent empirical chapters.

Table 5: Methods used in the empirical chapters

Analytical step	Methods used	Output (for every Visegrad country)	Output (for the Visegrad Group)
National identity	qualitative content analysis & expert interviews	national identity profile (main identity elements, significant others)	similar/overlapping identity elements
Solidarity behavior	chronological, structured description of events and policy decisions	detailed description of solidarity behavior of every Visegrad country	V4 as a building block/stumbling block within the EU?
Solidarity profile (motives of solidarity)	discourse analysis (MAXQDA) & expert interviews	solidarity profile of each country (main discursive justifications organized along the four principles of <i>proximity</i> , <i>need</i> , <i>deservingness</i> , and <i>self-preservation</i>)	solidarity profile of the Visegrad Group (main discursive justifications of solidarity behavior; interaction and hierarchization of the four principles)
Identity-solidarity nexus	-	table illustrating the identity-solidarity nexus (see table 5 above)	identity-solidarity nexus on the example of the two case studies

Source: Own table

PART III:

NATIONAL IDENTITIES OF THE VISEGRAD STATES

In a constructivist understanding, identities are not fixed but relative and relational, i.e. they are shaped by history, ideas, norms, beliefs, and values, and constructed through interactions with other actors (Wendt 1999). An identity of a state or a nation reflects the legacies of the past that in turn lead to the adoption of specific beliefs and values (Tulmets 2011). In addition, most authors agree that an identity is not entirely domestically driven but the *self* is further defined in relation to *significant others* (Harnisch 2011b). This can take the form of identification with or delimitation from one or several “out-groups” (Marcussen et al. 1999). Accordingly, the subsequent empirical chapters will present historical developments and milestones that have been particularly important for shaping the national identities of the individual Visegrad states, as well as explore their relations to the past and present *significant others*.¹⁷³ Based on the identified formative events and main *significant others*, each sub-chapter will also draw up the main identity elements that continue to underpin the (foreign) policy actions of the Visegrad states. The last section will provide a brief summary of the identity elements shared by all four Visegrad states.

¹⁷³ The accounts of national identity will mostly end with EU accession because impacts of more recent social, political, and economic developments on the (trans)formation of national identity are still difficult to observe. Since identity change is a product of social interaction and communication, it requires some time until one can reliably detect the modification of existing or the emergence of new identity elements. However, selected events that are already considered particularly formative for the redefinition of the respective national identity, such as the 2010 election of Viktor Orbán as Prime Minister of Hungary, will be included in the analysis too.

Chapter 6: Czech National Identity

Czech historians and political scientists alike consider Czech history to be for the most part discontinuous, oscillating between the “periods of darkness,” characterized by foreign domination, and “golden ages,” including during the Czech national movement in the nineteenth century and the successful transformation in the 1990s (Brodský 2001). Most authors further agree that it was precisely the historical discontinuities that were particularly fundamental for the formation and transformation of the Czech identity (Brodský 2001; Holý 1996; Kubiš et al. 2005; Kundera 1984). Drawing upon extensive secondary literature on Czech history and conducted interviews, this study identifies nine events that have been most formative for the Czech national identity and that will be elaborated below in greater detail: (1) the period of the medieval Kingdom of Bohemia (especially during the “Golden Age” in the fourteenth century and the Hussite movement in the fifteenth century); (2) the time period under the Habsburg Monarchy (1648–1867) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918); (3) the Czech national movement (in the nineteenth century); (4) the achievement of independence in 1918 and the legacy of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938); (5) the Munich Agreement in 1938 and the subsequent creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–1945); (6) the Soviet occupation and the period of socialist Czechoslovakia (1948–1989); (7) the end of the communist regime, the Velvet Revolution, and the peaceful break-up of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic (1989–1993); (8) the period of political and economic transformation and the development of the democratic Czech Republic (in the 1990s); and (9) the accession to the EU in 2004 (Holý 1996; Veselkova and Horvath 2011; Vlachová and Řeháková 2009).

6.1 Formative Events

The Kingdom of Bohemia was established by the Přemyslid dynasty in the twelfth century, but it experienced its greatest boom under the reign of Charles IV, who became Czech king in 1346 and was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1355. He made Prague an imperial capital and an economic, cultural, and political center of the Holy Roman Empire (Holý 1996). Among other things, he chose Prague for the establishment of the first university in Central Europe, which carries his name until these days, Charles University in

Prague. During his rule, Charles IV substantially increased the weight and prestige of the Bohemian Kingdom and his reign is therefore considered the “Golden Age” of Czech history (Holý 1996).

Another important period for the Czech self-understanding and formation of a distinct Czech identity was the Hussite movement in the fifteenth century, which is commonly classified as the first expression of Czechs striving for freedom and independence (Cabanel 2009, 31; Drulák 2013, 84). The name “Hussites” denotes the followers of Jan Hus, the martyr who criticized the wrongdoings of the Church and who, after refusing to forswear his teachings, was burned at the stake in Constance in 1415. Hussitism was primarily a religious movement and part of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. It was, however, later increasingly interpreted as a national and anti-German movement aiming at the assertion of national autonomy (Holý 1996).

In 1526, the Bohemian Kingdom was incorporated into the Habsburg Monarchy. The local, predominantly Protestant, nobility openly rejected the policy of centralization by the Habsburgs and their attempts to reimpose Catholicism in Bohemia. The discord between the Habsburgs and Czechs culminated at the beginning of the seventeenth century and resulted in the Defenestration of Prague in 1618, during which two Catholic officials and their secretary were thrown out of a window of the Prague Castle. This act is considered to be the catalyst for the Thirty Years’ War (Kořalka 1996). The defeat of the Bohemian estates at the famous Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 put an end to the Bohemian autonomy movement and the existence of Protestant Bohemia. What followed was a long period of re-Catholicization and reinforcement of the Habsburg authority (Kořalka 1996). The aftermath of the Battle of the White Mountain was also marked by large-scale immigration of Catholic Germans into Bohemia and by increasing dominance of the German over Czech language. The subsequent linguistic and cultural decline in the Bohemian lands is commonly referred to as the “Dark Age” (*doba temna*) (Cabanel 2009).

The nineteenth century was characterized by a period of the so-called “national awakening” when leading figures from academia underscored the famous history of the Czech nation and made efforts to foster the Czech language (interview 1Q; Kubiš et al. 2005). During this “national revival” (*národní obrození*), Czechs construed their identity in opposition to Germans with whom they shared territory within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and who

represented a politically and economically dominant element in Bohemia at that time (Holý 1996; Morison 1995). The central figure in the nationalist movement was František Palacký, the founder of modern Czech historiography. Palacký wrote the seminal work *The History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia*, which long served as the primary source for the understanding of history of the Czech nation (Drulák 2013, 83). In this writing, Palacký accentuated primarily the Crown Lands of Bohemia under the reign of Charles IV and the Hussite movement as the great periods of Czech history and independence (Palacký 2016 [1848]). Overall, the period of national awakening was crucial to the strengthening of national self-confidence and the cultural, political, and economic emancipation of the Czech nation (Agnew 2000). During that time, language and identity were closely intertwined and knowledge of the Czech language was considered as an important aspect of being Czech.

Aside from striving for political autonomy for the Czech lands within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Czechs and Slovaks started to discuss the form of their coexistence in a common state (Hudek 2011). The void created by the collapse and dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in the aftermath of World War I paved the way for the declaration of an independent Czechoslovak state on 28 October 1918, and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who was the main champion of the idea of Czechoslovak mutuality, became the first president (Holý 1996). Masaryk, who was largely influenced by the ideas of František Palacký, was a propagator of a universal humanistic mission of the Czech nation and, under his presidency, the country developed a strong democratic tradition (Drulák 2013, 83; Tabery and Červenka 2016, 102).

The construction of a single Czechoslovak nation was, however, driven primarily by pragmatism and not by a strong sense of cultural and linguistic proximity.¹⁷⁴ As a consequence, soon after the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic, the idea of a unitary Czechoslovak nation came into conflict with Slovak demands for a nationally based autonomy (interview 1Q). The prevalent Czech Protestant tradition and the Czech linguistic and cultural dominance encountered disapproval of the Slovaks, who also started to criticize the superior role of the Czechs in governance structures and the choice of Prague as the capital of the republic (Holý 1996; Tabery and Červenka 2016). The Czechoslovak state at

¹⁷⁴ The creation of the separate Slovak language led to the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic with two official languages instead of a single Czechoslovak nation speaking one language after World War I (Holý 1996).

that time was largely multiethnic, comprising seven million Czechs, three million Germans, two and a quarter million Slovaks, three quarters of a million Hungarians, half a million Ukrainians, and about a hundred thousand Poles (Kubiš et al. 2005, 138; Morison 1995, 73).

The coexistence of ethnic minorities within the Czechoslovak state was largely peaceful in the interwar period and the Czechoslovak national identity could develop without any significant external interruptions. This came to an end in 1938 when Czechoslovakia had to cede parts of its territory to Germany, Hungary, and Poland under the Munich Agreement, which the then Czechoslovak elites were not even invited to negotiate. This resulted in a severe disillusionment with Western powers, mainly Great Britain and France, because Czechoslovakia felt betrayed and abandoned by its closest allies (interview 1Q; Kubiš et al. 2005). The already tense situation was further aggravated by the German occupation of the Czech territory on 15 March 1939 and the establishment of the German-controlled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. At the same time, Slovak representatives declared an independent Slovak state under the official “protection” of the Third Reich (Holý 1996).

The Munich “betrayal,” the experience of World War II, and six years of living under occupation of Nazi Germany left a significant imprint on the Czech nation and its identity. It further deepened already existing anti-great-power sentiments. The metaphor of the Munich Agreement has been used ever since in the Czech political and media discourses to highlight the importance of the preservation of national sovereignty (Slačálek 2010). Moreover, Czech authorities declared Germans collectively guilty of the Nazi crimes, leading to an expulsion of nearly three million Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia in the years following the end of the war and to the continued persistence of anti-German sentiments (Veselkova and Horvath 2011, 246).

Czechoslovakia was restored as a state of two equal nations in 1945, but it hardly resembled the multinational state it used to be during the interwar period. The expulsion of Germans and Hungarians substantially altered the composition of the Czechoslovak population, making it more homogenous (Vlachová 2016a). The 1948 Communist overthrow of the Czechoslovak government and the subsequent installation of a Soviet-type communist regime had three major consequences: First, it led to mass emigration from Czechoslovakia. Second, the growing tensions between East and West resulted in the introduction of strict border controls and prevented its inhabitants from interacting with most other nations

(Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997). And third, national identity was largely suppressed in Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1989 when the country belonged to the Communist Bloc (Vlachová 2016a). The Prague Spring of the late 1960s and the idea of Czechoslovak “socialism with a human face” brought some hope of change. However, the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armed forces in August 1968 and the “Normalization period” that followed dampened these expectations and led to another wave of mass emigration after 1968 (Wolchik 2015).

Between 1989 and 1993, Czechoslovakia experienced turbulent times regarding the restoration of its independence and future coexistence of Czechs and Slovaks in a common state and underwent extensive political, economic, and social changes, which had a significant impact on the Czechoslovak and later Czech national identity. The end of the communist regime and the disintegration of the USSR were met with great enthusiasm by the Czechoslovak population and raised high expectations with regard to the political changes in 1989/1990. It also provided Czechoslovakia with the opportunity to redefine its national identity on its own terms (Brodský 2001). Simultaneously, the process of finding a new state identity while accommodating the preferences of both Czechs and Slovaks proved extremely difficult and finally resulted in a profound identity crisis and the split of Czechoslovakia. Experts on the issue conclude that since the Czechoslovak identity was a mere political construction seeking to unite two different nations within one state, its long-term existence was not sustainable (Brodský 2001; Znoj 1998).

The two nations were, first and foremost, unable to agree on the new country’s name. Slovakia, together with large parts of Moravia and Silesia, rejected the official name “Česko” because it referred only to the Bohemian part of the state and the remaining regions struggled to identify with it (Esparza 2010, 418). Similarly, the name “Czechoslovak Republic” was regarded as unacceptable by the Slovaks, who preferred the form “Czecho-Slovak Republic” to safeguard Slovakia’s equal status.¹⁷⁵ This, in turn, provoked outrage from the Czechs because the official name “Czecho-Slovak Republic” had been used between 1938 and 1939—after the Munich Agreement and before being forcefully subjugated to the Nazi rule—and carried too many negative connotations. Eventually, the two nations agreed on the name “Czech and Slovak Federal Republic,” recalling the federal structure established in 1968

¹⁷⁵ This is commonly known as the “hyphen war” (Morison 1995, 80).

(Holý 1996). Despite this compromise, different approaches to (economic) transformation by the Czech and Slovak elites further aggravated the existing tensions and led to increasing demands for Slovak national autonomy (Holý 1996; Tabery and Červenka 2016). As a consequence, after the elections in 1992, the Czech and Slovak political representations chose to peacefully disintegrate Czechoslovakia into two separate autonomous and independent republics. On 1 January 1993, the Czech Republic came into existence, being more homogenous in terms of ethnicity than ever before (Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997, 81 .

Whereas Slovakia arose as a completely new state and had to construct its identity virtually from scratch, the Czechs claimed to have a long tradition to build upon (Tabery and Červenka 2016).¹⁷⁶ The new identity was (re-)defined in opposition to the old system or, more specifically, the communist Czechoslovak identity, and the new regime decided to follow the democratic tradition of the First Republic (Holý 1996). The newly established Czech Republic presented itself as a “democratic, civilized, well-educated, and cultured nation, i.e. a nation that has always belonged to Europe” (Brožský 2001). The figurative slogans “back to Europe” or “return to Europe,” utilized by the Czech media and politicians in the 1990s, symbolized a return to the “normal order of things” after 40 years of living under communism. They were meant to send a signal that Czechs had historically and culturally always belonged to (Western) Europe, from which they were forcefully excluded during the communist period (Kundera 1984).

The period after the break-up of Czechoslovakia and before the accession to the EU was characterized by fundamental transformation of the Czech economy and political system. The transitions from a centrally planned to a free-market economy and from one-party system to democracy were running simultaneously and proved more effective than in other countries of the former socialist bloc (Riishøj 2007). Václav Havel, who became the first president of the independent Czech Republic, was a strong defender of humanity and universal human rights, which left an imprint on the transformed Czech identity (Drulák 2006).

After the division of Czechoslovakia, the Czechs moved closer to the West (Brožský 2001). Driven by the desire to make a sharp break with the communist past, the Czechs deliberately

¹⁷⁶ The Czechs emphasized the more than a thousand-year existence of their state, reaching to the Kingdom of Bohemia in the ninth century. Czech national consciousness and identity therefore seem historically more rooted (Tabery and Červenka 2016).

sought to distance themselves from the rest of Eastern Europe, including Slovakia. On the other hand, they realized that close cooperation with other post-communist Central European states would help them in joining the existing European and transatlantic institutions more quickly and effectively. Then Czech president Václav Havel is regarded as the main driving force behind the establishment of the Visegrad Group in 1991 (Jeszenszky 2007).

While the 1990s were in the spirit of “returning to Europe” and the integration of the Czech Republic into the (Western) European structures, enthusiasm for the EU diminished somewhat after the conclusion of the accession talks in 2003 and the following entry in 2004. Most observers trace this shift back to the 2003 and 2008 presidential and the 2006 parliamentary elections (Šlosarčík et al. 2011, 76). After the EU accession, the split between the two main Czech political parties, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), regarding their positions on the future of the European integration project became more pronounced. The former favored European integration and membership in the EU, while the latter was more Eurosceptic. More importantly, the relationship of the Czech nation toward the EU was shaped by the views of two leading figures in Czech politics at that time: the first president of the Czech Republic Václav Havel and the first Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus, who became the second Czech president in February 2003 (Auer 2008, 97; Esparza 2010, 418-423; Fawn 2003b, 206-210). Their perception of the EU could not be more contradictory. Václav Havel perceived the EU as a “positive other,” recognizing its democratic values and respect for human rights and expressing his belief that the Czech national identity would flourish in the EU. His conviction and positive recognition of the EU is apparent in his New Year’s speech from 1 January 2002:

“We should not be deceived by talk to the effect that within the European Union our Czech national identity would dissolve. It is we alone who could dissolve it, and actually many of us are doing just this day by day: by corrupting the Czech language, by trivializing Czech architecture, by destroying the Czech countryside, by disregarding Czech culture as a mere “appendage”, by kicking free critical thinking in the ankles. ... I have not noticed that the European Union has in any way harmed the identities of the Finnish, the Portuguese or the Irish. On the contrary, for those nations the European Union has paved the way for their further progress, while posing to them anew the question of how specifically they may wish to contribute to common progress” (quoted in Esparza 2010, 421).

Václav Klaus, on the other hand, maintained a dismissive attitude toward the EU, criticizing its excessive regulation and bureaucracy. Contrary to his predecessor Havel, he perceived the EU as a “superstate” with a high level of democratic deficit, thereby posing a threat to the Czech national identity (Esparza 2010, 422; Fawn 2003b, 222). In his speeches, he not rarely compared the EU and its institutions to the Soviet Union and denoted “Europeanism” as a new form of communism. The following quote summarizes his view of the EU:

“The historic dismantling of communism brought us freedom and sovereignty. Our gradual approaching the European Union, adjusting to its requirements and in 2004 formal entering into it was a process with much different characteristics than the first one. It has brought us less freedom, less democracy, less sovereignty, more of regulation, more of extensive government intervention” (Klaus 2007).

In economic terms, Klaus’ attitude toward the EU was rather ambiguous, highlighting the benefits of being part of the liberalized European space but downplaying any dependence of the country on the EU structural and other funds. In political terms, he warned against the creation of a “single European State” and opposed both the EU Constitution and the Treaty of Lisbon (Esparza 2010, 422-423). Although Klaus has never considered himself and his opinions Eurosceptic, but rather “Eurorealistic,” his perceptions and identifications toward the EU can be described as negative.

The current views of the EU have been strongly influenced by the Havel versus Klaus dichotomy, resulting in sometimes positive and at other times negative identifications toward the EU. Against the background of the long historical experience of foreign domination, the Czechs often express their fear of being discriminated against in comparison to the “older” Member States, and the Czech position with regard to the EU institutions continues to stress the importance of the equality among the Member States (Šlosarčík et al. 2011).

6.2 Significant Others

The previous paragraphs have outlined main past and present *others* that were or still are significant for the formation of Czech national identity. First, Czech identity was constructed in contrast to Habsburg Austria and, later and more significantly, Germany. The large German minority living on the territory of the present day Czech Republic served as a *significant other* during the process of Czech national emancipation in the nineteenth century (Kubiš et al. 2005, 140). As a consequence of the two World Wars and particularly due to

the experience of being turned into a German protectorate in 1939, the Czech national consciousness always contained a strong anti-German sentiment (Wingfield 2000, 247-248). Germany is nowadays considered as the most important economic partner for the Czech Republic, but the historical memory continues to impair the relations. The result is an ambivalent attitude of most Czechs to present day Germany (interviews 1E, 1F & 1S).¹⁷⁷

From 1918 to 1992, Czech national identity was formed and shaped in relation to Slovaks and Slovakia. In the initial phase, Slovaks were perceived as a related ethnic group and Slovakia as “the country by far the most similar in cultural terms” (Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997, 88). However, the relationship between Czechs and Slovaks suffered a serious setback following the formation of an independent Slovak state under the auspices of Nazi Germany during World War II (Brodský 2001). During communist Czechoslovakia, Slovakia was the only country that Czechs had natural contact with, unrestricted by any border controls, and this situation lasted for more than 40 years (Vlachová 2016b, 11). However, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1992 moved Slovakia from a *significant “internal” other* to an “external” other. The Czechs started to define themselves in opposition to it, perceiving their own country as situated in the center of Europe and belonging culturally to the West, while maintaining that Slovakia was politically, economically, culturally, and geographically part of Eastern Europe (Brodský 2001, 27; Fawn 2003b, 210; Holý 1996). This deliberate delimitation from Eastern Europe pertains not only to Slovakia, but concerns all countries situated to the East of the Czech Republic. From today’s perspective, Slovakia, which is geographically, culturally, and linguistically still very close and similar to the Czech Republic, remains a *significant other* for the Czechs.

From 1948 to 1991, the Czech national identity was being construed in contrast to the Soviet Union. The seizure of power by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Russian domination of the country in the subsequent years, and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 left a considerable imprint on the Czech identity. While the USSR disappeared as a *significant other* in 1991, reminders of the communist era are present in the

¹⁷⁷ In an address at Charles University in Prague on 17 February 1995, then president Václav Havel reflected on the ambiguity of the Czech relationship toward Germany: “Our relationship to Germany and the Germans has been more than merely one of the themes of our diplomacy. It has been a part of our destiny, even a part of our identity. Germany has been our inspiration as well as our pain; a source of understandable traumas, of many prejudices and misconceptions, as well as standards to which we turn. Some regard Germany as our greatest hope, others as our greatest peril” (Havel, quoted in Fawn 2003b, 216).

Czech consciousness until these days, stirring up predominantly negative emotions vis-à-vis Russia.¹⁷⁸

The accession to the EU fundamentally influenced the process of re-defining Czech national identity. Some Czechs praised the EU and its essential role in the process of overcoming the identity crisis that occurred in the years following the attainment of independence. On the contrary, some presented the EU as a potential “oppressor” entity, threatening the sovereignty of its Member States and leading to the erosion of their distinct national identities (Esparza 2010, 413). The EU undoubtedly serves as one of the most important *significant others* of today, however, the relationship continues to be highly ambiguous, fluctuating between close attachment and occasional disillusionment. It is presented in a negative or a positive light depending on the specific context and the person that does the “imagining.” While some decision makers portray the EU as a “positive other” epitomizing freedom and democratic values that have been enshrined in the Czech identity since the national revival in the nineteenth century, others continue to warn against the erosion of Czech national identity within the EU structures (Esparza 2010, 414-416).

6.3 Main Identity Elements

It is evident that the present Czech identity is affected by unresolved relationships with “great powers,” such as Germany, Russia, and increasingly also the EU. Events such as the Munich pact (“betrayal of Munich”) in 1938 or the invasion of Czechoslovakia (“betrayal of Moscow”) in 1968 created mistrust and led to negative othering vis-à-vis great powers (Beneš and Harnisch 2015, 157-158). Milan Kundera, Czech-born French writer who has lived in exile in France since 1975, also pointed to the repeated Western negligence, which he described as almost as detrimental as the German or Soviet invasions (Kundera 1984). The anti-great power sentiments and the interpretation of great powers as untrustworthy and perfidious remain present in official discourses, and they only differ with regard to which great power is considered a bigger threat to the Czech identity (interview 1G). Foreign policy preferences of the Czech Republic oscillate accordingly between the EU, sometimes

¹⁷⁸ Vladimír Handl points out that the “Russian factor” continues to divide the Czech society because a part of the political establishment and the public maintains a romantic relationship toward this country, relating mostly to the fascination with the Russian culture and the performance of the Russian army during World War II (interview 1E).

portrayed as an “emerging great power,” and Russia. Although current relations with great powers are prevalently associated with historic traumatic experiences with world powers, sometimes positive images of the past are invoked as well. A concrete historic example of Czechs identifying themselves positively with Western powers, concretely the United Kingdom, France, and the United States, was the time during the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) (Esparza 2010).

While there is admiration for and a feeling of belonging to the West, Czechs also maintain a certain sense of superiority over the East, or more specifically, over other Eastern European countries. Czechs are generally very proud of what they have achieved over the course of the centuries, while often living under foreign rule, and perceive themselves as an exceptionally cultured and well-educated nation (Brodský 2001; Holý 1996). This self-esteem can be traced back to the achievements of the great Bohemian Kingdom in the Middle Ages, the democratic First Republic under Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, as well as the successful transformation in the 1990s (Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997). The fact that Czechoslovakia was the only democratic country in Central Europe between the two World Wars served as a strong symbol and motivating force during the Velvet Revolution and, in its aftermath, reinforced the continuation of the Czech democratic tradition and strengthened the feeling of belonging to the West (Holý 1996). National pride and positive self-identification have been further influenced by leading figures of the Czech history, such as František Palacký and Milan Kundera. Palacký fostered the image of the Czech nation as inherently democratic and defined its role as a “bridge between German and Slav, between East and West in Europe” (Holý 1996, 182). Kundera portrayed the Czech lands as the civilizational heart of Europe (Kundera 1984). Following this tradition, the Czech nation refuses to be seen as Eastern European and insists on being regarded as part of Central Europe. In other words, due to its specific geopolitical location and its historical legacy, the Czech Republic understands itself as a bridge between East and West (Vlachová and Řeháková 2009). National pride and positive self-identification also fuel the country’s need to be respected and recognized as a relevant international player.

Numerous studies demonstrate that the Czechs hesitate to cede sovereignty to the EU or any other international body because of their long struggle for freedom and independence (Vlachová and Řeháková 2009). As Søren Riishøj notes, states forced to live for decades or

centuries under foreign rule tend to languish in the “integration dilemma” (Riishøj 2007).¹⁷⁹ This can be demonstrated in the case of the Czech Republic and its clear opposition to deeper integration efforts and unification tendencies in Europe. In this sense, Riishøj links the integration dilemma to the prevalent Euroscepticism in the Czech Republic, pointing to the Czech fear that their national identity would dissolve in European identity (Riishøj 2007, 508).

In addition to unresolved relationships with great powers and the related emphasis on sovereignty, the notion of victimhood is very strong in the Czech Republic. Czechs often portray themselves as innocent victims suffering from oppression, subjugation, and domination by others, be it the Habsburg Monarchy, (communist) Russia, or (Nazi) Germany (interview 1E; Harnisch and Beneš 2015). Another typical feature mentioned in relation to Czech identity is the Czech “littleness,” which manifests itself in two ways. First, numerous historical discontinuities made Czechs believe that others often decided “about them without them” (see Munich Agreement), which in turn evokes certain carelessness and indifference by the Czechs. This characteristic is closely related to the second expression of the Czech littleness, namely the tendency to rely on others and then blame them for one’s own mistakes. This identity feature, labeled by some as “should-be-ism,” postulates that Czechs are often critical and say something should or should not be done without coming up with their own proposals for how to solve the particular problem (Brodský 2001).

More than 40 years of communist rule, during which Czechoslovak society lived closed off from the rest of the world, have predicated the prevalent secularism and unconventional homogeneity of the Czech population (interview 1M; Cabanel 2009). The historical events of the twentieth century and later the dissolution of Czechoslovakia significantly altered the structure of the formerly multinational Czechoslovak state, making it largely homogenous in its ethnic composition (Vlachová 2016a). According to various surveys on national identity conducted in the 1990s, about 95% of citizens living in the Czech Republic identified themselves as Czech (Kubiš et al. 2005, 142; Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997, 81). A closer look at various population census data reveals that Czech national identity is strongly connected to the Czech territory. Only those people who live in the Czech Republic and speak

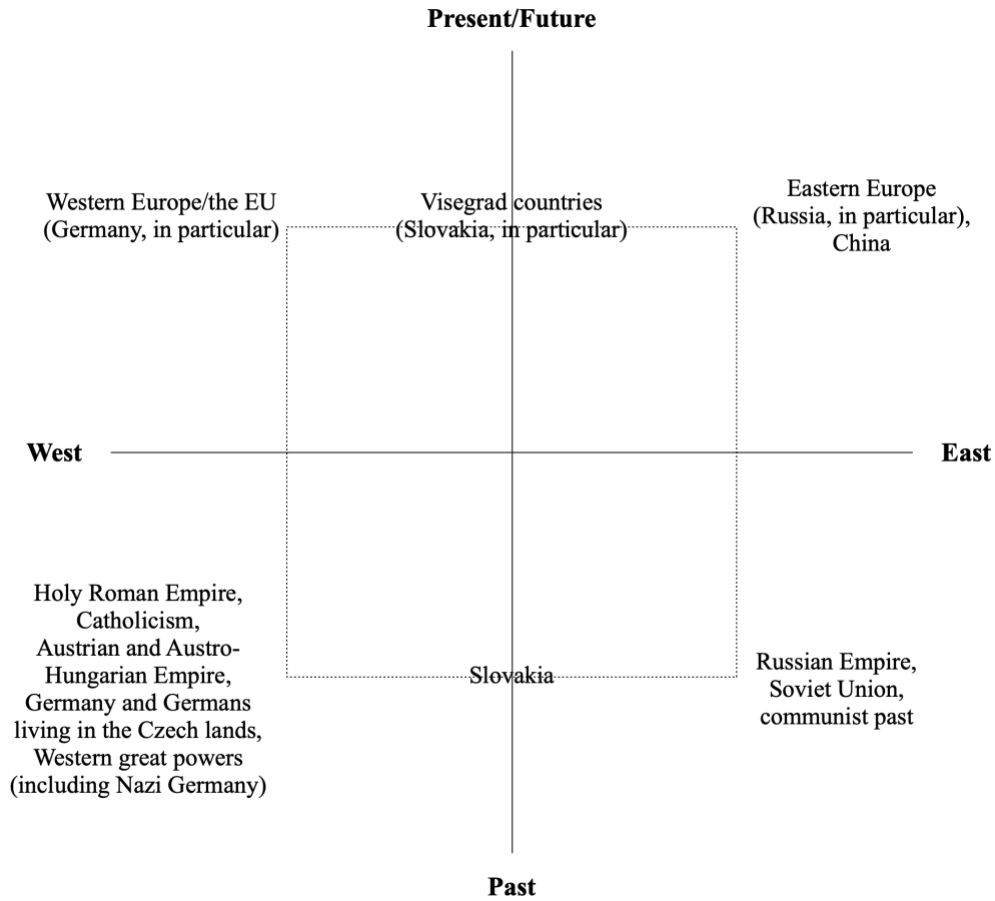
¹⁷⁹ Riishøj describes the integration dilemma as a feeling of being torn between the fear of being “absorbed” as a result of giving up a great part of national sovereignty and the fear of being “excluded” due to insisting on maintaining national sovereignty (Riishøj 2007).

the Czech language are regarded as fully-fledged Czechs (Holý 1996; Plecítá-Vlachová 2011; Vlachová and Řeháková 2009). This particular identity trait can explain the cautious, mistrustful, and sometimes overly negative attitude toward foreigners that is observable across the Czech political spectrum and society (Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997).

When it comes to religious identity, the interviewed experts agreed that the Czech nation, unlike its Central and Eastern European neighbors, can be characterized by “religious lukewarmness” (interviews 1L & 1Q). According to the Pew Research Center survey from 2017, 72% of the Czech population are religiously unaffiliated and only 29% say that they believe in God (Pew Research Center 2017). This widespread secularism is not only a consequence of decades of government-sponsored atheism in the second half of the twentieth century but also partly a legacy of the Czech Hussite movement in the fifteenth century as well as the Czech nationalism of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The repression against the Hussites and other Protestants by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the related forcible re-Catholicization of the Czech lands led to the dismissal of the Catholic faith and sparked the Czech distaste toward religious authorities. According to Dana Hamplová, in the first three years after gaining independence from the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918, one and half million Czechs left the Catholic church. This disaffiliation was further aggravated by the Soviet anti-religious propaganda and the communist regime’s persecution against believers (Hamplová 2010).

The following matrix depicts the main historical and current *significant others* for the Czech Republic and the table below provides a summary of the identity elements elaborated above. A detailed table summarizing the main formative events, *significant others*, and identity elements can be found in Appendix F.1.

Figure 14: Main historical and current *significant others* (the Czech Republic)



Source: Own depiction

Table 6: Summary of the main identity elements (Czech national identity)

Identity element	Specification
Feelings of victimhood & anti-great power sentiments	Discontinuous history as a result of oppression and foreign domination Aversion toward great powers
Feelings of bitterness and betrayal & anti-great power sentiments	Mistrust toward the West and the East (“historical debt” of both Russia and the West) Aversion toward great powers
Strong quest for sovereignty and independence	“Integration dilemma” / ambiguous relationship toward the EU
Self-image as a cultured and civilized nation	Democratic tradition and the tradition of a cultured and well-educated nation (Legacy of Palacký, Masaryk, Havel, etc.) Proud history

Feeling of belonging to the West, sense of superiority over the East → Bridge between the East and the West	“Return to Europe” (feeling of <i>rightful</i> belonging to the West)
	Superiority over the East (self-perception as an exceptionally cultured and well-developed nation)
	Bridge between the East and the West
Homogeneity of the Czech population	Historical development from a heterogenous to a homogenous nation (low percentage of foreigners living in the Czech Republic) Czech national identity strongly connected to the Czech territory
Widespread secularism	Protestant tradition
	Soviet anti-religious propaganda and the communist regime’s persecution against believers
Czech “littleness”	Acting in opportunistic ways and relying on others Blaming others for one’s own mistakes and disclaiming responsibility Skepticism and “should-be-ism”

Source: Own table

Chapter 7: Hungarian National Identity

Similar to the Czech historical experience, Hungary can look back at both a glorious past and its numerous interruptions (László 2014). Most experts on Hungarian history maintain that, in the case of Hungary, repeated struggles for independence were almost always followed by defeat (Csepeli 1997, 169; László 2014, 79). Examples include the Mongol invasion; the Ottoman occupation; the Peace Treaty of Trianon; the Second World War and the Holocaust; and the revolution of 1956. The first actual redemption came with the political regime change in 1989. All these significant events in Hungarian history have exerted influence on the national identity of Hungarians, as will be explained in more detail below.

7.1 Formative Events

According to mainstream Hungarian historiography, Magyar tribesmen first arrived in Europe in the late ninth century and settled in the Pannonian Basin, or Carpathian Basin, which lies in the southeastern part of Central Europe (Fowler 2004; Macartney 2008, 1-11). Under the ruling Arpád dynasty, Hungarians were converted to Christianity and the Hungarian tribal federation was integrated into the Christian Western Europe. With the coronation of King Stephen Istvan (later Saint Stephen) at Christmas 1000, the Hungarian kingdom was founded, which covered an area of the size three times bigger than that of modern-day Hungary (Macartney 2008, 11-17). The medieval Kingdom of Hungary experienced favorable development and flourishing growth, except for a short period during the Mongol invasion in the middle of the thirteenth century, which left the kingdom largely devastated (Macartney 2008, 31-33). During this “Golden Age” period in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Hungary was an economically rich kingdom and had a greater say in European politics (interview 2V).

The independence of the Hungarian Kingdom came to an end in 1526 after its defeat at the Battle of Mohács and the subsequent annexation by the Ottoman Empire (László 2014, 49). During the subsequent Ottoman Wars, the territory of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary was temporarily divided between the rival foreign rules of the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. While the southern part was ruled by the Ottoman Turkish sultans, the Habsburg Hungarian kings claimed the northern and western parts of the country, changing its name to “Royal

Hungary” (Csepeli 1997, 277). In the decades following the partition of Hungary, the territory suffered plundering and large material devastation, especially in Central Hungary ruled by the Turks (Macartney 2008, 65-72). At the end of the seventeenth century, after the Habsburgs had succeeded in pushing the Turkish forces out of Hungary, the country was almost fully reunited and fell under domination of the Habsburg Monarchy (Macartney 2008, 88).

Hungarians enjoyed far greater political and cultural independence than other territories in the Habsburg Monarchy, and later the Austrian Empire, having their own Diet (parliament) and constitution (Argentieri 2015, 213). Nevertheless, the increasing centralization of the Holy Roman Empire and repression of Protestants in Hungary sparked several rebellions against the Habsburgs in the eighteenth century. The most significant attempt to topple the Habsburg rule in Hungary was the Rákóczi war of liberation between 1703 and 1711 (Macartney 2008, 92-93).¹⁸⁰ After a short peaceful period under the rule of Maria Theresa, the Hungarian Estates, inspired by the ideas of French Enlightenment, opposed the “enlightened” absolutism of the new Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II (Cieger 2016, 126).¹⁸¹ After Joseph’s death, even those enlightened reforms ceased, and the Habsburgs reverted to reactionary absolutism and a forceful repression of protestants. Uprisings against absolutist Habsburg rule culminated in the 1848 revolution and war of independence from the Austrian Empire. On 15 March 1848, inspired by other revolutions that spread across Europe at that time, reformist politicians such as Lajos Kossuth publicly demanded comprehensive democratic rights for the Hungarian people, an act that was followed by mass uprisings against the Habsburg rulers. The Hungarian insurrection was suppressed by the Habsburgs, with significant help of the Russian army, in 1849 (interview 2H; see also Gerő 2006, 138). Despite the failed attempt to restore independence, Hungary was awarded “home rule” under the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. Consequently, from 1867 onwards, the Hungarian lands enjoyed considerable autonomy with separate administration within the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy (Argentieri 2015, 213-214; Haynes 1995, 88; Jeszenszky 2007, 44). Most authors describe the 50-year period of the Dual Monarchy as a heyday of

¹⁸⁰ Francis II Rákóczi, prince of Transylvania, was the leader of the Hungarian independence movement in the eighteenth century.

¹⁸¹ Among other things, Joseph II replaced Latin with German as the official language of administration, and also the education was completely Germanized (Macartney 2008, 124).

Hungary's economy and culture and an important time for the formation of national consciousness (interview 2V; Argentieri 2015; Gerő 2006; Macartney 2008).¹⁸²

Hungary remained in the Dual Monarchy until the outbreak of World War I. This meant that it appeared on the losing side at the end of the war and had to pay a price for it. Despite gaining full independence in 1918, as a result of international boundary changes, Hungary suffered the most drastic reduction of territory in its history. Under the terms of the Peace Treaty of Trianon, signed in 1920 between representatives of the Entente powers (the United Kingdom, the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire) and the Hungarian government, Hungary was deprived of two thirds of its territory, which was awarded to Austria, Romania, Italy and the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia) and Czechoslovakia (Argentieri 2015, 214; László 2014, 127; Shevchenko 2018, 65). As a result of these territorial arrangements, Hungary lost one third of its population and over three million ethnic Hungarians became citizens of neighboring countries (Haynes 1995, 89; Jeszenszky 2007, 49).

The Treaty of Trianon is often described as the most traumatic event of the Hungarian collective memory, having an important impact on the formation of Hungarian national identity (Kovács 2016; László 2014). After the war, Hungary was economically weakened and diplomatically isolated—surrounded by the “Little Entente” of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia—and experienced a drastically diminished status and influence in Europe (Haynes 1995, 89; Jeszenszky 2007, 44). Most Hungarians shared the opinion that their country had to pay a disproportionately high price, claiming that Austria was the dominant force in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and drew Hungary into World War I (Traub 2015). Upset about the outcomes of World War I and driven by a strong feeling of injustice, Hungary never accepted the terms of the Trianon Treaty and demanded its peaceful revision by the League of Nations (Jeszenszky 2007, 49).

The new regime of Miklós (Nikolaus von) Horthy, who was appointed the Regent of Hungary in 1920, embraced a nationalist and revisionist foreign policy (Csepeli 1997, 278). The determination to regain its “historical lands” prompted Hungary to join the Axis powers at

¹⁸² The revolution of 1848-49 and the relation toward the Austro-Hungarian Empire was something that determined the political system until 1918. Political parties were formed based on whether they accepted or refused the treaty with the Habsburgs. Similarly, debates about being a good Hungarian or a traitor of Hungarian interests were determined by the relation to the Habsburgs (interview 2V).

the outbreak of the Second World War. Between 1938 and 1941, Hungary regained most of its “lost” territories. After the Munich Agreement and the dismantling of Czechoslovakia in 1938–1939, it gained the territories of southern Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, which became known as the First Vienna Award. Moreover, under the Second Vienna Award, Hungary was allowed to annex northern Transylvania at the expense of Romania (Jeszenszky 2007, 49). Despite signing a non-aggression treaty with Yugoslavia in December 1940, Hungary agreed to participate in its invasion led by Germany in 1941. Under increasing German pressure, Hungary declared war on the Soviet Union in the same year (Haynes 1995, 91). The government party’s pro-Axis shift also led to the adoption of anti-Semitic-legislation and increased restrictions on Jews (Csepeli 1997, 199; László 2014).

After Germany’s defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad, Admiral Horthy attempted to switch sides and align with the Anglo-American coalition. Germany responded by occupying Hungary in March 1944 in order to prevent any further attempts of defection (Jeszenszky 2007, 44). During this short time period, more than half a million Hungarian Jews were deported to Nazi concentration camps or killed in Hungary (Csepeli 1991, 335). At the same time, the Soviet troops invaded Hungarian territory and, by the spring of 1945, German troops were pushed out of the country and Hungary was occupied by the Red Army (Argentieri 2015, 214).

Hungary found itself once again on the losing side of the war. After the Second World War, the 1947 Peace Treaty of Paris reaffirmed Hungary’s Trianon losses (Gerő 2006, 16). In addition, the Czechoslovak Košice Government program from April 1945 applied the principle of collective responsibility for destroying Czechoslovakia to persons of German or Hungarian nationality (Békés 2011, 68). Then President Eduard Beneš issued a decree depriving ethnic Germans and Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia of their citizenship and confiscating their property. As a consequence, around 70,000 ethnic Hungarians had to leave the country (László 2014, 165).

Hungary became a satellite of the Soviet Union after World War II and had to participate in the “building of socialism” (Csepeli 1997, 202-203). Under the totalitarian leadership of Mátyás Rákosi, the Hungarian government was very loyal to the Soviet Union and the country experienced a period of severe oppression and mass imprisonment, deportations, and executions of “class enemies” (Fischer 2016, 15). Growing frustration with the communist order, the Sovietization of the economic system, and the Russian domination culminated in

nationwide protests in late 1956. What started as a student demonstration for the withdrawal of Soviet military troops developed into a country-wide revolution, calling for national sovereignty and the introduction of a pluralist democracy. The reform communist Imre Nagy was appointed Prime Minister. He released political prisoners and promised to initiate political reforms, allowing for non-communist political parties that were abolished in 1948 to form part of the new coalition government (Macartney 2008, 242). After he announced that Hungary would leave the Warsaw Pact and become a neutral state, the Soviets, concerned about these developments, decided to intervene (Argentieri 2015, 216). Nagy appealed to the United Nations (UN) and asked for help, however, the Western great powers (the United States, the United Kingdom, and France), which were preoccupied with the Suez Crisis at that time, failed to respond to his plea (Fischer 2016, 16; Macartney 2008, 242). In other words, the West was perceived in Hungary more as a bystander that was not particularly helpful (interview 2H).

The revolution was brutally suppressed by the Red Army. The Soviets introduced retaliatory measures and the re-establishment of a one-party system with the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and its leader János Kádár in power (Csepeli 1997, 279). When Nagy refused to resign as Prime Minister, he was arrested and executed on charges of treason in 1958. Many other political prisoners were sent to prison work camps or executed (Fischer 2016, 16). According to numerous authors, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 served to provide a redefinition of Hungarian identity, because it clearly contrasted Western liberal traditions with Soviet totalitarianism (Haynes 1995, 93).

While Hungary remained part of the Soviet Union after the Soviet intervention in 1956, the economic reforms introduced by the Kádár government eased the previous centrally planned economy and communism in Hungary from the mid-1960s became gradually less authoritarian and repressive (Argentieri 2015, 218; Shevchenko 2018, 65). The "New Economic Mechanism" introduced by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee in 1966 carried elements of free market economy, which led to less foreign trade restrictions and the related increased availability of consumer goods, together with the improvement in the Hungarian standard of living (Nyysönen 2006). Hungarian citizens were provided with a more extensive assortment of food and consumer goods as well as economic and social welfare in exchange for pretended regime support. Hungary's communist

experience and the relatively liberal cultural and economic course of its regime, especially in the final period, is often being described as “Goulash Communism” (Fischer 2016; Nyysönen 2006). Hungary was, in fact, often portrayed as the Central and Eastern Europe’s “most open and market-friendly economy” (Rupnik 2012, 133) and the “happiest barrack” of the socialist camp (Nyysönen 2006, 154). Citizens of the other socialist countries perceived Hungary as the most “westernized” and liberal country in the former Eastern Bloc (Nyysönen 2006, 163; Shevchenko 2018, 65).

Already in the years preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, debates about the future of the country showed signs of division between those preferring a more nationalist course and those who advocated for an accelerated NATO and EU membership (Argentieri 2015, 219). It was in 1988 when a group of young lawyers founded the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz), which back then was a liberal party formed mainly by students persecuted by the communist party (Argentieri 2015, 219). In May 1989, Hungary started to dismantle the barbed-wire border fence between Austria and Hungary, which marked a symbolic end to the “Iron Curtain” that had divided Europe since the end of World War II. This act caused a chain reaction in Czechoslovakia and East Germany and finally resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall (Fischer 2016, 19).

The reburial of Imre Nagy on 16 June 1989 represented the symbolic start of the transition from state socialism to democracy. After more than 40 years, Hungary restored its national sovereignty and emerged as an independent, full-fledged nation state (Örkény 2006, 29). In the spring of 1990, the first free elections were held since 1945. The newly elected party of József Antall pursued the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary and the re-orientation of Hungarian foreign policy, strengthening its political, economic, and cultural ties to the West (Jeszenszky 2007, 45). The most vocal supporter of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary was then young Fidesz leader Viktor Orbán (Traub 2015). The fall of the communist rule and the restored national independence also went hand in hand with the need for a redefinition of the Hungarian national identity. This was the centerpiece of the transformation period in the 1990s, which saw two contrasting approaches to the further political development of the state: the “return to the Past” and the “return to Europe” (Kornai 2015, 43). One group called for a return to the “pre-communist” times, such as the late

nineteenth century and the interwar period; the other group emphasized the urgent need for the fastest possible Europeanization (Ágh 2011, 235).

Similar to the Czech Republic or Poland, Hungary experienced an exceptionally smooth and peaceful transition to democracy after 1989 and was considered a “post-communist success story” and “ideal reform country” (Herman 2016; Mungiu-Pippidi 2015). The country further proved that it wanted to make a sharp break with the past by adopting a resolution that reiterated the acceptance of its existing borders and not further pursuing any territorial revision of the Trianon Peace Treaty (Argentieri 2015, 227). The government program was centered around three foreign policy priorities: (1) building strong and stable transatlantic relations; (2) the reformulation of regional policy, exemplified by the Visegrad Cooperation; and (3) the support of Hungarian minorities in neighboring states (Ágh 2011, 255; Varga 2000).

The integration into Western institutions was Hungary’s overreaching goal after 1989 (Brincker et al. 2011). Hungary was among the first post-communist countries to open EU accession negotiations in 1998 and complied highly successfully with the economic and political criteria of enlargement (Herman 2016, 258). It was the first member of the former Soviet Bloc to become a member of the Council of Europe in November 1990. In 1996, Hungary was admitted to the OECD; in 1997, it joined NATO; and in 2004, it entered the EU.

The enthusiasm toward the West and the support of the country’s Euro-Atlantic orientation were very strong in the years before and after the EU accession, marked by high consent across the whole political spectrum (Göncz and Lengyel 2016a, 107; Shevchenko 2018, 66). However, the situation changed significantly in the context of the global financial crisis when the country found itself on the brink of financial collapse in 2009. The 2010 parliamentary elections are viewed by many as a major turning point in Hungarian history, influencing the formation of national identity (Ágh 2016c). At the election, Viktor Orbán’s center-right Fidesz party, in alliance with the Christian Democratic People’s Party (CDPP), won a landslide victory by achieving 53% of the vote and securing 68% of parliamentary seats. This result gave the ruling coalition not only the mandate to form the government but also the powers to carry out constitutional reforms. The process of constitutional re-drafting, which Viktor Orbán himself called a “constitutional revolution,” started immediately after the

takeover of the government. The constitution was amended twelve times between 2010 and 2011 (Argentieri 2015, 223). In April 2011, the Hungarian parliament adopted a new Fundamental Law, which overruled the former Hungarian Constitution from 1949 and symbolically “closed the door” on the Soviet past (Hungarian Ministry of Justice 2017). The new constitution is rooted in a conservative Christian worldview and determines fundamental values for Hungary, such as family, nation, fidelity, work, and faith for the political community as well as the coexistence of Hungarian citizens (Herman 2016, 258). This law has been subject to controversy both domestically and internationally, with many observers questioning its adherence to the European standards of liberal democracy. In addition, substantial changes were made to the Hungarian nationality law in 2011, granting Magyar citizenship to Hungarians living abroad, which was met with suspicion in neighboring countries (Orenstein et al. 2015; Rupnik 2012, 133).

Hungary is considered as a country that has experienced the most significant shift from being a model of democratic consolidation in the post-communist era to an exemplary case of de-democratization and a stronghold of the radical right (Ágh 2016c; Bogaards 2018; Shevchenko 2018, 63). Both policy makers and independent observers talk of an “illiberal turn” and “democratic backsliding,” accompanied by severe erosion of independent democratic institutions, widespread corruption, and disregard of EU norms and values (interview 2K; Herman 2016, 252; Kornai 2015, 34-35).

Many observers regard the period since the election of Viktor Orbán as particularly formative for the redefinition of Hungarian national identity. After the re-election victory in 2014, Orbán held a speech, in which he presented his philosophy and visions. He stated that “the Western financial crisis” and other international developments had eroded liberalism and the future lay with regimes such as China, Russia, or Turkey (Traub 2015). Four years later, he further promised to restore and protect “national identity, Christian cultural values, patriotism, attachment to homeland and family” (Hopkins 2018). With regard to the interpretation of historical events, Orbán introduced a new “national narrative” depicting Hungary neither as a collaborator nor a loser of World War II but rather as an innocent victim of the Third Reich (Shevchenko 2018, 67). Moreover, his government has promoted the historical narrative of Hungary serving the mission of protecting the rest of Europe from various Eastern invaders (Traub 2015). In May 2011, during a speech in Paris, Orbán

introduced his “Opening up toward the East” (*keleti nyitás*) policy, which aims to reduce Hungary’s dependence on the EU and the United States and strengthen the country’s economic ties with Russia and the Asia-Pacific (A. Rácz 2011, 146). Since then, Hungary has been pursuing a more pragmatic, multi-vector foreign policy with different powers from both the East and the West, trying to gain as much as possible from this “limbo” relationship (interview 2J; Shevchenko 2018, 68).

7.2 Significant Others

The national identity of Hungary and the country’s relationship to its *significant others* has been shaped by a strong ambivalence toward both the East and the West. This has its roots in the history, however, the conflicting nature of the country’s orientation is visible until today (West 2000, 55). On the one hand, during the long Habsburg rule, the Hungarians repeatedly attempted to separate themselves from the Viennese government and reinforce their Hungarian national identity. There were also instances when the country felt abandoned, mishandled, or unfairly punished by the Western powers, such as when Hungary had to pay—in their view an inappropriately high—price for their involvement in World War I. The Treaty of Trianon was largely perceived as a national humiliation, which resulted in demands for its revision in the interwar period (Shevchenko 2018, 65).¹⁸³ On the other hand, historically, pro-Western orientation has been compelling for the formation of Hungary’s international identity. The Western world has always been perceived as developed, civilized, and democratic, which strengthened the national tendencies after the end of communism to look westward and aim for a quick “return to Europe” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015).

In view of these contradictory developments and, to some extent, conflicting interpretations of history, Hungary has developed a “love-hate attitude” toward the EU, fluctuating between close attachment and occasional disillusionment (Ágh 2011, 263). According to comparable survey data, in the early 2000s, the majority of the Hungarian population supported the EU entry and Europeanization efforts. Accordingly, Hungary used to present itself as a pro-European and pro-integration country (Ágh 2011, 263). However, the popular support for EU membership has declined in the last 10 to 15 years. This has several interwoven causes.

¹⁸³ Hungarians refused to accept the Trianon “dictate” and used the slogan “*nem, nem soha!*” (No, no, never!) when calling for the reversal of the treaty (Shevchenko 2018, 65).

First, Attila Ágh puts forward that Hungarians had had high and sometimes unrealistic expectations before the entry and were then disenchanted by the stark reality (Ágh 2011, 237). Second, according to some authors, Hungarians have developed the feeling of being marginalized by older Member States and treated as secondary citizens in the EU (Ágh 2011, 235). Third, the EU, or rather the so-called “Brussels elite” with its Western liberal and pro-immigration approach, has been increasingly portrayed as an enemy by the Orbán government (interview 2E). Finally, the Hungarian government often criticizes the EU and its institutions as a symbol of “rampant bureaucracy” (interviews 2E, 2Q & 2U). Many experts agree that it is relatively easy for the Hungarian political leaders to scapegoat the EU and blame it for their own failures because the EU remains very distant, vague, and not so tangible for the majority of citizens (Schlipphak and Treib 2017; interviews 2U & 2W).

Nevertheless, despite the government’s increased anti-EU rhetoric, the EU is still quite popular among the majority of the Hungarian population. People appreciate the tangible benefits, such as open borders and the full freedom of movement or the money from cohesion funds flowing into the country (interviews 2C, 2D & 2N).¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, there is a growing crowd of Hungarians working in Western Europe and the Hungarian population is now ever more closely attached to other EU Member States due to family ties (interview 2B).

Similarly, on the political level, Hungary has also made repeatedly clear that it wants to remain part of the EU (interviews 2B & 2G; Than 2014). However, it has been making the case for a model of “Europe of nation states,” where individual Member States are awarded more autonomy and where national identity always takes precedence over European identity (interviews 2L & 2U). In addition to being strongly against any kind of federalism or supranationalism, the Hungarian government has asserted that the focus of European integration should be on the economy instead of deepening the political cooperation (interviews 2C, 2L & 2W). At the same time, the government rejects the idea of “two-speed” or “multi-speed” Europe because it does not want Hungary to end up at the periphery and become a second-class EU member (interview 2E). Reflecting on this dual image of the EU in Hungary, most domestic observers agree that especially the second Orbán government has

¹⁸⁴ According to the interviewed experts, Hungarians view their country’s EU membership mainly through the prism of benefits, such as open borders and diminishing roaming fees, while democratic values and principles are very low on the list (interviews 2C, 2E & 2K).

been pushing the limits to see how far it can go until the EU introduces some punitive measures (interviews 2B & 2I).

According to the interviewed experts, Germany has been the most important reference point since the Antall government in the early 1990s (interviews 2D & 2H). Similar to the Hungarian relations with the EU, Germany serves as both a positive and a negative point of reference. On the one hand, the idea of German dominance, for example in the EU, still evokes some negative historical associations. On the other hand, Hungarians have an overall positive perception of Germany (Csoport 2019). The country is portrayed as an economic model as well as a model of well-being. The current relationship between the two states is further shaped by Hungary's role as a "hub" for the German car production industry (interview 2M).

Not only Hungary's Western identity is ambiguous. Its relation to its Eastern neighbors and Russia is similarly problematic. On the one hand, Hungarian people are believed to have Eastern, or, more specifically, East Asian origins, and their ancestors are thought to have been the so-called "Turanians" (Kim 2016, 352). Turanism is a mythical geographical and ethno-cultural concept, which stresses the affinity of Hungarians with Turkic and Altaic peoples, such as from Central Asia or the Ural region (interview 2H). This identity element was invisible for some time, until Turanism was rejuvenated by the right-wing Jobbik party and it reemerged onto the Hungarian political agenda.¹⁸⁵ On the other hand, threats to the Hungarian nation's survival often came from the East, starting with Mongolian and later Ottoman occupations and ending with 42 years of Soviet domination (West 2000, 58). Until the policy re-positioning under the Orbán government in 2010, the stance toward Russia used to be quite negative due to historical reasons. Now the pursuit of economic cooperation largely determines the quality of the relationship with Russia (interviews 2E, 2H & 2Y). Russia is considered different from the rest of Eastern Europe. Hungary has no particularly close ties to other Eastern European states and perceives the region as something that "is different from us" (A. Rácz 2011, 147).¹⁸⁶ At the same time, Hungary has been increasingly looking eastward to intensify trade and economic cooperation.

¹⁸⁵ The Jobbik party, which is a staunch critic of globalism and liberalism, portrays Turanism as an alternative to the "decadent and weakening West" (Kowalczyk 2017).

¹⁸⁶ According to the interviewed experts, even Slovakia is treated by Hungarians as an Eastern nation and is often used as a contrast to Hungary (interviews 2H & 2Y).

Rather than Eastern Europe, it is the Western Balkan region that has been paramount to defining the Hungarian identity. However, the relationship between Hungary and the Balkans is also quite dubious. Hungarians see their identity as diametrically opposed to the Balkan identity, which they regard as uncivilized and backward (A. Rácz 2011, 146; West 2000, 58). In the era of Dual Monarchy in the eighteenth century, Hungary aspired for domination over the Western Balkan region, referring to the “civilizing mission” they wanted to pursue there (Juhász 2015, 114). After the defeat in World War I and the resulting loss of territory and influence, many Western observers regarded Hungary as one of the Balkan nations, which Hungary expressly disavowed. For them, the terms “Balkans” and “Balkanization” carried mostly negative connotations, such as ethnic-based violence, religious intolerance, and state fragmentation (Juhász 2015, 115). Hungary’s efforts to distance itself from the region intensified after the Balkan wars broke out. Nonetheless, at the same time, the Hungary’s economic interest in the Western Balkans intensified after 1989 and Hungary has since been one of the strongest supporters of the Balkan countries’ Euro-Atlantic integration and their EU accession efforts (Ágh 2011, 262). Hungary has often used the narrative of having unique knowledge and extraordinary relations with the region to demonstrate their usefulness to the West (Juhász 2015, 126). Also, having a stable Balkan region with a clear Western orientation fits well with the Hungarian foreign policy doctrine of pursuing good neighborly relations and protecting Hungarian minorities living in other countries.

7.3 Main Identity Elements

In the long and rich history of their country, Hungarians have experienced a series of defeats, unsuccessful revolutions, and other setbacks, which had a remarkable influence on the collective memory of the nation and, accordingly, the formation of the national identity. The Trianon Treaty following World War I is conceived as the deepest historical trauma for the Hungarian nation (Csepeli 1991; Than 2014).¹⁸⁷ Although Hungary as a state gained sovereignty, the nation became divided. More importantly, the collapse of the dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary implied that Hungary lost its pseudo-great power status and became a small state. Accordingly, in the interwar period, Hungarians portrayed themselves as

¹⁸⁷ The continued effect of the “Trianon syndrome” on today’s national consciousness can be demonstrated on the adoption of a law in 2010 establishing the Day of National Unity on 4 June, which is the day when the Treaty of Trianon was signed (Shevchenko 2018, 67; Traub 2015).

innocent victims of foreign great powers and as a community of suffering, which was humiliated and experienced iniquitous territorial losses (interview 2L). This notion of collective victimhood was reinforced during the period of the communist rule (Haynes 1995; László 2014).¹⁸⁸ To the present, the traumatic history is often invoked to point to the Hungarian nation's original greatness and its considerable weight in Europe, which later became a victim to others who attempted to dominate the country (interviews 2E, 2H & 2K).

Apart from the collective victim role, Hungarian policy makers time and again evoke Hungary's historical role as a force defending Europe from enemies coming from the East and so protecting Western Christendom (Deme 1998; Traub 2015). These narratives of being the "shield against barbaric Eastern influences" remain present until today (interview 2H). Moreover, due to its particular geographic location, Hungary has sought to cast itself as a bridge between East and West (Csepeli 1997, 168-173; Popova 2004, 30; West 2000, 56).

The tension between the romanticized notions about Hungary's glorious past on the one hand and the inferiority complex created by Trianon and the years of communist rule on the other hand form an indispensable part of Hungarian national identity (László 2014).¹⁸⁹ Some experts argue that the feeling of inferiority is being reinforced by the perception of continued paternalistic approach from older Member States toward newer Member States (interview 2W).

Correlative with the Trianon tradition is the notion that Hungary has always been surrounded by enemy great powers (interview 2V). More importantly, the notion of betrayal is present in Hungarian politics, referring mainly to the indifference manifested by Western Europe when Hungary fell under the Soviet sphere of influence or when it needed help against the Soviets in 1956 (interviews 2U & 2V; Csepeli 1997, 180). Gábor Egry contends that anti-great power sentiments are still very visible in Hungary but that the discourse is more pragmatic rather than ideological (interview 2H). Brussels is portrayed as a new great power, as a parallel to the pre-1989 dictate of Moscow (Kornai 2015, 43-44).

¹⁸⁸ Among other things, Hungarians felt betrayed by Western Europeans during the revolution in 1956 (interview 2U).

¹⁸⁹ The memory of the medieval great power status is a particularly important element of Hungarian national identity (interview 2P).

As a nation that has struggled for centuries for freedom and liberation, Hungary attaches great importance to sovereignty (interviews 2E & 2H). The government often emphasizes that Hungary is now an independent country, and no one is allowed to interfere in its internal affairs. Accordingly, Hungary's identity rests on the primacy of national sovereignty, and the government is against any form of pooling of sovereignty in the EU (interview 2E). In his 2015 State of the Nation address, Prime Minister Orbán made this very clear: "We cannot be successful if we can only be servants in our own country, if we have no independence. National sovereignty is a fundamental question" (quoted in Shevchenko 2018, 68).

Most authors suggest that nationalism is stronger in Hungary than in other Visegrad countries (Örkény 2006; Shevchenko 2018). A related argument is that nationalism has its roots in strong ethnocentrism and that Hungary has a rather ethnic, as opposed to civic, understanding of citizenship (interview 2L; Örkény 2006). Similar to other Central European countries, Hungary is relatively homogeneous in ethnic terms.¹⁹⁰ The largest minority are Roma and, indeed, strong social prejudice toward this minority and tensions between the Roma and the non-Roma population is an omnipresent issue in Hungary (Kim 2016).

On the contrary, Hungary is known for its strong sense of solidarity toward Hungarian minorities living abroad. After regaining sovereignty in 1990, minority policy has become a key element in Hungarian foreign policy thinking and identity (A. Rácz 2011, 146-147). When the first post-communist Prime Minister József Antall declared to be the spiritual leader of 15 million Hungarians, he also included the ethnic Hungarians in the surrounding regions (interview 2L). In 2001, the Hungarian parliament passed a Status Law by an overwhelming 92.4% vote, which enables ethnic Hungarian citizens living in neighboring countries, most notably in Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, and Serbia, to apply for the so-called "Hungarian identity card." This card symbolizes Hungarian ethnic belongingness and makes the holders eligible for certain benefits within the Hungarian labor market, education, and healthcare services (interview 2L; Deets and Stroschein 2005, 291). Hungarian political

¹⁹⁰ Before WWI, Hungary was strongly multiethnic. András Rácz estimates that Hungarians formed only around 48% of the population at that time (interview 2Q; see also Macartney 2008). After WWI, when modern Hungary of reduced size appeared as a consequence of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, the process of homogenization started. The elimination of originally quite sizable Jewish minority during WWII was another step to ethnic homogeneity. Last but not least, the deportation of Germans after WWII, the forced population exchange with Czechoslovakia and the years of international isolation under state socialism completed the homogenization process, leaving Hungary almost monoethnic (interview 2Q).

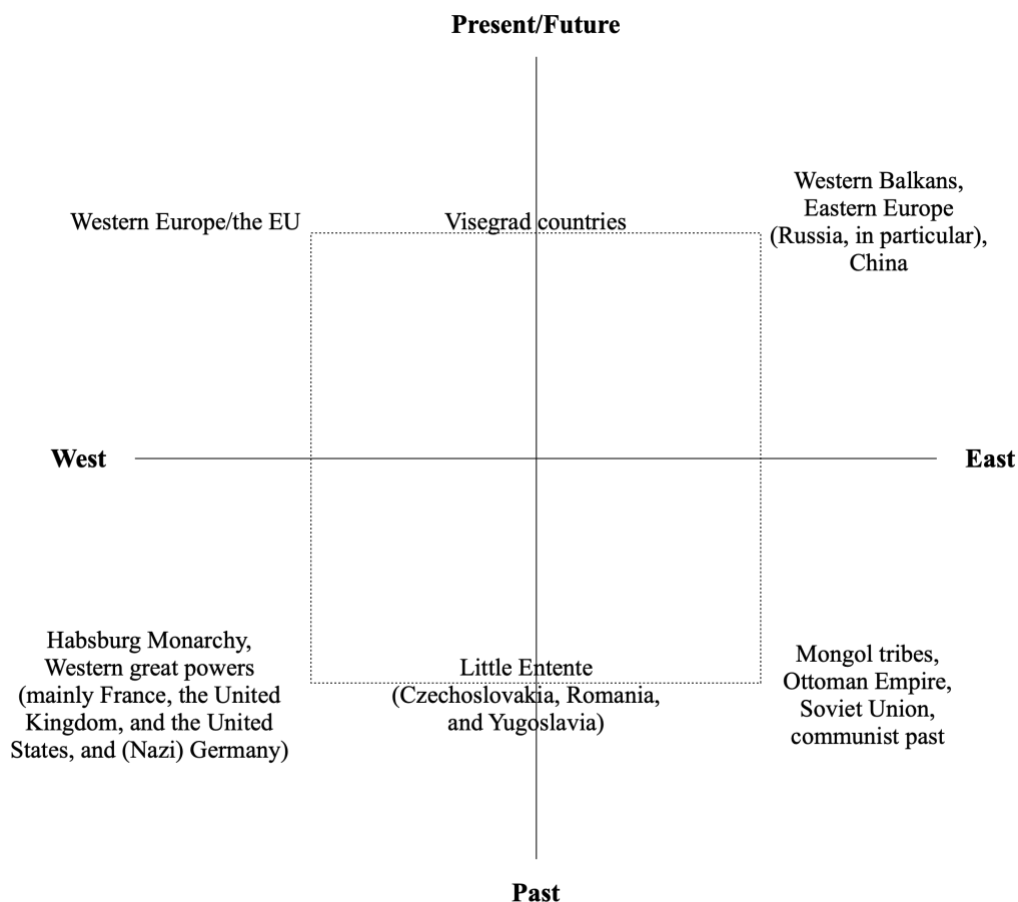
leaders often argue that the state should bear responsibility for all those people who feel connected to the Hungarian language and culture, which often meets resistance especially from the neighboring states. Even more controversial issue is that ethnic Hungarians in neighboring states with dual citizenship can participate in the Hungarian parliamentary elections (interview 2L).

The current government increasingly portrays the Hungarian national identity as Christian. According to Gábor Egry, the integration of the state into the Western Christian tradition in the first millennium was very important, as it symbolized a significant break with the Eastern part of the continent and meant that Hungary was founded to be a Western state (interview 2H). However, the religious underpinning of Hungarian identity is not as strong as in other European countries, especially after decades of communist secularization efforts (interview 2H; Haynes 1995, 95).¹⁹¹ Instead, religion is used as a political tool. There is broad agreement that the government of Viktor Orbán has redefined religiosity in Hungary, equating it mainly with traditional family values (interviews 2J & 2Q).

The following figure displays the main historical and current *significant others* for Hungary and the table below summarizes the main identity elements elaborated above. A detailed compilation of the main formative events, *significant others*, and identity elements can be found in Appendix F.2.

¹⁹¹ Gábor Egry estimates that only 10-15% of the population are really religious and around 40% follow habitant customs (interview 2H).

Figure 15: Main historical and current *significant others* (Hungary)



Source: Own depiction

Table 7: Summary of the main identity elements (Hungarian national identity)

Identity element	Specification
Sense of victimhood and anti-great power sentiments	Sense of victimhood based on a series of defeats, unsuccessful revolutions, and other setbacks
	Notion of being an innocent victim of foreign great powers and a community of suffering
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West	Perceived indifference manifested by Western Europe when Hungary fell under the Soviet sphere of influence or when it needed help against the Soviets in 1956
Strong attachment to national sovereignty	Notion of being a nation struggling for centuries for freedom and liberation

	<p>Strong opposition against any kind of federalism, supranationalism, or pooling of sovereignty</p> <p>National identity always having precedence over European identity</p>
Inferiority and superiority complex	Tension between the romanticized notions of Hungary's glorious past and the inferiority complex created by Trianon and the years of communist rule
	Feeling of inferiority reinforced by the perceived paternalistic approach from older Member States toward newer Members States (feeling of being treated as secondary citizens in the EU)
	Feelings of superiority over the Western Balkans (and Eastern Europe)
National pride	Heroization of Hungary's history (achievements despite repeated defeats)
	Memories of being the "happiest barrack" of the socialist camp, the most "westernized" and liberal country in the former Eastern Bloc, a "post-communist success story," and an "ideal reform country"
Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs	Heroization of Hungary's history (historical greatness and considerable weight in Europe)
	Feeling of being a bridge between the East and the West
Perception of belonging to the West versus the policy of "Opening up toward the East"	Historical ties to the Western culture
	Historical role as a force defending Europe from enemies coming from the East and so protecting Western Christendom
	"Return to Europe"
	Turanism and "Opening up toward the East"
Strong sense of solidarity toward Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries	Ethnic, rather than civic, understanding of citizenship
	Minority policy as a key element in Hungarian foreign policy thinking and identity
Homogeneity of the Hungarian population	Ethnic and religious homogeneity
Religious underpinning of Hungarian identity & attachment to traditional family values	Historical memory of belonging to the Western Christian tradition Conservative Christian worldviews

Source: Own table

Chapter 8: Polish National Identity

It is indisputable that Polish national identity represents a unique case, even within the context of Central and Eastern Europe. Poland's specific geopolitical location and bitter historical experiences, as well as the long tradition of Catholicism, have been immensely influential in shaping its national identity. Consequently, Poles have been able to develop a very distinct national identity, although, as will be detailed below, Poland, for a significant portion of its history, did not exist as an independent state (Sanford 2003). Indeed, periods of foreign domination, coupled with years of denied sovereignty, resulted in a Polish national identity that has developed strong references to ethnicity and religion (Góra and Zielińska 2019, 5). Roman Catholicism is still considered as one of the most important, if not the most important, pillar of Polishness (interview 3I).

8.1 Formative Events

Both the interviewed experts and the academic literature dealing with Polish history and identity are in broad agreement that there are five main time periods in Poland's long history that have had significant influence on the formation, as well as the transformation, of Polish national identity. First, the three partitions of Polish territories that occurred in 1772, 1793, and 1795, which are to be seen in the context of the Russian-German domination. Second, the Second World War, the German-Soviet aggression, and related devastating events such as the Katyn massacre, referring to the mass execution of thousands of Polish officials, and the Warsaw Rising, after which the city burned to the ground. Third, the communist regime and the innumerable popular protests, which sparked the emergence of the powerful Polish resistance movement *Solidarność*. Fourth, the transformation period in the 1990s. Finally, fifth, the accession of Poland to the Euro-Atlantic structures in 2004 (interviews 3I, 3K & 3L). These formative events will be elaborated upon below to show their impact on Polish national identity.

However, prior to delving into these five periods, it is necessary to understand the early historical events that set the context for the subsequent development of the Polish nation. One of the most significant early founding events for Poland occurred in the tenth century, when the Polish Duke Mieszko I decided to convert to Latin, as opposed to Slavonic,

Christianity, thereby tying the nation to Western culture (Mayblin et al. 2016a). Nevertheless, the very concept of the Polish nation can be dated back to the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*) was birthed from the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This largely polyethnic and religiously heterogenous entity was not a nation state in its classical sense, but rather consisted of a profusion of peoples with manifold religions and six official languages (Cordell 2009, 3; Davies 2001, 278; Millard 1995, 105). Then, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Poland became a regional power, with this period often being referred to as Poland's "Golden Age" (Arciszewska 2006, 106). The greatest triumph came in the late seventeenth century, when Polish King Jan III Sobieski helped defeat invading Turkish armies at the Siege of Vienna in 1683 (interview 3L). This victory over the Ottoman Turks at the Kahlenberg inspired many Polish authors and artists, who began to portray Poland as martyr and savior of Western civilization against countless barbarians coming from the East.

In the mid to late eighteenth century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth started to lose ground on the political, military, and economic front. As a consequence of such decline, the Polish nation saw itself increasingly exposed to the geopolitical ambitions of the three surrounding imperial powers: the Kingdom of Prussia, the Russian Empire, and the Austrian Empire, which culminated in the total of three partitions and the eventual vanishing of the Polish state (Sanford 2003, 186).¹⁹²

After the first partition in 1772, a group of reformers, inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, attempted to strengthen the declining power of the monarch and limit the powers of the privileged noble class, the *szlachta* (Millard 1995). They achieved the adoption of the liberal Constitution of the Third of May (1791), yet this new regime lasted only 15 months until the country's conservative nobility established the Confederation of Targowica as an alternative form of rule and asked Catherine the Great for support in restoring the former Polish constitution. When Russia heard this plea and invaded the country, Poland found itself abandoned by its then close ally Prussia. After the swift Polish-Russian War of 1792, Poland suffered huge territorial losses for the benefit of both

¹⁹² The motivation behind dividing Poland among its powerful neighbors was the shift in the regional balance of power in Europe and especially the growing potency of the Russian Empire, which both Prussia and the Habsburgs sought to prevent (Millard 1995).

the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia (Davies 2001, 273). Targowica, seen as the trigger for the second partition in 1793, became a symbol of national betrayal. After an unsuccessful nationwide uprising led by Tadeusz Kościuszko, the final partition between Russia, Prussia, and Austria followed in 1795, ultimately resulting in the disappearance of the Polish state from the map of Europe for the next 123 years (Millard 1995, 107).¹⁹³

Poland lost its political sovereignty just as the modern concepts of nation states and national identities, influenced by Romanticism, were slowly being embraced throughout Europe (Galbraith 2004, 57). In the absence of a Polish state that would foster an identification with the nation, the Polish intelligentsia became instrumental in upholding and spreading national consciousness based on historical, linguistic, and ethnic criteria (Davies 2001, 219-220). Polish Romantic literature of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, influenced particularly by the works of Adam Mickiewicz, created an image of Poland as a martyr suffering for the sake of protection of Christian Europe. Nobel Laureate in Literature Henryk Sienkiewicz also left a considerable imprint on Polish national mythology, and indirectly national identity, by writing about patriotism and heroic struggles of Polish people with partitioning powers (Janion 2011; Mach 2000).

The three partitions not only profoundly shaped the bilateral relationships of Poland with its three neighbors, especially with Russia and Germany, but also had a significant impact on the uneven economic, political, and cultural development of the three partitioned parts, the consequences of which can still be observed today (Cichocki and Czerwińska 2011). While the Austrian empire allowed for a great deal of administrative and cultural autonomy and religious tolerance, both Russia and Prussia pursued much more oppressive forms of domination, symbolized by ubiquitous Russification and Germanization of the Polish

¹⁹³ The Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century shifted the geopolitical balance in Europe again and the Congress of Vienna of 1815, aiming to establish a peaceful territorial settlement in Europe, decided to revise the division of the former Polish territory. It created the so-called Kingdom of Poland, also known as “Congress Poland” or “Vistula Land,” which was yet still ruled by the tsarist Russia. Poland was able to retain some, yet very limited, independence and sovereignty from the Russian Empire. However, the sweeping ignorance of the constitution by the Russian Empire triggered the November Uprising in 1830-31, which was swiftly suppressed by the Russian army and led to further autonomy restrictions (Grosfeld and Zhuravskaya 2015, 59). The “January Uprising” of 1863, which presented another unsuccessful attempt by the Poles to overthrow the Russian rule and restore the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, provoked an ever tighter Russian control and intensified Russification in the Polish lands.

territories (Grosfeld and Zhuravskaya 2015, 59-61).¹⁹⁴ The Industrial Revolution also took different courses within the three partitioned parts of Poland, which affected their further economic development. Indeed, the scale and depth of industrialization in the Prussian annexed territories was more profound than in the other two parts (Davies 2001, 149).¹⁹⁵

The end of the First World War and Woodrow Wilson's commitment to "national self-determination" brought about the restoration of Polish sovereignty after 123 years. From President Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points," which were principles drafted to be used as a basis for a postwar peace settlement, two were of particular significance for Poland:

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.

...

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant (cited from Welch 2003, 51-52).

With the newly acquired independence, Poland gained back territories from the collapsed partitioning powers. As a result of the post-World War I peace treaty signed in Versailles in 1919, interwar Poland stretched from Lithuanian and Ukrainian territories in the East (encompassing, among others, the cities Vilnius and Lwów) to cities such as Poznań in the West (Curry 2015). The newly established state was ethnically mixed, with one third of the population declaring their ethnicity as "not Polish." The Ukrainians constituted the largest minority, accounting for 13.9% of the population, followed by the Jewish ethnic group, Belarussians, Germans, and other ethnic groups (Curry 2015, 162; Davies 2001, 103). With regard to religious diversity, Roman Catholics, accounting for 64.8% of Polish citizens, represented the largest religious group, but were also complemented by Orthodox Christians, Jews, Greek Catholics, and Evangelical Protestants (Pasięka 2015). The ethnic, linguistic, and religious heterogeneity of the state ultimately proved to be the biggest challenge to the

¹⁹⁴ According to the historical evidence, the Russian Empire was the most oppressive, prohibiting any expression of Polish culture and traditions. But also the Prussian partition lands experienced severe constraints in their political and religious liberties after the enactment of Kulturkampf ("culture struggle") and the related punitive measures by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in the 1870s (Blanke 1983).

¹⁹⁵ For a more detailed account of the differences among the partitioned Polish lands, see Davies (2001, 2005), (Wandycz 1974), and (N. Wolf 2007).

so-called Second Polish Republic, with the newly incorporated Lithuanian and Ukrainian territories that were claiming independence. The Polish frontiers continued to shift up until 1921, when the Treaty of Riga was signed between Poland, Soviet Ukraine, and Soviet Russia (Millard 1995).

Accordingly, the main political cleavage in the period between 1918 and 1939 evolved around the question of whether an ethnic or a civic identity should be a determinant for the reconstruction of the Polish state. The two main opposing views mirrored the political ideologies of the two leading political figures at that time, Roman Dmowski and Józef Pilsudski (Zarycki 2000).¹⁹⁶ Dmowski, who was the founder and leader of the political movement National Democracy (for its abbreviation ND also known as “Endecja”), perceived Poland through the prism of ethnicity. He believed in the superiority of a distinctive Polish national identity, and his political ideology was infused with distaste for non-ethnic Poles, primarily Jews and Germans, but also the populations living in Poland’s Eastern Borderlands. Pilsudski, on the other hand, who is associated with the Polish socialist camp, emphasized the Polish Romantic, revolutionary history of the nineteenth century and the multiethnic legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Accordingly, he supported a polyethnic model of Poland. He embraced the idea of a shared civic identity within the state territory of Poland and argued for the establishment of a federation that would allow all ethnic groups to preserve their own distinct identities (Dabrowski 2011). Although both figures ultimately followed the same goal of building a common identity after the regained statehood, their interpretations of Poland’s historical legacy, views of the modern Polish nation, and definitions of “Polishness” differed significantly.

The Second Republic lasted only two decades before Poland was attacked by Germany on 1 September 1939 and the Second World War erupted. The German invasion was followed shortly by an invasion of the Red Army from the East and, as a result of this so-called “September Campaign,” Poland was again divided between two great powers, the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. The division and demise of Poland, pursuant to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, is also sometimes referred to as the “Fourth Partition of Poland” (Davies

¹⁹⁶ Their ideologies mirrored, on the one hand, the “state” versus “nation” debate, and, on the other hand, echoed the traditions of the Piast and the Jagiellonian royal families. While Pilsudski’s ideas resembled the Jagiellonian ideas of a federal multi-ethnic state, Dmowski represented the “piastic” Poland, named after a medieval dynasty that was transfigured as ethnically homogeneous (Sanford 2003, 187-188).

2001, 56; Sanford 2003, 190).¹⁹⁷ Another daunting experience for the Poles during the war, and one of the decisive episodes in the history of Poland, was the Warsaw Uprising against Nazi occupation in August 1944. That the advancing Red Army was within sight of fighting but stayed at the outskirts of Warsaw instead of helping the Polish underground liberate the city from the Germans caused the Poles to have deep disillusionment about Russia being their supposed ally in the war (Millard 1995, 113). The uprising's failure and the consequent destruction of the city are still considered a great national tragedy, notably because this also allowed the pro-Soviet Polish administration, and not the exile government, to gain control of Poland after 1945.

Experts agree that Poland's wartime experience was unparalleled. By the end of the war in 1945, up to seven million Polish citizens were dead and many more displaced. The atrocities committed by Nazi Germany against the Jewish, Roma, Slavic, and other populations, as part of the Nazi goal of preserving "racial purity," completely changed the ethnic structure of the region (Eberhardt and Owsinski 2015). It was, however, not only the process of Aryanization that contributed to the creation of a largely homogenous Polish society. Interethnic animosities, which had already become evident after the restoration of Polish independence in 1918, intensified during the war, culminating in multiple cases of Polish, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian populations committing massacres against each other.

Poland formally reappeared on the map of Europe following the Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945, where decisions on the postwar order in Europe were made. After a series of negotiations among the Allies, Poland's borders were entirely redrawn after the Second World War. Both its western and eastern frontiers moved approximately 200 km westwards. Poland lost some of its Eastern provinces in favor of the Soviet Union and its Lithuanian and Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republics (Davies 2001, 88-90). The new eastern border followed the so-called Curzon Line, which used to serve as a demarcation line between the Second Polish Republic and the Soviet Union following World War I.¹⁹⁸ This

¹⁹⁷ The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed a Pact of Non-Aggression on 23 August 1939, which was named after foreign ministers Joachim von Ribbentrop and Vyacheslav Molotov. A secret protocol of this pact envisaged dividing Europe (concretely Poland and the Baltic States) into spheres of influence. This Nazi-Soviet pact expired when Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa and attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941 (Davies 2001, 56-59).

¹⁹⁸ It was also this line along which Hitler and Stalin split the Polish territory according to the terms set forth in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Davies 2001, 65).

eastern loss was compensated by the acquisition of German territories. The newly acquired “Western and Northern territories” were mainly populated by migrants who lived outside these areas before 1939 (Grosfeld and Zhuravskaya 2015, 61). In addition, the new state had to deal with the resettlement of Polish Jews from the Soviet Union. This integration process was accompanied by forced expulsions of populations recognized as non-ethnic Poles, a process originally labeled “voluntary population transfers.” Those resettlements and expulsions of non-ethnic Poles from Poland’s territory, which lasted until 1950, completed the homogenization of Poland that had already been underway in the years preceding the outbreak of World War II (Curry 2015). According to the 1950 census, more than 97% of people inhabiting Poland were Polish and an overwhelming majority of them were members of the Roman Catholic Church (Eberhardt and Owsinski 2015, 142; Millard 1995, 113).

After the Second World War, Poland became part of the Eastern Bloc and the Communist Party took control of the government. By 1948, with Soviet support, the communists had a firm grip on the political power (Millard 1995, 113). The vast majority of the population, however, was strongly anticommunist. The already present anti-Russian sentiments stemming from Tsarist times were reinforced by the (later confirmed) assumption that the Soviet Union had been responsible for the killing of several thousand Polish officers who were found in a mass grave in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk in 1943 (Davies 2001, 58).

After Stalin’s demise in 1953 and the death of Poland’s Stalinist leader Bolesław Bierut three years later, the statewide repression decreased. However, shortages of food and consumer goods, coupled with poor standards of living, sparked the first workers’ protests in the city of Poznań, which later also led to intellectual protests throughout Poland in 1956. The Polish communists reacted by electing Władysław Gomułka from the reformers’ faction to the First Secretary of the Party, what became known as the “Polish October.” Gomułka promised to follow “a Polish road to socialism,” introduce reforms, and allow for more freedom and liberalization (Curry 2015, 163). However, intellectual freedom remained restricted, and this, paired with insufficient political reforms and economic failures, triggered further anti-communist protests and riots in 1968, 1970, 1976, and 1980 (Millard 1995, 116).

Each round of revolts and demonstrations brought about some concessions and reforms by the communist authorities, and Poland arguably became one of the most free and liberal satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe (Curry 2015). From the communist regimes,

Poland also had the most organized opposition and dissent (Killingsworth et al. 2010, 366). The most significant oppositional group was the trade union *Solidarność* (Solidarity), which arose in 1980 after a wave of industrial unrest was triggered by rising prices, hyperinflation, and general lack of financial stability in the late 1970s (Jakubowska and Kaniasty 2014). Solidarity soon developed into a mass national movement calling for economic reforms and political change in Poland. At the occasion of the shipyard workers' protests in the city of Gdansk in 1980, the government and the protest leader Lech Walesa signed the "Gdańsk Accords" on 31 August 1980, which led to the creation of the *Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy "Solidarność"* ("Independent Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity"). After a further series of labor strikes against the deteriorated standards of living and the ruling Polish United Workers' Party, the communist regime instituted martial law, imprisoned many Solidarity leaders and supporters, and banned the trade union, which from then on operated underground (Killingsworth et al. 2010; Lewicki and Mandes 2015, 46). The martial law was lifted in 1983, followed by the general amnesty and release of political prisoners by General Jaruzelski and the Communist Party in 1986 (Tulmets 2014, 35).¹⁹⁹

According to Norman Davies, with nearly ten million members, Solidarity represented "almost every single family" in Poland and posed a unified challenge to the communist authority (Davies 2001, 16-17). The communist government later recognized the strength of the movement and, by 1988, started to seek discussions with the Solidarity leaders concerning a new, more open system of government. With the Church acting as a mediator and facilitator, the communist authorities and Solidarity representatives engaged in the so-called "Roundtable Talks" (Millard 1995, 119-120). In the first free parliamentary elections since the end of the Second World War scheduled for June 1989, Solidarity achieved a landslide victory, which marked the beginning of a political transformation in Poland. A new, non-communist government was formed in September 1989 and Tadeusz Mazowiecki was elected the Prime Minister (Curry 2015, 166; Jakubowska and Kaniasty 2014, 400). In the fall of 1990, the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize recipient and a leading actor of the Solidarity movement, Lech Wałęsa, won the first popular presidential election.

¹⁹⁹ Wojciech Jaruzelski was the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party between 1981 and 1989, who stood behind declaring the martial law in Poland and arresting the Solidarity leaders in 1981 (Tulmets 2014, 35).

The leadership of the newly emerged state recognized that, after five decades of communist rule and a centrally planned economy, there was a need for reforming the Polish economic structure. Indeed, the Polish economy struggled with hyperinflation, declining industrial output, shortages of supplies, and low competitiveness on international markets. The proposed reformative measures and quick transition from communism initially enjoyed considerable public support. However, the “shock therapy,” describing one of the most far-reaching and profound economic reform programs introduced after 1989 to rearrange and jump-start the economy, proved more complicated and controversial than expected (Sachs 1994).²⁰⁰ The comprehensive transformation to a liberal market economy involved some short-term costs such as the closure of large state-owned (industrial) enterprises and rising unemployment. In addition, to reduce the government deficit, austerity measures were introduced that eliminated government subsidies and tax exemptions for state enterprises. Other structural adjustments included making the Polish zloty convertible to other currencies, reducing restrictions to foreign trade, encouraging foreign investment to reinvigorate the economy, and opening the Polish market to competition (Curry 2015, 177; Sachs 1994).

After an economic downturn in the initial years immediately following the reforms, the liberalization started to bear fruits and the economy began to recover (Sachs 1994). Considering the economic output and growth, Poland outperformed most of the other transitioning countries. Nevertheless, structural adjustments in the economy also brought some serious political consequences. The economic shock therapy, and the overall costly transition process, contributed to further polarization of the Polish society and led to the fragmentation of Solidarity. What used to unite the Solidarity movement was the non-violent struggle against the oppressive communist regime. With no clear political agenda after 1989/1990, it split into various factions and started to slowly lose its public support until it finally disappeared in 2002 (Curry 2015, 172).

The collapse of Communism also opened up the opportunity for Poland to re-establish its relations with both Western Europe and the former Soviet Bloc (Mayblin et al. 2016a).²⁰¹ While past disputes with former Soviet republics, especially Ukraine and Lithuania, were

²⁰⁰ The economic reform is also often termed the “Balcerowicz Plan” after then Minister of Finance Leszek Balcerowicz (Sachs 1994).

²⁰¹ The government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki defined three main foreign policy priorities when it came into power in 1989: a) EU and NATO accession, b) good neighborly relations with Russia and Germany, and c) good relations to the Eastern neighbors (Tulmets 2014, 53).

settled relatively quickly, the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Polish territory took longer than expected. The last combat units from the former Soviet Union left Polish soil in October 1993. The prolonged departure of the troops reinforced popular distrust and antipathy toward the Soviet Union and Russians (Goldman 1997, 49).

The main goal of the Polish foreign policy after 1989 was to break with its communist past and “return to Europe.” In Poland, this notion of returning to the West is more complex than in various other post-communist countries. First, integration with the West was justified on the basis that Poland had always served as a defender of Western civilization. Second, then political elites argued that Poland had always belonged to Western Europe and the nearly 45 years under communist rule were merely a temporary and unwanted separation from the “family” of Western European countries (Killingsworth et al. 2010, 359-361; Sanford 2003, 181). NATO membership provided an important guarantee for Poles that they would be protected from a perceived Russian threat (Terry 2000). Membership in the EU, in contrast, was perceived as an opportunity to enhance Poland’s economic situation and reaffirm its European identity. And yet, although European integration was one of the main priorities of the new independent Polish state, divisions resurfaced again around the question of national sovereignty and identity. The skeptical forces argued that joining the EU would once again limit Poland’s sovereignty, an experience that was familiar given the nation’s history, and pose a threat to its distinct national identity. More powerful EU members were depicted as a potential threat to Poland’s interests and goals (Góra and Zielińska 2019, 6).

The stance of the then 15 EU member states toward inviting Poland to join the Union was also not quite encouraging. Seeing a country with one of the highest levels of unemployment in Europe, existing EU members were concerned about large numbers of Poles possibly migrating to Western Europe for work (Galbraith 2004). In addition, after accession, Poland would become the new Eastern border of the EU and thus the entry point for migrants coming further from the East. As a consequence, the accession both to NATO but especially to the EU was slow and frustrating, which slightly curbed the initial enthusiasm and decreased the originally high degree of public support for EU accession (Killingsworth et al. 2010, 361; Wilkiewicz 2003, 99). On the referendum day in June 2003, over 77% of Poles voted in favor of the EU membership, with a turnout of around 59% (CBOS 2014). Many observers attribute the temporarily high support for EU membership to the pre-European campaign taking place

before the referendum (Góra and Styczynska 2015). According to Eurobarometer data, in the Spring of 2004, it was only 42% who continued to support the membership (Gallup International Hungary 2004).

After Poland became an EU member in 2004 and joined the Schengen Area in 2007, politics remained split, with the Social Democratic governments perceiving the EU membership as a great achievement and the conservative PiS party pursuing a rather Eurosceptic agenda (Curry 2015, 182). This pattern has remained unchanged until now.

8.2 Significant Others

The West, associated with Christendom, has always been an important *significant other* for Poland. As a consequence, despite Poland's geographical belonging to (Central and) Eastern Europe, the Western connection has always been much stronger. This fierce attachment to the West, based on a common culture and common religion, was also strengthened by intense trade with this part of the continent. Nonetheless, the repeated failures of Western allies to come to Poland's aid in its time of greatest need have undoubtedly created some resentment and feelings of betrayal, yet they have not diverted the Poles' general affection for European and Christian values (Davies 2001, 302).

The EU, which has to a certain degree replaced or is associated with the "West" as the *significant other*, is without doubt an important reference point for Poland. Yet, according to all interviewed experts, opinions on European integration are largely polarized between different segments of the society as well as political authorities. On the one hand, initially, the EU membership was largely viewed in pragmatic, instrumental terms, as a chance to enhance the country's prosperity and security and enable Poles to travel and work abroad. In fact, Poland has been one of the largest beneficiaries of EU funds since its accession in 2004 (Nowicka-Franczak 2017, 268). Correspondingly, those in Poland who recognize the immense benefits resulting from the membership are strong supporters of further Europeanization and deepening of the integration process (Cichoński and Czerwińska 2011, 286). In addition, as one of the biggest countries in Europe, both geographically and population-wise, Poland has strived to assume a visible role on the continent.²⁰² Enhancing

²⁰² Poland's agenda within the EU has revolved mostly around security issues, common energy policy, and the EU's Eastern policy (Bien zyk-Missala 2016).

Poland's standing within "an imagined hierarchy of nations" has accordingly been another important motivation for EU membership (Galbraith 2011, 22).

By contrast, some have warned against the risks stemming from economic competition and from being exploited by more powerful Member States (Galbraith 2011, 37). Yet most authors classify Polish Euroscepticism as primarily identity based. Polish Eurosceptic political elites describe European and national identities as incompatible (interview 3B). The EU is portrayed as an artificially constructed grouping that is trying to develop a common identity. More importantly, Western Europe has been increasingly condemned by Polish authorities and parts of the Church for its secular, cosmopolitan way of living, which according to them poses a (potential) threat to Polish national identity based on Christian values (Góra and Zielińska 2019; Zarycki 2000). Karolina Czerska-Shaw the Jagiellonian University in Krakow underlines that the ruling PiS party has been exceptionally focused on defying the "multiculti" character of the West. Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski, for example, referred to the "decadent" Western societies and condemned them for being "vegetarian, bicycle riding, gay tree huggers" (interview 3B).

Another major point of contention is the question of sovereignty. Due to historical reasons, Poland is highly sensitive to giving away part of its national sovereignty. Most Polish governments have been in favor of a Union of sovereign Member States rather than a federation of states and argued against extending the powers of the European institutions (Bien'zyk-Missala 2016). Søren Riishøj speaks of an "integration dilemma," where Poland fears being "absorbed" in a multicultural Europe but at the same time does not want to drift to the periphery in a scenario of "two-speed" or "multi-speed" Europe (Riishøj 2007). In addition, the feeling of "Western betrayal" is still present in the Polish society and politics. Thomas Zarycki compares the relationship between the EU and Poland to a mother-child bond and relates it to the continued need of Polish authorities to remind the Western Europeans of their moral guilt for the fate of Poland and use it as an argument to claim compensation for past deeds (interview 3M).

It follows from the above that the Polish attitude toward Western countries and the EU is an ambivalent "mix of desire and resentment" (Mayblin et al. 2016a, 71). Western European countries continue to serve as attractive destinations for Polish workers. However, the idealized picture of the West, put forth especially during the years of the communist rule, and

the historically rather asymmetrical relationship, where Western Europe was always seen as superior to Poland, is now being compensated by attempts to portray the West as morally corrupt and Poland as morally superior (see also Killingsworth et al. 2010).

Not surprisingly, Germany occupies a special position in Poland's historical memory as well as current discourse. It is Poland's largest neighbor and biggest trading partner. In addition, Germany has been a role model for many Poles in terms of quality of life (interview 3H). Many Poles admire and identify with the "Western" values that they believe Germans personify, such as work ethics and efficiency, self-discipline, punctuality, respect for law, or orderliness (Mach 2000; Stań zyk 2013). However, the bilateral relations between the two countries remain complicated due to historical animosities (interview 3E). The instrumental role of Prussia in the three partitions and the ensuing destruction of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and especially the experience of wartime occupation, have left a significant imprint upon Polish identity. Paweł Ukielski highlights in this context that historical remembrance dictates Poles to always be careful, which partially explains Poland's sensitivity when Germany tries to enforce certain things within the EU (interviews 3G & 3L). After 1989 and Germany's backing of Poland's accession to the EU, the relations between the two neighbors appeared to be improving. More importantly, various German and Polish governments attempted to work through historical traumas to achieve reconciliation. However, bilateral relations usually deteriorated under the ruling PiS party, in power again since 2015, as PiS has contributed to spreading negative stereotypes about Germans and Germany among Polish society (Cordell 2009; Stań zyk 2013). Recently, Germany and Poland were united in their response to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war in Ukraine. Poland also positively rated Germany's increased engagement in the eastern flank of NATO (interview 3E). However, the two states' disagreements over the construction of the Nord Stream I and II pipeline between Russia and Germany continue to cast a shadow over their bilateral relations.

Similar to its relationship with Germany, history proves to be an even bigger stumbling block in Poland's relations with Russia. While the interviewed experts agreed that the Polish-Russian economic relations used to be quite stable at the turn of the millennium, many of those pragmatic ties were broken after the war in Ukraine, when the Russian threat became increasingly tangible and amplified Polish fear of Russia's persisting imperialistic ambitions

(interviews 3G, 3L & 3M). As such, the multifaceted relationship with Russia requires a more elaborate explanation. Tomasz Zarycki, one of Poland's leading specialists on Polish-Russian relations, distinguishes five major functions that the negative image of Russia has on Polish identity: (i) Russia as a unifying threat; (ii) Russia as an oppressor bolstering Poland's victimization-based identity; (iii) Russia as an "underdog" minimizing Poland's own relative weakness and highlighting Poland's moral superiority; (iv) Russia as Asia strengthening Poland's European identity; and (v) Russia as an elusive subject matter and Poland as the exclusive expert (interview 3M; Zarycki 2004). This study uses a slightly adapted typology distinguishing between three main impacts of the Russian factor on Polish national identity:

i. Russia as an oppressor and a unifying threat

The Russian threat is deeply rooted in Polish identity discourse. Poles are hypersensitive to any signs of Russian geopolitical expansionism, and their continued dependency on Russian gas is regarded as a major danger to the state's sovereignty (Zarycki 2014, 607). In 1996, Poland signed a contract with the Russian corporation Gazprom, securing gas provision for a period of 25 years (Fedorowicz 2007, 546). Since then, Poland has undertaken numerous attempts to diversify its natural gas supply sources with the aim of becoming independent from Russian natural gas deliveries (Radio Poland 2019). These energy concerns are closely related to security concerns and the perceived threat stemming from the revival of Russia's imperial ambitions.

Russia's role in ending Poland's independence through the three partitions, the betrayal represented by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, and, finally, more than four decades of political subjugation to communist rule after 1945 had a profound and lasting effect on Polish national identity (Stańczyk 2013, 292). In particular, the suffering of Poles under many years of Russian domination and oppression was crucial in nurturing Poland's victimization-based identity.²⁰³ The Katyn massacre of 1940, during which Stalin ordered the Soviet secret service to execute 22,000 Polish military officers, policemen, and other public servants, has become the central symbol of Polish suffering inflicted by Russian hands, and therefore

²⁰³ Polish historian and publicist Andrzej Nowak wrote in 1997: "after 16 wars, of which two were waged aggressively by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and 14 belonging to a series of Russian expansion movements; after 250 years of Russian domination in Poland that provoked six Polish uprisings (Poland dominated Russia for two years and was driven out by the only Russian uprising ever), Poland seems to be free" (Nowak 1997).

occupies a sorrowful place in the collective memory of Poles (Millard 1995, 113). Further, for decades, Russian authorities refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing, stating that Stalin and his intelligence service were responsible for Katyn, not Russia, an argument that was not well received in Poland (Fedorowicz 2007, 543).²⁰⁴ It was only on 7 April 2010 that Russian and Polish leaders commemorated the victims of the Katyn massacre together for the first time, after which Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin publicly acknowledged Soviet responsibility. However, to the dissatisfaction of Poland, an outright apology and/or a disclosure of Soviet documents did not follow Putin's acknowledgement. When, only three days later, on 10 April 2010, a Polish airplane, carrying Poland's presidential delegation traveling to Katyn to commemorate the massacre's 70th anniversary, crashed near the Russian city of Smolensk, it reinvigorated historical traumas (interview 3G). The tragedy had 96 victims, including then Polish president Lech Kaczyński, the twin brother of Jaroslaw Kaczyński. Despite the official investigations confirming that the disaster was caused by pilot error in connection with bad weather, Polish and Russian authorities differed in their viewpoints on the reasons for the crash. Russia's reluctance to hand over the airplane wreckage to Poland led to many conspiracy theories (Bień zyk-Missala 2016). Thus, attempts of historical reckoning have had minimal success and continue to cause tension in Polish-Russian relations.

When Poland gained full sovereignty in 1989, there was a slight hope for the improvement of mutual relations. However, after Poland started to pursue integration with the Euro-Atlantic structures, Russia objected all Central and Eastern European countries' accession to the EU and NATO and Polish-Russian relations deteriorated again (Bień zyk-Missala 2016, 544-547; Fedorowicz 2007). A few years later, the Russian threat once again became tangible due to the proximity of the war in Ukraine to Polish borders. Most observers see the year 2014 as pivotal in this regard because it brought back the historical trauma. Piotr Kazmierkiewicz claims that the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the conflict that subsequently broke out in Eastern Ukraine had a double effect on Poland's identity. Not only did Russia attack Poland's direct neighbor, but, with no direct response from Germany or France, the Western reaction in 2014 was perceived by many Poles as insufficient, arousing memories of 1939 (interview 3G).

²⁰⁴ Originally, for many years, the Soviet Union denied even the slightest responsibility and blamed the executions of the crimes on Nazi Germany (Fedorowicz 2007, 543).

The negative perceptions of Russia and Russian people, still very much prevalent in Poland, continue to be affected by the feeling that Russia should apologize for its historic misdeeds. At the same time, some scholars argue that the Russian threat also has a unifying, integrating role for Polish national identity (interview 3M; Mayblin et al. 2016a, 64).

ii. Russia as part of uncivilized Asia and Poland as part of culturally superior Europe

As suggested in the prior section, Poland uses Russia as a negative point of reference to underscore its own European identity. Due to an inferiority complex developed toward the Western part of the world, Poland arguably underlines Russia's and other Eastern European states' weaknesses so as to downplay and/or relativize its own problems, prove its moral superiority over the East, and strengthen its own self-confidence (Zarycki 2014, 599-600). Any kind of connection to Eastern, particularly Russian, culture and heritage is understood as potentially undermining Poland's Europeanness. This corresponds to the negative portrayal of Russia in Polish public discourse, in which Russia carries an image of a "backward and negative other" (Zarycki 2014, 602-606). As Zarycki pointedly put it, "*being Polish means not being Russian*" (interview 3M).

iii. Russia as a "mystery" and Poland as an expert

Due to its long history with Russia, Poland claims to possess exclusive expertise in Russian affairs, while purporting that the West lacks a deeper understanding of the evil that Russia represents. For instance, with the Nord Stream project, Poland claims that the states involved should prepare their own demise because their naivete blinds them to the true Russian interests (interview 3M).

Analogically, Poland understands itself as an expert on Eastern European affairs (Zarycki 2004). Poland's immediate eastern neighbors Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine occupy a special place in Poland's history and memory. From the fourteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, the history of these countries was very much intertwined. The Eastern Borderlands, commonly known as the *Kresy*, represent the mythical territories that once belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Zarycki 2004). Simultaneously, Poland likes to think of itself as being "Central European" and tries to distance itself from anything Eastern European (Zarycki 2014, 603). Zarycki speaks of a Polish superiority complex toward its eastern neighbors (interview 3M; Zarycki 2004)

Poland has a long and convoluted history with some of the countries in Eastern Europe, mainly Lithuania and Ukraine. The already tense relations and ethnic animosities between Poles and Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians turned particularly violent from 1918 to 1945, when they disputed who would take control over the ethnically mixed territories in the East. The Lithuanians, in particular, were motivated by a strong quest for sovereignty and independence and, consequently, Polish-Lithuanian relations deteriorated (Burant 1993b, 396). Border changes and population transfers after World War II exacerbated the unresolved national minority issue, which has hindered relations between the neighboring countries ever since (Burant 1993b, 399).

In the 1990s, Poland pursued the so-called “two-track” policy, where it worked on establishing good neighborly relations with its eastern neighbors that also declared independence, while seeking to maintain good terms with the USSR, and later Russia (Fedorowicz 2007, 537-541). More importantly, Poland used its own experience with transformation and offered support to its eastern neighbors with political and economic reforms. Most authors argue that Poland’s engagement in Eastern Europe is motivated primarily by security concerns (Bień zyk-Missala 2016; Burant 1993b). Under this argument, Poland has supported the countries’ membership into NATO to block the expansion of Russian influence into Central Europe, hence easing its own difficult geopolitical situation (interview 3L). Other authors maintain that rather than security concerns, it is the feelings of solidarity with and/or responsibility toward the Eastern post-communist countries that guide Poland’s foreign policy in this region (Tulmets 2014).

The Visegrad partners are undoubtedly important significant others for Poland. The communist-era dissident solidarity led to the establishment of strong personal ties among the political leaders who assumed office after 1989. According to Paweł Ukielski, the domestic discussion after gaining independence fell along two extremes: One faction perceived Poland as a big and strong enough country that deserved a place on the same level with other “big players” in Europe, such as Germany or France, and did not need Central Europe to assert itself. The other camp proclaimed that Poland, as the biggest and strongest member of the V4, should assume regional leadership. In any case, Poland’s overbearing political style has sometimes led to tensions with other Visegrad states, especially the Czech Republic. In 1990,

Grzegorz Gornicki wrote: “Poles are generally disliked in other Central European countries for their cockiness ... [and] pretentious sense of self-importance” (Gornicki 1990, 57-58).

Until recently, the United States were recognized as Poland’s key partner and major ally in foreign policy and security affairs. While there is a Polish saying that “French will not die for Gdansk,” referring to the Second World War when Great Britain and France failed to prevent an aggression against Poland, the feeling that the Americans would always help the Poles used to be very strong on both the political and the societal level (interview 3L). Due to the strong Atlanticism and the continuous support of US policies and initiatives, including joining the “coalition of the willing” in Iraq in 2003, Poland was sometimes even called “America’s Trojan horse” (Curry 2015, 181). Under the Civic Platform governments, Poland became more pro-European but still retained its Atlanticist orientation. After Obama’s pivot to Asia in 2015 and a certain disengagement of the United States from Central European issues since then, there was a recognition that Poland cannot rely solely on the Americans (interviews 3H & 3K). While the Atlanticism has not disappeared, it seems to be less strong now than it used to be.

8.3 Main Identity Elements

The exceptional geographical location of being “sandwiched” between Germany and Russia has had several implications for Poland’s national identity. First, as the brief historical account illustrates, Poland went through multiple phases of foreign domination by external powers, mainly its immediate neighbors. The three partitions, the forced disappearance from the map of Europe for a long 123 years, the pressure stemming from attempts of cultural assimilation, and the experience under Nazism and communist totalitarianism have left a substantial imprint on contemporary Polish national identity. Lucy Mayblin goes so far as to speak of colonization of Poland (Mayblin et al. 2016a). Matt Killingsworth emphasizes that, while the whole European continent suffered during the Second World War, it was Poland whose population was most affected (Killingsworth et al. 2010). The sense of victimization has been reemphasized ever since (Wolff-Powęska and Forecki 2016). In reaction to the negotiations over a new EU treaty in 2007, then Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski criticized the proposed reform concerning a new voting system, arguing that Germany would receive an unfairly high number of votes, and, circling back to old grievances from the wartime

experience, he threatened to veto the deal. In a radio interview, he said: “If Poland had not had to live through the years of 1939-45, Poland would be today looking at the demographics of a country of 66 million” (Traynor and Wintour 2007). According to Tomasz Zarycki, the wartime experiences and Poland’s suffering during the Soviet period, for which the West is considered partly responsible by placing Poland into the hands of Moscow as a result of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, are still considered as very recent events. Moreover, they stir up Polish expectations that the West should still pay off its “historical debt” (interview 3M).

The omnipresent narrative of victimhood is coupled with heroization of Poland’s history (Marten-Finnis 1995). The dominant argument runs that Poland was damaged as a fault of certain countries’ intrusion and other countries’ abandonment but the nation survived nevertheless, which can be understood as a great victory and a proof of its moral qualities (Zarycki 2004). The popular belief is that Poles do not need to have a statehood to keep their national identity (interview 3J). Relatedly, many Poles like to portray themselves as *victorious victims* in a long history of opposition to external influence (interview 3I).²⁰⁵

Second, Poland’s delicate location of being situated between two culturally and religiously different civilizations in the East and the West has put it into the position of being “the bulwark of Europe.”²⁰⁶ According to the national mythology, Poland used to be the *Antemurale Christianitatis*, the guardian of Christianity and the European civilization (interview 3D). In the movies and novels of famous Polish authors, Poland is presented as being in constant fight against the Turks, pagans, and other infidels coming from the East.

²⁰⁵ The collective memory is so dominated by the victimization ethos that parts of the society, the political circles, as well as the expert community more or less deliberately repress the memories of the Polish troublesome past, especially the controversial wartime Polish-Jewish relationships and the role of certain Polish elites as collaborators with the communist regime (interviews 3G & 3I; Nowicka-Franczak 2017). The most burdensome issue has been the moral responsibility of the Poles for the misdeeds committed on Jews during the Second World War. The Jedwabne pogrom of 1941 was not the only act of Polish hostility against the Jews but probably the cruelest one, during which Jewish residents of the Polish town of Jedwabne were burned alive in a barn by their Polish neighbors for their alleged affiliation with the communists (Nowicka-Franczak 2017, 261). The dark pages in the history of Poland and the controversies surrounding it have created some competing narratives of its national past as articulated by the political elites. While the Civic Platform party has strived to settle accounts with the past, the conservative PiS party has been putting emphasis on the commemoration of the historical traumas and the martyrdom of the Polish nation (Stan zyk 2013, 290).

²⁰⁶ Galbraith provides a succinct summary of all invasions faced by Poland: “From the west and north came the Teutonic Knights in the 13th century, the Swedes in the 17th century, the Prussian Empire at the end of the 18th century, and the Nazis in 1939. From the East came Tartars, Cossacks, and Muscovites throughout the Middle Ages and into the 18th century, the Russian Empire at the end of the 18th century, and the Soviets after 1945” (Galbraith 2004, 58).

Such symbolism started with King Jan Sobieski, who fought the invading Turkish armies and helped defend Vienna in 1683, and this symbolic moment has been relived ever since (Mach 2000).²⁰⁷ The most emblematic event where Poland credits itself with saving Europe is the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1920 and Marshall Józef Piłsudski's defeat of the Red Army in the battle of Warsaw, known throughout Poland as the "Miracle of the Vistula" (Zarycki 2014, 611).

Third, this Romantic tradition of Polish messianism serves as an important symbol of the innumerable sacrifices Polish people made over the centuries to protect the Western civilization and its values. It is deeply rooted in Polish identity and it has also considerably shaped Polish foreign policy (interview 3M). The perceived role as "martyrs" and "saviors" of Christian Europe has been utilized by Polish political elites to justify their country's rightful belonging to the West (Arciszewska 2006; Wilkiewicz 2003; Zarycki 2014). In other words, Poles regard themselves as true Western Europeans. In the nineteenth century, Poland started to describe itself as the "eastern flank of Western Europe" with strong cultural and religious links to the West (Klatt 2011, 4; see also Mach 2000). According to Zdzisław Mach, numerous Polish writers and artists, such as Adam Mickiewicz, contributed to creating the picture of Polish heroic history and the nation's moral superiority (Mach 2000). In the second half of the twentieth century, when Poland was separated from Western Europe by the Iron Curtain, the anti-communist elites and the Roman Catholic Church continued to foster the emotional bond to Western culture and values (Mach 2000). When proclaiming the goal of "returning to Europe" after 1989, then President Aleksander Kwaśniewski declared: "We are back! Back to the great European Family. We are back to the place where Poland and Poles deserve after their 1000 year history and the great courage Poles have shown over the past several years" (translated from Gazeta.pl by Galbraith 2004, 66).

Fourth, lying on the intersection of Eastern and Western cultures also means that Poland suffers from both an inferiority and a superiority complex.²⁰⁸ The inferiority complex is directed toward the West and stems from the country's structural, economic dependence on mainly Western Europe. According to Zarycki, this feeling of civilizational inferiority has

²⁰⁷ The famous Polish painter Jan Matejko painted a large picture of Jan Sobieski, the winner of Vienna, and this painting is located in the Vatican museum, which means that all Polish Catholics see it when they go there (interview 3D).

²⁰⁸ Zarycki also speaks of a postcolonial versus a postimperial syndrome (Zarycki 2004).

always existed in Poland and, after the EU accession, “it has only changed the form but not the essence” (interview 3M). That the relationship between Poland and the “old” Europe is in essence asymmetrical has been acknowledged by some Western politicians. Many Poles felt deeply offended when former French President Jacques Chirac said in 2003 that they, together with other Eastern European countries, “missed an opportunity to shut up” after they had signed a joint letter supporting the US and British invasion in Iraq. With this statement, Chirac hinted that such a decision might reduce the candidate countries’ chances for membership. This saying and a feeling of unequal treatment still resonate in Polish political circles and society today (Mach 2000).

The center-periphery paradigm and the notion of the inferiority complex is compensated by the feeling of more or less nationalistic or patriotic pride based on an abstract idea of the sacrifices and the glorious and heroic past of the Polish nation, as mentioned before (interview 3M). The national self-exaltation occurs in two manifestations. On one hand, Poland has developed a superiority complex in relation with its Eastern neighbors, including those living in the pre-war Polish territories that were historically part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The conviction of having a special status in Central and Eastern Europe sometimes results in a paternalistic demeanor and sometimes in a contemptuous attitude toward these Eastern regions, which are regarded by the Poles as civilizationally and culturally inferior or “backward” (Mayblin et al. 2016a, 66-68). On the other hand, there have been increasing attempts to highlight Polish cultural capital and prove its moral superiority over the West (interviews 3I & 3J). Poland, so the argument runs, was able to preserve its identity during times of partition and dependence thanks to its solid moral and religious beliefs, and the West should now be taught those values it seems to have forgotten (Mach 2000).

Fifth, while Poland identifies itself more as Western than Central European, it simultaneously presents itself to be the “middleman” or “bridge” between the East and the West (Galbraith 2004; McManus-Czubin ka et al. 2003). This goes hand in hand with the self-conception of being a big and influential actor and leader of Central and Eastern Europe. Malgorzata Klatt, who conducted interviews with high-level representatives of the Polish governing elite, found out that the majority of them would like to see Poland as a recognized and respected partner in European and international affairs (Klatt 2011).

Sixth, Poland's unique historical circumstances have fostered a fierce attachment of Poles to political independence and sovereignty (interview 3B). During the Soviet domination, the idea of political independence drove the activities of the democratic resistance movement in Poland (Cichocki and Czerwińska 2011; Wilkiewicz 2003). Even now, the "sovereignty dilemma" continues to affect the country's attitude toward the EU. Poland frequently denounces large countries' influence in the EU institutions and their (perceived) power over common policies (Cichocki and Czerwińska 2011, 286).

And, finally, seventh, the experience of repeated foreign domination has influenced the nature of Polish nationalism, which was largely shaped by the romantic, heroic ideals of the nineteenth century and the predominance of ethnic identity, as opposed to civic identity (Millard 1995). The multiple border shifts and population movements on the Polish territory have resulted in widespread homogenization of the Polish population (interview 3L). The multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, which used to define the region before the partitions, has gradually disappeared as a consequence of mass purges of the Jewish, Slavic, Roma, and other ethnicities during the Second World War, the post-war expulsions of non-ethnic Poles, and the waves of emigration during the communist era (Pleskot 2015). By the time the Second World War ended, 97% of the population declared to be ethnically Polish (Cordell 2009, 13). Today Poland has the lowest percentage of people of non-native descent in the whole EU, accounting for less than 1% of the total population (Cudzoziemców 2020).²⁰⁹

Apart from ethnic homogeneity, Poland exhibits a remarkable degree of religious homogeneity. Many experts agree that it was the Catholic Church that preserved Polish national identity in between orthodox Russia and protestant Prussia and later again in the communist times (interview 3L). When the communists came to power, most Poles were already Roman Catholic and it was therefore very hard for the regime to discredit or suppress

²⁰⁹ At the same time, Poland is becoming an increasingly popular destination for foreign workers, with the number of foreigners living in Poland climbing from 84,000 in 2010 to 423,000 at the beginning of 2020 (Cudzoziemców 2020). Approximately half of them (214,700) were from the Ukraine. However, these are official statistics that potentially do not include a large portion of migrant workers from the Ukraine. According to official data from the National Bank of Poland, the Polish labor market accommodates every year around 1.2 million Ukrainians, 330,000 of whom receive a work permit, while the rest of them work on the basis of a special visa conditioned by the so-called "employer's declarations" (Polski 2020). Some of them are also granted the so-called *Karta Polaka* ("Polish Card"), which allows them to reside legally in Poland and obtain the Polish citizenship after one year if they are able to prove that they are of Polish descent and have Polish language skills. Those who obtain a Polish Card are no longer counted as foreign nationals.

the Catholic Church as they did in other countries.²¹⁰ Interestingly, Michal Luczewski argues that the current strength of the Catholic Church is partially an unintended consequence of the politics of the communists because Polish communism helped complete the transformation of once multiethnic, multiconfessional territories into a monoethnic, mostly Catholic state (interview 3I). More importantly, religion became a vehicle for mobilization during the communist era in Poland because it provided a sense of freedom in an unfree environment and helped unify the resistance against the oppressive regime (Lewicki and Mandes 2015). A mass religious mobilization occurred between 1956-1966, which eventually contributed to the preservation of a distinctive Polish identity against the atheistic communist leadership (interview 3I). The inviolable power of the Church became apparent in 1979 when Karol Wojtyła came to his native Poland for the first time after his election as Pope and his visit attracted more than 10 million people (Telewizja Polska 2019). *Solidarność*, though arising from trade unions, was also a deeply religious movement (Lewicki and Mandes 2015, 46).

While the society is now split as to what role the Church should play in Polish politics and society, according to the interviewed experts, religion continues to be firmly embedded in Polish national identity and serves as one of the sources of the nation's sense of moral superiority (interviews 3I & 3M). Especially the conservative wing of the Polish Catholic Church portrays the West as decadent, betraying the very central idea of Europeanness, namely Christian values. They claim that one day the West will rediscover the lost faith and finally understand the role of Poland (interview 3M). Reflecting on the continued Christian Catholic character of the nation, Marcin Galent from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow noted that, emotionally, Poles feel more attached to Rome than to Brussels, explaining the sometimes dismissive attitude toward the EU (interview 3D).

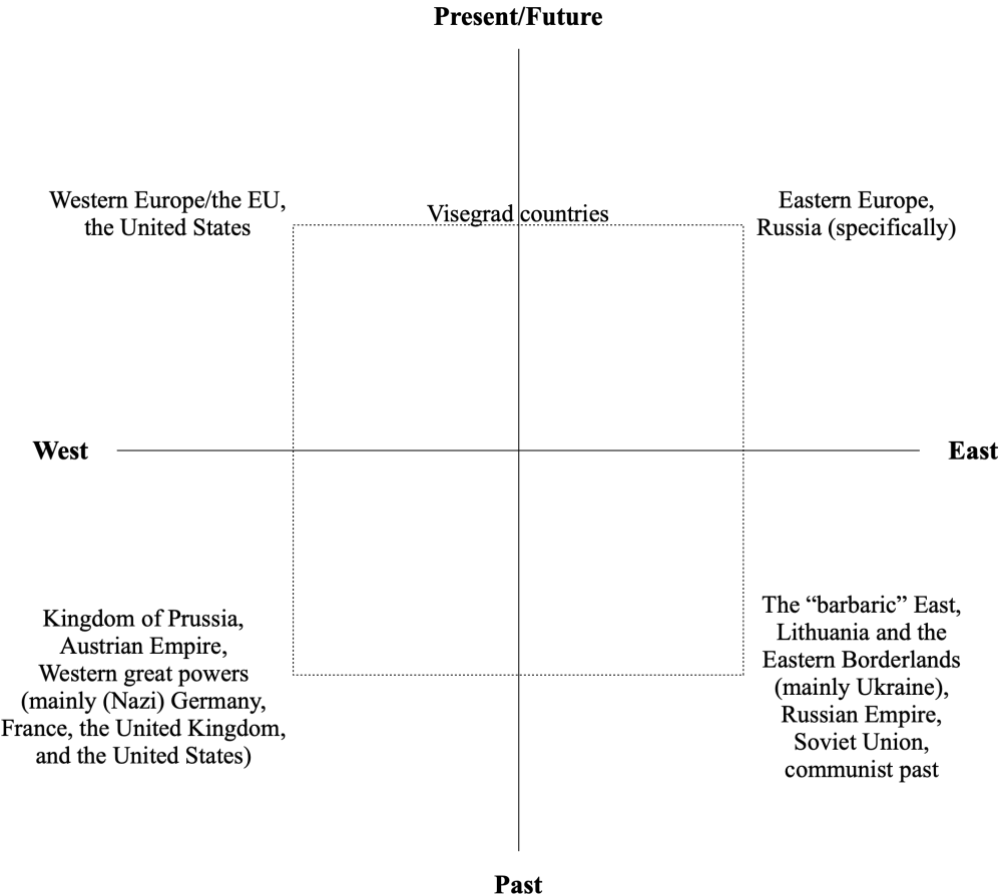
The role of the Church is not the only question that divides the Polish politics and society. The interviewed experts spoke of growing polarization and the existence of various cleavages, including liberal versus conservative, secular versus non-secular, and pro- versus contra-European, some of which were not visible in Poland for a long time and are now resurfacing again (interview 3J). Most experts acknowledge that the continued and even growing polarization of the Polish society can be traced back to the partitions and the uneven

²¹⁰ The communists could not destroy the Church also because they had to fight all other independence movements, such as the ones led by the Polish peasant party, the guerrillas, and the underground movement. Even though the Church was infiltrated by the communists, it was impossible to dismantle it (interview 3I).

cultural, economic, political, and institutional development of the Austrian, Russian, and Prussian territories, which was later reinforced by the uneven effects of the transition process in the 1990s (McManus-Czubin ka et al. 2003). As a consequence, it should not be omitted that contemporary Polish national identity can, to a certain extent, differ in the three historically partitioned areas of Poland.

The following matrix shows the main historical and current *significant others* for Poland and the table below provides a summary of the above-elaborated identity elements. A detailed table summarizing the main formative events, *significant others*, and identity elements is included in Appendix F.3.

Figure 16: Main historical and current *significant others* (Poland)



Source: Own depiction

Table 8: Summary of the main identity elements (Polish national identity)

Identity element	Specification
Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”	Commemoration of historical traumas, in particular Poland’s subjugation to great powers and related suffering under foreign dominations
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West	Bitterness originating from repeated instances of perceived betrayal even by the closest allies
High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty	Long history of striving for political independence
	“Integration dilemma” within the EU context
Superiority and inferiority complex	Superiority over Eastern territories (Eastern Borderlands, the <i>Kresy</i>)
	Resentment toward the liberal, “multiculti” character of the West
	Inferiority complex toward the West; historically asymmetrical relations with Western Europe
Perception of belonging to the West	Historical ties to the Western culture
	Poland as a martyr and savior of Western, Christian civilization / Poland as the “bulwark of Europe”
	“Return to Europe”
Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs	Heroization of Poland’s history
	Feeling of being a “bridge” between the East and the West
	Perception of being a regional leader
National pride based in the perception of having a strong and resilient ethnic identity	Important role of historical, linguistic, and ethnic aspects of national identity for the survival of the Polish nation
Fierce attachment to Christian values	Historical role of religion and the importance of the Roman Catholic Church in Polish resistance to various foreign dominations
Homogeneity of the Polish population	Ethnic and religious homogeneity
Polarization of politics and society*	Polarization stemming, among other things, from state partitions and uneven transformation after 1989

* Polarization is not an identity element per se but rather a reflection of the nature of Polish national identity.

Source: Own table

Chapter 9: Slovak National Identity

When Slovakia became an independent state on 1 January 1993 after the peaceful division of Czecho-Slovakia, it was presented with the challenge of redefining its national identity. Unlike the Czechs, who could refer to the tradition of the Kingdom of Bohemia and whose national consciousness and identity were historically more rooted, the Slovaks were seen as “people without a history and historic consciousness” (Riishøj 2007, 523). Dušan Kováč (2011b) points to the fact that, in order to be able to treat Slovakia as an independent entity with distinct internal features, the Slovak historiography decided to differentiate between Slovak history in a territorial versus in an ethnic sense. The territory of present-day Slovakia developed within the framework of the Kingdom of Hungary and its administrative frontiers were only created by the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, which Slovakia remained an integral part of until 1993. However, Slovak history as the history of a nation has much older roots (Kováč 2011b). The following paragraphs will present historical developments and milestones that have been particularly important for shaping Slovakia’s national identity over the course of the past centuries. This will be followed by an overview of Slovakia’s *significant others* and a summary of the main identity elements.

9.1 Formative Events

Both Czech and Slovak historiography consider the Great Moravian Empire of the ninth century to be the first historically documented state in Central Europe, covering the area that would later become Czechoslovakia. The territory spread across Bohemia, Silesia, Southern Moravia, and Slovakia, and is considered as part of the Slavic tradition. In fact, Slovak historians have created the impression that Slovaks were the dominant element within the formation, and declared Great Moravia as the first Slovak state (Holý 1996). More importantly, they have presented the arrival of the Byzantine missionaries Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia in the years between 863 and 867 as the beginning of the civilizing and Christianizing mission of the Slovaks (Agnew 2000, 624; Bakke 1999, 147).²¹¹ After the collapse of Great Moravia at the beginning of the tenth century, the territory of

²¹¹ Cyril and Methodius translated the greater part of the Bible and educated the Slovak clergy (Agnew 2000, 624; Bakke 1999, 147).

present-day Slovakia gradually came under Hungarian dominion and remained there until the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the First World War (Kováč 2011b, 6).

After 1526, the Kingdom of Hungary, and thereby also the Slovak territory, became part of a greater unit, the Habsburg Empire (Kováč 2011b, 8). Growing nationalism in Europe around the turn of the nineteenth century, sparked by ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, started the process of modernization and inspired calls for allowing the existence of distinct national identities within the Habsburg Empire (Hudek 2011, 258; Piscová and Bunčák 2000, 290). While the Czech and Slovak national movements were united in their opposition to the Habsburg rule, the conditions for the development of nationalism in the Czech lands were much more favorable. The Czech intellectuals could appeal to the old tradition of the Kingdom of Bohemia, and therefore the previous existence of independent statehood as well as a Czech literary language (Morison 1995, 69). On the other hand, the Magyarization of the Slovak population and the absence of a common Slovak literary language precluded the establishment of a robust national movement until the late eighteenth century (Wolchik 2015, 188).

Important to the process of formation of the Slovak nation was the development and codification of a standard literary Slovak language in 1843 (interview 4I).²¹² Ľudovít Štúr and other scholars, who decided to write in a language that would be understood by all segments of the Slovak population, laid the foundation of a separate Slovak national identity (Morison 1995, 68). In addition, by codifying Slovak as a separate literary language and presenting Slovaks as a distinct Slav nation, they sought to achieve political acknowledgment of Slovak national existence and territorial autonomy within the Hungarian state (Bakke 1999, 142; Kamusella 2009, 537). However, these demands were in sharp contrast with the ambitions of the Hungarian authorities who were striving for a homogenous national state (Hudek 2011, 260).

²¹² There were, in fact, two competing strands within the Slovak national revival movement, which disputed whether Czechs and Slovaks were one or two separate tribes within the Slav nation. One was Slovak-Catholic adhering to a Slovak literary language “Bernoláčtina,” the other Czechoslovak-Protestant using the old Czech biblical language known as “Bibličtina” (Bakke 2011; Kowalská 2011). For example, Slovak poets and philologists Jan Kollár and Pavel Jozef Šafárik advocated for Slav reciprocity and were supporters of Czech-Slovak unity (Kamusella 2009, 539). The linguistic-religious split impeded the national revival until the eventual rapprochement between the Catholic and the Protestant currents in the 1830s (Agnew 2000).

The failure of the Hungarian leaders to make any concessions to Slovak demands contributed to the formulation of the first coherent Slovak political program between 1845-1848 and culminated in the armed uprising of the Slovaks during the 1848-1849 Revolution (Kováč 2011a, 124). When the central government in Vienna suppressed the Magyar Revolution, they also rejected the Slovak political demands to assert themselves in the Kingdom of Hungary (Kamusella 2009, 548). In fact, the leaders in Budapest began to transform the Kingdom of Hungary into a one-nation state and rejected the Memorandum of 1861, in which the Slovaks demanded limited territorial autonomy along national and ethnic principles (Kováč 2011a, 128). The final setback to the national revival was caused by the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* of 1867, which attached Slovakia to the indivisible and unitary Kingdom of Hungary. Not only did the Slovak leaders fail to achieve linguistic, cultural, and administrative autonomy within a federal system, as envisaged in their political program, but what followed were years of harsh Magyarization on the Slovak territory (Kováč 2011b, 8; Morison 1995, 68-69).

Confronted by increasing Magyarization pressure in the second half of the nineteenth century, a new generation of Slovak nationalists emerged, who, instead of striving for a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic Hungary, favored a closer Czecho-Slovak cooperation (Nurmi 1999, 10). Gradually, the idea of a common Czechoslovak state gained ground and, after the outbreak of the First World War, “Czechoslovakism” was also formulated as a political program designed to achieve the unification of the Czech lands and Slovakia in one state (Bakke 2011, 247-249; Kováč 2011a, 134). While there were still numerous Slovak leaders who preferred to gain national self-determination within Hungary, the Czechoslovak idea prevailed at the end of the war (Hudek 2011, 261; Nurmi 1999, 19). The void created by the collapse and dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy paved the way for the declaration of an independent Czechoslovak state on 28 October 1918, and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who was the main champion of the idea of Czechoslovak mutuality, became the first President (Kováč 2011a, 134; Krajčovičová 2011, 137).

Soon after the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic, however, the idea of a unitary Czechoslovak nation came into conflict with Slovak demands for nationally based autonomy (Kamusella 2009, 558; Wolchik 2015). A new constitution adopted in 1920 enshrined the centralist structure of the new state, i.e. a single Czechoslovak nation, a single Czechoslovak language, and a single government located in Prague (Morison 1995, 74). The administrative

centralism with the government based in Prague triggered discontent and frustration among many Slovaks who feared that Prague would become “the new Budapest,” i.e. that Slovakia would once again come under foreign domination (Agnew 2000, 628). While the Czechs tended to present Slovaks as a branch of the Czech nation and their language as a Czech dialect, the Slovaks strived for recognition of their separate identity and enhanced legislative and administrative autonomy (Bakke 2011, 250; Kamusella 2009, 835-836). Religious differences between the two nations and different levels of economic development also contributed to the existing tensions (interview 4B). What is more, the economic differences were further aggravated during the worldwide financial and economic crisis of the 1920s (Krajčovičová 2011, 153).

Slovak autonomist arguments intensified during the interwar years, which went hand in hand with the strengthening of Slovak national consciousness and national identity as well as growing popular support for nationalist groups in Slovakia (Hudek 2011, 263; Wolchik 2015, 189). The most vocal supporter of Slovak national autonomy was the Slovak (later Hlinka’s Slovak) People’s Party founded by catholic priest Andrej Hlinka.²¹³ The party’s political and separatist ambitions culminated in the declaration of an independent Slovak Republic on 14 March 1939, which received direct support and approval of the Third Reich (Bystrický 2011, 174).²¹⁴ Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party was declared the only legal Slovak political party and, together with the Roman Catholic Church, it fully controlled public life in Slovakia (Kamenec 2011, 178). Josef Tiso became president of the new state.

The Slovaks achieved their longstanding goal of independent statehood and avoided the fate of the Czech lands, which had to face Nazi occupation on 15 March 1939 and the subsequent establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia under German control (Kamenec 2011, 175). However, the newly created Slovak state had little autonomy and was dependent on obedient collaboration with Hitler’s Germany (Morison 1995, 76). As a German satellite, Slovakia’s foreign and military policy was subordinated to the Third Reich. As a result, Slovakia, alongside Germany, took part in the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 and

²¹³ Slovak Catholics and the Catholic political elite traditionally promoted the idea that the Slovaks were a separate nation with a separate identity (Kamusella 2009, 827; Wolchik 2015).

²¹⁴ A constitutional amendment of 1938 reacted to changed conditions after the Munich Agreement and introduced autonomy for Slovakia within the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic. This composition did not last long, however, only until the declaration of independence by Slovakia on 14 March 1939 (Bakke 2011, 266; Krajčovičová 2011, 156).

participated in the Second World War on the side of the Axis powers (Kamenec 2011, 179-181; Rychlík 2011, 196). The wartime Slovak Republic (1939-1945) is regarded as one of the most problematic periods of Slovak history (Findor 2002). During the time when Slovakia existed as an independent state, though under German tutelage, the ruling party followed a systematic anti-Semitic policy and deported over two thirds of Slovakia's Jews to Nazi extermination camps (Findor 2002; Kamenec 2011).

Slovakia changed sides dramatically in 1944, partly as a consequence of Josef Tiso's decision to succumb to the German occupation of Slovakia. The underground Slovak National Council called upon Slovaks to join the fight against Tiso's regime and the growing German presence in Slovakia, which culminated in the Slovak National Uprising in August 1944 (Bútorá and Bútorová 1993, 706-707; Rychlík 2011, 205). In response, Hitler ordered the German military units to intervene in Slovakia, which turned into lasting occupation (Kamusella 2009, 857; Precan 2011). Despite the defeat, the partisan warfare continued up to the liberation of the Slovak territory by the Red Army in May 1945 (Kamenec 2011, 192).²¹⁵

The Czechoslovak government-in-exile, which set up its headquarters in London and was headed by former Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš, strived for the restoration of Czechoslovakia in its pre-Munich form (Agnew 2000, 628-629; Bakke 2011). Moreover, since it was clear that the Allies would not recognize an independent Slovak state after the war, the Slovak National Council declared itself in favor of re-establishing a common state of Czechs and Slovaks, yet only under a different constitutional settlement of Czech-Slovak relations (interview 4B; Precan 2011, 207). Following negotiations in Moscow, the agreed Košice Program of the new Czechoslovak government from 5 April 1945 acknowledged the separate identity of the Slovak and Czech nations and the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia as a federation of two nation states that would live as equal partners (Rychlík 2011, 203).²¹⁶ Within this federal constitutional structure, Slovakia was guaranteed regional autonomy and the Slovak National Council was recognized as the sole bearer of national sovereignty and the only political representative of the Slovak nation (Agnew 2000; Barnovský 2011).

²¹⁵ In other words, although the Slovak insurrection failed, it indirectly laid the ground for the Red Army's advance into Slovak territory (Kamusella 2009, 857).

²¹⁶ This decision aimed to erase the concerns about establishing another unitary Czechoslovak nation, as was the case in the aftermath of the adoption of the 1920 constitution, because the situation in 1945 was considered diametrically different from the political system of the First Czechoslovak Republic of 1918-1938 (Barnovský 2011).

This constitutional settlement did not last long. After the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in February 1948, a period of political transformation began, which had significant impacts on the structure of the Slovak society (J. Pešek 2011, 286). Threatened by political persecution, many citizens chose to emigrate. The Communist Party monopolized political power and aimed to apply total state control of all aspects of society (Wolchik 2015, 190). It fostered the centralist model of Czechoslovakia with the decision-making power located in Prague, dashing any Slovak hopes of autonomy or at least a federal solution (Kamusella 2009, 862; Kováč 2011b, 3). The communist leadership in the 1960s, with Alexander Dubček at its head, attempted to implement “socialism with a human face” and promised to introduce reforms, including the creation of a Czechoslovak federation (interview 4B). However, the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 suppressed the brief period of liberalization during the “Prague Spring” and, while the Soviets accepted the revival of the idea of a federal reorganization of Czechoslovakia, the federation did not really exist in practice and the real political power remained centered in Prague (Kamusella 2009, 865-866; Morison 1995, 77-78).²¹⁷

In November 1989, when the communist system in Czechoslovakia collapsed as a consequence of mass public demonstrations in Bratislava, Prague, and other cities—a process to be known as the Velvet Revolution—questions of national identity and sovereignty resurfaced (Agnew 2000, 629). Slovakia’s fears of not being treated as an equal partner in the federation became apparent in connection with choosing a new name for the state. While the two parties finally agreed on a compromise “Czech and Slovak Federative Republic,” the “hyphen war” was symptomatic of the unresolved tensions between the Czechs and the Slovaks (Morison 1995, 80).²¹⁸ The new elections scheduled for June 1990 laid bare the remarkable differences between the ambitions of Czech and Slovak political leaders and the unlikelihood of a common Czechoslovak statehood (interview 4I).

²¹⁷ The Constitutional Act No 143, which came into power on 1 January 1969, established the federation of the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic (Kamusella 2009, 866).

²¹⁸ The heated debate about whether to include a hyphen into the name “Czechoslovakia” or not was actually a dispute about how to achieve an acceptable division of power between the federal government and the two national governments (Kováč 2011b; Štefánský 2011). Slovak leaders suggested an alteration of the state’s name from Czechoslovakia to Czecho-Slovakia. However, this change was rejected by Czech politicians who associated it with the post-Munich Second Republic (1938–1939). This stance was in turn considered unreasonable by Slovak politicians (Kamusella 2009, 883).

While complete independence was not the original goal and public opinion polls indicated that most citizens in both states would have preferred a creation of a federation of two republics, the situation changed after the parliamentary elections in June 1992. Vladimír Mečiar and Václav Klaus and their respective parties, the Public against Violence and the Civic Forum, proved unable and unwilling to coalesce and they finally agreed on a peaceful constitutional division of the common state into two independent states in January 1993 (Morison 1995, 195; Wolchik 2015).

The foreign policy priorities of the newly founded states were very similar and aimed at reintroducing pluralist democracy, embracing market economy, and reclaiming their “rightful place” in Europe. Nevertheless, the two countries embarked on different paths in their transition process (Bútorá and Bútorová 1993; Wolchik 2015). While the Czech Republic made significant progress with regard to the political and economic transformation and was early admitted to join the existing European and transatlantic institutions, the anti-democratic actions of the government of Vladimír Mečiar resulted in Slovakia’s increasing international isolation. Both the EU and NATO rejected Slovakia’s initial application for membership (Bátora 2004, 44; Henderson 1999b, 210). It was only after the 1998 parliamentary elections and the victory of the opposition coalition that paved the way for the country’s inclusion in the second-round NATO expansion in 2004 and its accession to the EU in the same year (Bilčík 2004, 41; Krause 2003).

9.2 Significant Others

Reflecting upon Slovakia’s past, it comes as no surprise that Hungarians and Czechs belong among the Slovak nation’s main *significant others* (Hudek 2011, 263). Having lived under Hungarian rule for over a 1000 years—between the demise of Great Moravia in 907 and the creation of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918—Hungary was traditionally labeled as the “negative other” (Chudžíková 2011, 110-111). The “Hungarian other” refers not only to the state and its citizens but also to the Hungarian minority living on the territory of the Slovak Republic. Hungarians, who are concentrated mostly in the South and Southeast of the country, form the largest ethnic minority in Slovakia. These are remnants from the end of the First World War and the Treaty of Trianon, which ceded the Kingdom of Hungary’s territories to Czechoslovakia. The revisionist policies of the Hungarian government in the

interwar period tried to restore pre-war borders and reclaim areas with an overwhelmingly ethnic Hungarian population. Their efforts were fruitful when the First Vienna Award of 1938 ceded Hungarian-populated areas of Slovakia back to Hungary (Kamusella 2009, 819). When Czechoslovakia was recreated in 1945, a significant population exchange took place between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Hungarians were forced out of Czechoslovakia as a result of the Beneš Decrees or subjected to pressure to assimilate by accepting Slovak nationality (Driessen 1996/97, 3).

Slovak-Hungarian relations did not improve much during the communist era. Hungary was one of the Warsaw Pact countries that invaded Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 and ended the promising reforms introduced by the Prague Spring (Haight 1997, 32). Moreover, the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Dam, which was supposed to tame the Danube river and generate hydroelectricity, caused disputes between Hungary and Slovakia. Citing severe environmental implications, Hungary decided to withdraw its participation from this joint Soviet project, which the communist regimes in Prague and Budapest originally yet reluctantly agreed upon in the late 1970s (Fawn 2001, 55).

The strained relationship with Hungary improved after the end of the Cold War and especially after both states entered the EU in 2004. However, soon after, diplomatic tensions over the Hungarian ethnic minority living in Slovakia reappeared. In 2006, the hardline Slovak National Party joined the ruling coalition and the newly formed government started to promote Slovak as the only state language. In 2009, they passed an amendment to the language law, which mandates preferential use of Slovak as the state language and restricts the use of minority languages (The Economist 2009). The amendment was heavily criticized by Hungary as discriminatory toward the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, plunging the Slovak-Hungarian relations to their lowest point in recent history (interview 4D).

Moreover, since 2010, Viktor Orbán started to pursue a more active policy concerning Hungarian minorities in neighboring states, initiating a bill on dual citizenship and allowing ethnic Hungarians to vote in Hungary (interview 4J). As a response to this, Slovakia banned dual citizenship, requiring anyone to forfeit their Slovak citizenship if they apply for another citizenship (Euractiv 2010). Interestingly, the interviewed experts agree that, although the relations between Hungary and Slovakia had historically been tense, under Robert Fico and Viktor Orbán, the relations paradoxically improved. They are now focused primarily on

pragmatic cooperation in sectoral policies, avoiding the need to solve the problem of identities or historical animosities (interviews 4D, 4E & 4H).²¹⁹

The relationship with the Czechs is an even more complicated one. While the two states are sometimes still regarded as tied inseparably together, as “two branches of the Czechoslovak nation,” except for the “short” twentieth century, the history of Czechs and Slovaks unfolded differently (Bakke 1999; Bosák 1991). After the fall of Great Moravia in the ninth century, Slovaks became an integral part of the Hungarian Kingdom until 1918, while the Czech lands were immersed in the Holy Roman Empire and later administered by the Austrian and, after 1867, the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Kamusella 2009, 523; Teich 2011, 370).²²⁰ In addition to the political separation, the linguistic separation caused by the national movements and the codification of the Slovak language unfolded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Bakke 2011, 257-258). Some authors suggest that Slovak national identity rests primarily upon language and culture and they contribute this factor to the failure of the Czechoslovak idea, which was based primarily on historical arguments (Hudek 2011, 262; Kamusella 2009, 526).²²¹ In fact, Czech and Slovak conceptions of Czechoslovak mutuality differed from the outset. The Czechs tended to see the Slovaks as a branch of the Czech or Czechoslovak nation and the Slovak language as a Czech(oslovak) dialect. The Slovaks, on the other hand, claimed equality between the Czechs and Slovaks within a larger Slav nation and regarded Slovak as a self-standing branch of the Slavic language family (Kamusella 2009, 808; Kováč 2011a, 121-122). As a result, in contrast to the Czechs, who regarded the Czechoslovak identity as complementary to their existing Czech identity, the Slovaks never considered Czechoslovakia as “theirs” (Agnew 2000; Bakke 2011; Hudek 2011).

In 1918, Slovaks preferred a federal Czecho-Slovakia to a unitary Czechoslovakia. A similar dynamic repeated in 1945 and in 1968. While Czechs attempted to democratize Czechoslovakia, Slovaks demanded federalization of the state into Czecho-Slovakia

²¹⁹ Tomáš Černák from the Slovak Academy of Sciences adds that a dispute could break out again between Slovakia and Hungary because their views of the developments before 1918 are completely different (interview 4B).

²²⁰ From 1526 onwards, the Bohemian and Hungarian Kingdoms were ruled by the Habsburgs, yet they still developed as independent entities with significant socio-economic differences. While the Czech lands were among the most industrially advanced parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovakia, by contrast, remained predominantly agrarian (interview 4I; see also Bosák 1991; Selucký 1991; Wolchik 2015).

²²¹ According to Tomasz Kamusella, “the leading politicians of Czechoslovakia failed to utilize the common Czech and Slovak historical tradition of Greater Moravia for the sake of constructing a Czechoslovak nation” and utilized Hussitism to legitimize Czechoslovak statehood and nationhood instead (Kamusella 2009, 526).

(Kamusella 2009, 865-866). Dissatisfied with the illusionary nature of the new federation, the location of state power in Prague, and the perceived unequal status of Czechs and Slovaks, many Slovak nationalists assessed the Slovak development in the twentieth century as “from Hungarian despotism to atheistic Czech communism with a brief spell of liberty and independence during that interval,” referring to independent wartime Slovakia (see Kamusella 2009, 525). This quote also points to the fact that the Slovaks remained more religious than the increasingly atheist and agnostic Czechs (Kamusella 2009, 863-868). Slovak historian Miroslav Londák asserts that, apart from the political differences and uneven economic development, the confessional cleavage was one of the reasons why Czechoslovakia split (interview 4I).

In light of the differing historical experiences of the two nations and their distinctive cultural and religious traditions, several authors have come to the conclusion that the establishment of Czechoslovakia after 1989 was driven more by political realism than by common cultural heritage (Agnew 2000; Morison 1995; Nurmi 1999). Nevertheless, Slovaks and Czechs are two closely related nations, and the Czech Republic remains Slovakia’s most significant and closest *other*. The interviewed experts largely agree that the two countries maintain above-standard bilateral relations regardless of political parties in power (interviews 4B, 4E & 4K).

In addition to seeking good relations with neighboring countries, the domestic political consensus has been based on the fact that Slovakia is part of the West and this orientation has not been questioned. The interviewed experts contend that the EU remains Slovakia’s most important partner and that relations with Russia or China should not be overestimated (interviews 4G & 4J).²²² Nevertheless, in recent years, observers have noticed an interplay between instinctive pro-Europeanism and growing criticism of the EU in Slovakia. On the one hand, Slovaks are a very pro-European nation because they still remember the successful transformation after “Mečiarism” and the benefits of integration and membership (interview 4A). The public support for the EU continues to be very high and political elites reaffirm Slovakia’s intention to belong to the European core (Kazharski 2019; interview 4M).²²³ At

²²² Slovakia’s policy toward Russia has been motivated mainly by economic considerations, concretely the country’s energy dependence on Russia (interview 4J). Within the EU, Germany is Slovakia’s most important trading partner and investor (interviews 4G & 4J).

²²³ In 2017, reacting to the discussions on the state of the rule of law in Hungary and Poland, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico reaffirmed that Slovakia’s future should lie within a deeply integrated “core” of the EU (Jancarikova 2017).

the same time, Slovaks see their membership primarily through the prism of benefits, while the value-based considerations fall somewhat behind (interviews 4F & 4G). Moreover, although the migration and refugee crisis has not severely undermined this widespread support, it has created some fractions and given ground to Eurosceptic voices within Slovakia, such as Štefan Harabin or Marian Kotleba and their respective political movements. Nevertheless, despite these developments, experts on Slovak foreign policy agree that it would be highly unlikely for Slovakia to leave the EU or the Eurozone (interviews 4G & 4J).

Observers of Slovak foreign policy contend that, in Slovakia, there is a triangle of national, Visegrad, and European positions, which under normal circumstances are in sync. While Slovakia is aware of the fact that the V4 membership helped them enter the Euro-Atlantic structures, the country does not perceive the Visegrad Group as an alternative to the EU but instead strives to keep a clear pro-integrationist approach toward the Union (interviews 4J & 4K). Slovakia's foreign policy preferences are very well illustrated in the following statement by former Prime Minister Robert Fico: "I am very much interested in regional cooperation within the Visegrad Four but Slovakia's vital interest is the EU" (quoted in Jancarikova 2017). This is something that differentiates Slovakia from other Visegrad countries such as Hungary (interview 4M).

Finally, Slovakia's ties to Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans should be briefly outlined. Slovakia has played an active role in the context of the ENP and repeatedly declared itself in favor of further EU enlargement (Bilčík 2004). Slovakia's foreign policy has kept a particular focus on Ukraine, the country's largest neighbor. Moreover, even before the country's own accession to the EU, Slovak diplomacy was engaged in supporting reforms in various parts of the Western Balkans, most notably in Serbia and Montenegro (Bilčík 2004, 42-43).²²⁴

9.3 Main Identity Elements

For most of its history, Slovakia developed under Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and the formation of Slovak national identity cannot be separated from these frameworks. In fact, for the most part, Slovaks defined themselves in confrontation with Hungarian and Czech ethnic

²²⁴ When Slovakia launched its ODA programs in 2004, Serbia and Montenegro became the priority countries (Bilčík 2004, 42-43).

and national groups and their collective identities (Hudek 2011).²²⁵ The establishment of an independent Slovak Republic in 1993 has therefore been portrayed as a victory in the “thousand-year-struggle” for the recognition of Slovakia as a separate political nation (Kamusella 2009, 819-820; Piscová and Bunčák 2000, 293). This notion is reflected in the preamble of the Slovak Constitution, which highlights the country’s long history of subjugation to other nations, primarily Hungarians, and constructs the Slovak nation as a threatened victim:

“We, the Slovak nation, bearing in mind the political and cultural heritage of our predecessors, the experience gained through centuries of struggle for our national existence and statehood, mindful of the spiritual bequest of Cyril and Methodius, and the historical legacy of Great Moravia, recognizing the natural right of nations to self-determination” (Slov-Lex 1992).

The more distant history also played a key role for the construction of Slovak identity. While the impact of the early state formations on the development of Slovak national identity is disputed, experts agree that the idealized memory of Great Moravia and the civilizing and Christianizing mission of the Slovak population contributed to the formation of Slovak “national consciousness” (Kováč 2011b, 2; Kowalská 2011, 97; Nurmi 1999, 10). Religion has always played a much more important role in Slovakia than in the Czech lands, which were far more secular, and Catholicism proved essential for the formation of Slovak national identity (interviews 4A & 4B).²²⁶

Even more defining for the Slovak identity is the language. In Slovakia, language and identity are closely intertwined, which is why Slovaks were particularly sensitive to the “Bohemization” of the Slovak language and worked so hard to defend it (interview 4B).²²⁷ The codification of Slovak in the nineteenth century was a crucial element of the national revival. In 1995, the Slovak National Council adopted the State Language Act with the aim of ensuring legislative protection of the Slovak language (Chudžíková 2011, 118). Amended

²²⁵ Radoslaw Zednerowski cites Slovak politician and historian Rudolf Chmel, who argues that Slovaks were always dissociating themselves from the previous phase in history: “after 1918 it was necessary to distance from monarchy, the political system of Austria-Hungary; after 1938 the regime and ideology of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia was rejected; after 1945 the first Slovak Republic *en bloc*; after 1948 everything that preceded; after 1968 mainly the sixties; after 1989 the past forty years; after 1993 the three years that just passed” (Chmel 2002: 8, cited in Zenderowski 2019, emphasis in original).

²²⁶ Even before the communist era, the Czech lands were much more secular than Slovakia, mainly due to advanced industrialization and urbanization (interview 4B).

²²⁷ The goal of Bohemization was the development of a common Czechoslovak language.

in 2009, the law emphasizes the importance of the Slovak language for the preservation of Slovak identity and cultural heritage of the Slovak nation as well as for the expression of state sovereignty. The preamble to the language law reflects the described historical struggle for self-determination through language:

“The Slovak National Council, based on the fact that the Slovak language is the most important distinctive feature of the uniqueness of the Slovak nation, the most precious asset of its cultural heritage, the expression of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic, and the general tool of communication for her citizens, which, on the territory of the Slovak Republic, secures their freedom and equality in their dignity and their rights” (Slovak National Council 1995, 2009).

At the same time, the law implicitly incorporates the superiority and dominance of the Slovak language (Chudžíková 2011, 118). The Introductory Provision of the Act (§1 Art. 2) explicitly states that “the state language shall have priority over other languages used in the territory of the Slovak Republic” (Slovak National Council 1995, 2009). Observers agree that the strict legislative protection of the official language has been detrimental to the minority language usage in Slovakia (Kamusella 2009, 888). Moreover, language often serves as a source of distinctiveness of one’s nation and an expression of one’s national identity, which is why the subordinate position of minority languages in Slovakia creates unequal positions of different nationalities within the country (Chudžíková 2011; Vass 2015).

In line with this, the Slovak constitution suggests an ethnic instead of a civic definition of the Slovak nation and so delineates who is to be included in the Slovak nation (Chudžíková 2011, 118). Elisabeth Bakke contends that, historically, the term “Slovak” referred to culture or origin rather than the territory. She writes: “Slovaks were never thought of as the people living on the territory of Slovakia. Quite the reverse – Slovakia was defined as the territory inhabited by Slovaks” (Bakke 1999, 135). Over the course of history, Slovakia has developed into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state.²²⁸ Out of the Central European states, Slovakia is considered to be the most ethnolinguistically heterogeneous (Kamusella 2009, 892). Ethnic minorities form almost 20% of the Slovak population, the most significant being the Hungarian minority in the South and Southeast (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

²²⁸ The multi-ethnic character is often attributed to Slovakia’s development within the Kingdom of Hungary, which was a multi-ethnic state (Kováč 2011a, 121). The developments during and after the Second World War, including the liquidation of Jews and Gypsies, the deportation of Germans and Hungarians, and the ceding of Carpathian Ruthenia to the Soviet Union, reduced the percentage of minorities, but Slovakia still remained a multi-ethnic state (Kamusella 2009, 862-863; Morison 1995, 76-77).

2020b). In this context, many observers have noted that, since the end of communist totalitarianism, ethnic nationalism has become a crucial component of the modern Slovak nation (Hudek 2011, 265; Kamusella 2009, 523).

Moreover, the Slovak tendency to distinguish their nation from other “outgroups” can be traced back to the historical memory and feeling of always being the “smaller” partner (interview 4B). Slovakia viewed Hungary as an imperial power that caused the Slovak nation “a thousand years of oppression” (The Economist 2009). Similarly, in all Czechoslovak formations, Slovaks felt like an “agrarian pendant” that struggled to keep up economically with the Czechs (interviews 4B & 4I). The beginning of independent Slovak statehood dates back to 1 January 1993 when Czechoslovakia split in two. This event was portrayed as an end to the Czech domination over Slovakia and a chance to “reclaim” its own identity. Slovaks found their path in a pro-Western oriented foreign policy and integration into the Euro-Atlantic security, political, and economic structures (Bilčík 2004, 41; Bútorá and Bútorová 1993, 732).²²⁹

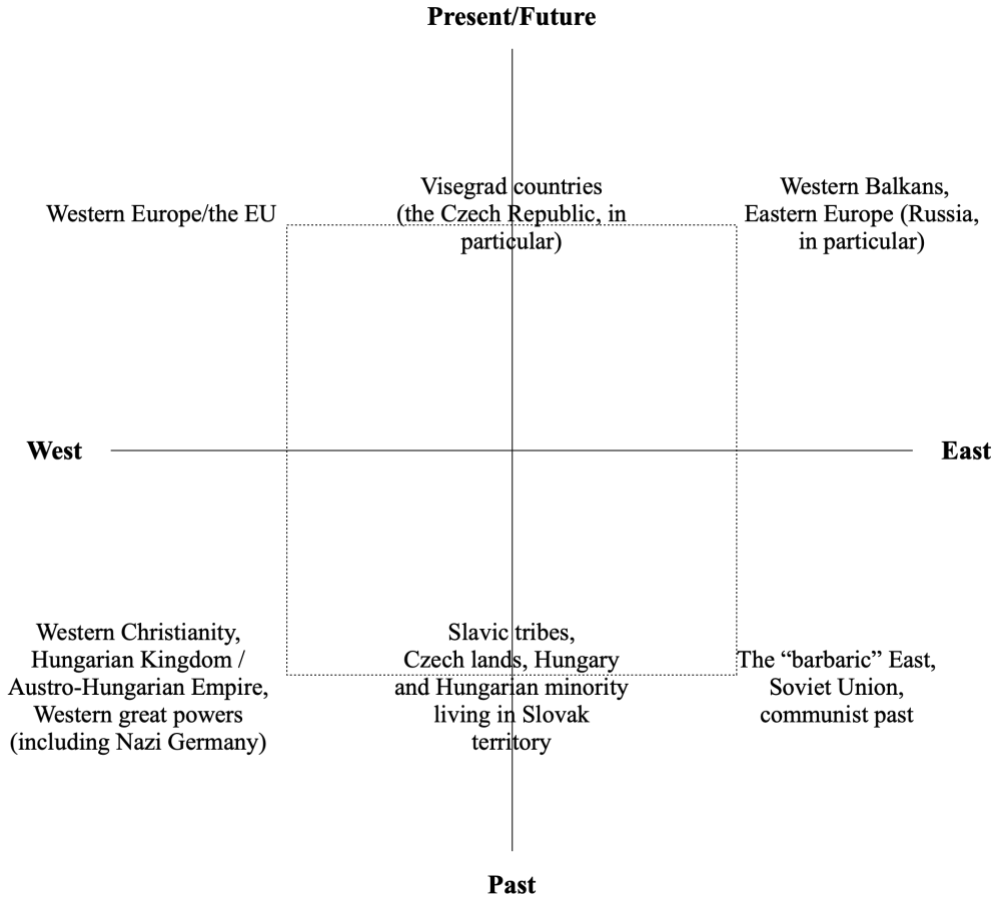
Similar to other post-communist countries facing post-independence identity challenges in the 1990s, Slovak political and intellectual elites searched for records of its “glorious past” (Zenderowski 2019). One historical memory embraced by Slovaks has been the Great Moravian Empire in the ninth century and the related portrayal of Slovaks as “civilizers” and guardians of Christian Western civilization against “Eastern barbarism” (Findor 2000, 7; Kamusella 2009, 526). Importantly, in Slovakia, this process of reconstruction and reevaluation of the modern national identity led to the polarization of Slovak historiography and the emergence of divisions in relation to the interpretation of particular events in collective memory (Kusá and Findor 1999; Zenderowski 2019). One element of Slovak history that has become the subject of numerous controversies is the Second World War and the role of the Slovak Republic versus the Slovak National Uprising. The majority of Slovak historians and politicians present the Slovak National Uprising of 1944 as a heroic struggle of the Slovak nation against totalitarianism and a proud act of national resistance against one’s own government that collaborated with Nazi Germany (Piscová and Bunčák 2000, 293). The other, nationalist current rejects such an interpretation and claims that wartime

²²⁹ In this context, Juraj Buzalka claims that adopting the Euro has given Slovaks self-confidence and the feeling that they are different (in the sense that “not even the Czechs have the euro”) (interview 4A).

Slovak Republic existing between 1939–1945 actually symbolized the sovereignty of the Slovak nation (Hudek 2015; Zenderowski 2019, 148-150). This one example shows the existence of competing visions of Slovak history and national identity, which may potentially lead to political instrumentalization of the past “in the form of legitimizing [one’s] own current political goals with (pseudo-)historical argumentation” (Hudek 2015, 5).

Figure 17 depicts the main historical and current *significant others* for Slovakia and the table below summarizes the main identity elements elaborated above. A detailed table providing a summary of the main formative events, *significant others*, and identity elements can be found in Appendix F.4.

Figure 17: Main historical and current *significant others* (Slovakia)



Source: Own depiction

Table 9: Summary of the main identity elements (Slovak national identity)

Identity element	Specification
Inferiority complex / feeling of always being the “smaller,” less important partner (also feelings of betrayal)	Inferiority complex toward the Czech Republic and, more generally, the “West” (historically asymmetrical relations) Perceived unequal status between Czechs and Slovaks in all Czechoslovak formations
Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”	Long history of subjugation to other nations, primarily Hungary and the Soviet Union, and related suffering under foreign domination
	Historically conditioned fears of international isolation
High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty	Long history of striving for political independence
Pride in national resistance	Heroization of certain events in Slovakia’s history (Slovak National Uprising of 1944; attainment of independent statehood in 1993)
Desire to prove the nation’s rightful belonging to the West	“Return to Europe” & continuous pro-integrationist approach toward the EU
	Endeavors to reconcile national, Visegrad, and European positions
Linguistic conception of nationhood	Slovak language as the most distinctive feature of the uniqueness of the Slovak nation The importance of the Slovak language for the preservation of Slovak identity and the expression of state sovereignty
	Superiority and dominance of the Slovak language over other languages in Slovak territory
Ethnic nationalism	An ethnic instead of a civic definition of the Slovak nation
Catholicism, attachment to Christian values	The importance of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovak history during various foreign dominations
	Civilizing and Christianizing mission of Slovakia (Slovaks as “civilizers” and guardians of Christian Western civilization against “Eastern barbarism”)
Relative homogeneity of the Slovak population	Slovakia as the most ethnolinguistically heterogeneous state in Central Europe, but in comparison with Western European states still quite homogeneous

Source: Own table

Chapter 10: National Identities of the Visegrad States

(Summary)

This summary section will juxtapose the four case studies to determine which identity elements are the same or similar across the Visegrad states as well as what the principal differences among them are. As elaborated in the theoretical chapter of this study, national identities are contingent on the specific historical circumstances that have contributed to their formation and transformation as well as the particular interpretation of these historical experiences. A closer look at history reveals many common features but also considerable differences in the historical development of the four post-communist states analyzed in this study. They were all medieval kingdoms that accepted Christianity around the same time. Their subsequent development alternated between the periods of *grandeur* and periods of foreign domination by more powerful neighbors and various “great powers,” including the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy and the Austrian Empire (Austria-Hungary), the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and the Kingdom of Prussia and the Third Reich (or Nazi Germany). What connects the Visegrad states is the experience of lost statehood and independence. As a result of three partitions, Poland disappeared from the map of Europe between 1795 and 1918. Hungary was partitioned between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs and later fell under domination of the Habsburg Monarchy. Similarly, the Bohemian Kingdom was incorporated into the Habsburg Monarchy and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Finally, Slovakia developed within the framework of the Kingdom of Hungary and later Czechoslovakia.

The two great wars of the twentieth century had different impacts on the individual nations. Although Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland gained independence after World War I, for Hungary, which appeared on the losing side of the war and was deprived of two thirds of its territory, it was a bitter experience. Similarly, during the Second World War, Hungary joined the Axis Alliance and, despite some attempted secret negotiations with the Allies toward the end of the war, it was occupied by Germany in 1944 and ended up once again on the losing side of the war. While the Czech lands were turned into the German-controlled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939 and experienced six years of occupation by Nazi Germany, the Slovaks declared an independent Slovak Republic under the official endorsement of the

Third Reich before switching sides in 1944. Experts further agree that, while World War II ravaged much of Europe, Poland experienced even more terrible losses than its Visegrad partners.²³⁰

Although all Visegrad states became part of the Eastern Bloc, each of them had a slightly different experience with the communist period. In Czechoslovakia, attempts to implement “socialism with a human face” with related reforms failed and the brief period of liberalization during the Prague Spring in the late 1960s was followed by the period of “normalization,” i.e. the reversal of the political reform process. Hungarians were more successful with their revolution in 1956. Despite being brutally suppressed by the Red Army, the uprising led to the introduction of economic reforms and the gradual easing of restrictions during the Kádár era of “goulash communism.” Similar to Hungary, the powerful Polish resistance movement *Solidarność* secured the country some reforms and concessions from the communist regime and cast Poland among the freest and most liberal satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe.

The national identities, which had been suppressed for almost 50 years under the Soviet rule, experienced a revival after the restoration of full sovereignty in 1989. Unlike the Poles, the Hungarians, and the Czechs, who had a long tradition of national consciousness to build upon, Slovakia was presented with the challenge of (re)defining its identity virtually from the ground up after the peaceful division of Czecho-Slovakia in 1993.²³¹ After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the overarching goal of the post-communist states in Central Europe was integration into Western institutions under the slogan of “Return to Europe” (Fawn 2003a, 18). Driven by the desire to make a sharp break with the communist past, they unequivocally declared their intention to return to Western European civilization, which, in their understanding, they had always been an essential part of. This argument is in line with Milan Kundera’s idea of Central Europe being kidnapped from the West by the Russian East, i.e. the Soviets (Kundera 1984).

²³⁰ About one fifth of Poland’s pre-war population perished during World War II (Easton 2019; Garlinski 1985; Sontheimer 2011).

²³¹ Moreover, while its three partners experienced an exceptionally smooth transition to democracy and market economy in the 1990s and were invited to join the EU and transatlantic structures, Slovakia under the authoritarian rule of Vladimír Mečiar faced international isolation, which ended only after the regime change in 1998.

The largely discontinuous history and the related events were particularly fundamental for the formation and transformation of the national identities of the four states. The decades and centuries of foreign domination, subjugation, and oppression created a very strong victimization ethos in Central Europe.²³² In this paradigm of “national redemption,” the Poles tend to portray themselves as innocent victims of the Germans and Russians; the Hungarians as victims of the Turks (Ottomans), Austrians (Habsburgs), and the West; the Czechs as victims of the Germans (including the Habsburg Monarchy); and the Slovaks as victims of the Hungarians and the Czechs (Kamusella 2009, 820). For Poland, the three partitions at the end of the eighteenth century and the Second World War experience are considered particularly painful. Throughout their rich history, Hungarians experienced numerous defeats and other setbacks, but the Trianon Treaty following World War I and the related territorial and population losses are regarded as the most traumatic event for the Hungarian nation. For Czechs, the annexation and occupation of their lands by Nazi Germany during the Second World War constitutes a collective trauma. And Slovakia often refers to its “thousand-year-struggle for independence” from Hungarians and Czechs. The notion of victimhood was reinforced in all four countries during the period of the communist rule. Even more than 30 years after the fall of the iron curtain, narratives of victimhood have not been erased and the Visegrad states continue to be haunted by (perceived) traumatic historical experiences (interview 1E; J.L. Taylor 2014; Walsch 2018).

In addition to seeing themselves as victims or even martyrs, several historical moments have created the feeling on the part of the Visegrad states of being betrayed and/or abandoned by their closest allies. For Czechs (and Slovaks), it is the bitter memory of not being invited to participate in the negotiations leading to the Munich Agreement and the subsequent German occupation of Czechoslovakia, as well as the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968. As mentioned earlier, Hungarians felt unfairly punished for their involvement in World War I and abandoned by Western Europeans during the 1956 revolution. And Poles often recall the failure of their Western allies to prevent an aggression against Poland at the outset of World War II, as well as the Red Army’s negligence when the Polish underground movement attempted to liberate Warsaw from Nazi occupation in 1944. Moreover, the Visegrad states hold Western powers partly responsible for placing them under the Soviet sphere of

²³² According to Paweł Ukielski, none of the V4 countries perceives itself to be wedged between Russia and Germany to the extent that Poland does (interview 3L).

influence. The notion of Western betrayal and the related historical grudge are still omnipresent in the Visegrad region, often coupled with the argument that the West should pay off its “historical debt.”

All these historical experiences have left a substantial imprint on the identities of the four nations, who often present themselves as victims of great power politics and communities of suffering (Ichijo and Spohn 2005, 10). The anti-great power sentiments remain present in official discourses and continue to affect the relations of the Visegrad states toward both Russia and the West (with “Brussels” often being portrayed as a new great power). Besides, due to the unique historical circumstances and their long struggle for freedom and independence, the Visegrad states attach great importance to the preservation of national sovereignty. Finally, there is a persistent belief in Central Europe that it is the “big players” such as Germany and France who make the decisions, while new EU members are not sufficiently respected (Tallis et al. 2017).²³³ The observable inferiority complex toward the Western states and the related feeling of not being treated as equal partners, but rather as second-class citizens, resonates in the Visegrad politics and societies until today.

This inferiority complex is being balanced by the memories of “golden ages” (Slovakia’s idealized memory of Great Moravia in the ninth century; the Kingdom of Hungary in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; Poland as a regional power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the medieval Kingdom of Bohemia in the fourteenth century and the Czech national movement in the nineteenth century) as well as of the successful transformation in the 1990s. Hungary and Poland further evoke their historical role as saviors of (Christian) Western civilization from countless barbarians and enemies coming from the East to justify their rightful belonging to the West. In recent years, this narrative has further shifted toward criticizing “too much liberal” Western Europeans and presenting Central Europe trying to protect the ideals of Western culture as morally superior. Some authors describe this phenomenon as a “new political Messianism” (Jokūbaitis 2018). The Visegrad states also maintain a certain sense of superiority over countries lying further to the East with the aim of relativizing their own position and strengthening their national self-confidence. Due to their specific location at the crossroads between two culturally and religiously

²³³ It is especially Slovakia and, to a lesser extent, the Czech Republic who identify themselves as small nations (interview 2J).

different civilizations in the East and the West, the Visegrad states sometimes cast themselves into the role of serving as a bridge between these two.

Another significant impact that the historical developments have had on all four countries is the homogenization of their societies. As a consequence of the two World Wars, post-war border shifts, and mass expulsions, as well as years of international isolation coupled with waves of emigration during the communist era, the formerly multiethnic territories in Central Europe have become overwhelmingly homogeneous in ethnic terms (Fawn 2003a).²³⁴ According to many authors, this particular identity trait leads to the prevalence of an *ethnic*, as opposed to *civic*, understanding of citizenship and the existence of wary, mistrustful, and sometimes overly negative attitudes toward foreigners (see, e.g., Chudžíková 2011; Hudek 2011; Kamusella 2009; Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997; Örkény 2006).

As regards the religious underpinnings of the Visegrad states' identities, there is a clear differentiation among the four nations. For Poland, Roman Catholicism is considered one of the most important pillars of its national identity. The religious foundations of Hungarian identity are less strong than in Poland, despite the Orbán government's increasing efforts to link the Hungarian national identity with Christianity. According to the interviewed experts, religiosity in Hungary is equated mainly with traditional family values and used for political purposes. In Slovakia, the historical civilizing and Christianizing mission has an important symbolic meaning and religion continues to be embedded in Slovak national identity. The Czech nation, unlike its Visegrad partners, is characterized by widespread secularism and "religious lukewarmness."²³⁵

The analysis has laid bare that the Visegrad states share a great number of similar identity elements, yet in some instances differ in their manifestation or degree. Table 10 offers a summary of these identity elements. On top of that, it is possible to identify some distinct identity elements specific for the individual Visegrad states. As mentioned before, in Poland, religion, concretely Roman Catholicism, is treated as the core element of national identity. What distinguishes Slovakia from its V4 partners is the close interrelation between identity and language. Hungary is known for its extraordinary sense of responsibility and solidarity

²³⁴ Both the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita) and the Habsburg Empire were largely polyethnic and linguistically and religiously heterogeneous entities (Hudek 2011).

²³⁵ Nevertheless, the interviewed experts suggest that, in the Czech Republic, there is a growing awareness of certain traditions and a rising interest in their preservation (interviews 1L & 1Q).

toward Hungarian minorities living abroad. And a fundamental feature of Czech identity is the so-called “littleness,” which implies a certain carelessness and a tendency to passively accept any changes in messianic fashion, disclaim responsibility, and blame others for one’s own mistakes.

Table 10: Summary of the main identity elements (the Visegrad States)

Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Feelings of victimhood & anti-great power sentiments	Sense of victimhood and anti-great power sentiments	Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”	Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”
Feelings of bitterness and betrayal & anti-great power sentiments	Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West	Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West	
Strong quest for sovereignty and independence	Strong attachment to national sovereignty	High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty	High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty
Feeling of belonging to the West, sense of superiority over the East → Bridge between the East and the West	Inferiority and superiority complex	Superiority and inferiority complex	Inferiority complex / feeling of always being the “smaller,” less important partner (also feelings of betrayal)
	Perception of belonging to the West versus the policy of “Opening up toward the East”	Perception of belonging to the West	Desire to prove the nation’s rightful belonging to the West
Self-image as a cultured and civilized nation	National pride	National pride based in the perception of a strong and resilient ethnic identity	Pride in national resistance
	Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs	Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs	
Homogeneity of the Czech population	Homogeneity of the Hungarian population	Homogeneity of the Polish population	Relative homogeneity of the Slovak population
Widespread secularism	Religious underpinning of Hungarian identity & attachment to traditional family values	Fierce attachment to Christian values	Catholicism, attachment to Christian values
Czech “littleness”	Strong sense of solidarity toward Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries	Polarization of politics and society	Linguistic conception of nationhood Ethnic nationalism

Source: Own table

The two case studies that follow discuss, on the one hand, the Visegrad states' reaction to the migration and refugee crisis and, on the other hand, their position toward further enlargement of the EU, while examining how national identities and the specific identity elements influence the expression of solidarity by the four countries.

PART IV:
THE V4 & THE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS

Chapter 11: Introduction to the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe

The EU has faced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants in the past few years, peaking in 2015 when more than one million asylum seekers reached European borders (Clayton and Holland 2015).²³⁶ This has challenged not only the response capacity of the individual countries, but also the unity and integrity of the EU as a whole. Since the exposure of the Member States to the migratory pressure has been very different, European political leaders struggled to reach a consensus on how to deal with the situation (Mihálik and Jankoľa 2016). While countries at the external frontiers of the EU, especially in Southern and Eastern Europe, had to deal with a big portion of humanitarian and social pressure caused by a massive inflow of refugees, some other EU Member States were not exposed to this kind of pressure at all (Bonansinga 2016).

The asymmetrical impacts of the crisis resulted in a situation where some countries, such as Germany or Sweden, took in the majority of refugees and called for EU-wide burden sharing, while others, mostly transit countries, resorted to individual actions such as reimposing border controls and erecting fences along their frontiers (Lehne 2016; Stevis-Gridneff and Pronczuk 2020b).²³⁷ Moreover, the refugee crisis has fueled xenophobic and anti-immigration sentiments in Europe (Bonansinga 2016). The spread of extremism and nationalism was accompanied by the rise of populist parties across Europe, including the Party for Freedom (PVV) of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, the National Front (FN) of Marine Le Pen in France, the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, and the Five Star Movement in Italy (The Economist 2016). Although the backlash against refugees has been present in politics and societies across all of Europe, the response of the Central European countries has been considered particularly sharp (The Economist 2016; Segeš Frelak 2017b; Šuplata 2016). The Visegrad Group, though hardly affected by the refugee influx, expressed a rather dismissive attitude toward asylum seekers and acted as an opposition bloc against

²³⁶ It should not be forgotten, however, that Europe received hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as during and in the aftermath of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (Pew Research Center 2016; Wihtol de Wenden 2017, 72).

²³⁷ One prominent example was Hungary, which constructed fences along its borders with Serbia and Croatia to prevent refugees from crossing its border (Dearden 2016).

the implementation of an EU-wide response to the refugee crisis, embodied by mandatory relocations of refugees (Bonansinga 2016; Buckley and Foy 2016; Nič 2016, 282).

In early March 2015, the European Commission launched its work on the European Agenda on Migration, which, among other aspects, covered an immediate action plan for measures to be taken in response to the acute situation in the Mediterranean, including the implementation of relocation and resettlement schemes. The common distribution key for both schemes was initially based on “objective, quantifiable and verifiable criteria that reflect the capacity of the Member States to absorb and integrate refugees, with appropriate weighting factors reflecting the relative importance of such criteria” (European Commission 2015a, 19).²³⁸ The European Commission’s proposals prompted the Council of the EU to adopt two decisions concerning the temporary emergency relocation scheme, which the Visegrad countries vehemently opposed (Pachocka 2015, 549; 2016, 117). The first “package,” based on a voluntary distribution scheme and aimed at relocating 40,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other Member States over the period of two years, was adopted through unanimous vote on 14 September 2015 (Szymańska 2017). However, when the Justice and Home Affairs Council voted on its plan to relocate additional 120,000 asylum seekers across the EU on 22 September 2015, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania voted against (European Commission 2015b; Lang 2015).²³⁹ Poland, which was originally also opposed to mandatory refugee quotas, voted in favor of the proposal. This surprising decision undermined the proclaimed unity of the Visegrad Group and evoked harsh criticism from Poland’s Visegrad partners (Bachman 2016; Markovic 2015).²⁴⁰

The firm rejection of the relocation plan, on the one hand, secured the V4 Group more media attention than ever before (Nič 2016, 282). On the other hand, media coverage and responses from European politicians were very negative. They blamed the Central Europeans for being unwilling to share the refugee burden and refusing to take people in (Michelot 2015;

²³⁸ These measurable and weighted criteria were supposed to reflect the capacity of each Member State to take in refugees and included the following factors: the size of the population (40%), total GDP (40%), the average number of asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees per one million inhabitants between 2010-2014 (10%), and the unemployment rate (10%) (European Commission 2015a, 19).

²³⁹ Although the relocation plan would have relieved Hungary from migration pressure, the country voted against the decision, arguing that it would attract many more asylum seekers that Europe would be unable to “absorb” (Knodt and Tews 2016, 11).

²⁴⁰ Observers agree that the affirmative vote of the Polish government probably resulted from the assessment that the costs of an intransigent position would have been too high for a country with a claim to co-shape the European policy and exert more political influence in Europe (Knodt and Tews 2016, 11; Lang 2015, 4).

Scancariello 2017; Zalán 2016b).²⁴¹ Several Western European leaders, such as the former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn, the former German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière, or the former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, argued that the Central European countries should demonstrate more solidarity with the EU since they had received billions of Euros through EU structural funds (Markovic 2015; Meier and Scheffer 2016; Michelot 2015). Some Western European politicians went even further, suggesting that the EU should cut funds for these countries as a reprisal for their lack of participation in solidarity and responsibility-sharing measures in the area of migration and asylum (Zalán 2016b). The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also appealed to the Visegrad leaders to share the common burdens and express solidarity with refugees (UNHCR 2016a).

In contrast to their negative stance on automatic permanent relocation mechanisms, the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group expressed their full support for measures agreed at the EU level aiming at a more effective external border protection (Visegrad Group 2016c). They argued that strict protection of the EU's external borders, together with fighting traffickers and tackling the root causes of the migratory flows, would lead to reducing the number of third country nationals arriving in the EU (Visegrad Group 2016c; Hokovský 2016).²⁴² At an extraordinary summit of the V4 in Prague in February 2016, the Visegrad Group proposed to close off the Greek-Macedonian and Greek-Bulgarian borders should the EU–Turkey Joint Action Plan fall short of expectations to stem the influx of migrants and should Greece fail to deliver on its obligations arising from its Schengen area membership to protect its external border (Blažek 2016; Blusz et al. 2016; Gotev 2016). In other words, the V4 emphasized the necessity of having an alternative back-up plan for the Western Balkans migration route (Visegrad Group 2016c). This “plan B” intended to bolster the effective protection of the Schengen borders by establishing a “second line of defense” at the Macedonian and Bulgarian side of the border, as Viktor Orbán named it (Gotev 2016).

²⁴¹ In January 2016, The Economist published a highly cited article entitled “Big, bad Visegrád” (The Economist 2016).

²⁴² The V4 Prime Ministers presented their approach as the only way to “reduc[e] the influx of illegal migrants into the European Union [and] regain control over the management of mixed migration flows” (Visegrad Group 2016b; Visegrad Group 2016d).

In their efforts to ensure a more effective protection of EU external borders and the Schengen Area, the Visegrad countries were providing experts and technical equipment to Frontex and the EASO and assisting countries of transit and origin, especially those in the Western Balkans (Visegrad Group 2016c; Pachocka 2016, 122-124). For example, the V4 states sent police officers to Macedonia to help protect the Macedonian-Greek border (Die Heinlein 2016; Welt 2016). Moreover, they were calling for the implementation of systematic and coordinated security checks, the development of a system of hotspots with detention capacity, as well as the introduction of speedy asylum procedures and effective return and readmission of migrants not eligible for international protection (Visegrad Group 2016b; Tallis 2016b).²⁴³ Most notably, they continued to stress the importance of the voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures.

At the Bratislava Summit on 16 September 2016, which was held as an informal meeting of the 27 EU heads of state and government discussing the consequences of Brexit and the future of the European project, the V4 issued a joint statement outlining their common position on EU migration policy. Expressing their support for a common European response to the migration and refugee crisis but also highlighting that sharing of responsibilities under CEAS should be voluntary rather than mandatory, the Visegrad states presented the concept of “flexible solidarity” in their statement (Visegrad Group 2016a). This concept, which was later renamed to “effective solidarity,” intended to allow EU Member States to decide on a voluntary basis how they wanted to contribute to common efforts in the migration and refugee crisis (Nič 2016; Zachová et al. 2017). The key to this framework was the attention paid to the particular circumstances in the individual Member States, including their capabilities and available resources (Visegrad Group 2016a). However, the proposal was criticized by countries such as Italy or Malta for being vague and ineffective, since the proposed measures would have most likely failed to relieve the frontier states (Segeš Frelak 2017b, 82; Végh 2016)

When the Visegrad states proved unable to block the adoption of the second relocation mechanism, which was passed in the European Council by a qualified majority on 22 September 2015, they continued to contest the decisions about the distribution of asylum

²⁴³ For example, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, the Visegrad states pledged 35 million euros for EU activities aimed at reinforcing Libya’s border security and preventing irregular migration to Europe (Gotev 2018; Visegrad Group 2017b; Government of the Czech Republic 2017a).

seekers (Knodt and Tews 2017). Slovakia and Hungary decided to file a lawsuit against the provisional mechanism for the mandatory relocation of asylum seekers at the CJEU, claiming that the Council decision would have required unanimity. They further argued that the inflow of third country nationals was not sudden, which is a necessary condition to justify a decision adopted on the basis of Article 78(3) TFEU. Finally, according to their complaints, the decision did not respect the principle of proportionality when allocating the mandatory shares to the Member States (Szymań ka 2017). In September 2017, the Court dismissed the case brought by Slovakia and Hungary in its entirety (CJEU 2017).

The two Council Decisions (2015/1523 and 2015/1601) required Member States to relocate persons in need of international protection from Italy and Greece, but Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic refused to take in their fair share of asylum seekers and made no sound pledges to this effect. This led the European Commission to launch an infringement procedure against them in June 2017. After the replies provided by the three Visegrad states were found unsatisfactory, the Commission eventually referred them to the CJEU, which in April 2020 found the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in breach of their legal obligations on relocation (Stevis-Gridneff and Pronczuk 2020b).

The Visegrad states were united in their opposition to an “open-door” policy toward refugees and found strength in working jointly to defy the EU relocation plans (interviews 1O & 2K). A closer look, however, reveals that the interests and reactions of the Visegrad countries were quite different with regard to the refugee and migrant crisis and that speaking of a single cohesive block would be misguided (interviews 1L, 2C & 2X). Poland’s surprising approval of the EU relocation scheme is just one example. Another example is the legal action taken by Slovakia and Hungary against this decision, with the Czech Republic refusing to join them in order not to “pour even more oil into the fire” (H.-J. Schmidt 2016b). In fact, over time, the positions of the four countries started to drift even more apart. While Poland and Hungary have been involved in a series of disputes with the European Commission over the rule of law and the EU’s founding values, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have seemed to adopt a more pragmatic, conciliatory narrative (Buckley and Foy 2016; Tabosa 2020).

The following chapters will accordingly deal with the Visegrad states individually and then, in the second step, shed light on the similarities and differences in their approaches. Every chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the *solidarity behavior*. It

describes the decisions and practical actions taken by the respective Visegrad country during the refugee and migrant crisis and outlines the attitudes of the government, general public, civil society, as well as other actors. The second section explores the specific *motives of solidarity*. It draws upon the results from the discourse analysis of speeches and statements of high-level political elites to determine what role solidarity played in the country's approach to the crisis. The analysis proceeds along the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* to see how the adopted measures in connection with the migration and refugee crisis were justified in the political discourse. And the third, summarizing section of every chapter examines the nexus between the solidarity profile of every Visegrad state and the national identity elements identified earlier. The identity-solidarity nexus is also illustrated in the form of a summary table at the end of each chapter.

Chapter 12: The Czech Republic & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis

A person who is not worried about the migration wave is a bit like a man who was not worried about the rise of Nazism in Germany.

—Czech President Miloš Zeman (20.11.2015)

12.1 Solidarity Behavior

The Czech Republic lies to the north of the main migration routes in Europe, and the situation in the country was therefore not affected by a significant number of refugees and migrants crossing the borders and applying for asylum (Faltová 2016). Only a fraction of asylum seekers trying to reach Germany via Hungary passed the Czech border (Miles and Lopatka 2015). In 2015, a total of 1,525 people applied for international protection in the Czech Republic, which represented a 31.9% increase compared to 2014 (Czech Statistical Office 2016b). However, a more thorough look at the statistics reveals that, compared to 2001, when 18,094 individuals submitted applications for international protection, this number was still very low. Of the 1,525 applications, asylum was granted to only 71 people, whereof 29 were from Syria and the rest mainly from Eastern Europe (Czech Statistical Office 2016a).²⁴⁴ Moreover, a total of 399 people, thereof 101 from Syria and 174 from Ukraine, received the so-called subsidiary protection, which allows them to remain in the Czech Republic for a temporary period if there are substantial grounds for the presumption that they would be in serious danger in their country of origin (Czech Statistical Office 2016c).

Although the amount of asylum applications remained low in the country, the number of non-citizens crossing Czech territory on their way to Western European countries such as Germany or Sweden increased significantly from 2014 onwards. In response to this, the Czech Republic detained around 3,100 refugees and migrants for illegal border crossing in 2015. In the subsequent year, this number almost doubled (Faltová 2016). The majority of the detainees were Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis (Jelínková 2019, 35). Under the Czech Act on Foreigners, these people were held at detention centers across the country, the main one being the Facility for Detention of Foreigners in Bělá-Jezová, which is a former military

²⁴⁴ In fact, almost half of the asylum applications in 2015 were filed by Ukrainians (Czech Statistical Office 2016b).

facility (Czech Public Defender of Rights 2015d). Czech Interior Minister Milan Chovanec justified the establishment of detention centers as a means to discourage refugees from seeking asylum in the Czech Republic in the first place (Basch and Heřmanová 2017).

In 2015, Czech Public Defender of Rights Anna Šabatová published a very critical report regarding the Bělá-Jezová detention center, stating that the living conditions in the facility were horrible and constituted a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Czech Public Defender of Rights 2015). The Ombudsperson reported that the detention centers were overcrowded and the detainees had only limited access to basic necessities, such as health care, bathrooms and toilets, and legal aid (Faltová 2016). Although the overall conditions reportedly improved over the course of 2015, mainly due to the opening of new detention centers, the restrictive policies against migrants and refugees and the detention conditions in the Czech Republic were further condemned by international bodies and officials, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein (Faltová 2016). He criticized the Czech Republic for committing systematic human rights violations by detaining refugees for up to 90 days in degrading conditions and by strip-searching them for money to pay for their stay in detention (Miles and Lopatka 2015; OHCHR 2015b).

Government Response

Despite original resistance, the Czech government eventually agreed to accept refugees under the adopted relocation and resettlement schemes and set themselves apart from Slovakia and Hungary, who challenged the quota decision at the CJEU (Faltová 2016). Under the EU resettlement scheme, the Czech Republic pledged to accept 1,500 refugees in total and resettle 400 people from camps in the Middle East by July 2017 (Vláda ČR 2015b; ČTK 2015). Similar to Poland and Slovakia, Czechia agreed to accommodate 153 Iraqi Christians who fled from areas controlled by the Islamic State.²⁴⁵ However, after a group of 25 Iraqis attempted to leave the country for neighboring Germany, the project was quickly canceled by the Czech government (Vláda ČR 2016a). In the end, of the 89 Iraqi refugees who had arrived, only 35 stayed and the rest was sent back to Iraq or returned voluntarily (Jelínková 2019, 35).

²⁴⁵ This special program was sponsored by the endowment fund Generation 21 (M. Novotná 2017, 13).

In reaction to the migration and refugee crisis, the Czech government adopted the “Strategy on Migration Policy” in July 2015, which defines seven principles reflecting the priorities of the Czech Republic in the field of migration and international protection.²⁴⁶ The primary objectives of this new migration policy strategy are to eliminate perceived threats posed by migration, secure the safety of the Czech citizens, and ensure peaceful coexistence with foreigners through quality integration (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2015a). Civil society actors have criticized the securitization focus of the migration policy strategy as well as little attention paid to the rights and needs of migrants (Faltová 2016). In November 2015, the Czech Ministry of the Interior also approved the Concept for Assistance to Refugees and States Under Strong Migratory Pressures, which specifies forms of Czech assistance to refugees in countries of origin and transit as well as to third countries hosting large refugee populations (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2015a).

Despite the original acceptance of its migrant relocation obligations stemming from the Council Decisions 2015/1601 and 2015/1523, the Czech government continued to be skeptical regarding obligatory quotas, stating that most of the refugees did not want to stay in the Czech Republic anyway but move further to Germany and other, wealthier countries (Zachová et al. 2017).²⁴⁷ The European Commission noted that the Czech Republic failed to uphold its obligations regarding the implementation of the relocation decision and made no sound pledges to do so in the future. As a consequence, in June 2017, the European Commission referred the Czech Republic, together with Hungary and Poland, to the CJEU for non-compliance with the temporary mechanism for the relocation of applicants for international protection (European Commission 2017f). In April 2020, the CJEU found all three countries in breach of their obligations under the EU law by refusing to accept their fair share of asylum seekers under the relocation scheme (CJEU 2020).²⁴⁸ When the relocation

²⁴⁶ These principles and priorities are the integration of foreigners, irregular immigration and the return policy, international protection (asylum), the external dimension of immigration, free movement inside the Schengen area, legal immigration, and coordination with common European immigration policies (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2015a).

²⁴⁷ Council Decision 2015/1523 on “establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece” envisaged the voluntary relocation of 40,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy and Council Decision 2015/1601 on “establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece” ordered the relocation of 120,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece (EU 2015a; 2015b).

²⁴⁸ The Court also found the Czech Republic at fault for initially pledging to accept 50 asylum seekers under the Council Decision 2015/1523 but then effectively relocating only 12 persons from Greece (European Commission 2017a).

program lapsed in 2017, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš commented the outcome as a victory. In response to the ruling, he said: “It is essential that we will not accept any migrants and that, meanwhile, the quota system was canceled. And that is mainly thanks to us” (Babiš 2017, quoted in Stevis-Gridneff and Pronczuk 2020a).

Although the Czech Republic became mainly a transit country for refugees, the political elites and the media created the impression of the incoming people as a major threat to the country (Jelínková 2019). The major political parties all expressed predominantly conservative attitudes, mostly stressing the importance of the maintenance of national security, opposing compulsory quotas on the relocation and resettlement of refugees, supporting stronger border protection, and seeking solutions outside EU territory, such as through the provision of humanitarian support to countries in conflict (Faltová 2016; Globsec Institute 2016). Migration became a topic employed by all political parties to boost their political standing, which also influenced the election campaign prior to Czech regional elections in October 2016 (interview 1L; Jelínková 2019, 42). Yet, authors such as Magda Faltová found that, apart from the two populist parties Úsvit-NK and Svoboda a přímá demokracie, who are known for their far-right and Islamophobic views, the positions of the other political parties were rather moderate (Faltová 2016).

Up until 2014, migration issues were largely absent from the Czech media (Pospěch and Jurečková 2019, 6). However, the events in the spring and summer of 2015 provoked intense media debate (Jelínková 2019, 38). According to the foremost Czech expert on migration Dušan Drbohlav, migration awareness among the Czech public is below the EU average, which he blames in part on deficient reporting by the domestic media (Drbohlav and Janurová 2019).²⁴⁹ In their analysis of the Czech media coverage of the refugee crisis, Michal Tkaczyk, Pavel Pospěch, and Jakub Macek discovered that the most common topic was refugee quotas, followed by reporting on criminal activities happening in various European cities and depicting refugees as a security threat. In addition, refugees were often portrayed as an administrative burden on the host countries. Almost none of the contributions addressed the causes of the crisis, the underlying motivations of refugees, and the situation in their countries of origin (Tkaczyk et al. 2015). Moreover, the news coverage was found to contain clichéd

²⁴⁹ To put one example, according to Dušan Drbohlav and Kristýna Janurová, Czechs tend to overestimate the number of immigrants living in their country, often as much as three times the actual number (Drbohlav and Janurová 2019).

and dehumanizing portrayals of refugees and immigrants, including metaphors of a “tsunami” or an “invasion.” All in all, numerous analyses have come to the conclusion that the Czech media offered a highly polarized picture of the refugee and migrant crisis, which may have contributed to the overall perception of refugees as a security threat (Drbohlav and Janurová 2019; Lebeda and Menšíková 2017; Tkaczyk et al. 2015).

Societal Response

Societal attitudes toward refugees and migrants indeed deteriorated over the course of 2015, not only but also due to events such as the attacks on the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and the Bataclan concert hall in Paris, cases of sexual assault in Cologne on New Year’s Eve, and terrorist attacks in Brussels (Bonansinga 2015, 824). According to a survey conducted by the Czech Public Opinion Research Center (CVVM) in June 2015, 70% of the Czech population were against the acceptance of refugees from North Africa and Syria (CVVM 2015). Similar results were provided by another poll from October 2015, according to which 70% of Czechs opposed allowing refugees to enter the EU (Median 2015). Between April and October 2015, there was also a significant increase of support (from 32% to 47% of respondents) for the protection of EU external borders and the return of refugees to their countries of origin (Median 2015). The Standard Eurobarometer 84 survey of autumn 2015 found that the Czech Republic was the only EU country where a majority of the population opposed a common European policy on migration. Whole 55% of Czechs were against a common EU migration policy, with 24% being the EU-28 average (European Commission 2015e).

Negative sentiments toward immigrants were fueled by the surge of Islamophobic and extreme right groups and movements in the Czech Republic, mostly active on social media where they spread anti-refugee and anti-Islam messages (Faltová 2016). One transformed into a registered association called “Blok proti Islámu” (Block against Islam) led by Martin Konvička. This group allied with individual politicians as well as with political parties such as *Úsvit* on the national level and the German *Pegida* movement on the European level (Globsec Institute 2016). Konvička, who, among other things, denounced Islam as a military ideology and posted on Facebook that he would “grind Muslims into meat and bone meal,” was later charged with hate speech (ParlamentniListy.cz 2015).

Other Actors: Grassroots Organizations, Academia, and the Business Sector

Not the whole society shared the views of these right-wing extremist groups. Several NGOs and other civil society actors played an important role in fighting against the spread of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and racism in the Czech Republic (Faltová 2016). For example, a group of Czech volunteers helped refugees on the Balkan route, responding to their humanitarian needs and supplying them with clothes and basic hygienic necessities. Later, this small-scale initiative called the “Czech Team” developed into a larger group of committed volunteers and was formalized into the association “Pomáháme lidem na útěku” (Basch and Heřmanová 2017; Pomáháme lidem na útěku 2017). Another notable volunteer group was the initiative “Hlavák,” which operated at the Prague main train station, helping individuals who had been released from Czech detention centers and wished to apply for asylum in the Czech Republic or transit to another European country (Filipec 2018).

Several initiatives of scientists, universities, and students also took action by trying to reorientate the public discourse from moral panic to a discussion based on facts (Faltová 2016). The most prominent of those initiatives was “Academics against fear and indifference,” which started as a petition against the increasingly xenophobic atmosphere in the Czech society (Vědci proti strachu a lhostejnosti 2015).

Moreover, due to a very low unemployment rate and the related need for foreign workforce, the two largest business associations in the Czech Republic, the Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Industry and Trade, accentuated the positive effects that refugees can have on local economy (Basch and Heřmanová 2017; Globsec Institute 2016).

12.2 Motives of Solidarity

Despite almost no presence of asylum seekers in the Czech Republic even at the height of the migration and refugee crisis, the Czech government has invested significant effort in opposing the idea of compulsory relocation quotas and deterring refugees and migrants from entering the country (Jelínková 2019). Moreover, the public discussions reflected strong negative emotions toward people of different ethnicity and religion, especially Muslims (Globsec Institute 2016). At the same time, the Czech government strived to present the country as a constructive EU member willing to participate in common solutions. The

following section will dissect, along the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*, how Czech decision makers justified their response to the refugee and migrant crisis and the EU's refugee relocation plans.

Proximity

“Behind the Iron Curtain, we have not been used to living with foreigners for forty years, which is why our people find it very difficult to get used to it today” (Zaorálek, 15.09.2015*).²⁵⁰ With these words, Czech Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek attempted to argue against the introduction of refugee quotas. He wanted to highlight that countries in the West such as Germany and post-communist countries such as the Czech Republic had a fundamentally different experience of accepting and cohabiting with foreign nationals. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out in this context that the distress caused by the migrant and refugee crisis of 2015 was nothing compared to the period between 1999 and 2003, when the Czech Republic experienced significantly higher inflows of asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia and other post-communist countries, especially Ukraine (Stojanov et al. 2017, 174). In 2001, the Czech Republic registered 18,094 asylum applications (EMN Contact point in ČR 2017). In contrast, the numbers of asylum seekers in 2015 represented only a fraction of this amount (Czech Statistical Office 2016b). This had led many observers to wonder why the Czech government adopted such a restrictive policy against third-country nationals in 2015 and why the societal attitudes toward migrants and refugees were so negative. The discourse analysis has laid bare that multiple justifications can be traced back to the solidarity principle of *proximity*.

Sovereignty versus the “Brussels Dictate”

Similar to other post-communist societies, Czechs are very sensitive when it comes to their sovereignty. They often highlight the strength of the Czech(oslovak) nation to survive 300 years under Habsburg rule, six years of Nazi occupation, and over 40 years under communism (Riishøj 2007, 522). Very much like their Visegrad partners, Czech officials depicted the introduction of mandatory and permanent quotas as a threat to national sovereignty (Sobotka, 15.09.2015 & Zeman, 26.11.2015). Several Czech politicians claimed

²⁵⁰ All translations made by the author of this study are marked with an asterisk (*).

the “Brussels dictatorship,” drawing a parallel to the former “Moscow dictatorship” (Jelínková 2019). In this sense, the Czech government advocated for maintaining a voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures, where each Member State could decide on the extent of its solidarity depending on its experience and available resources (Sobotka, 15.09.2015). Accordingly, the Czech Republic was a vocal supporter of the Slovak concept of “effective solidarity” (Zachová et al. 2017). Being outvoted through a qualified majority voting procedure at the meeting of EU Interior Ministers in September 2015 therefore constituted a huge disappointment for the Czech position. Then Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka commented on the decision, saying that “power solutions and the principle of outvoting in such sensitive matters are very imprudent” (Sobotka, 01.10.2015*).

Commitment to the European Project, Albeit with Criticism

While individual Czech politicians from across the political spectrum frequently criticized the EU’s quota proposals and its “open-door” policy, the Czech government repeatedly stressed its respect for the obligations toward the EU and the international community and voiced its support for a common European solution (M. Novotná 2017, 12-14). Both Prime Minister Sobotka and Foreign Minister Zaorálek shared the view that migration could not be managed by isolated national actions but required cooperation of all European states (Zaorálek, 21.09.2015 & Sobotka, 21.01.2016). In September 2015, updating the Chamber of Deputies on the migration situation, Sobotka informed the parliamentarians about his government’s pro-European position:

From the outset, we have held the opinion that the current migration situation and the arrival of refugees in European countries require a European solution. ... We are interested in a common European solution to the problem. National measures that are not coordinated will only lead to the disintegration of the common migration policy, the restriction of the free movement of persons and Schengen cooperation, and ultimately perhaps to the disintegration of the entire Schengen system (Sobotka, 15.09.2015*).

The subsequent government, in power since December 2017, reaffirmed the Czech Republic’s commitment to the European project and preference for joint solutions: “Indeed, individual Member States are not in a position to tackle the problem effectively. We want to work together within the EU” (Petříček, 10.12.2018*).

Although the Czech government from the beginning systematically opposed the introduction of mandatory quotas, it initially committed to the voluntary resettlement of 400 persons from camps in the Middle East and the admission of 1,100 persons from Italy and Greece (Vláda ČR 2015c). Moreover, the government approved a number of measures to relieve the most burdened countries, both in terms of personnel and material.²⁵¹ To further underline his government's solidarity and support for EU action, Prime Minister Sobotka advocated for further intensifying the Schengen cooperation. He described Schengen as a fundamental pillar of European integration and called for the effective use of Frontex with the aim of strengthening the common protection of EU's external borders (Sobotka, 21.01.2016). Importantly, unlike his Hungarian and Polish colleagues, he was not opposed to transferring further competencies to the EU to meet this aim (M. Novotná 2017, 14).

Ethnic Homogeneity

A factor that is said to have substantially influenced the receptivity of the Czech population toward the incoming people is the country's ethnic homogeneity. Throughout most of the twentieth century, the Czech Republic was a land of emigration rather than a transit or immigrant-receiving country. It was only after the fall of the Iron Curtain and especially after the EU accession that the Czech Republic experienced also increased immigration, especially from post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (Drbohlav and Janurová 2019; Prát 2016). Currently, foreign nationals form about 4% of the Czech population, which is a considerable increase compared to only 1% in 1993 (Czech Statistical Office 2020). Nevertheless, this rate is still among the lowest in the EU (Drbohlav and Janurová 2019). More importantly, except for a well-integrated Vietnamese community, the population is practically exclusively white (Czech Statistical Office 2019). The two largest ethnic groups are Ukrainians and Slovaks, and Slovaks are often not even considered as foreigners (Basch and Heřmanová 2017; Jurečková 2016; Prát 2016). Strikingly enough, only 40% of Czechs state that they personally know a foreigner living in the Czech Republic and, if Slovaks and Roma are removed from the equation, this number further drops to 30% (Globsec Institute 2016; Lebeda and Menšíková 2017, 10).

²⁵¹ The Czech government decided to send members of the Czech Police to Hungary, Slovenia, and Macedonia (Vláda ČR 2015d; 2016b).

Numerous surveys have shown that the refugees' country of origin affects the way they are perceived by Czechs. In June 2015, over 79% of the Czech population were against accepting refugees and immigrants from Syria and North Africa, while 53% were in favor of receiving at least some people fleeing Ukraine (CVVM 2015). Data from the Czech Ministry of the Interior reveal that this was not a one-time occurrence but that the attitudes of Czech citizens toward refugees from North Africa and the Middle East have been negative in the long term (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2020).

This goes hand in hand with the fact that the most significant “othering” was directed against Islam and Muslims. Although—or maybe precisely because—the Muslim population in the Czech Republic is very small, accounting for less than 0.1%, Islamophobia seems to have been one of the main drivers of the anti-immigration politics held by the government (Basch and Heřmanová 2017; Jelínková 2019).²⁵² The most outspoken critic was President Miloš Zeman, who repeatedly labeled Islam as a totalitarian ideology and equated refugees to terrorists (Bonansinga 2015, 832; *The Economist* 2016). In fact, his anti-Islamic views and rhetoric were known long before the migration and refugee crisis. Already in 2011, he told the weekly magazine *Reflex* that “calling someone a moderate Muslim is like calling someone a moderate Nazi” (Buchert and Hamšík 2011). During a press conference in August 2015, he compared the migration wave to a “tsunami” against which Europe and the Czech Republic should protect themselves (Cameron 2015; *Pražský Hrad* 2015). When he paid an official visit to the Zlín Region two months later, Zeman elaborated why he argued so strongly against accepting Muslim refugees:

“They will not observe and respect our laws and customs. They will have Sharia law, meaning that unfaithful women will be stoned and thieves will have their hands cut off. We will lose the beauty of women because they will be shrouded in burqas from head to toe” (Zeman 2015, quoted in *Novinky.cz* 2015b*).

Later that year, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution on 17 November 2015, Zeman appeared on the same podium as the leader of the Islamophobic movement “Blok proti Islámu” Martin Konvička (Globsec Institute 2016). According to several observers, there is a good reason to assume that his negative attitude toward refugees and

²⁵² Ondřej Slačálek and Eva Svobodová put forward that Czech Islamophobia is different from that in Poland or Hungary. Czechs belong to the least religious of nations and they tend to emphasize the importance of defending liberal rather than conservative, Christian values (Slačálek and Svobodová 2018, 480-481).

Muslims and his stereotyping rhetoric have supported the rise of xenophobic views and Islamophobia in the Czech Republic (see, e.g., Bonansinga 2015; Faltová 2016, 832).

Cultural Incompatibility

The religious background of the incoming people and their supposed incompatibility with the Czech population were used as arguments against accepting refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. Again, the staunchest critic of the concept of multiculturalism was President Zeman. He cited examples of alleged inadaptability of Islamic communities in Britain, France, Germany, and other places in Western Europe and warned against the Czech Republic becoming one of these places (Zeman, 17.10.2015).²⁵³ In the same line of thought, Zeman said that he would not oppose the reception of refugees and migrants from Ukraine because “they are culturally close to us and because they know how to work” (Zeman, 25.09.2015*). When confronted with the example of successful integration of the large Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic, he responded that Islamic immigrants came from a “dramatically different” culture whose ability to assimilate was questionable (Zeman, 24.08.2016).²⁵⁴ The interviewed experts remarked that such arguments against receiving Muslim refugees were quite hypocritical, considering that, in the wake of the Balkan wars in the 1990s, the Czech Republic managed a much larger migration flow and there were also Muslims among the refugees. And although back then the numbers were considerably higher, the matter did not attract much attention in the political debate (interviews 1K & 1L).

Foreign Minister Zaorálek also stressed the importance of accepting only those refugees that the country would be able to integrate without creating any religious, cultural, and other cleavages (Zaorálek, 29.06.2015). However, contrary to the President, he foresaw no danger to the Czech citizens in the sense of losing their way of life (Zaorálek, 21.09.2015).

²⁵³ Among other things, Zeman called German Chancellor Angela Merkel “the mother of all Syrians” (Zeman, 08.10.2015).

²⁵⁴ On a different occasion, Zeman attempted to clarify his position by saying that the culture of the foreigners currently living in the Czech Republic was not “a culture of murderers and of religious hatred” but was fully compatible with European values (Zeman, 17.11.2015*). Zeman also cited examples of Czechoslovak citizens emigrating after 1948 and 1968 to Germany, Austria, and other countries, stressing that this was an intracontinental migration of people with a very similar culture (Zeman, 24.08.2016).

Need

The “Background Material on Migration” prepared by the Czech Ministry of the Interior for the Members of Parliament in January 2016 emphasized that the Czech Republic’s approach to migration had always been characterized by the principles of solidarity and responsibility (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2016). While the commitment to solidarity is illustrated on examples of the provision of financial and material assistance to third countries most affected by the refugee crisis, in the document, there is silence about solidarity with the refugees themselves or the commitment to burden sharing (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2016). This government document reflects the Czech perception of *need*, which is primarily attributed to countries of refugees’ origin and third countries facing increased migration pressures. With regard to asylum seekers, the debate focused more on the security aspects and less on the plight of the incoming people. It was recognized that people fleeing war or persecution should be helped, but ideally in their countries of origin or not far from their families and homes.

Helping Outside Europe

The government of Prime Minister Sobotka made repeatedly clear that it was aware of the human tragedy and suffering of refugees who were in search for a better life outside their home countries (Sobotka, 13.05.2015). The government officials also stressed that they in no way wanted to relinquish their responsibility but instead direct their help toward fighting the causes of migration in the first place (Sobotka, 15.09.2015). All Czech governments since 2015 as well as President Zeman have adopted a unified position that refugees should first and foremost be helped in their countries of origin or in neighboring territories (Zeman, 19.06.2015 & Babiš, 11.06.2018). The most common explanation was the necessity to prevent a “brain drain” from African and other countries. Lubomír Zaorálek even mentioned the Czechoslovak experience of people emigrating during the Second World War as well as after 1948 and again after 1968 and the great loss this represented for the country (Zaorálek, 21.09.2015). Miloš Zeman also underlined that migration had a negative effect on countries of origin because it condemned them to future backwardness (Zeman, 29.08.2018). The Czech intention was therefore to reverse the trend of young skilled people leaving their home countries by helping to stabilize and improve the local situation for example through humanitarian aid and development cooperation (Zaorálek, 31.08.2015 & Hamáček,

27.08.2018). The government of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš followed the line set by Sobotka's government and reiterated that finding solutions outside Europe was better for both EU citizens and the migrants themselves, who often risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe (Babiš, 11.06.2018).

Solidarity with States under Migratory Pressure

In addition to signaling its willingness to address the *need* of fleeing people in their countries of origin, the Czech government expressed its solidarity and support for frontline states. After the first emergency summit of European leaders in Brussels, Bohuslav Sobotka issued a written statement that was meant to indicate the Czech readiness to help:

“We are well aware that we must help those countries that are most affected by the current wave of migration. At the April European Council, the Czech Republic therefore offered approximately 10 million crowns for the activities of the Frontex agency, as well as one of its “CASA” aircrafts with a crew and the immediate deployment of 60 Czech experts in the field of migration and asylum. At the same time, the government is ready to provide the necessary technical equipment such as patrol cars, thermal imaging cameras, and cynological services” (Sobotka, 13.05.2015*).

The Czech Republic repeatedly highlighted the necessity of cooperation with the countries located along the Balkan route in order to manage migratory flows (Sobotka, 01.10.2015 & 21.01.2016). In this context, Prime Minister Sobotka proudly announced Czech solidarity contribution by sending police officers and military equipment, including military forces, to Hungary, helping regulate migration in Slovenia and Macedonia, and supporting Greece in managing the migration pressure (Sobotka, 21.01.2016 & 22.03.2016).

Deservingness

Although the Czech government expressed its readiness to help fellow Member States in need, the alleged non-observance of Schengen rules by some of them was cited as a reason not to participate in EU-wide burden sharing. A much more contentious debate revolved around the question of whether refugees deserved European protection or not. The discourse analysis identified four types of arguments that questioned the incoming people's eligibility for international protection. First, the Czech government and the President formed a discursive link between migration and security and portrayed migrants as a social risk.

Second, the debate largely omitted the complex causes of migration and instead focused on stereotypical representation of refugees and potential challenges of integration (see also Jelínková 2019). Third, the government insisted on distinguishing between asylum seekers and economic migrants, the latter purportedly not deserving the same treatment as “genuine refugees.” Last but not least, Czech decision makers used the argument that asylum seekers were not interested in staying in the Czech Republic but wanted to move further to wealthy European countries to frame them as undeserving beneficiaries of Czech support (interview 1L; Jelínková 2019).

Non-compliance by EU Member States

Czech government officials repeatedly stressed the need for a uniform approach of all Member States and especially for absolute compliance with the Schengen rules (M. Novotná 2017, 14). They suspected that the shortcomings of the European asylum policy were a consequence of some countries not honoring their commitments (Zaorálek, 21.07.2015). They made comments that the Greeks and, to some extent, the Italians, were not following the European standards on border protection, registration of asylum claims, and return of unsuccessful applicants (Zaorálek, 31.08.2015 & Sobotka, 15.09.2015).²⁵⁵ In this context, the Czech government complained that the EU was turning a blind eye to the failures of countries at the Schengen border to manage the registration of refugees, while simultaneously scolding countries reluctant to accept quotas. Foreign Minister Zaorálek expressed this prevalent feeling of injustice on the part of Brussels toward the “new” Member States in an interview with the Czech daily *Hospodářské noviny*, demanding: “I want to see a willingness to talk to us, a willingness to compromise, and a willingness to respect Eastern European countries” (Zaorálek, 15.09.2015*).

Non-compliance by Asylum Seekers

The Czech government further criticized the automatic relocation system for randomly distributing refugees without asking them where they desired to go. Officials claimed that the incoming people were not interested in staying in the Czech Republic but would instead

²⁵⁵ Andrej Babiš, then still Minister of Finance, expressed his belief in 2016 that Greece should no longer be part of the Schengen system if it was unable to manage the protection of the external borders. He suggested that the surveillance of European borders should instead be centrally managed by the EU (Ihned.cz 2016).

move to Germany, Sweden, and other, wealthier countries (Sobotka, 15.09.2015 & Zaorálek, 21.09.2015). After the group of Christian refugees from Iraq, who had been voluntarily resettled by the Czech government, left the country for Germany, Interior Minister Milan Chovanec said that the 25 Iraqis had abused Czech generosity:

“This time cannot be used to break laws or to move to another Schengen country. I asked the Czech police to use all legal means so that these people, who abused the good will of the Czech Republic and her citizens, are returned to Iraq” (Chovanec 2016, quoted in Muller 2016).

This incident was often used as a pretext to portray refugees as ungrateful, not deserving Czech solidarity and assistance (interview 1L; Jelínková 2019). Moreover, the allegedly malfunctioning redistribution of asylum seekers and their unwillingness to stay in the Czech Republic were later used as an excuse to announce in June 2017 that the country would no longer accept a single refugee under the quotas (ČTK, iDNES.cz 2017).

Economic Migrants versus Refugees

While the Czech government repeatedly expressed its willingness to help refugees fleeing their homes due to conflict and for fear of their lives, they appeared much less welcoming toward economic migrants (e.g., Sobotka, 13.05.2015; interview 1K).²⁵⁶ In one of his speeches delivered in the Chamber of Deputies, Prime Minister Sobotka stated that the priority of the Czech government was to

“minimize illegal migration while clearly distinguishing persons who meet the conditions for international protection. People who qualify for political asylum need to be separated from economic migrants. Political refugees are eligible to our help. In the case of economic migrants, it is always necessary to respect the situation in the individual countries. There are no guaranteed rights when it comes to economic migration” (Sobotka 2015*, quoted in Stulík 2019, 10).

Both Prime Minister Sobotka and Foreign Minister Zaorálek repeated that, at the Schengen external borders, a distinction needed to be made between political asylum seekers or, as they named them, “legitimate refugees,” and economic migrants, i.e. those fleeing for economic reasons (Zaorálek, 29.06.2015 & Sobotka, 15.09.2015). They maintained that these two groups deserved a different type of treatment and, in this context, highlighted Czech

²⁵⁶ For example, the Czech Republic pledged to provide medical care to a group of sick Syrian children from Jordan and offer scholarships to 20 Syrian refugees to study at Czech universities (Sobotka, 13.05.2015).

solidarity contribution during the Balkan Wars when the country took care of a large number of “legitimate refugees” (Zaorálek, 29.06.2015 & Sobotka, 15.09.2015). Moreover, Zaorálek claimed that the asylum procedure was being largely abused by “bogus” asylum seekers, which he considered unacceptable (Zaorálek, 22.06.2015). President Zeman went even one step further, claiming that almost all refugees were actually economic migrants and asking the Czechs whether they wanted to “move half of Africa and Asia here, all those people whose standard of living is lower than ours” (Zeman, 08.10.2015*).

President Zeman was also the only Czech high-level politician who suggested that asylum seekers should fight against the Islamic State in their home countries instead of seeking refuge in Europe:

“I know that the vast majority of these illegal migrants are young, well-fed men. And I wonder why these men are not fighting for freedom of their country against the Islamic State. And if they come from countries where there is no fighting, I ask why they do not work for their homeland and for its improvement, so that their country can overcome the current backwardness” (Zeman, 17.11.2015*).

In 2015, in his traditional Christmas message to the nation, Zeman said that compassion and solidarity could be expressed toward the elderly, the sick, and especially the children, but not toward “illegal migrants who are young healthy men without families” (Zeman, 26.12.2015). Moreover, questioning the real motives of people fleeing to Europe, he ironically commented that Czechoslovak citizens who emigrated during World War II did so to fight in a foreign army and not to receive social benefits in the United Kingdom (Zeman, 20.11.2015 & 26.12.2015).

The Czech government later used the distinction between refugees and migrants—“a refugee is forced to leave his country due to armed conflict or persecution, while a migrant chooses to leave his country for economic reasons” (Petříček, 20.12.2018*)—to justify why the Czech Republic would vote against the Global Compact on Migration but join the Global Compact on Refugees.²⁵⁷ In this context, some authors made a notable observation that the Czech Republic’s reluctance to accept refugees who might as well be economic migrants contradicts its own historical experience (e.g., Jelínková 2019, 35). During the communist era, more than

²⁵⁷ After rejecting the UN’s Global Compact on Migration, Prime Minister Babiš tweeted: “(We did) as we promised. We are keeping to our strategy against illegal migration. And we won’t accept a single migrant” (Babiš 2018, quoted in Drbohlav and Janurová 2019).

half a million Czechs and Slovaks left the country and sought asylum and/or better living standards in Western Europe as well as in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Although they were mostly considered refugees in the host countries, many of them were actually highly skilled workers motivated by better economic prospects (Drbohlav and Janurová 2019).

Securitization of Migration

There is a wide consensus across the expert community that, in the Czech political discourse, migration was framed predominantly as a security problem. From the outset, a securitization discourse was adopted by almost all policy makers in the Czech Republic. In his analysis of speeches related to the migration and refugee crisis held by members of the Czech Chamber of Deputies, Ondřej Stulík found that, within the securitization framing of migration, three main thematic areas prevailed: the overall perception of migration as a crisis, the illegality of migration, and the allegedly negative effects of migration on the Czech economy (Stulík 2019). Czech decision makers often framed the Czech Republic as a (still) safe country needing protection against threats posed by “the dangerous mass of refugees” (Sobotka, 21.01.2016 & Babiš, 16.05.2019).

The main protagonist stirring up panic with his statements was President Zeman. He regularly expressed his deep conviction that Europe was facing an organized invasion rather than a spontaneous movement of refugees and that it was naïve to think that the Islamic State would not smuggle some jihadists among migrants (Zeman, 08.10.2015, 20.11.2015 & 26.12.2015). In an interview with the tabloid Blesk, Zeman asserted that

“a person who is not worried about the migration wave is a bit like a man who was not worried about the rise of Nazism in Germany. Simply because he does not appreciate the dangerous consequences of the migration wave” (Zeman, 20.11.2015*).

Zeman commented on the events in Berlin, Paris, and other European cities by hinting at a connection between migration and Islamic terrorist attacks (Zeman, 26.12.2016). One of his most famous quotes during the migration and refugee crisis was: “Not all Muslims are terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslims” (Zeman 2016, quoted in Jurečková 2016). He also warned that the “wave of migration” would not stop anytime soon but, on the contrary, rather

intensify due to continuing destabilization of some, especially African, states as well as by virtue of “chain” migration of relatives and acquaintances (Zeman, 31.08.2015).

Prime Minister Sobotka refused to draw a link between refugees and international terrorism, for which he received sharp criticism from the President. Zeman insinuated that Sobotka directly threatened the security of the Czech Republic “with his hesitation, his indecisiveness, and a number of other seemingly conciliatory and humanistic gestures, which ... do not appreciate the real danger” (Zeman, 26.11.2015*). However, Sobotka also commented on the security dimension of the migration and refugee crisis, saying that people fleeing war or persecution must be helped, but not at the expense of the country’s own peril (Sobotka, 21.01.2016). In this respect, the increased migration to Europe was portrayed by the Czech government not only as a security but also a civilizational challenge (Hamáček, 27.08.2018). Refugees were depicted as an administrative burden, a menace to the Czech labor market, and a threat to the Czech way of life (Basch and Heřmanová 2017; Jelínková 2019).

Finally, Czech government officials stressed the necessity to cut the connection between migration and organized crime and take strong action against smuggling networks (Sobotka, 08.07.2015 & Zaorálek, 21.07.2015).²⁵⁸ To this end, the Czech government demanded countries of origin to be included in the joint actions, mainly through acting against organized criminal networks and participating in voluntary return of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants (Zaorálek, 29.06.2015 & 21.07.2015). In other words, the Czech Republic expected self-effort on the part of countries of origin.

Self-Preservation

In the Czech Republic, the migrant and refugee crisis was often presented as a political and administrative burden (Jelínková 2019, 39). The government officials argued that the country had no sufficient capacity that would allow for accommodating higher numbers of incoming people, which is why they were compelled to give priority to “genuine” asylum seekers (Zaorálek, 29.06.2015 & 31.08.2015). They denounced the quota system as malfunctioning and kept reiterating that they were ready to help within their possibilities and capacities, so that the situation would not get out of control (Zaorálek, 29.06.2015, Stropnický, 12.02.2018

²⁵⁸ An often-cited example was the Czech involvement in the training of the Libyan Coast Guard to stop illegal migration in the Mediterranean (Sobotka, 03.02.2017).

& Babiš, 27.08.2018). Nevertheless, except for calling for stronger protection of the external borders, proposing the externalization of asylum procedures to third countries such as Turkey, and providing assistance to refugees in countries of origin and transit, no concrete action plans or a clear vision on how to tackle the situation within Europe were present in the Czech political debates (Globsec Institute 2016).

Still, in contrast to other Visegrad states such as Hungary, Czech decision makers were keen to present the country as a solidary member and build a bridge between the EU (especially Germany) and the V4 (interview 1H). They kept reiterating that the migration situation required a European solution and that they were ready to assume responsibility and implement the necessary solidarity measures (Sobotka, 15.09.2015 & 27.08.2018).²⁵⁹ In 2016, Foreign Minister Zaorálek published an article in the Social Europe magazine titled “A Visegrad Plan for Rebuilding European Cohesion,” in which he tried to restore Visegrad’s damaged image:

“Today, Visegrad’s common stance on migration is being criticized for undercutting European solidarity, with some going so far as to construe our cooperation as an alternative or counterweight to an EU core. The proposition is as misguided as it is dangerous. We must work to put these misconceptions to rest. ... Visegrad must play a positive role in rebuilding European cohesion and self-confidence. We should mobilize our main asset – mutual trust among the four countries – to help address common European challenges, through enhanced cooperation and dialogue with our strategic partners, above all Germany” (Zaorálek, 16.03.2016*).

12.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

In the Czech reaction to the migration and refugee crisis, the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* were closely interlocked. This summary section will first discuss the manifestation of Czech solidarity toward refugees and migrants and then toward fellow EU Member States and other third countries.

The discourse analysis has revealed that solidarity appeared primarily in connection with Czech citizens, not refugees. Still as Minister of Finance, Andrej Babiš said in November

²⁵⁹ Although the Czech Republic from the very beginning vehemently opposed the idea of compulsory quotas, it voluntarily committed itself to a one-time acceptance of almost the same number of refugees as originally proposed by the Commission (Sobotka, 08.07.2015). Even after they had been outvoted in the Council, the Czech government decided to respect the obligation regarding the redistribution of refugees and, in comparison to Slovakia and Hungary, did not challenge the quota decision at the CJEU (Sobotka, 01.10.2015).

2015 that it was necessary to “persuade European politicians to stop being politically correct, to think mainly about the security of their own people and not about humanitarian aid, which is important but can be misused” (Babiš 2015, quoted in Novinky.cz 2015a*). When solidarity was expressed toward third-country nationals, it was usually selective, distinguishing between forced and economic migration. Referring to the country’s limited capacities, the Czech government expressed its ability to be solidary only with those who were in dire *need* and thus *deserved* help, i.e. political asylum seekers (see, e.g., Zaorálek, 31.08.2015).

A common argument given for not being able to accept refugees was their alleged cultural incompatibility and supposedly problematic integration into the Czech society. The Czech Republic is still a relatively “new” destination country for immigration. More importantly, the largest numbers of migrants and asylum seekers come from the countries of the former Soviet Bloc, especially Ukraine, which are considered culturally akin (Drbohlav and Janurová 2019). The absence of a significant Muslim population in the Czech Republic might help explain why the largely secular Czech population reacted so dismissively toward Muslim refugees.²⁶⁰ According to Czech sociologist Yana Leontiyeva, the little willingness on the part of Czechs to accept people of a different race and from other religious circles is a result of “fear of the unknown,” which again fits in the premises of the contact theory.²⁶¹ The influx of Muslim refugees was depicted by Czech political elites and the media as a potential threat to the European culture as well as the Czech way of life (interview 1K).

Despite no substantial increase of irregular migration through the Czech territory, the Czech public debate was focused on framing migration primarily as a threat to national security and public safety (Faltová 2016; Kratochvíl 2015). President Zeman warned that terrorists might be coming with the migration wave disguised as refugees. The absence of Islamic terrorist attacks in the Czech Republic, as compared to Western Europe, was often cited to be a consequence of the low number of Muslim refugees and migrants residing in the country (Jelínková 2019, 40). According to Vladimír Handl, the securitization framing of the

²⁶⁰ According to Klára Plecítá from the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, although Czechs are not traditionally religious, they still have quite a conservative view of the world (interview 1M).

²⁶¹ According to the intergroup contact theory, people who know a foreigner have more positive attitudes toward immigration because they can imagine the interaction with that particular person. For example, the Czechs’ acceptance of the Vietnamese minority, which is already well-known to the Czech society and is considered as hardworking, has contrasted with the prevalent anti-immigrant sentiments (interview 1K).

migration and refugee crisis evoked the historical feeling of being threatened from outside and overrode the Czechs' compassion for others (interview 1E). A further connection was drawn between asylum seekers, their supposedly challenging integration, and increased crime rates. In addition, it was questioned why refugees had left their countries of origin in the first place. The widespread narrative was that the majority of them did not leave because of persecution or war, but rather with a view of living a better life in Europe, leading to the proclaimed necessity to distinguish refugees from economic migrants and grant asylum only to those people with a legitimate claim for protection.

This alleged lack of “genuine *need*” was related to the narrative of asylum seekers being “ungrateful” individuals whose motivation was only economic calculus, as evidenced by the fact that they often left towards Western Europe with more generous social systems. Examples of the so-called “asylum shopping,” i.e. resisting fingerprinting and registration and seeking to apply for asylum in a different state, and related secondary movements were used to depict refugees as *undeserving* individuals. Overall, the “deviant” construction of asylum seekers and the absence of sufficient coverage of the complex causes of the population movements may have diminished the perceived vulnerability of the fleeing people and their *deservingness* of help (Drbohlav and Janurová 2019; Jurečková 2016).

Concerning intergovernmental solidarity, the Czech government was trying to balance the Czech Republic's role as a responsible EU member and the omnipresent concerns about delegating sovereignty to the EU institutions. On the one hand, the Czech government agreed that the refugee crisis affected whole Europe and that the principle of solidarity was unquestionable. Addressing the Chamber of Deputies in January 2016, Prime Minister Sobotka made this very clear:

“We cannot pretend that we are not affected by the migration crisis. It concerns everyone because it is caused by wars, suffering, inhuman conditions, and it itself causes huge social and political tensions” (Sobotka, 21.01.2016*).

Accordingly, the Czech government signaled its readiness to be actively involved in EU solidarity activities and continuously demanded a common European solution (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2016). On the other hand, it proclaimed that each Member State should have the right to decide autonomously on how to express solidarity. Foreign Minister Zaorálek sought to address this seeming discrepancy with the following statement:

“Being pro-European does not mean accepting any idea from the European Commission. We did not reject the proposal for mandatory quotas relocating migrants under a “distribution key” because we were opposed to a European solution. We have rejected quotas, among other things, because a system that forces migrants to countries that they do not want to go and that cannot offer them the same standard of living as the richest EU countries simply cannot work. We are in favor of a common European approach if the voluntary system is respected and if we have the opportunity to decide how to show solidarity” (Zaorálek, 01.11.2016).

Before the medialization and securitization of the migration issue, the first reactions by Czech government officials can be summarized as “yes to solidarity, no to automatism.” The Czech Republic was willing to accept refugees from conflict regions, but only on a voluntary basis (interview 1K). Refusing to implement the quota decision and at the same time pledging to voluntarily accept almost the same amount of people suggests that it was less the participation in burden sharing as such, but rather the acceptance of a commitment “from above” that bothered the Czech political elites.²⁶² The interviewed experts are in agreement that the historical burden of foreign (great) powers purportedly trying to betray or abandon the Czech nation is still a more or less subconscious part of Czech identity, resulting in a careful and suspicious approach when the EU requests something from the Czech nation or when certain countries seem to dominate the discussion (interviews 1G & 1O).²⁶³ In this sense, the qualified majority voting on the quotas in the Council was also portrayed as another form of betrayal, creating an administrative burden and a security threat for the Czech Republic (interview 1E; see also Jelínková 2019).

Eventually, the Czech Republic expressed its solidarity mainly by helping countries most burdened by the refugee crisis, providing them with financial, material, and personnel support (Vláda ČR 2015b; 2015e, 2015f). The declared intention was to address the causes of migration, not the consequences, and so generate as few refugees and migrants as possible. Accordingly, in the Czech understanding, solidarity should lie in supporting countries of origin and strengthening the EU’s external border, not in redistributing refugees within the

²⁶² Truth be told, however, the Czech Republic later failed to uphold even these voluntary commitments to relocate persons in need of international protection.

²⁶³ The following quote by Minister of the Interior Jan Hamáček illustrates how the memory of the “Munich betrayal” and the “dictate of the great powers” of 1938 still resonates with the political context of today: “Munich is today a warning symbol of the failure of the political elites of democratic countries. It was not just the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia. ... The Munich dictate was another symptom of the erosion of trust in collective security and the growing efforts of individual states to defend their national interests regardless of others” (Hamáček, 01.10.2018).

EU. To this end, the Czech government was not opposed to delegating part of its sovereignty to the EU to protect Schengen's external borders and further strengthen the Frontex mandate. In addition to advocating for seeking solutions outside Europe, the *need* of fellow EU Member States and other frontline states, such as in the Balkans, that were facing significant migratory pressures was acknowledged. At the same time, Czech government officials blamed Greece for failing to comply with their obligations arising from the Schengen membership, thus questioning their *deservingness* of help.

The Czech government argued that, while the European debate on migration was narrowed down on the issue of redistribution, the Czech Republic was, in fact, proposing a much more effective solution: Assistance to refugees in their current place of residence was rendered as the best approach, which would have a positive impact on reducing the migration pressure on the EU Member States and, at the same time, protect refugees who would not be compelled to take an often dangerous journey to Europe. Instead, they could stay as close as possible to their home countries. Later in the debate, Czech decision makers made several comments that the apparent dysfunction of the relocation system proved them right and they succeeded in gradually shifting the debate away from quotas (Babiš, 11.06.2018 & Petříček, 10.12.2018). This conviction that it is necessary to have an own opinion and that the Western approach is not always the only option points to a certain pursuit of emancipation (interview 1C). At the same time, the Czech government justified its restrictive approach toward refugees on the grounds of not having colonies, therefore not being responsible for the situation. A related argument was that the West, which in turn did have colonies in the past and is better off socio-economically, should make a greater effort toward solving the situation. This again signals the persistent feeling of still lagging behind or catching up with the West in terms of socio-economic development (interviews 1D, 1E & 1G). In other words, the Czechs believe that they still have an uneven relationship with older Member States, who decide about the fate of the Czech nation (see, for example, the Czech government officials' outrage after being outvoted in the Council by a qualified majority on the issue of mandatory relocation quotas). This aspect, together with frequent criticism of the EU's approach and with own proposals mostly remaining at the level of rhetoric rather than reality, are all expressions of Czech "littleness," a typical feature of Czech identity.

Finally, it must be once again emphasized that, although no parliamentary party adopted an outright pro-refugee stance, the Czech political debate was nonetheless polarized. While the rhetoric of former Prime Minister Sobotka and Foreign Minister Zaorálek was rather moderate, current Prime Minister Babiš and especially President Zeman have made much more critical remarks about immigration.²⁶⁴ What united all actors across the Czech political spectrum was their opposition to mandatory quotas as well as advocacy for stronger protection of the Schengen external borders, increased Frontex capacity, free movement of persons without internal border controls, the creation of hotspots, and the consistent return of unsuccessful applicants for international protection (M. Novotná 2017, 15).

The following table once again illustrates the identity-solidarity nexus elaborated above.

²⁶⁴ When Andrej Babiš was still Minister of Finance, his views used to be more radical than after having assumed the position of Prime Minister. In November 2015, he claimed that if borders did not get completely shut down, Schengen would fall apart. In this context, he called on the EU to take over the protection of the external borders instead of Greece and Italy, which were failing to meet their obligations. Moreover, similar to President Zeman, he warned that Islamic State fighters who “aim to kill our people” might come together with refugees (Novinky.cz 2015a).

Table 11: Identity-solidarity nexus (the refugee and migrant crisis & the Czech Republic)

Identity element	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
Feelings of victimhood & anti-great power sentiments	Perceived “inadaptability” of Islamic communities, which would threaten the Czech way of life	Securitization of migration → primary need to secure the safety of Czech citizens	Securitization of migration (refugees and migrants portrayed as a security problem and a social risk) Connection between migration and Islamic terrorist attacks as well as between migration and organized crime	Claiming that the West with its colonial past and its better socio-economic profile should make a greater effort toward solving the crisis situation
Feelings of bitterness and betrayal & anti-great power sentiments	Suspicion when the EU requests something from the Czechs or when certain EU Member States seem to dominate the discussion The qualified majority voting on the quotas in the Council portrayed as a form of betrayal, creating an administrative burden and a security threat for the country		Feeling of injustice on the part of Brussels toward the “new” Member States (criticizing Czechs and others for refusing to accept quotas while turning a blind eye to the non-compliance by other states with their Schengen obligations) → Reluctance to participate in EU-wide burden sharing due to non-observance of Schengen rules by some Member States Perception of asylum procedure being abused by “bogus” asylum seekers (mostly economic migrants)	Refugee quotas presented as a political and administrative burden imposed by the EU The qualified majority voting on the quotas in the Council portrayed as a form of betrayal, creating an administrative burden and a security threat for the country
Strong quest for sovereignty and independence	Mandatory quotas perceived as a threat to national sovereignty (the “Brussels dictatorship”) Being in favor of a common European approach if the commitments are voluntary / Demanding to decide autonomously on how to express solidarity	Expressed readiness to help the most burdened countries (if in the form of “flexible solidarity”)		Expressed readiness to help the most burdened countries within the country’s possibilities and capacities (advocating for the possibility of “flexible solidarity”)
Self-image as a cultured and civilized nation	Respect for the obligations stemming from the EU membership; calling for a joint European solution	Provision of assistance to countries of origin and third countries facing increased migration pressures	Emigration of Czechoslovak citizens during Communism presented as a more “noble” and “rightly deserved” form of migration (as compared to the motives of the people currently seeking asylum in Europe)	Striving to act as a constructive EU Member State and assume responsibility Conviction of being the one proposing the most

		Expression of solidarity with those in dire need, i.e. political asylum seekers	Asylum seekers not interested in staying in the Czech Republic but striving to move further to wealthier European countries framed as undeserving beneficiaries of Czech support (implicitly hurting the Czech pride)	effective solution (which is not narrowed down on the issue of redistribution)
Feeling of belonging to the West, sense of superiority over the East → bridge between the East and the West	Readiness to be actively involved in EU solidarity activities and help fellow EU Member States in need	Readiness to help fellow EU Member States in need		Striving to build a bridge between the EU (especially Germany) and the Visegrad Group
Homogeneity of the Czech population	Little experience of living with foreigners and the absence of a significant Muslim population in Czech territory leading to negative stereotypical representation of refugees (see contact theory and “fear of the unknown”) Refugees and migrants from Ukraine perceived as culturally akin, those from the Middle East and North Africa as potentially threatening the Czech culture, values, and way of life		Stereotypical (predominantly negative) representation of refugees, diminishing their eligibility for international protection The low number of Muslim refugees and migrants residing in the country cited as the reason for the absence of Islamic terrorist attacks in the Czech Republic	
Widespread secularism	Perceived cultural incompatibility of Muslims and the related expectation of their problematic integration into the Czech society		Perceived cultural incompatibility of Muslims and the related expectation of their problematic integration into the Czech society	
Czech “littleness”	Feeling that it was again decided “about them without them” (when outvoted in the Council on the issue of mandatory relocation quotas)			Criticism of the EU approach while presenting no concrete action plans or a clear vision on how to tackle the crisis situation

Source: Own table

Chapter 13: Hungary & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis

We don't see these people as Muslim refugees. We see them as Muslim invaders.
—Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (interview with Staudenmaier 2018)

13.1 Solidarity Behavior

Of the four Visegrad countries, the most outspoken critic of EU migration policy was Hungary and especially its Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Buckley and Foy 2016). He started to rally against refugees already in early 2015, when the migration numbers were still relatively low (interview 2O; The Economist 2016). In response to the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in Paris in 2015, he claimed that “all the terrorists are basically migrants” (Kaminski 2015). Hungary was also the first European country that built a razor wire fence on its borders to keep migrants and refugees away (Bayer 2016; A. Juhász et al. 2015, 5; Die Welt 2016). Later, designated transit zones were set up, where asylum seekers could issue their applications (interview 2R). Furthermore, Hungary decided to send police to Macedonia and Bulgaria to help protect the borders and prevent further migration into the EU (A. Juhász 2016).

Many politicians and observers across Europe deemed Hungary’s harsh stance irrational (A. Juhász et al. 2015, 14). As a matter of fact, Hungary has never witnessed migration flows at such levels as during the recent migration and refugee crisis when it served as the first entry point into the EU (Bernát 2016, 98; Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2017b; Pardavi 2017, 13). The migration pressure was especially noticeable in 2015, when the Hungarian police registered approximately 400,000 irregular migrants and, thereof, a total of 177,135 asylum seekers applied for international protection in Hungary (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2017b). However, it is also true that Hungary has not become a destination, but merely a transit country and the majority of applications have been dropped because most asylum seekers only passed through the country and moved further on to Western Europe, mainly Germany and Sweden (interview 2A; Bernát 2016, 74; Lang 2015, 2).²⁶⁵ According to the

²⁶⁵ A New York Times team documented in 2015 why migrants and asylum seekers did not want to stay in Hungary but rather move on to other European countries (Hartocollis 2015). Among other things, Hungary seemed to be an unappealing destination economically and because of the language (interview 2B).

Hungarian Asylum Office, asylum procedures could be completed in only 2% of the cases because most asylum seekers had left the country before they received decisions on their asylum claims (A. Juhász 2016).

Of those 177,135 asylum seekers who registered in Hungary in 2015, 146 were granted asylum and 356 subsidiary protection (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2017b). In 2016, the number already dropped significantly to 29 432 arriving refugees, whereof 154 received asylum and 271 subsidiary protection (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2017b). In addition, throughout 2015, there was a major shift with respect to the country of origin of the asylum seekers. While in the first two to three months of 2015, there was significant migration from Kosovo, most refugees arriving in Hungary in the spring and later were from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq (interview 2R; Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2017a).

Government Response

Although most refugees and migrants did not want to settle in Hungary permanently, but rather use it as a corridor to reach other (Western) European countries, the Hungarian government, motivated by the political goals to redeem its falling popularity and divert attention from other domestic issues, such as corruption or conflicts within the governing party, put the refugee and migration issue on top of the agenda (A. Juhász et al. 2015, 24; Pardavi 2017, 13; Zachová et al. 2017). It raised a series of anti-refugee campaigns, including sending letters to all Hungarian households with anti-immigrant messages in the spring of 2015, which was officially called the “National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism,” and launching a billboard campaign in the summer of 2015 (E. Inotai 2015, 43; Simonovits and Bernát 2016, 8).²⁶⁶ The billboards carried three types of anti-immigration messages: 1) “If you come to Hungary, you have to respect our culture;” 2) “If you come to Hungary, you have to respect our laws;” and 3) “If you come to Hungary, you cannot take away Hungarians’ jobs” (Pardavi 2017, 13; Simonovits and Bernát 2016, 8; Thorpe 2015). Formulated only in the Hungarian language, the message was clearly addressed to the Hungarian public and not the incoming refugees and migrants (interviews 2B & 2O). When

²⁶⁶ In the eyes of many experts, the national consultation was a fake public opinion survey, which entailed biased and misleading questions. Moreover, the Hungarian government evaluated only those responses that were sent back, which was only a fraction of the distributed questionnaires (interview 2O).

referring to asylum seekers, Hungarian government officials often used terms such as “economic immigrants” and “illegal immigrants” and warned against the possibility of an increased crime, job losses for native Hungarians, and the spread of diseases by refugees (Buckley and Foy 2016; A. Juhász et al. 2015, 24-25).

In addition, the government at first let arriving refugees and migrants come in and appear in different parts of Hungary. Most observers agree that this was a deliberate political trick to create a feeling that Hungary risked being overflowed with migrants and refugees (interview 2A).²⁶⁷ Vera Messing from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences stressed that, according to the Dublin regulation, refugees should have registered in Hungary when coming from Serbia. However, most of them did not want to register because the rejection rates in Hungary were very high and they feared not getting a refugee status (interview 2O). Instead, they wanted to travel further to Austria. When refugees were assembling at the Keleti railway station in Budapest, Viktor Orbán issued an instruction that only those people with valid identity documents would be eligible to buy train tickets. However, most refugees had no documents at all. Being unable to buy tickets, they got stranded at the railway station and in the neighboring parks, where they started to put up their tents. According to Jörg Bergstermann from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Budapest, with this tactic, Orbán’s government wanted to present the whole situation as a serious safety problem (interview 2D).²⁶⁸

Regarding the relocation scheme proposed by the EU, Viktor Orbán and his cabinet rejected this proposal from the very beginning, claiming that it harmed the sovereignty of their country and that the solution lay rather in the protection of the EU’s external borders and the establishment of hotspots outside of the Schengen Zone (E. Inotai 2015, 43; Meier and Scheffer 2016; Zachová et al. 2017). After collecting enough signatures in a petition against the introduction of the EU quota system, Orbán announced a referendum for 2 October 2016 on this issue (Buckley and Foy 2016; Foy and Byrne 2016; Simonovits and Bernát 2016, 9). In this referendum, people were asked whether the EU should be entitled to force Hungary

²⁶⁷ While the Keleti train station turned into a de facto refugee camp in the center of Budapest, in other parts of the country people actually never saw a single refugee (interview 2B).

²⁶⁸ Similarly, building a fence on the Serbian border as an attempt to stop migration resulted in occasional clashes between angry refugees, who wanted to continue their trip to other countries in Western and Northern Europe, and the Hungarian police. Such incidents were also used as arguments against accepting refugees (interview 2B). When a group of refugees and migrants climbed over police fencing and started walking on the highway to reach the Austrian border, the Hungarian state television used it as another example of how problematic the incoming people were (interview 2D).

to resettle immigrants “without the consent of the National Assembly” (Herszenhorn 2016; Zalán 2016a). More than 98% of Hungarians who voted in the referendum rejected the EU’s quota system (Kingsley 2016). However, due to the insufficient voter turnout (43.35%), the referendum was declared invalid (Herszenhorn 2016; Lattmann 2016; Nič 2016, 288). Nevertheless, Fidesz’s effort paid off inasmuch as it managed to regain its popularity (The Economist 2016). According to the opinion research institute Medián, the support for Fidesz rose from 28% to 32% in only four months in 2015 (A. Juhász et al. 2015, 21).

Apart from these nation-wide campaigns aimed primarily at Hungarian citizens, the Hungarian government undertook several measures to curb asylum and tighten laws on refugees. On 1 August 2015, the Hungarian Parliament amended the law regarding refugees (Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum), requiring all asylum seekers to prove that they did not have the chance to apply for asylum in another transit country (considered safe) on their way to Hungary (Dearden 2017; A. Juhász 2016; K. Juhász 2017). Accordingly, Hungary started rejecting asylum applicants who had entered Hungary for example from Serbia because the government considered Serbia a safe third country (Pardavi 2017, 13). In addition, the new law enabled the detainment of asylum seekers. As reported by many human rights organizations, asylum seekers were held in detention centers together with illegal migrants for as long as twelve months (interview 2R; Dearden 2017; Human Rights Watch 2015). Moreover, after the Hungarian-Serbian and the Hungarian-Croatian borders were closed down in September and October 2015, hardly any asylum seekers were able to enter Hungary and apply for asylum (A. Juhász 2016; Simonovits and Bernát 2016).

People who sought asylum in Hungary were supposed to use one of the four “transit zones” on the southern border.²⁶⁹ Following the reports of Hungarian NGOs, the UNHCR, Human Rights Watch, and other international human rights bodies, Hungary was constantly violating its international human rights obligations (OHCHR 2015a; Pardavi 2017, 14). According to Amnesty International and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the conditions on the border were dire and cases of severe ill-treatment of refugees and migrants, including disproportionate use of force, were nothing unusual (Amnesty International 2015; OHCHR 2015a).

²⁶⁹ In January 2018, it was decided that every day only one person could apply within the transit zone. The rejection rate was around 98% (interviews 2R & 2U).

Realizing that framing migration as a threat could be used to mobilize the population as well as to legitimize and enforce certain policies, the Hungarian government decided to link everything with the migration agenda (interviews 2D & 2E). It maintained a constant anti-migrant discourse, although, especially after the closure of the Serbian border and the implementation of the EU-Turkey migration deal, not many refugees and migrants were arriving at the Hungarian borders (interview 2U). According to the interviewed experts, the Hungarian political response was in the first place a very consciously built-up PR campaign to construct an enemy image and show the Hungarian government's efforts to protect its people (interviews 2O & 2R). In addition, the government used the topic of migration as a campaign against George Soros and Western European liberal circles (interview 2T).²⁷⁰

Societal Response

Most observers agree that the anti-refugee campaigns launched by the Hungarian government fundamentally altered the society's perception of immigration (A. Juhász 2016; Budapest Times 2016). Despite hardly any presence of immigrants and refugees in the country, the Hungarian research institute Tárki observed rising levels of xenophobia among the Hungarian population (Ballai 2015; Zachová et al. 2017). According to the data collected by Tárki, xenophobia reached an all-time high (53%) in Hungary in January 2016 (Simonovits and Bernát 2016, 7). Tárki, which regularly evaluates the majority's welcoming attitudes (xenophilia) and rejection toward asylum seekers (xenophobia), reported that, in April 2015, the level of xenophobia was at 46%, declined a little between July and October 2015 but again increased dramatically between October 2015 and January 2016 (Sik 2016, 41-44; Simonovits and Bernát 2016, 7-12).

Furthermore, while in 2013, only 3% of Hungarian citizens listed immigration as one of the major challenges in Europe, in the May 2015 Eurobarometer survey, it was 43% and, in the autumn of 2015, already 68% (European Commission 2015d; European Commission 2015e;

²⁷⁰ The billionaire philanthropist George Soros has been repeatedly accused by Orbán as well as other Fidesz party members and the pro-government media of promoting liberal values and cosmopolitanism and fostering immigration to Hungary. Soros basically became the "public enemy number one" (interview 2B). The Swiss weekly "Das Magazin" revealed that the campaign against George Soros and the accompanying rhetoric used by Viktor Orbán was prepared by two Jewish-American political consultants, Arthur J. Finkelstein and George Eli Birnbaum, who were also advising the Trump administration on the presidential election. According to the investigation, it was them who advised Orbán to put emphasis on illegal immigrants (interviews 2B & 2O).

Sik and Szeidl 2016, 20). This significant shift in a very short time—from spring to fall of 2015—corresponded with the timing of the targeted government anti-immigrant campaigns.

In 2015, when people started arriving in large numbers to Hungary, there was an emergence of spontaneous solidarity initiatives, including at the Keleti railway station where Hungarian citizens were distributing food and other goods (interviews 2O & 2R). This demonstration of solidarity, humanitarian compassion, and desire to help lasted for a few weeks in a row and was localized to big cities such as Budapest or Szeged (interviews 2A & 2F). Then, only one year later, influenced by the government propaganda, the societal views turned significantly anti-migrant and the feeling of solidarity toward people in need grew weaker (interview 2Q).

Other Actors: Grassroots Organizations and the Media

The reportedly heavily xenophobic attitudes of parts of the Hungarian population were balanced by various groupings and organizations that actively participated in relief activities. They can be classified into four main groups: established charity and aid organizations; NGOs working in the refugee-related aid work; brand new grassroots organizations; and further international organizations, especially the UNHCR (Bernát 2016, 80). The most active NGO was the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, which repeatedly raised its voice against the government's rhetoric (A. Juhász et al. 2015, 28; Simonovits and Bernát 2016, 15).²⁷¹ Newly established grassroots organizations, such as Migration Aid, which started to form in the early summer of 2015, played a major role in helping asylum seekers in Hungary. They organized themselves on Facebook and were based solely on volunteers, who helped refugees entering and/or crossing the country and provided them with food, clothes, and other basic necessities (Bernát 2016, 83; A. Juhász 2016; Simonovits and Bernát 2016, 7). The grassroots organizations claimed that relief work provided by the state and large established charities was almost invisible or their activities insufficient, which is why the volunteers felt obligated to fulfill these tasks (Bernát 2016, 98).

While the civil society sector sought to challenge the Hungarian government's positions, the media in Hungary, dominated by Fidesz-related platforms, largely mirrored the political discourse. In addition, especially in the rural areas outside Budapest, people rarely have

²⁷¹ The Hungarian Helsinki Committee was founded already in 1989 to provide asylum seekers with legal assistance including legal representation (The Hungarian Helsinki Committee 2017).

access to alternative media sources (interviews 2D & 2U). As a result, the government was able to largely control and frame the domestic discourse on migration. The purpose of its media campaigns was to incite an atmosphere of fear and create a common enemy (interview 2C). Achieving this goal was made easier insofar as the Hungarian opposition was weak, fragmented, and unable to offer an alternative narrative (interviews 2A, 2D & 2L).

13.2 Motives of Solidarity

Hungary's hardline position on the issue of migration, including the erection of the border fence, the rejection of the quota-based system for redistributing refugees, and the subsequent filing of a lawsuit at the CJEU, together with the inflammatory rhetoric of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, caused significant unease among EU officials and some EU Member States. The conducted discourse analysis has revealed the main factors underlying the adopted measures by the Hungarian government in connection with the migration and refugee crisis as well as the justifications thereof. The following sections accordingly explore the two notions of solidarity in the Hungarian political debate—compassionate relation with those in need and solidarity with other EU Member States—along the four solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*.

Proximity

Concentrating on the solidarity principle of *proximity* in the analyzed statements helps uncover the reasons behind the overly negative attitudes toward migrants and refugees and the lacking sense of attachment to the EU and its Member States. In the second half of 2014, Fidesz's popularity was dropping quite sharply. Therefore, Viktor Orbán and his government wanted to appear tough when it comes to migration and so subdue any kind of opposition (interviews 2E & 2O). Most interviewed experts agree that, for the Hungarian government, it was of secondary importance whether the EU would perceive them as a hindering factor. In other words, the domestic gains prevailed over the international losses (interview 2G).

Primacy of National Sovereignty

The debate around migration was framed, first and foremost, as a freedom fight for national sovereignty. The Hungarian government considered the policy of binding quotas as a failure

and kept reiterating that, as a sovereign state, Hungary had the inalienable right to decide who it would take in (interviews 2A & 2L). The Hungarian stance was that the EU should manage the whole crisis administratively, while the individual Member States should be responsible for the rest. After the European Commission proposed a 10-point action plan on migration in response to the deteriorating situation in the Mediterranean, Viktor Orbán stated that

“it would be more appropriate if the regulation of immigration were delegated to national competencies. My view is – and I am glad that finally a debate has started on this issue – that, instead of quotas, we must allow individual Member States themselves to decide on this issue. We Hungarians want to decide ourselves on whether we want immigrants in Hungary or not” (Orbán, 19.05.2015).

Orbán repeatedly presented the proposed quota system as a violation of the EU founding treaties and as a contradiction to democracy, claiming that only the Hungarian citizens have the right to decide who they want to live with (see for example Orbán, 19.05.2015, 24.02.2016 & 26.04.2017).²⁷² When reacting to the criticism voiced by other EU Member States, Orbán was proud to argue that Hungary occupied the moral high ground because it listened to the will of its people and, as opposed to others, did not seek to impose its approach to migration on anyone else (Orbán, 19.12.2015 & 23.03.2019). In this context, the Hungarian government criticized especially Germany’s unilateral decision to open the borders without consulting others and then expecting everyone else to shoulder part of the burden (interviews 2C & 2W).

In his speeches, Viktor Orbán often hinted at the possibility of losing national independence and sovereignty as a result of foreign influence: “In big political questions Hungary will only be able to follow, never to decide on its own path” (Orbán, 03.06.2015); “Shall we revert from a free nation to a subjugated nation? Shall we accept others transforming us according to their preferences?” (Orbán, 09.11.2017). Correspondingly, references to “the Brussels dictate” were quite common.²⁷³ It went so far that, in 2017, the Hungarian government launched a National Consultation entitled “Let’s Stop Brussels,” which was supposed to

²⁷² Among other statements, Orbán said that “there is an institution called democracy, which demands that in key issues of national policy the people’s will must be clearly enforced” (Orbán, 09.11.2017).

²⁷³ Appealing to the Hungarian parliament to always preserve sovereignty over national decisions, Orbán stated: “We Hungarians alone are able to decide on this. This cannot be dictated from the UN Headquarters in New York, and not even from the headquarters in Brussels. This can only be the decision of the Hungarian people” (Orbán, 23.09.2015).

discuss perceived interference by the EU in Hungarian national affairs.²⁷⁴ However, according to both national and international independent observers, the consultation featured numerous factually incorrect or highly misleading claims and allegations. One such claim was that “Brussels wants to force Hungary to let in illegal immigrants” (European Commission 2017g). Sticking to their line of reasoning, the Hungarian government even refused help from the external border agency Frontex, after the EU regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard was reformed in 2018, claiming that it would take away the country’s sovereignty over its own frontiers (interviews 2R & 2U).

Perceived Existence of Double Standards

In addition to denouncing the EU proposals for setting up an automatic relocation mechanism as a violation of national sovereignty, the Hungarian government utilized the notion of existing double standards in the EU to mobilize against criticism from Western Europe (interviews 2U & 2W). In an interview with the Budapest-based daily newspaper *Napi Gazdaság* in June 2015, Prime Minister Orbán summarized this underlying sense of injustice in two short sentences: “We are just as sovereign as any other EU Member State. Only at first sight” (Orbán, 03.06.2015). Implying that older and newer Member States are being treated differently in the EU, Orbán put forward that, after erecting the fence, Hungary was portrayed as the “black sheep” of Europe, although for example Austria also threatened to build a border fence across the Brenner pass at the Italian border:

“We should perhaps point out with appropriate composure and without undue satisfaction that what the countries on the Balkan migrant route are now doing, including Austria, is in fact the Hungarian solution. They are building fences – even though they may call them something else by coining highly amusing linguistic terms. They are building fences, stopping the migrants and sending them back” (Orbán, 19.02.2016).

Hungary as a Country of Hungarians

If feelings of belongingness to the EU were not much pronounced in the official discourse, expressions of compassion with refugees and migrants entering Europe were basically non-existent. Hungarian government officials argued that solidarity works only in national

²⁷⁴ A National Consultation is a campaign or a questionnaire on public opinion sent to all mailboxes across Hungary, which is supposed to inform policy decisions on “important national questions” (Simonovits and Bernát 2016).

communities and were openly against accepting any asylum seekers under the quota system. They wanted to keep Hungary as a country of Hungarians, framing the preservation of national identity as an existential question (Orbán, 19.05.2015; interview 2F). They claimed that refugees would be unable to learn the language and integrate into the Hungarian society. Moreover, the Hungarian government later altered its rhetoric by starting to evoke the Christian roots of European identity and putting a greater emphasis on conservative values (interview 2A). Hungarian decision makers openly rejected multiculturalism and their statements were often Islamophobic.²⁷⁵ At the height of the crisis, Viktor Orbán said that “those arriving have been raised in another religion, and represent a radically different culture” (Orbán, 03.09.2015).

Before 2015, the target of “otherness” and of racist discourse by the right-wing politics in Hungary had mostly been the Roma population. After the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015, those discourses and sentiments were increasingly used also with regard to refugees (interviews 2F & 2U). The interviewed experts pointed out that these two forms of racism now reinforce each other (interviews 2A & 2O). Since most of the policies regarding Roma integration had failed, people drew the consequence that refugees also could not be integrated. In addition, the Hungarian government used the “Roma-refugees parallel” to argue against the quota, claiming that Western Europeans were imposing refugees on Hungary because they did not know what living with populations like the Roma felt like (interview 2F).

At the same time, the Hungarian government used the experience of Western Europe as an example of unsuccessful coexistence of civilizationally different populations and the emergence of parallel societies (Orbán, 30.09.2016). Viktor Orbán often warned against “a decreasing Christian element and an increasing Muslim element” and the possibility of elimination of nations in Europe:

“Yes, this is a matter of life and death: we are talking about fundamental issues related to our very existence. If we look at the shifting ethnic balances and the difference in fertility rates between the indigenous population and those who have

²⁷⁵ In an interview in June 2015, Orbán shared his take on multiculturalism: “Multiculturalism means the mixing of different civilizations. The fact that a country contains many nationalities is a completely different matter. Hungary has multinational roots and cultural backgrounds, but this is not multiculturalism. Multiculturalism means the co-existence of people with different background civilizations – for example Islam, the Asian religions and Christianity side by side. We shall make every effort to save Hungary from this” (Orbán, 03.06.2015).

newly arrived, simple mathematics tell us how many years it will take before there are as many of them as of us, and when they will be in the majority” (Orbán, 30.09.2016).

When faced with questions about demographic change and population decline in Hungary, Viktor Orbán stated that, instead of encouraging immigration, his government would focus on pro-family policies to preserve the country’s ethnic-cultural composition (Orbán, 19.06.2015 & 30.01.2018).²⁷⁶ In this context, he made references to the historical struggle of Hungary to keep its national and cultural identity: “Under communism we didn’t let them turn us into Homo Sovieticus and eradicate our culture” (Orbán, 30.09.2016). Furthermore, he pointed to the fundamental difference between countries that saw the migration and refugee crisis as a technical question of distribution and countries such as Hungary that regarded it more as an issue of sovereignty and identity (Orbán, 23.06.2017 & 29.06.2017).

Fear of Identity Loss & Ethnic Homogeneity

The Hungarian government constantly warned against the possible loss of identity. The majority of the Hungarian society, which is, as a whole, very homogenous, perceive themselves as Christian and white, and this government’s message resonated with their convictions (interview 2U). More importantly, Hungarians have never had the chance to interact with faraway cultures. In fact, according to the interviewed experts, an average Hungarian never meets someone of foreign origin. There are so few Muslims in Hungary that most people will never encounter them. It is therefore easy to construct an unknown common enemy (interview 2Q).²⁷⁷ This reality is congruent with the contact theory in sociology, which postulates that people are more prone to accepting negative information about an unknown group (interviews 2A & 2O). The lack of exposure helps explain why for example in Budapest there was much less of the “undistinguished fear” than in the Hungarian countryside where there is almost no presence of immigrants (interviews 2A & 2C). András Szalai put it in a nutshell when he said that the Hungarian people had no fear of coexistence but rather “fear of the unknown” (interview 2U).

²⁷⁶ To boost fertility rates, the Hungarian government has launched several campaigns, such as offering loans and income tax exemptions for families with four and more children (interviews 2E & 2T).

²⁷⁷ Therefore, when the government started distributing their questionnaires, asking whether the citizens would be able to let migrants live in their houses, the people were totally shocked (interview 2B).

Moreover, the principle of *proximity* can help illuminate why Hungary showed more solidarity during the Balkan Wars in the 1990s. Back then, Hungary erected proper refugee camps and received a very significant number of the Balkan refugees, a process it managed quite smoothly (interview 2O). Many experts suggest that the reaction was different because many of the fleeing people were of Hungarian origin, for example from Vojvodina, and the conflict was taking place much closer to Hungary (interview 2A).²⁷⁸

Need

Looking at the solidarity principle of *need*, many interviewed experts explained that, while at the grassroots and civil society level, Hungarians showed a lot of solidarity toward people in need, the Hungarian government's reaction to the refugee flow was everything but humanistic (interviews 2B & 2Q). Except for offering help to persecuted Christians from the Middle East and Africa, the need of the fleeing people was generally played down (Orbán, 29.06.2017 & 27.11.2019). Moreover, the frontline Member States such as Italy or Greece were portrayed as less affected by the crisis (i.e., less *in need*) than Hungary itself.

Hungary's Own Vulnerability

When faced with questions about why Hungary was so reluctant to help other EU Member States in need, government officials pointed to the country's own vulnerabilities. First, Viktor Orbán argued that the country lay "on the route of the Muslim immigration invasion" and faced increased migration pressures at its border (Orbán, 27.11.2019). In addition, he stressed that Hungary was facing considerable migration pressure not only from the South but also from the East, mainly Ukraine (Orbán, 19.02.2016). Therefore, in his view, due to the specific geographical location, Hungary was more affected than others and should have been the one receiving help.²⁷⁹ He used the same line of argument also in the EU-wide discussions on relocating refugees from Greece and Italy:

²⁷⁸ In this context, András Rácz remarked that it should be no surprise that the pro-migrant grassroots movement started from the South in cities such as Szeged or Pécs, where people still remembered the Balkan Wars and the refugees seeking help (interview 2Q).

²⁷⁹ In the following statement, Orbán tried to illustrate the pressure Hungary was facing: "If we look at the number of asylum-seekers relative to per capita gross national product, Hungary is the second most affected Member State, after Germany. If we look at the number of asylum-seekers per thousand inhabitants, Hungary is once again second – this time, after Sweden" (Orbán, 19.05.2015).

“More migrants are coming to Hungary: twice as many as to Italy, and something like six times more than to Greece. In other words, they want to bring people here from countries where fewer migrants arrive. In a quota system, migrants should be taken away from Hungary” (Orbán, 04.09.2015).

Finally, Orbán often pointed to the small size of Hungary as compared to big countries such as Germany or the United Kingdom, which, according to him, prompted a stronger feeling of being in danger. He referred particularly to the demographic challenges faced by Hungary, concretely the shrinking population:

“Big countries do not understand that, because big countries have no feeling of being in danger. If you have 80 million people or 60 million people or 100 million people, it is almost impossible to imagine that the moment can arrive when there are no more Hungarians left in the world” (Orbán, 19.06.2015).

Deservingness

The Hungarian government put forward several arguments why neither the incoming refugees and migrants nor the EU and its Member States *deserved* Hungary’s help. As regards refugees, they were accused of non-compliance and malevolent motives such as terrorism. In a similar vein, the Hungarian government blamed certain EU Member States for disregarding their obligations under the Schengen Agreement, made others responsible for the arisen situation, and lamented the missing reciprocity and solidarity within the EU.

Securitization of Migration

The analysis has shown that, from the beginning of the migration and refugee crisis, the Hungarian government was trying to evoke fears of an existential threat and the related need for increased security. Viktor Orbán often used strong expressions, such as a “storm of migration,” “modern-day mass migration,” or “unlimited supply of migrants,” when referring to the migration and refugee issue and made use of various statistics to support his claim that the situation might actually get much worse. Some examples of the Prime Minister’s warnings, most of which he delivered at the height of the crisis in 2015, include:

“Europe is not in the grip of a “refugee problem” or a “refugee situation”, but the European continent is threatened by an ever-mounting wave of modern-era migration. Movement of people is taking place on an immense scale, and from a European perspective the number of potential future immigrants seems limitless” (Orbán, 03.09.2015).

“With each passing day we see that hundreds of thousands have been turning up and clamouring at our borders, and there are millions more intending to set out for Europe, driven by economic motives” (Orbán, 03.09.2015).

“The truth is that Europe is being threatened by mass migration on an unprecedented scale. Tens of millions of people could come to Europe. Today we are talking about hundreds of thousands, but next year we will be talking about millions, and this will never end. There is unlimited supply for this mass migration” (Orbán, 05.09.2015).

“So what we must face today is not merely a refugee issue, and not even just an immigration problem, but a modern-day mass migration for which at present the supply appears to be inexhaustible. And we have not yet even mentioned the arrival, now emerging in Hungarian statistics, of the first migrants heading for Europe from the Sub-Saharan regions of Africa: Mali, Niger, and a little further east Eritrea and Somalia” (Orbán, 25.09.2015).

“The size of the challenge is enormous, its potential to worsen is unlimited, and European leaders have yet to realise this” (Orbán, 25.09.2015).

“And we must not forget about Africa! Africa is only just starting to move, and unless we have a rational policy, the Africans will also start coming. That would mean dozens of millions more” (Orbán, 12.11.2015).

“It is a very serious problem, and we have been teetering on the verge of an enormous threat for some time now. ... we observed the phenomenon itself: namely that masses of people are flooding into the world in which we live in an uncontrolled manner” (Orbán, 19.12.2015).

“Even now, as we speak, at this very moment, we are under siege. ... In the next few years the intense pressure on the border will not come to an end. There are still millions preparing to set out in the hope of a better life: at this very moment, hundreds of thousands are considering setting out for Europe” (Orbán, 07.03.2017).

Hungarian government officials focused on highlighting threats that the incoming people were supposedly posing. They referred to risks of infectious diseases, warned Hungarian women about the increased danger of violent attacks, and framed refugees and migrants as enemies, terrorists, and adherents of radical Islam (see for example Orbán, 04.09.2015, 19.12.2015 & 27.11.2019). Moreover, they used historical analogies, such as comparing the occupation by the Ottoman Turks to the influx of refugees and migrants and highlighting the role of Hungary as the first line of defense against Muslims (Goździak and Márton 2018, 9; interview 2U). Finally, Viktor Orbán framed the experience of large Western European cities, such as Paris, as a failure of open migration policies and presented his government’s approach as saving Hungary from the emergence of parallel societies, deteriorating public security, and terrorist attacks (Orbán, 30.09.2016 & 20.06.2017).

As mentioned before, people are naturally afraid of unknown things, so when the government launched its anti-immigrant propaganda campaigns, the Hungarians did not even need the physical presence of refugees to feel threatened (interview 2U). Then, when the government made their presence even more visible, through targeted media campaigns and by broadcasting pictures of angry young men, the majority of the Hungarian society believed the government's rhetoric and felt that the incoming people did not earn the right to apply for international protection (interviews 2A & 2O).

Non-compliance by Asylum Seekers

A common argument used against the incoming migrants and refugees was that they were unwilling to get registered and refused to cooperate with the Hungarian authorities (Orbán, 04.09.2015). A related narrative was that the proposed quota would put people to places where they did not want to go (interview 2W).²⁸⁰ Viktor Orbán repeatedly raised the objection that incoming refugees and migrants did not want to “come to” but instead only “go through” Hungary to reach Western European countries (Orbán, 22.12.2016 & 27.04.2017). He argued that people reaching Hungary were no longer fleeing for their lives if they had already arrived in Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, or Serbia, but their motivation at that point was primarily to get a refugee status in Germany.²⁸¹ In his understanding, those people should be treated as migrants rather than refugees (Orbán, 09.09.2015). Stressing that refugees cannot decide which country they want to go to once they reach a safe country, he invoked Hungary's own experience from 1956:

“But a refugee cannot say that they want to be a refugee in Germany, or in Macedonia – or in Hungary, for that matter. They have no choice! This is the same procedure, Ladies and Gentlemen, as in 1956” (Orbán, 23.09.2015).

The Hungarian government further argued that people belonging to different cultures and religions would be unwilling to observe the laws of Hungary but would instead gradually seek to suppress the Hungarian culture and customs and replace it with their own way of life

²⁸⁰ As Viktor Orbán ironically put it, “if someone is transported to some other place, they will have to be tied to a tree there, as otherwise they will simply go back to Germany” (Orbán, 22.09.2016).

²⁸¹ Stressing that refugees should be primarily concerned with their safety, Viktor Orbán said that “Turkish refugee camps may not be the most comfortable places, very probably are not what you would dream about, and may not offer the life we would like for ourselves, but those who are already in a Turkish refugee camp are safe” (Orbán, 09.09.2015).

(Orbán, 07.03.2017 & 20.06.2017). Zsuzsanna Árendás from the Central European University and at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences noted that these narratives resembled the “blaming the victim” kind of logic, according to which the victims are made entirely or partially responsible for what happened to them (interview 2A).

Economic Migrants versus Refugees

Especially at the beginning of the crisis, Viktor Orbán was determined to underline the Christian nature of Hungarians and the government’s readiness to provide care for every asylum seeker entering the Hungarian territory. In the same breath, he made sure to highlight that most of those arriving in Europe were not “genuine” refugees but economic migrants:

“We are a Christian and national government, we have mercy in our hearts, and we have always sheltered refugees – genuine refugees – and shall continue to do so in the future. Immigrants, however, are not the same as refugees: they want a better life, and this is why they come here. We understand this, but cannot accept it” (Orbán, 19.05.2015).

This deliberate distinction between refugees and immigrants had several implications. First, Viktor Orbán argued that Hungary was not obliged to apply the rules relating to refugees to all incoming people (Orbán, 23.09.2015). Second, he referred to almost all asylum seekers as illegal immigrants and maintained that Hungary as a Schengen Member State was obliged to stop illegal border-crossings (Orbán, 19.05.2015). Third, in order to curb illegal immigration, Orbán called for separating (genuine) refugees from (economic) migrants outside the territory of the EU (Orbán, 21.10.2016 & 27.04.2017). In consequence thereof, in 2017, the Hungarian parliament approved a comprehensive set of amendments to the Hungarian asylum law, requiring all asylum seekers to submit their applications in the newly established transit zones (Orbán, 09.13.2017). Humanitarian organizations and NGOs expressed their deep concerns about these measures, which enabled Hungarian authorities to also automatically detain asylum seekers already present in the country and keep them in detention for the whole duration of their asylum process. Moreover, all persons found in an irregular situation in Hungary could be returned back to Serbia (Amnesty International 2017; interview 2U).

Finally, Prime Minister Orbán questioned the intentions of the incoming people, implying that their main motivation was of economic nature instead of fleeing conflict and prosecution.

In this context, he noted that there was a difference between how he and other European leaders conceived and described the phenomenon, saying: “The Germans call it a refugee crisis, we call it a migrant crisis. We point out that many migrants are coming for economic reasons. ... All they sense is that they could have a better life here” (Orbán, 12.11.2015).

Non-compliance by EU Member States & “Not a Hungarian Problem”

In addition to blaming refugees and migrants for the difficult situation, Viktor Orbán underscored multiple times that the moral responsibility for the crisis lied with certain Member States of the EU. First, he denounced the statements by Chancellor Merkel and other European leaders because, according to him, they sounded like an invitation and created a false impression that Europe would embrace an unlimited number of asylum seekers (Orbán, 09.09.2015 & 25.09.2015). To underscore his point, Orbán stated repeatedly that the refugee crisis was a “German problem”:

“Germany itself announced that it would offer special, preferential procedures to asylum seekers from Syria; this is what has created the trouble in Hungary. This trouble in Hungary was caused by bad German communication; it was not the Hungarian police and not the Hungarian authorities. It was not even the migrants themselves, but the false promise that they had been invited to Germany” (Orbán, 04.09.2015).

Hungary was particularly outraged by Germany’s decision to unilaterally admit refugees and expect other Member States to bear the consequences resulting from that decision, arguing that such an approach contradicted the idea of European solidarity (Orbán, 22.09.2016; interview 2K).

Second, on multiple occasions, Viktor Orbán publicly condemned Greece for not observing the Schengen Agreement and so putting everyone else in Europe in trouble (see, e.g., Orbán, 09.09.2015 & 23.09.2015). He justified the erection of the fence along Hungary’s border and the necessity to separate refugees from migrants on the grounds of Greece being unable to protect its borders, hence also the external borders of the EU and the Schengen Area (Orbán, 08.02.2016).

And third, Viktor Orbán and his government felt strengthened in their position, as even those Member States that did not openly oppose the relocation plan were failing to fulfill their quota commitments (Orbán, 27.04.2017).

(Historical) Reciprocity

Hungarian decision makers further contended that the EU and the individual Member States did not deserve Hungarian support, as they had also not always been solidary with Hungary (interview 2J). There is a resentment still dominating the national memory that the West never helped Hungary, from when the Ottoman Empire invaded the Hungarian territory to the revolution in 1956 (interview 2H). In addition, the Nord Stream 2 project, which would divert gas transports away from Ukraine and cut off Central European states, such as Hungary or Slovakia, from transit revenues, was seen as a salient issue undermining trust and solidarity between the “old” and the “new” EU Member States (interview 2W). Also in the field of migration, Viktor Orbán complained that Hungary experienced a lack of European solidarity, despite facing large movements of people coming from Ukraine and carrying the burden for the protection of the external borders of the Union (Orbán, 09.09.2015 & 15.02.2016).²⁸² He expressed his feelings of injustice in the following statement:

“While it is obvious that far more migrants are coming to Hungary (at times, many times more) than to other countries with external borders – and once again I shall not name countries – the assistance given to them is this big, while the assistance we receive is this small” (Orbán, 09.09.2015).

Self-Preservation

Hungarian government officials argued that Hungary, as a small country, was unable to offer jobs to immigrants or provide them with the same social benefits as the Hungarian citizens receive (Orbán, 19.05.2015; interview 2C). Instead, as they put it, the Hungarian solidarity contribution focused on guarding Europe and on humanitarian support targeted toward protecting Christian minorities in the Middle East (Orbán, 29.08.2018; interviews 2K & 2X). More importantly, they framed their approach as the best solution to the migration and refugee crisis and encouraged others in Europe to follow suit.

²⁸² In a press conference following his meeting with Deputy Prime Minister of Italy Matteo Salvini, Viktor Orbán made the following complaint: “I told the Federal Secretary that border defence has cost Hungary more than one billion euros. We have received nothing from Brussels: they didn’t relieve us of any part of this burden. They have a sack full of promises, but they’re not willing to even partly finance the border fence. I think that this is wrong” (Orbán, 02.05.2019).

Flexible Solidarity

The Hungarian government repeatedly argued that Hungary showed solidarity by protecting the EU borders, in line with its historical role as a gatekeeper of Europe. In Viktor Orbán's statements, the use of historical analogies was quite common:

“We found ourselves on the front pages of newspapers in 1956, because rebelling against oppression threatening us from the East – we had no other choice – propelled us to world fame. And today the situation is the same” (Orbán, 23.03.2019).

Not only the historical mission but also the responsibility as a frontier Member State to protect the external borders of the EU were used as arguments to justify the construction of the border fence as well as the introduction of other measures. With time, the Hungarian decision makers argued ever more vehemently that they deserved recognition, rather than criticism, from their European partners because, as opposed to other Member States, they were complying with the Schengen Agreement and defended Europe by stopping “the entry of hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants” (Orbán, 27.04.2017 & 11.09.2018). Claiming that the actions taken were in the interest of everyone in Europe, Hungarian officials demanded the protection of the external borders of Europe to be recognized as a manifestation of solidarity.²⁸³ According to the interviewed experts, this suggests a flexible understanding of solidarity, according to which solidarity can be expressed through taking part in the quota system as much as through defending borders and spending money on building a border fence (Orbán, 21.10.2016; interviews 2E & 2R).

Hungary as a Problem Solver / Pursuit of Emancipation

In Hungary, the “quota versus border protection” discord was presented as the main point of dispute with the EU. The following statement by Viktor Orbán from 2017 clearly illustrates the diametrically opposed views held by Hungary and other EU countries on this topic:

“A great many countries here in the European Union – say that migration should be ‘managed humanely and well’. In contrast to this, our position is that we must resist the pressure of migration. These are two completely different philosophies.

²⁸³ During a press conference in Brussels after the EU summit in October 2016, Viktor Orbán made the following comment: “We therefore demand that this be recognised as a manifestation of solidarity, especially as there are Member States which have a duty to protect their state borders, but are not doing so. They are not showing solidarity with the other Member States of the European Union, but we are. And so we expect to hear no more insulting claims that Hungary lacks solidarity” (Orbán, 21.10.2016).

Our goal is not to bring migrants into Europe in well-regulated circumstances; our goal is to prevent migrants from coming to Europe” (Orbán, 10.03.2017).

The Hungarian Prime Minister repeatedly criticized EU leaders for admitting or, as he put it, inviting asylum seekers to Europe and then wanting to distribute them among the individual Member States. He claimed that the main problem with the distribution of migrants and refugees was the uncertainty as to how many people would eventually come:

“And mentioning quotas, are they mathematically defined in relation to something? And can you tell what the total is that they will be defined in relation to? Forty thousand? Five hundred thousand? One million? Ten million? How many will come? Ladies and Gentlemen, shouldn’t the calculation of quotas come after first protecting our borders, so that we know precisely how many people we are talking about, and can then determine who will take on what percentage” (Orbán, 09.09.2015).

During EU summits, Orbán often cautioned that millions more people could arrive to Europe and asked rhetorically whether all of them would be distributed. In addition, he referred to the financial burden that the quota system would put on the receiving states (Orbán, 09.09.2015). For Orbán, the quota system was only addressing the consequences and not the causes of the problem. Another related argument used by Hungary as a justification for opposing the quota system was that it would further encourage organizations involved in human trafficking, people smuggling, and illegal immigration to continue with their practices (Orbán 03.09.2015 & 29.06.2017).

The Hungarian government claimed that the EU had no real plan for the management of the crisis situation (Orbán, 09.09.2015). Orbán accused the European political elites of living in a closed, ideological shell with no connection to reality and called the EU approach “lenient,” “ill-conceived,” “self-destructive,” “naïve,” and “a crazy idea” (Orbán, 19.05.2015, 09.09.2015 & 16.09.2016). It was the lack of a common European solution that he ultimately cited as the reason why Hungarians needed to rely on themselves (09.09.2015).²⁸⁴ Throughout the whole migration and refugee crisis, Orbán and his government maintained the stance that the only viable solution to the crisis was to defend the external borders and argued that everyone should follow Hungary’s example: “My answer to this is that if

²⁸⁴ In an interview from 2015, Viktor Orbán argued: “When I saw that this squabble would result in anything but a common European solution, we immediately launched our own national policy” (Orbán, 04.09.2015).

everyone followed Hungary's example, if everyone fulfilled their duties, the problem would be solved" (Orbán, 12.11.2015).²⁸⁵

Not only did Viktor Orbán accuse the EU of a lack of a plan or strategy on how to deal with the crisis, but he later declared that Hungary played a crucial role in the European migration debate and that it was his country that proved that stopping migration can be both legally and physically possible (Orbán, 29.08.2018). He felt vindicated in his stance due to other EU Member States purportedly endorsing Hungary's approach. In February 2016, after the EU summit on migration, the United Kingdom's future in Europe, and other issues, he stated:

"The most important development at today's summit was – and I am going to summarise a long debate in just half a sentence – that, in effect, the Hungarian solution was approved in the European Union for the first time. If you read the document being issued, you will see that we have assigned top priority to protecting the borders and halting the masses of migrants" (Orbán, 19.02.2016).

By 2018, Orbán came to the conclusion that the Hungarian position had been gradually adopted by many states across Europe, even those that originally looked down upon Hungary and condemned its actions (Orbán, 15.12.2016 & 26.02.2018).²⁸⁶

In addition to presenting Hungary as a savior of Europe and one of the most solidary members of the EU, Viktor Orbán sought to underline Hungary's pioneering role in upholding the core democratic principles that the Union was founded upon. He contended that, with the help of the National Consultations, his government was able to integrate public opinion into its policies, which in turn increased the legitimacy of the government's decisions (Orbán, 03.09.2015 & 24.02.2016). In addition, he used this argument as a pretext to criticize the West, making references to the existence of state-orchestrated journalism and "a gap between the opinion of the people and the policy pursued by the elite" in Western European states (Orbán, 09.09.2015).

²⁸⁵ In a press conference following the meeting of the European Council in December 2016, Viktor Orbán presented the triad of propositions that underlined the joint V4 position: "The three assertions are that the external borders must be protected, that those who have entered must be removed from the continent, and that those who want to enter and those whom we have removed must be guarded in large camps outside the territory of the EU, where they must be duly screened" (Orbán, 22.12.2016).

²⁸⁶ Orbán also maintained that the EU-Turkey deal, signed in March 2016, followed the same logic that his government had been proposing the whole time, namely closing the European borders and determining who can be let in (Huszka 2017, 603).

13.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

In his speeches and public statements, Viktor Orbán often drew a link to the historical experiences of Hungary and portrayed migration as a pertinent issue of identity (Orbán, 23.06.2017). To this end, he used analogies, such as depicting Hungary as the first line of defense against Muslims and comparing the migrant and refugee situation of 2015 to the Turkish occupation of Hungary in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The following excerpt from Viktor Orbán's speech at the closing event of the fifth National Consultation discussing Hungary's national sovereignty best illustrates the role of history and national identity in contemporary Hungarian foreign policy thinking. It can be summarized along the following three lines: "Stop Brussels – Stop migrants – Stop Soros":

"I wish to welcome everyone on this, the birthday of our king Saint Ladislaus. Before I start the main body of my speech, it is right and proper to commemorate a king who built our nation. Saint Ladislaus strengthened the Hungarian state, thus protecting us against all external attacks and internal intrigues, and his practice of Realpolitik among the great powers guaranteed our country's independence: "Stop Brussels". His actions protected the Hungarian people against destruction by nomadic peoples: "Stop migrants". Pursuing the course set by Saint Ladislaus has strengthened the identity of the Hungarian state and the Hungarian nation: "Stop Soros". The Hungarians have pursued this path for a thousand years, and today we Hungarians likewise do not want to abandon this path" (Orbán, 29.06.2017).

In addition, it has become clear from the analysis that some of the narratives Orbán used as a justification for his government's policies and decisions were closely interwoven and related not only to one but to several solidarity principles.

When it comes to intergovernmental solidarity, a stronger attachment to the EU and other Member States has been burdened by Hungary's historically conditioned aspiration to make sovereign decisions, reinforced by the feeling of the persistence of double standards within the EU. Viktor Orbán repeatedly warned against letting the Union manage the migrant and refugee crisis because it would contravene the national competence of Hungary. The automatic relocation was presented by Orbán as an attempt by the "pro-immigrant European politicians" and those Member States that unilaterally decided to admit asylum seekers at national level to enforce their decisions on other EU members opposing the introduction of the quota system (Orbán, 19.12.2015; see also interview 2B). Viktor Orbán also noted that the Hungarian response could have been different if the Hungarian government had been

properly consulted (Orbán, 22.09.2016). References to “the Brussels dictate” are reminiscent of the persistent anti-great power sentiments and a strong attachment to national sovereignty in Hungary. At the same time, by frequently highlighting its responsibility for the protection of the external borders of the EU, Hungary signaled its desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs, who deserves a greater political weight and who others should take seriously.

The analysis has laid bare Hungary’s complicated relationship with the EU and some (almost exclusively Western European) Member States. On the one hand, Viktor Orbán and his government repeatedly stressed the commitment of Hungary to the EU and the feeling of belonging to the “family of Europe’s Christian peoples” (Orbán, 11.09.2018). In a 2015 interview with Swiss weekly *Weltwoche*, Viktor Orbán tried to explain Hungary’s precarious position:

“We, however, live in the East, on the historical border of the continent. If we were not in the EU, we could easily find ourselves in the same situation as Ukraine. From a historical perspective, Ukraine should be in the EU. But at this point in time does it truly belong to Europe? If we do not want to be a second Ukraine, if we do not want a country in the twilight between two worlds, Hungary must belong to the EU. It is about our identity” (Orbán, 11.12.2015).

Accordingly, Hungarian decision makers have advocated against a two-speed Europe or any kind of a core and periphery constellation (Orbán, 10.03.2017). On the other hand, they have criticized the functioning of the EU and warned against a gradual weakening of national competencies as a consequence of deeper European integration (Orbán, 19.12.2015). More importantly, in the past few years, the Hungarian government has put increased emphasis on Hungarians’ identity as Central Europeans, claiming the economic development of the Central European region to be decisive for the success of the EU over the coming years (Orbán, 08.02.2016). This “turning the tables” argument is best expressed in the following statement by Viktor Orbán:

“So we are not receiving or requesting aid, but are a self-aware community which gives at least as much to the EU as the EU gives us. And we may perhaps even venture to say that the older Member States of the European Union profit from their cooperation with us” (Orbán, 30.01.2018).

This kind of emancipation, which corresponds to the principle of *self-preservation*, was apparent from numerous public statements by Hungarian policy makers containing the

narrative that Hungary should better find their own way out of the crisis because the EU could not be relied upon. Hungarian government officials claimed that their approach to the migrant crisis manifested in protecting borders was the most democratic, compliant with the Schengen Agreement, and in the interest of all Europeans, and should therefore be included in solidarity. Hungary's feeling of superiority was reinforced by the belief in unsuccessful integration of immigrants and the emergence of parallel societies in Western Europe as well as the personal conviction that the Hungarian stance on migration was becoming a jointly held position in Europe.

The principle of *proximity*, in Hungary's case characterized by a lacking sense of togetherness with the EU and its Member States, was closely intertwined with the principle of *deservingness*, which manifested itself in several forms. Viktor Orbán assigned the moral responsibility for the crisis to other Member States, blaming them for the problems in the Middle East and North Africa (former Western colonial powers), for the implementation of unilateral decisions (Germany), or for not following the rules and so contributing to the erosion of trust in the EU (Greece). Although he emphasized on several occasions that Hungary sympathized with states such as Greece and their plight, Orbán simultaneously evoked the (historical) "debt" by Western European countries toward Hungary as a result of their lacking solidarity. In addition, he made the liberal governments in Europe with their "politically correct approach to migration" responsible for the, in his eyes, poorly managed migration crisis and the surge in illegal immigration, questioning their deservingness of Hungarian support (Orbán, 29.06.2017).²⁸⁷ As regards the quota, the Hungarian government highlighted Hungary's own vulnerability as a frontier Member State facing migration pressures and the resulting *need* to be helped by others.

When it comes to refugees, the lacking feeling of any kind of *proximity* proved decisive for expressing solidarity with the incoming people.²⁸⁸ The Hungarian government often underscored the impossibility of living with and integrating people from cultures other than

²⁸⁷ At the National Conservatism conference organized in February 2020, Viktor Orbán once again shared his conviction that "the liberal governments failed to protect their own citizens, they failed to protect their own borders, and the security of their own citizens, and stop illegal migration, so it means that liberal governments failed" (Orbán, 04.02.2020).

²⁸⁸ The principle of *proximity* also helps explain why the Hungarian reaction to the migrant and refugee crisis stands in stark contrast to the solidarity expressed during the Balkan Wars and toward Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries.

Christian, referring to the Christian roots of Hungarian identity (Orbán, 23.09.2015). Viktor Orbán also used the “incompatibility of cultures” argument to warn Hungarians about the possibility of losing their culture, customs, and way of life. In addition, not only the religious but especially the ethnic homogeneity of the Hungarian population and the lack of contact with foreign cultures made it easier for the Hungarian government to argue for keeping Hungary as a country of Hungarians and reject multiculturalism.

The missing feelings of connectedness and compassion were also reflected in the other principles. By suggesting that asylum seekers were no “genuine refugees” but rather economic migrants seeking a better life, their *need* and *deservingness* to obtain solidarity was put into question. Through portraying asylum seekers as potential terrorists, criminals, and people unwilling to integrate and comply with local laws, the Hungarian government further undermined their credibility and eligibility for help.

At the same time, Hungary’s desire to be a recognized European player as well as its conviction of being able to offer better solutions than others have been apparent from multiple statements. The Hungarian idea of solidarity is to protect the external borders, build hotspots in other countries, and address the root causes of migration (interviews 2R & 2U). In this sense, the Hungarian government has promised to protect Christian minorities in the Middle East and Africa and increase humanitarian assistance as a form of financial solidarity (interviews 2A & 2C).

Table 12 synthesizes the identity-solidarity nexus in Hungary’ approach to the refugee and migrant crisis, as elaborated above.

Table 12: Identity-solidarity nexus (the refugee and migrant crisis & Hungary)

Identity element	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
Sense of victimhood and anti-great power sentiments	References to “the Brussels dictate” and the possibility of losing national independence and sovereignty as a result of foreign influence	Hungary’s own vulnerability as compared to other Member States (facing migration pressures, small size, etc.)	Securitization of migration (refugees accused of non-compliance and malevolent motives such as terrorism) Use of historical analogies (comparing the occupation by the Ottoman Turks to the migration influx)	
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West			Certain (Western European) Member States made partially responsible for the crisis Accusations of lacking (historical) solidarity with Hungary	
Strong attachment to national sovereignty	Primacy of national sovereignty; “domestic gains” more important than “international losses” Fierce criticism of unilateral decisions by some Member States	References to the possibility of losing national independence and sovereignty as a result of foreign influence (own need)	Fierce criticism of unilateral decisions by some EU Member States (the migrant and the refugee crisis presented as the “German problem”)	
Inferiority and superiority complex	Notion of existing double standards in the EU	Hungary’s own vulnerability as compared to other Member States		Hungary, as a small country, unable to offer the same benefits to asylum seekers as other EU Member States Hungary’s pioneering role in upholding core democratic principles of the EU Hungary superior to the West (criticism of open migration policies leading to the emergence of parallel societies, terrorist attacks, etc.)
National pride	Hungary occupying the moral high ground (as compared to		Self-perception as an upholder of EU law, as opposed to other Member States	Hungary occupying the moral high ground (as compared to other

	other Member States) by listening to the will of its people		disregarding their obligations under the Schengen Agreement	Member States) by listening to the will of its people Highlighting the role of Hungary as the first line of defense
Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs		Expressing willingness to show solidarity toward people in need (“genuine refugees”)	Self-perception as an upholder of EU law, as opposed to other Member States disregarding their obligations under the Schengen Agreement	Responsibility as a frontier state to protect the EU’s external borders Hungarian solidarity focused on guarding Europe and on humanitarian support targeted toward protecting Christian minorities in the Middle East
Perception of belonging to the West versus the policy of “Opening up toward the East”	Western Europe viewed as an example of unsuccessful coexistence of civilizationally different populations and the emergence of parallel societies			Hungary’s need to rely on itself due to the lack of a common European solution Hungary superior to the West
Solidarity toward Hungarian minorities	Greater solidarity during the Balkan wars in the 1990s than during the 2015/2016 crisis			
Homogeneity of the Hungarian population	Hungary as a country of Hungarians; rejection of multiculturalism Lack of exposure to foreign cultures and the construction of a common enemy “Roma-refugees parallel”	Lack of contact leading to false perceptions of the plight of the incoming people	Lack of contact leading to false perceptions of the plight of the incoming people and their deservingness of help	Western Europe viewed as an example of unsuccessful coexistence of civilizationally different populations and the emergence of parallel societies → rejection of multiculturalism in Hungary
Religious underpinning of Hungarian identity & attachment to traditional family values	Preservation of national identity framed as an existential question & greater focus on the Christian roots of Hungarian identity Islamophobic statements	Solidarity almost exclusively only with persecuted Christians from the Middle East and Africa	Refugees and migrants framed as adherents of radical Islam Argument that people belonging to different cultures and religions would not be willing to observe the Hungarian laws and customs	Hungarian solidarity contribution focused on humanitarian support targeted toward protecting Christian minorities in the Middle East

Source: Own table

Chapter 14: Poland & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis

A good Christian is someone who helps, not necessarily by accepting refugees.

—Elżbieta Witek, Polish government spokeswoman (16.10.2015)

14.1 Solidarity Behavior

The Polish response to the migrant and refugee crisis has been one of the least welcoming in Europe, despite the fact that Poland, located outside the main migration route, was not much affected by the crisis (interviews 3B & 3E). The number of third country nationals who applied for international protection in Poland was 11,345 in 2015, which was a 50% increase compared to 2014 (Central Statistical Office of Poland 2016). Nevertheless, most of these people came from Russia (71%, mainly from Chechnya) and Ukraine (20%).²⁸⁹ Similarly, in 2016, 12,321 persons applied for international protection in Poland, with Russians and Ukrainians again constituting the clear majority of all applicants (Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 6). These developments at the height of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe were in line with a longer trend. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, refugees coming to Poland have mostly been from the Eastern European and Caucasus regions, which have been affected by military conflicts, political turmoil, and economic hardship (Szulecka et al. 2018). In addition to receiving applications for international protection, Poland, affected by labor shortage, has been facilitating economic immigration from third countries, mainly Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova (interview 3B; Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018). Ukraine is a prime example of this refugee–economic migration “interrelation” typical for Poland. In the face of the military, political, and economic developments in Ukraine following the 2013/2014 Euromaidan protests and due to geographical proximity, Ukrainians constitute by far the largest group of immigrants living in Poland (I. Józwiak and Piechowska 2017).

The low number of asylum applications from the Middle East and North Africa even at the height of the migration and refugee crisis signals that only very few refugees seem to want to come to Poland (Narkowicz 2018).²⁹⁰ Numerous sources confirm that Poland is not a

²⁸⁹ Only 100 people, that is less than 1%, came from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, and Turkey (Central Statistical Office of Poland 2016).

²⁹⁰ In 2015, there were only 295 Syrian asylum seekers in Poland, from which 203 were granted refugee status (Central Statistical Office of Poland 2016).

destination but rather a transit country for asylum seekers coming to the EU from regions such as the Middle East (interview 3B; Szulecka et al. 2018, 19-20). Overall, Poland still remains a country of emigration (Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018).

Government Response

Although the migration and refugee crisis affected Poland to a much lesser extent than other EU member states, Poland was one of the main opponents of the EU plan for the redistribution of refugees (Segeš Frelak 2015). However, in contrast to the fellow Visegrad Group countries, Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz from the then ruling party Civic Platform voted in September 2015 in favor of the proposed plan, which would have seen 7,000 asylum seekers, mainly from Syria and Eritrea, resettled in Poland (Bachman 2016; Kratochvíl 2015).²⁹¹ Although Kopacz's final decision safeguarded the international reputation of Poland, she and her government were exposed to a strong criticism from the remaining V4 members as well as the domestic opposition. The main critical voice at home came from the national-conservative PiS party of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who accused the government of committing treason on their own country and the Visegrad friends (Segeš Frelak 2015, 45). The Polish pro-quota approach did not have a long duration, though, only until the parliamentary elections of October 2015, which were marked by a landmark victory of PiS.

Experts therefore largely agree that the Polish reaction to the migration and refugee crisis needs to be seen in the political context or, more precisely, under the lens of the heated electoral contest. They contend that the Polish political debate ahead of the elections and the related campaign provided a very crucial point for forming a negative picture around the migration and refugee crisis and marked the beginning of the medialization and politicization of the whole issue. All political parties took a rather hard stance on refugees and immigrants, particularly Muslims (Pedziwiatr 2017). The PiS party's main electoral message was "We will not accept a single refugee" and they won largely on that promise (interview 3D). Once in power, PiS introduced a number of changes that shifted the course of the Polish attitude toward migrants and refugees (Narkowicz 2018; Segeš Frelak 2015, 46).

²⁹¹ Karolina Czerska-Shaw points out in this context that the picture is not completely black and white, as the Civic Platform government was also quite reluctant to accept the quota (interview 3B).

For example, in 2016, when xenophobia and intolerance as well as hate crimes against immigrants and minority groups were on the rise, PiS abolished Poland's Council for the Prevention of Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was responsible for addressing racial discrimination (Narkowicz 2018). More alarmingly, the new government first suspended and then, in March 2017, completely abolished the Polish Migration Policy document developed by the previous government. Although the PiS government argued that it was the unexpected escalation of the refugee and migrant crisis, together with an increase of immigration from Ukraine, that informed the decision, experts on Polish affairs agree that the measure was equally driven by the government's refusal to embrace plurality (interviews with CMR experts 2018; Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 9). A new strategy, whose draft was leaked to the media at the end of June 2019, aroused significant controversy among migration experts and NGOs, including the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and the Committee for Migration Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The strategy foresees a "reasonably conducted" policy with regard to legal economic migration, but only from selected areas of the world that are Christian (Szulecka et al. 2018, 22-23). In the words of Karolina Czerska-Shaw, the document basically states: "We want and we need foreign workers but we also want to choose from where we want them" (interview 3B).²⁹²

At the same time, while acknowledging the new demographic reality in Poland, including low fertility rates, ageing population, and the depopulation of the country, Polish government officials only rarely speak about the growing need for migrant workers. When Deputy Minister for Regional Development, Paweł Chorąży, claimed in 2018 that the country needed more economic immigrants and it would therefore be good to start attracting people from other regions than Eastern Europe, he was (indirectly) fired for his bold, pro-migration statements (interview 3D). Meanwhile, according to the Eurostat, in 2016, 2017, and 2018, Poland issued the highest number of employment-related residence permits for third-country nationals among all EU Member States (Eurostat 2017, 2018, 2019a). A large majority of those permits were work visas given to workers from Ukraine.²⁹³

²⁹² The Polish government shows a clear preference for economic migrants from Poland's direct neighborhood and the facilitation of inflow of people of Polish origin (Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 9).

²⁹³ Overall, there are now over two million Ukrainians working in Poland, yet Ukrainian migration still remains very peripheral to the political agenda (interviews with CMR experts 2018).

After PiS came to power, Poland withdrew from the originally declared number of asylum seekers to be accepted under the relocation and resettlement schemes proposed by the European Commission within the framework of the European Agenda on Migration (Szulecka et al. 2018, 23). Instead, the Polish government formulated a list of its own priorities in responding to the migration situation in the European context. These included strengthening internal security and the protection of the EU's external borders as well as greater assistance and support to third countries affected by migratory pressure (Szulecka et al. 2018). Furthermore, the government expressed resolute opposition to the proposed mechanism of compulsory relocation of asylum seekers, stating that it was their sovereign right to decide who would come to Poland (Szydło, 06.09.2016).

Ultimately, Poland participated neither in the relocation nor the resettlement scheme (European Commission 2017e; Szulecka et al. 2018; Zachová et al. 2017). The government's refusal to accept their share of refugees prompted the European Commission to launch a legal case against Poland in June 2017. At the beginning of April 2020, the CJEU ruled that Poland—as well as Hungary and the Czech Republic—had violated the EU law by resisting to comply with the emergency relocation measures, thus failing to help ease the strain on the countries on the European external borders hosting large numbers of asylum seekers (Stevis-Gridneff and Pronczuk 2020b). Reacting to the Court's decision, the Polish government said in a statement that

“the refusal to comply with the relocation mechanism was dictated by the need to protect Poland's internal security and defend it against uncontrolled migration. The most important goal of government policy is to ensure the safety of our citizens” (quoted in Stevis-Gridneff and Pronczuk 2020b).

Societal Response

In Poland, public attitudes toward receiving refugees and welcoming migrants underwent a significant reversal. Although Poles have traditionally held some of the most pro-immigration views in Europe, based on the data from the European Social Survey and the World Values Survey, their stance has not been so welcoming toward Muslims (Bachman 2016). While, on average, 60% of Poles are in favor of accepting Ukrainian refugees, a vast majority is against receiving refugees from the Middle East and Africa (Wiącek 2017). Polish acceptance of Middle Eastern refugees sharply declined in the peak months of the Europe's

migration and refugee crisis, from 46% in September 2015 to 30% in December 2015 (CBOS 2015b). In addition, according to numerous polls conducted by the Polish Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) in 2015 and 2016, the percentage of respondents, who were against receiving refugees from areas affected by military conflicts, almost tripled in less than one year, from 21% in May 2015 to 61% in April 2016 (CBOS 2015b, 2016a). This significant decline in public support for accepting refugees occurred against the background of the Polish parliamentary elections in October 2015 and the Paris terror attacks in November 2015 (Bachman 2016; CBOS 2016a). Over time, the skeptical view held by the public has consolidated, and Poles have transformed from careful supporters to staunch opponents of letting refugees into the country. In research polls conducted by CBOS, from December 2015 throughout September 2016, only a quarter of respondents stated that they would accept refugees from the Middle East and Africa (CBOS 2015b, 2016a).

Looking at the polling data, it becomes apparent that there are multiple reasons for rising Islamophobic and anti-refugee sentiments in Poland (Bachman 2016). One important factor has certainly been the strong anti-immigration rhetoric by PiS members, who have been securitizing the migration issue and exploiting fears of immigration as part of their political tactic (interview 3D; Krzyżanowska and Krzyżanowski 2018, 612). When asked about their reasons for rejecting refugees from the Middle East and Africa, in a polling from September 2015, 44% of respondents mentioned the lack of resources and the country's preparedness, while almost the same number, 41%, cited threats such as crime, terrorism, and competition on the labor market (CBOS 2015b). The fear of terrorism increased considerably after the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris and Saint-Denis and then declined again in the second half of 2016 (CBOS 2015b, 2016b). Besides security concerns, religion and traditional values undoubtedly play an important role in Poland. Polish citizens often cite the religious element of Poland's national identity and the cultural distance between the Polish society and the North African and Middle Eastern refugees (CBOS 2015a).

Some authors also mention the broader phenomenon of growing political polarization of the Polish society (interview 3B; Narkowicz 2018). In fact, the Polish society has been deeply divided with respect to the refugee issue. On the one hand, the public sphere was dominated by a wave of hate commentaries on the Internet and anti-refugee demonstrations like "Today refugees, tomorrow terrorists!," "Poland, free of Islam!," and "We want repatriates instead

of immigrants” (Bachman 2016; Segeš Frelak 2015, 46). Some far-right nationalist groups, such as Ruch Narodowy (National Movement) and the ONR (National-Radical Camp), and anti-Muslim groups such as SIOE (Stop Islamisation of Europe) and Polska Liga Obrony (Polish Defence League), were associated with incidents of attacks on minorities (Narkowicz 2018). On the other hand, as a counterforce against growing racist attitudes and violence in Poland, pro-refugee mobilization occurred across the Polish society, especially on the municipal and grassroots levels.²⁹⁴ Masses of people advocating for accepting refugees and greater inclusion organized or participated in demonstrations under the motto “Refugees, Welcome” and held the Polish Day of Solidarity with Refugees at the height of the crisis, on 15 October 2015 (Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018; Wiącek 2017).²⁹⁵ Moreover, public support for human rights organizations working to raise awareness for the rights of refugees and combat discrimination, such as Amnesty International Poland or Never Again, increased and new organizations on the grassroots level were established. These included for example the initiatives Chlebem i Solą, which aims at challenging stereotypes by spreading awareness about the situation of refugees and immigrants in Poland and Europe, or Refugees Welcome Polska, which brings Poles into direct contact with refugees through living in shared flats (Morath 2017).²⁹⁶ Furthermore, some activists traveled to Italy and Greece and expressed solidarity by helping on the ground. Members of academia have also attempted to spread positive messages and so influence the Polish debate on migration.

Other Actors: The Media and the Church

Stereotypical anti-refugee narratives have been perpetuated by the Polish media. Some outlets, particularly those supporting the PiS government’s positions, provided one-sided

²⁹⁴ On the municipal level, cities such as Warsaw, which has the biggest concentration of migrants, Gdań k, Poznań, Wrocław, Kraków, or Lublin have been developing their own programs of integration of migrants. To put one example, “Open Krakow” is a cooperation between the municipal government and communities as well as NGOs that deal with integration, multiculturalism, diversity issues, and similar topics (interview 3B). More importantly, it has become visible that the opposition party is much stronger on the local levels. In the run up to the regional municipal elections in 2018, the PiS party made a video, which showed the future reality of 2025 if the Civic Platform were the ruling party. It displayed chaos on the streets, migration leading to terrorist attacks, and other dystopic images, which were supposed to spread fear and create moral panic. However, the video completely backfired, with even the right-wing media saying that this was too much (interviews 3B & 3D).

²⁹⁵ Aside from calling for solidarity with people in need, they also underlined the undergoing demographic change and the related needs of the Polish labor market (Segeš Frelak 2015, 46).

²⁹⁶ Although the Polish government had an EU asylum and integration migration fund, it stopped applications for funding. As a consequence, Polish pro-migration NGOs had to deal with serious cuts in their budgets (interview 3B).

coverage and a generally negative representation of migrants and refugees.²⁹⁷ They frequently portrayed Muslim refugees as a threat and compared the migration and refugee crisis to natural and other disasters (Krzyżanowska and Krzyżanowski 2018; Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018). For example, the covers of the right-wing media outlets *Sieci* and *DoRzeczy* carried slogans such as “September 2015, they are coming” or “They are invaders, not refugees” (Pedziwiatr 2017). They also accused other European media of deliberately playing down the problems arising from immigration in the name of political correctness. Following the New Year’s Eve sexual assaults in Cologne and other European cities, the right-wing Polish weekly magazine *Sieci* caused outrage across Europe. The cover of its February 2016 edition depicted a young blond woman who was screaming while darker-skinned male hands were ripping apart the EU flag draped loosely around her body and the heading said “Islamski Gwałt na Europe” (“Islamic Rape of Europe”) (Wiącek 2017, 178). As a consequence, many experts contend that the public media largely contributed to the hysteria and stirred the already existing fears (interviews 3B & 3H).

Similar to the polarized Polish society, the Polish Catholic Church has also been considerably divided over their stance on refugees. The “pro-refugee Church” adopted the welcoming approach of Pope Francis and stressed the fact that Polish people were refugees themselves (interviews 3A & 3B).²⁹⁸ Although still regarded a moral authority by the majority of the Polish population, the Pope’s position on refugees was not embraced by everyone in Poland. Pope Francis’ calls for Christian solidarity were overshadowed by the “anti-refugee Church,” which followed the line set by the ruling PiS party (interview 3H).²⁹⁹ The most radical public critic of Islam and (Muslim) refugees has been former priest Jacek Międlar, who had to resign his priesthood in 2016 but has remained a public figure. His sermons and teachings are in line with far-right Catholic nationalism. In addition, *Radio Maryja*, created by another priest,

²⁹⁷ The interviewed experts largely agree that the difference in coverage between the public media and the private newscast was jaw-dropping and felt like living in two completely different countries (interviews 3B & 3F).

²⁹⁸ On 26 October 2016, Pope Francis stated: that “closing doors is not the solution. ... We all have the duty of welcoming our brother who flees from war, hunger, or violence” (Pope Francis, 2016; quoted in Narkowicz 2018). Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek from the more liberal wing of the Polish Catholic Church told the press that “not accepting refugees practically means resigning from being a Christian” and added that he was “ashamed of those who don’t want to do their duty not just as Christians but as human beings” (quoted in Cienski 2017).

²⁹⁹ Since the elections in 2015, the PiS government has strived to reinforce a national Catholic identity in Poland and maintain an ever-closer relationship with the Church. Kasia Narkowicz stresses in this context that, while the Polish Catholic Church has historically played a key political role in Poland and “has always been a political Church, it has not always been on the side of the ruling power” (Narkowicz 2018).

Tadeusz Rydzyk, has also focused on spreading the reactionary traditionalist or conservative form of Catholicism and religious nationalism (interview 3D; Goździak and Márton 2018; Narkowicz 2018).

14.2 Motives of Solidarity

The conflict lines running between the pro-refugee and anti-refugee political elites, the Polish society, and the Church point to a broader and more complex identity conflict within the Polish nation. The following section aims to dissect the reasons behind this polarization and determine various identity elements and other contributing factors that have stimulated a predominantly dismissive attitude toward foreigners in general and refugees from the Middle East and Africa in particular. Even if some of the presented arguments might not have been internalized by the Polish political elites but were instead intentionally instrumentalized for political purposes, such as during the presidential and parliamentary election campaigns of 2015, they have resonated within the wider public, thus reflecting some deeply rooted values (see also Morath 2017). In addition, the discourse analysis of the Polish political debate has helped to show the extent to which the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* were used as a justification for the government's decisions and actions.

Proximity

The solidarity principle of *proximity* can help explain both Poland's reluctance to participate in an EU-wide solution to the refugee and migrant crisis and its much more welcoming attitude toward Ukrainians than toward people coming from the Middle East and Africa.

Sovereignty Concerns & Moral Superiority

The analysis has shown that, in Poland, the sense of attachment to the EU might be fading away. According to the interviewed experts, Poland's reaction to the migration and refugee crisis created the impression as if the EU was not something that Poland was an inherent part of (interviews 3B & 3J). Natasza Styczyńska compares the relationship of Poland toward the EU to the relationship between the Santa Claus and a kid: "It is an abstract and imaginary figure that Poles want to come and drop off presents, but, similar to Santa, it should not tell them what to do" (interview 3J). Karolina Czerska-Shaw adds that presenting the EU as an

“imagined community,” as opposed to the “real” Polish national community, shifts the idea of solidarity back to the national level (interview 3B). Accordingly, the political discourse in Poland was dominated by references to national sovereignty and an intentional opposition to the “dictates” of the West. It is, however, also important to note that the Civic Platform government and the PiS government reacted very differently to appeals to European solidarity.

On the one hand, Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz stressed several times that Poland “has always supported the European solidarity and the values we fought for ourselves for a long time. We don’t avert our eyes from our European partners and mainly from the tragedy of the people who, risking their lives, reach our continent” (Kopacz, 03.09.2015). She justified her government’s decision to participate in the European relocation scheme by emphasizing Poland’s belonging to Europe and by making clear that Poland’s reliability in the EU was at stake. During an extraordinary session of the Sejm in September 2015, she stated: “Turning our back to those who need help in this great European family makes us leave this community morally and mentally” (Kopacz, 16.09.2015).

On the other hand, the plea to accept refugees as part of the EU relocation scheme was presented by the PiS government as an unwanted imposition, an attempt of the EU to undermine Poland’s sovereignty (Narkowicz 2018). Then Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło referred to the proposed automatic relocation scheme as “blackmail” (Szydło, 24.05.2017).³⁰⁰ Other Polish politicians portrayed the EU as a new colonizer (interview 3B). Due to the complicated history of foreign domination and years of lost territorial and political independence, Polish national identity is considered to contain strong attachment to the idea of sovereignty. Correspondingly, in the political discourse, statements dominated that Poland must resist the “Brussels dictate” and keep their own way of doing things (interviews 3B & 3G).³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ During a parliamentary debate on the topic of security, Szydło declared, among other things, that “Poland would not submit to any blackmail on the part of the European Union on accepting refugees” and “was not going to take part in the madness of the Brussel elites” (Szydło, 24.05.2017).

³⁰¹ The importance of national sovereignty was reiterated also in other statements of Polish politicians, sometimes in connection with references to historical betrayal. When the EU criticized the transformation of Polish judicial system as an attempt to undermine the independence of the Polish judiciary, President Andrzej Duda dismissed the EU as an “imaginary community” and underscored that “Poles have the right to have their expectations toward Europe, especially the Europe that left us at the mercy of Russians in 1945” (Santora and Berendt 2018).

Angela Merkel's welcoming attitude toward refugees was condemned as absurd and Western experience with immigration and integration as a failure (interviews 3C & 3G). In this respect, Karolina Czerska-Shaw stresses that, for Poland, the "looking glass" has always been the West, however, since the migration and refugee crisis, voices have been getting louder that the "decadent, multi-culti ideology of the West" is going to be the demise of the European civilization (interview 3B).³⁰² Highlighting the incompatibility of cultures, the "clash of civilizations," is Poland's way of saying that they know what is best for Europe because they are the Eastern borderland and the last frontier of Christianity. They claim that they are protecting Europe not only from foreign influences but also from itself by trying to maintain the "proper" cultural, i.e., Christian, character of Europe (interviews 3A, 3B & 3C).

In addition to illustrating Poland's loosening attachment to the EU, the proximity principle helps illuminate why the Polish government has pursued a very selective migration policy, showing a strong preference for Ukrainians and similar nationalities that are white and Christian (interviews 3B, 3D, 3G & 3H).

Ethnic and Religious Homogeneity and "Platonic Islamophobia"

Some authors bring up the argument that, due to the major transition from communism to a liberal order, increasing globalization and international mobility, and challenges related to these global phenomena, populations in Central and Eastern Europe may feel uprooted and disoriented. To counter their fear of potential identity loss, they tend to "cling to their traditions and values even more strongly in an attempt to reaffirm their identity and create a feeling of stability or rather security" (Morath 2017). Accordingly, the Polish discourse during the migration and refugee crisis was built around cultural-identity arguments based on a multitude of stereotypes and prejudices, portraying refugees as a threat that would destroy the Polish culture and its Christian values.

Experts agree that one of the major factors, if not the major factor, behind anti-refugee and anti-Muslim views is Poland's religious and ethnic homogeneity (Balogun 2020; Jaskulowski 2019; Narkowicz 2018; Wiącek 2017). Although historically a multinational, multicultural

³⁰² Interior Minister Mariusz Błaszczak warned in this context that succumbing to the EU pressure to accept refugees "is a straight road to a social catastrophe, with the result that in a few years Warsaw could look like Brussels" (quoted in Cienski 2017).

state, the current Poland has one of the most homogenous societies in the world, with non-nationals representing less than 1% of the population (Cudzoziemców 2020). In addition, unlike many of the countries in Western Europe, Poland in contemporary history had only limited experience with foreigners and different cultures (interview 3C). For a long time, it was a country of emigration. During the long communist period, there were almost no migrants entering Poland (Szulecka et al. 2018, 21).³⁰³ Only since its accession to the EU in 2004 has Poland increased its attractiveness also as a destination country and experienced increased immigration flows, mostly from Eastern Europe (Misiuna and Pachocka 2014; Szulecka et al. 2018).³⁰⁴ Therefore, with little ethnic and religious diversity and lacking experience with foreigners, common misconceptions about Muslims and Islam easily resonate with existing mistrust and fear of the unknown.³⁰⁵

Although a small Muslim population has been living in Poland for centuries, there had been almost no recorded negative stigmatization directed against them up until the 2000s (Morath 2017). This perception has changed against the background of the terrorist attacks happening in several European cities and elsewhere in the world, resulting in growing verbal aggressions and physical violence directed against minorities in Poland (Narkowicz 2018). At the height of the crisis in 2015, politicians from both the right-wing spectrum as well as the liberal mainstream expressed Islamophobic sentiments. For example, Katarzyna Bielańska from the Civic Platform compared dark-skinned refugees to a black burger bun and her campaign posters read “Yes to black burgers, no to refugees” (Narkowicz 2018).

Kasia Narkowitz calls the Polish experience “Islamophobia without Muslims” or “platonic Islamophobia,” referring to the population’s resentment toward practically non-existent Muslims in the country (Narkowicz 2018). In Poland, a country of 38 million people, there is an estimated Muslim population of only 35,000, which is less than 0.1%.³⁰⁶ At the same time, approximately 96% of the population declare adherence to the Roman Catholic Church,

³⁰³ According to available statistics, “between 1949 and 1990, on average, from one to three thousand immigrants were registered annually” (Szulecka et al. 2018, 21). In contrast, as a consequence of colonialism and other historical developments, Western Europe has more experience with different cultures (interviews with CMR experts 2018).

³⁰⁴ At the same time, many Poles have left the country to work in Western Europe, especially in the United Kingdom and Germany (Szulecka et al. 2018, 22).

³⁰⁵ In 2016, only 28% of Polish respondents declared having contact with foreigners, mainly Ukrainians, which was still an increase compared to 2015, when the percentage was mere 19% (IOM 2016).

³⁰⁶ Nevertheless, numerous polls have shown that Poles tend to significantly overestimate the presence of Muslims in their country (Ipsos 2016; Narkowicz and Pedziwiatr 2017).

which makes Poland one of the most religiously homogeneous countries in Europe and the world (interview 3C). When questions about the connection between solidarity and the Christian faith were raised, Elżbieta Witek, the spokesperson of the PiS government, argued that “*a good Christian is one who helps, not necessarily by accepting refugees*” (quoted in Narkowicz 2018). The government’s official rhetoric indeed was that it would welcome refugees as long as they were not Muslims (Narkowicz 2018).

It is the small size of the Muslim population, the lack of real contact with them, and the generally limited knowledge of immigration that stirs up the pre-existing stereotypes and prejudices of Poles. Their “fear of the unknown” has been further exacerbated by the media and the ruling government. Anti-Muslim sentiments in Poland have been fueled by orchestrated linkages between Islam and terrorism, arguments about their alleged unwillingness to integrate within the receiving societies, and references to their different culture and religion (Goździak and Márton 2018; Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018). Catholicism constitutes one of the main pillars of Polish national identity and, as explained earlier, the Polish Church has been divided over the refugee issue, with the more influential conservative wing sharing the governing PiS party’s rejective position and employing a strategy of othering Islam (interview 3B; Morath 2017; Wiącek 2017).³⁰⁷

The narratives about the incompatibility of cultures help illuminate why both the government and the public have been much more open to accepting Ukrainian refugees. Refugees and immigrants from Eastern Europe are perceived as ethnically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically alike, and are expected to integrate or assimilate more easily (interviews 3D & 3H). Historically, Ukrainian migrants have been indispensable for the Polish economy as seasonal workers and labor force in low-paid jobs (Morath 2017). In addition, Polish experience of dominance over the Eastern Borderlands and the historically determined sense of superiority in relation to the East have created a feeling of responsibility and a paternalistic attitude toward these Eastern European regions (Mayblin et al. 2016b).

³⁰⁷ In October 2017, there was a mass rosary held on the borders of Poland to pray for Poland and Europe. Over a million people were holding hands as a symbol for Poland being the bastion of Christianity and for keeping the “Muslim other” out (interview 3B).

Need

Looking at the second principle of *need*, where no special bond or feelings of attachment are a necessary precondition for expressing solidarity, it becomes clear that, in the Polish political discourse, there was a lack of acknowledgment of the need to help fellow EU Member States most affected by the crisis. On the individual level, the moral or humanitarian obligation to help people in need was recognized.³⁰⁸ However, such a help was intended to be of a financial nature, delivering assistance to the asylum seekers' countries of origin rather than providing the fleeing populations with refuge (Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 24). In addition, the Polish political elites and the media often tried to downplay the challenges faced by incoming refugees (Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 19).

Helping Outside Europe & Solidarity with States under Migratory Pressure

When responding to appeals to European solidarity, Polish government officials often highlighted their own country's specific contribution to addressing the need of both refugees and fellow Member States. On the one hand, the Polish government argued that it was offering financial help to hosting communities, delivering humanitarian assistance in countries of origin, and helping during post-conflict reconstruction, because it regarded this approach as more effective than taking in refugees.³⁰⁹ At a press conference after the European Council summit in December 2015, Beata Szydło said:

“I'm satisfied with the decision concerning migration issues, because Poland's position, which we presented since the beginning of the problem which appeared in Europe, was confirmed. ... The migration problem should be solved, in the first place, outside the European Union's borders” (Szydło, 18.12.2015).

With regard to the automatic refugee relocation mechanism, Polish Interior Minister Mariusz Błaszczak declared after the meeting of Ministers of Internal Affairs of Visegrad Group countries and Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia that the redistribution mechanism only “attracts more and more migrants” (Polish Ministry of the Interior 2016; see also Błaszczak

³⁰⁸ During an extraordinary Sejm session dedicated to the topic of refugees, Ewa Kopacz posed the following rhetorical question: “Can we today afford a gesture of solidarity towards those who flee their country? Can a 40-million nation afford today a gesture of solidarity towards those who need this help?” (Kopacz, 16.09.2015).

³⁰⁹ Szydło reiterated at numerous occasions Poland's promise of increased development assistance and humanitarian aid for countries of refugees' origin to help local people in need (see, for example, Szydło, 29.11.2015, 04.02.2016, 08.06.2016, 26.08.2016, 16.12.2016, 07.04.2017, 11.04.2017).

11.04.2017). In addition, Błaszczak and other government officials underscored Poland's expertise in border management issues, the country's long-lasting contribution to protecting the EU's external borders, and the "solidarity service" of Polish border guards helping in other countries, such as Macedonia (interview 3E).

Deservingness

The third principle of *deservingness* has disclosed that, in Poland, neither the refugees nor the EU and its Member States were perceived as particularly deserving of Polish solidarity. Instead of focusing on the plight of refugees, security and economic concerns dominated the political discourse. As will be shown below, presenting refugees as potential terrorists or economic migrants, who merely want to receive government aid and social benefits, can generate mistrust of their genuine needs and intents and distort the public's understanding of their plight and entitlement to receiving solidarity.

Securitization of Migration

PiS was domestically successful in securitizing the issue of migration and using the potential threat of terrorism as a justification for not welcoming refugees (interviews with CMR experts 2018; Narkowicz 2018). After the terrorist attacks in Brussels in March 2016, Prime Minister Beata Szydło made known that Poland would not accept any refugees under the relocation plan (Bachman 2016). Government spokesperson Elżbieta Witek also repeatedly compared refugees to a severe security threat. This is just one example of her statements: "The number of refugees is currently so big that no one can control it and we have said repeatedly that we cannot let the enemy into our home" (Narkowicz 2018). The government's rhetoric about the threat of Muslim terrorists coming to Europe to destroy the European (Christian) civilization amplified feelings of insecurity present in the Polish society.³¹⁰ According to different opinion polls, around two thirds of Poles believed that the presence of refugees would increase the likelihood of terrorism in Poland (interviews 3G & 3L; Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 10).

³¹⁰ In 2017, Beata Szydło declared that "in the context of building the security of Poland, we must address the greatest security crisis of the European community, which is the migration crisis" (Szydło, 24.05.2017).

The security dimension also contained other components, including health-related, religious, and economic ones (interview 3C). First, Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the PiS party, said that refugees could bring diseases and parasites to Poland, and other politicians also linked migration from the Middle East to the possible emergence of dangerous diseases (Narkowicz 2018; Wiącek 2017, 170).³¹¹ Second, PiS presented refugees from the Middle East as being religiously and culturally alien and Poles as being summoned to preserve the traditional Christian values. And third, many of the arguments can be subsumed as economic fears. The official communication was that taking in refugees would overstrain the economic capacities of Poland. Despite continually decreasing unemployment, people feared loss of jobs as a consequence of refugees overflowing the labor market (Morath 2017). In addition, Polish political elites argued that giving social benefits to refugees would pose an economic burden on Poland and underscored that governmental support should first and foremost be directed at Poles (Petelczyc 2018; interviews 3C & 3E). In addition to highlighting the need of their own citizens and the state's primary duty to take care of them, arguments were raised that Poland was not as wealthy as most Western European countries and should therefore bear a lesser burden (interviews 3C & 3E; Morath 2017).

Little Self-Effort by Refugees

Arguments pointing to little self-effort made on the part of refugees and the resulting missing claim for solidarity were fourfold. First, a recurring argument was that refugees from the Middle East and Africa did not want to live in Poland, but only used it as a transit country to finally settle in Western Europe, and it therefore made no sense to resettle them there (Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 17). Second, related statements referred to the alleged unwillingness of culturally and religiously alien populations from Africa or the Middle East to integrate. Third, it was argued that not all refugees were as desperate as sometimes portrayed.³¹² Instead, the argument went, they were seeking an “easy life” in Europe and therefore did not deserve getting money intended for Polish people or even hardworking immigrants from Ukraine (Mayblin et al. 2016b, 68). And fourth, some attempted to shift the blame, accusing

³¹¹ During the run-up campaign to the elections in 2015, Jarosław Kaczyński warned that migrants carry “all sorts of parasites and protozoa, which ... while not dangerous in the organisms of these people, could be dangerous here” (Kaczyński, quoted in Cienski 2017).

³¹² A frequently expressed complaint was that many refugees possess smartphones and Polish citizens do not (interview 3G; Wiącek 2017, 171).

especially male refugees of running away from war instead of fighting. Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski suggested that Syrian refugees arriving in Europe could be trained with Europe's help to form an army that would liberate their home countries (Stone 2015). Similarly, Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, the leader of the opposition Polish People's Party, stated: "We'll never close the door to orphans, but let the young men fight for the freedom of their countries" (quoted in Cienski 2017).

Some observers were wondering why the Polish attitude toward the incoming refugees was not more compassionate, considering that, for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Poland itself was a country of emigration. Marcin Galent pointed out that the first great wave of Polish emigrants were political refugees in 1832 after the failed November Uprising. These were followed by Polish refugees during and in the aftermath of the Second World War and Polish emigrants during the communist times, especially after the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981 (interview 3D; Wiącek 2017, 174).³¹³ Another great wave of emigration happened as a consequence of Poland's accession to the EU in 2004. Since then, hundreds of thousands of Poles have made use of the free movement provisions and left for greater prosperity to other EU countries (Bachman 2016; BBC News 2006; Wiącek 2017). The interviewed experts remarked that, although Poles themselves had experienced in their collective history what being displaced and seeking refuge felt like, this experience did not translate into greater hospitality (interviews 3B & 3D). While Ewa Kopacz pointed out at the very beginning of the refugee crisis that Poles were also helped out in the past, making an appeal to Polish solidarity—"When we needed help, the West helped us. Today, when others need help, we should do it as fast, professionally and responsibly as we can. This is the meaning of the word 'solidarity'" (Kopacz, 11.07.2015)—similar narratives were completely missing in the PiS government's rhetoric. PiS officials tried to dismiss any charges of hypocrisy by contrasting the situation of fleeing Poles, who worked hard abroad and therefore deserved solidarity, with the situation of people fleeing from the Middle East and Africa, who allegedly only wanted to benefit from European generous social systems (interview 3H; Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 23).

³¹³ In 1981, thousands of Polish refugees were offered political asylum in Austria and provided with food, clothing, and pocket money (Lewis 1981). More importantly, Polish citizens experienced solidarity not only from the West. For example, during the Second World War, around 120,000 fleeing Poles were accepted by Iran (interview 3D).

(Historical) Reciprocity & “Not a Polish Problem”

In reaction to the allegations of lacking solidarity with other Member States, Polish political elites responded by implying the absence of historical reciprocity and solidarity by the EU and its individual Member States toward Poland (interview 3E). They brought up the case of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project, denoting its construction as a violation of the principle of energy solidarity in the EU (Szydło, 18.03.2016; Petelczyc 2018; Wiśniewska 2018). Furthermore, they also disputed the Western support of Central and Eastern European economies through EU cohesion funds. In 2016, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski stated in an interview: “for each euro we get from Brussels, 70 or 80 cents go back to Western Europe because we are buying [its] technology” (Bachman 2016). By his statement, he signaled that Poland did not feel obligated to be involved in a common European response. The denial of any sense of duty to help was underlined by references to lacking historical responsibility on the part of Poland for the ongoing conflicts in the world and the resulting migration situation in Europe. In Poland’s understanding, responsibility and moral obligation toward refugees lies with other European countries with colonial history (interview 3C; Łaciak and Segeš Frelak 2018, 24).

Self-Preservation

Taking into account the perceived capacity of Poland to accept refugees, there were two arguments that circulated in the political discourse, which hinted at the limited potential of Poland to accept refugees from the Middle East and Africa. First, Polish governmental elites consistently argued that the scale of Member States’ involvement should reflect their actual ability to admit refugees (Kopacz, 04.09.2015; Szydło, 06.09.2016). They often pointed to Poland’s insufficient economic capacity, as described above, and argued that it should therefore be burdened less than other, wealthier European countries such as Germany.³¹⁴

Second, Polish government representatives claimed that, due to accepting Ukrainian refugees, the capacity of the country was overstrained, and it was therefore not capable of

³¹⁴ When Ewa Kopacz pledged that Poland would accept its share of refugees under the relocation scheme in 2015, she made sure to emphasize toward the domestic audience that European, not national funding would be ensured: “Everything will be paid for by the European Union. There may be such an option that first Poland will disburse its own funds, and then the EU will reimburse them” (Kopacz, 21.07.2015). In addition, she put forward that Polish solidarity would have to correspond to the country’s possibilities (Kopacz, 05.09.2015).

taking in any more people (interview 3B). In 2015, then Prime Minister Beata Szydło argued that Poland would not participate in the relocation mechanism because the country already welcomed over one million Ukrainian refugees (Szydło, 19.01.2016). It soon became clear that what she referred to was the number of Schengen short-term visas, which is a completely different category (interview 3K; I. Józwiak and Piechowska 2017). Karolina Czerska-Shaw noted in this context that it can be disputed whether such a mistake at the highest political level can be attributed to ignorance or rather instrumental use of statistics and deliberate obscuring of the difference between economic migrants and refugees. In any case, there was no public apology by the Polish government for the gross miscalculation (interview 3B).

Responsible Solidarity & Pursuit of Emancipation

At the same time, Polish government officials emphasized that they wanted to demonstrate solidarity, but only if it was a “responsible solidarity,” which in their understanding encompassed strengthening the external borders of the Schengen zone and fighting the causes of migration (Kopacz, 08.09.2015; Trzaskowski, 22.09.2015; Szydło, 04.02.2016). They repeatedly voiced their opinion that the protection of external borders and the provision of humanitarian aid constituted a better solution to the migration crisis than a distribution of refugees among the individual Member States (Szydło, 04.02.2016).

In this context, Prime Minister Beata Szydło and Minister of the Interior and Administration Mariusz Błaszczak frequently brought forward Poland’s effective protection of its Eastern border—which is, at the same time, the Eastern border of the EU—and affirmed that the Polish Border Guard was ready to support its EU partners, such as by helping to protect the Macedonian-Greek border (Błaszczak, 01.05.2017). During a meeting in Brussels between EU leaders and Turkish authorities, Szydło reiterated this commitment: “We declared the involvement of Polish border control officers, Polish policemen, a few hundred people who are ready to step in, and naturally the equipment, too” (Szydło, 08.03.2016). The eagerness to showcase its potential as an EU member points to a certain “emancipation” and the PiS party’s ambition to “make Poland great again” (Santora 2019; Traub 2016). In this context, the “pro-Ukrainianness” of Polish political elites and their warm welcome toward Ukrainian asylum seekers and migrants can also be seen in the context of the government’s desire to establish Poland as a leader of Central and Eastern Europe (Józwiak and Piechowska 2017).

14.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

The analysis has shown that the reasons for Poland's negative stance toward accepting refugees, especially under an EU relocation scheme, are complex and diverse. The analyzed arguments and justifications, which have been discussed under the four solidarity principles and elucidate the motives of solidarity, again reflect the underlying national identity and the individual identity elements. Scrutinizing the interplay of the solidarity principles and identity elements, the following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the Polish discourse:

Looking at the principle of *proximity*, the sense of attachment to the EU (or the West in general), which was fostered by Poland's inferiority complex and its desire to "return to Europe" after 1989, seems to be fading away.³¹⁵ The country's political elites appear more self-confident, criticizing Western Europe for their approach to immigration and multiculturalism and highlighting their own conception of what is best for Europe (interview 3B). In addition, arguments stressing the preponderance of national sovereignty over European solutions, backed by references to the historical experience of foreign domination and lost independence, seem to resonate well with the Polish society. Similarly, the religious and ethnic homogeneity of the Polish population and the general lack of experience with foreigners can help explain the missing sense of obligation and general hostility toward inhabitants of remote, culturally alien countries, while simultaneously holding a greater sympathy for the fate of refugees and immigrants from culturally similar Eastern Europe. Poland's openness toward immigration from the neighboring countries also reflects a particular feeling of historical responsibility toward the former Eastern Borderlands region and the populations living there.

The two principles *need* and *deservingness* experienced a certain twist during the migration and refugee crisis, with Poland trying to redirect the attention to itself. Instead of acknowledging the plight of fellow EU Member States such as Greece or Italy, Polish political elites stressed their country's own solidarity contribution by taking in a large number of Ukrainian refugees and its limited economic capacities as compared to other (Western) European countries. Moreover, they disputed the entitlement of other Member States to

³¹⁵ This finding holds true especially for the PiS government, in power since 2015. The previous government of Ewa Kopacz repeatedly stressed Poland's belonging to Europe (Kopacz, 03.09.2015 & 16.09.2015).

receiving solidarity, alleging that Poland was also deprived of EU solidarity in the past. Last but not least, they questioned why Poland should bear the consequences of a crisis that others, especially Western European colonial powers, were responsible for. In summary, Poland presented itself as the one who *needed* and *deserved* solidarity and not other EU Member States. Such arguments hint at unresolved tensions with the West and the perception of the West's "historical debt" toward Central and Eastern Europe and other parts of the world. In the intergovernmental realm, it was therefore less the sense of attachment that would potentially induce greater compassion for other Member States' *need* and *deservingness*, but rather the desire to be seen as a responsible international actor, which propelled Poland's calls for and commitment to "responsible solidarity." This also helps illuminate why the Polish government was reluctant to follow the common European response but made sure to accentuate Poland's own solidarity contribution (see the principle of *self-preservation*).

On the individual level, the government repeatedly stressed the *need* of Polish citizens and its responsibility to ensure their safety and well-being first before being able to help refugees (see also Morath 2017). More importantly, the genuine *need* of refugees and their *deservingness* of European solidarity were often questioned. The official state rhetoric made linkages between the terrorist attacks in Europe and the presence of refugees from Muslim countries, provoking the historically contingent feeling of insecurity and narrative of victimhood. Furthermore, the political elites accused refugees of little willingness and self-effort made to settle and integrate in Poland. The deservingness of receiving solidarity was further called into question by suspecting refugees of fleeing to Europe primarily due to financial motives instead of fighting for freedom in their home countries.

All in all, the common perception was that most refugees from the Middle East and North Africa neither needed nor deserved help and those who needed and deserved it were best helped through humanitarian assistance in their countries of origin. The expressed solidarity with Ukrainian migrants and refugees by allowing them into the country indicates that geographical, cultural, and religious *proximity* serves as a favorable factor for solidarity. Similarly, due to religious affinity, the *need* of Christian refugees was recognized (and politically acceptable) and they were more likely to be offered asylum than Muslim refugees.

The following table exemplifies the nexus between the Polish national identity and Poland's reaction to the refugee and migrant crisis described above.

Table 13: Identity-solidarity nexus (the refugee and migrant crisis & Poland)

Identity element	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”	Refugee quotas seen as a “blackmail” by the EU	(Muslim) refugees perceived as a security threat → primary need to protect Polish citizens	References to the primary responsibility of the European colonial powers to solve the European migration problem	
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West		Perception of limited economic capacities as compared to other (Western) European countries → highlighting the needs of Poland and its citizens	References to EU’s lacking historical solidarity toward Poland	Perception of limited economic capacities as compared to other (Western) European countries
High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty	National sovereignty and national solutions over European solutions	References to the state’s primary duty to take care of the safety and well-being of its own citizens before helping refugees		
Superiority and inferiority complex	Feeling of moral superiority over Western Europe Paternalistic attitude toward Eastern European regions	Perception of limited economic capacities as compared to other (Western) European countries → highlighting the needs of Poland and its citizens		Perception of limited economic capacities as compared to other (Western) European countries
Perception of belonging to the West	Weakening attachment to the EU / growing emancipation		Belittlement of (past) solidarity expressed by the West / the EU toward Poland	Pursuit of emancipation
Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs	Demonstrating solidarity with Ukrainian refugees	Solidarity with Ukrainian refugees by taking them in Solidarity with other refugees through humanitarian assistance in the countries of origin		Solidarity contribution by taking in a large number of Ukrainian refugees References to “responsible solidarity” (protection of external borders and the provision of humanitarian aid presented as the right solution)

National pride based in the perception of having a strong and resilient ethnic identity	Paternalistic attitude toward Eastern European regions		Own migration experience as a different case Questioning why refugees escape to Europe instead of fighting for freedom in their home countries	Poland as an expert on the protection of the Eastern border
Fierce attachment to Christian values	“Platonic Islamophobia”	Solidarity with refugees from Eastern Europe that are white and Christian	Muslim refugees portrayed as a threat that would destroy the Polish culture and its Christian values	
Homogeneity of the Polish population	Selective migration policy (acceptance toward refugees and economic migrants from Eastern Europe that are white and Christian versus lower sympathy for ethnically, religiously, and culturally alien refugee groups)	Solidarity with Ukrainian refugees by taking them in versus solidarity with other refugees through humanitarian assistance in the countries of origin	References to little willingness and self-effort made by (Muslim) refugees to settle and integrate/ assimilate in Poland	Refugees from the Middle East and North Africa as overstraining the economic capacities of Poland versus acceptance toward economic migrants from Eastern Europe
Polarization of politics and society	Very visible polarization with respect to migration (in the political sphere, in the Church, and also between different segments of the Polish society)			

Source: Own table

Chapter 15: Slovakia & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis

We realize that we also bear the political costs of our attitude to the migration crisis. ... However, this is the price we are prepared to pay to guarantee the security of our country and its people to the maximum.

— Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico (01.12.2015*)

15.1 Solidarity Behavior

Similar to the Czech Republic, due to its geographic position, Slovakia was only marginally affected by the migration pressure (interviews 4F & 4H). Statistical data shows that, while in 2014, a total of 328 people applied for asylum in Slovakia, one year later, during the actual peak of the migration and refugee crisis, the Slovak Republic received 330 asylum applications. The official data therefore show no significant increase in the number of people seeking protection in Slovakia. Refugee status was granted to 14 asylum seekers in 2014 and only 8 asylum seekers in 2015 (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic 2015c). In 2016, 167 people received asylum, an increase caused by the voluntary resettlement of 149 Christian refugees directly from Iraq (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic 2016b). Compared to 2004, when 11,395 individuals submitted applications for international protection in Slovakia, even the 2016 numbers still appear to be very low (IOM 2017).³¹⁶

Despite not having been greatly affected by the refugee crisis, the topic of migration became particularly salient in the Slovak political and public discourse from the second half of 2015 (Dubéci 2016; Zvada 2018). The Slovak government called for stronger border protection, advocated for addressing the root causes of migration, and, together with three other Central and Eastern European states, rejected the mandatory European redistribution mechanism (Mihálik and Jankoľa 2016, 21; Nič and Sturm 2016). In line with the European Council's decision from September 2015, Slovakia was assigned to take in 802 refugees via the EU relocation scheme (Cunningham 2016; Council of the EU 2015b). However, then Prime Minister of Slovakia, Robert Fico, questioned the legitimacy of the Council's decision, which he described as a "ritual suicide," and filed a lawsuit against this decision at the CJEU in

³¹⁶ The interviewed experts emphasized that, in 2004, accepting these asylum seekers, mainly from the Balkans and Ukraine, was not at all politicized (interviews 4F & 4K). More importantly, considering that Slovakia was able to easily accommodate refugees and migrants in the past, a handful of Slovak politicians suggested that the country clearly had the capacity to accommodate a few hundred people (e.g., Kiska, 07.09.2015; interview 4E).

December 2015 (The Economist 2016; H.-J. Schmidt 2015, 41). On 6 September 2017, the Court dismissed the challenge brought by Slovakia and Hungary over the refugee relocation scheme, pressuring them to abide by the quota system. Nevertheless, important to note is that, until July 2017, Slovakia had taken in 16 asylum seekers from Greece under the relocation mechanism and, unlike Hungary, fulfilled at least part of its legal obligations. Therefore, the Court decision had primarily a political, not a legal, significance for Slovakia (Androvičová 2017b, 40; Brljavac 2017, 99).

The following section looks into the specific developments in the area of migration in the Slovak Republic under the party Smer–SD (Direction–Social Democracy) and explores how the 2016 parliamentary elections altered the political framing of the refugee and migrant crisis. It is followed by another short section covering the societal response, the role of media, and the civil society engagement in Slovakia before results of the discourse analysis are presented and discussed.

Government Response

Migration had long been a marginal issue of public concern and political debate in Slovakia, a fact that many associate with the low number of migrants present in the country (Androvičová 2015; Bolečeková and Olejárová 2017; Tabosa 2020). The situation changed in 2015 when both the public and political actors gained interest in the critical situation in the Mediterranean and the increased number of migrants and refugees coming to Europe (Androvičová 2015, 2017b). Despite being neither a central transit nor a destination country for immigrants and refugees, the government of Prime Minister Fico from the outset adopted an anti-immigration rhetoric and securitization discourse (Androvičová 2017b).³¹⁷ In connection with the debates on the introduction of refugee quotas, as proposed by the European Commission, the government rejected any system aiming to redistribute refugees among EU Member States.

The governmental position on the issue of granting protection to third-country nationals enjoyed remarkable domestic political consensus (Androvičová 2017a; Zvada 2018). When a resolution rejecting the EU system of redistributing refugees was adopted by the Slovak

³¹⁷ Only for a fraction of Syrian refugees, Slovakia acted as a transit country (Macurak and West 2019, 24).

parliament in September 2015, it was almost unanimously endorsed by the parliamentarians (Androvičová 2017b). Conformity among major political parties in Slovakia was also apparent in relation to proposed solutions to the migration and refugee crisis. Most proposals aimed at strengthening the EU external borders, better distinguishing between persecuted refugees and economic migrants, and combatting the root causes of migration in the countries of origin (Bolečeková and Olejárová 2017, 571-572). In addition, the Slovak government initiated a number of preventative measures, including increasing the number of police officers and adopting an “anti-terrorism package,” which it presented as a response to the deteriorated security situation in Europe (Androvičová 2017b, 63-64; Zvada 2018, 227).³¹⁸

The only visible political figure in Slovakia who held strong pro-migrant stances and called for an approach toward refugees and migrants based on humanity and solidarity was President Andrej Kiska (interview 4F). Kiska warned against scaremongering and criticized mainstream parties for adopting far-right discourses (Žúborová and Borárossová 2017, 5). However, Kiska remained a rather isolated voice on the Slovak political scene.

The political discussion in the country was influenced by the upcoming parliamentary elections in March 2016 (interview 4K). Most parties based their election campaigns on a strong anti-immigrant sentiment, trying to suppress other urgent issues and structural problems, such as unemployment or healthcare, as most observers have claimed (see, e.g., Dubéci 2016; Nič and Sturm 2016; Zvada 2018). Moreover, there was a wide consensus among almost all political parties in Slovakia that stronger border protection presented the only feasible solution to the migration and migration crisis and that the EU policy of refugee relocation did not bring anything (Dubéci 2016; Mihálik and Jankoľa 2016). The only party standing for a common European approach was Most-Híd, a smaller multi-ethnic party representing the Hungarian minority in Slovakia (interview 4F).³¹⁹ In general, cultural and religious arguments, framing Islam as a threat to Slovak (Christian) values, and security arguments, related to the necessity to protect the nation from crime and Islamic terrorism, prevailed in the election campaigns (Dubéci 2016; Mihálik and Jankoľa 2016; Mudde 2016).

³¹⁸ This new legislation adopted by the government at its extraordinary session on 27 November 2015 contains over 15 amendments that are supposed to provide more effective means to fight terrorism (The Slovak Spectator 2015a).

³¹⁹ Zsolt Gál from Comenius University in Bratislava noted that the Most-Híd party was also not strongly pro-refugee but at least brought some rational arguments into the discussion, such as “if we accept 100-1000 refugees, it would not destroy our country” (interview 4F).

Prime Minister Fico, who was seeking a re-election, chose a rhetoric that was perceived both at the national as well as international levels as quite confrontational (Cunningham 2016; H.-J. Schmidt 2016b). In his speeches and remarks, he, among other things, warned Europe against the threat from an “onslaught of hundreds of thousands of migrants” (Schneider 2015). He spoke of an “EU dictate” when referring to the compulsory relocation of refugees under the quota system, argued that “the idea of multicultural Europe has failed,” and insisted that “the migrants cannot be integrated” (Cunningham 2016; Foster et al. 2016). At the height of the election campaign, he stated that “Islam has no place in Slovakia” and that he wanted to prevent the formation of a “coherent Muslim community” in his country (Cunningham 2016; Matharu 2016; The Slovak Spectator 2016). His Smer–SD party picked the slogan “We protect Slovakia” as one of the main campaign messages and put it on billboards across the whole country (Nič and Sturm 2016; Smer–SD 2017).³²⁰

At first, domestic and international observers alike wondered why Smer–SD and other Slovak mainstream political parties co-opted anti-immigration rhetoric typical of the far right. The reasons became clear at the latest after the election, when three nationalistic or right-wing political parties with extremist views and anti-migrant and anti-Muslim electoral campaigns entered the parliament (interviews 4F & 4K). One of them, winning a total of 15 seats in parliament, was the Slovak National Party (SNP), which is a successor of the Slovak National Party that existed between 1871 and 1938. SNP is a nationalist party asserting that the Slovak Republic is and should remain a state of Slovaks. In the past, the party was known for its anti-Roma and anti-Hungarian sentiments (Kazharski 2018, 766). The SNP party based its pre-election campaign on warning against the “Islamization of Europe.”³²¹ Its leader, Andrej Danko, repeatedly denounced multiculturalism, positioned Islam against Christianity, and maintained that Slovaks “have to do everything for Catholic Europe to remain the same Catholic Europe” (Danko, quoted in Zvada 2018, 227).

Another political force that entered the parliament with 11 seats was the populist movement We Are Family-Boris Kollár (Sme Rodina-Boris Kollár). The pre-election campaign of this new party had two agendas: to spread fear of migrants and refugees, portraying them as

³²⁰ As a reaction to the refugee and migrant crisis, the Smer–SD party changed its original electoral slogan from “We work for the people” to “We protect Slovakia” (interview 4F).

³²¹ The party also advocated for banning the building of mosques and minarets or the wearing of burqas in the Slovak Republic (Zvada 2018, 227).

people with different civilization habits and value systems who would be unable and unwilling to integrate, and to present itself as an anti-establishment movement standing up to “euro-idiocy” in handling the crisis (Zvada 2018, 228-229). The chairman of the party, Slovak billionaire Boris Kollár, considered the migration movements to be a “controlled process of Muslim invasion into Europe that can lead to riots and civil wars” (Kollár, quoted in Vanier 2015).

The most radical anti-Muslim and anti-Islam rhetoric was employed by the extreme right-wing Kotleba-People’s Party Our Slovakia (Kotleba-Ludová strana naše Slovensko). Its leader, Marián Kotleba, is a former neo-Nazi activist, who, among other things, used to dress in a black uniform reminiscent of the Hlinka Guard, the wartime fascist militia linked with the Nazi-sponsored Slovak State (Cameron 2016). The party pursued a goal of zero immigration, using campaign billboards with the slogan “Stop Immigrants!” With over 8% of the vote, the previously marginal party won 14 out of 150 seats in the election, causing a shock among many national as well as international commentators of Slovak politics. They described the results as a “turning point” and a “political earthquake” in the Slovak parliamentary system (Rybář and Spáč 2017, 155).

The 2016 elections brought about significant changes to the composition of the unicameral Slovak parliament, with radical right or ethnonationalist parties controlling nearly one fifth of the seats. The traditional opposition party Christian-Democratic Movement (Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie, KDH) fell short of the five percent electoral threshold and, for the first time since its inception, remained out of parliament (Rybář and Spáč 2017, 155). Smer–SD also suffered substantial losses. It lost the parliamentary majority and had to form a coalition government with the nationalist SNP, Most–Híd, and Network (Kazharski 2018, 766; Rybář and Spáč 2017).³²² Observers noticed that the dominance of the migration topic in the Slovak political discourse and media coverage and the strengthening of anti-immigration moods corresponded with the election campaign (Žúborová and Borárosová 2017). After the parliamentary elections, the new coalition government, mainly the Smer–SD party and the Most-Híd party, started to moderate its stance again (Dubéci 2016; Nič 2016, 288).

³²² Network (Sieť), which has been renamed to the Slovak Conservative Party, is a centre-right party, which entered the Slovak parliament for the first time in 2016.

Apart from winning the election, another reason for the Slovak government to alter its position was taking over the Presidency of the Council of the EU on 1 July 2016. Slovak politicians were eager to signal Slovakia's readiness to help "according to its own possibilities" (Bolečeková and Olejárová 2017). They sent police units to countries facing significant migration pressure, such as Hungary, Serbia, and Macedonia, to help them manage their borders (TASR 2018). At the end of 2015, in cooperation with a private Catholic initiative Pokoj a Dobro (Peace and Good), Slovakia voluntarily accepted a group of 149 Iraqi Christians (Dubéci 2016; Zachová et al. 2017). Furthermore, as a gesture of solidarity to its European partners, Slovakia offered to provide temporary housing for 500 Syrian asylum seekers who had been registered in Austria (interview 4L). They were supposed to stay in an asylum center in Gabčíkovo, a small town in the south of Slovakia, until their applications had been processed.³²³ Finally, at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees hosted by former United States President Barack Obama on the margins of the 71st session of the UN General Assembly in September 2016, the Slovak Republic committed itself to providing 550 government scholarships for refugees until 2021 (SITA 2016).

The Slovak EU Presidency pursued four main priorities and, under the particular circumstances, migration immediately became one of them.³²⁴ Slovakia underscored its ambition to lead the EU towards a sustainable migration and asylum policy by stressing that "the current migration crisis is putting enormous pressure on the Union's external border and on the Member States' asylum systems" (Slovak Presidency 2016). During its presidency, Slovakia introduced the concept of "effective solidarity," which was a rebranded form of the previously used term "flexible solidarity" (Nielsen 2016; Véggh 2016). By allowing each individual EU Member State to decide how it wanted to help, "effective solidarity" was supposed to provide an alternative to mandatory migrant resettlement quotas (interview 4L). Slovakia proposed a three-pillar system, distinguishing between scenarios under normal, deteriorating, and severe circumstances (Nielsen 2016). Under the first scenario, presupposing a moderate migration flow, the allocation of refugees and the sharing of

³²³ After more than 3,000 residents of Gabčíkovo signed a petition against the establishment of a temporary asylum camp in the building of the former Slovak Technical University, local authorities organized a public referendum, in which about 97% of voters opposed the temporary relocation of asylum seekers from Austria (The Local 2015). Although the outcome of the consultation was not binding, it manifested a dismissive attitude of the Slovak population toward receiving refugees (Brljavac 2017, 100).

³²⁴ The four priority areas were economically strong Europe, modern single market, sustainable migration and asylum policy, and globally engaged Europe (Slovak Presidency 2016).

responsibility would be guided by existing asylum rules and the reformed Dublin regulation. The second scenario covered the concept of “effective solidarity,” stating that, in case of a high number of asylum arrivals, all Member States should take part in a collective effort, yet various expressions of solidarity should be allowed. These could encompass everything ranging from relocating refugees to offering higher financial contributions to Member States “under pressure” as well as to special EU agencies and migratory funds, such as EASO and Frontex (Végh 2016). In the worst case scenario of uncontrolled mass immigration, decisions and actions would be managed by the European Council (Nielsen 2016). The concept was presented as a “game-changing” solution to the strained relations within the EU because it would “enable Member States to decide on specific forms of contribution taking into account their experience and potential” (Visegrad Group 2016a).

Societal Response

Similar to elsewhere in Europe, the public opinion in Slovakia was influenced by the domestic political mood as well as by the events unfolding on the European borders and in the EU Member States. For example, after a tragedy happened near a small Austrian town Parndorf in August 2015, during which 71 refugees suffocated in a refrigeration truck, a more welcoming attitude toward refugees could be observed in the Slovak society (Dubéci 2016). A group of Slovaks launched an online petition titled “Plea for Humanity,” appealing to the government to immediately draft an action plan for the support of refugees (Nič and Sturm 2016). However, after the Paris terrorist attacks and under the influence of the pre-election campaigns in Slovakia, a negative stance toward migrants and refugees gradually prevailed (Dubéci 2016; H.-J. Schmidt 2015). According to the Eurobarometer survey from September 2015, Slovaks also proved to be the greatest opponents of the redistribution mechanism in the whole EU. Only 31% supported the idea, compared to the EU average of 78% (The Slovak Spectator 2015c).³²⁵

Several opinion polls conducted before and after the March 2016 parliamentary elections confirmed that the pre-election anti-immigrant rhetoric adopted by almost all political parties in Slovakia had a considerable effect on the societal perception of immigration (Tabosa 2020;

³²⁵ Benjamin Cunningham from Politico cites another poll, according to which 89% of Slovaks opposed the EU’s relocation policy (Cunningham 2016).

Zvada 2018). When looking at the Eurobarometer 83 and Eurobarometer 85 surveys, the results show that, from May 2015 to May 2016, Slovak citizens became much more concerned about the topic of migration and considered it among the most important issues facing Slovakia and the EU (Bolečeková and Olejárová 2017, 572). A survey commissioned by the Slovak Academy of Science found that, in December 2015, almost 70% of respondents were very or quite concerned about the arrival of refugees, citing crime, Islamic terrorism, and lack of cultural compatibility as the main reasons for their fears.³²⁶ By September 2016, the number dropped to less than 50% (SAV 2016).³²⁷

Other Actors: The Media and Grassroots Organizations

On the whole, the Slovak public largely shared the political elites' negative attitude toward refugees and immigrants (Androvičová 2017b; Brljavac 2017; Lincényi 2017; Zvada 2018). Moreover, numerous surveys found that only a small portion of Slovaks were aware of the legal definition of a refugee enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and that a large part of them was unable to distinguish between those fleeing war and those leaving their countries for other reasons (Dubéci 2015). This fact led many authors to suggest that not only the political elites, but also the media, which framed the topic in terms of security, were to blame for the adverse attitudes of Slovaks toward refugees and immigrants (see, e.g., Dubéci 2016; Letavajová and Divinský 2019; Lincényi 2017). Viera Žúborová and Ingrid Borárosová observed that the migration and refugee crisis entered the Slovak media discourse in May 2015 and, since then became a very medialized topic, with the highest number of reports (70%) being issued in September 2015 and January 2016 (Žúborová and Borárosová 2017, 7). Moreover, their analysis also confirmed that the media coverage of migrants and refugees was overly negative (Žúborová and Borárosová 2017, 15).

While the majority of the mainstream media echoed the political discourse on migration, Slovak political elites encountered opposition from representatives of human rights organizations, religious organizations and charities, think-tanks, NGOs, and other civil

³²⁶ Marcel Lincényi, who conducted his own survey in the fourth quarter of 2015, came to similar results, finding out that up to 76.5% of respondents believed that refugees would be unable or unwilling to follow Slovak traditions and norms and 75.5% were convinced that the acceptance of asylum seekers in Slovakia would lead to increased crime rates in the country (Lincényi 2017, 359-360).

³²⁷ The survey in 2015 was conducted by the agency FOCUS and the one in 2016 by the agency TNS Slovakia. The questions were identical (SAV 2016).

society actors (Androvičová 2017b, 46). Civil society engagement was the main driving force behind organizing help for refugees and showing a different face of the Slovak society (Zachová et al. 2017). A network of volunteers launched a “Who will help?” campaign, organizing fundraising events and providing accommodation for refugees. Their efforts and many expressions of solidarity contrasted with the negative, anti-refugee political and public discourse (Dubéci 2016; Nič and Sturm 2016).

15.2 Motives of Solidarity

Slovakia is in many respects a remarkable case, even when compared to other Visegrad states. On the one hand, the government of Prime Minister Fico went along with the dismissive stance on refugee quotas held by the V4 and the official rhetoric often resembled the one of Viktor Orbán in Hungary or Jarosław Kaczyński in Poland. Moreover, not only did the Slovak government reject the quota-based system for redistributing refugees, but it also did not hesitate to file a lawsuit against the mandatory relocation mechanism at the CJEU. On the other hand, Slovakia has a reputation of being one of the most pro-European Member States (Kazharski 2018, 770; Tabosa 2020, 13). It often prides itself of being the only V4 country to have adopted the Euro, which increases its interdependence with the rest of the Eurozone members (interview 4A). More importantly, Slovakia assumed its first-ever Presidency of the Council of the EU in July 2016, which “put the government in an ambiguous position when it is expected to both act in the name of its national interest and represent the EU as a whole” (Kazharski 2018, 766).

The following paragraphs reveal the main themes present in the political argumentation and justification of the adopted measures in connection with the migration and refugee crisis as well as explore whether and how the Slovak political discourse in relation to migration changed over time. Many authors see the relocation decision from September 2015 as a turning point in the Slovak approach toward the crisis. In addition, there is broad agreement among scholars and political observers alike that the 2016 parliamentary elections in Slovakia substantially altered the political framing of asylum seekers (interview 4F; Androvičová 2017b; Kissová 2018; Zvada 2018). The solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* guide the analysis.

Proximity

The discourse analysis has revealed that, although Slovakia rejected the quota mechanism for refugee redistribution, the political leaders were eager to reaffirm time and again Slovakia's "belongingness" to the EU core and commitment to solidarity with its European partners. With regards to the actual policy toward migrants and refugees, the questions of cultural and religious adaptability and the resulting feasibility of successful integration dominated the discourse.

Slovakia as a Responsible and Solidary EU Member

Despite following the course taken by the Visegrad Group in opposing the mandatory quota system put in place by the EU, Slovakia strived very hard to demonstrate that it was not trying to evade common responsibility and solidarity. The most visible figure in this context was President Kiska, who consistently called for mutual solidarity among European countries in the wake of the unprecedented crisis that Europe was facing (e.g., Kiska, 07.10.2015, 05.11.2015 & 12.12.2016). He often reminded Slovaks of the basic idea of Europe based on humanity and solidarity, where every member has a moral obligation to help. Moreover, he emphasized the added value of acting together when confronted with problems and warned against letting shortsighted domestic political ambitions prevail (Kiska, 05.11.2015). The following statement best illustrates his pro-European orientation:

"I believe in Europe — in Europe of solidarity, responsibility and humanity. I believe in its capacity to overcome this and other crises. The solution is certainly not in divisions. We need Europe that is united. Because the strong and successful European Union is in finding solutions together" (Kiska, 05.11.2015).

Slovakia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Miroslav Lajčák also repeatedly assured his European partners of Slovakia's readiness to show solidarity and take part in searching for a Europe-wide solution to the migration problem (Lajčák, 20.04.2015 & 11.09.2015). After meeting German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier in April 2016, Lajčák commented that the migration and refugee crisis was

"not a German, Greek, or Slovak problem, it is a European problem. We are all in it together and the solution can only be pan-European. We have been saying

this from the very beginning and we have declared our readiness to be part of this joint solution from the beginning” (Lajčák, 08.04.2016*).

Consequently, what distinguished Slovakia was their recognition of the refugee and migrant crisis as a joint European problem. In contrast to other Visegrad states, who blamed Greece for failing to effectively protect the external borders of the EU and register asylum seekers, Slovak decision makers acknowledged the burden Greece had to bear in connection with the migration pressures and offered material, technical, personnel, and financial help in the spirit of European solidarity (Kiska, 07.09.2015 & Lajčák, 15.03.2016). When asked about Slovakia’s support for Greece, Foreign Minister Lajčák stated: “Greece is our close partner and ally within the EU and NATO, we perceive the challenges they face and we are ready to help our friends meet these challenges together” (Lajčák, 09.02.2016*). In another statement, he added that “this is not their crisis, they are not alone in it – they have responsible and solidary friends who are involved in joint solutions” (Lajčák, 10.04.2016*).

With the approaching Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU, the country’s eagerness to present itself as a responsible EU member became ever more evident. The development of a sustainable migration and asylum policy became one of the four presidency priorities and Slovak officials started to increasingly emphasize the necessity of a coordinated European response. In his speech introducing the Slovak Presidency, Prime Minister Robert Fico said:

“Unity and solidarity are the prerequisites for meaningful functioning of the Union. Given the great variety of European nations, we cannot rely on the mechanical administrative assessment of problems. None of the current and future aspects of the crisis can be resolved by uncoordinated individual national measures. No Member State has enough power to do this. We need a joint European approach and a visionary process” (Fico, 06.07.2016).

What further shaped Slovakia’s position on migration, besides its first EU Presidency, was Foreign Minister Lajčák’s appointment as President of the UN General Assembly for the 72nd session from September 2017 to September 2018. In the wake of his Presidency, Miroslav Lajčák appealed to his Slovak as well as international colleagues to think beyond national borders and search for comprehensive pan-European and international solutions (Lajčák, 29.01.2016). Despite his strong recommendation for Slovakia to participate in the Marrakech summit in November 2018 and sign the Global Compact for Migration, Slovakia eventually rejected the UN migration pact (Lajčák, 27.11.2018; interviews 4E & 4G).

Slovakia's Desire to Belong to the EU Core

The repeated assurances of close attachment to the EU and its values mirrored Slovakia's long-term strategic interest to be part of the core of the Union (Kazharski 2019; interview 4H). As elucidated by President Kiska, deeper European integration had been something that Slovak governments and most political parties could agree on for decades and that was enshrined in the country's most important strategic documents (Kiska, 07.10.2015). Therefore, Kiska more than once expressed his concerns about the bad reputation of Slovakia and other Visegrad states in relation to the migration and refugee crisis, which could potentially lead to the return of a distinction between the old and new Member States, between the West and the East (e.g., Kiska 07.10.2015 & 05.11.2015). In one of his statements, he warned that

“it would be against our strategic interest, against our common sense to turn Central Europe into some trouble-making block inside the EU allied by trivial, selfish and short-sighted ‘blame-it-on-Brussels’ political agenda” (Kiska, 05.11.2015).

Other Slovak politicians were more reserved in their statements when commenting on their country's performance in the EU, although the desire to belong to the core of the EU and not be “left out” was also quite evident. In this sense, Robert Fico referred to the benefits that the EU had brought to Slovakia and its people and reinforced that, despite some lost confidence following the financial and economic crisis and the migration and refugee crisis, Slovakia would always remain one of the greatest supporters of the EU integration project (Fico, 06.07.2016). Although Fico not infrequently resorted to sharp criticism of the EU's handling of the migration and refugee crisis, he kept emphasizing Slovakia's belonging to the EU. In October 2017, when he was debating with students of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra about Slovakia's membership in the EU, he stated: “People can think anything of the EU, but there is no better project for us” (Slovak Government 2017*). Fico reaffirmed this conviction just a few weeks before leaving office in March 2018, saying: “We are the European Union. ... There is nothing better than the EU. It just isn't” (Slovak Government 2018b*). His successor, Peter Pellegrini, also vowed loyalty to the EU and declared that his first task as new Prime Minister would be to reassure his EU colleagues that his government “will maintain a strong pro-European course” (Reuters 2018).

Cultural Incompatibility

Slovak political elites commonly presented the migration and refugee crisis as a clash of civilizations (Zvada 2018). Muslim refugees were particularly stigmatized in the political rhetoric as impossible to integrate due to their cultural and religious differences. After the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015 and the sexual assaults on New Year's Eve in Cologne, Prime Minister Fico said that “[t]he idea of multicultural Europe failed and the natural integration of people who have another way of life, way of thinking, cultural background and most of all religion, is not possible” (Fico, quoted in Cunningham 2016). He stressed that, in order to avoid scenarios similar to the terrorist attacks in Paris, Berlin, and other Western European cities, it was necessary to avert the formation of “compact Muslim communities” in Slovakia (Kazharski 2018, 768). Later, he tried to bolster his argument by warning that Muslim communities in Slovakia might attempt to modify the character of the country built on Cyril-Methodist traditions (Fico, 25.05.2016). He viewed Christianity as incompatible with Islam and claimed that “Islam has no place in Slovakia” (Matharu 2016).³²⁸

President Kiska took a diametrically opposite position. He did not see the incoming people as a threat to the Slovak values and way of life. Instead, he reminded Slovak citizens that “Slovakia is already home to several thousand people from different cultures who have arrived here not so long ago. And we live well side by side” (Kiska, 07.09.2015).

The Slovak government used culture and religion as defining factors when objecting the EU redistribution quotas, declaring their willingness to accommodate only a small number of Christian refugees (Brljavac 2017, 98; Kissova 2018, 750). Countering the principle of non-discrimination with regard to relocating refugees, Prime Minister Fico stated that he could only imagine accepting for example Christian families from Syria if they were in danger because it would not endanger Slovak identity and cultural foundations (BBC News 2015a).³²⁹ On that note, Slovakia consented to welcome 25 Christian families from Iraq.

³²⁸ In November 2016, the Slovak parliament passed a new law, according to which a religion must have at least 50,000 members—up from 20,000—to obtain official state recognition and be eligible for state subsidies. Considering that there are only about 2,000 Muslims in Slovakia, the new law effectively blocks Islam from becoming an officially recognized religion in the country (Brljavac 2017; CNS News 2016).

³²⁹ The principle of non-discrimination essentially means that “individuals who are in similar situations should receive similar treatment and not be treated less favourably simply because of a particular ‘protected’ characteristic that they possess” (EUR-Lex 2020). The TFEU explicitly prohibits discrimination on grounds of nationality in all EU policies and actions (TFEU 2009a).

Need

Considering the solidarity principle of *need*, the analyzed statements evoke that the safety of Slovak citizens was as an absolute priority and that national security was put above other principles, such as the observance of migrants' and refugees' rights (Androvičová 2015). In the wake of the 2015 Paris attacks, Prime Minister Fico said that he respected "that there's a migration crisis but Slovak citizens and their security is of higher priority than the rights of migrants" (The Slovak Spectator 2015b, 332). On the other hand, Slovakia did not hesitate to offer help to countries affected by increased migratory pressure.

Moral Obligation to Help People in Need, Ideally Outside Europe

The only high-level Slovak politician who repeatedly called for more compassion toward asylum seekers was President Kiska. Although he also expressed the opinion that the quota mechanism was not a perfect solution that would solve all the problems associated with the migration pressure on Europe, he was still in favor of Slovakia's participation in the redistribution for the sake of the suffering people (Kiska, 07.09.2015). He highlighted the moral obligation of every country to help people in need out of humanity and solidarity (Kiska, 20.09.2016 & 19.09.2017). Moreover, he urged fellow Slovaks not to forget that behind the statistical numbers were actual human beings fleeing to escape war, violence, and persecution in their home countries with the hope of starting a new life in Europe (Kiska, 07.10.2015 & 20.09.2016). In a statement entitled "Attitude to refugees will define the heart and soul of Slovakia," Kiska appealed to people's feelings, encouraging them to ask themselves the following questions:

"How many of us would not sacrifice all of their property if they or their families faced the risk of death? And how many parents would not want to gather all available means to save their children at least? Everyone who had such a chance would do so" (Kiska, 07.09.2015).

Other Slovak politicians, such as Prime Minister Fico or Foreign Minister Lajčák, also recognized the need of some of the fleeing people, yet argued that the right approach was not to distribute them among EU Member States but to stop the deaths of innocent people trying to get to Europe in the first place. They informed their European partners that, in their opinion, the most effective response to the crisis was combating and dismantling smuggling

networks and tackling the root causes of migration in countries of origin (Lajčák 20.04.2015, 01.09.2015 & 06.11.2015).

Solidarity with States under Migratory Pressure

As mentioned previously, Slovak government officials voiced their country's readiness to provide support to largely burdened states such as Greece. Moreover, Slovakia's solidarity was not limited to EU Member States but extended also to the Western Balkan states, which were facing a large influx of migrants and refugees. Foreign Minister Lajčák expressed his understanding of the burden borne by transit countries such as Serbia and reiterated multiple times that they deserved more support from the EU (Lajčák, 13.11.2015). In December 2015, Lajčák expounded on his interpretation of the geographical scope of European solidarity, stating:

“This is also how we envisage European solidarity – helping those partners who bear the greatest burden. We in the European Union continue to look for the best solution to the migration crisis, but that does not mean that it will be a solution limited only to the EU. The solutions to this fundamental problem must be Europe-wide and also concern countries such as Serbia, which play an important and positive role in managing the influx of migrants and deserve recognition and thanks for it” (Lajčák, 04.12.2015*).

It appears implicitly but clearly from the statement that the Slovak provision of solidarity to other states was conditioned by their *proximity* (focus on the EU and Balkan partners), *need* (level of exposure of transit countries and extent of the burden borne by destination countries), as well as *deservingness* (self-effort in managing the migration pressures). Similarly, the decision to accommodate asylum seekers in Gabčíkovo was also presented by the Slovak government as a gesture of solidarity and reciprocity or, as Minister of Interior Robert Kaliňák put it, a desire of Slovakia to “pay its debts” to Austria, which hosted Czechoslovak refugees after the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 and offered a helping hand to Slovakia during the EU accession process (The Local 2015).

Deservingness

Almost without exception, observers and commentators of Slovak politics agree that the domestic political discussion around the topic of migration was dominated by a securitization discourse (Androvičová 2015, 2017b; Kissová 2018; Kluknavská et al. 2019; Tabosa 2020;

Žúborová and Borárosová 2017; Zvada 2018). Most of these authors adopt the definition by the Copenhagen School and conceptualize securitization in its broadest terms, according to which migration can be framed as a threat to the state's security and economy as well as national identity, culture, and way of life.³³⁰ In Slovakia, refugees and migrants, especially those of Muslim origin, were associated with terrorism and crime and presented as a security risk. Moreover, immigration was framed as a “cultural war,” a clash of Christian and Muslim civilizations, and a threat to Slovak and European values. Last but not least, the issue of sovereignty was invoked by Slovak decision makers, who lamented that the sovereign right of nation states to decide who to allow into their territory was being threatened (Androvičová 2015; Tabosa 2020; Zvada 2018).

The extent of the existential threats facing Slovakia became a common point of contention between President Kiska and the ruling Smer–SD party, especially Prime Minister Fico and Minister of Interior Kaliňák (Tabosa 2020; Žúborová and Borárosová 2017).³³¹ Kiska warned against political manipulation of migration and scaremongering (Kiska, 07.10.2015 & 01.01.2016). Fico, in contrast, asserted that the gravity of the situation dictated putting political correctness aside and criticized President Kiska and the opposition for neglecting or underestimating the security and cultural threats stemming from migration: “I am very surprised at how the opposition leaders are deliberately downplaying security risks ..., even though they see what is happening in connection with migration in Europe” (Fico, 08.01.2016).³³² Jarmila Androvičová puts forward that the Slovak Prime Minister had a tendency to exaggerate the scope of the problem and instill a sense of danger among the public by disseminating numbers and evidence that were imprecise or misleading (Androvičová 2017b). For example, at the beginning of 2016, he maintained that, according

³³⁰ According to the Copenhagen School, an issue is securitized when it is “presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure,” and existential threats can be organized into political and military, cultural, economic, and environmental policy contexts or “sectors” (Buzan et al. 1998, 23-24).

³³¹ A notable change came with Peter Pellegrini as Prime Minister, who in 2018 stated that “the government continues to reject quotas and mandatory redistribution of migrants ... [but, at the same time, also refuses] the unreasonable spread of fear among citizens in regard to migration by some opposition parties as part of the ongoing campaign for the municipal elections” (Pellegrini, quoted in Pravda 2018*).

³³² In a commentary issued for the Slovak daily *Hospodárske noviny*, Fico made a similar point, writing: “If someone says with all seriousness that hundreds of thousands of unregistered migrants and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, who move around the EU uncontrollably, do not increase the security risk in Europe, then I do not know how to respond to this [nonsense]. As the government of the Slovak Republic, we cannot, of course, afford even a hint of such naivety. All the more so as intelligence services across EU countries talk about the increased security risk” (Fico, 01.12.2015*).

to the UN, three million migrants were due to arrive in Europe in 2016, and it was therefore paramount to “stop this wave from continuing” (Fico, 12.01.2016). Moreover, he claimed that 80% of the incoming migrants were men aged 25-35, not women with children fleeing war, and that these young men were possibly dangerous (Fico, 12.01.2016). With this allegation, he suggested that the majority of asylum seekers neither needed nor deserved help.

Securitization of Migration

In Slovakia, an interesting discursive shift occurred with regard to the conflation of migration, Islam, and terrorism. In January 2015, Foreign Minister Lajčák underlined that he was against any association of terrorism and extremism with Islam. He stated that “terrorism ... is not just coming from the Middle East to the West. Muslim countries are the ones who suffer the most from it” (Lajčák, 22.01.2015). However, following the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 and incidents happening in other European cities, the government of Robert Fico started to present the wave of refugees as a direct cause of terrorism. Moreover, when drawing a link between migration and terrorism, the Slovak government officials almost always automatically referred to Muslim refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. For example, after observing a minute’s silence in the wake of the Paris attacks, Prime Minister Fico said that his country was “monitoring every Muslim in our territory” (quoted in Androvičová 2017b, 51).

Over the course of the crisis, Fico exacerbated his securitization rhetoric, portraying refugees and migrants as an existential threat to Slovakia and Europe (Tabosa 2020, 14). At a news conference in July 2016, he said that there was an “absolute link between migration and terrorism” (Fico, 29.07.2016). Against this background, he warned the public of an increased risk of individual terror attacks because, as he claimed, unchecked migration made it easier for potential terrorists to not only get into Europe but also illegally smuggle weapons with them. He acted on the assumption that “anyone could have crossed the borders during the huge influx of illegal migrants. God knows what they had in their backpacks beside food and clothes” (Fico, 29.07.2016). Similarly, Minister of Interior Kaliňák asserted that it was virtually impossible to uncover potential terrorists among the refugees coming to Europe (Androvičová 2017b, 56).

Slovak political elites tried to portray all Muslims not only as potential terrorists but also as an existential threat to Slovak identity, values, and way of life (Žúborová and Borárosová 2017; Zvada 2018). According to numerous authors, by highlighting the “cultural differences” of the incoming people, the government provoked or strengthened the Slovak citizens’ fear of the unknown (Androvičová 2017b; Cunningham 2016; Kissová 2018). When legitimizing their claims, decisions, and adopted measures, Slovak government officials purposely referred to the experience of other countries, especially Western states with large immigrant communities, who were facing problems of coexistence of different cultures and civilizations. For example, in reaction to the sexual assaults on New Year’s Eve in Cologne, Prime Minister Fico said that he wanted to avoid what happened in Germany and prevent anyone from harassing Slovak women in public places (SME 2016). In general, the Slovak government strived to promote the idea of Slovakia as a country where the “liberal perversion” of the West had not yet managed to emerge in full force and where Slovaks still had the opportunity to avoid such a development (Androvičová 2017b, 55-56).

“Undeserving” Economic Migrants versus “Deserving” Refugees

In line with their security view of migration, the Slovak government claimed that it must be able to very carefully select who it would let into its territory, i.e. who would not pose a threat to Slovakia. This was connected to the next argument, namely the necessity of distinguishing between “deserving political refugees” fleeing conflict zones and “undeserving economic migrants” seeking a better life in (mainly Western) Europe (interview 4L).³³³ The majority of Slovak political representatives were open to offering assistance to persons persecuted in their home countries. At the same time, however, they argued that most of the incoming refugees were undeserving “economic migrants” ineligible for solidarity and asylum (interview 4K). Even President Kiska did not avoid making a distinction between economic migrants and “genuine” refugees when he appealed to Slovaks to help others in need:

“I am not talking about illegal economic migrants who should speedily be returned to their safe home countries. What I have in mind are real refugees, people whose suffering is often beyond our imagination” (Kiska, 07.09.2015).

³³³ This argument often went hand in hand with the claim that people crossing the Slovak territory had no intention to stay but actually desired to settle in states such as Germany (interview 4L).

The Slovak government used the character of refugees—the “undesired” versus the “potentially acceptable” ones—to legitimize the non-acceptance of the redistribution quota, claiming that 95% of the incoming people were economic migrants (Fico, 28.01.2016). Some authors have noted a certain inconsistency behind the “genuine refugee versus economic migrant” argument, considering that a great number of Slovak nationals have left for work to other EU Member States once the country joined the EU in 2004 and the Schengen area in 2007 (interview 4H; Bolečeková and Olejárová 2017).³³⁴ Various estimates indicate that about 10% of Slovak labor force works or studies abroad, with the Czech Republic and the Great Britain being the most popular destinations (Bahna 2011; Baláž 2012). Reflecting on this discrepancy and the ostensible existence of “double standards,” Lenka Kissová puts forward that, in the Slovak political discourse, positive *self* and negative *other* representation was noticeable. While emigrants from Slovakia or former Czechoslovakia were associated with personal qualities such as hard work and adaptability and portrayed as people who deserved a better life, refugees from the Middle East and North Africa were depicted as “others” who would most likely not accept the rules, norms, and values of the host country and therefore did not deserve solidarity (Kissová 2018, 755-756).³³⁵ In a TV interview in May 2015, Interior Minister Robert Kaliňák implied the supremacy of fleeing Slovaks over the incoming migrants and refugees using the following words:

“Also our emigrants emigrated from the Communism, but each one of them, and we can definitely generalize this, adopted the rules and values of the country in which they arrived. Whether these people became Americans, Germans, Austrians or Swiss, they fully respected the rules of that state and they left behind our [values]” (RTVS 2015*).

In this manner, the Slovak government drew a boundary between adaptable ergo deserving former Slovak emigrants and unadaptable ergo non-deserving current refugees and immigrants from the Middle East and Africa (interview 4L).

³³⁴ Looking into a more distant history, Miloslav Bahna writes that around 800,000 Slovak nationals left Slovakia between the end of nineteenth century and the end of the Second World War, followed by more than 130,000 who emigrated under the communist regime between 1948 and 1989 (Bahna 2011). These people were either political refugees fleeing the regime and political leadership in their country or economic migrants striving to find work abroad (Bahna 2011).

³³⁵ Moreover, according to Karen Henderson, Slovaks understand working in other EU Member States not as a form of migration but as a freedom of movement (interview 4H).

Self-Preservation

Discussions about whether Slovakia was capable of accommodating a certain number of asylum seekers addressed several interrelated issues, including the right to make sovereign decisions, the idea of “flexible solidarity,” and the “material” capacity of the country to take care of immigrants and refugees.

Flexible Solidarity

President Kiska argued that, since Slovakia was neither a destination nor a significant transit country, it had the capacities to accept several hundred or even thousand people fleeing from war and persecution in their home countries (Kiska, 07.09.2015 & 01.01.2016). He also emphasized that accommodating these people would in no way threaten the safety of Slovaks because “Slovakia has already faced even more than ten thousand asylum seekers and we have successfully dealt with the situation” (Kiska, 07.09.2015). He insisted that the number of asylum seekers that Slovakia was supposed to accept under the quota scheme represented only a fraction compared to the overall Slovak population and would therefore not be too overwhelming for Slovak capacities (Kiska, 06.10.2020). In this context, he drew attention to countries facing much greater migration pressures, such as Jordan, Lebanon, or Turkey, which, despite the hardships, continued to provide refuge to millions of people (Kiska, 05.11.2015).

Slovak government officials did not share President Kiska’s optimistic assessment and argued that there were alternative, more effective methods of engaging and expressing solidarity, such as focusing on eradicating the root causes of migration flows, providing support to countries hosting refugees, and ensuring consistent protection of the Schengen external borders (Lajčák, 06.11.2015 & Fico, 01.12.2015). They highlighted that, despite being a small country, Slovakia was able to allocate considerable resources to various aid programs and help the countries of the Western Balkans to protect their borders (Fico, 12.01.2016). When Foreign Minister Lajčák commented on the provision of 550 governmental scholarships to refugees, he made sure to emphasize Slovakia’s solidarity contribution: “It has been confirmed that we do not stand aside when global problems are solved and we are ready to become involved in a constructive way” (SITA 2016). At this and other occasions, Lajčák recalled the necessity of having a more flexible approach to

solidarity, which would take into account the specific possibilities of countries and enable them to participate other than by fulfilling mandatory quotas for resettlement of asylum seekers (Lajčák, 21.09.2016). The introduction of the concept of “effective solidarity” during the Slovak Council Presidency was an attempt to put this conviction into praxis.

Demonstration of State Sovereignty

When confronted with criticism from their EU partners for not wanting to participate in the redistribution mechanism, Slovak decision makers responded by affirming their position that they would not allow anyone to deprive them of their right to have an independent opinion.³³⁶ They emphasized that an important manifestation of state sovereignty is the possibility to regulate entry of foreign nationals into state territory (Bolečeková and Olejárová 2017; Kisošová 2018). Therefore, they perceived the adoption of the mandatory quota system as very unfortunate and condemned the EU for violating Member States’ sovereignty. Even three years after the disputed Council decision, Foreign Minister Lajčák still complained that there was an attempt within the EU to “force a majority vote on a particular course. Countries that voted against were attacked and criticized” (Lajčák, 27.11.2018*).

With time, the Slovak government began to “boast” that their opposition to quotas proved to be more than justified because the incessant migration flow led many EU members to embrace the Slovak position that they had initially rejected and criticized (Fico, 01.12.2015 & 12.01.2016; interview 4L). In May 2016, Prime Minister Fico pointed to the ineffectiveness of the redistribution system, saying: “When you look at how many people have been relocated under quotas, you see two big zeros there” (Fico, 25.05.2016). Reflecting on the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU, Fico proudly declared that Slovakia had become a respected country that had proved its ability to effectively manage complicated processes. He affirmed that his government had demonstrated sovereignty on migration matters instead of passively listening to what others were saying. Addressing the Slovak nation, he stated: “We are not a big country and we are not the wisest in the world, we do not have a big economy, but I can confirm that we have made a hole in the world in the field of foreign policy” (Fico, 23.10.2017).

³³⁶ Only President Kiska called for a more constructive approach, stating: “Slovakia is still a young country. But it has come a long way and grew up fast – which is why our ambitions in foreign policy issues should by far exceed our excitement about voicing our own, different opinion” (Kiska, 07.10.2015).

15.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

The discourse analysis has highlighted that there is not one but multiple reasons why Slovakia became agitated by the proposals to distribute asylum seekers among EU Member States using a quota system. There is a similar confluence of factors behind the Slovak reluctance to accept non-Christian refugees. This section summarizes the main discursive legitimation strategies present in the Slovak political discourse and assesses whether and how the specific reasoning reflects the Slovak national identity.

In their reaction to the migration and refugee crisis, Slovak political elites were caught between their country's strong pro-EU orientation and domestic interests. On the one hand, Slovakia has for years been concerned with affirming its belongingness to Europe (Tabosa 2020). This feature can be traced back to the memories of the era of "Mečiarism" and the resulting fear of marginalization and explains why Slovakia has always pursued a deeper level of EU integration than other V4 countries such as the Czech Republic. In the context of the migration and refugee crisis, Slovak foreign policy was consequently motivated by the desire to avoid another international isolation. President Kiska was particularly worried about the negative image that his country acquired during the crisis and expressed his hope that

"Slovakia would preserve its reputation. The reputation of a self-confident country with people having an open heart. A country which is capable of both receiving and lending a helping hand" (Kiska, 07.09.2015).

Kiska as well as other Slovak politicians constantly attempted to prove that their country belonged to the European "core" and identified with the EU's fundamental values (Kiska, 07.10.2015). At the opening ceremony of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU, Prime Minister Fico explained the historical underpinnings of Slovakia's allegiance to the Union with the following words:

"As a colleague of yours, MEP Phillipe Juvin, wrote in his essay recently, the 'cement' of Europe lies within its history. This history determines our sense of belonging to a family, our sense of European identity. It was the driving force behind Slovakia's integration efforts over a number of years. We wanted our common values, including human dignity, security, prosperity, freedom, peace and democracy, to become a reality for us. The Union made that all happen" (Fico, 06.07.2016).

What instigated Slovak criticism of the EU approach and the dismissive attitude to the refugee quotas was mainly the question of national sovereignty and the right to regulate the

entry into state territory (Kissová 2018). The imposition of the mandatory relocation quota was largely regarded as interference in domestic affairs (Tabosa 2020). This aspect went hand in hand with the lingering feeling in Slovakia of still being the “small” partner in the EU, ignored by bigger Member States that push ahead their own interests and ignore everyone else’s needs and concerns. Prime Minister Fico repeatedly expressed his skepticism about EU members having equal powers, which, in his opinion, had never been the case and never would be (Fico, 25.05.2016). In support of this argument, he claimed that the problem of migration had escalated “because the big countries solve it at the expense of the small ones” (Fico quoted in Androvičová 2017b, 53).

With the intention of overcoming the lasting sense of inferiority, Slovak decision makers tried to highlight the distinct qualities of the Slovak nation. Referring to his country’s unique experience of rapid transformation, Prime Minister Fico argued that Slovakia possessed the ability to respond to crisis situations better than “advanced democracies” (Fico, 25.05.2016). Moreover, he maintained that this was also why his government eventually decided not to conform to some EU policies despite the political repercussions. In an official blog post from December 2015, he wrote:

“We realize that we also bear the political costs of our attitude to the migration crisis. ... However, this is the price we are prepared to pay to guarantee the security of our country and its people to the maximum” (Fico, 01.12.2015).

This quote typifies what kind of domestic argument prevailed, namely that the interests of Slovak citizens should always come first and the needs of everyone else second. Slovak decision makers pledged not to make any decisions that might potentially endanger Slovak citizens, even at the cost of losing some political credibility internationally. Consequently, the prioritization of national security interests and the view of foreign nationals as a risk to Slovakia’s domestic society induced the government’s restrictive approach toward migrants and refugees. “Uncontrolled migration” to Europe was discursively interlinked with organized crime and “Islamic” terrorism (Kissová 2018). The terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 gave substance to these arguments, with Prime Minister Fico asserting that, “within the migratory wave, many Islamic State fighters came to Europe” (TA3 2015). The emergence of attacks also made it easier for the Slovak government to tighten up domestic anti-terrorist legislation and strengthen the powers of the police in this area as well as justify its rejection of the quota system. In the wake of the New Year’s Eve incidents in Cologne

and other European cities, asylum seekers were increasingly portrayed not only as potential terrorists but also as rapists and intolerant religious fundamentalists (Žúborová and Borárosová 2017). Here, a discursive intersection between crime, terrorism, and non-Christian, primarily Muslim, refugees became apparent.

Asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa were stigmatized in Slovak political discourse as “others” who might endanger not only the physical safety of Slovak citizens but also the “traditional” Slovak culture and way of life. The prevalent argument was that the “otherness” of immigrants and refugees, viewed mainly through the prism of their different ethnicity, cultural background, and religion, would lead to problematic integration and hence also possible increase in violent activities in the country (Androvičová 2017b). The alleged inadaptability of asylum seekers was used as a legitimation for the government’s restrictive policies aiming to exclude certain groups of refugees from solidarity.³³⁷

The framing of migration as a cultural threat did not appear “out of the blue” in Slovakia in 2015 but can also be found in important conceptual documents dated well before the escalation of the migration and refugee crisis in Europe.³³⁸ The proven impact of historical circumstances on national identity and decision making led Lenka Kissová to argue that the Slovak case “reveals the continuation of a longer historical state-building process built on ethnonational elements that condition belonging as well as practical policy making” (Kissová 2018, 760). In contrast to Western European countries, Slovakia remained isolated from international migration flows for a good part of the twentieth century and, even after the establishment of the sovereign Slovak Republic in 1993, it has not become a traditional destination country for immigrants (Bolečeková and Olejárová 2017; Brljavac 2017; Lincényi 2017). The number of foreigners legally residing in Slovakia has steadily increased since the country’s accession to the EU, yet the current share of non-nationals amounts to 1.4% (Eurostat 2019b; Gajdošová and Heriban 2019, 56). More importantly, almost half of foreigners living in Slovakia come from Ukraine (The Slovak Spectator 2020).

³³⁷ The Slovak government made a comparison between refugees and Roma people, claiming that refugees would be equally impossible to integrate as Slovakia’s Roma population (Matharu 2016).

³³⁸ One such document is the “Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2020” approved by the Slovak government in 2011, in which cultural proximity is regarded as a positive value (MSVR 2011). The document states that “[t]he basic criterion for the admission of foreigners within the framework of managed economic migration is their potential for the development of the Slovak economy and society with a preference for the admission of qualified and highly qualified migrants from culturally close countries of origin” (MSVR 2011, 2*).

Consequently, Slovaks have relatively little experience of cohabitation with foreigners from different cultural backgrounds, a fact that was also put forward by Foreign Minister Lajčák:

“We need to recognize that our societies have different experiences with migration. There are countries that have been open societies for decades and are very diverse. Other states, such as Slovakia, were less open and are therefore not used to dealing with different cultures” (Lajčák, 27.11.2018).³³⁹

As opposed to the Western universalist interpretation of solidarity accentuating the obligation to help all people who are in distress, the Slovak political discourse was dominated by references to cultural and ethnic categories of belongingness (see the solidarity principle of *proximity*).³⁴⁰ Lenka Kissová discovered in her analysis of political discourse in Slovakia that the majority of Slovak political representatives adopted a discursive strategy of positive *self* and negative *other* representation, highlighting the superiority of Slovak values and pointing to the potentially threatening nature of other cultures (Kissová 2018). Within the cultural “othering,” religion played the most significant role. Numerous statements of Slovak politicians highlighted the importance of the Christian tradition in Slovakia’s history, seeking to equate Slovak national identity with Christianity and thus justify the decision to accept exclusively Christian refugees (Kazharski 2018, 770).

The intentional distinction between “Slovaks” and “others” formed around cultural distance and religion was further connected to the criterion of (*un*)*deservingness* of solidarity and the juxtaposition of adaptable and therefore deserving Christian versus unadaptable and therefore undeserving Muslim refugees. Perhaps more importantly, the selection of who deserves receiving Slovak solidarity was further evaluated against the ascribed character of asylum seekers. A distinction was made between deserving political refugees and undeserving economic migrants. The Slovak government claimed that the majority of the incoming migrants were economically motivated and therefore not eligible for help, and used this as a legitimizing tool for its refusal of the refugee quotas (Žúborová and Borárosová 2017). The actual *need* of asylum seekers was not the driving force behind the Slovak efforts, and, if recognized, the Slovak government insisted that assistance should be aimed primarily at countries of origin (interview 4L).

³³⁹ Practically all interviewed experts stressed that the absence of experience of living with other people from different cultures, caused mainly by the forced isolation during the communist area, has made Slovaks more susceptible to “fear of the unknown” (interviews 4G, 4H, 4K & 4L).

³⁴⁰ In this context, Robert Fico claimed that the prospect of multiculturalism was “against the very essence of the country” (Matharu 2016).

The following table illustrates the reflection of Slovak national identity in its response to the refugee and migrant crisis, as elaborated above.

Table 14: Identity-solidarity nexus (the refugee and migrant crisis & Slovakia)

Identity element	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
<p>Inferiority complex / feeling of always being the “smaller,” less important partner (also feelings of betrayal)</p>	<p>Emphasizing Slovakia’s desire to belong to the EU core and not be “left out” (fear of renewed isolation and/or marginalization) Feeling of still being the “small” partner in the EU, ignored by bigger Member States</p>		<p>Distinction between “deserving political refugees” fleeing conflict zones and “undeserving economic migrants” seeking a better life in Europe (implicitly feeling betrayed by the latter group)</p>	<p>Eagerness to present itself as a responsible EU member in the wake of the Slovak EU Council Presidency Expressing readiness to be involved in a constructive way despite being a small country and emphasizing the necessity of a more flexible approach to solidarity Intention of overcoming the lasting sense of inferiority by claiming to be able to better respond to crisis situations than “advanced democracies”</p>
<p>Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”</p>		<p>National security and safety of Slovak citizens put above everything else</p>	<p>Adoption of securitization discourse portraying refugees and migrants as an existential threat to Slovakia and Europe Conflating migration with (organized) crime and “Islamic” terrorism</p>	
<p>High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty</p>	<p>Perception of mandatory quotas as interference in domestic affairs and a threat to Slovakia’s sovereign right to regulate entry of foreign nationals in its territory</p>			<p>Perception of mandatory quotas as interference in domestic affairs and a threat to Slovakia’s sovereign right to regulate entry of foreign nationals in its territory → “flexible”/“effective” solidarity as a better solution</p>
<p>Pride in national resistance</p>		<p>Comparing “safe” Slovakia with Western states facing problems of coexistence of different cultures</p>		<p>Pointing to the alleged ineffectiveness of the redistribution system and claiming to have chosen a better way of addressing the crisis compared to the EU and other Member States Filing a lawsuit against the mandatory relocation mechanism at the CJEU</p>

Desire to prove the nation's rightful belonging to the West	Recognition of the crisis as a joint European problem Repeated assurances of close attachment to the EU and its values, including the commitment to solidarity with European partners	Provision of help to countries affected by increased migratory pressures	Reciprocal provision of solidarity to European partners (e.g., provision of temporary housing for Syrian asylum seekers registered in Austria)	Eagerness to present itself as a responsible EU member in the wake of the Slovak EU Council Presidency Expressing readiness to participate in a common European solution to the migration and refugee crisis
Linguistic conception of nationhood	References to cultural (including linguistic) and ethnic categories of belongingness; rejection of multiculturalism		Alleged linguistic inadaptability of asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa that would lead to failed integration	
Ethnic nationalism	References to cultural and ethnic categories of belongingness; rejection of multiculturalism Highlighting the superiority of the Slovak culture over other, especially non-Christian, cultures Refugee and migrant crisis framed as a "clash of civilizations" Stigmatization of asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa as people impossible to integrate due to their cultural and religious differences	(Muslim) asylum seekers presented as "others" who might endanger the "traditional" Slovak culture and way of life & national security and safety of Slovak citizens put above everything else	Alleged cultural and religious inadaptability of asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa that would lead to failed integration Positive <i>self</i> and negative <i>other</i> representation (juxtaposition of adaptable ergo deserving former Slovak emigrants versus unadaptable ergo non-deserving current migrants and refugees)	
Catholicism, attachment to Christian values	Religious "othering": portrayal of Islam as a threat to Slovak, ergo Christian, values (Christianity viewed as incompatible with Islam) Declared willingness to accommodate only Christian refugees that would not endanger Slovak identity and culture	Declared willingness to accommodate only Christian refugees that would not endanger Slovak identity	Juxtaposition of adaptable and therefore deserving Christian refugees versus unadaptable and therefore undeserving Muslim refugees Association of Islam with terrorism and extremism	
Relative homogeneity of the Slovak population	Rejection of multiculturalism Highlighting the superiority of Slovak values and pointing to the potentially threatening nature of other cultures		Pointing to the potentially threatening nature of other cultures	

Source: Own table

Chapter 16: The V4 & the Refugee and Migrant Crisis

(Summary)

When assessing the impact of the recent migration and refugee crisis on the Visegrad states, it becomes clear that none of the four countries was affected to the extent that, for example, Turkey and Lebanon, but also Germany and Sweden were. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia were only marginally affected by border crossings of refugees, and the number of asylum applications remained very low. In large parts of these countries, people never encountered a single refugee. Hungary, which served as the first entry point for the Balkan migration route into the EU, was the only Visegrad member that experienced higher migration pressure in 2015. But it also did not turn into a destination country, with most asylum seekers leaving Hungary before their asylum applications had been processed. Consequently, Hungary and, to a much lesser extent, the other three Visegrad states served merely as transit countries for asylum seekers coming to the EU. Overall, there was no significant increase in the number of people seeking protection. More importantly, the majority of asylum applications were filed by Ukrainians, not by third-country nationals from regions such as the Middle East and North Africa.

Despite being neither central transit nor destination countries for asylum seekers, the topic of migration became particularly salient in the political discourse of the Visegrad states, and the governments of all four countries adopted an anti-immigration rhetoric and securitization discourse from the outset. With slight differences in the sharpness of their rhetoric, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, leader of the ruling Polish PiS party Jarosław Kaczyński, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, and Czech President Miloš Zeman all became outspoken critics of the EU approach to the refugee and migrant crisis. Interestingly enough, the V4 governments' opposition to the proposed mechanism of redistribution of asylum seekers enjoyed remarkable domestic political consensus. Not only far-right but also mainstream political parties expressed predominantly conservative, anti-immigrant attitudes. Only very few political parties and individual politicians, such as the Most-Híd party in Slovakia, the Civic Platform in Poland, and Slovak President Andrej Kiska, took a more moderate and pragmatic stance on immigration (see, e.g., Mihálik and Jankoľa 2016). By contrast, Islamophobic and extreme right groups and movements were on the rise in Central Europe,

including Dawn – National Coalition and “Blok proti Islámu” in the Czech Republic, Polska Liga Obrony in Poland, Kotleba-Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (ĽSNS) in Slovakia, and Jobbik in Hungary (Stojarová 2018).

Observers of the Visegrad politics therefore largely agree that the V4 reaction to the migration and refugee crisis must be considered against the background of domestic political contexts. In fact, the parliamentary elections in Poland (in October 2015) and Slovakia (in March 2016) as well as regional elections in the Czech Republic (in October 2016) coincided with the peak of the migration and refugee crisis in Europe. Moreover, in the spring of 2015, Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz party experienced a defeat in several parliamentary by-elections and suffered a considerable decline in popularity. Accordingly, the mainstream explanation is that the V4 leaders instrumentalized the refugee issue for domestic political purposes, hoping that a harder stance on migration would strengthen them domestically. Numerous studies came to the conclusion that the medialization and politicization of the topic of migration paid off.³⁴¹ The PiS party won largely on the promise “not to accept a single refugee” and the Fidesz party was able to restore its falling popularity. Only in Slovakia, the Smer–SD party lost parliamentary majority, with radical right and ethnonationalist parties receiving enough votes to enter the Slovak parliament and controlling nearly one fifth of the seats (Mudde 2016).

While migration issues used to be largely absent from the Central European mainstream media outlets, the events of 2015 provoked intense media debate. The news coverage was found to contain stereotypical, dehumanizing, and one-sided portrayals of refugees and immigrants. Various authors suggest that in all four countries the majority of the media, some of them with ties to the ruling parties, echoed the political discourse on migration and contributed to creating an atmosphere of fear. The political and media discourse had a considerable effect on the societal perception of immigration, as indicated by several opinion polls conducted in the four countries. Moreover, similar to elsewhere in Europe, societal attitudes toward refugees and migrants further deteriorated as a consequence of tragic events happening in several EU Member States, including the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 and

³⁴¹ For the case study on Slovakia, see for example Dubéci (2016), Mihálik and Jankoľa (2016), Nič and Sturm (2016), and Zvada (2018); for the Czech Republic for example Faltová (2016) and Jelínková (2019); for Poland for example Pedziwiatr (2017) and Segeš Frelak (2015); and for Hungary for example E. Inotai (2015), A. Juhász et al. (2015), and Pardavi (2017).

in Brussels in 2016 as well as the sexual assaults in Cologne during the 2015-16 New Year's Eve celebrations. The majority of Visegrad citizens seemed to share the political elites' negative attitude toward refugees and immigrants.

However, as a counterforce against the predominantly negative anti-immigration political and public discourse, spontaneous solidarity initiatives emerged across all four countries. They were concentrated at the main railway stations as well as along the Balkan route, with volunteers distributing food, clothes, and other basic necessities to the incoming refugees and migrants. These numerous campaigns, initiatives, and newly established grassroots organizations, including "Who will help?" in Slovakia, "Pomáháme lidem na útěku" and "Hlavák" in the Czech Republic, "Migration Aid" in Hungary, and "Refugees Welcome Polska" and "Chlebem i Solą" in Poland, played a major role in helping asylum seekers. Civil society engagement was not only the driving force behind organizing help for refugees on Visegrad territory, but the representatives of human rights organizations, think-tanks, NGOs, and other civil society actors also worked to counter the spread of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and racism in their respective countries.³⁴²

The existence of a significant anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment in the Hungarian, Polish, Slovak, and Czech societies on the one hand and pro-refugee mobilization on the other hand point to a certain polarization. This assertion holds true for all Visegrad countries, yet with different intensities. The most pronounced form of polarization was observed in Poland, where not only the Polish society but also the Church and political elites, especially on the national versus municipal levels, split over the issue of the admission of refugees.

The analysis has also made clear that when dealing with complex topics such as migration, it is paramount to differentiate between manifestations of solidarity toward refugees and migrants and toward fellow EU Member States and other countries. Accordingly, the following section first considers the case of intergovernmental solidarity, followed by an exploration of Visegrad states' solidarity toward the incoming people.

³⁴² For a detailed overview of expressions of solidarity with refugees made by diverse civil society actors and grassroots movements in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, see the collection published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Bratislava in 2017 (FES Bratislava 2017).

16.1 Intergovernmental Solidarity

16.1.1 Motives of Solidarity

Considering the case of intergovernmental solidarity, the Visegrad states demonstrated different levels of readiness to assist countries of refugees' origin and other countries experiencing increased migratory pressures. The Czech Republic and Slovakia committed to offer financial and material assistance to third countries hosting large refugee populations or facing other challenges related to migration. Hungary and Poland, on the contrary, "twisted" the solidarity principle of *need* by stressing their own vulnerabilities instead of acknowledging the plight of others. They contended that they already carried the burden of facing large movements of people coming either via the Balkan route or via Ukraine and that it was therefore also them who deserved solidarity for protecting the EU's external borders. Hungary, in particular, appeared quite reluctant to help other states in need.

A similar pattern appeared with regard to the Visegrad states' assessment as to whether their EU partners needed and deserved their help. While both Slovakia and the Czech Republic described the refugee and migrant crisis as a joint European problem and expressed their willingness to help fellow Member States in distress, the Czechs were much more critical of states such as Greece or Italy, accusing them of non-compliance with the Schengen acquis. This allegation was also raised by Hungary, which justified the erection of the fence along its borders by blaming Greece for failing to effectively protect the external borders of the EU and register asylum seekers.³⁴³

Greece was not the only EU Member State that was held responsible for the crisis. Hungary and, to a lesser extent, the other three Visegrad states, blamed German Chancellor Angela Merkel for her welcoming gestures that, in their eyes, encouraged more refugees and migrants to come to Europe. They criticized Germany for unilaterally creating a burden for other Member States, thereby contradicting the idea of European solidarity (see, e.g., Buckley and Foy 2016; Grosse and Hetnarowicz 2016; Lehne 2016). Viktor Orbán repeatedly declared that the refugee crisis was therefore a German, not a European problem.

³⁴³ While the Civic Platform hesitantly consented to participating in the redistribution mechanism aimed at relieving the pressure on Member States such as Greece and Italy, the PiS party was strongly against.

This allegation clearly illustrates that the political discourse in all four post-communist states was largely dominated by references to national sovereignty. When Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Romania were outvoted in the Council and the second emergency relocation scheme was adopted in September 2015, the V4 felt pushed in a corner by Western European states and confirmed in their conviction of existing double standards in the EU. They argued that the quotas were imposed from above without any prior consultation with the countries concerned and that the Council decision should have been adopted by unanimity rather than qualified majority (interviews 1C, 1O & 3H). The Polish and Hungarian leaders were particularly firm in their condemnation of the relocation mechanism, speaking of “blackmail” and “the Brussels dictate.”³⁴⁴ They reiterated that, as sovereign states, they had the inalienable right to decide who to take in and advocated for maintaining the voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures.

Moreover, the four countries perceived the migrant and refugee crisis not only as a threat to their sovereignty but also as a political and administrative burden. Government officials across Visegrad insisted that their countries did not possess the capacity needed to accommodate the required number of asylum seekers. Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic brought up the “small country” argument and the Polish government used the presence of Ukrainian refugees in the country as an excuse for being unable to accept any refugees from elsewhere.³⁴⁵

The Visegrad states further used this argument of lacking sufficient capacity to receive asylum seekers to advocate for a more flexible understanding of solidarity that would reflect the specific circumstances in the individual Member States. The introduction of the concept of “effective solidarity” (rebranded from “flexible solidarity”) during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU was the practical consequence of such declarations. To enhance their standing within the EU, the V4 states were eager to demonstrate their own solidarity contributions, such as by protecting the EU borders, focusing on eradicating the root causes of migration flows, and providing help to countries of origin and transit.

³⁴⁴ As expounded in the previous footnote, one should not forget the different reaction to the proposed automatic relocation scheme by the Civic Platform government, which eventually endorsed the EU relocation scheme, and the subsequent PiS government, which regarded the quota system as an unwanted imposition and refused to participate in its implementation.

³⁴⁵ A notable exception was President Kiska who maintained that even Slovakia as one of the smallest EU members had the capacity to provide refuge to a few hundreds or thousands of people in need.

16.1.2 Hierarchy of Solidarity Principles & Identity-Solidarity Nexus

The previous paragraphs have illustrated that the discursive legitimation strategies used by the political elites in the Visegrad states against the background of the migration and refugee crisis are complex and manifold. This section is dedicated to the discussion of whether and how these justifications of intergovernmental solidarity reflect the respective national identities of the Visegrad states. Among other things, it aims to show the overlaps and differences in the Visegrad states' perception of and compliance with the EU's response to the refugee and migrant crisis. The following conclusions can be drawn from the conducted discourse analysis:

First, the considerable difference among the Visegrad states in relation to the degree of their contestation of EU migration policy instruments mirrors their general approach to European integration. While decision makers from all four Visegrad countries criticized the EU's relocation proposals and its "open-door" policy, Czech and Slovak leaders repeatedly voiced their support for a joint European solution and reiterated their preparedness to express solidarity with their European partners. Slovakia, in particular, strived to reaffirm time and again its close attachment to the EU. From all analyzed statements made by V4 political elites, Slovak decision makers used the word "solidarity" the most, signaling their country's readiness to participate in a common European solution to the migration and refugee crisis. This can, in part, be attributed to Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2016 and its eagerness to act as a responsible EU member, in part to its painful experience with international isolation under Mečiar's rule in the 1990s, and, in part, to its long-term interest to belong the core of the Union. Similarly, despite some statements to the contrary, the Czech Republic generally strived to present itself as a reliable Member State and a "bridge-builder" between the EU and the V4. On the other hand, feelings of belongingness to the EU and attachment to other Member States were much less pronounced in the Polish official discourse and almost non-existent in the Hungarian one. But even these two countries, despite their complicated relationship with the EU institutions, made sure to reiterate their belonging to (Christian) Europe.

Notwithstanding the strength of their feelings of belongingness to the EU, all Visegrad states have demonstrated an ever-strong attachment to national sovereignty. This characteristic can be traced back to their complicated history of foreign domination and years of lost

independence and the related aspiration to finally make sovereign decisions. References to “the Brussels dictate” and the persistence anti-great power sentiments in the official discourse further underline this argument. The qualified majority voting in the Council and the imposition of the mandatory relocation quota was portrayed by some Visegrad politicians as another form of betrayal that they experienced in the past.

What further united the Visegrad states in this context was their perception of the persistence of double standards within the EU. The Central European states felt heavily criticized for refusing to participate in the EU redistribution system, while contending that the Southern EU Member States remained “unpunished” for disregarding their obligations under the Schengen Agreement. Moreover, the V4 felt a sense of injustice due to some Western European leaders claiming that the newer Member States had experienced European solidarity in many fields for years and were therefore required to show solidarity when it was demanded of them. The Visegrad officials rejected such expectations of solidarity in a “transactional manner” (“we were solidary with you and now it’s your turn”) and raised the counterargument of (historical) reciprocity, contending that other EU members had also not always been solidary with Central Europe (interview 1H).³⁴⁶ In this context, they frequently brought up the case of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project, which they denoted as a violation of the principle of energy solidarity in the EU (see, e.g., Knodt and Tews 2016; Lang 2015). Two related arguments were that the moral responsibility for the migration and refugee crisis lied primarily with those Member States that used to have colonies and that these states, which are usually better off socio-economically, should bear most of the burden and costs related to solving the situation.

Such statements hint at the persistence of unresolved tensions with some “older” EU Member States, the lingering feeling of still lagging behind or catching up with the West, and the related sense of being treated like second-class members. On the other hand, the discourse analysis has revealed a fading inferiority complex typical for the “return to Europe” period in the 1990s as well as the first years after the V4 states’ EU accession. The V4 political elites appeared more self-confident, challenging the EU’s approach to the refugee and migrant crisis and claiming to be able to offer more effective solutions.

³⁴⁶ Poland and Hungary evoked the “historical debt” by some Western European countries, positioning themselves as the ones who actually *need* and *deserve* solidarity.

Visegrad officials asserted that there were other, better ways to get involved and express solidarity than by participating in the mandatory redistribution of asylum seekers. They denounced the quota system as malfunctioning, only addressing the consequences and not the causes of migration and constituting an additional pull factor attracting more people to come to Europe (Visegrad Group 2016b). Later, they felt vindicated in their opposition to the quotas, as the majority of the EU Member States were failing to implement the relocation plan and some of them started to embrace a similar approach focused on protecting the EU's external borders. Overall, the discourse analysis of official statements indicated a certain emancipation on the part of the Visegrad countries. Slovakia prided itself on its performance as President of the Council of the EU at the height of the refugee and migrant crisis. Hungary insisted that, if they had not closed the borders, the March 2016 agreement with Turkey would have never come into existence. Poland, motivated by the desire to be seen as a responsible international actor and a leader of Central and Eastern Europe, was keen on highlighting its solidarity contributions, such as by hosting Ukrainian refugees and migrants. And the Czech Republic maintained that their plan to eradicate the causes of migration by providing assistance to countries of origin was the best and most effective approach.

In summary, in the Visegrad states' reaction to the migration and refugee crisis, the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* were closely interlocked. The intergovernmental solidarity was driven in all four states mainly by sovereignty concerns (*proximity*) in connection with the conviction of being adept at proposing alternative, more effective solutions than others (*self-preservation*). Moreover, despite their disapproval of the redistribution quota, Slovakia and the Czech Republic strived to be perceived as constructive EU members and displayed a stronger sense of togetherness with the EU than Poland and Hungary (*proximity*). The recognition of the *need* of fellow EU Member States under migratory pressure was the strongest in Slovakia and weakest in Hungary. The plight of these states and their *deservingness* of solidarity were disputed on the grounds of their alleged non-compliance with the Schengen rules. The following table summarizes the main discursive strategies used to justify the Visegrad states' reaction to the refugee and migrant crisis in the realm of intergovernmental solidarity.

Table 15: Main justifications of solidarity behavior in the Visegrad states’ reaction to the refugee and migrant crisis (intergovernmental solidarity)

Solidarity Principle	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Proximity	Sensitiveness with regard to national sovereignty	Sensitiveness with regard to national sovereignty	Sensitiveness with regard to national sovereignty	Sensitiveness with regard to national sovereignty
	Commitment to the European project, albeit with criticism	Weakening attachment to the EU (perception of existence of double standards in the EU & sense of moral high ground)	Weakening attachment to the EU & sense of moral superiority over Western Europe	Desire to be perceived as a responsible and solidary EU member and belong to the EU core
Need	Solidarity with states under migratory pressure	Hungary’s own vulnerability	Limited solidarity with states under migratory pressure	Solidarity with states under migratory pressure
Deservingness	Non-compliance by EU members	Non-compliance by EU Member States & “not a Hungarian problem” & (historical) reciprocity	(Historical) reciprocity & “not a Polish problem”	Reciprocal provision of solidarity to European partners
Self-preservation	Pursuit of emancipation (eagerness to present itself as a constructive and responsible EU member)	Pursuit of emancipation (Hungary as a problem solver and democratic pioneer)	Pursuit of emancipation (eagerness to showcase its potential)	Pursuit of emancipation (eagerness to present itself as a responsible EU member)
	Advocating for “flexible solidarity” & references to the country’s limited capacities to accommodate asylum seekers	Advocating for “flexible solidarity” & Hungary as a small country with limited capacities	Advocating for “responsible solidarity” & perception of limited capacities as compared to Western European countries	Advocating for “flexible solidarity” & Slovakia as a small country with limited capacities

Source: Own table

16.2 Solidarity with Refugees and Migrants

16.2.1 Motives of Solidarity & Identity-Solidarity Nexus

In reaction to the allegations of lacking solidarity with people in need of protection, the Visegrad states often put forward that, unlike many countries in Western Europe, they have no historical experience of admitting refugees and coexisting with different cultures. This can be seen partly as a consequence of an absent colonial past and partly as a legacy of belonging to the Communist Bloc, which prevented the Visegrad states from interacting with other cultures and resulted in a diminished openness of the societies in Central and Eastern Europe (interview 1L; Podgórzan 2017). Moreover, a frequently reproduced narrative by the Visegrad leaders is the ethnic and religious homogeneity of their societies with little to no tradition of immigration (Tabosa 2020). Throughout most of the twentieth century, the four (at that time three) states served as countries of emigration rather than immigrant-receiving countries. It was only after the fall of the Iron Curtain and especially after the EU accession that they experienced increased immigration flows, mostly from post-communist Eastern Europe.

The analysis has revealed that these arguments are not entirely accurate. All V4 countries have had at least some experience in providing refuge to persons seeking international protection, albeit on a much smaller scale than most Western European states (Segeš Frelak 2017b). In the wake of the Balkan Wars in the 1990s, all of them were able to manage much larger migration flows than was the case in 2015. Additionally, Hungary was an important destination country for refugees arriving from Romania during and after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime in the 1990s, and Poland and the Czech Republic have been accustomed to accommodating asylum seekers from Ukraine and the Caucasus. Slovakia is the only Visegrad country where the number of asylum applications has remained rather moderate. Similarly, the argument that the V4 states are traditionally homogenous societies that lack the experience of accommodating other cultures does not hold completely true, considering that Central Europe was historically one of the most culturally diverse and multiethnic regions in Europe.

Nevertheless, as a consequence of more recent historical developments, the Visegrad states currently have very low percentages of foreigners living on their territory and a

fundamentally different experience of living with other cultures than the majority of Western European countries. The Czech Republic, with a 5% rate of foreign nationals, is considered an exception in the Visegrad region, with Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia registering around only 1% (Segeš Frelak 2017b, 83; Statista 2020). Numerous surveys have indicated that most Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, and Slovaks have no real personal contact with third-country nationals and, if they do, it is usually with ethnic groups that are considered culturally alike.

Following the premises of contact theory, limited experience with immigration and cohabitation with foreign cultures reinforces existing stereotypes and prejudices and can therefore help explain the prevalence of anti-immigrant sentiments in Central European societies. A lack of contact with foreigners in largely homogenous societies also easily resonates with “fear of the unknown” and generates a concern that “otherness” of foreign cultures and lifestyles might potentially jeopardize national identities. Due to the negligible size of Muslim populations in the Visegrad countries and their overly negative representation in political and media discourse, the most significant “othering” has been directed against Muslim refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. On the contrary, refugees and immigrants from Eastern Europe, who are considered ethnically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically akin, have been accepted without problems. During the migration and refugee crisis, both the Visegrad leaders and their citizens expressed strong preference for accepting only Christian refugees. Poland and Hungary were particularly committed to evoking the Christian roots of their identities and protecting traditional Christian values. They frequently alleged the impossibility of living with and integrating people from cultures other than Christian and asserted that humanitarian support should be primarily targeted toward protecting Christian minorities in conflict regions. Similarly, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, who objected to the EU redistribution quotas, voluntarily resettled 149 and 153 Christian refugees from Iraq respectively. Muslim refugees, on the other hand, were stigmatized in the political discourse as “culturally incompatible” and impossible to integrate. The Visegrad leaders often cited examples of unsuccessful coexistence of civilizationally different populations in Western Europe and warned against creating possible cultural tensions and social conflicts in their home countries.

In the whole Visegrad region, there was a general tendency to downplay the *need* of the fleeing people, with Hungary being the most “extreme” in this regard.³⁴⁷ The debates focused more on the security aspects and economic concerns and less on the plight of asylum seekers. Moreover, in all four Visegrad states, ensuring national security and safety of their own citizens was put above the needs of the incoming people seeking protection. In the cases where the moral and humanitarian obligation to help people fleeing war or persecution was recognized, the Visegrad representatives argued that assistance should first and foremost be directed toward the asylum seekers’ countries of origin. They insisted that increased development assistance and humanitarian aid aimed at stabilizing and improving the situation in the regions of refugees’ origin would prevent the deaths of people trying to undertake an often-dangerous journey to Europe, stop the “brain drain” from the sending countries, and reduce the migration pressure on the EU Member States.

The Visegrad states differed only very slightly in their assessment of whether the incoming refugees and migrants *deserved* their help. The analysis has disclosed that in none of the Visegrad states were the asylum seekers perceived as particularly deserving solidarity. Two main arguments were used to question their eligibility for international protection. First, the V4 criticized the dysfunctionality of the automatic relocation system, claiming that the incoming people were not interested in staying on their territory anyway but only used it for transit to finally settle in wealthier countries with more generous social systems. Incidents such as the Christian group of refugees leaving the Czech Republic for Germany despite being voluntarily resettled were used as pretext to portray refugees as ungrateful individuals who do not deserve solidarity and assistance. And, second, perhaps except for Poland, the Visegrad states were fixated on making a clear separation between “genuine” refugees, who were fleeing conflicts and prosecution and were therefore considered eligible for protection, and economic migrants, who were allegedly only motivated by the vision of a better life in Europe and therefore did not deserve solidarity.³⁴⁸ The reaction of the Visegrad states was considered by many as hypocritical, considering that the Central European states themselves had a long history of emigration and that, among the emigrants, there were both political refugees and labor migrants who left for work to other (EU) states. However, the V4

³⁴⁷ One rare exception was Slovak President Kiska, who called for more compassion toward asylum seekers.

³⁴⁸ Considering Poland is already home to over two million Ukrainians working there and the country still faces labor shortage, the Polish government has been facilitating temporary economic migration, mainly from Ukraine and other Eastern European states (Koryś 2004; Segeš Frelak 2017a).

dismissed such accusations, claiming that, as opposed to asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa, emigrants from the former communist countries possessed personal qualities such as hard work and always fully respected the rules, norms, and values of the host countries, therefore deserving solidarity. In other words, through this strategy of positive *self* and negative *other* representation, they implied potential inadaptability of the incoming migrants and refugees and their resulting ineligibility for solidarity and asylum.

In addition to portraying asylum seekers as a social risk, the Visegrad states considered the increased migration movements as a threat to national security and public safety. Securitization rhetoric was adopted by almost all decision makers in the four Visegrad states, contributing to spreading fear and stirring up panic with their alarming statements. They had a tendency to conflate immigration with terrorism and criminality and present especially asylum seekers of Muslim origin as an increased security risk. Moreover, they often raised the issue of the terrorist attacks and other incidents happening in Western Europe, implying that the presence of refugees from Muslim countries would increase the likelihood of terrorism in Central and Eastern European cities too. They juxtaposed the allegedly impossible integration of immigrants and the emergence of parallel societies in Western Europe on the one hand and the low number of Muslim refugees and migrants and the absence of Islamic terrorist attacks in Central and Eastern Europe on the other hand. The increased migration to Europe was further framed as an administrative burden, a threat to the states' economies, and a strain on their labor markets. As mentioned before, the Visegrad states often pointed to their limited economic capacities and insisted that they should therefore bear a lesser burden than other, wealthier European countries.

16.2.2 Hierarchy of Solidarity Principles

The analysis has shown that, similar to the formerly discussed case of intergovernmental solidarity, national identities played a considerable role in the Visegrad states' reaction to the increased migratory movements to Europe and their expression of solidarity with the incoming refugees and migrants. Moreover, the arguments used as a justification for the Visegrad governments' decisions and actions were closely interwoven and related not only to one but to several solidarity principles. The last part of this summary chapter discusses their manifestation and hierarchization.

In all four Visegrad states, geographical, cultural, and religious *proximity* proved decisive for expressing solidarity with the incoming people. The religious and ethnic homogeneity of the region and the general lack of experience of cohabitation with foreigners can help explain the diminished sense of affiliation and obligation toward asylum seekers from geographically and culturally distant regions and a greater compassion for the fate of refugees and immigrants that are white and Christian. This goes hand in hand with the frequently made claim that Central and Eastern European states have a certain historically conditioned predisposition toward cultural and ethnic interpretations of national identity (Kazharski 2018; Kisoová 2018). It was especially Hungary and, to a lesser extent, Poland, who rejected multiculturalism and framed the preservation of national identity as an existential question. They made references to their historical struggles with foreign domination and the related need to preserve their countries' ethnic-cultural composition in order to avoid potential identity loss. Similarly, references to cultural and ethnic categories of belongingness also prevailed in the Slovak political discourse. Within the "cultural othering," religion played a significant role in the Polish, Slovak, and Hungarian discourse. Especially Hungarian and Polish officials sought to evoke the Christian foundations of their national identities and made numerous references to the need for preservation of traditional Christian values in Europe.

The arguments formed around cultural distance and religion were also reflected in the other solidarity principles. First, the Visegrad governments stressed the *need* of their own citizens. In other words, solidarity appeared primarily in connection with their own citizens, not refugees. Second, asylum was offered primarily to Christian refugees, who were considered as being in danger and need for protection. Third, it was suggested that the cultural and religious "otherness" of Muslim immigrants and refugees might bring about their problematic integration and the related risk of increased crime and disorder. The securitization framing of the migration and refugee crisis evoked the historical feelings of insecurity and narratives of victimhood still prevalent in the Visegrad region. Finally, in addition to their alleged "inadaptability," the majority of the people coming from the Middle East and North Africa were depicted not as "genuine refugees" but rather as economic migrants seeking a better life in Europe. In sum, through portraying asylum seekers as potential terrorists, delinquents, and people unwilling to integrate within the receiving societies and comply with local laws, their *need* and *deservingness* to obtain solidarity were put into question. In this context, implying the lack of sufficient capacities, the Visegrad

governments expressed their ability to be solidary only with those who were in dire need (the principle of *self-preservation*). In cases where the plight of the asylum seekers was recognized, the Visegrad states advocated for helping them preferably in their countries of origin. The following table visualizes the main motives and discursive justifications of the Visegrad states' solidarity behavior toward refugees and migrants.

Table 16: Main justifications of solidarity behavior in the Visegrad states' reaction to the refugee and migrant crisis (solidarity with refugees and migrants)

Solidarity Principle	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovak Republic
Proximity	Ethnic homogeneity & cultural incompatibility	Fear of identity loss & ethnic homogeneity & Hungary as a "country of Hungarians"	Ethnic and religious homogeneity & "platonic Islamophobia"	Cultural incompatibility
Need	Helping refugees in their countries of origin	Emphasizing Hungary's own vulnerability (solidarity primarily in connection with Hungarian citizens)	Helping refugees in their countries of origin	Moral obligation to help people in need, ideally in their countries of origin
	Solidarity primarily in connection with Czech citizens, not third country nationals		Solidarity primarily in connection with Polish citizens (highlighting the state's primary duty to take care of its own citizens)	Solidarity primarily in connection with Slovak citizens (caring for their safety put above everything else)
Deservingness	Securitization of migration	Securitization of migration	Securitization of migration	Securitization of migration
	Economic migrants versus "genuine" refugees	Economic migrants versus "genuine" refugees		"Undeserving" economic migrants versus "deserving" refugees
	Non-compliance by asylum seekers	Non-compliance by asylum seekers	Little self-effort by refugees	
Self-preservation	Insufficient capacity to receive and accommodate asylum seekers	Insufficient capacity to receive and accommodate asylum seekers	Already overstrained capacities due to the acceptance of refugees from Eastern Europe	Insufficient capacity to receive and accommodate asylum seekers

Source: Own table

PART V:
THE V4 & FURTHER ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU

Chapter 17: Introduction to the EU's Enlargement and Neighborhood Policies

The second overarching case study will explore the position, aims, and ambitions of the Visegrad states with regard to the Union's policy toward further enlargement, both before and after their accession to the EU in 2004, as well as their capacity to influence this particular policy field. The focus will lie on the level of the Visegrad states' engagement in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (covering Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) as well as their activities in the Western Balkan region (concretely Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia). The choice of these two areas was inspired by the EU's neighborhood and enlargement preferences as well as by the fact that the Central European countries were "greatly involved in the stabilisation of the Western Balkans as well as in the definition of EU policies in the Eastern neighbourhood, like the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership" (Tulmets 2014, 20). Similar to Elsa Tulmets (2014) and other authors, the present study will address the Visegrad states' relations with Russia only at the periphery because it would otherwise be beyond the scope of this book.

To provide a coherent and comprehensive account of the Visegrad states' solidarity and support for the EU enlargement policy, the ENP and its distinct dimension, the Eastern Partnership, will first be introduced. Following this, the Visegrad states' engagement with the Western Balkans will be discussed. This introduction will again be followed by four case studies covering the individual Visegrad states. For every V4 member, the country's general stance toward potential candidate countries in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, the origins of its commitment to support further enlargement, and its motivation to be active in these two regions will be studied. Similar to the case study covering the Visegrad states' response to the migration and refugee crisis, a discourse analysis of speeches and statements of high-level political elites, organized along the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*, will be used to dissect the motivations underlying the V4 solidarity with countries aspiring to join the EU. The subsequent summary section will elaborate on the similarities and differences in the Visegrad states' approaches toward EU enlargement.

European Neighborhood Policy

In the period between the end of the Cold War and the “big bang” enlargement in 2004, the EU’s enlargement policy was mainly concerned with Central and Eastern European candidate countries and with establishing a functioning strategic partnership with Russia. In the eyes of many observers, the EU’s interest in the other Eastern European states was fairly limited (Adamczyk 2010; Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 426). After it was clear that new Member States would be joining the Union, discussions about possible challenges related to the physical extension of the EU’s external borders to the East emerged. The EU realized the necessity to reevaluate its relations with politically and economically less stable new Eastern neighbors that it had neglected before. On the one hand, it had to find answers to numerous pragmatic questions, such as border controls and visa issues. On the other hand, these procedural aspects were accompanied by a mental shift especially on the part of the “old” Member States, which started to reevaluate their perception of the region (Stępniewski 2016). Karolina Pisarska cites one EU official who admitted that: “Eastern Europe was a complete “terra incognita” for many Member States before the enlargement, more distant mentally than Africa or even Latin America” (Pisarska 2008, 6).

As a result of these deliberations, in March 2003, the European Commission published a document titled “Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours,” which suggested that the EU should strive to develop a zone of stability, security, and prosperity with its immediate neighbors and create a “ring of friends” based on shared values (European Commission 2003).³⁴⁹ This document provided the basis for a new initiative formed in 2004, which was given the name “European Neighborhood Policy” (ENP). It encompassed ten Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian National Authority, Syria, and Tunisia) and six Eastern

³⁴⁹ In the first reaction to the new geopolitical and security realities after the 2004 enlargement, the United Kingdom and Denmark proposed the establishment of the New Neighbors Initiative in April 2002, which was supposed to encompass only three Eastern European countries: Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. As a result of the pressure exerted by the southern EU Member States, especially France and Spain, which called for the inclusion of the African countries, the proposal was expanded towards the Mediterranean states and rebranded to “Wider Europe” (Buras and Pomorska 2006; Cianciara 2008, 37).

European (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) states.³⁵⁰ The aim was to consolidate the EU's neighborhood policies under a single, coherent framework with no promise of full membership offered to the participating countries.³⁵¹ Importantly, the establishment of the ENP coincided with the democracy-oriented "color revolutions" in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004. Those parallel developments raised hopes that, together with the ENP, they could bring about greater security, stability, and prosperity throughout the whole region.

Eastern Partnership

Because the scope of the ENP was so broad and the initiative involved two groups of states, Eastern Europe and North Africa and the Middle East, that had very little in common, it failed to deliver the expected results and was largely perceived as an inadequate mechanism to promote democratization processes, stimulate effective economic reforms, and bring stability into both regions (Adamczyk 2010, 197-198; Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 427). Treating two significantly different regions with varying potentials and aspirations to EU membership as one had a demotivating effect on some ENP countries that felt underappreciated by the EU (Latoszek and Kłós 2016, 78; Stepniewski 2016, 184). This, in turn, resulted in their reduced will to introduce necessary reforms, which again decreased their chance of EU membership. The ineffectiveness of the neighborhood policy encouraged some EU Member States to push for intensified cooperation with the EU's Eastern neighbors and for developing a separate policy toward this specific region.

Some additional factors also paved the way for the emergence of the Eastern Partnership. First, it was the turbulent political developments that underlined the need for a new approach toward three Eastern European countries—Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine—and three countries from the South Caucasus—Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The failure of the Orange

³⁵⁰ Belarus, due to its poor record on democracy and human rights, was only included in the ENP in 2009 as part of the Eastern Partnership (Stewart 2009). Turkey and the Western Balkan countries were not included in the process because they had already been granted the status of (potential) candidates. Russia too was invited to join the ENP but declined the offer, insisting on designing relations with the EU in the form of a more equal "strategic partnership." The EU and Russia signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1997, which defined four "Common Spaces" for cooperation, including the Economic Space, Space of Freedom, Security and Justice, Space of External Security, and Space of Research and Education (DeBardleben 2011).

³⁵¹ The core instrument used by the ENP are so-called Action Plans, which outline a set of political and economic objectives to be met by the neighboring countries in exchange for financial and technical aid granted by the EU (EEAS 2015).

Revolution in Ukraine and the ensuing political chaos in the country, coupled with the rise of authoritarian tendencies largely in Belarus, but also in Armenia or Azerbaijan, provided an important impulse for the EU to pay utmost attention to the stabilization of its immediate neighborhood. More importantly, Russia's intervention in the armed ethno-political conflict between Georgia and its former autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in August 2008 accelerated the work on the project, especially after Russia's formal recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 428; Latoszek and Kłos 2016, 76-78). Second, gas crises in Eastern Europe pointed to potential economic risks in an unstable region. And, lastly, competing enlargement initiatives within the EU provided a window of opportunity to bolster relations with the Eastern European neighbors. France initiated the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean within the framework of the ENP (Adamczyk 2010, 199; Wojna and Gniazdowski 2009, 6). In addition, the Northern Dimension of the EU put forward by Finland was used by Poland to make the case for a complementary, independent "Eastern policy" of the EU (Buras and Pomorska 2006, 36).

To establish a certain reciprocity between the Eastern Dimension and the Southern Dimension of the ENP, Poland and Sweden decided to present a new regional cooperation format specifically directed at Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. This initiative was supposed to offer comprehensive and tailored assistance to the participating countries in their transformation and modernization efforts in exchange for more concrete benefits from the EU, as opposed to the previous selective and rather ad hoc reforms with no accession prospect.

The Polish–Swedish non-paper on the launch of the Eastern Partnership was first presented at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting in Brussels on 26 May 2008. In June, it was unanimously endorsed by the European Council (Conclusions of the European Council 2008). The European Commission was tasked to draft a concrete proposal concerning the Eastern Partnership, which it presented in its Communication to the European Parliament and the Council in December 2008 (European Commission 2008). Under the Czech Presidency, a detailed proposal from the Commission was presented to the European Council. After it received unanimous support in March 2009, the initiative became an integral part of the European foreign policy (Copsey and Pomorska 2014). The Eastern

Partnership was officially inaugurated by the 27 Foreign Ministers of the EU and the six partner countries at the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit on 7 May 2009 under the auspices of the Czech EU Council Presidency. The participants of the Summit concluded that the Eastern Partnership would be governed by the principles of differentiation and conditionality.³⁵²

The purpose of establishing the Eastern Partnership was to accelerate democratic transition in the countries involved by providing them with a perspective of potential future accession to the EU (Latoszek and Kłos 2016, 79).³⁵³ The upgrading of political relations has been happening largely through Association Agreements. The EU signed these agreements with Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia on 27 June 2014 and a comprehensive, and a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with Armenia followed in 2017.³⁵⁴ In the realm of bilateral cooperation, the EU also aimed at developing stronger economic links through Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreements (DCFTAs). The traditional bilateral approach of the EU toward Eastern Europe was decided to be complemented by a multilateral cooperation framework and a provision of EU expertise and financial support toward the implementation of political, social, and economic reforms. The foreseen measures were subsumed under four multilateral “thematic platforms,” which encompass ensuring energy security, enhancing mobility and people-to-people contacts, deepening economic integration, and strengthening democratic institutions and good governance (EaP Civil Society Forum 2020). The Comprehensive Institution Building (CIB) program was conceived within the framework of the Eastern Partnership to help the countries prepare for European integration by carrying out substantial reforms in the field of administrative capacity and implementing key elements of the *acquis communautaire* (Korosteleva et al. 2014, 258; Tulmets 2011, 12).

³⁵² The principle of *differentiation* shall ensure that the Eastern Partnership countries are assessed individually and that their political, socio-economic, and other specificities and needs are taken into account. The principle of *conditionality* shall, in turn, guarantee that the countries’ accession prospects depend on the degree of their pre-accession efforts and compliance with the set criteria (Delcour and Soler i Lecha 2017).

³⁵³ While it was emphasized that EU membership was not a guarantee automatically following the countries’ participation in the Eastern Partnership, the project was there to help them make the necessary political, economic, administrative, and other adjustments to be prepared for potential accession once the “enlargement fatigue” has passed (Cianciara 2008; Stepniewski 2016, 187).

³⁵⁴ The EU’s relations with Azerbaijan are governed by the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, in force since 1999, and a new agreement has been under negotiation since 2017 (European Commission 2020c). With Belarus, the EU signed visa facilitation and readmission agreements in 2020 (European Commission 2020d).

In sum, the Eastern Partnership was designed with the aims of responding to the altered geopolitical and security realities after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements and limiting Russian influence in the rather volatile Eastern European region.³⁵⁵ Although the Eastern Partnership has been sometimes criticized as another “empty gesture” because it does not explicitly include a promise of an eventual EU membership, it has offered a European perspective to the involved countries, meaning that it increased the depth and quality of their relationship with the Union, and provided a positive signal against the perceived “enlargement fatigue” (Adamski 2011; Klatt 2011).³⁵⁶ Moreover, the Eastern Partnership has been praised for differentiating between Southern and Eastern neighbors within the ENP and for reinvigorating the ENP’s Eastern Dimension (Boonstra and Shapovalova 2010).

The Visegrad states have all been keen advocates of the ENP, especially its Eastern Dimension (Duleba et al. 2013). Even during the time when the V4 were candidates themselves, they were already calling for a systematic EU policy toward Eastern Europe (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007, 3). After their EU accession, expressions of solidarity with and responsibility toward other former communist countries in the neighborhood intensified and enlargement became one of the priority areas of the Visegrad cooperation (Griessler 2018; Tulmets 2014). The 2004 Kroměříž Declaration emphasized that the Visegrad states were “ready to assist countries aspiring for EU membership by sharing and transmitting their knowledge and experience” and contribute to shaping EU’s enlargement and neighborhood policies toward the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe (Visegrad Group 2004). At the 2011 Bratislava Summit, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad cooperation, the V4 adopted a new declaration, in which they reinforced their commitment to actively supporting the integration endeavors of the Eastern Partnership and Western

³⁵⁵ However, it was repeatedly stressed by the architects of the Eastern Partnership that the initiative was not directed against Russia. Instead, they emphasized that the country might participate in concrete regional Eastern Partnership projects as a third party (Adamski 2011, 51). Russia’s reaction to the Eastern Partnership idea was at best reserved, portraying the establishment of the partnership as an attempt by the EU to create a sphere of influence in its Eastern neighborhood. Its negative perception was fueled by seeing the EU as a competitor to its own Eurasian project and the related fear of losing its status of a priority partner to some of the countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (Stewart 2009). Moscow’s concerns intensified when it became clear that Ukraine was about to sign an Association Agreement with the EU in 2013, which eventually escalated into an open confrontation.

³⁵⁶ For example, the Eastern Partnership can lead to eventual visa liberalization, which is a highly attractive topic to all Eastern Partnership countries (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 429-430).

Balkan countries and facilitating “the process of enlarging the area of stability and democracy in the EU neighborhood” (Visegrad Group 2011a; see also Duleba et al. 2013).

To further advance the political association and economic integration of Eastern European partners with the EU and thereby enhance the V4 contribution to the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, the Visegrad states established the “Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership Program” (V4EaP) in 2011. The V4EaP program, financed by the IVF, focuses on supporting social and economic transformation, democratization, and regional cooperation in the Eastern Partnership countries as well as on fostering the development of civil society and people-to-people contacts (Visegrad Group 2011b; see also interview 1C; Bauerová 2018; Latoszek and Kłos 2016).

Western Balkans

The V4’s approach toward the Western Balkans has evolved similarly as the Visegrad Group’s engagement in Eastern Europe. Cooperation with the Western Balkan states, together with support for their rapprochement with the EU, have been identified as priority areas of the V4 cooperation (Griessler 2018). The Kroměříž Declaration, adopted shortly after the Visegrad states’ EU accession, already expressed the Visegrad Group’s support for the continuation of the EU enlargement process toward Southeastern Europe. The Hungarian V4 presidency in 2009-2010 established the informal tradition of organizing regular summits of Visegrad foreign ministers with their counterparts from the Western Balkan countries, and this structured political dialogue continues to take place to date (Juzová et al. 2019, 2; Strážay 2012, 55-56).

In addition to their vocal political support for the integration ambitions of the Western Balkan countries, the Visegrad states have dedicated funds from the IVF to projects aimed at promoting economic and political transformation, regional cross-border cooperation, and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans (Juzová 2019; Juzová et al. 2019). Moreover, owing to the region’s own successful political and socio-economic transformation, the Visegrad Group has served as a source of inspiration for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The establishment of the free trade area in the Western Balkans under the name “CEFTA 2006,” which was originally implemented in the Visegrad region and enabled the V4 countries to get prepared for entering the EU single market, is an

example of successful experience sharing by the V4 (Strážay 2012, 57). The Western Balkans Fund, which was created in Tirana in 2015 on the basis of the IVF, represents another example of the Visegrad Group's institutional knowledge transfer to the Western Balkans (interviews 2J & 2S). Among the objectives of the fund are the development of closer cooperation among the Western Balkan states and their integration into the EU (Western Balkans W.B. Fund 2020). Similar to the IVF, it fosters people-to-people contacts, grass-roots initiatives, and cooperation among civil society actors (Juzová et al. 2019; Orosz 2017).

With regards to enhancing the stability and security of the region, the Visegrad states have been involved in numerous UN, EU, NATO, and OSCE missions in the Western Balkans, including UNPROFOR in Croatia, EUFOR Concordia in Macedonia, EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and KFOR and EULEX in Kosovo (Griessler 2018, 148-153; Orosz 2018, 19).³⁵⁷ Increased migratory flows to Europe, which escalated especially in the summer of 2015, further intensified the engagement of the V4 in the Western Balkans. The Visegrad states were in favor of involving the states along the so-called Balkan migration route into the solution of the migration and refugee crisis and pushed for strengthening the interregional cooperation in the areas of justice and home affairs (Juzová et al. 2019, 4; Orosz 2017, 5).

Overall, the Visegrad Group has been able to develop a comprehensive policy approach toward the Western Balkans, encompassing political, economic, cultural, and other dimensions. After the Western Balkan countries became victims of the so-called “enlargement fatigue” in the EU, the Visegrad Group remained committed to offering them a European perspective (Juzová et al. 2019, 2). However, according to some authors, the legitimacy of the Visegrad approach toward the Western Balkans has been undermined by both V4's internal developments, such as the recent backsliding on democracy and the rule of law in Hungary and Poland, and external factors, above all the establishment of the Berlin Process as a potentially competing initiative (Juzová 2019). The Berlin Process was launched by Germany in 2014 with the goal of bringing together the Western Balkan states with other states from the former Yugoslav region, concretely Croatia and Slovenia, and some other EU

³⁵⁷ Comparing the four Visegrad partners, Hungary has the highest number of troops in the Western Balkan area (Balcer 2005, 113; Orosz 2017, 7).

members, such as Germany, France, Austria, and Italy.³⁵⁸ The Berlin Process strives to foster regional interconnectivity, political dialogue and reconciliation, and European integration of the Western Balkans. Although several V4 countries have expressed their interest in getting involved in the new framework, Poland has been the only one invited to become a member of the Berlin Process (Juzová 2019; Orosz 2017). Moreover, while both the Visegrad Cooperation and the Berlin Process serve as drivers behind the regional cooperation among the Western Balkan states and their activities overlap to a certain extent, there have so far been no attempts to intertwine the two formats (Juzová 2019). The potential for latent rivalry has led some observers to wonder whether the Visegrad Group would be able to retain its role as a credible advocate and a role model for the Western Balkans in the future (Juzová 2019).

The following chapters will explore the individual positions of the Visegrad states on further enlargement of the EU. Similar to the first case study, every chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part discusses the respective Visegrad country's level of engagement in Eastern Europe (the Eastern Partnership states) and the Western Balkans. The second part presents the results of the conducted analysis of the discourse of high-level political elites and explores—along the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*—the role of solidarity in the country's approach to the European neighborhood and potential EU enlargement. The third part examines the nexus between the identity elements identified in chapters 6-10 and their reflection in the justifications of the adopted measures (i.e., the solidarity profile) of the Visegrad states. The identity-solidarity nexus is also presented in the form of a summary table at the end of each chapter. After a detailed elaboration of the four countries under investigation, the last, summarizing chapter illuminates the similarities and differences between the Visegrad states.

³⁵⁸ The establishment of the Berlin process was a reaction to the EU's diminished interest in the enlargement process following the economic and financial crisis and other challenges Europe was facing in the 2000s and 2010s and an attempt to keep the EU's leverage in the region against the increased presence of other actors such as China or Russia. Actually, many see the State of the European Union address by then President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker in 2014, in which he announced the Commission's plans on freezing enlargement, as the catalyst for enhanced engagement on the part of Germany and other EU Member States (Juzová 2019; Orosz 2017).

Chapter 18: The Czech Republic & EU Enlargement

Although we all share the same values and the same goals, we do not share the same concerns, which is due to different historical experiences and length of stay in the community. People in the so-called “old countries” are afraid of further enlargement and some politicians fear EU disintegration, indiscipline, and loss of social security. On the contrary, we are afraid of barriers, discrimination, and enforced conformity within the Union.

—Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek (02.03.2009)

18.1 The Czech Republic and the EU’s Enlargement Policy

After the fall of the communist regime, the Czech(oslovak) diplomacy was busy strengthening the country’s Western orientation and was therefore not very active in the European neighborhood throughout the 1990s (Král 2010; Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007). The Czech foreign policy priorities shifted after the country’s NATO and EU accession in 1999 and 2004 respectively. Tomáš Weiss as well as other authors contend that EU membership did not change the Czech foreign policy’s long-term focus on the promotion of human rights and democracy in countries in transition, but rather altered the Czech interpretation of the neighborhood, paying special attention to countries bordering the EU. Approximately around 2006, the support for the Western Balkan countries was complemented by an increased focus on Eastern Europe as the geographical priority area of Czech foreign policy (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007; T. Weiss 2011). Although the Czech Republic was behind the launch of the Eastern Partnership, its contribution to this policy field is less well known than the Polish one (Tulmets 2008, 79). Accordingly, this section will analyze the reasons why Czech diplomacy in relation to Eastern Europe used to be less pronounced and what eventually caused a change of course. The subsequent section will introduce the Western Balkan dimension of Czech foreign policy, followed by a comprehensive discussion of results derived from the conducted discourse analysis.

Czech Eastern Policy

Czechoslovak and later Czech policy toward the post-Soviet space can be divided into several stages: In the first few years after gaining independence, the vast majority of the Czech political elite perceived the East primarily as a space from which it was necessary to gain distance. The main goals of Czechoslovak diplomacy in the early 1990s were the withdrawal

of Soviet troops from the territory and, ideally, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, also known as Comecon (Votápek 2004, 99; T. Weiss 2011, 28). After all these policy aims had been achieved by mid-1991, the next stage was characterized by a “return to Europe,” an intentional reorientation toward the West.³⁵⁹ As a consequence of the pursued integration into the Western institutional structures, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the attention paid by Czech officials to the East was reduced to a minimum. Petr Kratochvíl writes that, with the demise of the Soviet Union, a political *terra incognita* emerged between Central Europe and Russia, which was generally perceived as poor, unstable, and unattractive, and therefore irrelevant to Czech politics (Kratochvíl 2007, 16).³⁶⁰ In addition, after the breakup of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic lost its common border with the post-Soviet space, which it welcomed as a positive geopolitical shift, but which also resulted in the decline of mutual political, economic, and cultural contacts (Kratochvíl 2007, 16).

According to several authors, Czech disinterest in the European East in the 1990s was caused by its sudden geographical separation from the region, its increased focus on the accession process, and its prioritization of the Balkans (Král 2010; Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007; T. Weiss 2011). Since the 2000s, the situation gradually started to change. In connection with the nearing accession to the EU, Prague had to clarify a number of practical issues with Eastern European countries, such as mutual trade and visa regulations (Kratochvíl 2007, 16; Votápek 2004, 100). In addition, the V4 was searching for a new agenda and Eastern Europe turned out to be the new focus of their policy coordination (interview 1R).

At the same time, driven by the aim of becoming a full-fledged member of the EU and NATO, the Czech Republic never hesitated to “sacrifice” its Eastern partners in order to speed up its own accession negotiations. For instance, while Poland was resolutely against the introduction of visa requirements for nationals travelling from post-Soviet Eastern European countries, the Czech Republic, seeking to enter the Schengen Area as quickly as

³⁵⁹ The memorandum that the Czech government attached to its EU membership application in 1996 affirmed that the Czech territory had for centuries been a “natural and distinct part of the West European civilization area,” from which it was artificially and forcefully separated (Vláda ČR 1996).

³⁶⁰ This gloomy picture was confirmed by the numerous internal conflicts, clashes, and attempted *coup d'états* in Eastern Europe after 1991 and the subsequent First Chechen war between 1994-1996 (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007, 5).

possible, introduced visa requirements in 2000, almost four years before the actual EU accession (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007, 6).

In the years following its EU entry, the Czech Republic started to be more involved in the Eastern European region and strived to actively shape the ENP. Elsa Tulmets argues that the growing interest in Eastern Europe on the part of Czech politicians can be traced back to several critical junctures (Tulmets 2008). One was the prospect of the upcoming Czech Presidency of the EU Council and the related opportunity as well as necessity to be more involved in EU's affairs and foreign policy issues.³⁶¹ During its presidency of the Visegrad Group in 2007–2008, the Czech Republic drafted a non-paper about the EU's Eastern Policy entitled "ENP and Eastern Neighborhood - Time to Act: Food for Thought," which was first discussed among the Visegrad Group and then circulated to other "like-minded" EU countries such as the Baltic states, Germany, and Sweden in order to gain their support (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007). Based on these various consultations, the Czech government presented the non-paper to the GAERC in April 2008. It argued for designing a multilateral project-based approach of the ENP towards the East in addition to the existent bilateral relations with the individual Eastern countries (Dangerfield 2009, 1742-1744). The key promise of the forthcoming Czech EU presidency was "Europe without barriers," an ambition of the Czech government to develop a "more distinctive" profile of the Eastern dimension of the ENP and offer the Eastern European partners the maximum degree of economic integration acceptable to all EU Member States (Tulmets 2008, 87-88; Wojna and Gniazdowski 2009, 20-21). Although the Czech proposal did not get adopted, it served as a baseline for the subsequent Polish–Swedish Eastern Partnership initiative eventually launched in May 2009 (Král 2010, 10; Wojna and Gniazdowski 2009, 20-21).³⁶²

Once the Czech Republic assumed the EU Presidency in 2009, the Eastern dimension became one of the three priority areas of Czech foreign policy, along with the Western Balkans and transatlantic relations (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007, 6). The focus on the Eastern neighborhood coincided well with the Czech support for democracy and human rights. The

³⁶¹ In her analysis of policy speeches and official declarations of Czech politicians, Elsa Tulmets found out that Eastern Europe was addressed with increased frequency as the Czech EU Presidency drew nearer (Tulmets 2008).

³⁶² Observers of Polish and Czech foreign policies noticed that the EU's Eastern policy generated a kind of "leadership competition" between the Czechs and the Poles (Dangerfield 2009).

Presidency endorsed the Polish-Swedish proposal for the creation of the Eastern Partnership with the aim of having a more balanced approach to the ENP (Dangerfield 2009, 1743). Czech officials strived to create a parallel initiative to the Southern dimension of the ENP, which was launched under the name “Union for the Mediterranean” in 2008 (T. Weiss 2011, 32-33).³⁶³ In addition, the Russian-Ukrainian gas disputes at the outset of 2009 raised awareness about the interdependence between the stability of Eastern European countries and energy security (Wojna and Gniazdowski 2009, 21-22). Last but not least, the war that broke out between Georgia and Russia over the self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in summer 2008 required stronger Czech involvement in the issue, considering their upcoming EU Presidency (Tulmets 2008, 87). Although the initial Czech reaction was marked by a discord between the government and the President, the Czech government eventually endorsed seeking political dialogue with Russia, as well as the provision of assistance to Georgia to reduce the humanitarian crisis (Tulmets 2008, 93-94).³⁶⁴

The inaugural Eastern Partnership summit was held during the Czech Republic’s EU Presidency in Prague on 7 May 2009, adopting a declaration that largely mirrored the Czech Presidency priorities. Afterwards, the country sustained its attention on Eastern Europe. The program statement of the coalition government of Prime Minister Petr Nečas, drawn up after the May 2010 elections, explicitly mentioned the relations with Eastern European countries, especially those in the Eastern Partnership project, as a cornerstone of Czech foreign policy (Cibulková 2011, 207). The developments from 2010 onwards confirm that, regardless of the change of government, the Eastern Partnership project has become firmly established as one of the priorities of Czech foreign policy. This claim is supported by the fact that Czech diplomat Štefan Füle served as the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy from 2010 to 2014.

Since the establishment of the Eastern Partnership, the Czech Republic has been in favor of further deepening cooperation with the six countries, a goal that it has pursued both multilaterally and bilaterally. At the multilateral level, the Czech EU Presidency was

³⁶³ While then French President Nicolas Sarkozy was openly against any further enlargement of the EU, Czech politicians signaled their endeavor to grant a candidate status and thus accession perspective to the countries of Eastern Europe (Tulmets 2008, 89).

³⁶⁴ Then Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek and Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg took the side of Georgia, whereas President Václav Klaus alleged that Georgia was the one who provoked the conflict and argued against sanctioning Russia (Tulmets 2008, 93-94).

particularly pivotal for strengthening Czech engagement in Eastern Europe (Cibulková 2011, 219).³⁶⁵ The Czech Republic has also emphasized the role of the IVF and the V4EaP program for civil society support in the Eastern Partnership countries (Kohout, 28.11.2013). Bilaterally, the Czech Republic has launched a number of specific initiatives to share its transformational experiences and stimulate reforms in the Eastern Partnership countries (Kohout, 28.11.2013). In terms of content, the focus of the Czech Eastern Policy has been primarily on democracy promotion and related human rights aspects. To this end, the Czech government created a separate Department of Transformation Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July 2004 and transition promotion became a distinct policy area (Kratochvíl 2007, 18).³⁶⁶ In 2007, this department merged with the Department of Human Rights to create the Department of Human Rights and Transformation Policy, which has made it possible, *inter alia*, to synergistically link multilateral human rights issues with concrete projects in support of human rights and democracy (interview 1J).

The Transition Promotion Program TRANS is part of Czech ODA and, at the same time, a specific tool for promoting democracy and human rights (MFA Czech Republic 2017b). The program encompasses countries that are already in transition towards democracy as well as countries where the transformation has not yet begun, such as Belarus. While classical ODA is implemented at the level of government, TRANS operates at more practical levels and implements projects that do not require the consent of the respective government. Above all, it supports civil society, promotes the freedom of expression and free media, and assists with institution building in the area of the rule of law (interview 1J; MFA Czech Republic 2015b).³⁶⁷ TRANS classifies almost all Eastern Partnership countries, except for Azerbaijan, as target countries for the Czech transition promotion policy (MFA Czech Republic 2020a).

³⁶⁵ Directly after launching the project, at the initiative of the Czech Republic, several multilateral meetings were held that thematically focused on the Eastern Partnership. For example, a seminar entitled “The Future of the Eastern Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities” was organized by the Czech Republic and Poland in Madrid in January 2010 (Cibulková 2011, 208). In addition, in 2010, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Kohout published a joint article with his German counterpart Guido Westerwelle in the *Financial Times Deutschland* on the ENP and its Eastern dimension, in which they signaled their interest in the implementation of specific projects within the Eastern Partnership (Cibulková 2011, 208).

³⁶⁶ Until then, the Czech Republic was providing democracy assistance within the Czech development aid program (Bartovic 2008, 29).

³⁶⁷ The head of the TRANS department, Jan Látal, underlines that, while there is a dividing line between ODA and TRANS with regard to development cooperation, the two programs should be complementary. Moreover, a few priority countries, such as Georgia, Moldova, or Bosnia and Hercegovina, are part of both programs (interview 1J).

At the same time, Moldova and Georgia are priority countries of the Czech development policy (MFA Czech Republic 2017b, 13).

Under the first Czech president Václav Havel, the promotion of democratization and human rights were under the supervision of the presidential office. Havel became the patron of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), an independent organization founded with the purpose of supporting democratic transformations both inside and outside Europe (European Partnership for Democracy 2020). Later, the democratization and human rights agenda shifted more toward the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially after the former Director of the People in Need Foundation (Člověk v tísni) Tomáš Pojar became the first Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2005 (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007, 7).

Czech research institutes, think tanks, and NGOs, such as People in Need, have been particularly instrumental in forging a more systematic approach toward Eastern Europe (Bartovic 2008; T. Weiss 2011). In 2008, a union of eleven Czech NGOs working in the field of democracy assistance was established under the name Association for Democracy and Human Rights (DEMAS). This new consortium has since served as a platform for discussion, cooperation, better coordination of activities, and joint advocacy and lobbying (Bartovic 2008). The organizations can draw on their expertise gained during the transformation period in the Czech Republic and participate in the co-design of governmental programs in the countries in transition, focusing predominantly on fostering people-to-people contacts, supporting local NGOs, providing training for journalists, and conducting other activities “on the ground” (interview 1J; Bartovic 2008). According to Jan Látal, head of the TRANS department, Czech government officials have sought to make Prague a hub for NGOs active in the post-Soviet region. Prague was selected as the headquarters of the Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS), a network of independent think-tanks in Central and Eastern Europe endeavored to share the lessons of transition. The Czech Republic also had a key role in establishing the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, which is an institutionalized platform for civil society organizations from the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries with the aim of promoting socialization among the civil society actors and facilitating internalization of European norms and values in the six countries (interview 1J).

In terms of geographical focus, bilateral relations with individual Eastern Partnership countries are differentiated and focus on various areas. Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and

Belarus have belonged among priority countries for Czech foreign policy since the mid-1990s (Kratochvíl 2007; Tulmets 2008). Moldova and Georgia have been large recipients of Czech ODA. In addition, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia have benefitted from Czech democracy assistance programs, which is reflected in the amount of fund allocations of the transformation cooperation program TRANS (interview 1J; see also Bartovic 2008).

Czech relations with Ukraine have oscillated between two poles. On the one hand, Czech governments have supported Ukraine's transformation and approximation to Euro-Atlantic structures (Zaorálek, 18.03.2014). Ukraine has also become an important source of foreign workforce in the Czech Republic, with Ukrainians forming a significant minority group. Ukraine is therefore important for the Czech Republic from an economic point of view (Cibulková 2011). On the other hand, politically, the Czech Republic continues to present itself as a champion of Ukraine's political interests, but, at the same time, strives to pursue a realistic policy toward Russia (interview 1N).³⁶⁸ For example, Czech government officials were less active in their support of the "Orange Revolution" in comparison to their Polish and Hungarian colleagues (T. Weiss 2011, 34-35). Similarly, observers of Czech foreign policy agree that the role of Czech diplomacy in the later Ukrainian crisis was rather passive and ambiguous (Dostál and Eberle 2015, 49-50). The Czech government followed the EU line in pleading for Ukrainian territorial integrity and supporting the introduction of sanctions against Russia. Moreover, the Czech Republic was active in providing humanitarian assistance to Ukraine (interview 1J; Dostál 2016, 47; Dostál and Jermanová 2017, 36). However, the government's activities were undermined by the words and deeds of President Zeman, who demanded to end the sanctions against Russia and suggested that Ukraine should resign to the loss of the annexed territory of Crimea in exchange for financial compensation (Dostál and Eberle 2015, 49; Havlíček and Lebduška 2018, 46). This divisiveness at the highest political levels has been detrimental for Czech-Ukrainian relations and damaged the reputation of the Czech Republic in Ukraine (Havlíček et al. 2019).

³⁶⁸ While, after the end of the Cold War, the Czech identity was constructed in opposition to the communist totalitarian past and the Czech foreign policy remained deeply mistrustful of Russia until 1998/1999, under President Václav Klaus, the development of pragmatic relations started to pick up the speed (Kratochvíl et al. 2006, 501-505). Further Czech-Russian rapprochement has taken place under the aegis of President Zeman, who has been pointing to the Czech dependency on Russia's natural resources and the benefits stemming from closer economic contacts.

In contrast to its rather half-hearted attitude in relation to the Ukrainian conflicts, the Czech Republic was actively involved in the solution of the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova. In 2005, as one of only few EU Member States, it opened an embassy in Chisinau (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007, 6). Czech interest in Moldova was fostered after the April 2009 elections, which paved the way for a democratic government with pro-European orientation (Cibulková 2011, 215). In 2010, the Czech Republic participated in the meeting of the Group for the European Action of the Republic of Moldova, which was created at the initiative of Romania. On this occasion, Moldova and the Czech Republic signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in the Field of European Integration, which aims to strengthen the contractual basis of Czech-Moldovan cooperation in this area (Cibulková 2011, 215). Moldova was identified as both a developing country and a country in transition and has therefore been included as a priority country in both Czech bilateral ODA and the TRANS program.

Georgia has been considered as a priority country since 2010, the reason being the necessity to continue with the reconstruction and development aid initiated by the Czech Republic after the Russo-Georgian War in 2008. During this military conflict, the Czech Republic, with the single exception of President Klaus, took a clear pro-Georgian stance (Cibulková 2011, 206).³⁶⁹ Since 2008, the economic importance of Georgia for the Czech Republic has also increased. The Czech Republic belongs among the most important investors in the country (Cibulková 2011, 215).

Belarus became an object of Czech attention because of Václav Havel and his support for dissidents (interview 1N). For years, Czech governments were continuously criticizing the regime of President Lukashenko and declared their solidarity with the Belarusian opposition (Votápek 2004, 106; T. Weiss 2011, 36). In September 2002, they denied Lukashenko a visa to attend the NATO summit in Prague and, due to continued human rights violations in Belarus, the Czech government did not invite Lukashenko for the 2009 Prague Eastern Partnership Summit. After the rigged presidential elections in Belarus in 2006 and 2010, and the subsequent public demonstrations that occurred across the country, the Czech Republic stepped up its transition promotion in Belarus (Bartovic 2008; T. Weiss 2011). Eventually, the Czech Republic adopted the EU's policy of dialogue with the Lukashenko regime but has

³⁶⁹ Tomáš Weiss notes that the Czech media compared the 2008 Russian-Georgian war to the 1968 invasion in Czechoslovakia (T. Weiss 2011, 35-36).

strived to maintain a proactive role in the field of human rights protection and democracy support (Cibulková 2011, 214).

The gas crisis of 2009 and the Nabucco gas pipeline project increased the importance of Azerbaijan for Czech foreign policy. This resulted in the Czech Republic deciding to strengthen its presence in the country and open a separate representation in Baku in December 2009. Azerbaijan is an important partner for the Czech Republic from the point of view of energy security and due to the country's economic potential. The turnover of mutual trade is the second highest after Ukraine, which is mainly due to the delivery of crude oil from Azerbaijan to the oil processing facilities in the Czech Republic (Aliyev 2017). Of the six Eastern Partnership countries, Armenia receives the least attention of Czech foreign policy (Cibulková 2011, 216).

Most observers of the Czech Eastern policy agree that, although the Eastern Partnership is still one of the priority areas of Czech foreign policy, most of its activities remain on a declaratory level and a clear motivation to act has been missing in recent years (interviews 1C, 1F, 1N & 1R). Instead of an ambitious vision on how to contribute to the further development of the Eastern dimension of the ENP, the Czech engagement in this region has been marred by inconsistent signals from the highest political levels (Dostál and Jermanová 2017, 37; Havlíček and Lebduška 2018, 47). Nevertheless, since 2019, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Petříček, there have been signs of revived efforts to be a constructive player in the Eastern European region and to push the Eastern Partnership as a relevant policy domain on the European agenda (Havlíček 2019, 12-13; Havlíček et al. 2019, 40).

The Balkan Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy

The Western Balkan region is one of the most important vectors of Czech foreign policy. Still remembering the turbulent disintegration of Yugoslavia, the security and stability of the Western Balkans has been a long-proclaimed interest of Czech foreign policy (Petříček, 21.01.2020 & 29.10.2020).³⁷⁰ This is why the Czech Republic has been focusing on this

³⁷⁰ Numerous activities in the Western Balkans used to contrast with the low level of engagement in the East (Kratochvíl 2007, 17). However, it should be noted that, in the 1990s, Czech diplomacy focused its attention primarily on the West and integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, and economic and political engagement with the Western Balkans was largely a personal initiative of President Václav Havel (Tesař 2010b, 31; Zrno 2006, 15).

region with its official development assistance and transformation policy programs (Dopita 2017, 205; Juzová 2020; Kratochvíl et al. 2015, 48). As an EU member, the Czech Republic became an active supporter of EU enlargement to Southeastern Europe, which was expressed by prioritizing the integration of the Western Balkans during its Presidency of the EU Council in 2009. The Czech Republic was also able to use its proactive approach to influence the EU-wide policies toward the individual states of the Western Balkans, such as in the process of visa liberalization (Kratochvíl et al. 2015, 48-49; Tesař 2010a, 235).

Additionally, the Western Balkans has long been perceived as a traditional sphere of Czech economic interests (Dopita 2016b; Kloboučnicková and Druláková 2015; Tesař 2012). The region is an attractive source of trade and investment opportunities for Czech companies. Economic cooperation is particularly strong with Serbia, where the Czech Republic serves as one of the biggest investors (Juzová 2020).³⁷¹ Accordingly, Czech officials have been among the main advocates for Serbia's integration into the EU (Dopita et al. 2018, 123). In this context, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs has insisted on advancing dialogue on the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo.³⁷²

The movement of refugees and migrants through Southeast Europe from 2015 onwards provided a strong impulse for Czech support of the Western Balkans' Euro-Atlantic integration (Dopita 2016a).³⁷³ A significant and tangible step in this direction was the establishment of the Western Balkans Fund in November 2015 during the Czech V4 Presidency (Dopita 2016a, 216; Dostál 2016, 50).³⁷⁴ Overall, the Czech Republic's foreign policy has aligned its approach toward the Western Balkans with the official position represented by the EU and NATO (Dopita et al. 2018; Tesař 2010a). The information

³⁷¹ Before its EU accession, Croatia used to be the priority in Czech foreign policy toward the Western Balkans (Tesař 2010a, 2011, 2012). This attention has later shifted mainly toward Serbia (Tesař 2012, 211).

³⁷² The Czech approach toward Kosovo has been highly ambiguous and split between the supporters and deniers of Kosovo's independence (Dopita et al. 2018, 121). The declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008 caused a fundamental disagreement between then Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg and then President Václav Klaus. Although the Czech Republic eventually recognized Kosovo's independence, this issue has continued to divide the Czech political scene (Tesař 2010a, 234)

³⁷³ The Czech Republic initiated a more structured approach toward the Western Balkan region in the wake of the migration and refugee crisis in Europe (Domaradzki et al. 2018; Juzová 2020). Among other things, the Czech Republic sent Czech police officers to Serbia and Macedonia to assist them with guarding the external borders of the EU (Domaradzki et al. 2018, 11).

³⁷⁴ The Fund, which was officially launched in September 2017, was inspired by the model of the IVF and supports projects aimed at strengthening the civil society dimension of the interregional cooperation, boosting Western Balkans cooperation, and advancing the region's integration into the EU (Dopita et al. 2018, 124; Juzová 2020, 16).

material issued by the Czech Foreign Ministry in 2013, which outlined the priorities of Czech foreign policy toward the Western Balkans, as well as the new Foreign Policy Concept of the Czech Republic published in August 2015, underline the desired synchronization of the Czech foreign policy with the goals of the EU enlargement policy. These aim at ensuring stability, the democratic rule of law, and prosperity in the Western Balkan region (Czech Government 2015a, 31; MFA Czech Republic 2013; Tesař 2013).

18.2 Motives of Solidarity

The conducted interviews have revealed that, although foreign policy preferences may change depending on the political parties in power, Czech governments have consistently supported further EU enlargement (interviews 1N & 1R).³⁷⁵ The following section will assess Czech foreign policy toward the countries of the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership from the perspective of identity and solidarity. The principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* will provide the framework for analysis.

Proximity

The Czech Republic is the only Visegrad country not bordering any of the Eastern Partnership countries, which naturally reduces the importance of cross-border cooperation with this region. Moreover, unlike in the case of Hungary or Poland, there are no Czech minorities living in Eastern Europe that would reinforce a sense of responsibility for the fate of these territories. Consequently, the region has attracted less attention in Czech foreign policy as compared to other V4 states (interview 1D). While geographical proximity is negligible, the Eastern Partnership countries have been considered by Czech officials as part of the European culture (Petříček, 09.01.2019; interview 1G). What also contributes to a greater identification with this region is the presence of a significant Ukrainian minority living in Czech territory (Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007). As for the Western Balkans, this part of Europe is considered to be geographically close to the Czech Republic, and the migration and refugee crisis has only reinforced this perception (Petříček, 29.10.2020; Tesař 2010b).

³⁷⁵ Traditionally, the Civic Democrats were in favor of widening but not deepening of the European integration process, whereas the Social Democrats viewed EU enlargement as an opportunity to export European values outside of EU borders (Tulmets 2008, 85; T. Weiss 2011, 29). This dichotomy later dissolved with new political parties emerging in the Czech political arena.

Similar Historical Experience & Know-how Sharing

The discourse analysis has revealed that Czech elites are largely aware of their country's similar historical experience with the former Soviet republics. They frequently pointed to shared historical developments and the resulting kinship (see also T. Weiss 2011, 40). For example, in his opening address at the Eastern Partnership Summit on 7 May 2009, then Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek stressed that the region of Carpathian Ruthenia, which is now part of Ukraine, belonged to the First and Second Czechoslovak Republic in the 1920s and 1930s (Topolánek, 07.05.2009).

A factor that has drawn the Czech Republic to the Eastern Partnership countries the most is their shared communist past. When former dissidents, such as Václav Havel, assumed power after 1989, they decided to pursue a value-oriented foreign policy, which received support from across the political spectrum.³⁷⁶ Democracy support and the promotion of human rights in the East were quickly identified as important priority goals for Czech foreign policy (Bartovic 2008; Tulumets 2008). The common narrative was that, after they had successfully entered the EU, they were eager to share their transition experience with other post-communist states as opposed to leaving them behind (interview 1R). Similarly, the Czech EU Presidency was also underpinned by statements indicating Czech support for democratization and transformation processes in post-Soviet republics that would build on the country's "own historical experience with a non-democratic regime and the process of political and economic transformation" (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2007). This conviction of the Czech Republic's "mission" to pass their democratic transition experience on to others has not changed over time. In his 2018 address to the members of the Czech diplomatic corps, Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček asserted that he was planning to

“pursue work on reaffirming our active and constructive position in the EU and the broad Transatlantic Area. My general priorities include cultivating relations with our neighbours and ‘neighbours of the neighbours’. ... In this context, it is key to make good use of what we consider important Czech added value: democratic transition experience. It remains highly relevant for our bilateral as well as multilateral foreign policy outreach” (Petříček, 24.10.2018*).

³⁷⁶ Against the backdrop of its own dissident tradition, the Czech Republic was open to granting political asylum to dissidents and opposition leaders persecuted by authorities in Belarus or Ukraine (Bartovic 2008; Tulumets 2008).

The importance of *proximity* for the Czech Republic's sharing of its transformation experience becomes clear when reading the Human Rights and Transition Promotion Policy Concept of the Czech Republic from 2015, which explicitly mentions only two regions—Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans—as priority areas:

“The national Transition Promotion Programme offers the Czech experience primarily to countries close to the Czech Republic in cultural, historic, geographic or other terms. Accordingly, it focuses on partners in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans” (MFA Czech Republic 2015b).

This specific geographical focus is also reflected in concrete instruments. For example, part of Czech democracy assistance has been delivered through the Czech-UNDP Trust Fund. Its mission and geographic focus was changed in 2004 when the Czech Republic decided to share its own lessons learned primarily with ex-Soviet republics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as with the Western Balkan countries encountering similar challenges that the Czech Republic faced in the 1990s (Kratochvíl 2007, 43).

Responsible and Reliable EU Member

Various Czech governments, irrespective of political affiliation, have made multiple assurances that the Czech Republic would pursue an active and predictable foreign policy based on firm anchoring in the EU and NATO and a long tradition of promoting human rights and democracy. In his speech setting forward his government's vision for the Czech EU presidency, then Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek affirmed that the Czechs considered themselves to be “an ancient part of the large family of proud European nations” (Topolánek, 14.01.2009*). Almost ten years later, Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček confirmed this sense of belonging to the Western cultural circle:

“I firmly believe that the course we took in November 1989 is the only right one. It led us back to the womb of the democratic and free West, symbolized by the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance. They embody the values we espouse in our foreign policy: freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, but also equal opportunities, solidarity, and responsibility” (Petříček, 18.10.2018*).

Government officials have emphasized that, despite being a small country, the Czech Republic should not be afraid to promote its interests and participate in defining the European agenda (Hamáček, 27.08.2018). Reflecting on the manifold global challenges, Foreign

Minister Petříček stated that he refused to “accept the idea that we are too small or insignificant to deal with these problems and leave the solutions to others” (Petříček, 28.08.2019*). Accordingly, in the enlargement domain, the Czech Republic has showed its determination to take an active part in shaping the common European future and contribute to European solutions. In the words of Petříček’s predecessor, Martin Stropnický, the Czech Republic has sought to be “a reliable partner and a stabilizing factor within the region as well as within the EU” (Stropnický, 06.02.2018*). Successive Czech governments have confirmed their readiness to be both a partner of the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries as well as a mediator between them and the EU Member States.

Need

Recognizing the *need* of political and economic stability of the Western Balkan and Eastern European regions and its beneficial effects on the Czech Republic, Czech governments have reinforced their focus on economic diplomacy and pursued a strategy of “stabilization through integration” (Havlíček et al. 2019, 41; T. Weiss 2011, 30).

Regional Stability and Security

The Czech Republic considers the EU’s enlargement policy as the most effective instrument toward ensuring durable regional stability (Babiš, 12.09.2019). One of the main proclaimed goals of the Eastern Partnership was to safeguard a stable neighborhood, both politically and economically (Topolánek, 07.05.2009). Similarly, the Western Balkans Fund, based on the successful model of the IVF, was established with the aim of overcoming bilateral obstacles in the Western Balkans (Stropnický, 06.02.2016 & Zaorálek, 12.04.2016). Czech governments have expressed their conviction that the support for democratic and market-oriented reforms and the promotion of human rights would contribute to the stability, security, and prosperity of both regions, which would in turn benefit all of Europe (Babiš, 16.05.2018 & 12.09.2019). Foreign Minister Petříček outlined the perceived interdependence between the stability of the EU neighborhood and European security in the following statement:

“Europe cannot be safe unless our neighborhood is safe. An indispensable component of our security policy, in line with the EU Global Strategy, rests in enhancing the resilience of states and societies, both within the EU as well as

within partner countries to the East and to the South. Consequently, our endeavors will focus in particular on providing support to the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, as well as selected countries in Africa and the Middle East” (Petříček, 24.10.2018*).

The Western Balkans has gained in relevance for Czech foreign policy against the background of the migration and refugee crisis from 2015 onwards. Prime Minister Andrej Babiš frequently described the Western Balkans as a key partner and ally in addressing the flow of refugees and migrants into the EU (Babiš, 16.05.2018 & 12.09.2019). Czech government officials have repeatedly pledged to strengthen bilateral relations with Western Balkan countries and help them improve their capacities to be able to effectively protect their external borders and manage new waves of migration in case the Balkan migration route was revived again (Zeman, 29.11.2016 & Hamáček, 27.08.2018). In other words, Czech decision makers realized that enhanced engagement with the Western Balkans was in the direct interest of the Czech Republic (Zaorálek, 12.04.2016, Zeman, 04.10.2018 & Petříček, 24.10.2018).

Economic Potential & Energy Security

The preparation of the Czech EU Presidency and the ensuing establishment of the Eastern Partnership as one of its priorities also contributed to a greater realization of the economic opportunities that this region presents for the Czech Republic.³⁷⁷ The concrete and pragmatic benefits stemming from the economic stabilization of the Eastern European and Western Balkan regions was the most frequently cited reason for supporting their rapprochement with the EU. The declarations of Czech government officials reveal a strong interest in the creation of comprehensive free trade zones that would allow for reciprocal market access and the expansion of mutual trade and investment opportunities (Topolánek, 07.05.2009, Rusnok, 04.09.2013 & Petříček, 02.01.2019). Stabilization and modernization of the Western Balkan and Eastern European economies and their integration with the European market has been recognized as beneficial not only for their partner countries but also for the EU and its individual Member States (Kohout, 06.01.2014). Prime Minister Babiš put forward that the

³⁷⁷ Outlining the goals of the upcoming Czech Presidency in front of the European Parliament in January 2009, then Prime Minister Topolánek argued for deepening the Eastern dimension of the ENP and insisted that strengthening cooperation with Ukraine and the countries in the Caucasus was “not only morally important but also practical. This cooperation will enable us to diversify foreign trade and supplies of energy raw materials” (Topolánek, 14.01.2009*).

Czech Republic, as a country with historical connections to the enterprises of the former Soviet Union, and thanks to its language skills, had all the prerequisites to be among the drivers of economic cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries (Babiš, 16.04.2019). Similarly, Czech governments have acknowledged the strategic importance of the Western Balkans and the potential economic benefits for the Czech Republic stemming from the region's deeper integration into the EU's legal and economic system (Tesař 2010b; Zrno 2006).

In addition to the realization of the economic potential of the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, the cessation of Russian gas supplies via Ukraine in the 2000s created a greater awareness of the need for energy security and contributed to the Czech Republic's growing interest in strengthening relations with countries such as Azerbaijan (Topolánek, 29.01.2009). Czech governments have strived to diversify energy sources and transmission routes to achieve greater independence from Russian energy. For example, the program statement of the government of Petr Nečas from June 2009 listed the Nabucco gas pipeline among the key projects (Cibulková 2011, 207).

Deservingness

Czech governments have signaled that they are resolved to provide support to Eastern European and Western Balkan partners, while simultaneously emphasizing that support is not unconditional but requires progress made in fulfilling all conditions of the membership (Zaorálek, 13.01.2016 & Petříček, 28.08.2019). Reflecting on the tenth anniversary of the Eastern Partnership in 2019, Minister of Foreign Affairs Petříček underlined that the speed and degree of convergence of individual countries to the EU was correlative with their ambitions:

“Our support depends on the efforts of the countries themselves, their progress on reforms, and political responsibility. We expect partner countries, regardless of the type of their contractual relationship with the EU, to show maximum ambition in implementing reforms. The Union promotes the principle of greater support for greater efforts. At the same time, we want those, who do not respond to the appeals, to receive less” (Petříček, 01.02.2019*).

Czech government officials have maintained that the accession criteria are the fairest instrument to assess the readiness of the candidate countries for membership and that the EU

should learn from the success of previous rounds of enlargement. Referring to the Czech Republic's own accession experience, former Prime Minister Topolánek stressed that solidarity of the "old countries" had benefited both the old and the new members and that states aspiring for EU membership deserved the same chance to prove themselves (Topolánek, 02.03.2009).

In addition, some decision makers have recognized the Czech Republic's obligation to provide support to certain countries as a form of reciprocal solidarity. During his official visit to the Republic of Serbia, President Zeman underlined that both countries shared common destinies and that the Czech Republic was Serbia's "obligor" when it comes to solidarity: "I would like to thank Serbia once again for standing up for us in 1938 and 1968 when we were occupied by the Soviets. We have something to repay and that's why I am here" (Zeman, 11.09.2019*).

Self-Preservation

The inaugural summit of the Eastern Partnership took place in Prague in May 2009, which has created a sense of ownership on the part of the Czech Republic (interview 1N). As a consequence, since the Eastern Partnership was established, Czech governments have presented the Czech Republic as a pro-active EU Member State willing to share its transition experience while aspiring to shape the future development of the Eastern Partnership.

Agenda Setter with the Right Expertise

After joining the EU, the Czech Republic, together with its V4 partners, was looking for a new agenda, and assistance toward the neighboring region appeared to be a perfect opportunity to assume a policy-making role (interview 1O). The Czech Republic became a member of an informal grouping of "like-minded countries," which brought together a number of new Member States as well as other countries such as Germany or Sweden and which focused on supporting the Eastern dimension of the ENP. When introducing the Czech Republic's EU Presidency program in the European Parliament in January 2009, then Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek declared that the priorities of the Presidency reflected the specific Czech know-how. He listed three concrete contributions. First, he underlined that the Czech Republic, as a former Eastern Bloc state and a country dependent on gas and oil imports,

understood the importance of energy security not only for economic prosperity but also for a free and independent foreign policy. Second, he contended that the Czechs, still remembering their totalitarian past, valued the EU membership and considered it their moral duty to strengthen cooperation with those who had been left behind. In this context, he added that, just as France had applied its know-how on the Mediterranean, the Czechs would endeavor to convince the Union of the importance of the Eastern Partnership. The third contribution he mentioned was the Czech experience in regard to the banking crisis in the late 1990s, the successful stabilization of financial institutions, and the resulting determination to share its expertise during the ongoing financial crisis (Topolánek, 14.01.2009).

Similarly, Czech involvement in projects related to the promotion of human rights and democratization processes was also put in relation to the country's own past. The coalition agreement between the Civic Democrats, the Christian Democrats, and the Greens from 2006 explicitly stated that the government would “support democratization processes all over the world, especially in Europe and its immediate neighborhood, as an expression of our global co-responsibility” (Vláda ČR 2006, 32). In a similar manner, in his inaugural address as the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tomáš Petříček affirmed that, due to its own historical experience with the communist totalitarian regime and its systematic oppression, the Czech Republic was eager to “express its solidarity with those who fight for human rights on a daily basis” (Petříček, 18.10.2018*).

In a nutshell, Czech governments have created an image of the Czech Republic as a role model for democratic state-building that can credibly and effectively provide support to the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries through transformation cooperation projects. More importantly, they have felt confirmed in their role as successful enlargement advocates by the establishment of the Eastern Partnership and the creation of the Western Balkans Fund (Zaorálek, 12.04.2016 & Petříček, 28.08.2019).

18.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

The analysis has revealed that behind the Czech Republic's motivation to support the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries on their way to the EU is a combination of factors. Some of the justifications have been more value-oriented in the sense that the Czechs have a moral obligation to pass their own transformation experience on to others.

Others have been more pragmatic, highlighting the need for the Czech Republic to have a stable, secure, and prosperous neighborhood (interviews 1J & 1O). Observers of Czech foreign policy have noted that the values-based approach dominated in the 1990s and 2000s under the “Havel spirit,” while the 2010s have been marked by a strengthened focus on economic diplomacy and pragmatic relations (interview 1N). This two-pronged approach has been complemented by the Czech governments’ ambition to take a more pro-active role in EU policy and decision making (interview 1O).

The Czechs have viewed their engagement in the European neighborhood primarily as an opportunity to demonstrate their know-how as well as a way to generate benefits for their country, pointing to the prominent role of the solidarity principles *self-preservation* and *need*. After the EU accession, the Czech Republic aimed to find a niche to boost its profile, which it discovered in the realm of human rights and democracy promotion and the related focus on the EU’s neighborhood. Czech decision makers present the Czech Republic as a nation that has experience in fighting against totalitarianism, understands democratic transformation processes better than others, and is capable of being a policy maker and agenda setter. The national pride shines through the statements seeking to profile the Czech Republic as a traditional defender of democratic values and a transformation pioneer. Moreover, from the analyzed statements, it becomes clear how proud Czech government officials have been that the Eastern Partnership was launched under the Czech EU Presidency (Dangerfield 2009, 1744).

Most justifications have addressed the necessity to contribute to the creation of a belt of safety and prosperity around Europe. The Czech nation was involuntarily drawn into many European conflicts, and stability of the European neighborhood has therefore been regarded as a priority of Czech foreign policy and a precondition for the country’s security (T. Weiss 2011, 29). The increased migratory flows from 2015 onwards only confirmed the perceived importance of the Western Balkan region for the Czech Republic from a safety point of view (see, e.g., Babiš, 12.09.2019). In addition, both Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans have been regarded by Czech governments as promising foreign markets (Babiš, 16.04.2019; Vondra 2006a). Consequently, EU enlargement and intensified bilateral economic relations with the respective countries have been considered as a way to increase trade turnover, strengthen the potential for Czech investments in the regions, and enhance the country’s

energy security (Cibulková 2011; Havlíček 2019; Kratochvíl and Tulmets 2007; Najšlová 2015). Accordingly, next to promoting regional stability, economic diplomacy has been at the core of Czech engagement in the European neighborhood.

Looking at the solidarity principle of *proximity*, its manifestation can be found at two levels: toward the European neighborhood and within the EU context. Historical and cultural ties, such as a shared communist past, similar dissident tradition, or the presence of minorities from those territories in the Czech Republic, have justified the selection of the Balkans and Eastern Europe as priority areas for Czech foreign policy (Tulmets 2008). Due to the country's own recent historical experience, Czech decision makers claim to have empathy and understanding for how difficult transformation and approximation to the EU can be (interview 1N). Statements by various government officials have reflected their feeling of commitment to help because their country went through the same struggles and they are familiar with the difference between being "outside" and being "inside" the EU (see, e.g., Topolánek, 02.03.2009).

Czech involvement in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe has been further motivated by the desire to prove the country's belonging to the West and its commitment to the principles of liberal democracy, the rule of law, the protection of universal rights and freedoms, and other related values (Petříček, 28.08.2019). In the context of the country's EU accession bid, the Czech elite strived to differentiate Central Europe from Eastern Europe, which was generally associated with crime, illegal migration, undemocratic practices, poverty, and economic instability (Kratochvíl 2007; Tulmets 2008). In other words, they were motivated by the desire to distance themselves from the past and become a rightful member of the new community (interview 1R). Czech decision makers have repeatedly expressed their aversion to being treated as someone from the East who needs to be "cultivated" and lectured about European values because, historically, Czech territory has always been located in the heart of Europe (Petříček, 06.12.2019). In his inaugural speech introducing Czech priorities for the EU Presidency, then Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek quoted the Czech philosopher Václav Krejčí, who said that the Czech Republic lied in the center of Europe not geographically, but mainly in a cultural and intellectual sense:

"We are in the deepest womb of the continent, where the influences from all directions flow in, we feel surrounded by all European nations. ... That is why we say to ourselves that we are at a crossroads of mental currents and that this implies

our mission to mediate, especially to mediate between the West and the East” (Topolánek, 14.01.2009*).

In a nutshell, while the “not-yet-Europeanized East” had played a necessary role in the Czech political elites’ endeavor to emphasize their own European credentials, this focus later shifted toward the ambition to overcome some of the negative connotations associated with Eastern Europe and to serve as a bridge between the East and the West (Kratochvíl et al. 2006, 502). Numerous statements lay bare how important it has been for the Czechs to sit at one table within the EU, participate in common decision making, and avoid any further “about us without us” scenarios (see, e.g., Babiš, 30.04.2019). Prime Minister Babiš said that the Czech Republic had a duty to help with EU projects aimed at strengthening both economic relations and political stability and security in the European neighborhood because it would propel the Czech Republic “among the elite countries of the old continent” (Babiš, 16.04.2019). This interplay between national pride and the high level of self-esteem on the one hand and the desire to be taken seriously by “older” Member States on the other hand, are also a product of historical experience of lying at the intersection between East and West.

In summary, since the 2000s, the Czech Republic has been a consistent advocate of an “open-door” policy and of bringing the countries from the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe closer to the EU. Several examples mentioned above illustrate the coexistence and interdependence of the solidarity principles of *self-preservation*, *need*, and *proximity*. However, unlike, for example, in the case of Poland, the principle of *proximity* was not the leading justification of the Czech solidarity behavior but rather the consequence of the Czech Republic’s desire to share its specific knowhow (*self-preservation*) and generate benefits not only for the partner countries but also for itself (*need*). The principle of *deservingness* was addressed only marginally, stressing the aspiring candidates’ responsibility to comply with the obligations of EU membership.

Based on the previous paragraphs, the following table illustrates the identity-solidarity nexus in the Czech Republic’s engagement in the European neighborhood and its approach toward further enlargement of the EU.

Table 17: Identity-solidarity nexus (EU enlargement & the Czech Republic)

Identity element	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
Feelings of victimhood & anti-great power sentiments	<p>Similar historical experience (shared communist past) and resulting kinship</p> <p>Czech support for democratization and transformation processes building on the country's own historical experience with a non-democratic regime and the perceived moral duty to express solidarity with those who had been "left behind"</p>	<p>Political and economic stability of the European neighborhood regarded as a precondition for the Czech Republic's own security</p> <p>Western Balkans portrayed as a key partner and ally in tackling the influx of refugees and migrants into the EU</p> <p>Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans viewed as promising foreign markets and important partners for enhancing the Czech Republic's energy security</p>	Sense of obligation to provide support as a form of reciprocal solidarity (e.g., to Serbia which showed solidarity when the Czechs were occupied by the Soviets)	Eagerness to share own transition experience with other post-communist states
Feelings of bitterness and betrayal & anti-great power sentiments	Desire to "sit at one table" in the EU, participate in common decision making, and avoid any further "about us without us" scenarios			Desire to "sit at one table" in the EU, participate in common decision making, and avoid any further "about us without us" scenarios
Strong quest for sovereignty and independence		Supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova		Announcements of the aspiration to promote its interests and participate in defining the European agenda despite being a small country
Self-image as a cultured and civilized nation	<p>Assurances that the Czech Republic would pursue an active and predictable foreign policy anchored in the EU and NATO</p> <p>The Czech involvement in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe motivated by the desire to prove the country's belonging to the West and its commitment to the principles of liberal</p>			Self-portrayal as a traditional defender of democratic values and a transformation pioneer that can credibly and effectively provide support to the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries through transformation cooperation projects

	democracy, the rule of law, the protection of universal rights and freedoms, and related values			Ambition to take an active part in shaping the common European future and contribute to European solutions
Feeling of belonging to the West, sense of superiority over the East → bridge between the East and the West	<p>The Czech involvement in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe motivated by the desire to prove the country's belonging to the West and its commitment to the principles of liberal democracy, the rule of law, and related values (sense of belonging to the "Western cultural circle")</p> <p>Aversion to being treated as someone from the East who needs to be "cultivated" and lectured about European values</p> <p>Desire to differentiate Central Europe from Eastern Europe, but also to serve as a bridge between the East and the West</p> <p>Feeling of having the "mission" to pass own democratic transition experience on to others in the (South-)East</p>	Engagement in the European neighborhood driven by the need to strengthen the country's Western orientation before the EU accession and to find a new agenda and "boost its profile" after the accession (own <i>need</i>)		<p>Feeling of having the "mission" to pass own democratic transition experience on to others in the (South-)East</p> <p>Self-portrayal as a traditional defender of democratic values and a transformation pioneer who can credibly and effectively provide support to the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries through transformation cooperation projects</p>
Homogeneity of the Czech population	Stronger motivation to engage in the Eastern Partnership due to the presence of a significant Ukrainian minority in Czech territory			
Widespread secularism				
Czech "littleness"	Desire to "sit at one table" in the EU, participate in common decision making, and avoid any further "about us without us" scenarios			Refusal to accept the idea that the Czech Republic is too small or insignificant to leave finding solutions to others

Source: Own table

Chapter 19: Hungary & EU Enlargement

Currently, the integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union is one of the top priorities of the Hungarian government. We believe that enlargement can bring about a genuine reunification of Europe.

—Fidesz-KDNP Delegation to the European Parliament (2019)

19.1 Hungary and the EU's Enlargement Policy

The ENP and further enlargement of the EU have been clear priorities in Hungarian foreign policy since the 1989 democratic transition. The three fundamental pillars of Hungary's foreign policy, as formulated at the beginning of the 1990s, were good relations with the neighboring countries, responsibility toward Hungarian minorities living abroad, and Euro-Atlantic integration. Accordingly, even before its own accession to the EU, Hungary argued for strengthening the Eastern Dimension of the Union's external relations (Hungarian Government 2011, 14). Since its accession in 2004, Hungary has strived to gradually intensify its presence and activities in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans (A. Rácz 2011, 151). The government led by Ferenc Gyurcsány, in office from 2004 to 2006, proclaimed that the Hungarian development policy should be oriented toward Eastern and Southeastern Europe. More importantly, bearing in mind the Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring states, Hungary has endeavored to influence the ENP and the EU engagement in the Western Balkans in such a way that it would entail a more effective protection of minority rights (A. Rácz 2011, 153). Altogether, the country's advocacy for expanding the EU's borders to the East and South and its support for European integration of aspirant countries has enjoyed a broad consensus across Hungary's political parties and governments (Huszka 2017, 594).

Driven by geopolitical considerations as well as historical and economic reasons, the Western Balkans and, to a lesser extent, Eastern Europe have been traditional priority areas for Hungarian foreign policy. During its EU Presidency in the first half of 2011, Hungary strived to speed up the EU and NATO integration of the Western Balkan states and hosted an Eastern Partnership Summit to "provide further impetus to the Eastern Partnership" (Hungarian Government 2011, 53; Shevchenko 2018, 68). In the wake of the migration and refugee crisis in Europe, Hungarian government officials, especially Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó, urged the EU to accelerate the accession talks with the Western Balkan

countries on the grounds that it was necessary to enhance regional stability (Hungary Today 2018). Szijjártó argued that the integration would strengthen the Western Balkans migration route and so “protect the EU against another wave of migration” (EURACTIV 2016). The following sections elaborate in greater detail on Hungary’s position on EU enlargement toward the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries and then focus on the underlying motivations.

Hungary’s Eastern Policy

Historically, Hungary had almost no connections to Eastern Europe and its foreign policy toward this region was quite limited (A. Rácz 2011, 149).³⁷⁸ This “policy of indifference” toward Eastern Europe started to change with Hungary’s integration into NATO in 1997 (A. Rácz 2011, 150). Since then, Hungary has become a more active promoter of Euro-Atlantic integration of Eastern European countries, especially Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, Moldova (interview 2X). Declaring that the “Eastern winds are blowing in the world economy,” Prime Minister Viktor Orbán famously formulated Hungary’s “Eastern opening” policy in 2010. The “Opening up toward the East” (*keleti nyitás*) approach is supposed to be based on pragmatic cooperation with Russia, China, Japan, and other Far East and Central Asian countries and its main strategic aim is the intensification of trade and investment (Kałan 2013, 4). Noticeably, the scope of this policy is much broader than the Eastern European neighborhood. In this context, András Rácz puts forward that, in Hungarian foreign policy thinking, there is no unified understanding of the general term “East.” Consequently, it can refer to anything from Turkey or Russia to China and Japan (A. Rácz 2011, 145). In this respect, the Hungarian case significantly differs from the Polish commitment to Eastern Europe and its *polityka wschodnia* (“Eastern policy”).

In December 2011, the Orbán government adopted a strategy entitled “Hungary’s Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union,” in which it outlined its policy objectives relating to Eastern Europe in general and the Eastern Partnership countries in particular. These encompassed trade and economic cooperation, energy security, visa facilitation, and people-to-people contacts (Duleba et al. 2013, 19). In

³⁷⁸ In the Soviet times, Hungary did not have many possibilities to establish relations with the other Soviet Socialist Republics, which is why these had to be developed basically “from scratch” after gaining independence (A. Rácz 2011, 148).

addition, Hungary established a non-profit organization called the International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT), whose activities revolve around democracy promotion in countries undergoing a democratic transition, including in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans (A. Rácz 2011, 153).

Many authors see Russia as a limiting factor with regards to Hungary's engagement in Eastern Europe (interview 2Q). According to the interviewed experts, Hungary's relations with Russia are special, especially under the current government of Viktor Orbán, and Hungarian activities are mostly pursued with the intention of not alienating Moscow (interviews 2B & 2U). The influence of the "Russian factor" can be best demonstrated by the example of the Ukraine conflict.

Upholding the stability and security of Ukraine has been in the interest of Hungarian foreign policy ever since it gained independence (A. Rácz 2011, 148). Ukraine is not only Hungary's most important trade partner from all the Eastern Partnership countries but also a direct neighbor, which has led to intensified cross-border cooperation and joint projects ranging from disaster management to environmental protection (Duleba et al. 2013, 18). More importantly, there is a small Hungarian minority living in the Transcarpathian region near the border with Hungary. Ukraine has been the main receiver of Hungary's ODA and most of the financial support has been concentrated precisely on the protection of the Hungarian minorities in Ukraine (interview 2Q). Last but not least, Ukraine is of strategic importance to Hungary due to its role in transiting Russian oil and gas supplies to Central Europe (Duleba et al. 2013, 18). However, Ukraine-Hungarian relations deteriorated considerably in the wake of the 2014 Maidan protests against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and subsequent developments in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea (interview 2X). The Ukrainian-Russian conflict generated only a lukewarm response from the Hungarian government, which disagreed with the EU imposing economic sanctions on Russia over its intervention in Ukraine (Sadecki 2014). At the same time, Hungarian officials and diplomats affirmed Hungary's neutrality in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict and declared Hungary's support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Sadecki 2014). At a press conference following the meeting of the Prime Ministers of the V4 and Ukraine in September 2016, Viktor Orbán claimed that the Visegrad countries were one of the very few Member States still advocating for Ukraine's accession to the EU (Orbán, 07.09.2016). Many observers see

two main reasons behind Hungary's ambivalent stance. One is Hungary's tendency to enhance its economic cooperation with Russia, especially in the energy sector. And the other one is the presence of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine (Sadecki 2014).

To illustrate how the minority component continues to define Hungarian policy toward the Eastern partners, here is one recent example: Since March 2017, Orbán's government has been blocking high-level EU and NATO meetings with Ukraine as a retaliation against the adoption of an education law in Ukraine, which, in their understanding, discriminates against ethnic Hungarians living in western Ukraine (interviews 2Q & 2U). When the Ukrainian government tried to establish Ukrainian as the state language, the Hungarian government responded with reference to the right of national minorities to use their native language in education and cultural life (interview 2B).³⁷⁹

In terms of preference in Hungarian Eastern policy, Ukraine is followed by Moldova. Hungary established diplomatic relations with Moldova in 1992 and has since supported the country's independence as well as its European aspirations (A. Rácz 2011, 155). There are various underlying motivations behind the Hungarian interest in Moldova: In the initial phase in the early 1990s, Hungary supported Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity mostly in order to counter-balance its bilateral tensions with Romania over the rights of the Hungarian minority living in Romanian territory (interview 2Q).³⁸⁰ As unification with Romania was taken off the agenda by the Moldovan "consultative referendum on remaining an independent nation" in 1994, Hungarian-Moldovan relations stalled for some time (Duleba et al. 2013, 18).³⁸¹ After Moldova became the EU's immediate neighbor following Romania's accession in 2007, and especially after the country's pro-Western turn in 2009, Hungary stepped up its involvement in Moldova again. Driven by the desire to appear as a policy maker within the EU, Hungary has supported Moldova's transition processes by providing technical assistance, offering training programs, and sharing its own pre-accession experiences (Bartha et al. 2014, 11; Duleba et al. 2013, 20). Recently, in addition to

³⁷⁹ The Hungarian government's criticism of Ukraine's language laws has been "music to the ears" of Vladimir Putin, who drew parallels to the situation in Ukraine's Donbas region and used it as a justification for Russia's support of the separatists (interview 2B).

³⁸⁰ Hungary supported pro-independence forces in Moldova that strived to decrease the Romanian dominance in the country (A. Rácz 2011, 148).

³⁸¹ Although the question posed in the referendum did not refer directly to Romania but to independence in general, many public figures presented the 95% of those voting in favor of keeping the republic as a "sovereign, independent" state as a clear "no" to a union with Romania (Duleba et al. 2013, 18).

encouraging the Europeanization and modernization of Moldova and the implementation of administrative and judiciary reforms, Hungary has increasingly emphasized the security and economic aspects of the cooperation, including the prevention of illegal migration and fighting organized crime, including smuggling and drug trafficking (Bartha et al. 2014, 9). Hungary is further a member of the “Friends of Moldova Group,” which is an informal forum assisting Moldova in pursuing pro-European reforms (Bartha et al. 2014, 9).

In the case of Belarus, Hungary used to be in favor of strengthening ties on a bilateral basis, however, Hungarian-Belarusian relations have been very moderate ever since Alexander Lukashenko became president (interview 2Q).³⁸² Despite the non-existence of political conflicts or unsettled disputes, political relations have never been very close and the volume of economic cooperation has remained modest too (Orbán 2020). Similarly, the South Caucasus enjoys rather limited attention from Hungary. Out of the three South Caucasian countries, Hungary has the closest relations by far with Azerbaijan, concentrated almost exclusively on energy security-related issues (Kačan 2013, 4; A. Rácz 2011, 155-156). The energetic cooperation with Azerbaijan intensified after the Russia-Ukraine gas disputes in the 2010s, during which Hungary faced a decline in gas deliveries. Azerbaijan is seen as an alternative source of natural gas supplies, which would help reduce Hungary’s dependency on Russia and Ukraine. Georgia and Armenia play only a minor role in Hungarian foreign policy (A. Rácz 2011, 156).

The Balkan Dimension of Hungarian Foreign Policy

While Eastern Europe was long treated as a limited priority in Hungary’s foreign policy, historically, Hungary has always been very interested in the Western Balkans, irrespective of the government (interviews 2B & 2X). According to Iván Halász, the Western Balkans has occupied a prominent place in Hungarian foreign policy since the Middle Ages until now (Halász 2008, 26-27). During the Balkan Wars happening in Hungary’s immediate neighborhood, Hungary became a host to thousands of refugees from the former Yugoslavia and the conflict also adversely affected Hungary’s economy and tourism (Halász 2008, 29; Orosz 2018, 17-18). Hungary’s policy toward the Western Balkan region has been further

³⁸² During the drafting phase of the Eastern Partnership concept, Hungary was in favor of including Belarus in the project as an acknowledgement of the pro-European changes and reform processes happening in the country (A. Rácz 2010, 22).

motivated by the threefold foreign policy agenda mentioned earlier. The underlying logic is that promoting the Western Balkan countries' accession to the EU leads to better bilateral relations, which in turn favors the Hungarian minorities living there (Huszka 2017, 591). It is precisely the presence of Hungarian communities in some Western Balkan states, especially Serbia, that is often cited as the main motivation factor behind Hungary's engagement in the region (Bartha et al. 2014, 7).³⁸³ Overall, Hungary has established closer economic and political relations with the entire Western Balkan region, yet Hungarian foreign policy assigns different levels of priority to the individual countries.

After Croatia joined the EU in 2013, Serbia has become the priority candidate country for Hungary (interview 2C). Hungary achieved a significant breakthrough with Serbia as a result of historical reconciliation and settlement of disputes that used to burden the two countries' relations.³⁸⁴ After 2000, bilateral relations improved but the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina continued to be the target of hostile actions for many years (Szilágyi 2008, 17). The Hungarian government even threatened to use its veto against Serbia's candidate status in 2011 after the Serbian parliament adopted a new restitution law, which deprived the sizeable ethnic Hungarian minority in northern Serbia of the right to seek restitution or compensation for losses suffered under the communist regime. Once Serbia amended its rehabilitation law, which redefined the notion of "serving in occupation forces" and made it possible for the Hungarian minority to be included in restitution, Hungarian-Serbian relations improved dramatically (Orosz 2018).

The EU integration process of the other Western Balkan countries enjoys more or less equal support (Huszka 2017, 595). Hungary has continually lobbied for granting candidate status to Albania, trying to improve its negative image (Hungarian Government 2011, 22-23). Similarly, Hungary has actively promoted opening accession talks with the Republic of North Macedonia, praising the progress it has achieved (interview 2J; Huszka 2017, 597). Hungary

³⁸³ Croatia entered the EU during the Hungarian presidency and Hungary was very supportive during the accession process. According to Hana Semanić, the main driver was ethnic Hungarians living in Croatia (interview 2S).

³⁸⁴ During the Second World War and in its aftermath, terrible atrocities were committed between Hungarians and Serbs. In January 1942, several hundred Serbian civilians were murdered by Hungarian forces in Novi Sad, which was traditionally a Hungarian territory (under the Trianon Treaty granted to Yugoslavia but during the Second World War again annexed by Hungary). Tito's partisans killed tens of thousands of ethnic Hungarians in 1946 (interview 2P). Five decades later, Hungarian-Serbian relations experienced further tensions under the rule of Slobodan Milošević (interview 2P).

became one of the first states to establish diplomatic relations with Montenegro in 2006 and has since supported its aspirations to join the EU and NATO (Szilágyi 2008, 14). As the only Visegrad country, Hungary opposed penalizing Bosnia and Herzegovina for its non-compliance regarding the execution of the so-called “Sejdić-Finci ruling” of the European Court of Human Rights by curbing pre-accession assistance funding (Huszka 2017, 597).³⁸⁵ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary also helped build up the intelligence service, so that the country could join NATO (interview 2Q).

In light of the migration and refugee crisis, the relationship between Hungary and the Western Balkan states deteriorated (interview 2S). Already in 2014, an unusually large number of asylum seekers and migrants, mainly Kosovar Albanians arriving via Serbia, started to reach Hungary (Huszka 2017, 592; BBC News 2015b). After Hungary erected a wire fence on the Serbian border and started to return asylum seekers back to Serbia, bilateral relations were under pressure for some time. Aleksandar Vučić, then Serbia’s Prime Minister, criticized that Serbia had not been consulted before Hungary introduced the measures (Huszka 2017, 599). However, the tensions between the two governments dissolved very quickly and both Orbán and Vučić soon praised the great Serbian-Hungarian relations and their outstanding partnership in addressing the migrant and refugee crisis (interview 2J).

All in all, Hungarian activities are focused almost exclusively on Ukraine and Moldova in the East and Serbia in the Western Balkans (A. Rácz 2011, 152). While Hungary’s bilateral relations with the other countries of Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans are less pronounced, Hungary is much more engaged there through multilateral frameworks, including the Eastern Partnership, the Visegrad cooperation, and the Danube Strategy.³⁸⁶ At the same time, many observers argue that Hungary’s influence on the EU enlargement policy has remained limited due to its lacking “credibility to argue persuasively about what would

³⁸⁵ The Sejdić-Finci case concerns two citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jakob Finci and Dervo Sejdić, the former being a member of the Jewish community and the latter a member of the Roma community, who contested the provisions of the Bosnian Constitution allowing only ethnic Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats to assume posts in the Presidency and the upper house of the national Parliament. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights decided in December 2009 that the applicants’ ineligibility to stand for election to the Presidency or the House of Peoples was in breach of Article 14 and Protocol 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights (European Court of Human E.C.o.H. Rights 2009).

³⁸⁶ Since Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans all lie along Danube River and are part of the Danube Strategy, it allows Hungary to make a connection between the two priority regions of its neighborhood policy (A. Rácz 2011, 158). Within the Visegrad cooperation, Hungary has advocated for using the financial sources from the IVF to support projects in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans (interview 2S; A. Rácz 2011, 157).

be appropriate and legitimate EU action towards aspiring countries” (Huszka 2017, 604). For example, Hungary has not been invited to join the Berlin Process, despite the fact that it requested observer status and could, as a direct neighbor to the Balkan region, contribute with its expertise.³⁸⁷

19.2 Motives of Solidarity

While Hungary’s enthusiasm for EU enlargement, especially in the Western Balkans, has not faded away over the years, the Hungarian government’s strained relationship with the EU and its frequent anti-EU rhetoric, which intensified during the migrant and refugee crisis, have raised the question of why Hungary would encourage others to join the club it so often criticizes (Huszka 2017, 592; Ker-Lindsay et al. 2017, 517). Consequently, the following section will explore the motivations behind Hungary’s engagement in Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans and try to answer the question to what extent Hungarian foreign policy toward these two regions can be explained by using the concepts of solidarity and identity. The solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* will provide the framework for analysis.

Proximity

While Hungary has very limited historical connections to the Eastern European region, it is directly neighboring the Western Balkan states and its commitment toward this part of Europe has been noticeably much stronger (Ker-Lindsay et al. 2017, 517; A. Rác 2011). In other words, the principle of *proximity* and the existence of geographical, historical, and cultural ties help illuminate why, from these two regions, the Western Balkans is the priority for Hungary.³⁸⁸ The following three quotations exemplify the role that similar experience, be it due to shared histories, similar struggle for independence, or analogous experiences with the accession process, plays in Hungary’s support for the individual states’ European aspirations:

³⁸⁷ The Berlin Process is an intergovernmental platform launched by the German government in 2014 to strengthen the rule of law, the economy and infrastructure development, and overall reinvigorate the EU integration process in the Western Balkan region (interview 2J; Huszka 2017, 603-604).

³⁸⁸ Hungarian officials often speak about *friendship* with the individual countries, such as Serbia or Bosnia and Hercegovina (Orbán, 01.07.2015 & 18.06.2019).

“Due to our similar histories, from the very beginning Hungary has supported Montenegro’s accession to both NATO and the EU” (Orbán, 25.02.2017).

“We Hungarians know only too well that independence is a difficult thing. I could recite a long list of empires which, at various times in history, deprived Hungary of its independence, but which now are nowhere to be found. And yet we are still here. So we appreciate the struggles you are going through for your independence and the preservation of your language and culture. And the success with which you have accomplished this over thousands of years elicits huge respect from us Hungarians” (Orbán, 21.04.2017).

“I myself have seen a period in which the Hungarian people’s approval of our country’s EU accession resembled a roller coaster: there are ups, and there are downs. But believe me, if you ask me, on the whole I cannot suggest to you a better alternative than trying to move as close to the European Union as possible” (Orbán, 05.09.2016).

Additionally, there is one even more important factor that has defined Hungarian policy toward potential candidates for EU membership and it is the Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries (interviews 2U & 2W).

Hungarian Minorities in Neighboring Countries

As mentioned before, one of the three pillars of Hungary’s foreign policy after gaining independence was to care about Hungarian minorities living abroad.³⁸⁹ In fact, minority policy was an absolute priority in the early 1990s. When the first Prime Minister of Hungary József Antall declared to be a Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians “in spirit,” thus counting in also around five million Hungarians living outside the country’s borders, it raised eyebrows in the neighboring countries (interview 2Q).³⁹⁰ This policy goal has not changed over time and Hungary is still interested in the fate of Hungarians living abroad, especially in Vojvodina in Serbia and in the Transcarpathian basin in Ukraine (interviews 2H & 2S). Some of the interviewed experts put forward that the Hungarian government shows solidarity with ethnic Hungarians living outside of Hungary not only out of feelings of connectedness but also for opportunistic reasons. In the Hungarian parliament, out of 99 seats, two depend on the vote by ethnic Hungarians, which can be very important for achieving a supermajority.

³⁸⁹ Hungary’s minority-related interests go back to the First World War, when Hungary lost two thirds of its territory and approximately three million ethnic Hungarians found themselves situated outside the new borders of Hungary. Since then, the Hungarian foreign policy thinking and identity entailed the commitment to national minorities living abroad (A. Rácz 2011, 146-147).

³⁹⁰ The neighboring states were doubtful about Antall’s intentions, fearing that the Hungarian state might seek territorial revision and interfere in their internal affairs.

This is often considered as one of the reasons why Orbán's government enabled Hungarian minorities abroad to obtain a dual citizenship and voting rights (interviews 2H & 2U).

Since minority issues feature high on Hungary's agenda, they have also influenced Hungary's attitude toward the ENP and further enlargement of the EU. As detailed above, the minority component has affected the quality of Hungary's relations with Serbia and Ukraine and played a crucial role in the formulation of the Hungarian position on their bid for EU membership.

Need

When urging the EU to show solidarity with accession candidates, Hungarian officials have very often highlighted the *need* to enhance regional stability, ensure energy security, and make use of the regions' economic potential (interview 2C). Moreover, they have been eager to demonstrate how the admission of new members would benefit the EU (in other words, how it would address the *need* of the EU). The Hungarian government has argued that an advancement in the integration process would contribute to the region's stability and development, which would in turn benefit the EU seeking good neighborly relations (Orbán, 15.05.2020). At the same time, Viktor Orbán contended that the EU needed new "injections of energy"—similar to what it had received through the accession of the Visegrad countries—that would boost the performance of the European economy (Orbán, 26.03.2018 & 15.04.2019).

Regional Stability

Hungary is considerably concerned with the physical security and stability of the European neighborhood (interviews 2W & 2X). The series of violent conflicts leading to the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s directly impacted Hungary's security and economy, which is why Hungary has a fundamental interest in preserving the stability of the region (Orbán, 01.07.2015; see also Bartha et al. 2014, 7).³⁹¹ European accession has had a stabilizing effect

³⁹¹ Compared to the other Visegrad countries, Hungary has contributed with the largest number of troops to the UN and EU missions to the Western Balkans, such as KFOR, EUFOR Althea, and EULEX Kosovo (Griessler 2018; Orosz 2018, 19).

on many countries and Hungary therefore sees the Western Balkan countries' process of rapprochement with the EU as a positive force:

“We are convinced that the peace and security of the European continent cannot be established without the peace and stability of the Balkans – which in turn can only be achieved through NATO and European Union membership” (Orbán, 25.02.2017).

Similarly, regional security and stability in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region are high on the agenda of Hungarian foreign policy (Orbán, 10.02.2015). During his official visit to Chisinau in 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó said: “[The Eastern Partnership] is also in our security interests in view of the fact that the more allies the EU has in the East, the stronger it will be” (Hungarian Government 2018a).

Since the migration and refugee crisis, Viktor Orbán has increasingly highlighted the strategic position of the Western Balkan states along the Balkan migration route and their role in protecting Europe from migration (Orbán, 29.09.2017 & 29.02.2018).

Economic Ambitions & Energy Security

Hungarian engagement in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans is further driven by economic ambitions (interviews 2Q & 2X). Hungarian officials have realized that if the Eastern Partnership countries modernize their economic systems, it makes it easier for Hungarian companies to invest there (interview 2W). The Western Balkans already accounts for a substantial share of Hungarian trade and foreign direct investment. Hungary views Serbia, in particular, as a priority partner and a promising market for its exports and the implementation of its investments (see, e.g., Orbán, 05.09.2016 & 09.02.2018).³⁹² Viktor Orbán even expressed his conviction that the deepening of Serbian-Hungarian economic cooperation directly favors Serbia on its road to Europe:

“The fastest form of accession is for the Hungarian and Serbian economies to become as integrated as possible, because that will mean Serbia becoming integrated with the markets and economic area of the European Union” (Orbán, 09.02.2018).

³⁹² Also Montenegro, an attractive location for Hungarian investments and home to Hungarian enterprises, such as Hunguest Hotels or the Hungarian Telecom, is regarded as “a priority target and a key ally” (Orbán, 25.02.2017; see also Huszka 2017, 595).

A major flagship project for Hungary and the Western Balkans is the construction of the Belgrade-Budapest railway line, which is part of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (Orbán, 22.11.2016).

Furthermore, Hungarian foreign policy toward Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans is influenced by energy considerations. As mentioned earlier, Hungary is largely dependent on the security of the Ukrainian transit of Russian oil and gas and has therefore explored Azerbaijan as a potential alternative source of energy supplies (A. Rácz 2011).³⁹³ Moreover, expecting complications regarding a new gas transit deal between Russia and Ukraine from 2020 onwards, Hungary and Serbia agreed on the construction of a joint gas pipeline (Orbán, 01.07.2015). The Serbian-Hungarian interconnection shall supply Russian natural gas via the TurkStream gas pipeline, running from Russia to Turkey and further through Bulgaria to Serbia. Becoming a transit country, the strategic importance of Serbia for Hungary has increased significantly (Orbán, 15.05.2020).

Deservingness

In the context of the enlargement process, Hungary has declared its support for those candidates that are committed to fulfilling the accession criteria. At the same time, as Beáta Huszka and others argue, Hungary has supported the accession of the Western Balkan states rather unconditionally, sometimes downplaying the significance of the EU membership criteria related to the rule of law, media freedom, or corruption (Huszka 2017, 596). The discourse analysis of speeches and statements by Viktor Orbán has made clear that the decisive criterion for the Hungarian government is the self-effort in the economic realm. As an illustration, when Orbán made the case for further EU enlargement, he endorsed the stabilization of the economy in Serbia, the innovation potential of Georgia, or the extent of the economic development Montenegro had achieved (Orbán, 10.02.2015, 01.07.2015 & 29.09.2017). In a press statement following his meeting with Nikola Gruevski, leader of the Macedonian ruling party VMRO-DPMNE, Orbán stated:

“Macedonia only has a chance of becoming a member of the European Union if it continues to remain a success story: if its economic policy is decisive, if it

³⁹³ Similarly, Viktor Orbán highlighted Georgia’s and Belarus’ important role for Hungary’s energy security (Orbán, 10.02.2015 & 06.06.2020).

continues to develop, if there are investments and it achieves GDP growth” (Orbán, 29.09.2017).

In this respect, the Hungarian Prime Minister most frequently cited the economic achievements of Serbia as well as the country’s further potential for growth (Orbán, 22.11.2016 & 15.05.2020). Underlining that Serbia’s economic indicators, such as the gross domestic product (GDP) or the national debt, reached levels that many EU Member States could be proud of, he maintained that Serbia deserved a reappraisal for its efforts (Orbán, 09.02.2018 & 26.03.2018). Similarly, during the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2011, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó declared that the Eastern Partnership countries deserved positive feedback for what they had accomplished in the economic reform processes (Szijjartó 2017).

In general, Hungarian officials have claimed that, while the performance of the aspirant countries should be the factor determining the pace of their integration, conditions for EU membership have become much tougher and membership criteria are difficult for countries struggling with post-communist and post-conflict legacies to achieve (Huszka 2017, 596). Hungary’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs János Martonyi contended that, in order to avoid a credibility crisis, the EU should treat the aspiring countries the same way it treated other Central and Eastern European states during their accession in the 2000s (Martonyi 2011, 42-43). Moreover, the Hungarian government has also blamed “more prosperous countries” in the EU for the “enlargement fatigue” and emphasized that the EU should keep its promises, such as giving Ukrainians access to visa-free travel (Orbán, 25.11.2016 & 19.10.2017).

Self-Preservation

Since the EU accession, Hungary has strived to assume the role of a “policy shaper” or “policy maker,” as opposed to its position of a “policy taker” in the pre-accession period, and the enlargement agenda seemed to be the right way to go (Duleba et al. 2013, 19; Ker-Lindsay et al. 2017, 519). According to Zsuzsanna Végh, especially in the first years after accession, the Hungarian approach to enlargement was much more driven by the desire to share Hungary’s own experience and gain influence and legitimacy inside the EU (interview 2X). Focusing its attention on the Western Balkans, which is considered the Hungarian

“specialty,” came as a natural choice (interview 2Q). In his statements, Viktor Orbán often referred to the “great success story” of the Visegrad states to strengthen Hungary’s credibility as a connoisseur of transformation processes and a key contributor to the integration of the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe (Orbán, 22.11.2016).³⁹⁴

19.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

Hungary has consistently urged the EU to show more solidarity toward the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries by speeding up the accession negotiations. Hungarian support for enlargement to the Western Balkans is driven primarily by the principle of *proximity*. Hungarian minorities, especially in Serbia, have been a key determinant of Hungarian foreign policy. In addition, Hungary’s support of the Western Balkans’ integration process has been further influenced by its historical ties and geographical proximity to the region as well as increasing economic interconnections. As a neighboring country to the Western Balkans, Hungary further highlights the importance of Euro-Atlantic integration for safeguarding the security and stability of the region (Orosz 2018, 17-18; Semanić 2016, 99).

Compared to its activities in the Western Balkans, Hungary’s engagement in the Eastern Partnership region has been rather moderate (A. Rácz 2010, 19). The leading solidarity principle here is not the one of *proximity* but the one of *need*. Hungary shows a particularly high level of interest in the energy security dimension of the Eastern Partnership. The extraordinarily high dependence on Russian gas conditions Hungary’s pragmatic approach to the region, characterized by its efforts to avoid any kind of confrontation with Russia and its quest to secure alternative sources of energy supply from the South Caucasus (A. Rácz 2010). The geopolitical importance of the region is underlined by the presence of Hungarian minorities in Ukraine. Declarations of feeling responsible for all those who feel connected to the Hungarian language and culture point to the existence of strong ethnocentrism in Hungary and of ethnic, rather than civic, understanding of citizenship.

³⁹⁴ Speaking at the Hungarian-Ukrainian Business Forum, Viktor Orbán proudly stated: “And now look at the reality. We joined in 2004, it is now 2016 and, twelve years after our accession, if we Central Europeans – the countries of the V4 – were not members of the European Union, there would be no economic growth in the EU, only stagnation and decline. The only reason there is growth in the European Union is that these four countries – from Poland to Hungary – are growing dynamically, and have become Europe’s new economic growth engine” (Orbán, 25.11.2016).

On the whole, the analysis of the Hungarian case has illustrated that the solidarity principles of *proximity* and *need* are closely interconnected, which can be exemplified by the expressions of emotional attachment to the Hungarian minorities living abroad and the related necessity to look after their well-being. In addition, the Hungarian government has connected the two regions' *need* to integrate into the European structures to its own *need* for regional security and (economic) stability. Hungary's preoccupation with the stability of its immediate neighborhood and the protection of Hungarian minorities living there are reminiscent of the continued presence of the "Trianon syndrome" in Hungarian foreign policy. Moreover, Hungary's fixation on sovereignty is evident in its support for political independence and territorial integrity of other states, such as Moldova and Ukraine.

With regard to the solidarity principle of *deservingness*, Hungary has conditioned the aspirant countries' bid for membership by their progress in fulfilling the accession criteria, while attaching greater importance to economic reforms and modernization efforts and less to human rights and rule of law indicators. More importantly, Hungarian officials have demanded the EU to treat new accession candidates equally with previous EU candidates from Central and Eastern Europe. Through its continued advocacy, Hungary strives to position itself as an active shaper of the EU enlargement policy, which possesses unique expertise with regard to the Western Balkan region (*self-preservation*).

The following table illustrates the manifestations of the solidarity principles and the identity-solidarity nexus elaborated above.

Table 18: Identity-solidarity nexus (EU enlargement & Hungary)

Identity element	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
Sense of victimhood and anti-great power sentiments	Similar historical experience (struggle for independence) and resulting kinship	Stressing the need to enhance the regional stability of the European neighborhood (memory of the Balkan Wars) and ensure energy security (memory of Russia-Ukraine gas disputes) Underlining the necessity to strengthen the capacities of the countries along the Balkan route to protect Europe from mass migration		Highlighting the “success story” of Hungary as being able to overcome historical defeats → determination to establish itself as a credible partner that can help other countries with similar historical experience
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West		Stressing the need to enhance the regional stability of the European neighborhood	Appealing to the EU to keep its promises to candidate countries	
Strong attachment to national sovereignty		Support for other states’ (e.g., Ukraine’s and Moldova’s) sovereignty and territorial integrity		
Inferiority and superiority complex	Desire not to be regarded as one of the Balkan nations but rather as someone who has unique knowledge and extraordinary relations with the Western Balkan region			The Western Balkans as the “specialty” of Hungarian foreign policy → desire to assume the role of a “policy shaper” or “policy maker”
National pride		Presenting the Western Balkans, similar to the Visegrad Group, as a source of (economic) potential for the EU		Highlighting the “great success story” of the Visegrad states as a sign of credibility to advocate for the accession of the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership states
Desire to be a recognized actor in	Sharing of its own experience with transition and the accession			Desire to assume a policy-shaping role in the enlargement agenda

European and international affairs	process (sense of similar historical developments) Hungarian economic activity and ambitions in the Western Balkans (economic proximity)			
Perception of belonging to the West versus the policy of “Opening up toward the East”		High dependency on Russian gas → efforts to avoid confrontation with Russia and secure alternative sources of energy supply from the South Caucasus		
Strong sense of solidarity toward Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries	Solidarity with ethnic Hungarians living in Vojvodina in Serbia and in the Transcarpathian basin in Ukraine	Declared need to take care of Hungarian minorities living abroad		
Homogeneity of the Hungarian population	Historical and cultural ties to the Western Balkans			
Religious underpinning of Hungarian identity & attachment to traditional family values				

Source: Own table

Chapter 20: Poland & EU Enlargement

Eastern policy is among the key dimensions of Poland's foreign policy. ... It is in Poland's interest that nations of our eastern neighbourhood should enjoy independence and security ... and that their right to the sovereign choice of a path of development, political system and alliances should be respected. Those that decide to opt for Europe and the West can count on Poland's unwavering assistance in achieving this aim.

—Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz (MFA Poland 2020a)

20.1 Poland and the EU's Enlargement Policy

In addition to pursuing integration into the NATO and EU structures, reestablishing relations with its Eastern neighbors became one of the top priorities for modern Polish foreign policy after 1989 (Tyschenko 2014, 71). The political elites soon realized that better relations with its neighboring countries would not only contribute to greater stability in the region but also provide for a stronger Polish position within Western Europe (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 423). Poland has since become an advocate for the “open-door” policy of the EU toward its Eastern neighbors. Initially, Poland followed a “two-track” or “dual-track” policy, where it attempted to maintain a balance in its relations with the Soviet Union and the Newly Independent States (NIS), especially Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and Russia. In 1994, a new policy approach was put in place that focused on developing stable relations with states identified as being of particular significance for Poland, including again Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, but this time also Moldova, the Baltic States, and Kazakhstan (Buras and Pomorska 2006, 35; Machitidze 2016, 378).

Even prior to its own accession in 2004, Poland lobbied for the creation of an independent “Eastern Dimension” of the EU foreign policy (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 424; Szczepanik 2011, 60). In 1998, in his inaugural speech announcing the commencement of Poland's EU accession negotiations, then Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek for the first time presented the idea of creating the “Eastern Dimension” of the EU that was supposed to serve as a framework of cooperation with the new Eastern neighbors after the enlargement in 2004. As a follow-up to this suggestion, in 2001, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a document entitled “Eastern Policy of the European Union in the Context of its Enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe: the Polish vision.” It was later translated into a non-paper presented at the Copenhagen Summit of the European Council in December 2002, detailing

the main goals and mechanisms of the proposed EU's Eastern policy. Poland advocated in favor of European aspirations expressed by Ukraine and Moldova and, possibly, also Belarus (MFA Poland 2003). However, the idea did not receive much acceptance and support in Brussels, above all due to fear of alienating Russia (Adamczyk 2010, 196).

After the ENP launched in 2004 and Poland became a fully-fledged member of the EU, Eastern European countries became the main vector of Polish foreign policy and Poland started to advocate for narrowing the focus of the ENP and bolstering the significance of the Eastern Dimension (Szczepanik 2011; Tyschenko 2014). In 2006, the Polish Foreign Ministry submitted another proposal to the European Council, in which Ukraine was designated to assume a central role in any integration project. The document advocated for visa facilitation and acknowledged the strategic importance of close EU–Ukraine relations. In addition, it called for resolving the frozen conflicts in South Caucasus and Transnistria (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 425).

Poland's Role in the Establishment of the Eastern Partnership

Favorable circumstances for establishing an independent Eastern Dimension of the EU's neighborhood policy appeared again in 2007. At this time, Polish diplomats in Brussels prepared another, albeit brief, non-paper titled "The European Neighbourhood Policy – Eastern Dimension." The document pointed to the inefficiencies resulting from the broad scope of the ENP and called for a new form of cooperation with the Eastern neighbors. The Eastern dimension was presented as a form of regional cooperation analogous to the existing Northern dimension initiated by Finland or the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership (EURO–MED) (Cianciara 2008; Żurawski vel Grajewski 2010).

Most observers agree that the Polish image and reputation as a credible and reliable EU Member State improved strongly between 2007 and 2009, which ultimately helped push through the new proposal. The election of Donald Tusk's administration in 2007 was viewed very positively in Brussels because the previous PiS government of Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński with its Eurosceptic rhetoric had a largely negative image amongst EU diplomats (Cianciara 2008; Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 431-432). There is also a broad agreement that the success of the initiative was a result of diplomatic and alliance building skills of Prime

Minister Tusk, his Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, and the Polish diplomats in Brussels (Kaminska 2010, 79).

First, Poland made a decision to act jointly with Sweden, which was about to take over the rotating presidency of the EU. For Poland as an EU newcomer, working together with a respected Member State was a strategic move. Not only did Poland benefit from Sweden's impeccable reputation, but also Swedish experience with navigating through the structures of the European institutions proved invaluable for the proposal to meet all the EU's formal and informal requirements. Under the Swedish influence, the Polish government learned how to tone down its rhetoric and become more modest in its advocacy for the European integration aspirations of Ukraine and other Eastern neighbors (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 433-435). In addition, Polish governmental officials and diplomats recognized the importance of compromise and, as a consequence, instead of presenting the plan as a purely Polish initiative, like they did with the other proposals before, they opted for joint leadership (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 432). Last but not least, some authors mention the choice of Sweden as a tactical move to avoid the assumption that the proposal was in any way directed against Russia, as Russian-Swedish relations were rather favorable at that time (Klatt 2011).

And second, Poland was praised for its skilled coordination of all efforts and effective coalition building with both "old" and "new" EU Member States.³⁹⁵ Polish diplomats conducted regular consultations with the Commission during the drafting process and were applauded for their proactive, constructive, and alliance-prone approach (Cianciara 2008; Kaminska 2010). More importantly, thanks to intense political lobbying, Poland and Sweden were able to gain a strong coalition backing for their proposal. They received support of the Scandinavian EU members, the Baltic States, and the Visegrad Group members, most importantly the Czech Republic, which made the Eastern Partnership one of the priorities of its Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half on 2009 (Copsey and Pomorska 2010, 314; Kaminska 2010, 79). According to many observers, receiving support from Germany and France turned out to be the decisive moment (Adamczyk 2010, 198; Stepniewski 2016, 187). The greater receptiveness by Germany toward Poland's ideas is attributable to the improved relationship under the Tusk government (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 433). Also

³⁹⁵ Joanna Kaminska emphasizes that, also on the national level, Poland pursued a broad involvement of actors, including governmental actors, Polish members of the European Parliament, think tanks, and NGOs (Kaminska 2010, 80).

France, which for a long time followed the “Russia first” principle and was rather ambiguous toward any attempts to intensify the EU relations with the former Soviet Republics, became more accommodating after the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 and the Russia-Ukraine gas dispute in 2009 (Adamczyk 2010, 201-202). More importantly, Poland recognized the opportunity to gain French support for the Eastern Partnership in exchange for its willingness to back the Southern Dimension of the EU’s neighborhood policy, the Union for the Mediterranean (Cianciara 2008).

Poland’s Eastern Policy

Poland, the largest border country in the Eastern part of the EU, has been actively involved in the shaping of the Eastern Dimension of the EU. Bilateral measures and support thorough ODA have been complemented by Polish engagement on the EU level in launching the Eastern Partnership project. In contrast to some other EU members, Poland has always been very receptive to the European aspirations of the candidate states and in favor of the Eastern Partnership countries receiving necessary financial and technical support and becoming as integrated in the European structures as possible. For example, Poland has actively lobbied for lifting the visa regime with Eastern Partnership countries (Duleba et al. 2013, 21). At the same time, Poland has always stressed the importance of a conditionality or “reforms first” approach, according to which the accession prospects of the countries should depend on their individual progress with regard to democratic reforms and the observance of EU values and principles (interview 3J).

Malgorzata Klatt puts forward three “ideational” principles underlying Polish foreign policy goals in the East. The first one is the principle of differentiation, according to which the EU should differentiate between the Southern and the Eastern neighborhood. This principle lies at the heart of the Eastern Partnership, with all policies designed to be tailored to the specific circumstances of each country (see also Naturski 2007, 74). The second principle states that the cornerstone of the Eastern Partnership should be the application of “European standards” for the successful promotion of democracy, which is in line with the aforementioned principle of conditionality. And the third one points to Poland’s plea for increased regional cooperation and the benefits stemming from political, economic, and social interconnectedness among the Eastern partners (Klatt 2011).

Upon the launch of the Eastern Partnership, Poland made it one of the main priorities during its Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2011 and has since continued to act as a core facilitator and supporter of the Eastern enlargement of the EU (Machitidze 2016). Traditionally, Poland's foreign policy has been centered on Ukraine and Belarus as immediate neighbors, with shared history and Polish minority groups residing in these states, and, to a lesser extent, on Moldova (interview 3J; Bartha et al. 2014, 14).

Ukraine is a traditional partner for Poland (Adamczyk 2010). Poland was the first state to recognize Ukraine's independence and, in the early 1990s, the two countries established a strategic partnership. Although the two countries share a complicated history, tied to atrocities committed in the interwar period and during the Second World War, they have been working on gradual reconciliation (interviews 3K & 3L).³⁹⁶ The absence of conflict over national minorities has made it easier for the two neighbors to pursue the development of amicable relations (Burant 1993a, 412). Polish diplomacy has worked towards facilitating the country's integration into the EU and NATO and Ukraine has held an exceptional place in Poland's policy toward the Eastern neighborhood (Bieńczyk-Missala 2016, 115).

The strategic importance of Ukraine to Poland can be seen against the background of Poland's attempts to ease its difficult geopolitical situation (Burant 1993a). Some authors like to cite Marshall Piłsudski's remark that "[t]here can be no free Poland without a free Ukraine," pointing to the importance of not allowing Ukraine to fall under Russia's sphere of influence (Reeves 2017, 155-156). This is possibly one of the reasons why Polish authorities were particularly wary of widespread violations of democratic standards during presidential elections in Ukraine in late 2004 and why Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski led international mediation efforts between the conflicting parties during the subsequent Orange Revolution (interview 3K). According to Andrzej Szeptycki, the election of President Victor Yanukovich in 2010 and the rise of more nationalistic tendencies in both Warsaw and Kiev led to a deterioration of bilateral relations and a decrease in high-level political contacts (interview 3K). The Ukrainian domestic developments also had an adverse effect on Poland's advocacy efforts for Ukraine's closer ties with the EU. In spite of numerous assurances signaled toward Polish President Bronisław Komorowski during

³⁹⁶ The atrocities refer mainly to the massacre committed by Ukrainian nationalists, with active support of the local Ukrainian population, against up to 100,000 Poles in the regions of Volhynia and Eastern Galicia between 1943 and 1945. In retaliation, Poles killed several thousand Ukrainians (interviews 3K & 3L).

bilateral meetings, President Viktor Yanukovich eventually decided against signing the Association Agreement with the EU at the Vilnius Summit in November 2013, leading to the Euromaidan protests and the removal of his government (Bieńczyk-Missala 2016, 115; President.pl 2013).

Since the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the commencement of separatist movements in Eastern and Southeastern regions of Ukraine in 2014, Poland has been supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and it has been favorable of imposing and maintaining hard sanctions against Russia (interview 3K). In line with this, Poland still supports Ukraine's Europeanization efforts, even though the probability of the country's membership in the EU has decreased significantly in the past years (interview 3H). In view of the ongoing conflict in the Donbass region, Polish efforts have been primarily focused on stabilizing the situation in Ukraine (Stępniewski 2016).³⁹⁷

Poland and Belarus moved quickly to develop relations after their independence declarations in 1991 by signing a treaty on friendship and cooperation and establishing diplomatic relations. Yet the relationship with Belarus has been impaired by the regime's authoritarian tendencies and its violations of human rights and civil liberties. Poland has been a staunch supporter of democratic reforms, dismissed by the Belarusian regime as interference in its internal affairs (Burant 1993a). Andrzej Szeptycki adds that the Polish-Belarusian relationship has also been adversely affected by President Alexander Lukashenko's attempts to control the Polish ethnic minority living in Belarus (interview 3K).

Moldova has received an elevated status and attention in Poland's foreign policy following the introduction of the Eastern Partnership project in 2009. Polish-Moldavian bilateral relations are regulated by numerous bilateral agreements outlining various areas of cooperation (Bartha et al. 2014, 14). Szeptycki points out in this context that Poland's relations with Moldova are mainly on a "technical" level, with Poland providing financial resources and other forms of assistance (interview 3K).

³⁹⁷ At the same time, the interviewed experts noted that, under the PiS government, the Polish-Ukrainian relationship has been gradually worsening (interviews 3H & 3J). According to Jacek Kucharczyk from the Institute of Public Affairs, the PiS party has tried to neutralize possible right-wing opposition by "concessions." And because some of the right-wing voters are pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian, PiS has been reluctant to continue with the pro-Ukrainian rhetoric of the previous government (interview 3H).

The South Caucasus countries play a secondary role in Poland's Eastern policy, although, in the context of the Eastern Partnership, they have gained in importance. Especially Georgia and Azerbaijan are important for Poland's energy security (Szeptycki 2011).³⁹⁸ Armenia, on the other hand, has enjoyed only limited attention of Poland, especially following its "U-turn decision" to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in the wake of Euromaidan protests in Ukraine in 2014, as opposed to pursuing closer integration with the EU (Latoszek and Kłós 2016; Shapovalova and Kapusniak 2011).

Recognizing the new geopolitical realities in the region, Polish authorities publicly claim that they are still as committed as ever to the Eastern Partnership. During the celebrations of the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership program in Brussels in May 2019, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz assured Poland's invariable support for the Eastern Partnership policies and called for bringing the six countries closer to the EU without offering them the prospect of eventual EU membership.³⁹⁹ He also proposed further institutionalization of relations, including a permanent secretariat and a rotating presidency of the Eastern Partnership countries. In his remarks, he referred to the successful experience of the four Visegrad countries and their effective economic cooperation through CEFTA (Czaputowicz 2019). In this context, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Marcin Przydacz stressed that "the future of the Eastern Partnership is also a test of credibility and solidarity for the EU" (Przydacz, 29.10.2019).

The Balkan Dimension of Polish Foreign Policy

Poland is also supportive of the European aspirations of the Western Balkan region. In the words of Foreign Minister Czaputowicz: "Poland supports the future accession of the Western Balkans countries to the European Union. Without their presence in the EU, we cannot say that this project is complete" (Czaputowicz, 04.07.2019). However, the level of Polish engagement in this part of Europe has been rather modest compared to, on the one hand, the activities of its Visegrad partners in the Western Balkan region and, on the other hand, its own presence in the Eastern Partnership area (Domaradzki et al. 2018, 29; Orosz

³⁹⁸ Poland unequivocally took the side of Georgia in its war with Russia in 2008 (Tulmets 2014, 178).

³⁹⁹ Similarly, in 2017, then Prime Minister Beata Szydło and Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski urged the EU to maintain an "open-door" policy toward the Eastern Partnership states and keep the Eastern Partnership "high on the EU agenda" (Szydło 2017; Waszczykowski 2017).

2017, 8). Out of the V4 countries, Poland is the most geographically distant from the Western Balkan region and, unlike for example Hungary, it was not impacted by the political turmoil and the armed conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s (Lachert 2020, 24; Żornaczuk 2010, 224). Similar to its weak historical ties with the Balkan states, Poland's economic involvement in the Western Balkan region has also been quite limited (Balcer 2005; Domaradzki et al. 2018; Żornaczuk 2012).

Poland's foreign policy activities in the Western Balkans are organized through three main channels—bilateral cooperation, V4 initiatives, and EU projects—and focus primarily on enhancing security and stability of the region and supporting the integration efforts of the respective countries (Żornaczuk 2010, 224).⁴⁰⁰ In addition to providing funds for infrastructure development and other reforms, Poland has offered to share its experience with accession negotiations (Morawiecki 2020). Relations with the Western Balkans are usually among the priority areas of Poland's Visegrad Group presidencies and, in 2019, Poland also presided over the Berlin Process, which is an initiative supporting the integration of the Western Balkans with the EU (Polish MFA 2019). In fact, Poland is the only Visegrad country that has been invited to join the Berlin Process. Last but not least, the Western Balkan region has gained strategic importance for Poland since the initiation of the Polish-Croatian Three Seas Initiative in 2015 (Domaradzki et al. 2018, 37; Lachert 2020, 24; Orosz 2017, 8).

20.2 Motives of Solidarity

Poland is regarded as the staunchest advocate among the EU Member States of enlarging the Union further to the East. The previous sections have demonstrated that the democratization and modernization of the Eastern European region and the countries' integration into European structures has been Poland's long-term ambition. This section will accordingly unveil the underlying motivation behind Polish engagement in the Eastern neighborhood.⁴⁰¹

Most experts agree that Poland's foreign policy toward its Eastern neighbors has to a great extent been shaped by geopolitical reasons and security concerns. In addition to diminishing possible interference from Russia, the need for establishing a separate Eastern Dimension of

⁴⁰⁰ Regarding its military presence in the region, Poland has been engaged in various peacekeeping missions in the Western Balkans (Żornaczuk 2012).

⁴⁰¹ Since the Balkan dimension of Polish foreign policy is much less pronounced than Polish Eastern policy, Poland's engagement in the Western Balkans will be discussed only marginally.

the EU was justified on the grounds of preventing the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe (Natorski 2007; Tyschenko 2014). Nevertheless, Poland's positive attitude toward this part of Europe is also deeply rooted in its historical memory and national identity. Other authors add geographical proximity and related economic interests as decisive factors as well as Poland's desire to replicate the success of its own democratic transformation (interview 3K; Copesey and Haughton 2009; Klatt 2011). The following paragraphs will discuss some of the main motivational grounds behind Polish generally enthusiastic attitude toward further enlargement in greater detail and along the four solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*.

Proximity

The long history of Poland's ties to the East continues to exert a strong influence over its relations with the Eastern Partnership countries. Notwithstanding complicated historical legacy of Poland with countries such as Ukraine or Belarus over the ethnically mixed territories in the Eastern Borderlands (*kresy*), which culminated in violent clashes in the interwar period, during World War II, and the immediate postwar period, the experience under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as well as the subsequent similar regional developments up until the twentieth century continue to shape Poland's foreign policy toward this part of the continent (Burant 1993a, 396-397; Reeves 2017, 152; Szczepanik 2011, 45-47). The official website of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs dedicated to the Eastern policy states:

“Our common history, similar traditions and cultural links bind us with Ukraine and Belarus. The Polish-Ukrainian cooperation is very intense and takes place at all levels — from the central government to districts and communes. Polish and Ukrainian NGOs and scientific and cultural exchanges are extremely vibrant, too” (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2020a).

Similar references to strong historical, cultural, economic, and personal links also to the other Eastern Partnership states can be found in numerous statements by Polish elites across the political spectrum (Tusk, 12.03.2010 & Szydło, 07.09.2016). Polish decision makers frequently use the word “friendship” when describing Poland's relationship to its Eastern partners (see for example Tusk, 29.03.2011).

Historical Ties & Poland's Civilizing Mission

Tomasz Zarycki claims that the ideologies of “Eastness” still play a significant role in Poland, although different political and societal groups have a different understanding of the Polish Eastern territories. All interviewed experts agree that Poland has no geopolitical ambitions in these regions. At the same time, referencing to *kresy* has become a useful political narrative because it is something every Pole can relate to. Zarycki and Ukielski speak of cultural nostalgia because *Kresy* is a broadly described concept in Polish historiography and can be found in many classics (interviews 3L & 3M). In addition, the presence of Polish minorities in those territories, concretely in Belarus and Ukraine, reinforces the feeling of responsibility and emotional attachment (Burant 1993a, 398). Christopher Reeves and Melchior Szczepanik note that there has been an observable dichotomy in Polish politics between political realists and idealists (or “romantics”) regarding how Poland should treat its Eastern neighborhood (Reeves 2017, 148-149; Szczepanik 2011, 50-52). While the realists would argue that the promotion of a Western-style democracy in Eastern Europe might unnecessarily antagonize Russia, the romantics would insist on stronger commitment “in the name of a solidarity stemming from the countries’ common history” (Reeves 2017, 148).⁴⁰²

Natasza Styczynska and other authors emphasize that the sentimental attachment to the former Commonwealth territories is complemented by a superiority belief and a civilizing vision (interview 3J). There is a broad agreement across the scientific community that the civilizing mission originates from the Jagiellonian “Golden Age” period when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth stretched from the Baltic sea to the Black sea and when Poland was transmitting Western culture and values to the East (Burant 1993a; Copsey and Haughton 2009, 278; Reeves 2017, 142). This Jagiellonian idea is said to continue to influence contemporary Polish foreign policy and the country’s relations with its Eastern European neighbors to this day, prompting the feeling of responsibility on the part of Poland to assist its counterparts in the immediate neighborhood (Machitidze 2016). Styczynska calls this paternalistic approach of civilizing the other countries further to the East by promoting democracy and liberal values the “big brother” syndrome (interview 3J).

⁴⁰² Left liberals in Poland would claim that Poland should forget about this topic altogether because such a thinking is “post-colonial” (interview 3M).

Need

Various Polish decision makers have repeatedly acknowledged not only the legitimate claim but also the *need* of the Eastern Partnership states to move closer to the EU. Polish political elites often point to the Russian Federation's attempts to destabilize and dominate the region and argue that political and economic approximation to the EU would decrease the amount of pressure that Russia exerts on these countries (for example Tusk, 14.11.2013; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2020a). Advocating for a greater stability of the Eastern European region is also considered as an effective means of addressing Poland's own security needs.

Geopolitics & Security

Considering Poland's historical experience with partitions and shifting borders, it is no surprise that the country's desire since its EU accession has been not to serve as the Schengen frontier and the Union's "buffer zone" in the East. In other words, Poland's ambition would be to build the buffer zone in Ukraine instead, which would ideally reinforce its own security (interview 3J; see also Copey and Haughton 2009, 281; Latoszek and Kłos 2016, 104). According to many interviewed experts, the clear priority is to move Russia a bit more East, limit its control over Eastern European countries, as well as contain the extension of its influence further into Central Europe (interviews 3J & 3K). Zarycki explained the motives in a few simple words: "if we don't help Ukrainians, Russia will be on the Polish border" (interview 3M). These security concerns correspond with the traditional Polish geopolitical dilemma resulting from its sandwiched position between Russia and Germany and the persisting sense of vulnerability (Natorski 2007). Polish government officials have repeatedly stressed that providing support to Ukraine would be a guarantee of Poland's security and an important element of stability in Europe: "The fourth pillar of the Polish security will be in the future democratic and free Ukraine" (Tusk, 19.03.2014).⁴⁰³ In a 2014 interview with then Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Poland's persisting sense of victimhood became once again evident: "The most important task for today is to protect Ukraine from its ultimate dissolution and Russian take-over. ... We are under threat of a new Yalta. The victim is not Poland, but Ukraine" (Tusk, 18.03.2014).

⁴⁰³ Similar remarks have been made also for example with regard to Georgia: "Georgia is our major partner and its role in the regional security policy is of primary importance" (Przydacz, 29.10.2019) and Albania: "We appreciate the fact that Albania is a guarantor of stability and security in Western Balkans" (Szydło, 09.12.2016).

Economic Benefits & Energy Security

In addition to the security and geopolitical concerns, there are further factors that have been influential in the formulation of Polish policies toward Eastern Europe. Considering already existing trade and economic relations between Poland and its Eastern neighbors, Polish politicians often cite economic opportunities that would stem from further Eastern enlargement, such as the opening up of Eastern European markets and the strengthening of Polish export (Tusk, 18.02.2010 & Przydacz, 29.10.2019). In statements addressed to the domestic audience, they stress how broadening economic contacts with Eastern Europe would benefit Polish companies and the Polish economy, such as through joint projects and mutual investment (Tusk, 12.03.2010; Kopacz, 09.09.2015).⁴⁰⁴ Moreover, Poland fears that political and economic instability in the East might provoke uncontrollable migration over its borders (Burant 1993a, 395). At the same time, the Polish economy is largely dependent on the cheaper workforce from the East, which is why Poland has been a strong supporter of a visa-free travel regime for citizens from the Eastern Partnership countries (Klatt 2011).⁴⁰⁵ Last but not least, Poland sees its support for the pro-European aspirations of the Eastern partners through the lens of energy security, as a means to avoid natural gas supply disruptions (Tusk, 21.05.2014).

Deservingness

Poland has always conditioned its support for the European aspirations of the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states upon their personal efforts to carry out essential reforms and their observance of European values and standards (for example Tusk, 18.02.2010; Kopacz, 19.01.2015 & Czaputowicz, 12.07.2019). In this context, Poland has offered its help with fighting corruption, strengthening the rule of law and good governance, and implementing other reforms (Szydło 02.12.2016 & Czaputowicz, 12.07.2019). Moreover, referring to their country's own experience, Polish leaders often stress the

⁴⁰⁴ During the session of the Cabinet Council in April 2014, former Prime Minister Donald Tusk said: "We will propose such support for Ukraine which, at the same time, will support Polish companies and the Polish economy. This is due to the fact that synergy between the money we spend and the interest of Polish companies and institutions is necessary" (Tusk, 08.04.2014).

⁴⁰⁵ While it is hard to determine the exact figures, it is estimated that between one and two million Ukrainians currently live and work in Poland (Reuters 2020).

importance of reconciliation, good neighborly relations, and effective regional cooperation as prerequisites of Euro-Atlantic integration (Tusk, 30.03.2011 & Czaputowicz, 07.05.2019).

Polish government officials have occasionally made a connection between the solidarity Poland received from the West and the resulting obligation to help others in similar need. During an official state visit after the 2014 Ukrainian parliamentary and presidential elections, Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz told the Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk: “We have undergone a long and difficult transformation period ourselves. We know how important help of foreign partners is. ... One day Poland needed help, now it’s time for Ukraine” (Kopacz, 19.01.2015).

Self-Preservation

As already indicated by the solidarity principle of *proximity*, what ties Poland to its Eastern partners is the similar historical experience of fighting for independence as well as the related aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration (Tusk, 11.03.2010 & 18.03.2014). Polish political elites soon realized that this special expertise not only helps Poland to act as a “bigger brother” to its Eastern neighbors but that it also provides for a stronger Polish position within Western Europe. During EU summits, in bilateral meetings with the Eastern Partnership states, during its Visegrad presidency, and in other fora, Polish officials have repeatedly reiterated why the Polish point of view is unique and should be taken into account (Tusk, 08.04.2014 & Szydło, 07.09.2016).

Sophisticated Expertise & Leadership Aspirations in the EU

The aforementioned missionary vision of Poland toward its Eastern neighborhood also encompasses its desire to share its own experience with post-communist transformation toward democracy and market economy (interview 3J). Former Foreign Affairs Minister Radosław Sikorski made this very clear when he addressed the Polish Sejm in 2008:

“Protecting human rights as well as the rule of law and democracy have become a Polish passion. ... We would like to make sure that such promotion of democracy is more closely tied to development aid, addressed to countries close to us. This conviction results from the belief that our particular experience in the creation of democratic institutions and economic transformation can be translated into effective support of similar processes in other countries” (Sikorski's statement translated by Klatt 2011, 3).

In other words, Poland, which had to undergo a similar post-communist transformation and face similar challenges during the accession process, presents itself as being well equipped to understand the difficulties faced by the neighboring states aspiring for EU membership (Tusk, 06.09.2011).

This sophisticated expertise has also helped Poland in the process of redefining its role in Europe. After the collapse of Communism, Poland has strived to re-establish itself firmly on the European continent and, after the EU accession, gain the status of a respected partner country with considerable weight based on its large territory and population size (Copsey and Haughton 2009, 278). Former Polish national security adviser, Marek Siwiec, argued that the Eastern policy should become “the Polish specialty in the EU,” drawing on the Polish knowledge of the region underpinned by the long joint historical experience (Buras and Pomorska 2006, 35). It follows that Poland’s aspirations to adopt an active role in the shaping of the Eastern dimension of the EU and position itself as a linchpin between the West and the East have been brought in connection with the country’s aim of consolidating its place in Europe (interview 3K; Klatt 2011; Machitidze 2016). This ambition is reflected in numerous statements and can be also found on the official website of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

“Poland is in a sensitive location — at the crossroads between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. We are a member of the European Union and NATO, which are the institutional face of Western countries, but at the same time we have special ties with the East, given our shared past of the authoritarian communist regime. This location offers us a unique opportunity to strengthen our country’s international position” (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2020a).

Similar to the Czech Republic, the analyzed statements of Polish decision makers have disclosed a sense of ownership with regard to the Eastern Partnership project. Reflecting on the Eastern Partnership’s tenth anniversary, Poland reiterated its sense of responsibility for the further development of the project and its desire to actively contribute to the future approximation of the Eastern European countries to the EU. In the words of Foreign Minister Czaputowicz: “As one of the Eastern Partnership’s co-founders, Poland is at the same time one of the initiators of a process of reflecting on its future after 2020” (Czaputowicz, 07.05.2019).⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁶ Similarly, after a meeting with the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden Stefan Löfven in 2017, then Prime Minister Szydło declared: “We agreed that as initiators of the Eastern Partnership we feel especially responsible for its future” (Szydło, 20.06.2017).

20.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

The discourse analysis as well as the conducted interviews have revealed that the principle of *proximity* has been decisive for Poland's solidarity with the Eastern European countries. Due to long historical ties and strong economic, cultural, and personal links, the Eastern European countries have been ever-present in Poland's foreign policy and Poland has been an unequivocal advocate of their EU accession efforts (Poland.pl 2019). The existence of historical and cultural bonds can also help explain why Polish foreign policy has been more concentrated on the Eastern Dimension than for example on the Mediterranean vector of EU neighborhood relations or on the Western Balkan countries (Cichocki and Czerwińska 2011, 298). Additionally, the analysis has made evident that Polish minorities living in the neighboring states fortify Poland's sense of historical obligation toward the former Commonwealth territories (see also Szczepanik 2011).

With regard to the principle of *need*, Polish political elites have recognized the need for strengthened security and economic stability in the regions neighboring the EU. Stressing Poland's own experience with political and economic transformation after 1989, they have repeatedly underscored their country's support for the pro-Western orientation of the Eastern European states and their aspirations for EU membership. Nevertheless, it is evident from the narratives that the need of the Eastern partners is frequently overshadowed by Poland's desire to address its own precarious geopolitical situation. Poland hopes to reinforce its own security by reducing Russia's zone of influence in Eastern Europe and preventing uncontrolled migration from a politically and economically unstable neighborhood. Moreover, Poland's sense of historical victimhood and fears of lost sovereignty have found their expression in narratives emphasizing the need to protect Ukraine from dissolution and Russian takeover.

While Poland has repeatedly expressed feelings of responsibility for the developments in its immediate neighborhood and presented itself as a staunch proponent of the further enlargement process of the EU, its insistence on the "reforms first" approach reflects Poland's own experience with transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration. Polish political elites have been consistent in stressing the importance of self-effort on the part of candidate states when it comes to democratic reforms and the fulfilment of the EU accession criteria.

The aspect of *deservingness* has accordingly played an important role in Poland's attitude toward further EU enlargement.

Finally, Poland's motivation for strengthening cooperation with the EU's Eastern neighbors has been driven by its desire to demonstrate its sophisticated knowledge of the region, serve as a bridge between the East and the West, and consolidate its role in (not only Central and Eastern) Europe (see the solidarity principle of *self-preservation*). This ambition has been bolstered by Poland's paternalistic approach and missionary vision toward its Eastern neighbors, to which it feels superior.

Table 19 exemplifies the nexus between the solidarity profile of Poland and the national identity elements identified earlier.

Table 19: Identity-solidarity nexus (EU enlargement & Poland)

Identity element	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”		<p>Poland’s ambition to establish an anti-Russian “buffer zone” further East to reinforce its own security</p> <p>Polish geopolitical dilemma resulting from its historically sandwiched position between Russia and Germany and the persisting sense of vulnerability and related security concerns</p> <p>Fears of uncontrollable migration as a result of political and economic instability in the East</p>		
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West		<p>Poland’s desire to prevent a “new Yalta” (in Ukraine)</p>		
High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty	<p>Understanding of the geopolitical insecurity of other Eastern European states due to own experience of lost sovereignty</p>	<p>Polish geopolitical dilemma resulting from its historically sandwiched position between Russia and Germany and the persisting sense of vulnerability and related security concerns</p>	<p>Accentuation of the right to the sovereign choice of a path of development based on similar historical experience</p>	
Superiority and inferiority complex	<p>Superiority belief and a civilizing mission toward the former Commonwealth territories (the “big brother” syndrome)</p> <p>Poland’s conviction that its successful experience with transformation can be translated into effective support of similar</p>		<p>Linkage between the solidarity Poland received from the West and the resulting obligation to help others further East in similar need</p>	<p>Sophisticated expertise on Eastern Europe as a tool to help Poland in the process of redefining its role in Europe and overcoming its inferiority complex</p> <p>Poland’s conviction that its successful experience with transformation can be translated into</p>

	processes in other post-communist countries			effective support of similar processes in other countries
Perception of belonging to the West	Civilizing mission and the perceived role as a transmitter of EU values and principles to the former Commonwealth territories Paternalistic approach toward the former Commonwealth territories		Insistence on the implementation of democratic reforms and compliance with European values and standards	Active role in the shaping of the Eastern dimension of the EU as a means of consolidating its place in Europe
Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs	Perception of being the crucial “bridging linchpin” between the East and the West	Understanding of the difficulties faced by the neighboring states aspiring for EU membership (recognizing their <i>need</i>) and related desire to share own experience with post-communist transformation		The Eastern policy as “the Polish specialty in the EU,” drawing on Poland’s knowledge of the region and similar historical experience Poland’s conviction that its experience with political and economic transformation can be translated into effective support of similar processes in other countries
National pride based in the perception of a strong and resilient ethnic identity	Strong historical, cultural, and personal links to the East Emotional attachment toward Polish minorities living in Eastern Europe	Feeling of responsibility for the fate of its immediate neighborhood Sympathy toward Polish minorities living in Eastern Europe		
Fierce attachment to Christian values	Strong ties to the culturally and religiously akin Eastern Europeans			
Homogeneity of the Polish population	Sense of affiliation with the ethnically, religiously, and culturally akin Eastern Europeans			
Polarization of politics and society	Dichotomy in Polish politics regarding how Poland should manage its relations with its eastern neighbors (striving not to unnecessarily antagonize Russia versus stronger commitment in the name of solidarity stemming from common history)			

Source: Own table

Chapter 21: Slovakia & EU Enlargement

It is important to maintain the credibility of enlargement as an important tool for achieving positive change in the region. If we ask our partners to meet our conditions, we must also fulfill our obligations.

— Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák (06.03.2017)

21.1 Slovakia and the EU's Enlargement Policy

Slovakia has been a strong advocate of the enlargement of the EU to the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. For example, the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2016 made it one of its priorities to maintain and strengthen the credibility of the enlargement process (Lajčák, 12.10.2016). This foreign policy priority has enjoyed a remarkable consensus on the domestic political scene, independent of the parties in power (Duleba et al. 2013, 25; interview 4C). Looking at the two regions, the Western Balkans has played a more prominent role in Slovakia's foreign policy than the Eastern Partnership states. Traditionally, the largest proportion of Slovakia's ODA has been earmarked for the Western Balkan countries.⁴⁰⁷ The Eastern European states have received more attention since the establishment of the Eastern Partnership in 2009, whereby the focus has been mainly on Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. The relations with the countries of the South Caucasus have so far been modest in comparison (Marušiak 2013b; Najšlová 2011).

Slovakia's Eastern Policy

Alexander Duleba identifies three different phases in Slovakia's relations with Eastern Europe from the beginning of independent Slovak foreign policy in 1993 until the establishment of the Eastern Partnership in 2009, which coincide with the three Prime Ministers in office: Vladimír Mečiar, Mikuláš Dzurinda, and Robert Fico.⁴⁰⁸ The respective governments differed with regard to their foreign policy goals, including the relations with the Eastern neighborhood (Duleba 2009, 7-8).

⁴⁰⁷ For example, in 2009, Slovakia allocated 39% of its ODA to Serbia alone and only 10% to all Eastern partners combined (Najšlová 2011, 111).

⁴⁰⁸ Vladimír Mečiar was Prime Minister from 1992–1998; Mikuláš Dzurinda led two consequent Slovak governments in the period of 1998–2006; and Robert Fico became Prime Minister after the parliamentary elections in 2006 and served in this position until 2018.

In the 1990s, Slovakia was preoccupied with its own domestic problems. Under the leadership of Vladimír Mečiar, Slovakia became what Madeleine Albright called “the black hole of Europe,” which put its aspirations to join the EU and NATO on ice for some time. Although the Mečiar government also declared full integration with Western structures as the main goal of Slovak foreign policy, Vladimír Mečiar’s authoritarian style of rule led to deteriorating relations with the West and disqualified Slovakia from the first round of pre-accession negotiations. Due to the strained relations between Slovakia and representatives of the EU and NATO, the Mečiar cabinet announced political rapprochement with Russia as a new foreign policy priority and a potential alternative to the Euro-Atlantic integration. Justifying this foreign policy reorientation, Mečiar proclaimed: “if they don’t want us in the West, we shall turn East” (quoted in Duleba 2009, 15). According to Juraj Marušiak, Alexander Duleba, and other connoisseurs of Slovak foreign policy, the idea of Pan-Slavism, implying closer relations with Russia, inspired the foreign policy of the then ruling Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and Slovak National Party (Marušiak 2013b, 43-44). They promoted a balanced foreign policy, where Slovakia would serve as a geostrategic bridge between the West and the East.⁴⁰⁹ However, Slovakia’s Eastern policy suffered under the country’s bad reputation and international isolation.

Only after the parliamentary elections in September 1998, Slovakia’s foreign policy took a “U-turn.” A new broad-based coalition government led by Mikuláš Dzurinda pursued a clear Euro-Atlantic course. Declaring its preparedness to catch up with the Visegrad neighbors and meet the criteria for EU and NATO membership, Slovakia undertook a series of wide-ranging reforms and was consequently invited to begin accession negotiations in 1999 (Najšlová 2011, 103-105). In light of these developments, the intensity of bilateral relations with Russia decreased and Dzurinda’s centrist government abandoned the vision of Slovakia becoming a bridge between the West and the East. Instead, the new government program formulated Slovakia’s aspirations to develop more balanced relations not only with Russia but also with other Eastern European partners such as Ukraine (Duleba 2009, 9; Marušiak 2013b, 49). Importantly, Slovakia and Russia were able to settle mutual political disputes of 1998–2000 and agree on the development of “partner-like” and “mutually advantageous” relations,

⁴⁰⁹ A great supporter of this vision was also Ján Čarnogurský, Prime Minister between 1991–1992, who emphasized Slovakia’s Slavic identity and its cultural ties with Russia and who saw Slovakia’s role as an intermediary between Western Europe and Russia (Marušiak 2013b, 44).

especially with regard to the transit of strategic energy resources. Russia finally came to terms with Slovakia's accession to the EU and NATO, with President Vladimír Putin affirming that Slovak-Russian relations "are not burdened by any problems, and are developing dynamically on the political, economic and cultural levels" (quoted in Duleba 2009: 17).

The prospect of becoming a member of the EU prompted Slovak political elites to start thinking about Slovakia's own specific contribution to the European project (Najšlová 2011, 106). In a series of consultations among Slovak decision makers as well as key foreign policy think-tanks, involvement in the East as well as in the Western Balkans appeared as a natural foreign policy domain, in which Slovakia could provide its "unique expertise" and transformation experience. The two regions were regarded as geographically close and undergoing a similar historical development (Najšlová 2011, 107). Therefore, even prior to its own accession, Slovakia advocated for a separate Eastern dimension of the Union. It supported democratization processes happening in the former USSR republics, especially Ukraine and Belarus. Slovakia's interest in shaping the new EU Eastern policy intensified after joining the EU in 2004 (Marušiak 2013b, 62).

With Robert Fico assuming office in 2006, the economic dimension of Slovakia's relations with Russia and the countries of Eastern Europe intensified (Duleba 2009, 22). However, seeking an improvement of Slovak-Russian relations, Fico also showed more sympathy for and understanding of Russian interpretation of events happening in the former Soviet Republics, which in turn caused deterioration of relations with those Eastern European states. Fico's positions and proclamations, which were often inconsistent with the state's official line, created a noticeable ambivalence in Slovak foreign policy. For example, although Slovakia followed the EU policy line of criticizing the proclamation of independence by the two Georgian provinces, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the Russian recognition thereof, Prime Minister Fico accused Georgia of being responsible for the military conflict (Duleba 2009, 52; SME.sk 2010). Similarly, despite Fico's government promising continued support for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, bilateral relations between Slovakia and Ukraine seriously deteriorated against the backdrop of the "gas crisis" between Russia and Ukraine in January 2009.⁴¹⁰ The complete discontinuation of natural gas supplies from Russia via

⁴¹⁰ Moreover, according to Juraj Marušiak, bilateral relations between the two countries were further impaired by Ukraine's decision to introduce an import levy of 13% on cars and refrigerators in 2009, an act denounced by Slovakia as highly discriminatory in the wake of the global economic crisis (Marušiak 2010, 151).

Ukraine to Slovakia for almost two weeks seriously damaged the Slovak economy.⁴¹¹ Prime Minister Fico held Ukrainian authorities responsible for the crisis and called for a “re-evaluation” of Slovakia’s support for Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations (Duleba 2009, 39). The relations stabilized only after Victor Yanukovych assumed presidential office in February 2010. Ukrainian government officials assured Slovakia of no further unpredictable developments with regard to energy supplies and Slovakian decision makers, in turn, confirmed their commitment to supporting Ukraine’s ambitions to join the EU (Marušiak 2013b, 59-60).⁴¹²

Slovakia welcomed the adoption of the EU Eastern Partnership program in 2009, denoting it as “a very good preparation for the future unification of all of Europe’s parts in one European project” (then Foreign Minister Ján Kubiš quoted in Marušiak 2010, 147). The Eastern Partnership has since served as a stimulus for strengthening Slovakia’s relations with the Eastern European countries, especially Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and, to some extent, Georgia (Marušiak 2013b). The new government’s manifesto for the period 2010-2014 included the Eastern Partnership, along with the European integration of the Western Balkans, among long-term foreign policy priorities and declared its support for the continuation of the “enlargement of the area of stability, democracy and partnership, with particular emphasis on the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership” (Government of the Slovak Republic 2010). Slovakia also became an active member of an informal coalition of “EaP like-minded countries,” which consists of EU Member States actively promoting the Eastern Partnership program (Marušiak 2010, 148).

As previously mentioned, Ukraine and Belarus were formerly the priority partners for Slovakia, with all the other Eastern Partnership states playing only a minor role in Slovak foreign policy or foreign trade (Duleba 2009, 45-46). The territorial scope of Slovakia’s Eastern policy has altered over the years, with Moldova and Georgia also assuming a more prominent place (interview 4C; Čaňo and Szép 2010, 73-74). The level of interaction with Azerbaijan and Armenia has, however, remained rather limited (Najšlová 2011, 110).

⁴¹¹ Experts estimate the aggregate economic loss from the gas crisis for Slovakia of about 1 billion Euros (Duleba 2009, 32).

⁴¹² An even more important step toward revitalization of bilateral relations came with the change of government in Slovakia and Iveta Radičová becoming Prime Minister in July 2010 (Duleba 2010, 126).

Similar to the other Visegrad states, Slovakia has been a staunch advocate of Ukraine's entry into the EU. Slovakia shares a 98-kilometre-long border with Ukraine and, of the six Eastern Partnership states, Ukraine is Slovakia's largest trade partner (Duleba 2010, 129). However, their bilateral relations were not always rosy. During the Mečiar period (1992–1998), Slovakia perceived Eastern Europe as an “indifferent neighborhood” and Ukraine was viewed primarily as a gate to the Russian market (Duleba 2009, 35). Despite Dzurinda administration's efforts to enhance relations with Ukraine at the turn of the millennium, several issues impaired the development of amicable bilateral relations. One of them was the countries' competition for the chairmanship of the 52nd General Assembly of the UN in 1997 as well as for the seat of a non-permanent member representing the Central European group of nations in the UN Security Council in 1999 (Duleba 2009, 8). Another point of contention was the introduction of a strict visa regime for Ukrainian citizens in 2000, to which Ukraine reacted by unilaterally revoking the readmission treaty with Slovakia (Marušiak 2013b, 58).⁴¹³ The bilateral relations witnessed an improvement around 2001-2002. During the “Orange Revolution” in 2004, the Slovak government actively supported the political changes and democratization processes in Ukraine (Duleba 2009, 36).

Slovakia's response to the Euromaidan revolution and the Ukraine crisis in 2014 was hampered by the existence of two contradictory policy lines (Lopatka and Santa 2014). President Gašparovič condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for separatists in Donbass and suggested that the EU should respond by providing Ukraine with a clear prospect of membership. His successor, Andrej Kiska, also denounced Russia's aggression, assuring Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko that “Slovakia will never recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea, will never accept any political, military or economic interference in Ukrainian sovereignty” (Kiska, 20.05.2015). Prime Minister Fico, *au contraire*, claimed that the imposed economic sanctions against Russia were harming the Slovak economy and should be lifted (The Slovak Spectator 2014). Fico's government was sharply criticized by domestic opposition and European partners alike for its “multi-voice policy,” on the one hand supporting Ukraine's European integration ambitions and on the other hand opposing EU sanctions against Russia (Duleba 2015, 43-44). Despite the anti-sanctions rhetoric of the Prime Minister, the Slovak government eventually endorsed all of

⁴¹³ The Slovak government justified its decision by the need to harmonize Slovak visa policy with the EU (Marušiak 2013b, 58).

the EU's restrictive measures against Russia (interview 4F). Moreover, it concluded a reverse gas flow deal with Ukraine in April 2014 when Ukraine faced acute shortages of energy supply. Although Russia retaliated by reducing its gas deliveries to Slovakia, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Lajčák refused to stop the reverse flows of natural gas to Ukraine, underlining that

“our reverse flow has already saved approximately a half billion USD to Ukraine. ... We continue with practical help to Ukraine through the reverse flow despite the 50 percent gas supply reduction for Slovakia. This is our concrete contribution to the discussion on how to help Ukraine to survive this winter” (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic 2014).

In March 2014, Slovakia also organized a joint V4 meeting with the aim of confirming unequivocal support for Ukraine both in seeking a political solution to the conflict in the East of the country and in carrying out reforms related to the country's rapprochement with the EU (interview 4D). The Visegrad Group expressed its support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the ongoing reform processes, and Foreign Minister Lajčák specified that Slovakia would take over the patronage of energy security and security sector reforms (Lajčák, 16.12.2014).

Slovakia remains among the most active supporters of Ukraine's ambitions to join the EU, offering assistance based on its own transformation experience and expertise gained during the integration process (Duleba 2015, 45). Slovakia has continued to support Ukraine not only through reform assistance, but also through the provision of humanitarian aid as well as the continued reverse flow of gas, which contributes to strengthening Ukraine's energy independence and security (Lajčák, 02.12.2015).

Relations between Slovakia and Moldova were quite insignificant up until 2009 (Marušiak 2013b). The country was not an attractive economic partner for Slovakia and the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova ruling from 2001 held back the reform process. The parliamentary elections of 2009 brought in a pro-European coalition and created a new momentum for Moldova's EU integration efforts (Marušiak 2010, 153). This also provided a breakthrough for the development of bilateral relations between Moldova and Slovakia, with Slovak government officials assuring their support for Moldova's approximation with the European structures and pledging assistance in multiple forms. Moldova has become one of the priority countries of Slovak ODA and Slovak governments have offered Moldova its

experiences with reform and integration processes (Lajčák, 26.01.2015). Moreover, in connection with the unresolved Transnistrian conflict, Slovakia has been a staunch supporter of the territorial integrity of Moldova (Marušiak 2013b, 43-44).

Similar to Moldova, Belarus was for a long time on the margin of Slovakia's foreign policy. In 2003, it became a target country of Slovak ODA (SlovakAid), with a significant portion of the projects focusing on democracy promotion, economic transformation, and support of civil society (Duleba 2009, 43; 2010, 133). Moreover, numerous Slovak NGOs have been involved in Belarus (Marušiak 2013b, 65-66). Slovakia disapproved the emerging authoritative regime of President Lukashenko and the violation of human rights and democratic principles. After the 2010 presidential elections and the subsequent suppression of opposition forces, Slovakia acted as one of the main proponents of expanding personal and economic sanctions against the Belarussian regime and especially the regime's representative, Alexander Lukashenko (Najšlová 2011, 110). Overall, Slovak policy toward Belarus has been influenced by the character of EU–Belarusian relations.

In comparison to Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, the countries of the South Caucasus were practically absent in Slovakia's foreign policy for a long time. Slovakia had no immediate political interest in the region and the volume of foreign trade was negligible (Duleba 2010). However, Azerbaijan and Georgia have gained strategic importance for Slovakia as means to strengthen the country's energy security (Lajčák, 15.05.2015). Azerbaijan, as a major producer of crude oil and natural gas, plays an important role for the transit of energy supplies to Europe (Duleba 2010, 134-135). Slovak-Georgian relations have also been developing dynamically, with Slovakia sharing its transformation experience and assisting Georgia with reconstruction and modernization efforts (Marušiak 2013b, 67; Najšlová 2011, 115). Politically, Slovak decision makers have supported the territorial integrity of Georgia and rejected the sovereignty of the Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Gašparovič, 24.04.2014 & Kiska, 19.06.2015).

Overall, Slovakia has pursued a “multivectoral” Eastern policy, endorsing the further enlargement of the EU to the East while, at the same time, stressing that the Eastern Partnership should not become an anti-Russian project (Duleba 2009; Marušiak 2013b). Unlike other Visegrad states such as Poland, where the threat perception of Russia is quite high, Slovak authorities have mostly avoided criticizing the state of human rights and

democracy in Russia (Marušiak 2013b, 52). According to experts on Slovak foreign policy, Slovakia had

“neither too dramatic nor so many negative experiences with Russian imperialism in their past, especially from the point of the history of their national emancipation. Therefore, the historical image of Russia in Slovakia is more connected with the so-called ‘Slavic idea’ and/or ‘idea of Slavic Brotherhood’ than ‘Russian imperialism’” (Duleba 2009: 10).

The relative absence of negative historical experiences with Russia prior to the communist era makes the Slovak case quite unique in Central Europe. Although Slovak governments after 1993 have differed in their specific approaches to Russia, their policies have been shaped mainly by pragmatic considerations, stressing the importance of sound economic cooperation and Slovakia’s dependence on Russia’s energy raw materials (Najšlová 2011, 106). Almost 90% of primary energy resources in Slovakia are imported from abroad, the vast majority of them from Russia (Duleba 2009, 28-30). Moreover, the Slovak territory is used for the transit of Russian natural gas to Western and Southern Europe. The security of natural gas supplies from Russia to Slovakia via Ukraine has therefore played an important role in Slovak–Russian bilateral relations (Marušiak 2013b, 53). Slovakia’s pragmatic, non-ideological approach toward Russia has led the think-tank European Council for Foreign Relations (ECFR) to designate Slovakia as a “Friendly Pragmatist” in its relations with Russia (Duleba 2009, 19; Marušiak 2013b, 57).

The Balkan Dimension of Slovak Foreign Policy

The Western Balkan region has been a stable priority in Slovakia’s foreign policy for decades. Historically, Slovakia has always considered the Western Balkans to be an indivisible part of Europe and has served as one of the loudest and most persistent advocates of the Western Balkan states’ integration into the EU (Lőrincz 2008a, 65; Sláviková 2005, 101). In accordance with Slovak analysts, this study identifies several “big moments” of Slovakia’s engagement in the Western Balkans. The first one was the initiation of the so called “Bratislava Process” by the Slovak diplomacy and NGO sector in 1999. The Bratislava Process served as a platform for unification of the Serbian opposition against the repressive Slobodan Milošević’s regime with the aim of initiating democratic changes in the country and re-establishing stability in the region (Lőrincz 2008a, 66). The consequent regime’s fall in October 2005 opened the way for Serbia’s democratization, ended the country’s

international isolation, and created the conditions for Serbia's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures (Lőrincz 2013, 32).

Second, the provision of ODA and the engagement of various Slovak NGOs in the Western Balkans have constituted an important form of Slovakia's assistance to the region (Lőrincz 2010; Sláviková 2005). For example, shortly before its EU accession in 2004, Slovakia created the Bratislava-Belgrade Fund, allocating most of its ODA to Serbia and Montenegro (Sláviková 2005, 103). More notably, Slovakia's diplomatic efforts contributed to the non-violent separation of Montenegro from Serbia by referendum in 2006 (Šagát 2006, 112-113).

Third, Slovakia has gained international respect thanks to the diplomatic activities of some of its politicians, who, as representatives of the international community, considerably influenced the course of events in the Western Balkan region. One was Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Kukan in his position as the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Balkans during 1999-2001 (Sláviková 2005, 102). The other one was Miroslav Lajčák, who served as the High Representative of the international community and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (Lőrincz 2013, 33). Lajčák, together with another Slovak František Lipka, were also entrusted by the EU with the enactment of a referendum concerning the status of Montenegro and the supervision over the whole process.⁴¹⁴ Lajčák and Lipka significantly contributed to ensuring a smooth and peaceful conduct of the referendum according to the European standards and the eventual acceptance of the results by the opposition in Montenegro (Šagát 2006, 112-113; Sláviková 2005, 105). With 55.5% in favor, Montenegro became independent in 2006.

And, finally, Slovak diplomacy was vigorously supporting Croatia's efforts to move closer to the EU (Šagát 2006, 119; Sláviková 2005, 105). It even took some of the credit for the successful conclusion of the accession process in 2011 and Croatia's entry into the EU in 2013 (Euractiv.sk 2013). Slovakia was also the first country to ratify the Croatian accession treaty to the EU, a decision that enjoyed consensus across the Slovak political spectrum (Fico, 12.04.2012).

⁴¹⁴ Lajčák held the position of the EU ambassador for the referendum in Montenegro and Lipka was appointed chairman of the Montenegro referendum election board (Sláviková 2005, 105).

The above examples illustrate that Slovak diplomacy was eager to actively influence the course of events in the Western Balkan region even before its own EU accession. The Slovak efforts intensified after 2004, yet with different levels of ambition depending on the Western Balkan country in question. The priority partner for Slovakia has been unequivocally Serbia due to historically close and friendly relations (Šagát 2006; Sláviková 2005). Thousands of Slovaks have been living in the northern Serbian autonomous province Vojvodina since the nineteenth century and, in recent years, more than one million Serbs have come to Slovakia as *Gastarbeiter* to work mainly in large factories in the South of Slovakia (interview 4C). Slovakia has been constantly supporting Serbia in its integration efforts (Gašparovič, 03.06.2010).

The Slovak Republic respects the territorial integrity of Serbia and, as opposed to the rest of the V4, does not recognize Kosovo (Lőrincz 2013, 35-36).⁴¹⁵ Slovak officials claimed that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in February 2008 violated the principles of international law and threatened the stability of the entire region (Gašparovič, 04.12.2009). In March 2007, when negotiations regarding the status of Kosovo were still pending, the National Council of the Slovak Republic issued a declaration, stating that "the solution to the future status of the province of Kosovo must respect the legitimate demands of Serbia as well as the Charter of the United Nations and other international legal norms" (National Council of the Slovak Republic 2007). Slovakia's position on Kosovo has remained consistent over the years and Slovakia continues to be one of the five EU Member States (together with Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Spain) that have not yet recognized the independence and sovereignty of Kosovo. Nonetheless, it has declared its support for the normalization of the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo, such as through the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue (interview 4C; Gašparovič, 27.02.2013). Moreover, apart from the status question, Slovakia has sought to develop good bilateral relations with Kosovo (interview 4C; Nič 2017). Slovakia also has very good relations with Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina (interview 4C). As previously mentioned, Miroslav Lajčák was in charge of preparing a referendum that led to the creation of independent Montenegro in 2006. Slovakia has considered Montenegro as a leader in the integration process among the countries of the

⁴¹⁵ According to some authors, Slovak support for the territorial integrity of Serbia is motivated mainly by the fear of potential separatist tendencies of the Hungarian minority living in southern Slovakia (Lőrincz 2010; Marušiák 2013b; Nič 2017).

Western Balkans, praising the country for its progress especially in the area of rule of law (Lajčák, 19.05.2015). Consequently, Slovakia has been a long-standing supporter of Montenegro's endeavor to join the Euro-Atlantic structures, and Slovak ODA has been allocated toward supporting stabilization, transformation, and integration processes in the country (Gašparovič, 12.06.2013; Lajčák, 19.05.2016 & 08.05.2019). As a matter of fact, Slovakia's foreign policy activities played a significant role in granting Montenegro candidate status in 2010 (Lőrincz 2010, 143).

Bosnia and Herzegovina was for a long time not regarded as one of the priority areas of Slovak foreign policy. This changed in the wake of Miroslav Lajčák's appointment as High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2007 to 2009 and his contribution to the democratic consolidation of the country (interview 4C; Lőrincz 2013, 33-35). Slovakia has since provided both political and practical support to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the process of transformation, modernization, and European integration (Lajčák, 10.11.2015).

Macedonia is listed among priority countries of Slovak ODA and Slovakia has sought to accelerate the reform processes and foster the integration efforts of this country (Lőrincz 2013, 35). Slovakia had traditionally only minimum contacts with Albania but also this country has later become one of the priority countries of Slovak development aid in the Western Balkans (Lajčák, 10.03.2015).

In summary, Slovakia has managed to develop amicable political relations with all the successor states of former Yugoslavia. It has also been a sound advocate of their integration efforts, claiming that the European project will be fully completed only after the accession of the countries of the Western Balkans (Gašparovič, 14.09.2011; Fico, 12.04.2012; Lajčák, 04.09.2016). More importantly, positioning the Western Balkan region as one of the fundamental pillars of the Slovak foreign policy has been shared by all Slovak governments since the country's independence in 1993. While Slovakia's political contacts with the individual countries flourished, for a long time, bilateral economic and trade relations were falling behind. A great part of the Slovak political establishment lamented that Slovakia had not been able to take advantage of the momentum of its political and diplomatic activities and make use of the economic potential and trade opportunities in the Western Balkans (Lőrincz 2008b, 2010, 2013). According to Július Lőrincz, the situation improved after

Miroslav Lajčák became Foreign Minister and put forward the concept of economic diplomacy (Lőrincz 2013, 39)

21.2 Motives of Solidarity

The process of Western Balkan and, to a lesser extent, Eastern Partnership countries' integration into the EU has enjoyed significant support in Slovakia. Both regions belong to Slovakia's long-term foreign policy priorities (interviews 4C & 4M). The conducted discourse analysis sought to dissect the main factors underlying the Slovak engagement in the EU's neighborhood. The following sections will discuss whether and to what extent the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* have influenced Slovakia's support for the EU enlargement and the candidate countries' integration ambitions.

Proximity

Many authors claim that Slovakia has prioritized the countries of the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe in its foreign policy due to their geographical proximity, similar historical experience, and shared Slavic identity (Lajčák 2007; Lőrincz 2013; Najšlová 2011). Slovakia has traditional linkages with some of the former Yugoslav countries, a large Slovak minority lives in Serbia, and Ukraine is its direct neighbor (interview 4C). Moreover, Slovak decision makers have repeatedly expressed their conviction that the countries of the Western Balkans are an integral part of the European area and, unless they become members of the EU, the enlargement process cannot be considered (successfully) completed (Lajčák, 02.10.2018).

Cultural Closeness & Similar Historical Experience

Slovak government officials have repeatedly put forward that the Slovak-Balkan as well as Slovak-Ukrainian historical relations are closely intertwined and based on the tradition of Slavic mutuality (Gašparovič, 04.12.2009 & 13.09.2013). In fact, the territory of current Slovakia and a large part of the Western Balkan territory used to belong to Austria-Hungary (Šagát 2006, 111). The historical, cultural, and, in some cases, linguistic, proximity has been determinant for Slovakia's engagement in the two aforementioned regions (Lőrincz 2008a, 2013). In addition, Slovak leaders have frequently expressed their belief that Slovaks

perfectly understand the peculiarities and difficulties faced by the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership states because Slovakia, too, had undergone similar transition and faced similar challenges of the reform process and of catching up with the West (Kiska, 20.06.2015).

Slovak Minority in Vojvodina

The largest community of Slovak expatriates in the world lives in the Serbian autonomous province Vojvodina, which has been an important motive behind Slovakia's support for Serbia's aspirations to become an EU member (interview 4B; Šagát 2006; Sláviková 2005).⁴¹⁶ In fact, SlovakAid pays special attention to the Slovak compatriots living in the area when providing ODA to Serbia (Korčok, 15.05.2020). In contrast to the often-tense relations between Hungary and Serbia over the Hungarian minority living in Vojvodina, Slovakia has been thankful for how the Serbian Government has been treating the Slovak community living on its territory (Gašparovič, 04.12.2009). The Slovak political elites have frequently emphasized the essential role of the Slovak minority in Vojvodina, serving as an important bridge between Slovakia and Serbia and contributing to cultural interconnectedness of the two countries (Gašparovič, 22.01.2013 & Lajčák, 02.04.2015).

Reliable EU Member

As mentioned before, Slovakia has followed a pragmatic, “double-track” Eastern policy, on the one hand fostering the democratization and integration processes in the Eastern Partnership countries and on the other hand making sure to maintain good relations with Russia (interview 4F). Whereas some Slovak governments, such as those of Mikuláš Dzurinda (2002-2006) and Iveta Radičová (2010-2012), favored the EU's value-based approach to the region, others, such as those led by Robert Fico (2006-2010, 2012-2016, and 2016-2018), prioritized economic ties with Russia over greater involvement in the Eastern Partnership project. Many experts pointed to the contradiction between Fico's statements targeted toward the domestic audience, in which he criticized sanctions against Russia, and his rhetoric toward the Western partners, where he endorsed EU decisions and presented

⁴¹⁶ Vojvodina is an autonomous province of Serbia located in the northernmost part of the country close to the Hungarian border. According to the latest census of Serbian population carried out in 2011, 52,750 Slovaks live in Serbia, thereof 50,321 in Vojvodina (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2011).

Slovakia as a reliable partner (interview 4F; Duleba 2015). The interviewed experts also agree that the EU remains Slovakia's most important partner (interviews 4A, 4G, 4J & 4M).

Need

Slovak leaders have often shown recognition and compassion for the difficult situation faced by their Western Balkan and Eastern European partners. They frequently supported them in difficult times through the provision of humanitarian aid, including when Ukraine was suffering from the conflict in the East of the country or when some of the Western Balkan countries such as Serbia and Macedonia were disproportionately affected by the migration flows in 2015 and 2016 (Lajčák, 16.12.2014 & 03.12.2015). The analysis has shown, however, that the Slovak Republic has supported further enlargement of the EU not only out of sheer compassion for the *need* of the aspiring candidate countries. Instead, Slovak officials have often claimed that an investment in the security and stability of the EU neighborhood is, at the same time, an investment in Slovakia's and EU's own security (Lajčák, 04.09.2016). Moreover, they have declared the intention to explore the economic potential of the neighboring regions.

Regional Stability and Security

In the words of the former Slovak Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Miroslav Lajčák, the EU's internal and external security dimensions are more closely interlinked than ever before, which implies the need for closer cooperation with the neighboring regions (Lajčák, 09.09.2016). In other words, stability, prosperity, and predictability in the immediate neighborhood are crucial for the EU's own stability and security and therefore also in Slovakia's vital interest. As a matter of fact, Slovakia put forward this very argument when explaining why the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU chose enlargement policy as one of its priorities (Lajčák, 12.10.2016).

According to Slovak decision makers, the Western Balkans is a region where the situation can still not be considered completely peaceful and stable, despite many improvements. Consequently, they have appealed to the EU to not leave the region at the mercy of other players, whose activities might be incompatible with EU's interests (Lajčák, 16.02.2017). At the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2019, Lajčák said:

“If the EU misses another opportunity to integrate the countries of the Western Balkans, it will mean an imaginary opening of the door to deepening instability and further influence from abroad on this region. It will become a kind of conflict zone and the European continent will become divided and unstable” (Lajčák, 25.01.2019*).

Slovakia therefore continues to be actively involved in the Western Balkans and has expressed solidarity and readiness to help mainly for the sake of having a stable, democratic, and prosperous neighborhood (Lajčák, 25.01.2019). Similarly, Slovakia’s leaders have expressed their country’s concern about Ukraine’s political stability and economic prosperity because it is its only non-EU neighbor and the developments in Ukraine “have an immediate impact on Slovakia” (Lajčák, 02.02.2016; see also Duleba 2010, 127; Marušiak 2013b, 62). They have used the “mutual benefits” argument when making the case for giving Ukraine the prospect of EU membership. For example, in 2015, former President Kiska stated: “I am convinced that a European perspective for Ukraine is as important for the safety and prosperity of the Ukrainian people, as it is for us in the West” (Kiska, 20.06.2015).

Untapped Economic Potential & Energy Security

The motive of expanding the zone of stability and security in Europe stretches also to other than just the security domain, most notably to energy security. The gas crisis of 2009 exposed Ukraine’s strategic role for transporting Russian oil and gas to Europe (Gašparovič, 08.10.2010 & Lajčák, 16.02.2017). This incident considerably increased Slovakia’s interest in closer cooperation with the remaining Eastern Partnership states (Duleba 2009, 50; Marušiak 2013b, 69).

Moreover, as pointed out by Foreign Minister Lajčák, stability and security in the EU’s eastern and southern neighborhood are directly linked to the state of the regions’ economic development and, therefore, the activities should extend beyond ODA and political support and focus on deepening cooperation in the economic sphere too (Lajčák, 09.09.2016). During their official visits to the Western Balkan and Eastern European countries, Slovak decision makers have repeatedly bemoaned the level of economic relations lagging far behind the level of political relations. Consequently, together with their counterparts, they have pledged to explore the untapped potential in the area of bilateral economic cooperation (e.g., Gašparovič, 14.09.2011; Lajčák, 10.11.2015 & 28.11.2019).

Deservingness

By far the most decisive factor behind Slovakia's support for the enlargement process has been the self-effort of the individual aspirant countries. More than half of the codes of the conducted MAXQDA analysis relate to statements of Slovak decision makers, in which they insist that the aspiring candidates must prove strong commitment to carrying out necessary reforms and fulfilling the conditions of the accession process. Moreover, the statements highlight Slovakia's determination to make sure that reforms do not exist only "on paper" but are actually implemented in practice and bring concrete results to citizens (Lajčák, 24.02.2020).

Slovakia has been in favor of a consistent and coherent application of the principles of conditionality and differentiation, according to which partner countries are assessed individually and the pace of accession negotiations depends on the degree of pre-accession efforts and compliance with the set criteria (e.g., Lajčák, 02.04.2015 & Korčok, 22.04.2020). Slovak leaders have commonly praised those countries that have demonstrated political stability, strengthened democratic institutions and the rule of law, and performed as a stabilizing factor in the respective region (e.g., Gašparovič, 11.03.2008 & 14.09.2011; Lajčák, 05.04.2016). They have particularly appreciated the progress made by Montenegro, which has, in their view, become a leader of integration processes in the Western Balkans and set a good example for other adepts to EU membership.⁴¹⁷ Speaking after the National Council of the Slovak Republic had given its consent to the ratification of Montenegro's NATO accession bid, Foreign Minister Lajčák stated:

"In the process of preparing for membership, Montenegro has implemented many political, security and economic reforms, and from the smallest country in the former Yugoslavia, it has developed into a model for the whole region" (Lajčák, 14.06.2016*).

Despite describing some candidates as a success story of democratic transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration, Slovak political elites have appealed even to these countries not to "rest on laurels" but instead continue with the launched reforms (e.g., Lajčák, 21.05.2016 &

⁴¹⁷ The most appreciative of the progress made by Montenegro was former Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, who played an instrumental role during Montenegro's pro-independence referendum (see a selection of his speeches and statements, for example from 19.05.2015, 05.04.2016, 21.05.2016, 14.06.2016, 04.09.2016, 12.10.2016, 26.01.2017, and 08.05.2019).

Kiska, 11.06.2017). In this context, they have often recalled the extreme effort that Slovakia had to exert in order to become a member of the EU (e.g., Gašparovič, 20.06.2007; Fico, 12.04.2012; Kiska, 30.05.2016). They have assured the aspirant countries in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe that, although the reform process can sometimes be quite tedious, it is worth the struggle and does pay off in the end (Fico, 18.04.2013; Lajčák, 09.03.2015 & Kiska, 11.06.2017). At the same time, they have put forward in EU meetings that it would only be fair to demonstrate the same amount of solidarity that Slovakia received itself during the transformation process in the 1990s (interview 4M). Back in 2007, when Miroslav Lajčák was still serving as High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he elaborated on this sense of responsibility toward aspiring candidates:

“We need to be proud of the progress in our country, but simultaneously look more ahead as well as around; across the borders of Slovakia as well as the European Union. Being solely a consumer of the benefits that stem from our membership does not suffice. We are expected to actively reflect on our inputs and contributions, too. The self-confident Slovakia managed to exploit the integration into the Union and the Alliance more than its neighbors. Now, how can we contribute to the spread of the process to other countries and regions?” (Lajčák 2007, 48).

In a nutshell, Slovakia understands EU enlargement as a two-way street, meaning that if candidate states do their part and fulfill all necessary membership requirements, conversely, the EU must also live up to its promise and reward the well-performing candidates (Gašparovič, 04.12.2009 & Lajčák, 04.09.2016).⁴¹⁸ For this reason, the Slovak EU Presidency made it one of its priorities to maintain and strengthen the credibility of the enlargement process (Lajčák, 12.10.2016).

The “if you do your homework, we are ready to assist you” mantra and the anticipation of self-effort on the part of aspiring candidate countries underline the key role of the principle of *deservingness* in Slovakia’s position toward further EU enlargement.

⁴¹⁸ Miroslav Lajčák stated that “it is important to maintain the credibility of enlargement as an important tool for achieving positive change in the region. If we ask our partners to meet our conditions, we must also fulfill our obligations” (Lajčák, 06.03.2017).

Self-Preservation

As mentioned in the previous section, Slovak leaders made a clear promise already in the 1990s that, as soon as they had solved their own domestic problems, consolidated internally, and “returned to Europe,” they were ready to assist others (Lajčák 2007, 47). They have since offered to share Slovakia’s EU integration experience and pass on their knowledge gained during the transformation and reform processes.⁴¹⁹ Moreover, due to the specific location of Slovakia, lying at the crossroads of Western Europe and Eastern Europe/Western Balkans, Slovak officials believe that they understand the regions better than their Western partners in the EU (interview 4D; see also Lőrincz 2013; Malová and Haughton 2007; Sláviková 2005). When asked about the reason why there were regular meetings taking place in the V4 plus Eastern Partnership format, Miroslav Lajčák responded that

“the answer is simple: we have a very similar recent history, we know and understand the challenges these countries face in the process of modernization and transformation and, of course, because we are willing to share experiences from a successful transformation process. In other words: the V4 countries are aware of the responsibility for developments in our immediate neighborhood. That is why we actively support the reform processes in the countries to the east of our borders and from those of the EU. That is why we are actively passing on our experience from the transformation period and reforms to them” (Lajčák, 15.05.2015).

The MAXQDA analysis has laid bare that this sincere effort to assist other countries aspiring to join the EU has been also motivated by Slovakia’s desire to increase its visibility and (re)gain respect in international politics (see also Najšlová 2011). In recognition of being a small Member State in terms of size, economy and international influence, after its accession to the EU, Slovakia was looking for a niche where it could make its own contribution to the EU agenda. It has chosen sharing the “transition experience” as its specialty (Najšlová 2011). Slovakia’s decision makers have frequently presented their country’s experience of doing away with the communist regime, catching up with its neighbors in the EU accession process, and successfully embracing the EU’s political and economic standards as an asset for being able to understand and help others with democratic transition and Euro-Atlantic integration. By claiming to have a comparative advantage over other European states in this specific

⁴¹⁹ This is only a selection of statements and speeches, in which Slovak leaders offered to share Slovakia’s experience of political, economic, and social transformation and European integration: Gašparovič, 20.06.2007, 12.06.2013 & 24.04.2014; Lajčák, 16.12.2014, 09.03.2015, 10.03.2015, 19.05.2015, 26.01.2017 & 25.06.2019.

domain, they have strived to profile Slovakia as a responsible and reliable Member State and prove that even a small country can make a big difference. Robert Fico' statement illustrates Slovakia's desire to be at the forefront of European integration: "We want to make the club stronger, competitive and we want to expand it. We want to be the engine of the European integration in the Central European region" (Fico, 12.04.2012).

21.3 Identity-Solidarity Nexus

The analysis has shown that Slovakia's efforts to shape the EU's enlargement policy have been a blend of various factors. There are four main, interrelated sources of Slovakia's solidarity with countries aspiring for EU membership, which correspond to the four solidarity principles and are related to Slovakia's national identity and understanding of its past. The first one, which applies mainly to the context of the Western Balkans, draws on Slovakia's geographic and cultural proximity and traditional ties with some of the Balkan nations, including the presence of the Slovak minority in Serbia. Slovak foreign policy has been further motivated by the perception of a certain similarity between its own historical experience and that of the respective Balkan countries in the sense that they struggle with similar phenomena as Slovakia did in the past. Consequently, Slovak leaders have always claimed to have a sound knowledge of the Western Balkan region and its problems (interview 4D). The engagement of some of its top diplomats such as Miroslav Lajčák and Eduard Kukan and their contribution to the stabilization of the Western Balkans has earned Slovakia a good reputation in the region (Lőrincz 2013). All these factors, together with Slovak leaders' claims that, until the Western Balkan states become members of the EU, the process of European integration remains unaccomplished, point to the solidarity principle of *proximity*.

The second motivating factor behind Slovakia's engagement in the EU neighborhood, which can be subsumed under the principle of *self-preservation*, addresses Slovakia's ambition to be recognized as a relevant international player and participate in EU decision-making processes. Embracing the narrative of being the "kidnapped West" (Kundera 1984), Slovak leaders wanted to prove their country's rightful belonging to the Euro-Atlantic structures. After the accession, when searching for a niche where they could make a visible imprint on the EU policies, they chose offering assistance to candidate countries based on Slovakia's

own experience of transformation and European integration as their main contribution to European politics (e.g., Lajčák, 16.12.2014 & 09.03.2015). The majority of the Slovak governing elite has then strived to paint a picture of Slovakia not being a “new” Member State anymore but an established and responsible member that is ready to show solidarity to those in need. This mixture of pride and responsibility is apparent in Robert Fico’s statement from 2013:

“We are respected members of the European Union and NATO, which provide us with the highest level of security and stability ever. This forms the basis of our commitment to contribute actively to their further strengthening. Today we are providers rather than consumers of security and stability, contributors to overall economic prosperity and providers of donor assistance” (Fico, 18.04.2013).

Slovakia’s desire to be “taken seriously” further originates from the country’s small size and the historical memory of being oppressed and/or ignored by other countries. Through actively supporting the aspirations of candidate countries, Slovakia has aimed to reclaim its self-confidence and prove that even small countries can contribute to shaping EU policies and deserve to be treated as equal members.

The third solidarity motive reflects the reasoning in the Slovak discourse that a stable, democratic, and well-governed neighborhood serves Slovak national interests better than one that is conflict-ridden, volatile, and impoverished. The Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s manifested the geopolitical and strategic significance of the Western Balkans for Slovakia (Lőrincz 2013, 22-23). In the words of Miroslav Lajčák, “the Western Balkans was and remains a priority foreign policy agenda for the Slovak Republic because it represents a strategic investment in Europe’s security and prosperity” (Lajčák, 28.02.2017). By the same token, considering that Ukraine is Slovakia’s only non-EU neighbor, for pragmatic reasons, Slovakia has had interest in Ukraine becoming stable and integrated in the Euro-Atlantic space. Moreover, energy security and economic considerations have taken on special salience in the Slovak discourse on further EU enlargement. In sum, Slovakia’s endeavor to bring about stability, democracy, and prosperity in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe has been motivated by the *need* of the respective countries as well as by the *need* of Slovakia to stabilize and strengthen its neighborhood and more effectively use the existing potential for cooperation, especially in the trade and economic area.

And the fourth rationale of solidarity in the Slovak approach to the EU enlargement is closely connected to the principle of *deservingness*. Slovak decision makers have repeatedly emphasized that every single country aspiring to join the “elite European club” must first fulfill its commitments and implement the necessary EU pre-accession requirements and that the speed of the accession negotiations is conditional on the level of ambition and progress made (Lajčák, 02.10.2018). At the same time, they have attached key importance to the consistency and credibility of the EU enlargement policy, maintaining that efforts invested in reforms, transformation, and modernization of the country deserve to be rewarded by being brought closer to the EU. In this context, they have also stressed that well-performing candidate countries should be given the same prospect of membership that Slovakia once had (Lajčák, 21.05.2015). Reflecting on Slovakia’s experience, the speeches and declarations of the Slovak political leaders have stipulated the notion of reciprocity in the sense of “we will help you because we were also helped by others.

The following table illustrates the interplay of the solidarity principles and identity elements in Slovakia’s approach toward further enlargement of the EU and its engagement in the European neighborhood.

Table 20: Identity-solidarity nexus (EU enlargement & Slovakia)

Identity element	Proximity	Need	Deservingness	Self-preservation
<p>Inferiority complex / feeling of always being the “smaller,” less important partner (also feelings of betrayal)</p>	<p>Offering assistance to aspiring candidates for EU membership based on Slovakia’s own experience of transformation and European integration (perception of understanding the peculiarities and difficulties faced by the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership states due to similar experience of catching up with the West)</p>			<p>Ambition to be recognized as a relevant international player and participate in EU decision-making processes (desire to present itself as a responsible country ready to show solidarity to those in need)</p> <p>Searching for a niche to increase its visibility and make a substantial imprint on EU policies</p> <p>Desire to be “taken seriously” and prove that even a small country can make a big difference</p>
<p>Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”</p>	<p>Pursuit of a pragmatic, “double-track” Eastern policy, on the one hand fostering the democratization and integration processes in the Eastern Partnership countries and on the other hand making sure to maintain good relations with Russia</p> <p>Perception of similar historical experience (in the sense that some of the countries struggle with similar phenomena as Slovakia did in the past)</p>	<p>Compassion for the difficult situation faced by their Western Balkan and Eastern European partners</p> <p>Stressing that an investment in the stability of the EU neighborhood is also an investment in Slovakia’s own security</p> <p>Highlighting Slovakia’s energy dependence as well as the benefits of exploring the economic potential of the neighboring regions</p>		
<p>High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty</p>		<p>Support for the territorial integrity of Moldova, Georgia, and Serbia out of fear of potential separatist tendencies of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia</p>		

Pride in national resistance	Perception of understanding of the peculiarities and difficulties faced by the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership states due to similar experience of catching up with the West (sense of proximity based on similar historical experience)		Recalling Slovakia's own efforts exerted in order to become a member of the EU	Slovakia's own experience of doing away with the communist regime, catching up with its neighbors in the EU accession process, and successfully embracing the EU's political and economic standards presented as an asset for being able to assist others with democratic transition and Euro-Atlantic integration
Desire to prove the nation's rightful belonging to the West	Desire to present itself as a responsible and reliable EU Member State that makes positive contributions to the European project		Ambition to maintain and strengthen the credibility of the enlargement process (calling for the same solidarity that Slovakia experienced itself as a candidate) Favoring a consistent and coherent application of the principles of conditionality and differentiation	Ambition to be recognized as a relevant international player and participate in EU decision-making processes Searching for a niche to increase its visibility and make a substantial imprint on EU policies
Linguistic conception of nationhood	Linguistic proximity with some of the aspiring candidates Attachment to the Slovak minority living in Vojvodina			Conviction of being able to understand the situation and struggles of the aspiring candidate countries better than most of the Western states
Ethnic nationalism	Geographic, historical, cultural, and linguistic proximity and traditional ties (including with the Slovak minority in Serbia) Perception of similar historical experience and shared Slavic identity			
Catholicism, attachment to Christian values	Cultural and religious proximity with some of the aspiring candidate countries			
Relative homogeneity of the Slovak population				Source: Own table

Chapter 22: The V4 & Further Enlargement of the EU

(Summary)

Further enlargement of the EU has been a steady priority in the foreign policy of all Visegrad states (interviews 1O, 2G, 2I, 3K & 4J). Despite having only limited contact with both Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans up until the late 1990s, the prospect of becoming full-fledged members of the EU prompted the V4 political elites to start thinking about their specific national contributions to the European project (Tulmets 2011).⁴²⁰ Therefore, even prior to their own accession, the Visegrad states were already advocating for the creation of an independent “Eastern dimension” of the ENP and were calling for intensifying the relations with the Western Balkan region. Their efforts accelerated after joining the EU in 2004 when the V4 were searching for a new agenda and chose Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans as new priority areas of their policy coordination. The analysis has shown that support for the expansion of the EU to the East and South has enjoyed remarkable consensus across political parties and governments in all four countries.⁴²¹

The Visegrad states have used their presidencies of the Visegrad Group and the Council of the EU (Czech Republic in 2009, Hungary and Poland in 2011, and Slovakia in 2016) to advance the enlargement debate. In their presidency programs, they repeatedly called for the acceleration of accession talks with candidate countries in order to maintain and strengthen the credibility of the enlargement process. Among the most successful results of their efforts was the creation of the Eastern Partnership in 2009 and the appointment of Visegrad diplomats as EU and UN representatives active in the European neighborhood.⁴²²

⁴²⁰ In the 1990s, the four countries differed in the level of their commitment to the European neighborhood. While Poland and Hungary began reestablishing relations with neighboring countries soon after gaining independence, Slovakia was preoccupied with its own domestic issues, and the Czech Republic focused on its own accession negotiations. From 2000s onwards, in the wake of the nearing EU entry, all states stepped up their engagement in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.

⁴²¹ Notwithstanding some inconsistencies in the reaction to the Georgian and Ukrainian conflicts (see the Czech and Slovak cases), the debate on further EU enlargement has been largely consensual among all Visegrad states.

⁴²² Examples include the appointment of former Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Kukan as the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for the Balkans (1999-2001), Czech diplomat Štefan Füle as the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy (2010-2014), and Slovak politician and diplomat Miroslav Lajčák as the High Representative of the international community and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2007-2009).

Overall, the Visegrad states have served as the loudest and most persistent advocates in the EU of maintaining an “open-door” policy and supporting Eastern European and Western Balkan states in their European aspirations and integration efforts. Bilaterally, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have allocated the majority of their ODA to the two regions, and they have been involved in various multilateral fora.

Despite their joint interest in further expanding the EU, the Visegrad states differ in their sectoral and country priorities. While Hungary favors the Western Balkan states, the Polish foreign policy has a greater preference for Eastern Europe (interviews 1B, 1D, 2G, 2I & 2J).⁴²³ The Czech Republic is involved in promoting democracy in both regions but considers the Western Balkans as the traditional sphere of its economic interests. Similarly, Slovakia, which perceives itself as a small country with limited resources, tries to balance its engagement in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, with the Western Balkans playing a more prominent role in Slovakia’s foreign policy (interviews 2X & 4C). The Visegrad states’ geographical preferences have been further reflected in the ODA allocated to the individual countries. In the Western Balkans, activities and funds provided by the Visegrad states have been focused mainly on Serbia. From the Eastern Partnership countries, Ukraine has undoubtedly attracted the most attention, followed by Moldova and Belarus. However, relations with Belarus have deteriorated as a consequence of the authoritarian rule by President Lukashenko. Relations with the South Caucasian countries have been limited in comparison, although Azerbaijan, in particular, has gained importance as a strategic partner due to its crucial role as supplier of natural gas to Europe.

In addition to the different geographical focus, the foreign policy interests of the Visegrad states sometimes diverge considerably. Ukraine, especially, has become a major point of contention. All four countries declare strong support for Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Except for the Czech Republic, the Visegrad states share a common border with Ukraine and one of the constant goals of their foreign policies has been to uphold the stability of this large EU neighbor. Due to profound cross-border exchange, the V4 seek tighter economic and trade cooperation. Most importantly, the Visegrad states recognize the vital importance of cooperation with Ukraine in the energy sector. Ukraine has further become an important

⁴²³ While Polish foreign policy uses the established term “polityka wschodnia” (Eastern policy), there is no such term and no unified understanding of the “East” in Hungary, which indirectly reflects the perceived importance of Eastern Europe in the states’ respective foreign policies (interview 1O; A. Rácz 2011).

source of foreign workforce for Poland and the Czech Republic. Hungary is mainly concerned with protecting the interests of the Hungarian minority living in the Ukrainian Transcarpathian region. Nevertheless, despite a number of shared interests, the level of ambition regarding the Visegrad states' support for Ukraine differs. For example, while Poland assumed a mediating role during the 2004 "Orange Revolution," the Czechs were not very invested in this conflict. Compared to its Visegrad colleagues, Slovakia reacted particularly irritated in the wake of the 2009 "gas crisis."

The biggest dissonance among the Visegrad states appeared in their reaction to the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the ensuing Russia-Ukraine conflict (interviews 1O, 1R, 2G & 3E). While Poland strictly condemned Russia's actions, Slovak and Czech reactions were rather ambiguous as a result of contradictory policy positions at the highest political levels, and Hungary only provided a lukewarm response and argued against imposing and maintaining economic sanctions against Russia (Bieńczyk-Missala 2016, 112; A. Schmidt 2016a, 129). Consequently, although all four states officially declared their unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the V4, as a group, failed to effectively coordinate its policies toward Ukraine. According to many authors, this discordant response to the Ukrainian-Russian conflict reflects the Visegrad states' relations toward Russia, which oscillate between threat perceptions on the one hand (mainly Poland) and energy dependence together with the pursuit of pragmatic economic cooperation on the other hand (mainly Hungary but, to a lesser extent, also Slovakia and the Czech Republic) (see, e.g., Daniel 2020, 113-114; Ślufińska and Nitszke 2017, 23-24; Tulmets 2008, 88-89).

Overall, while further enlargement of the EU has somewhat always united the V4, it has also become clear that the Central European states do not invariably form a unified front with regards to the Eastern Partnership or Western Balkan agenda (see also Pisarska 2008).⁴²⁴ The differences in focus and approach can be explained by the Visegrad states' geographical location (i.e. the question of whether they share a common border with the applicant countries), historical-cultural ties, the presence of minorities on the territory of the aspiring countries, geopolitical considerations, and economic interests. The following paragraphs will

⁴²⁴ For example, Slovakia is the only Visegrad state that does not recognize the independence and sovereignty of Kosovo.

therefore summarize and juxtapose the four case studies reflecting the Visegrad states' foreign policy behavior toward the Western Balkans and the EU's European neighborhood from the perspective of solidarity and identity.

22.1 Motives of Solidarity

The analysis has revealed that geographic, historical, cultural, religious, and sometimes linguistic *proximity* has significantly impacted the Visegrad states' engagement in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans. In terms of geography, the Czech Republic is the only Visegrad country not bordering any of the Eastern Partnership or Western Balkan states, but it still considers both regions as geographically close. Seen historically, Poland has developed an emotional attachment, a feeling of responsibility, and almost a paternalistic approach to the Eastern European region (see the legacy of the "Eastern Borderlands" or "Kresy"), while Hungary, Slovakia, and, to a lesser extent, Czechia, have historical and cultural ties to the Western Balkans (see the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). In fact, specific historical circumstances resulted in Hungarian, Slovak, and Polish minorities living in the neighboring countries, especially Serbia and Ukraine, which serves as a further motivating factor for the V4 to participate in shaping the EU enlargement policy. In addition, the Visegrad states feel a certain kinship with countries of the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe due to their similar struggles with post-communist transformation and reform processes. Finally, not all but some of the V4 members have justified their engagement in the European neighborhood by referring to the sense of attachment (*proximity*) to the EU. The Czech Republic and Slovakia have been particularly eager to confirm their sense of belonging to the Union and present themselves as responsible and reliable EU members who want to positively contribute to EU policy making.

Considering the solidarity principle of *need*, the V4 have made their claim for admission of new candidates against the background of the need to enhance regional stability, to make use of the regions' economic potential, and to ensure energy security. First and foremost, the Visegrad states consider the EU's integration process to be the most effective instrument to safeguard a stable and predictable neighborhood, which in turn benefits the EU's own safety and security. Due to their geographic location as well as historical and geopolitical factors such as the memory of the Yugoslav wars or the fear of Russian expansionism, Hungary and

Slovakia are mainly concerned with the security and stability of the Western Balkans and Poland with that of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Moreover, in the wake of the migration and refugee crisis, the Visegrad states have increasingly recognized the states along the Balkan migration route as important partners in managing migration flows in Europe.

In addition to the motive of expanding the zone of stability and security around Europe, the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership states are seen by the V4 as having a promising economic potential. All four Visegrad states have shown increased interest in intensifying trade and economic relations and exploring further investment opportunities in both regions. When arguing in favor of the aspiring candidates' rapprochement with the EU, the V4 usually consider their own economic benefits first, such as gaining attractive investment locations and promising markets for exports, and only then proceed to discuss the need for economic stabilization of the European neighborhood. Similarly, the need to ensure their own energy security has been influential in the formulation of the Visegrad states' policies toward the Eastern Partnership countries, above all Ukraine or Azerbaijan.

In sum, while also showing certain compassion for the difficult situation faced by the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries, the Visegrad states have framed further enlargement as being primarily advantageous for the EU and its Member States. In this context, they have often pointed out how their own EU accession benefitted the EU. The V4 have also recalled the solidarity they received and argued that other states aspiring for EU membership *deserved* equal treatment. In addition to appealing to the EU to uphold the credibility of the enlargement process, the analyzed statements of the Visegrad leaders contain notions of responsibility (or "reciprocal solidarity") on their part toward aspiring candidates, who are perceived as being in a similar position that the V4 states were once in. Concurrently, the Visegrad states have constantly advocated for a consistent and coherent application of the principles of *ad* and differentiation in the assessment and treatment of aspiring candidates.⁴²⁵ According to this approach, self-effort in implementing essential reforms and fulfilling accession criteria is to be rewarded by additional support, while membership prospects of under-performing aspirants should be diminished. Slovakia, in

⁴²⁵ This argument was recently reiterated during the video conference of V4 foreign ministers on the COVID-19 pandemic and the Eastern Partnership (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2020b).

particular, recalling its own strenuous experience of “catching up” during the accession process, has made the case for upholding the principle of *deservingness*.

The analysis has further laid bare that the motivation of the Visegrad states to show solidarity with other countries aspiring for EU membership has been largely driven by their desire to (re)establish themselves as respected members of the international community. After their successful accession to the EU, the Visegrad states were in search of a niche that would allow them to make a notable contribution to the EU agenda and increase the visibility of the group (interview 4D). The membership provided the V4 with the chance to become policy makers or shapers as opposed to their pre-accession role of policy takers. Due to their historical experience with the communist totalitarian regime and the subsequent transformation toward democracy and market economy, the Visegrad states chose assistance toward other post-communist countries situated in Eastern and Southern Europe as their “specialty.” The analyzed statements contain expressions of the V4 feeling better equipped than other EU Member States to steer further enlargement of the Union. First, due to their geographic proximity and similar recent historical experience, the V4 present themselves as connoisseurs of the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership regions and the challenges they face. Second, they claim that, by virtue of their own successful economic and political transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration, they are apt to serve as role models for the candidate countries of today. In fact, the Visegrad states have, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, offered to share their own integration experience and pass on the knowledge gained during the transformation and reform processes. Third, they see themselves as “the center of Europe” that can act as a “bridge” between the “old” Member States and potential new candidates or, as they often frame it, between the “West” and the “East.” And lastly, Poland and the Czech Republic, who were both instrumental in the process of launching the Eastern Partnership, have demonstrated a sense of ownership with regards to this project (see the solidarity principle of *self-preservation*).

22.2 Hierarchy of Solidarity Principles & Identity-Solidarity Nexus

Overall, the analysis has revealed that the endeavors of the Visegrad states to shape the EU’s enlargement policy have been motivated by a variety of factors, which are closely interrelated. More importantly, the juxtaposition of the four cases shows that the V4

sometimes coincide and sometimes differ in the weights attached to the individual solidarity principles, which can be attributed to their specific national identities. The Polish and Hungarian support for enlargement has been primarily driven by the solidarity principle of *proximity* in connection with the principle of *need*. The existence of historical and cultural ties and the presence of minorities, along with geographical proximity and geopolitical considerations, have substantially shaped their foreign policies (see Hungary's orientation on the Western Balkans and Poland's focus on Eastern Europe). While minorities have been the key determinant of the Hungarian foreign policy since its independence, Poland's actions have been propelled by its concerns regarding Russia's influence in the Eastern neighborhood. In fact, recalling the turbulent times in their history and conflicts that took place on their soil, all four countries have stressed the necessity to foster the stability and security of the European neighborhood. Nevertheless, the persisting sense of victimhood and vulnerability and its impact on the current foreign policy are clearly strongest in Poland (see also Copsy and Haughton 2009).

In Slovakia, the principle of *proximity* has been overshadowed by the principle of *deservingness*, which is reminiscent of Slovakia's own struggles with the implementation of the necessary pre-accession reforms. Weaker forms of this "reforms first" argument appeared also in the remaining V4 states, mostly in connection with the Visegrad Group's own efforts during transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration. Of the four analyzed states, the feelings of *proximity* to potential candidate countries have been the weakest in the Czech Republic. Moreover, both in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the *proximity* principle is as strong, or perhaps even stronger, in relation to the countries' attachment to the EU than to the European neighborhood. As mentioned previously, Czech and Slovak leaders have strived to prove their country's rightful belonging to the Western cultural circle and the values it embodies. Similar to the first case study, the Visegrad states' attitudes toward further EU enlargement are also shaped by the different levels of their attachment to the EU.

The leading motive behind the Czech involvement in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe has been economic and energy security considerations. Similar references to this "reversed" principle of *need* can be found in all four countries, yet with differing magnitude. The primacy of their own need for (energy) security and (economic) stability, as opposed to attaching priority to the need of the aspiring candidates, reflects the underlying notion in the

Visegrad states' national identities that it is them who deserve solidarity in the first place (see the notion of betrayal and the related “historical debt” of Western Europe).

In a similar manner, the memory of “Yalta,” which is a symbol of being abandoned, ignored, or marginalized by other, more powerful countries, has prompted the Visegrad states to actively participate in shaping the common European future and avoid any further “about us without us” scenarios.⁴²⁶ This persistent inferiority complex has stirred the ambition of the Visegrad states to be recognized and treated as relevant international players who have “returned to Europe.” References to their unparalleled knowledge of the neighboring regions, their experience with transformation processes, and their own successful integration story, all subsumed under the solidarity principle of *self-preservation*, have suggested an increase in self-confidence and feelings of national pride.

Before proceeding to the concluding chapter of this study, the following table summarizes the main discursive strategies used to justify the Visegrad states' support for further EU enlargement and their solidarity with potential candidates in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan regions.

Table 21: Main justifications of the Visegrad states' support for further EU enlargement

Solidarity principle	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovak Republic
Proximity		Geographic proximity (mainly Western Balkans)	Geographic proximity (mainly Eastern Europe)	
	“Reversed” minority component (Ukrainian minority living on the Czech territory)	Minority component (Hungarian minorities in Vojvodina and the Transcarpathian region)	Minority component (Polish minorities in the Eastern Partnership countries)	Minority component (Slovak minority in Vojvodina)
	Similar historical experience & know-how sharing	Similar historical experience	Historical ties & Poland's civilizing mission	Similar historical experience & cultural closeness
	Responsible and reliable EU member			Responsible and reliable EU member

⁴²⁶ Central and Eastern European states felt betrayed by their Western Allies because it was agreed at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 that the majority of Eastern Europe would fall under the Soviet sphere of influence.

Need	Regional stability and security	Regional stability	Geopolitics & security	Regional stability and security
	Economic potential & energy security	Economic ambitions & energy security	Economic benefits & energy security	Economic potential & energy security
Deservingness	Self-effort	Self-effort	Self-effort	Self-effort
	Historical reciprocity	Historical reciprocity	Historical reciprocity	Historical reciprocity
Self-preservation	Sense of Ownership (Eastern Partnership)		Sense of Ownership (Eastern Partnership)	
	Agenda setter with the right expertise (desire to assume a policy making role)	From “policy taker” to “policy maker/shaper”	Agenda setter	Agenda setter (searching for a niche to make a contribution to the EU agenda)
	Desire to “boost” its profile in the EU	Desire to be recognized as a relevant player	Leadership aspirations in the EU	Desire to increase their visibility and (re)gain respect in international politics
	Eagerness to share transition and integration experience with other post-communist states with similar historical experience Self-portrayal as a traditional defender human rights and a promoter of democratization processes	Eagerness to share transition and integration experience with other states with similar historical experience Hungary as a connoisseur of transformation processes	Eagerness to share transition and integration experience with other states with similar historical experience Post-communist transformation toward democracy and market economy as Poland’s prime expertise	Eagerness to share transition and integration experience with other states with similar historical experience Sense of having a more profound knowledge of the regions (comparative advantage over other European states)

Source: Own table

PART VI:
CONCLUSION

Chapter 23: Conclusion and Outlook

The Visegrad Group celebrated its 30th anniversary in February 2021. Neither the achievement of the strategic goal of Euro-Atlantic integration nor any of its internal divisions brought about an end to the group, as some authors had predicted (see, e.g., Pehe 2004, 2011; Vykoukal 2006). Nevertheless, in the 30 years of the group’s existence, the purpose of the Visegrad cooperation has shifted several times, and this development has largely mirrored the various phases of the Visegrad states’ relationship with the EU. Based on the findings from previous chapters, this study identifies five stages of V4-EU relations—*courting and engagement*, *marriage*, *honeymoon*, *adjustment*, and *marriage crisis*—which are summarized in the table below and discussed in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Table 22: Stages of V4-EU relations

Phase	Time Frame	V4 purpose and internal relations	V4 & EU
Courting and Engagement	Pre-accession (1991-2003)	Improvement of neighborly relations Facilitation of Euro-Atlantic integration Oscillation between close and stagnating relations	“Return to Europe”
Marriage	Accession (2004)	Accomplishment of the “raison d’être” of the group	Successful accession to the EU
Honeymoon	Early post-accession (2004-2008)	New areas of cooperation (e.g., assistance to countries aspiring to join the EU) Development of personal networks at different levels	Desire to prove their rightful belonging to the West Striving for recognition (desire to act as policy makers and agenda setters, e.g., in the realm of the ENP)
Adjustment	Post-accession (2009-2014)	Launch of the Eastern Partnership Introduction of regular consultations ahead of Council meetings and initiation of the V4+ format	Unfulfilled expectations (frustration with the process of “catching up with the West”) Rising desire for self-assertion
Marriage crisis	2015-now	Internal divisions (V2+2)	Pursuit of emancipation Different visions of European integration

Source: Own table

The Visegrad Group was initially established with the aim of developing good neighborly relations, strengthening regional ties in Central Europe, and facilitating the three (later four) countries' accession to the Euro-Atlantic integration structures (Vašáryová 2006). The “return to Europe” was declared as one of the main strategic goals that the countries strived to achieve after the collapse of the USSR. The pre-accession phase was accordingly dominated by extensive political and economic transformation and Europeanization of national policies. The Visegrad states were actively *courting* the EU until it put an *engagement ring* on their finger in the form of the Treaties of Accession signed in 2003.

The first years after the EU entry in 2004 (the *marriage*) were characterized by widespread enthusiasm because the economic situation in the Visegrad region started to improve. The Visegrad agenda was expanded into new areas of cooperation, most notably into joint support for further EU enlargement and assistance to countries aspiring for EU membership (Kroměříž Declaration 2004). Their efforts to steer the focus of the ENP toward Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans culminated in the launch of the Eastern Partnership in 2009.

This *honeymoon* phase lasted until about 2009. Against the background of the economic and financial crisis and the subsequent Eurozone crisis, economic growth slowed down and the Visegrad states began to adopt a more pragmatic approach toward the EU (interview 1A).⁴²⁷ According to most experts on Central Europe, the V4 had perceived the EU membership as a means to modernize their economies and converge the quality of living to the Western European standards and were disappointed with the sluggishness of the process of “catching up with the West” (interviews 1D, 1E, 1P, 2X & 4H). During the *adjustment phase* in the early 2010s, the Visegrad states metaphorically took off their rose-colored spectacles and started to see their EU membership in less idealistic terms. This transition to a new phase of relationship with the EU was accompanied by a rising desire for self-assertion. In a gradual process of self-emancipation, the Visegrad leaders started to formulate more critical opinions

⁴²⁷ Slovakia was the only Eurozone member that did not take part in the first bailout package for Greece. Slovaks disputed why they should contribute to solving the Eurozone crisis when they were not responsible for any of the problems, they themselves had to undergo extensive reforms and fiscal consolidation between 1998 and 2006, and pursued a responsible fiscal policy. Moreover, Slovak officials emphasized that Greek pensions were higher than Slovak salaries, and, therefore, providing solidarity under such circumstances would be absurd and unjustifiable in front of the electorate (interviews 4F & 4H). The other three V4 partners also questioned why they should participate in the financial assistance provided to Greece, arguing that they had not contributed to the crisis situation and were not even members of the Eurozone. The Visegrad states' reluctance to show support for solidarity measures during the Eurozone crisis eroded their relationship with the EU.

on various policy issues. This became particularly apparent during the migration and refugee crisis, which set in motion a serious *marriage crisis* between the EU and the V4.

A shift to a more self-assured demeanor has been observable on the part of the political elites in all four countries, yet with varying degree and manifestation. The narrative of the Visegrad Group becoming an alternative EU “core” and economic engine of Europe has been mostly articulated by the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Boros 2017; Cabada 2018; Végh 2018a). Together with the PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński, he has vowed to start a cultural counter-revolution to reform the EU and called for a return to a more loosely integrated Europe of sovereign nation states (interview 1P). Although Czech and Slovak decision makers adopted a similar Eurosceptic rhetoric at the peak of the refugee and migrant crisis, their approach has been less confrontational and ideologically driven than in the case of the Hungarian and Polish leaders (Végh 2018a). The Czech and Slovak governments have been reluctant to embrace Hungary’s and Poland’s sovereigntist narrative and follow the proposed cultural counter-revolution in the defense of traditional values (Nič 2016; Rotaru 2018).

Slovakia and the Czech Republic began to distance themselves from the other two Visegrad partners particularly after the EU institutions had decided to launch infringement procedures against Poland and Hungary for non-compliance with the EU’s fundamental values and principles (Kudzko 2017). Slovakia, which has always been in favor of the further deepening of European integration and is the only Visegrad country participating in the Eurozone, has sought to pursue an even greater rapprochement with the EU core (Geist 2017; Strážay 2018; Zalán 2018). In this context, former Prime Minister Fico stated in summer 2017 that his government would not sacrifice Slovakia’s favorable position in the EU core for the sake of sub-regional cooperation (Jancarikova 2017; interview 4J). The Czech Republic, in turn, strived to reinvigorate and upgrade its relationship with Germany, which led to the signing of the Czech-German Strategic Dialogue in July 2015 (Tallis 2016a; Végh 2018b). Moreover, both the Czech Republic and Slovakia actively aimed to strengthen their relations with neighboring Austria by launching the Slavkov Triangle in 2015 (interviews 1A, 1F & 2Q).

Noticing the widening division between Czechia and Slovakia on the one hand and Hungary and Poland on the other, experts and observers not only from Western Europe but also from within the Visegrad region started to label the new constellation “V2+2” instead of V4 (R.

Anderson 2018; Nič 2016; Stuchlíková 2018; Walsch 2018; interviews 2C & 3F).⁴²⁸ With the establishment of new regional formats of cooperation, such as the Slavkov Triangle and the Three Seas Initiative, some even envisioned a breakup of Visegrad.

In sum, the question may be raised whether the *marriage crisis* triggered by the migration and refugee crisis might not only lead to a V4-EU *divorce* but also to the potential breakdown of the two partners—the dissolution of Visegrad Group and/or the disintegration of the EU. By summarizing and reflecting on the findings of this study, the following paragraphs make the case that neither a breakup of the Visegrad Group nor the V4 states' withdrawal from the EU are likely scenarios for the foreseeable future.

23.1 The Visegrad Cooperation between Pragmatism and Shared Identity

The migration and refugee crisis gave the Visegrad Group unprecedented international attention. Due to the Visegrad states' similar responses to the migration challenge, many observers have started to perceive the V4 as a cohesive bloc. Those less acquainted with the character of the Visegrad cooperation expect a permanent consensus among the four states and are surprised when their positions do not converge and when the Visegrad leaders do not speak with one voice (see, e.g., Dempsey 2014). However, experts from the region emphasize that having homogeneous positions at all times has never been the aspiration of the Visegrad cooperation (interviews 1C & 2Q). Although the founding fathers of Visegrad, Václav Havel, József Antall, and Lech Wałęsa, might have had more idealistic goals in mind when they were launching the Visegrad cooperation, there is broad agreement among connoisseurs of the V4 that the motivation to cooperate is first and foremost pragmatic (interviews 1B, 1C, 1H, 1N, 1P, 2G, 2J, 4E, 4J & 4M).⁴²⁹

⁴²⁸ An alternative label of the new constellation would be “V3+1” if Slovakia's explicit pro-integrationist approach toward the EU is taken into account (interview 4M).

⁴²⁹ All four countries realize that their Visegrad Group membership is important for the realization of their foreign policy goals and interests in the EU, however, each member attaches different importance to the Visegrad cooperation (Végh 2018a; interview 4M). Hungary portrays Central Europe as Europe's most dynamic region and treats Visegrad as a means to pursue its national goals (R. Anderson 2018; Boros 2017; interviews 2E & 2L). Similarly, Poland perceives the Visegrad Group as a useful instrument for amplifying national interests at the EU level but seeks participation also in other formats of regional cooperation, such as the Three Seas Initiative, the Bucharest Nine, and the Weimar Triangle. The Czech Republic sees the added value of the V4 mainly in cooperation in sectoral policy areas and EU-level coordination (Végh 2018a). For Slovakia, the Visegrad Group has a high symbolic value. In the 1990s, Slovakia was a laggard in the EU accession process, but the other three V4 states helped the country to catch up with them and join the enlargement round in 2004 (Geist 2017; interview 4G). This is why Slovakia has been particularly invested in reversing the negative branding of the Visegrad Group (interviews 2G & 4M).

The Visegrad Group serves mainly as a political instrument for amplifying national interests, such as through the organization of “mini-summits” before European summits to coordinate policies and achieve shared objectives (Bauerová 2018b; Dostál 2015; Dubský and Kočí 2020; V. Józwiak 2018). The otherwise informal and loose institutional character of the cooperation enables its members to flexibly formulate joint positions in areas where their interests align while avoiding debates on non-consensual issues (Cabada and Waisová 2018; interviews 2G & 2Q). Krisztina Arató and Boglárka Koller use an analogy to the two-level game concept by Robert Putnam and consider the Visegrad cooperation as a three-level game with domestic, Visegrad, and EU levels. They hypothesize that the V4 countries use the middle level—the Visegrad cooperation—only when it supports their national interests and common positions can be reached (Arató and Koller 2018; interview 2M).

The two case studies have also confirmed that the Visegrad states prioritize national over regional interests. Although all Visegrad countries criticized EU policies on migration and were opposed to the EU’ relocation and resettlement plans, the extent of their resistance differed. Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic voted against the relocation quota proposal, but the Czech Republic later refrained from challenging the Council decision at the European Court of Justice. Moreover, while Czechia, Hungary, and Poland faced infringement procedures for non-compliance with their obligations under the 2015 Council Decisions on the relocation of refugees, Slovakia, which pledged to accept more refugees, did not. Finally, Slovakia’s and Czechia’s later attempts at a more conciliatory approach toward the EU contrasted with the more confrontational rhetoric of Hungarian and Polish leaders. Similarly, the second case study has revealed that, despite the Visegrad states’ joint interest in further expanding the EU, their sectoral and country priorities differ considerably. The most significant differences have been detected in the Visegrad states’ stances and responses to the Ukrainian-Russian conflict and related support for Ukraine’s European integration ambitions.

The ascertained pragmatic nature of the V4 cooperation raises the question about the likelihood of a shared Visegrad identity and intra-Visegrad solidarity. It is indisputable that the Visegrad states are bound by geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and shared historical experience, although presumably not to the extent that Milan Kundera (1984) and some other authors have tried to convey. The creation of the Visegrad Group has helped the

four countries overcome bilateral tensions and created a sense of belonging and togetherness (interview 1C). Moreover, the dense interactions at various political and administrative levels have contributed to the formation of a “quasi-Visegrad identity” (Kořan 2010a, 60; see also Fawn 2013). Finally, Aliaksei Kazharski (2018) and Mats Braun (2020) suggest that the migration and refugee crisis has also strengthened the sense of shared identity in the V4 countries.

However, this study contends that, rather than speculating about the potential existence of a specific and exclusive Visegrad identity, it is more useful to take a closer look at Visegrad states’ overlapping identity elements that influence foreign policy preferences. A more differentiated look at the Visegrad states’ national identities can explain why, in certain policy areas and situations, the Visegrad partners decide to work together, while in others, they pursue their own individual goals and interests. Moreover, the interplay of national identity elements can illuminate the different constellations of contestation of EU policies by the Visegrad states, as the next summary section illustrates.

23.2 The V4 and European Solidarity from the Angle of National Identities

The fundamentally different positions in the context of the migrant and refugee crisis have unfolded debates about a crumbling trust among EU Member States, the revival of an East-West normative gap, and the state as well as the future of the EU integration project. Research has suggested, and the two case studies in this publication have made it clear, that many tensions and crises within the EU can be traced back to different conceptions of solidarity, which are again closely related to varying historical experiences and national identity constructions. The following paragraphs summarize the findings of this study, which exemplify how national identities continue to exert influence on the Visegrad states’ understanding of their place in Europe and their attitude toward pan-European solidarity.

“The concept of Central Europe emerges from the tension between the aspiration for a Western identity and the failure to achieve it” (Eberle 2018, 172). This sentence alludes to one key aspect of the Visegrad states’ national identities, which continues to shape their relations to the EU as well as the rest of the world, namely their unceasing desire for “Westernness.” The ideological dichotomy of the Cold War reinforced the already existing self-conception in Central Europe of being *geographically* located “in between” the East and

the West, belonging *culturally* to the West, and being occasionally *politically* “abducted” by the East (Kundera 1984).⁴³⁰ The Kunderian notion of “a kidnapped West” provided the Visegrad states with the necessary legitimacy to declare their “rightful return to Europe.” However, the V4 later realized that such geopolitical imagination requires constant reproduction and that the self-conception of being “Western” can only be considered successful and legitimate if authorized by others, in this case other Western European states (Slačálek 2016).⁴³¹ This realization and the related pursuit of “Westernness” has resulted in a number of specific behavior patterns.

The Visegrad states have sought to prove their Western credentials by demonstrating their superiority over countries lying further to the East. Indeed, every country in Central Europe aspires to be perceived as “most Western” (Eberle 2018, 184; Sztwiertni 2018, 88). At the same time, due to their specific location between the East and the West, the Visegrad states often cast themselves into the role of serving as a “bridge” between these two. Moreover, they present themselves as connoisseurs of the transformational processes happening in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans and therefore ideal partners to share their experience with post-communist transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration. The Visegrad states’ solidarity with the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states is therefore motivated not only by the sense of geographic, historical, and cultural proximity but also by the desire to be treated as important players who can act as policy makers (interviews 2M, 4H & 4M). Similarly, during the migration and refugee crisis, the Visegrad states expressed their ambition to be recognized as relevant players and participate in the EU decision-making processes.

The Visegrad states’ aspirations for recognition have been thwarted by the continued feeling of being treated as second-class members within the EU (interviews 1I, 1P, 2G & 2W). In the Visegrad region, there is a great amount of frustration about the existence of double standards within the Union that extend beyond the issue of dual food quality in different

⁴³⁰ In this geopolitical imagination, the West symbolized values and ideals that the Visegrad states felt to have been deprived of for decades or even centuries, such as respect for human rights, democratic principles, and economic freedom and modernity. On the contrary, the “East” was associated with backwardness (Zarycki 2018). For more on how the “West” and the “East” are considered in cultural, rather than physical-geographical terms, see, for example, Kuus (2007, x) and Todorova (2009, 48).

⁴³¹ Slovenian philosopher and cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek wrote in *The Plague of Fantasies*: “The original question of desire is not ‘What do I want?’, but ‘What do *others* want from me? What do they see in me? What am I to others?’” (Žižek 1997, 9, emphasis in original).

Member States.⁴³² Central European politicians often criticize that not every EU Member State is sized by the same standards. In their view, when Western Europeans do things differently, it is commonly presented as having an opinion, but when Central and Eastern Europeans do it, they are labeled as “troublemakers” (interview 2W).⁴³³ This underlying sense of injustice was also used as an argument in connection with the migration crisis and the rejection of the refugee quotas. The prevailing notion in Central Europe is that Western Europeans have never accepted them as equal partners.

Although the Visegrad states have all become fully-fledged members of the EU, “the return to Europe” has not yet resulted in the expected convergence with the most developed EU Member States (Böröcz 2012; A. Schmidt 2016a, 130; interviews 1F, 2K & 4J). These unfulfilled expectations and the related sense of inferiority have several effects on the Visegrad states’ approach to solidarity. There is a prevalent belief in the Visegrad states that it is them who deserve solidarity. They perceive solidarity within the framework of distributive justice, by which logic the allocation of funds should be directed toward poorer, less developed regions (interviews 1G, 2N & 3J). Moreover, they claim to be entitled to EU funds as part of the West’s redemption for past wrongdoings—for betraying and/or abandoning Central Europeans in their times of greatest need (interviews 1G & 2U). These narratives of betrayal and victimhood are particularly strong in Poland and Hungary but regularly appear across the whole region (interviews 2B & 3G). John E. Mack argues that victim mentality, self-pity, and blaming others for its own historical traumas can lead to an absence of accepting any responsibility and the incapacity to sympathize with the suffering of another group (Mack 1999: 125). The prevalence of narratives of trauma, suffering, and injustice would therefore explain why, during the migrant and refugee crisis, the Visegrad states promoted solidarity primarily in connection with their own citizens as opposed with refugees, why they were unable or unwilling to parallel their own refugee experience with

⁴³² Due to the economic dependence on Western Europe, politicians from the Visegrad region sometimes argue that Central Europe serves as a “cheap workshop” for Western multinational companies (Geist 2017, 25; interview 1A; Zarycki 2018, 83). The argument goes that Western companies have relocated their manufacturing activities to Central (and Eastern) Europe, exploiting the local workforce without creating value for the local economies (Zarycki 2018, 83).

⁴³³ A frequently used example to illustrate this point is the statement by former French President Jacques Chirac, who said in 2003 that Central and Eastern European countries, who had expressed support for the United States’ Iraq policy, had “missed a good opportunity to shut up” (Mach 2000).

the suffering of other refugees in different contexts, and why Hungary and Poland emphasized their own vulnerabilities instead of acknowledging the plight of other states.

Narratives of trauma and victimhood, such as remembering the countries' defeats and periods of foreign domination, further impact political discourse and policy making in the Central European region through a strong focus on national security. The analysis has demonstrated that the securitization framing of the migration and refugee crisis adopted by the governments of all four Visegrad countries evoked the historical feelings of being threatened from outside and resonated with the existing fears of local populations. Similarly, the Visegrad states' engagement in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states has been motivated by their desire to safeguard the stability and security in the European neighborhood.

The Visegrad states' long struggle for freedom and independence has further resulted in their strong attachment to national sovereignty. The Visegrad states—with the sole exception of Slovakia—appear highly sensitive to delegating parts of their national sovereignty to the EU institutions. Confirming Frank Schimmelfennig' and Thomas Winzen's (2017, 245) argument that "the likelihood that identity and sovereignty concerns arise varies across policies," this study has found that while issues of sovereignty have been raised only marginally in the context of further enlargement of the EU, the migration and refugee crisis was a substantial trigger for sovereignty politics in the Visegrad states. The debate around migration was framed, first and foremost, as a freedom fight for national sovereignty. The political discourse in all four states was largely dominated by references to national sovereignty, with Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Hungarian governments asserting their sovereign right to regulate entry of foreign nationals into state territory. The adoption of the emergency relocation mechanism in September 2015 was perceived as an unwanted imposition and a threat to national sovereignty. The frequent references to "the Brussels dictate" are reminiscent of the persistent anti-great power sentiments in the Visegrad region.

The aforementioned feeling of not being treated as equal partners, but rather as second-class citizens within the EU finds its manifestation in different contexts. In the wake of the tensions over burden-sharing mechanisms at the EU level, some Western leaders reproached the newer EU members for having received billions of euros through EU cohesion funds as well as support with political, social, and economic transformation, while being unwilling to

reciprocally express solidarity when asked to (interview 1A).⁴³⁴ They described such behavior as “cherry picking” and criticized the Visegrad states for adopting a transactional relationship with the EU.⁴³⁵ Visegrad officials have rejected such accusations of only “consuming” European money without contributing to the European project. They argue that the removal of trade barriers upon EU accession resulted in western companies “invading” the local markets and that the lion’s share of the received funds goes back to the net contributors through investment returns (Arak 2020; Armand 2019).⁴³⁶ Moreover, they contend that another example of capital flow from East to West can be seen in the “brain drain” of skilled workers, which is connected to significant social and economic costs (Armand 2019; interview 2C). Finally, they occasionally portray EU funds not as gestures of solidarity but rather as disguised paternalism of richer Western Europe toward less affluent, post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (Rzegocki 2017). Consequently, the Visegrad states categorically reject any proposals of withholding European funds from Member States deemed to lack European solidarity (e.g., due to failing to accept their share of refugees under a quota system) (Végh 2018a, 9).

Discussing solidarity across different policy fields raises the issue of reciprocity. Importantly, reciprocity contains a temporal dimension and is conditioned by future expectations as well as past experiences. Instead of being motivated by the prospects of *future reciprocity*, the Visegrad states have been fixated on narratives of *historical reciprocity*, maintaining that the EU and its Member States do not deserve their solidarity, as they have also not always been solidary with them (interviews 1A, 1L, 1O & 2J). In addition to the historical notions of “Western betrayal,” the political discourse also contained more recent perceptions of missing solidarity on the part of Western Europe. The most often cited example has been the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which would divert gas transports away from Ukraine and cost Central European states, such as Hungary or Slovakia, their advantage as

⁴³⁴ The Visegrad countries have been among the biggest net beneficiaries of EU funds. In the 2014–2020 budget period, the Visegrad states received over 30% from the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund (European Commission 2020b). As a matter of fact, Poland is the largest net recipient of EU funds (European Commission 2020a).

⁴³⁵ According to experts on Czech politics, Prime Minister Babiš is a champion of a transactional approach to the EU (interviews 1D & 1F).

⁴³⁶ Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Member of the European Parliament, Witold Waszczykowski, stated in an interview: “for each euro we get from Brussels, 70 or 80 cents go back to Western Europe because we are buying [its] technology” (Waszczykowski 2016).

transit countries. The Visegrad states criticized the project for violating the idea of energy solidarity and used it to point to Western hypocrisy.⁴³⁷

The *historical reciprocity* arguments—propelled by the underlying feeling that the West must still compensate its “historical debt” toward Central Europe—point at a “retrospective” mentality of the Visegrad states, as opposed to a prospective one. The Kunderian images of being victims and/or outsiders of history, coupled with the lingering feeling of still lagging behind or catching up with the West, continue to affect Visegrad states’ foreign policies. The discourse analysis has revealed that especially Hungarian and Polish discourses are dominated by historical narratives. Officials from these two countries have frequently articulated feelings of being aggrieved in history and emphasized their nations’ suffering from historical traumas.⁴³⁸

Hungary and Poland have also increasingly sought to evoke the religious underpinnings of their national identities. Not only have they presented themselves as the *Antemurale Christianitatis*—the historical guardians of Christianity and the European civilization—but they have also used culture and religion as criteria of belongingness.⁴³⁹ Strategies of “cultural othering” and of positive *self* and negative *other* representation have been employed also in Slovak and Czech political discourse. The religious and ethnic homogeneity of the Visegrad states has appeared as one of the major factors behind their little willingness to accept refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, while simultaneously expressing greater sympathy for the fate of refugees and immigrants from culturally similar regions, such as Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. Due to the lacking experience of coexistence with foreign cultures, common misconceptions about Islam and Muslims and narratives about the supposed incompatibility of cultures have resonated with existing mistrust and fear of the unknown in the Visegrad societies and influenced their receptiveness toward refugees and migrants.

⁴³⁷ Related to the topic of migration, several Central European politicians brought up the argument that, after the Visegrad states’ EU accession, some Western European Member States were reluctant to open their labor markets to Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, and Slovaks (V.r. Bilčík 2009, 27-28).

⁴³⁸ Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán often uses historical analogies, for example, emphasizing the role of Hungary as the first line of defense against Muslims and comparing the migrant and refugee crisis to previous occupations of Hungary.

⁴³⁹ Recalling their historical role of guardians of Christian Western civilization against “Eastern barbarism,” Hungarian, Polish, and, to a lesser extent, Slovak officials stressed the need for preservation of traditional Christian values in Europe and claimed that the Western liberal concept of multiculturalism failed.

The numerous discursive references to cultural and ethnic categories of belongingness have made clear that, in Central Europe, nation is predominantly understood in ethnic and cultural terms—as opposed to the civic notion of nationhood prevalent in Western Europe (see also Mikulova 2018; Zenderowski 2018).⁴⁴⁰ The resulting tendency toward ethnocultural nationalism, which can be observed across all Visegrad states, influences their solidarity toward outgroups. As mentioned above, in the case of the migrant and refugee crisis, it can help explain the Visegrad governments’ preference for accepting only Christian refugees as well as their stigmatization of Muslim communities. In the case of further enlargement of the EU, the Visegrad states’ engagement in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans has been stimulated by feelings of cultural proximity to the neighboring regions as well as strong sense of solidarity and responsibility toward own minorities living there.

The following table summarizes the reflections of national identity—or, more precisely, the manifestation of individual identity elements—in the Visegrad states’ solidarity behavior, as described in the previous paragraphs. In line with the theoretical premises of this study that political elites as “discourse bearers” can select or discursively (re)activate certain identity elements, the analysis has confirmed that identity elements are not always active in all contexts or that the manifestation of the same identity element can differ from context to context. Moreover, the findings provide evidence for the possibility of simultaneous activation of several identity elements.

Table 23: Identity-solidarity nexus on the example of the two case studies

Identity elements	Migrant and refugee crisis	EU enlargement
Sense of victimhood and anti-great power sentiments	<p>Victim mentality leading to the refusal to accept any responsibility for the crisis and the incapacity to sympathize with the suffering of refugees</p> <p>Solidarity primarily in connection with own citizens as opposed with refugees</p> <p>Inability or unwillingness to parallel own refugee experience</p>	Engagement in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states motivated by the desire to safeguard the stability and security in the European neighborhood

⁴⁴⁰ Authors attribute the prevalence of the ethnic notion of national identity in Central Europe to various factors, including the distinct nation formation processes, the construction of national identity around cultural, religious, and ethnic lines, the traumatic fear of physical extermination, and the related need to “imagine” the national existence independently from existing states and borderlines (Goździak and Márton 2018, 4; Moskalewicz and Przybylski 2018, 6).

	<p>with the suffering of other refugees in different contexts</p> <p>Emphasizing own vulnerabilities instead of acknowledging the plight of other states</p> <p>Securitization framing of migration (evoking the historical feelings of being threatened from outside)</p>	
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West	<i>Historical reciprocity</i> and the underlying feeling that the West must still compensate its “historical debt” toward Central Europe	Desire to “sit at one table” in the EU, participate in common decision making, and avoid any further “about us without us” scenarios
Strong attachment to national sovereignty	<p>Framing of migration as an issue of national sovereignty (frequent references to the sovereign right to regulate entry of foreign nationals into state territory)</p> <p>Perception of the emergency relocation mechanism as an unwanted imposition and a threat to national sovereignty (frequent references to “the Brussels dictate”)</p>	Issues of sovereignty discussed only marginally
<p>The desire for “Westernness” and the related inferiority and superiority complex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National pride, self-image as a cultured and civilized nation - Perception of belonging to the West - Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs - Continued feeling of being treated as second-class members within the EU - Bridge between the East and the West - Sense of superiority over the East 	<p>Expressions of ambition to be recognized as relevant players and participate in EU decision-making processes</p> <p>Conviction of being able to offer better and more effective solutions to the crisis than others</p> <p>Underlying sense of injustice and the feeling of being unjustly labeled as “troublemakers” due to their rejection of refugee quotas</p> <p>Persistent feelings of inferiority and the related belief that it is them who deserve solidarity</p>	<p>Solidarity with the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states motivated by the desire to be treated as important players who can act as policy makers</p> <p>Self-portrayal as connoisseurs of transformational processes happening in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans</p> <p>Desire to share own experience with post-communist transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration and serve as a bridge between the East (i.e., new candidates) and the West (i.e., “old” Member States)</p>
<p>Ethnic homogeneity</p> <p>Ethnic (as opposed to civic) understanding of citizenship</p>	<p>Little willingness to accept refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, while simultaneously expressing greater sympathy for the fate of refugees and immigrants from culturally similar regions, such as Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans</p>	<p>Strong sense of solidarity and responsibility toward own minorities living in the neighboring countries</p> <p>Engagement in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans stimulated by feelings of cultural proximity</p>

Religious underpinnings of national identity Attachment to traditional conservative values	Culture and religion as criteria of belongingness Preference for accepting only Christian refugees and stigmatization of Muslim communities	Engagement in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans stimulated by feelings of cultural and religious proximity
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Source: Own table

The discourse analysis has confirmed that the Visegrad states' national identities shape their foreign policies and solidarity behavior. Moreover, it has illustrated how a particular composition and interplay of identity elements account for the variance in hierarchization and prioritization of solidarity principles, which in turn leads to varying approaches to solidarity espoused by the individual states as well as possible variance between policy fields. While the study has come to the conclusion that the solidarity principles are generally closely interlinked and interdependent, the principle of *proximity* has appeared to be determinant for the other three principles of *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation*.

In the Visegrad states' reaction to the migrant and refugee crisis, this study has distinguished between solidarity toward asylum seekers on the one hand and toward fellow EU Member States on the other hand. The findings suggest that intergovernmental solidarity was driven in all four states mainly by the solidarity principle of *proximity* in connection with the principle of *self-preservation*. While all four states expressed sovereignty concerns over the EU's relocation scheme and made the case for the model of "flexible solidarity," the Czech Republic and especially Slovakia tried to balance their criticism by signaling their desire to act as constructive and responsible EU members and exhibited a stronger sense of attachment to the EU than Poland and Hungary did. The principle of *proximity* was also closely intertwined with the principle of *deservingness*, with Visegrad officials assigning responsibility for the crisis situation to other Member States, including those with colonial history and/or "open-door" migration policies. The *need* of frontline Member States and their *deservingness* of solidarity were further disputed on the grounds of their alleged non-compliance with Schengen and Dublin rules. Polish and, above all, Hungarian officials further twisted the principles *need* and *deservingness* by highlighting their countries' role in the protection of the EU's external borders. In summary, in all four Visegrad states—yet with different gradations—it was less the sense of attachment (*proximity*) that would potentially induce greater compassion for other Member States' *need* and *deservingness*, but rather the

desire to be recognized and respected as relevant players in European and international affairs (*self-preservation*).

Solidarity toward asylum seekers was in all four states unequivocally driven by the principle of *proximity*. Refugees from the Middle East and North Africa were stigmatized in political discourses as culturally incompatible “others,” who would be impossible to integrate and potentially pose a threat to the European culture and way of life.⁴⁴¹ The missing feelings of attachment and compassion toward inhabitants of remote, culturally alien countries found their reflection also in the remaining solidarity principles. Instead of recognizing the *need* of the fleeing people, solidarity appeared primarily in connection with own citizens, whose safety was allegedly threatened. Through portraying especially Muslim asylum seekers as potential terrorists, criminals, and people unwilling to integrate and suggesting that most of them were in fact no “genuine refugees” but rather economic migrants, the Visegrad governments questioned their *deservingness* of help. The common narrative was that most asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa neither needed nor deserved help and, if they did, they should first and foremost be helped in their countries of origin.

Visegrad states’ solidarity with the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states aspiring for EU membership rests on similar motivations, but the leading solidarity principle differs for every country. Hungarian and Polish support of further EU enlargement is driven primarily by the principle of *proximity*, which also explains their preference for the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe respectively. In the Czech case, the principles of *need* and *self-preservation* have been pivotal for the country’s solidarity with the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states. And for Slovakia, the most decisive factor has been the self-effort of the individual aspirant countries, pointing to the principle of *deservingness*. Nevertheless, in all four cases, the solidarity principles have been again closely interconnected and conditional on each other. For example, geographic *proximity*, historical bonds, cultural ties, and the presence of Hungarian, Slovak, and Polish minorities in the neighboring regions have increased the Visegrad states’ compassion for the *needs* of the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries. In another example, similar historical experience (*proximity*) has allowed the Visegrad states to demonstrate their sound knowledge of the two regions and the

⁴⁴¹ The principle of *proximity* also illuminates why the Visegrad states generally express a greater sympathy for the fate of refugees and immigrants from culturally similar Eastern Europe or the Western Balkans.

problems they face, share their specific knowhow of post-communist transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration, consolidate their role in Europe, and make a visible imprint on EU policies (*self-preservation*). Similar to the case study on the migration and refugee crisis, the principle of *need* has experienced a certain “twist” or “reversal,” with the Visegrad countries reasoning for enhancing the stability and prosperity of the European neighborhood primarily for the sake of their own physical and energy security as well as economic benefits. Finally, all V4 states have attached great importance to the notion of *deservingness*—conditioning the aspirant candidates’ bid for membership by their level of compliance with the accession criteria—but differed in terms of focus (e.g., the Czech Republic focusing on the promotion of human rights and Hungary attaching greater importance to economic reforms).

Overall, the juxtaposition of the four countries and two policy fields has indicated that the Visegrad states sometimes coincide and at other times differ in the way how the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* are used as a justification for adopted decisions and actions, which can be attributed to their specific national identities. Table 24 provides a simplified summary of the previous paragraphs. A more differentiated look at the interplay and hierarchization of solidarity principles, together with the respective discursive legitimation strategies reflecting the underlying national identity elements, can be found in the individual empirical chapters and summary chapters 15 and 20.

Table 24: Summary overview of the principal discursive legitimation strategies

	Migrant and refugee crisis (intergovernmental solidarity)	Migrant and refugee crisis (solidarity toward refugees and migrants)	EU enlargement (international solidarity)
Proximity	Attachment to national sovereignty (opposition to refugee quotas) Support for a common European solution & desire to act as a responsible EU member (mainly Slovakia → the Czech Republic → Poland → Hungary)	Ethnic and religious homogeneity, cultural and ethnic interpretation of national identity & limited experience of cohabitation with foreign cultures → missing feelings of attachment and compassion toward inhabitants of remote, culturally alien countries	Geographic proximity Historical bonds and cultural ties Presence of minorities Similar historical experience (e.g., with transformation and Europeanization)
Need	Differences in recognition of the <i>need</i> of fellow Member States	Solidarity primarily with own citizens (for the sake of their safety and well-being)	Enhancing the stability and prosperity of the European neighborhood for the sake of own

	Redirecting attention to own vulnerabilities (mainly Hungary and Poland)	Provision of help primarily in countries of origin	(energy) security and economic benefits
Deservingness	Alleged non-compliance by EU Member States such as a Greece and Germany	Distinction between “genuine” refugees and economic migrants Alleged incompatibility of cultures and related impossibility of integration Securitization of migration (migrants and refugees as a threat to national security and public safety)	Conditionality (importance of self-effort and compliance with the accession criteria)
Self-preservation	Acceptance of refugees presented as a political and administrative burden Pursuit of emancipation (desire to be recognized and respected as relevant players in European and international affairs; conviction of being able to offer better solutions than others)	Acceptance of refugees presented as a burden and a strain on state capacities Limited capacities to accept and accommodate people	Desire to be recognized as respected members of the international community and make a visible imprint on EU policies Self-portrayal as role models with the right know-how (experience with transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration) “Bridge” function (having sound knowledge of the two regions)

Source: Own table

23.3 Outlook: The Visegrad States’ and the Future of European Integration

While it may well be argued that the Visegrad cooperation used to be largely unknown to the broader European public and many European leaders had considered it irrelevant to EU decision making, the migration and refugee crisis certainly gave a distinct political character to the Visegrad Group. However, at the same time, it changed the external view of the V4 to a largely negative one, with many people starting to portray the group as an obstructionist bloc that deliberately defies the European mainstream and blocks the development of joint positions at the EU level. This has led numerous observers to claim that, in recent years, the Visegrad Group has largely acted as a “reactionary alliance” and “defensive project” within the EU, united *against* certain policies and trends rather than standing *for* specific principles (R. Anderson 2018; Cabada 2018; Merheim-Eyre 2018; T. Novotná and Stuchlíková 2017; Stuchlíková 2018; Végh 2018a). Visegrad states’—particularly Hungary’s and Poland’s—calls for creating a looser union of nation states, their tensions with the EU institutions, and

their uncompromising tone on certain issues, such as migration or the rule of law clause in the EU Multiannual Financial Framework, have put the region's narrative of "returning to the West" into question and given rise to debates about the possibility of *differentiated (dis)integration*.

The findings of this study suggest that the "return to Europe" has not disappeared, but rather changed its essence. The Visegrad states appear more self-confident and outspoken in their criticism of certain EU policies, but despite all contentious issues, there is a broad agreement—and the study has come to the same conclusion—that none of the Visegrad states would want to leave the EU (see also Bil 2017; Łada 2017; Végh 2018a).⁴⁴² All four states realize that European integration has been advantageous for the region's economic development and the improvement of living conditions (A. Schmidt 2016a, 130; Wenzel 2018, 61). Moreover, opinion polls show that public support for EU membership is relatively high across all Visegrad states, perhaps with the exception of the Czech Republic (T. Novotná and Stuchlíková 2017).⁴⁴³ Even the Hungarian and Polish governments with their vision of a conservative Europe do not reject the idea of European integration altogether, but rather talk about changing its "over-bureaucratic nature" (interviews 2C, 2E, 2K, 2L, 2Q & 2U).

The empirical chapters of this study have exemplified how historical experiences and national identities influence states' attitudes toward European solidarity and, more generally, European integration. It has become clear that sovereignty concerns are the main factor that continues to hinder the Visegrad states' deeper integration with the EU structures. Nevertheless, while the level of attachment to the EU and the values it represents might be less pronounced than, for example, in Western Europe and the character of the Visegrad states' EU membership appears mainly pragmatic and instrumental, it does not automatically preclude the V4 from acting as solidary and responsible EU members.⁴⁴⁴ The analysis has proven that the motivational basis for solidary behavior does not necessarily have to be a

⁴⁴² The Trends of Visegrad European Policy survey conducted with over 400 stakeholders (including politicians, civil servants, journalists, and scholars) from the Visegrad states in 2017 found that 98% of them "agree" or "somewhat agree" with the statement that "EU membership is more beneficial to [their country] than any other form of relationship with the EU" (Dostál and Végh 2017, 19).

⁴⁴³ In an opinion poll conducted jointly by the research centers CVVM Sociological Institute in the Czech Republic, TÁRKI in Hungary, CBOS in Poland, and FOCUS in Slovakia in 2017, 88% of Poles, 82% of Hungarians, 74% of Slovaks, and 56% of Czechs declared their support for EU membership (CBOS 2017).

⁴⁴⁴ Virtually all interviewed experts agreed that the V4 view their membership first and foremost through the prism of benefits and that a greater identification with the European project is missing (see interviews 1G, 1L, 1S, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2G, 2H, 2L, 2Q, 2U, 2X, 3J, 4F, 4G, 4J, 4K & 4L).

sense of togetherness, underpinned by shared norms and values, but that states can also be motivated by other factors, such as pursuit of self-interests and the desire for recognition and respect. It follows that an overarching sense of community or shared identity are not necessary prerequisites for the emergence of solidarity among Member States, but that the European project can as well rest on “functional” (as opposed to “affectional”) solidarity, as long as the conditions of mutuality and reciprocity are clearly defined.

A similar line of thought applies also to the internal dynamics of the Visegrad Group. The findings of this study suggest that the V4 has always been and will remain an ad hoc, interest-driven coalition rather than a permanent bloc. The existing dissonances among the Visegrad members, which concern unresolved historical tensions, minority issues, and different foreign policy preferences, are unlikely to disappear. However, they seem not to preclude the V4 partners from coordinating their positions on issues of common concern, and a potential breakup of the Visegrad Group in the near future therefore appears highly unlikely.

To conclude, this study infers that the current *marriage crisis* will not lead to an eventual V4–EU *divorce* in the form of the Visegrad states’ withdrawal from the EU and potential European disintegration. However, considering how identity politics shapes the course of European integration, the EU and the Visegrad Group could benefit from some *marriage counseling*. The analysis has made clear that relations between the Visegrad states and Western European states continue to be burdened by notions of missing solidarity in the past, which provide grounds for justifications of reciprocal non-solidary behavior in the present and future. Therefore, if the EU and its Member States wish to continue and advance the European project, they need to break this vicious circle and move away from narratives of *historical solidarity* and reciprocity to the notion of solidarity as a forward-looking expectation. This study began with a quote from the Schuman Declaration, which argued for building a united Europe in the spirit of solidarity. The declaration also stated that “the coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany” (Schuman Declaration 1950). This study would like to propose a slightly modified wording for future European integration, which would read as follows: “Building a Europe based on solidarity requires the elimination of age-old oppositions among all European nations.”

23.4 Reflection and Implications

This study has attempted to explore the national identities of the Visegrad states and their approaches to solidarity in the most comprehensive way possible. However, due to the scope and complexity of the topic, the author also recognizes some potential limitations, which can serve as a basis for further research.

One of the greatest challenges behind exploring the multifaceted national identities of the Visegrad states was to capture them as objectively as possible. Not only political elites but also historians and other intellectuals can formulate narratives and constructs of their nations' history, which may reflect their own subjective views, values, and preferences. Therefore, a researcher needs to be particularly careful when assessing secondary sources and interviewing experts on the topic of national identities. This is why the author of this study made sure to interview not only historians but also experts coming from other disciplines such as political science and sociology. By cross-checking information from multiple perspectives with the help of *data and method triangulation*, this study strived to obtain the most contentious picture of national identities possible as well as reveal potential contradictory interpretations. Nevertheless, the findings would certainly benefit from further exploratory research of national identity elements characteristic for every Visegrad state.

Examining several cases always raises the question about their comparability. While the author's language skills proved to be a great added value for the empirical analysis, they also posed a potential challenge in terms of comparability. The author of this study is a Czech native speaker and understands both Slovak and Polish. However, she can neither speak nor read Hungarian. To offset this imbalance, the author made sure to "overinterview" Hungarians, i.e. to conduct more interviews with Hungarian than with Czech, Slovak, and Polish experts. Moreover, since the *lingua franca* of the Visegrad cooperation is English, it allowed the author to analyze both primary sources issued by the Visegrad Group and secondary sources published by the numerous research and policy institutes that are members or cooperation partners of Think Visegrad – V4 Think Tank Platform. An additional analysis of sources in the Hungarian language may still help uncover potential discrepancies between statements at the level of domestic political discourse and the rhetoric targeted toward international audience, thus providing further valuable insights into the subject matter.

Speaking about comparability of cases, it further needs to be pointed out that while, for example in Hungary, there has been no change in government since 2010, Poland experienced a change of power at the height of the refugee and migrant crisis, which significantly shifted the course of Polish foreign policy. Although the author strived to account for such domestic developments and related changes in foreign policy preferences, it was not within the capacity of the present study to go one level deeper and investigate party politics. Therefore, further research should turn to analyzing differences across political parties on the domestic level and the consequences these may have for European politics.

From a theoretical point of view, this study has stressed the importance of “concept integration” in the realm of social constructivism and strived to open new avenues for theory-based research on the issue of solidarity and identity. The author therefore hopes to inspire further research on the proposed identity-solidarity nexus. Reflecting on the developed analytical framework, it must be acknowledged that the solidarity principles of *proximity*, *need*, *deservingness*, and *self-preservation* are no distinct categories but that discursive justification strategies can occasionally be assigned to multiple principles simultaneously. For example, by suggesting that asylum seekers were no “genuine refugees” but rather economic migrants, political elites questioned both their *need* and *deservingness* of help. The identified interdependencies among the solidarity principles lay the foundation for further research, which could explore the identity-solidarity nexus in other contexts and further refine the framework.

In terms of empirical evidence, the analysis has made clear that geopolitical traumas, which may seem to be forgotten, tend to resurface during times of crisis. It would therefore be worth applying the identity-solidarity framework to other cases, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, to gain additional insights into the influence of national identities on European solidarity and, more generally, European integration.

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APPENDIX

Appendix: Table of Contents

Appendix A: Selected policies of the Visegrad cooperation.....	1
Appendix B: State of research on the Visegrad cooperation.....	5
Appendix C: Mentions of solidarity in the TEU and the TFEU	18
Appendix D: Qualitative content analysis.....	20
Appendix D.1: Czech national identity (categories, coding rules, and coding examples).....	20
Appendix D.2: Hungarian national identity (categories, coding rules, and coding examples)....	24
Appendix D.3: Polish national identity (categories, coding rules, and coding examples).....	29
Appendix D.4: Slovak national identity (categories, coding rules, and coding examples).....	34
Appendix E: Interviews.....	39
Appendix E.1: Overview of interviews.....	39
Appendix E.2: Letter of information.....	42
Appendix E.3: Interview guides.....	44
Appendix E.4: Summaries of interviews	52
Appendix F: National identities of the Visegrad states (summary tables)	53
Appendix F.1: Czech national identity.....	53
Appendix F.2: Hungarian national identity.....	54
Appendix F.3: Polish national identity.....	56
Appendix F.4: Slovak national identity	57
Appendix G: MAXQDA	59
Appendix G.1: MAXQDA Codebook.....	59
Table G.1.1: Solidarity in the context of the refugee and migrant crisis	59
Table G.1.2: Solidarity in the context of further EU enlargement.....	60
Appendix G.2: Overview of MAXQDA documents.....	62
Table G.2.1: Refugee and migrant crisis & the Czech Republic	62
Table G.2.2: Refugee and migrant crisis & Hungary.....	66
Table G.2.3: Refugee and migrant crisis & Poland	70
Table G.2.4: Refugee and migrant crisis & Slovakia.....	73
Table G.2.5: EU enlargement & the Czech Republic	76
Table G.2.6: EU enlargement & Hungary	79
Table G.2.7: EU enlargement & Poland	81
Table G.2.8: EU enlargement & Slovakia	84
Appendix G.3: Results MAXQDA	89

Appendix A: Selected policies of the Visegrad cooperation

This section briefly outlines the Visegrad states' cooperation in the security and defense sector as well as in the fields of EU cohesion policy and energy policy. The Visegrad countries' positions on potential further enlargement of the EU and their migration policies are covered in great detail in the two case studies in the empirical chapters of the study.

Security and Defense Policy

During the Soviet rule in Central and Eastern Europe, all four Visegrad countries were members of the Warsaw pact, which was a collective defense treaty among the Soviet Union and its seven satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe pledging mutual defense of any of its members in case of attack. After the East-West conflict ended, the Warsaw pact was dissolved in 1991 and the Soviet troops peacefully withdrawn from the whole region (Gazdag 1997, 18-26). Since the establishment of the Visegrad Group in 1991, the efforts to develop and strengthen the security and defense cooperation have been at the heart of it (Gawron-Tabor 2015, 64). However, the grouping experienced numerous ups and downs in its security and defense cooperation.

During the initial years of the Visegrad Group (1991-1997), the security and defense cooperation was not very intensive and it was limited almost solely to political consultations (Madej 2013, 2). Nevertheless, in late 1990s, after Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were invited to join NATO, the cooperation of the Visegrad states intensified, as they tried to accelerate the process of integration within the Alliance (Visegrad Group 2017; Madej 2013, 2). After the four countries joined NATO and became members of the EU, the defense cooperation within V4 declined again, confining itself to political consultations without any concrete projects (Gawron-Tabor 2015, 64). It reinvigorated again in 2010 after the introduction of NATO Smart Defense and EU Pooling & Sharing initiatives (Visegrad Group 2016). Another impetus for deepening defense ties was provided by the financial crisis after 2008 and the related cuts in defense budgets (Střítecký 2012, 65). As a consequence, after years of absence, the subject of common defense cooperation emerged as an important item on the Visegrad agenda (Gawron-Tabor 2015, 77). This time, the cooperation and contacts

among the Visegrad countries started to evolve not only on the political, but also on the technical and operational level (Madej 2013, 3).

Despite an increased number of high-level meetings and declarations, most of the proposed and planned activities were not successfully implemented (Gawron-Tabor 2015, 64-66). Consequently, the Visegrad Group was criticized for providing general manifestations of political will and setting vague goals without any actual implementation of concrete programs and specific projects (Madej 2013, 4). A departure from these declarative statements and mere coordination of positions to the adoption of long-term strategic documents can be observed since the meeting of the Prime Ministers in Budapest in October 2013 (Visegrad Group 2013). In the “Budapest Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Heads of Government On Strengthening the V4 Security and Defence Cooperation,” the Prime Ministers of the four countries tasked the respective Ministers of Defense (1) to draft a long-term vision for a common security and defense cooperation strategy that would strengthen the capability development efforts; (2) to strengthen cooperation in the field of training and exercises of the V4 armed forces and, in order to increase their interoperability, hold joint V4 military exercises on an annual basis; and (3) to explore the possibility of establishing a framework for an increased defense planning cooperation (Visegrad Group 2013). Accordingly, in March 2014, the V4 Ministers of Defense signed the “Long Term Vision of the Visegrad countries on Deepening their Defence Cooperation” (Visegrad Group 2014). The Long Term Vision provided the V4 Group for the first time with a strategic concept of the scope and main goals of the V4 defense cooperation, as well as outlined main areas of practical cooperation (Visegrad Group 2014).

The increasing assertiveness of Russian foreign and security policy has triggered the cooperation of the Visegrad countries in recent years. After a relatively long period of stability in the Central European region, the Russian occupation of the Crimea in March 2014 and the turmoil in Eastern Ukraine fundamentally changed the Visegrad Group’s perception of a possible security threat from Moscow and resulted in an unprecedented level of Visegrad defense cooperation (Rácz 2014, 2015).¹

¹ The Prime Ministers and foreign ministers held a number of extraordinary meetings and the V4 pledged to contribute to strengthening NATO capabilities and to participate in NATO’s activities in the Eastern Flank. Moreover, in 2016, the Visegrad Group formed its first joint EU Battlegroup. The intention to establish this military formation, the first one of its kind in the V4 history, stemmed not only from the growing Russian

Energy Policy

The issue of energy security resonates intensely within Visegrad. The dependence on Russian gas and the related need for the diversification of energy sources united the V4 countries, especially after the gas crisis in 2009 (interviews 1C & 4M). In the Bratislava Declaration of 2011, the Visegrad states declared that they would strengthen their cooperation in energy matters. However, the Nord Stream II pipeline, which would redirect a considerable amount of gas flows outside Central Europe, has cracked the seemingly united V4 front (interviews 1B, 1P & 4M). Poland has acted as the fiercest opponent of the Nord Stream II project, pointing to its potentially destabilizing geopolitical consequences. The Czech Republic initially joined the anti-Nord Stream 2 coalition but has later kept a rather low profile, hoping to play an important transit role within the project. Slovakia, which used to be one of the most vocal opponents of Nord Stream II, has over the course of time adopted a stance similar to that of the Czechs after it became clear that it could remain an important transit country even after the inauguration of Nord Stream 2. And Hungary's position has been driven by pragmatism and opportunistic motives rather than solidarity with the other group members (Jirušek 2019, 2020). As a consequence, the Visegrad countries have struggled to find a common ground on this particular issue. Contrary to their joint statements proclaiming their common objectives with regard to energy security, individual interests of the four countries have caused disunity in their stances (Jirušek 2020).

assertiveness but was also a result of the changing security environment caused by the US pivot to Asia, the need to continue transformation and modernization of V4 military forces, as well as the desire to demonstrate Alliance solidarity by supporting the NATO's Smart Defense initiative (Paulech and Urbanovská 2014; Šuplata 2013, 4). The battlegroup is considered a major project of the V4 regional defense cooperation (Sobják 2012, 136). The battlegroup should foster further collaboration of the V4 in the military-defense area by providing ample opportunity to the V4 states to fill their existing capability gaps and increase the interoperability of their military forces through training and joint exercises, which would in turn enable them to cooperate without significant difficulties in the future (Paulech and Urbanovská 2014; Šuplata 2013). The Joint Training and Exercises Strategy launched in 2015 during the Slovak Presidency can be regarded as another major success (Visegrad Group 2015; Naď et al. 2010, 9). As a consequence, since 2015, joint V4 military exercises are organized on an annual basis with the aim to enhance the visibility, credibility, as well as interoperability of the Visegrad armed forces (Šuplata and Naď 2014). The commitment to organize annual V4 military exercises is complemented by efforts to harmonize national educational defense systems of the Visegrad countries (Visegrad Group 2015). In order to minimize overcapacities in education and training infrastructure, the Visegrad Group established the Military Educational Platform (VIGMILEP) that should serve to improve the Professional Military Education (PME) of military officers and other experts in the area of security and defense in accordance with NATO and EU standards (Visegrad Group 2015).

Cohesion Policy

The Visegrad states' positions further coalesce around the topic of cohesion policy, which promotes the Union's socio-economic and territorial cohesion by addressing development disparities between individual Member States and regions (Végh 2018). The Visegrad states formed the core of the so-called "Friends of Cohesion" group, which lobbied for sustaining the cohesion capabilities of the EU in the 2013–2020 budgetary period (interviews 2E, 2I, 2L & 3K).² In a similar manner, the V4 were against reducing the allocation of cohesion funds in the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (Šitera 2019; Zgut et al. 2018).

² The Friends of Cohesion Group was formed in 2005 to gather and represent the interests of net beneficiaries from the European budget (at that time it was Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain). The group helps its members to coordinate their positions and jointly advocate for a strong cohesion policy.

Appendix B: State of research on the Visegrad cooperation

The following bibliography provides an overview of the most relevant works on the Visegrad cooperation, as elaborated in chapter 2:

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Appendix C: Mentions of solidarity in the TEU and the TFEU

CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TEU	
Preamble	DESIRING to deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions,
Article 2	The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.
Article 3	<p>It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.</p> <p>It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States.</p> <p>In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.</p>
Article 21 (Union's External Action – General Provisions)	The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity , and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.
Article 24 (The Common Foreign and Security Policy)	<p>Within the framework of the principles and objectives of its external action, the Union shall conduct, define and implement a common foreign and security policy, based on the development of mutual political solidarity among Member States, the identification of questions of general interest and the achievement of an ever-increasing degree of convergence of Member States' actions.</p> <p>The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall comply with the Union's action in this area.</p> <p>The Member States shall work together to enhance and develop their mutual political solidarity. They shall refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations.</p>
Article 31 (The Common Foreign and Security Policy)	<p>Decisions under this Chapter shall be taken by the European Council and the Council acting unanimously, except where this Chapter provides otherwise. The adoption of legislative acts shall be excluded.</p> <p>When abstaining in a vote, any member of the Council may qualify its abstention by making a formal declaration under the present subparagraph. In that case, it shall not be obliged to apply the decision, but shall accept that the decision commits the Union. In a spirit of mutual solidarity, the Member State concerned shall refrain from any action likely to conflict with or impede Union action based on that decision and the other Member States shall respect its position.</p>

Article 32 (The Common Foreign and Security Policy)	Member States shall consult one another within the European Council and the Council on any matter of foreign and security policy of general interest in order to determine a common approach. Before undertaking any action on the international scene or entering into any commitment which could affect the Union's interests, each Member State shall consult the others within the European Council or the Council. Member States shall ensure, through the convergence of their actions, that the Union is able to assert its interests and values on the international scene. Member States shall show mutual solidarity.
CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TFEU	
Preamble	INTENDING to confirm the solidarity which binds Europe and the overseas countries and desiring to ensure the development of their prosperity, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations,
Article 67 (Area of Freedom, Security and Justice – General Provisions)	It shall ensure the absence of internal border controls for persons and shall frame a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control, based on solidarity between Member States , which is fair towards third-country nationals. For the purpose of this Title, stateless persons shall be treated as third-country nationals.
Article 80 (Policies on Border Checks, Asylum and Immigration)	The policies of the Union set out in this Chapter and their implementation shall be governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility , including its financial implications, between the Member States. Whenever necessary, the Union acts adopted pursuant to this Chapter shall contain appropriate measures to give effect to this principle.
Article 122 (Economic Policy)	Without prejudice to any other procedures provided for in the Treaties, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may decide, in a spirit of solidarity between Member States , upon the measures appropriate to the economic situation, in particular if severe difficulties arise in the supply of certain products, notably in the area of energy.
Article 194 (Energy)	In the context of the establishment and functioning of the internal market and with regard for the need to preserve and improve the environment, Union policy on energy shall aim, in a spirit of solidarity between Member States , to: a) ensure the functioning of the energy market; b) ensure security of energy supply in the Union; c) promote energy efficiency and energy saving and the development of new and renewable forms of energy; and d) promote the interconnection of energy networks.
Title VII - Solidarity clause, Article 222 (External Action by the Union)	The Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster. The Union shall mobilise all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States, to [...] The arrangements for the implementation by the Union of the solidarity clause shall be defined by a decision adopted by the Council acting on a joint proposal by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The Council shall act in accordance with Article 31(1) of the Treaty on European Union where this decision has defence implications. The European Parliament shall be informed.
Protocol (No 28) on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion	RECALLING that Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union includes the objective of promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity between Member States and that the said cohesion figures among the areas of shared competence of the Union listed in Article 4(2)(c) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

Source: Own summary based on TEU and the TFEU (European EU 2009)

Appendix D: Qualitative content analysis

Appendix D.1: Czech national identity (categories, coding rules, and coding examples)

Categories (identity element)	Coding rules (specification)	Coding examples
Feelings of victimhood & anti-great power sentiments	<p>Discontinuous history as a result of oppression and foreign domination</p> <p>Aversion towards great powers</p>	<p>The anti-great power sentiments which were typical for post-1968 dissident discourse (see Kundera, 1968) are clearly present in the arguments of Czech parliamentarians and government officials today. Our content analysis shows that the stereotypical interpretation of great powers as treacherous and dangerous significant others is widely shared not only by Czech Eurosceptics but also by some supporters of the institutional reform treaty. Great powers are viewed as (potential) perpetrators and oppressors of other (smaller) states while the Czech Republic is presented as a (potential) victim of these great powers (Harnisch and Beneš 2015, 158).</p> <p>(...) the ability to survive the 300 years under Habsburg rule, six years of Nazi occupation and 43 years under Stalinism and post- Stalinism that has left its marks on national identity. Many Czechs feel that national identity has been “given” from outside, forced upon them by foreign great powers (Riishøj 2007, 522).</p>
Feelings of bitterness and betrayal & anti-great power sentiments	<p>Mistrust towards the West and the East (“historical debt” of both Russia and the West)</p> <p>Aversion towards great powers</p>	<p>The Munich agreement (‘Munich betrayal’) thus represents a significant shift towards negative demarcation vis-a-vis significant and organized others (perfidious great powers in general). Therefore, the narrative of the ‘Munich betrayal’/‘Munich dictate’ flourished after World War Two (during the communist period). We may argue that the communists simply generalized the representation originally constructed specifically for Germany and directed it towards the larger set of Western powers in general (Harnisch and Beneš 2015, 156).</p> <p>This deep Czech disillusionment with great powers is generally best exposed in the work of Milan Kundera. (...) According to Kundera, the tragedy of Central Europe (including Czechoslovakia) lies not only in the Soviet/Russian invasion but also in the West’s negligence (Harnisch and Beneš 2015, 157).</p> <p>(...) that those negative images of the past were going to be repeated in the present with the EU, like the “betrayal of Munich” in 1938 (the Munich Pact) or the “betrayal of Moscow” in 1968, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Today, this means the fear of an imagined next betrayal of Brussels, boosted by the “Eurofederalists,” who will create a superstate or superpower called the European Union (Esparza 2010, 429).</p>

<p>Strong quest for sovereignty and independence</p>	<p>“Integration dilemma” / ambiguous relationship towards the EU</p>	<p>Identity-based Euroscepticism is closely linked to the above-mentioned integration dilemma involving a contradiction between national identity and European identity and including a fear of being “absorbed” by a supranational institution like the EU, thereby loosing national sovereignty (Riishøj 2007, 508).</p> <p>Within this anti-great power discourse, the EU is increasingly understood either as an emerging great power per se (‘Brussels’ as a new ‘power centre’, the EU as emerging ‘superstate’) or as an institutionalized great power with domination over Europe. The (growing) influence of the great powers (negative significant others) is seen by most of the Czech parliamentarians as harmful and detrimental to the Czech national interests and national sovereignty (Harnisch and Beneš 2015, 158).</p>
<p>Self-image as a cultured and civilized nation</p>	<p>Democratic tradition and the tradition of a cultured and well-educated nation (Legacy of Palacký, Masaryk, Havel, etc.)</p>	<p>In a more positive way, Czech intellectuals regard their country as democratic, civilized and cultural, situated at the crossroads between East and West Europe, and belonging to the West as the “normal order.” The deviation from that order has been explained as the “un-normal,” as the “negative otherness” (Riishøj 2007, 523).</p> <p>Czechs have always seen themselves as a cultured and educated nation and they have tended to express a pride in their culture, but not, however, in the performance of the state. This is understandable – historically the state has often been a source of subjugation for the Czechs, while in the case of culture the opposite has been true (Vlachová and Řeháková 2009, 257).</p> <p>The image of the Czech nation which is most frequently invoked when Czechs talk about their assumed national traditions is the image of a democratic, well-educated and highly cultured nation, and this image is, in numerous contexts, a distinct source of national pride (Holý 1996).</p>
	<p>Proud history</p>	<p>The inhabitants of the Czech Republic are very proud, especially of its history (including history of the Czech Kingdom) arts and literature. Also, they are mostly proud of the results of the national economy since 1990 (Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997, 92).</p>
<p>Feeling of belonging to the West, sense of superiority over the East → Bridge between the East and the West</p>	<p>“Return to Europe” (feeling of <i>rightful</i> belonging to the West)</p>	<p>(...) the conviction that the Czech national naturally belongs to the European west is an important part of the national identity. (...) It can be based on the Czech attraction to the West with the consequence of a spontaneous desire for „getting back to Europe“ after the revolution and of the self-interpretation of the Czechs as a culturally European nation (Kubiš et al. 2005, 147-148).</p> <p>The figurative slogan „Return to Europe“, to which the media and some politicians referred in 1990, has epitomised a „return to the normal order of things“ for Czechs. It was a return to Europe, to which they have always felt they belonged, and with which they have always claimed to have strong cultural and historical ties (Brodský 2001, 24).</p>

	<p>Superiority over the East (self-perception as an exceptionally cultured and well-developed nation)</p>	<p>Czechs have always detested being classified as Eastern Europeans. (...) For Czechs, Eastern Europe is Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, and possibly Poland, but their country is part of Central Europe, and it is commonly described as lying in „the heart of Europe“ or even as being „the heart of Europe“ (Holý 1996).</p> <p>Post-Communist, Czech(oslovak) identity has been therefore constructed as an identity of a democratic, civilized, well-educated, and cultured nation, i.e. a nation that has always belonged to Europe, that has always been European and also a nation that has always detested being classified as Eastern European (Brodský 2001, 23).</p>
	<p>Bridge between the East and the West</p>	<p>They see themselves as belonging to neither the East nor the West - as standing in between. Their country lies on the boundary between East and West, and it has often seen the solution to its political predicament by thinking of itself as a „bridge“ between them. The image of a bridge expresses again the positive value ascribed to centrality: a structure that links the two sides. Czech national identity has been built on this metaphor since nineteenth-century national revival. (...) the metaphor of the bridge lends to Czech identity the role of mediator between two distinct European cultures and values systems (Holý 1996).</p>
<p>Homogeneity of the Czech population</p>	<p>Historical development from a heterogenous to a homogenous nation (low percentage of foreigners living in the Czech Republic)</p> <p>Czech national identity strongly connected to the Czech territory</p>	<p>The current population of the Czech Republic used to be rather heterogeneous in terms of both ethnicity and language. (...) The historical events of the 20th century have totally shattered this picture of an open and multi-cultural society. Most members of the Jewish community living in the Czech Lands were killed in concentrations camps during World War II. The majority of those who survived the Nazi regime later emigrated, mainly to Israel. Over 90% of the German-speaking population was forced to leave the country in the early post-war period. Although in the late 40s one immigrants (mainly Slovaks) were encouraged to resettle in the border regions, the scope of immigration could not alter the newly-constituted and overwhelming majority of Czechs in the Czech Lands (Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997, 79-80).</p> <p>The 1948 Communist coup d'etat and the subsequent installation of a Soviet-type communist regime seriously hindered the natural exchange of both ideas and people between the Czech Lands and neighboring countries. The two waves of mass emigration which occurred in the Czech Lands after the 1948 Communist overthrow and after the 1968 Soviet army invasion. (...) Thus the only real natural contact between the Czechs and other nations - that which was neither restricted by the border control, nor by the ideological aims of „tourism planners“ - was for more than 40 years represented by the coexistence with Slovaks within the framework of Czechoslovakia (Nedomová and Koštelecký 1997, 80).</p>

Widespread secularism	Protestant tradition	<p>A number of the leading figures of nineteenth-century Czech nationalism were Protestant, either by upbringing (Kollar, Safarik, Palacky) or by conversion (Masaryk). (...) They opposed the Czech ‘genius’ to the Austrian ‘genius’, defining the latter in terms of Catholicism and the former in terms of Hussism, and portraying Hussism as the first expression of the typically Czech aspiration to a freedom (Cabanel 2009, 31).</p> <p>The Czechs had always understood the state to be the defender of a nation’s vital interests and a guarantee of its existence as a cultural entity, and thus they had always striven for independent statehood. The secular nature of Czech national identity and the rejection of the Roman Catholic Church are connected with this (Vlachová and Řeháková 2009, 255).</p>
	Soviet anti-religious propaganda and the communist regime’s persecution against believers	<p>Indifference towards church religion was, in the second half of the 20th century, further deepened by the anti-religious propaganda and persecution of the communist regime but we should not interpret the Czech non-religiosity simply as a legacy of the communist past. The Czech population had rather ambiguous attitudes towards the church even before the onset of the communism, which explains why none of the other Central European post-communist country displays a similarly low support for traditional religion as the Czech Republic's population (Hamplová 2010).</p>
Czech “littleness”	<p>Acting in opportunistic ways and relying on others</p> <p>Blaming others for one’s own mistakes and disclaiming responsibility</p> <p>Skepticism and “should-be-ism”</p>	<p>The concept of littleness is sometimes interestingly regarded as the fundamental feature of Czech identity. It embraces the tendency to accept any changes in a messianic fashion, passively obeying something one is strongly dissatisfied with, something which prime Minister Klaus called the Czech tendency to, here and there, „cover in history“, a certain carelessness, cowardliness, preferring the definite to the uncertain, blaming others for one’s own faults, expecting something from others, but not from oneself, disclaiming responsibility. (...) Czech littleness is conceived as a constant immaturity, caused mainly by numerous historical discontinuities and by the fact that Czechs did not have much historical space to „grow up“ politically, i.e. it has been somebody else deciding about them, instead of them. Miroslav Macek has named another phenomenon of Czech politics, which, it can be argued, is another expression of its littleness - „should-be-ism“ - planning something, saying something should be done, criticising something, but not putting words into practice, not doing anything to change one is critical about (Brodský 2001, 29).</p>

Source: Own table

Full results of the conducted qualitative content analysis can be shared upon request.

Appendix D.2: Hungarian national identity (categories, coding rules, and coding examples)

Categories (identity element)	Coding rules (specification)	Coding examples
Sense of victimhood and anti-great power sentiments	Sense of victimhood based on a series of defeats, unsuccessful revolutions, and other setbacks	<p>In the centuries following the Turk occupation a series of local and temporary victories in battles fought for the restoration of national independence ended in defeat one by one, the last in 1956. There is no redemption until the end of the 20th century. Even the political system change in 1989/90 cannot be considered redemption since the agency of the nation had relatively little importance in its occurrence (László 2014, 50).</p> <p>For centuries, the recurring schema was that initial victories are followed by defeat ... This form of consolidation of historical experiences in collective memory leads to the so-called collective victim role (László 2014, 50).</p> <p>The Peace Treaty of Trainon as a traumatic event of the Hungarian collective memory. The peace treaty ending the First World War was concluded between representatives of the Entente and the Hungarian government on 4 June 1920 in the Grand Trianon Palace near Versailles. The peace treaty deprived Hungary of two thirds of its territory and population. (László 2014, 127-128).</p>
	Notion of being an innocent victim of foreign great powers and a community of suffering	<p>The redefined version of Hungarian identity appeals to the feelings of victimhood and the desire for the resurrection of Hungarian greatness. Tellingly, the first vote of the Fidesz controlled parliament was to adopt a law establishing the Day of National Unity to be observed on June 4, the day of the signing of the Treaty of Trianon (the first official commemoration of the treaty since the end of World War II). The commemoration of the national tragedy was supposed to bring together all Hungarians, including ethnic Hungarians living abroad who were soon allowed for the first time in nearly a century to obtain Hungarian citizenship and to vote in Hungarian elections (Kounalakis, 2015, pp. 85e86) (...) The key message of the emerging new “national narrative” is that Hungary was neither the culprit in the war, nor its loser. Rather, it was the innocent victim of foreign great powers (Shevchenko 2018, 67).</p> <p>The interwar notion of Hungarians as a community of suffering still exists and has been strengthened by the period of communist rule. (...) Furthermore, since it was Soviet power that ensured the victory of communism after 1947 and the suppression of the 1956 revolution, Hungarians regard them- selves as the victims of an unwanted communist regime much as they did after the 1919 Bolshevik experiment (Haynes 1995, 95).</p>
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West	Perceived indifference manifested by Western Europe when Hungary fell under the Soviet sphere of influence	While pro-Western orientation has been historically crucial for Hungary's international identity, its historical narrative frequently features instances when the country was disrespected, abandoned, betrayed and unduly punished by the West (Maracz, 2012, pp. 170e171). One prominent example of such insult and injury is the exorbitant price Hungary had to pay for the country's full independence

	<p>or when it needed help against the Soviets in 1956</p>	<p>gained after the end of World War I. In 1920, the Treaty of Trianon imposed by France and England punished Hungary for being on the losing side during World War I by surrendering more than two thirds of its territory and more than half of its pre-war population to Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Austria and Italy. With 3.5 million of ethnic Hungarians living in historical Hungarian villages and now finding themselves outside the country's borders, Hungary experienced drastically diminished status and influence in Europe (Johnson, 2001, pp. 171e196). Inter-war Hungary was surrounded by a hostile “Little Entente” of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia with few opportunities of independent foreign policy (Jeszenszky, 2007, p. 44). While Hungary mattered in the pre-1914 European politics, after Trianon it clearly did not (Traub, 2015) (Shevchenko 2018, 65).</p> <p>When Hungary was drawn into the Soviet political orbit after World War II, the West acquiesced to the imposition of the hardline Stalinist regime in late 1940s and to the Soviet brutal suppression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 96e103; 153e160; Gati, 2006) (Shevchenko 2018, 65).</p>
Strong attachment to national sovereignty	<p>Notion of being a nation struggling for centuries for freedom and liberation</p>	<p>During this century at Trianon, in 1945, at the 1947 Peace of Paris, or at the conclusion of the Warsaw Pact other nations have determined the country's fate. And when, in 1956, the Hungarians tried to achieve independence from the Soviet Bloc, their efforts were unsuccessful (Deme 1998, 313).</p> <p>Hungarians are characterized, through their incessant struggle for independence (Cieger 2016).</p>
	<p>Strong opposition against any kind of federalism, supranationalism, or pooling of sovereignty</p> <p>National identity always having precedence over European identity</p>	<p>After coming back to power in 2010, Orban called for rethinking of the relationship between European integration and national sovereignty (Gazdac and Kiss, 2015, pp. 119e120). Hungary should no longer view itself as a compliant student of the Western educators. It should be genuinely sovereign. “We cannot be successful if we can only be servants in our own country, if we have no independence. National sovereignty is a fundamental question,” emphasized Orban in his 2015 State of the Nation address (Orban, 2015) (Shevchenko 2018, 68).</p>
Inferiority and superiority complex	<p>Tension between the romanticized notions of Hungary’s glorious past and the inferiority complex created by Trianon and the years of communist rule</p>	<p>On the same occasion Foreign Minister Geza Jeszenszky spoke of the need to restore legitimate national pride and to do away with the inferiority complex created by the years of communist rule (Deme 1998, 312).</p> <p>Trianon has been a source of national sorrow for Hungarians for more than half a century. To some extent this is a post-colonial malaise, made all the keener by the widespread sense that the lands lost are true Hungarian soil. The large minority populations in Romania, Slovakia and the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina give a political edge to that sorrow. For many ethnic Hungarians, particularly those who now live beyond Hungary's borders, Trianon was perceived as a grossly unfair imposition (Traub 2015).</p>

	<p>Feeling of inferiority reinforced by the perceived paternalistic approach from older Member States towards newer Members States (feeling of being treated as secondary citizens in the EU)</p>	<p>The „secondary membership“ for the new members states has been a real danger, and the victimisation or „naming and blaming“ strategy of the West European leaders has caused resentment in ECE. The resentment in its extreme form can produce even the populist slogan of the „domination from Brussels“ (Ágh 2011, 265).</p> <p>(...) the European identity has come to the fore after the EU entry in the 2000s as a Value war on the EU because the issue European identity has emerged as connected to a threat perception of becoming secondary citizens in the EU (Ágh 2011, 235).</p>
	<p>Feelings of superiority over the Western Balkans (and Eastern Europe)</p>	<p>One of the most important consequences of the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy was the radical transformation of the relationship between Hungary and the Balkans. During the age of dualism the aspiration for a Hungarian domination over the region was a prevailing view in Budapest. This view was based on various economic and geographic arguments referring to the “civilizing mission” of Hungarians as ‘a civilized Western people’ (Juhász 2015, 114).</p>
National pride	<p>Heroization of Hungary’s history (achievements despite repeated defeats)</p>	<p>The Avowal of the National Faith evokes the Christian and European roots of the country, its alleged freedom-fighting tradition, and the "outstanding intellectual achievements of the Hungarian people." (Cieger 2016, 142-143).</p> <p>Historical Hungary could be considered as a great power of medieval Europe which in the sixteenth century was occupied by the Turks and later by the Habsburgs, who ruled the country from then on in co-operation with the Hungarian aristocracy, and in a Dual Monarchy as of 1867. (...) The perception of this historical experience as an earlier "Golden Age" (Nyyssönen 2006, 165).</p>
	<p>Memories of being the “happiest barrack” of the socialist camp, the most “westernized” and liberal country in the former Eastern Bloc, a “post-communist success story,” and an “ideal reform country”</p>	<p>Tensions in relations between Hungary and the West are especially puzzling since the former has been widely acknowledged as the “ideal reform country”: a steadfast follower of the West and one of the trailblazers in Eastern Europe's transition to markets and liberal democracy (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015, p. 90) (Shevchenko 2018, 63).</p> <p>Hungary was considered a post-communist success story. The country achieved a peaceful and negotiated transition to democratic rule in October 1989. (...) Hungary was among the first countries to open EU accession negotiations in 1998 and complied particularly successfully with membership requirements. (Herman 2016, 252).</p>
Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs	<p>Heroization of Hungary’s history (historical greatness and considerable weight in Europe)</p>	<p>Hungarian narrative schema - the glorious past is greatly accentuated. (László 2014, 49).</p> <p>The redefined version of Hungarian identity appeals to the feelings of victimhood and the desire for the resurrection of Hungarian greatness (Shevchenko 2018, 67).</p> <p>The perception of this historical experience as an earlier "Golden Age" (Nyyssönen 2006, 165).</p>

	Feeling of being a bridge between the East and the West	Despite this long history of ambivalence in Hungary toward both East and West, the closest the Hungarian state in the early-post-socialist era has been to ambivalence is in depicting Hungary as a bridge between East and West (West 2000, 56).
Perception of belonging to the West versus the policy of “Opening up towards the East”	Historical ties to the Western culture	Culturally, Hungarians see themselves as European and Western, at least some of the time. Historically, Hungarians know they share with many of their neighbours a history of Mongol, Ottoman, Habsburg, and Soviet domination (West 2000, 54). Even the Hungarian 'Golden Age' of St Stephen has been used as an example of Hungary's 'Western' credentials (Haynes 1995, 95).
	Historical role as a force defending Europe from enemies coming from the East and so protecting Western Christendom	Hungarians fought their enemies who came from the east: Tartar, Turk and other invaders and in doing so also were protecting Western Christendom (Deme 1998, 310). Orban's government has also invested in the promotion of the historical narrative depicting Hungary as a Christian force saving Europe from Muslim invaders (Shevchenko 2018, 67).
	“Return to Europe”	Indeed, membership in the EU25 and `returning to Europe' were two of the most salient ideas during the early stages of the transition for legitimating political action and justifying the hardships that followed (West 2000, 54). Integration into the West and conforming to the criteria for membership in the key Western institutions became Hungary's overarching goal after the end of the communist rule (Shevchenko 2018, 65-66). The fall of communism brought the restoration of Hungarian sovereignty—a happy separation from the East, an expectant turn toward the West. (...) For twenty years the direction of changes in foreign policy remained clear: Hungary must be an organic part of Europe; it must unambiguously belong to the Western world and further strengthen its political, economic, and cultural ties to the West (Kornai 2015, 43).
	Turanism and “Opening up towards the East”	Orban's sceptical position on the Euro-Atlantic Alliance and his emphasis on the East (Economist, 2014a) is illustrative of the fact that, in foreign policy issues, there is an overlap between Jobbik and Fidesz. In view of all of these factors, it can be argued that the rise of Jobbik is pre- dominantly due to the party's strategy in which they re-shaped Hungarian national identity, instead forming an ideological narrative, based in mythic Turanism (Kim 2016, 353). Orbán used the explicit term of 'Opening up towards the East' (keleti nyitás) in Paris in May 2011. (...) The current government, just like the previous ones, categorizes Russia as an important partner in the opening-up efforts; consequently Russia belongs to the East (Rácz 2011, 146).

Strong sense of solidarity towards Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries	Ethnic, rather than civic, understanding of citizenship	<p>The collapse of communism went hand in hand with the need for a redefinition of the national/ ethnic identity in Central and Eastern European societies. Simply put, the reconstruction of collective identity according to national/ethnic terms and the revival of the historically based division between the mythical "we" and "them" became inevitable (Strážay 2005, 47).</p> <p>Following his election victory in April 1990, Antall stated that the 'Hungarian nation stands united regardless of the citizenship that some Hungarians may have acquired in the tempest of history' (Haynes 1995, 97-98).</p>
	Minority policy as a key element in Hungarian foreign policy thinking and identity	<p>In August 1992, Antall said that he wished to be Prime Minister "emotionally as well as spiritually" for 15 million Hungarians, a figure that included the ethnic Hungarian populations in surrounding countries. (Traub 2015).</p> <p>Since the collapse of the bipolar world in 1990, Hungary's foreign policy has focused on three main goals: (1) better ties with the West and better transatlantic relations; (2) cooperation and rapprochement with neighbouring countries, and (3) oversight of the situation of Hungarians in nearby states. These objectives as a foreign policy doctrine were based by the Hungarian parliament on 1 March 1993 and confirmed also on 29 December 1998 (Ágh 2011, 255).</p>
Homogeneity of the Hungarian population	Ethnic and religious homogeneity	<p>The period also saw the consummation of what, in its long-term effects on the national destinies, was the most serious of all its developments - the great transformation of the ethnic character of the population. The beginnings of the change reach back to far earlier periods. The Turkish advance through the Balkans had already driven many Serbs, Vlachs and Bosnian Croats to take refuge in Hungary. Then had come the Turkish invasion and occupation of Hungary itself. (...) It is calculated that by the end of the impopulation, the Magyars numbered only about 35 per cent of the total population (Macartney 2008, 116-119).</p> <p>Hungary's relative ethnic homogeneity (Fowler 2004, 58).</p>
Religious underpinning of Hungarian identity & attachment to traditional family values	<p>Historical memory of belonging to the Western Christian tradition</p> <p>Conservative Christian worldviews</p>	<p>One further specific element of Hungarian national identity is Christianity (Fowler 2004, 60). (...) the state foundation establishes Hungarian national identity as Christian (Fowler 2004, 63).</p> <p>Beyond these convictions, however, there is little other intellectual foundation to the Hungarian sense of identity. In particular, Hungarian nationhood lacks any coherent sense of a religious underpinning. Since religious affiliation in Hungary is divided between Catholicism and Calvinism, religion as such cannot provide an underpinning to notions of identity beyond a vague loyalty to a broadly based 'Western' Christianity. (Haynes 1995, 95).</p>

Source: Own table

Full results of the conducted qualitative content analysis can be shared upon request.

Appendix D.3: Polish national identity (categories, coding rules, and coding examples)

Categories (identity element)	Coding rules (specification)	Coding examples
Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”	Commemoration of historical traumas, in particular Poland’s subjugation to “great powers” and related suffering under foreign dominations	<p>Following the electoral success of the conservative Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) in 2005, the country witnessed a rapid revival of officially sanctioned debate about the importance of preserving national identity. This was to be achieved through the commemoration of historical traumas, in particular Poland’s subjugation by ‘Others’ and the suffering this inflicted on the Polish nation. (Stańczyk 2013, 289-290).</p> <p>The entire post-war reality, all areas of life, were dominated by a narrative of victimhood (Wolff-Powęska and Forecki 2016, 7).</p> <p>While many Europeans can justifiably lay claim to having the most tragic modern history, it is perhaps Poland that has the strongest claim. Even with regards to the experiences of the Second World War, where most countries experienced extraordinary levels of suffering, it was arguably the Poles who suffered the most (Killingsworth et al. 2010, 363).</p>
Feelings of betrayal and related “historical debt” of both Russia and the West	Bitterness originating from repeated instances of perceived betrayal even by the closest allies	<p>The war had a searing effect. To the massive physical losses of some six million citizens, mass dislocation, psychological degradation and exhaustion were added a sense of national betrayal by the Western Allies (Millard 1995, 112).</p> <p>They were still reeling from the shock of the defeat of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 and the virtual crushing of the non-communist resistance movement, the AK. What is more, the survivors blamed the Red Army, at the outskirts of Warsaw, for standing by while the capital was reduced to rubble and the cream of the AK perished. (Millard 1995, 113).</p> <p>Poland’s miseries from Soviet hands, for which the West is partly responsible by ceding Poland to Moscow at Yalta and Potsdam, are used to imply a debt that the West is expected to pay off (Zarycki 2004, 614).</p>
High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty	Long history of striving for political independence	<p>Significant for the Polish political tradition is the idea of political independence (Cichocki and Czerwińska 2011, 273)</p> <p>The largest country in what was Eastern Europe, or that part of Europe ruled by communist parties until the late 1980s, Poland has had a long history of opposition to the Russians and struggle against outside conquerors. By 1795, Poland had been completely carved into pieces of the Russian, German, and Austrian empires. From then on, Poles fought at home and abroad for Poland to be independent. It took World War I and Woodrow Wilson’s commitment to “national self-determination” for Poland to get that independence (Curry 2015, 162).</p>
	“Integration dilemma” within the EU context	Polish society is especially sensitive to a sense of solidarity and balance. Due to historical reasons, it is afraid of the large countries’ domination in the EU institutions and common policies and would like to avoid the development of forms of

		<p>closer cooperation such as „core Europe“ or „two-speed Europe“ (Cichocki and Czerwińska 2011, 286).</p> <p>The above-mentioned Polish foreign policy activism has activated the so-called “integration dilemma”—on the one hand a fear of being “excluded,” on the other a fear of being “absorbed” (Riishøj 2007, 520).</p>
Superiority and inferiority complex	Superiority over Eastern territories (Eastern Borderlands, the <i>Kresy</i>)	<p>When talking about the Polish inferiority complex, some point out the fact that in most surveys, Poles in fact declare a very high level of national pride, one that is often above the level of national averages in the West. At the same time, Kurczewska argues that the contemptuous and disrespectful attitude toward the eastern neighbors that she reports as emerging consistently from her empirical research should be interpreted as an obvious superiority complex (Zarycki 2004, 601).</p> <p>Problems with the identification of the “eastern” elements in the historically shaped Polish identity and the interaction between contemporary Polish and Russian culture as well as other cultures of the region may of course be linked to a number of other factors. ... All in all, there seems to exist a syndrome of symbolic “flight from the East,” and ignoring the East out of fear of being suspected of having any links with it or sympathy towards it – such are the main orientalist motives of the majority of identity narratives. Liberal Poland aspires to a definitely non-Eastern Poland – as remote as possible from everything that might be associated with anything Russian, and as close as possible to anything connected with what is perceived as Western, whatever that label might mean (Zarycki 2017).</p>
	Resentment towards the liberal, “multiculti” character of the West	<p>Although the ‘Poland as belonging to (Western) Europe’ discourse became dominant among Polish intellectuals, there were those who looked upon the West ‘as false, cold and morally corrupt, because it was seen to be materialistic, godless, mercantile and rationalist’ (Killingsworth et al. 2010, 360).</p> <p>Poland is therefore often depicted in political and media debates as morally superior to western countries and as a society that has not been ‘spoiled’ by changes brought about by ‘civilisational’ processes (Wise, 2010b), for example its ethnic and religious homogeneity was valued by some (Mayblin et al. 2016, 71).</p> <p>(...) the Polish Catholic Church, increasingly seen as the very essence of Polishness, always had a highly ambivalent attitude towards European modernity, secularism, and liberalism. (...) The ‘true Polish soul’ is something different from Europe’s ‘lack of spiritual values’ (...) (Lewicki and Mandes 2005, 49).</p>
	Inferiority complex towards the West; historically asymmetrical	<p>There is no doubt that Poland has always been a peripheral part of Europe. Influences from Western Europe have always been stronger in Poland than any contributions Poland might have made to European culture. Polish elites, fairly self-confident before the partitions, in the nineteenth century developed a certain inferiority complex towards Europe,</p>

	relations with Western Europe	<p>always looking to the west for recognition of the role of Poland in European history, always trying to prove that Poland indeed belonged to European centre of civilisation. Relations between Poland and Western Europe were asymmetrical, not only because Poles took from the west more than they contributed there, but also because the west was more important for the Poles than Poland for western Europeans (Mach 2000).</p> <p>While Polish elites might have felt an ingrained part of Western Europe, they were well aware of the fact that the relationship between Poland and Western Europe has often been ‘asymmetrical (Killingsworth et al. 2010, 360).</p>
Perception of belonging to the West	Historical ties to the Western culture	<p>The idea of Poland belonging to Western Europe is informed primarily by nineteenth century spiritual and political national elites, who created the myth of Poland as the eastern flank of Western Europe and, as such, the gatekeeper of Western values and defender of Western civilisation (Killingsworth et al. 2010, 359).</p> <p>Poles consider themselves a Western European nation. This idea is one of the central elements of the Polish national identity (Mach 2000).</p>
	Poland as a martyr and savior of Western, Christian civilization / Poland as the “bulwark of Europe”	<p>Poland’s geopolitical position between two cultural and religious civilisations of East and West, together with nineteenth century anti-Russian uprisings, created a myth that Poland is a gatekeeper of Western values and defender of Western civilisation. This reinforces three important issues. First, Poles regard themselves as belonging to a Western European tradition (Klatt 2011, 4).</p> <p>Recalling its 1000-year history, Poland naturally considers itself a part of Europe. The country perceives itself as a defender (ultramontanism, Polonia semper fidelis, the bulwark of Christianity) of the world of Christian (Catholic) values against external enemies (Turkey, Russia) (Wilkiewicz 2003, 99).</p>
	“Return to Europe”	<p>The popular notion of a ‘return to Europe’ represents three mutually reinforcing ideas. First, as in other parts of Central Europe, Poland conceived its fight against communism as a fight to return to Europe (Kundera, 1984); after 1989, hence, the goal to join the European Union was widely shared across political divisions. Second, it suggests that the 45 years under Communist rule, when Poland was deemed to belong to Eastern rather than Western Europe, represented nothing more than an aberration. Third, it suggests an equally strong feeling that Poland had in some way always been a part of Europe. As such, it reflects a need to recover ‘national self-esteem as a member of the family of free, independent and above all modern European states (Killingsworth et al. 2010, 359).</p> <p>After World War II Poland was cut off from Europe. The intellectual, anti-communist elites and the Roman Catholic Church created a myth of belonging to Europe, an ideological and emotional construction which presented Poland as part of Europe, artificially and temporarily</p>

		separated from the rest of the family of European countries by the Iron Curtain (Mach 2000).
Desire to be a recognized actor in European and international affairs	Heroization of Poland's history	<p>Masterpieces of painting, poetry and drama created and image of heroic struggle for freedom and played a significant role in the construction of the Polish national identity and the world-view of educated Poles (Mach 2000).</p> <p>The feeling of Polish innocence and the heroization of their own history has been encouraged in young and old by the stylization of the historical literature (Marten-Finnis 1995, 259).</p>
	Feeling of being a "bridge" between the East and the West	<p>Furthermore, in Grudziński's opinion, reformulating Poland's foreign policy and becoming an intelligent agent would endorse Poland's place in Europe as a middle-man between the West and the East (Klatt 2011, 6).</p> <p>The specific strengths of Polish expertise in Russia seem to lie on one hand in the length and cruelty of the Russian occupations and on the other in Poland's aforementioned European-ness, which makes it unique in being able to express its special knowledge of the East in terms of Western-European notions. Poland is both a Slavic nation and a Catholic one, the former greatly deepening its understanding of Russia and the latter allowing it to belong to Western Christianity and so to Western Europe. These considerations are sometimes used to justify the idea of Poland as a bridge or intermediary between Russia and the West (Zarycki 2004, 616-617).</p>
	Perception of being a regional leader	<p>According to a majority of the representatives of the Polish political elite interviewed for this article, Poland is big and influential. For example, acting Political Director in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Witold Sobków, is convinced that Poland is currently a regional leader and an expert in Eastern European politics in the EU (Klatt 2011, 6).</p>
National pride based in the perception of having a strong and resilient ethnic identity	Important role of historical, linguistic, and ethnic aspects of national identity for the survival of the Polish nation	<p>Poland lost its sovereignty at the end of the 18th century, just as the modern concept of nation took hold throughout Europe. Thus, there was no Polish state to promote identification with the nation. Instead, generations of romantic Polish patriots made it their mission to preserve the idea of the nation even though it had no political reality. Correspondingly, Polish sociologists developed theories of nationalism based on cultural factors rather than state political power (Galbraith 2004, 57).</p> <p>The Polish national identity is usually characterised in ethnic terms with strong references to ethnicity and religion. This construction stems from the Polish history of foreign domination and denied sovereignty. additionally, Roman Catholicism and its institutional network helped to build and sustain Polish national identity in the absence of state structures during the period of partitions in the nineteenth century, heavily influencing its construction. The communist era, when the Church represented the nation against the communist regime, reinforced this role (Góra and Zielińska 2019, 5).</p>

Fierce attachment to Christian values	Historical role of religion and the importance of the Roman Catholic Church in Polish resistance to various foreign dominations	<p>The Catholic Church became closely identified with Polish national identity. These lessons served Poles well in their resistance to the German occupation of World War II and remained with them for the more than forty years of communist rule (Curry 2015, 162).</p> <p>Poland strikes social scientists as a rare case of a deeply religious nation lying on the outskirts of a mostly secularized Europe. (...) Most authors refer to history in order to explain this tie, arguing that during times of partition and dependence, 'only the Catholic Church kept the bright flame of freedom alight' (Davies 1982; Steven 1982: 156). The communist period only reinforced the link between religion and national identity(Lewicki and Mandes 2005, 39).</p>
Homogeneity of the Polish population	Ethnic homogeneity Religious homogeneity	<p>Due to experiences of the Second World War and 40 years of communism the Polish society and state became de facto unitary (Cichocki and Czerwińska 2011, 270).</p> <p>When the Polish communists came to power they took control of a new territorial entity. The Soviet Union had incorporated the ethnically mixed eastern borderlands. In return Poland acquired German lands, now known as 'the recovered territories'. This new Poland was largely homogeneous, both in regard to ethnicity and religion. (Millard 1995, 113).</p> <p>In consequence of war and mass relocation of populations Poland became an almost homogeneous nation, ethnically and religiously (Lewicki and Mandes 2005, 45).</p>
Polarization of politics and society	Polarization stemming, among other things, from state partitions and uneven transformation after 1989	<p>Poland was divided among three empires—Russia, Austria–Hungary, and Prussia—for over a century until 1918. The partition brought about divergence in culture, institutions, and economic development (Grosfeld and Zhuravskaya 2015).</p> <p>The three empires differed in economic development, political institutions, culture, and, as a result, economic and social policies toward their Polish territories. (...) Because the Industrial Revolution occurred when Poland was divided among the three empires, differences in the scale and depth of industrialization had an important effect on economic development of the three parts of Poland. Prussia industrialized its Polish territory earlier than either Russia or Austria. In particular, Prussia completed substantially more big-scale infrastructure projects in its Polish territories than did its counterparts (Grosfeld and Zhuravskaya 2015, 61).</p>

Source: Own table

Full results of the conducted qualitative content analysis can be shared upon request.

Appendix D.4: Slovak national identity (categories, coding rules, and coding examples)

Categories (identity element)	Coding rules (specification)	Coding examples
<p>Inferiority complex / feeling of always being the “smaller,” less important partner (also feelings of betrayal)</p>	<p>Inferiority complex towards the Czech Republic and, more generally, the “West” (historically asymmetrical relations)</p> <p>Perceived unequal status between Czechs and Slovaks in all Czechoslovak formations</p>	<p>However, the Czech Lands were ruled by Austria; Slovakia was part of the Hungarian kingdom for nearly a thousand years. As a result, the Czechs had greater opportunities to develop a mass-based national movement and participate in politics in Bohemia and in Vienna. The Czech Lands also became the center of the empire’s industry. (...) In contrast to the Czech Lands, which were among the most developed parts of the empire, Slovakia remained predominantly agrarian (Wolchik 2015, 187-188).</p> <p>The unitary nature of the state, which was a centralized government based in Prague, also provoked dissatisfaction among many Slovaks, who came to feel that they had merely traded rule from Budapest for rule from Prague (Wolchik 2015, 189).</p> <p>These clashes strengthened the view that Slovakia was not being treated as an equal partner in the federation but as a subordinate province. Fears grew that Slovakia's interests could never be properly safeguarded in a federation in which it had only a third of the total population (Morison 1995, 82).</p> <p>The Kosice program of the new Czechoslovak government, however, explicitly recognized the Slovaks as a separate, distinct nation, and promised them significant regional autonomy on the principle of “an equal to an equal.” These promises were hardly kept even before the Communist seizure of power in February 1948, and afterwards the inherent centralization of Stalinism meant that once more the affairs of Slovakia were decided from Prague. Only during the heady months of 1968 did Slovak leaders gain acceptance of a federal reorganization of Czechoslovakia, the only Dubcek-era reform to survive the “fraternal assistance” of 21 August 1968. Yet the way in which autonomy was carried out effectively emasculated most of its provisions, and the genuine decision-making power remained in Prague (Agnew 2000, 629).</p>
<p>Sense of victimhood and the “great power complex”</p>	<p>Long history of subjugation to other nations, primarily Hungary and the Soviet Union, and related suffering under foreign domination</p>	<p>The Moravian Empire collapsed at the beginning of the tenth century, squeezed between the Germans to the west and the invading Magyar horde from the east. As a consequence the Slovaks were to remain under Hungarian dominion until the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the conclusion of the First World War. There was no identifiable Slovak historical state (Morison 1995, 67).</p> <p>Unlike the Czechs, the Slovaks have been seen as a people “without a history” and historic consciousness. There have been references to the Moravian kingdom in the ninth century and the missionaries St. Cyril and St. Methodius, the introduction of Christianity and national awakening in the nineteenth century, but these references are few. (Riishøj 2007, 523).</p> <p>Always finding themselves in states that “belonged” to others, the Slovaks asserted a natural right to their own “visibility,” ending in the creation (for the second time in one century) of their own state in 1993 Vienna (Agnew 2000, 642).</p>

		<p>The idea based on the 1000 years of suffering between the fall of Great Moravia (as the first Czechoslovak state) and the creation of a Czechoslovak republic was rooted into the Slovak narrative. It was clearly stated that Slovak history, up to 1918, was the history of a subjugated nation (Hudek 2011, 264).</p> <p>Obviously, it was the Magyar destruction of Greater Moravia that marked the beginning of this ‘tisícročná poroba’ (one millennium-long yoke). It was Šafárik, who gave a final shape to this stereotype of ‘tisícročná poroba’ in the 1820s (Kamusella 2009, 819). (...) The frequent political use of the concept of poroba, brought another one of obet, or victim. In Central Europe, it became a popular genre of nationhood legitimization to present one’s nation as a ‘victim,’ or even ‘martyr’ wronged by a neighboring nation(s). In the biblical tradition, ‘the last will be the first,’ so the hope was that a real or imagined wrongdoing would be ameliorated in future in favor of the ‘victim-nation.’ In this paradigm of ‘national redemption,’ the Slovaks were presented as a victim of the Magyars and the Czechs (Kamusella 2009, 820).</p>
	Historically conditioned fears of international isolation	<p>After the 1989 “velvet revolution” against communist rule and 1993’s “velvet divorce” dissolving Czechoslovakia, there seemed to be fewer and fewer things about Slovak political life that one could describe as “velvet.” Under Mečiar’s prime-ministerial leadership, the government of Slovakia developed an increasingly rough edge, becoming so inhospitable to ethnic minorities and so intolerant of political opposition that both the European Union and NATO rejected its application for membership on political grounds alone (Krause 2003, 66).</p> <p>Although the Slovak leadership never renounced the goals of joining NATO and the EU, under Mečiar Slovakia fell out of the group of countries included in the first round of NATO expansion and was in danger of being excluded from EU expansion as well (Wolchik 2015, 207).</p>
High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty	Long history of striving for political independence	<p>Just as the declaration of sovereignty had referred to the millennial struggle of the Slovak nation for its individuality, the Slovak constitution and Gasparovic’s address both anchored the achievement of the constitution in history. The preamble to the constitution called to mind “the political and cultural heritage of our predecessors, the experience gained through centuries of struggle for our national existence and statehood, ... the spiritual bequest of Cyril and Methodius, and the historical legacy of Great Moravia,” in addition to the right of nations to self-determination (Agnew 2000, 631).</p> <p>The second milestone was a real breakthrough after 1000 years of coexistence with Magyars and other nations in one kingdom. After decades of ruthless “Magyarization,” the Slovaks finally lost trust in the Hungarian state and decided to live together with the Czechs. The “Martin Declaration” from October 1918, a political document expressing the Slovak will for independence from Hungarians and for a common life with the Czechs (Bútorá and Bútorová 1993, 706).</p> <p>The establishment of the Slovak Republic in 1993 has been represented in a romantic manner as a ‘victory in the thousand-year struggle for independence’ (from both Hungarians and Czechs) (Chudžíková 2011, 114).</p>

Pride in national resistance	Heroization of certain events in Slovakia's history (Slovak National Uprising of 1944; attainment of independent statehood in 1993)	<p>In May 1945, as Soviet forces approached from the east, Slovak anti-Nazi opposition leaders staged what has come to be known as the Slovak National Uprising against the Germans near the Dukla pass. This action came to be seen after the war as a symbol of Slovak resistance and as a counter to the policies of the Slovak state (Wolchik 2015, 189-190).</p> <p>The Slovak National Uprising of 1944 is undoubtedly the peak in the history of the twentieth century (Kováč 2011b, 8).</p>
Desire to prove the nation's rightful belonging to the West	"Return to Europe" & continuous pro-integrationist approach towards the EU	<p>After the end of communism, Czech and Slovak leaders faced many of the same tasks as leaders in other postcommunist states. The top priority goals were aptly summarized in the election slogans of almost all parties that ran candidates in the June 1990 parliamentary elections: democracy, the market, and the return to Europe (Wolchik 2015, 193).</p> <p>Slovakia's foreign policy priorities since the creation of an independent state in 1993 until 2004 were defined through the general goals of joining Euro-Atlantic security, political and economic structures. Despite the period of Slovakia's increasing international isolation by the West under the leadership of Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar in the mid-1990s, the country's main goals were successful integration into the European Union and NATO (Bilčík 2004, 41).</p>
	Endeavors to reconcile national, Visegrad, and European positions	<p>(...) statement by Prime Minister Robert Fico: <i>"I am very much interested in regional cooperation within the Visegrad Four but Slovakia's vital interest is the EU"</i> (Jancarikova 2017).</p>
Linguistic conception of nationhood	<p>Slovak language as the most distinctive feature of the uniqueness of the Slovak nation</p> <p>The importance of the Slovak language for the preservation of Slovak identity and the expression of state sovereignty</p>	<p>There was no common Slovak literary language until the modern period, and regional differences in the spoken language were considerable. Genuine signs of a developing Slovak national consciousness did not come until the late eighteenth century. The development of a literary language was crucial to this process (Morison 1995, 67).</p> <p>The important reason for the failure of the Czechoslovak idea was the fact that the idea of Slovak nation was traditionally built on language and not history. It was not a coincidence that a slogan of the Slovak autonomist groups was: 'For our Slovak (language)!' (Hudek 2011, 262).</p> <p>Questions of language and identity were closely intertwined in both national revivals, a result of the prevailing linguistic conception of nationhood (Bakke 2011, 248).</p>
	Superiority and dominance of the Slovak language over other languages in Slovak territory	<p>State Language Act was adopted in 1995, in order to ensure legislative protection of the state language, i.e. the Slovak language as defined by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. Protection of the Slovak language is the major purpose of the Act. The Act also constitutes the relations between the state language and minority languages. (...) "Bearing in mind that the Slovak language is the most important attribute of the Slovak nation's specificity and the most precious value of its cultural heritage, as well as an expression of sovereignty of the Slovak Republic and a general vehicle of communication for all its citizens, which secures their freedom and equality in dignity and rights in the territory of the Slovak Republic, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has resolved to adopt the following Act." (emphasis added). (...) This also constitutes the</p>

		<p>Slovak nation as a state-forming nation exercising its right to self-determination through language as a source of distinctiveness. At the same time, it implicitly excludes citizens whose first language is not Slovak (Chudžíková 2011, 118).</p> <p>Introductory provision of the Act (§1 Art. 2) further reads: “The state language shall have priority over other languages used in the territory of the Slovak Republic.” Superiority and dominance of the Slovak language is thus incorporated officially in legislation, which explicitly establishes unequal power relations between the majority language and minority languages. (...) it could be assumed that such provision also determines superiority of the nation bearing the superior attribute and constructs relevant Others (national minorities using different languages) as less important, secondary and subordinate. Superior position within social relations can be understood as a source of distinctiveness ensuring positive image of the in-group in relation to relevant out-groups (recognized national minorities) in the territory of the Slovak Republic (Finell and Liebkind, 2010) (Chudžíková 2011, 119).</p>
Ethnic nationalism	An ethnic instead of a civic definition of the Slovak nation	<p>Even the preamble of the Slovak constitution refers to ethnic and not civic nation. It starts with a phrase ‘We the Slovak nation’ and mentions the ‘hundreds of years of experience with struggle for national existence and statehood’. Even at the end of 20th century, the concept of Slovak national identity is keeping its traditional defensive attitude in a form of ‘eternal struggle’ against ‘negative others’ (Hudek 2011, 265).</p> <p>The very core of Slovak legislation, the Constitution, is itself composed in a manner explicitly manifesting essentialist conceptualization of the nation: “We, the Slovak nation, bearing in mind the political and cultural heritage of our ancestors and the centuries of experience from the struggles for national existence and our own statehood, mindful of the spiritual heritage of Cyril and Methodius and the historical legacy of Great Moravia, recognizing the natural right of nations to self-determination,(...)” (emphasis added). (...) The nation is constructed here as a result of struggle, fight, as a final reward for centuries of suffering, which refers to the prevailing rhetoric of struggle and threat also present in other legislative acts as will be demonstrated later. The text also overtly differentiate who is included in the Slovak nation: those who identify with the national myth of a ‘thousand-year-long’ struggle for existence and with the tradition of Cyril and Methodius who brought Christianity to the territory of contemporary Slovakia. (...) Distinction is also present in the reference to Christianity and common Great Moravian⁶ history, thus creating an ethno-space and suggesting ethnic definition of the Slovak nation (Chudžíková 2011, 117-118).</p> <p>Clearly, the nationalism of the Slovaks is much more steeped in ethnicity than that of the Magyars, the Poles, or the Czechs (Kamusella 2009, 523).</p>
Catholicism, attachment to Christian values	The importance of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovak history during	<p>A final difference between the two regions was evident in the sphere of religion. Both peoples were predominantly Roman Catholic, but the population in the Czech Lands was far more secular than that in Slovakia, where levels of religious observance were much higher. There were also important differences in the relationship of Catholicism and national</p>

	<p>various foreign dominations</p>	<p>identity and the role of Protestantism in the two areas. (...) However, Catholic figures and, in the interwar period, Catholic priests and the church, were much more closely linked to the emerging sense of Slovak identity (Wolchik 2015, 188).</p> <p>The tradition of the Byzantine mission to Great Moravia led by Cyril and Methodius was also used to lend the prestige of a civilizing and Christianizing mission to this ersatz state tradition (Agnew 2000, 624).</p> <p>Tiso, being a Catholic priest, legitimized his rule and the independent Slovak statehood by drawing on the tradition of Catholicism deeply entrenched among most Slovaks, and pointing (as Hlinka had done before) to the ‘atheistic, liberal, and demoralizing character’ of Czechoslovakia (Kamusella 2009, 851).</p>
	<p>Civilizing and Christianizing mission of Slovakia (Slovaks as “civilizers” and guardians of Christian western civilization against “Eastern barbarism”)</p>	<p>The implication was also that the nomadic Magyars had inherited basic agricultural skills, Christianity and the Moravian state tradition from the Slovaks, who had acted as the civilizers of the "barbarians." (Bakke 1999, 147).</p> <p>This idealised memory of the Great Moravia tradition and the knowledge that their Slovak predecessors had taken part in the building of the state, the Christianising mission and acculturation of their own Magyar conquerors (Kowalská 2011, 96-97).</p>
<p>Relative homogeneity of the Slovak population</p>	<p>Slovakia as the most ethnolinguistically heterogeneous state in Central Europe</p>	<p>As a consequence of the fact that in the tenth century the Slovaks had been absorbed into the Kingdom of Hungary, which was a multi-ethnic state (Kováč 2011a, 121).</p> <p>The growing suppression of Slovak nationalism was offset by Prague’s policy of expelling Germans and Magyars from Czechoslovakia. By default, this made Slovakia more ethnolinguistically homogenous and transferred property and assets especially from Magyars to Slovaks (Kamusella 2009, 862-863).</p> <p>Out of the four Central European nation-states analyzed in this study, Slovakia remains the least nationally homogenous, with Slovaks accounting for 85.8 percent of its population as per the 2001 census. With Poles amounting to 98.8 percent of its population, Poland is the most nationally homogenous polity in the region (2002 census). In this ranking, it is followed by Hungary with the 92.3 percent share of Magyars in the population (2001 census), and by the Czech Republic, where Czechs constitute 90.4 percent of the population (2001 census) (Kamusella 2009, 892).</p>

Source: Own table

Full results of the conducted qualitative content analysis can be shared upon request.

Appendix E: Interviews

Appendix E.1: Overview of interviews

Full names of the interviewed experts can be shared upon request.

Czech Republic

Interview	Institutional Affiliation	Date of interview
Interview 1A	EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy	12.02.2019
Interview 1B	Metropolitan University of Prague, Department of Political Science and Humanities & Journal <i>Politics in Central Europe</i>	04.03.2019
Interview 1C	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic	05.03.2019
Interview 1D	AMO – Association for International Affairs	07.03.2019
Interview 1E	Institute for International Relations (IIR)	04.03.2019
Interview 1F	AMO – Association for International Affairs	13.02.2019
Interview 1G	Charles University, Institute of Political Studies & Metropolitan University of Prague, Department of Political Science and Humanities	06.03.2019
Interview 1H	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic	05.03.2019
Interview 1I	Charles University, Institute of Political Studies	12.02.2019
Interview 1J	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic	08.03.2019
Interview 1K	Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociology	11.02.2019
Interview 1L	Charles University, Institute of Political Studies	12.02.2019
Interview 1M	Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociology	12.02.2019
Interview 1N	EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy	27.02.2019 (Skype)
Interview 1O	Charles University, Institute of International Studies & Visegrad Insight	07.03.2019
Interview P	Aspen Institute Central Europe	11.02.2019
Interview 1Q	Charles University, Institute of Czech History & Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy	13.02.2019
Interview 1R	French-German Centre Marc Bloch & Europa-University Viadrina	28.02.2019 (Skype)
Interview 1S	Metropolitan University Prague, Department of International Relations and European Studies & EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy	05.03.2019

Source: Own table

Hungary

Interview	Institutional Affiliation	Date of interview
Interview 2A	Central European University, Center for Policy Studies	03.12.2018
Interview 2B	Central European University, Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS)	22.01.2019
Interview 2C	Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy	22.01.2019
Interview 2D	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Budapest	30.11.2018
Interview 2E	Hungarian Academy of Sciences	04.12.2018
Interview 2F	Central European University, Center for Policy Studies	28.02.2019 (Skype)
Interview 2G	Antall József Knowledge Centre (EU–V4 Office)	24.01.2019
Interview 2H	Institute of Political History	30.11.2018
Interview 2I	Corvinus University, Institute of International Studies	23.01.2019
Interview 2J	Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (IFAT) (2x)	03.12.2018
Interview 2K	Central European University, Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS)	28.02.2019 (Skype)
Interview 2L	Corvinus University Budapest, Institute of International Studies	30.11.2018
Interview 2M	National University of Public Service, Centre for Strategic and Defence Studies	03.12.2018
Interview 2N	Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Center for Social Sciences	24.01.2019
Interview 2O	Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociology	24.01.2019
Interview 2P	Hungarian Academy of Sciences, History Department	24.01.2019
Interview 2Q	Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Department of International Studies	22.01.2019
Interview 2R	National University of Public Service	25.01.2019
Interview 2S	Central European University, Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS)	04.12.2018
Interview 2T	Eötvös Lóránd Tudományegyetem, Faculty of Social Sciences & TÁRKI	04.12.2018
Interview 2U	Central European University, Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS)	20.11.2018
Interview 2V	Institute of Political History	03.12.2018
Interview 2W	Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (IFAT)	29.11.2018
Interview 2X	European-University Viadrina	13.03.2019 (Skype)
Interview 2Y	Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociology	24.01.2019
Interview 2Z	Corvinus University of Budapest	03.12.2018

Source: Own table

Poland

Interview	Institutional Affiliation	Date of interview
Interview 3A	Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw (interviews with CMR experts; 4x)	14.12.2018
Interview 3B	Jagiellonian University, Institute of European Studies & Jagiellonian Centre for Migration Studies	12.12.2018
Interview 3C	University of Warsaw, Institute of Social Policy & Centre of Migration Research	18.12.2018
Interview 3D	Jagiellonian University, Institute of European Studies	12.12.2018
Interview 3E	Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)	14.12.2018
Interview 3F (2x)	Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM)	18.12.2018
Interview 3G	Independent migration researcher	17.12.2018
Interview 3H	Institute of Public Affairs	14.12.2018
Interview 3I	Center for the Thought of John Paul II	14.12.2018
Interview 3J	Jagiellonian University, Institute of European Studies	12.12.2018
Interview 3K	University of Warsaw, Institute of Int. Relations	15.12.2018
Interview 3L	Warsaw Uprising Museum	19.12.2018
Interview 3M	University of Warsaw, Institute for Social Studies	17.12.2018

Source: Own table

Slovakia

Interview	Institutional Affiliation	Date of interview
Interview 4A	Comenius University, Institute of Social Anthropology	28.01.2020
Interview 4B	Comenius University, Department of Slovak History	28.01.2020
Interview 4C	GLOBSEC Policy Institute	29.01.2020
Interview 4D	Slovak Foreign Policy Association SFPA	30.01.2020
Interview 4E	EURACTIV Slovensko	29.01.2020
Interview 4F	Comenius University, Department of Political Science	30.01.2020
Interview 4G	Comenius University, Institute of European Studies and International Relations	29.01.2020
Interview 4H	Comenius University, Institute of Social Anthropology	28.01.2020
Interview 4I	Slovak Academy of Sciences, Institute of History	28.01.2020
Interview 4J	Slovak Academy of Sciences, Section III - Social Sciences, Humanities, Arts and Culture	30.01.2020
Interview 4K	Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)	30.01.2020
Interview 4L	Migration Office at the Slovak Ministry of the Interior	28.01.2020
Interview 4M	Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Central and Eastern Europe Program	11.03.2020 (Skype)

Source: Own table

Appendix E.2: Letter of information

Visegrad Countries in the European Union

(Martina Vetrovcova, PhD Candidate, University of Heidelberg, Germany)

Executive Summary:

The doctoral thesis aims to analyze the performance of the Visegrad Group (V4) and its four Member States – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland – within the European Union (EU) on the continuum between acting as a “building block” or a “stumbling block.” The instrument used in the study to measure this performance is the concept of solidarity. In addition, the study also argues that analyzing the understanding of solidarity of states is unthinkable without considering their respective national identities. In other words, the nexus between identity and solidarity is essential in order to understand the motivational grounds behind states’ decisions. The expression of solidarity very much depends on which identity elements are brought to the political agenda, as can be demonstrated on the following two empirical examples.

In the context of the recent migration and refugee situation in Europe, the Visegrad Group has gained (unwanted) attention. The unprecedented refugee flow to Europe in the past few years has challenged not only the response capacity of the individual countries, but also the unity and integrity of the EU as a whole. Since the exposure of the Member States to the refugee influx has been very different, the political leaders continued to struggle to reach a consensus on how to deal with the situation. The Central European states with their rejection of mandatory refugee quotas have been accused of being selfish, showing little solidarity with refugees, and building an opposition bloc within the EU institutions. Despite expressing their general support for the common European response to the migration crisis, the failure of public diplomacy of the four countries to effectively communicate their stance on automatic permanent relocation mechanisms that would not be perceived as obstructive led other EU Member States to describe the Visegrad states as non-constructive and non-reliable partners.

However, the Visegrad states have proved in the past that they can act as policy-makers and agenda-setters within the EU as well. The most evident example of their proactive and agenda-setting role is their support for the EU Eastern Policy, the integration of the Western Balkans, and future EU enlargement. Not only has the Visegrad Group been willing to share its historical experience of post-communist transition and accession to European structures with countries aspiring for EU membership, but it has aimed to shape the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) towards the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, which was accomplished by the creation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009 and the establishment of the “Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership Program” (V4EaP) in 2011. This example makes clear that the general assumption of the Visegrad states as being unable or unwilling to show any signs of solidarity towards others is inherently wrong and needs to be further explored.

Solidarity has become one of those “buzzwords”, frequently employed in everyday language and omnipresent in political discourse. However, its precise understanding by decision makers, media, and even policy experts is often missing. Because of the complexity of the concept, scientists from various disciplines describe the term solidarity as diffuse, fuzzy, nebulous, ambiguous, and controversial. There are also country-specific interpretations of solidarity, adding to the general confusion regarding its proper definition. The dissertation project aims to close this conceptual gap to some extent and explore the specific understanding of solidarity in Central Europe, building on the nexus between identity and solidarity. The findings are relevant not only for the field of Political Science in general, and the subfields International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis in particular, but also for all policymakers interested in the region of Central Europe. The research project will, among other things, examine whether national identity shaped by historical and political factors, such as the heritage of communism or the length of the EU membership, has influence on the identification of the countries with the European project, their willingness to show solidarity with others, and their support for further integration efforts.

Profile of Martina Vetrovcova:

Martina Vetrovcova is a PhD candidate at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Originally a Czech citizen, she has been living in Germany since 2013. After completing her Bachelor's degree in International Studies and Diplomacy at the University of Economics in Prague in 2013 (summa cum laude), she moved to Germany to pursue her Master's degree in Political Science and Sociology at the University of Heidelberg, which she completed with distinction in February 2016. Since summer 2016, she has been working on her doctoral thesis, in which she focuses on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and their understanding of solidarity, especially with regard to migration and further enlargement of the European Union. Her other areas of research include human rights, sustainable development, and (environmental) migration, with a particular focus on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as well as diverse foreign and security policy issues, including Chinese-European relations and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Since 2015, she has been working as a research assistant, office manager, and project coordinator at the chair of Professor Dr. Sebastian Harnisch at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Heidelberg. She has also worked as a research assistant at the Heidelberg Center for the Environment (HCE) and interned at the German Bundestag. For many years, Martina Vetrovcova has been an enthusiastic Model United Nations participant and staffer. She has been volunteering at the National Model United Nations • New York for several years and currently serves as the Under-Secretary-General for the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Department. Martina Vetrovcova is also the founder and President of Momentum Novum, a social enterprise focused on sustainable development. She has received numerous scholarships, including the graduate scholarship by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the PhD scholarship by the Klaus Murmann Fellowship Programme of the Foundation of German Business (Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft), the International Studies Association (ISA) travel grant, and the heiDOCS travel grant by the Rectorate of Heidelberg University.

Selected Publications:

Vetrovcova, M. (2018): *The Power of Perceptions in International Relations: CEE and China in a New Era*, in: China-CEE Institute Working Paper 2018, Issue: 26, https://china-cee.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Work_paper-201826-Martina-Vetrovcova.pdf (peer-reviewed).

Vetrovcova, M./Jungmann, M. (2018): *The Powerless in Power? Small Island Developing States' Responses to Climate Change* (to be published; presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention 2018 in San Francisco).

Vetrovcova, M./Harnisch, S. (2018): *Towards an "Expectations Fulfillment Gap" in 16+1 Relations? China, the EU and the Central and Eastern European Countries*, in: Chen Xin (ed.): *16+1 Cooperation and China-EU Relationship*, Budapest: China-CEE Institute, pp. 115-135 (peer-reviewed).

Vetrovcova, M. (2018): *EU-China Relations - The Visegrad Group as a Doorway to Europe?*, in: Huang Ping/ Liu Zuokui (eds.): *16+1 Cooperation: Status Quo, Prospects and Policy Suggestions*, China-CEEC Think Tanks Book Series (peer-reviewed).

Briones Sosa, A./Curtis, D. E./Saint Clair, M./**Vetrovcova, M.** (2017): *World Food Programme Background Guide 2018*, National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY), https://www.nmun.org/assets/documents/conference-archives/new-york/2017/NY17_BGG_WFP.pdf.

Vetrovcova, M. (2016): *V4 - Terra Incognita*, research paper presented at the conference "NATO Towards Challenges of a Contemporary World – After the Warsaw 2016 Summit" in Łódź, 15-16 November 2016.

Austin, E./Weitzel, M./**Vetrovcova, M./Landwehr, J.** (2016): *Security Council Background Guide 2017*, National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY), https://www.nmun.org/assets/documents/conference-archives/new-york/2017/NY17_BGG_SC.pdf.

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Connell, K./Adebayo, J./**Vetrovcova, M./Wilkes-Pounders, S.** (2015): *United Nations Industrial Development Organization Background Guide 2016*, NMUN•NY, https://www.nmun.org/assets/documents/conference-archives/new-york/2016/NY16_BGG_UNIDO.pdf.

Appendix E.3: Interview guides

Czech Republic

Meeting with xy

Date: DD.MM.YYYY, hh:hh

Location: Institute, University, City, Country

Affiliation: University, Department

Short Biography:

Added value for my study:

Questions specific to migration:

1. How severely was the Czech Republic affected by the recent refugee and migration crisis (2014+)? What was the reaction of the Czech government and/or their contribution to solve this Europe-wide challenge? Have there been any recent developments that are worth mentioning?
2. In the reaction, can we observe any parallels (or discrepancies) to other large refugee and migration movements in the past?
3. What were the main reasons behind the rejective stance towards the relocation scheme proposed by the EU? How did the Czech government communicate their decisions domestically and internationally (EU-wide)?
4. What has been the perception of the 'obligation of European solidarity' with regard to the migration crisis (both towards the arriving refugees and migrants and towards other EU Member States)? How did the Czech government respond to the accusations of lacking solidarity by not accepting their share of asylum seekers under the EU relocation scheme?
5. How strong has been the coordination and cooperation with the other Visegrad states in reacting to the refugee and migration crisis? Has the V4 Group been able to act as one cohesive block?
6. Have the Czech government, academia, business sphere, civil society and the general public been united in their reaction to the refugee and migration situation and, if not, what have been the major differences between the listed actor groups?
7. Has the political stance towards migration from Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe versus from the Middle East and (North) Africa been different and, if yes, why and how?
8. What are the underlying reasons for the specific Czech stance towards immigration and migrants? What is the role of religion and traditional values as well as other elements that make up the Czech national identity?

Questions on national identity:

1. Which (historical) events have had significant influence on the formation as well as transformation of Czech national identity? What are important elements that make up the Czech national identity?

2. Which past “significant others” have influenced the formation as well as transformation of the Czech national identity? Who are current “significant others” for the Czech Republic?
3. Please assess a self-understanding on the part of the Czech politics and society that depict the nation as a “victim of great power politics” (e.g. stemming from the Turkish or Habsburg domination and the Soviet suppression). Can we still observe anti-great-power sentiments in today’s discourse, and if yes, towards which states are they directed?
4. What are the remaining legacies of the communist past in the Czech Republic?
5. How would you assess the transformation period after 1989?
6. What is the role of religion in the Czech national identity?

Questions specific to the European Union and solidarity:

1. How would you define the current relationship of the Czech Republic towards the European Union? How does the Czech Republic regard the deepening and/or widening of the European integration?
2. To what extent does (the majority of) the political elite in the Czech Republic support solidarity as one of the core values of the European Union? What does solidarity mean according to them in the EU context?
3. Has the Polish own experience with emigration influenced the public discourse regarding the solidarity principle in the EU and the shared responsibility of the EU Member States in the context of refugee and asylum policies?
4. How does the Czech Republic understand the concepts of solidarity and sovereignty within the European/EU context?
5. In which policy area(s) do you see the agenda setting role of the Czech Republic within the European Union?

Questions specific to Eastern Enlargement:

1. What is the foreign policy/general position of the Czech Republic towards Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans and further enlargement of the European Union? Which countries are considered as priority partners and **why**?
2. What is the motivation behind the Czech engagement in Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans? To what extent can the Czech foreign policy towards Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans be described by using the concepts of solidarity and identity? (vs. pragmatic reasons - security, economy, ...)
3. What is the role of Russia with regards to Czech engagement in Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans?
4. Has the Czech Republic been able to influence the EU agenda with regard to Eastern Europe? Has the Czech Republic acted rather bilaterally or in multilateral frameworks (e.g. within the V4 format)?

Questions specific to the Visegrad region

1. How would you define the relationship of the Czech Republic towards other Visegrad states? (e.g. „preferential treatment“/cooperation/competition/....)
2. What are main division lines between the Visegrad states and what are some of the aspects that unite them?
3. Is the Visegrad cooperation based rather on pragmatic grounds or on a feeling of attachment? How solidary would these states act towards each other in times of crisis?

Additional Comments:

Meeting with xy

Date: DD.MM.YYYY, hh:hh

Location: Institute, University, City, Country

Affiliation: University, Department

Short Biography:

Added value for my dissertation:

Questions specific to migration:

1. How severely was Hungary affected by the recent refugee and migration crisis (2014+)? What was the reaction of the Hungarian government and/or their contribution to solve this Europe-wide challenge? Have there been any recent developments that are worth mentioning?
2. In the reaction, can we observe any parallels (or discrepancies) to other large refugee and migration movements in the past?
3. What were the main reasons behind the rejective stance towards the relocation scheme proposed by the EU? How did the Hungarian government communicate their decisions domestically and internationally (EU-wide)?
4. What has been the perception of the ‘obligation of European solidarity’ with regard to the migration crisis (both towards the arriving refugees and migrants and towards other EU Member States)? How did the Hungarian government respond to the accusations of lacking solidarity by not accepting their share of asylum seekers under the EU relocation scheme?
5. How strong has been the coordination and cooperation with the other Visegrad states in reacting to the refugee and migration crisis? Has the V4 Group been able to act as one cohesive block?
6. Have the Hungarian government, academia, business sphere, civil society and the general public been united in their reaction to the refugee and migration situation and, if not, what have been the major differences between the listed actor groups?
7. Has the political stance towards migration from Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe versus from the Middle East and (North) Africa been different and, if yes, why and how?
8. What are the underlying reasons for the specific Hungarian stance towards immigration and migrants? What is the role of religion and traditional values as well as other elements that make up the Hungarian national identity?

Questions on national identity:

1. Which (historical) events have had significant influence on the formation as well as transformation of Hungarian national identity? What are important elements that make up the Hungarian national identity?
2. Which past “significant others” have influenced the formation as well as transformation of the Hungarian national identity? Who are current “significant others” for Hungary?

3. Please assess a self-understanding on the part of the Hungarian politics and society that depict the nation as a “victim of great power politics” (e.g. stemming from the Turkish or Habsburg domination and the Soviet suppression). Can we still observe anti-great-power sentiments in today’s discourse, and if yes, towards which states are they directed?
4. What are the remaining legacies of the communist past in Hungary?
5. How would you assess the transformation period after 1989?
6. What is the role of religion in the Hungarian national identity?

Questions specific to the European Union and solidarity:

1. How would you define the current relationship of Hungary towards the European Union? How does Hungary regard the deepening and/or widening of the European integration?
2. To what extent does (the majority of) the political elite in Hungary support solidarity as one of the core values of the European Union? What does solidarity mean according to them in the EU context?
3. Has the Polish own experience with emigration influenced the public discourse regarding the solidarity principle in the EU and the shared responsibility of the EU Member States in the context of refugee and asylum policies?
4. How does Hungary understand the concepts of solidarity and sovereignty within the European/EU context?
5. In which policy area(s) do you see the agenda setting role of Hungary within the European Union?

Questions specific to Eastern Enlargement:

1. What is the foreign policy/general position of Hungary towards Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans and further enlargement of the European Union? Which countries are considered as priority partners and **why**?
2. What is the motivation behind the Hungarian engagement in Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans? To what extent can the Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans be described by using the concepts of solidarity and identity? (vs. pragmatic reasons - security, economy, ...)
3. What is the role of Russia with regards to Hungarian engagement in Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans?
4. Has Hungary been able to influence the EU agenda with regard to Eastern Europe? Has Hungary acted rather bilaterally or in multilateral frameworks (e.g. within the V4 format)?

Questions specific to the Visegrad region

1. How would you define the relationship of Hungary towards other Visegrad states? (e.g. „preferential treatment“/cooperation/competition/...)
2. What are main division lines between the Visegrad states and what are some of the aspects that unite them?
3. Is the Visegrad cooperation based rather on pragmatic grounds or on a feeling of attachment? How solidary would these states act towards each other in times of crisis?

Additional Comments:

Meeting with xy

Date: DD.MM.YYYY, hh:hh

Location: Institute, University, City, Country

Affiliation: University, Department

Short Biography:

Added value for my dissertation:

Questions specific to migration:

1. How severely was Poland affected by the recent refugee and migration crisis (2014+) and what was the reaction of the Polish government and/or their contribution to solve this Europe-wide challenge? Have there been any recent developments that are worth mentioning?
2. In the reaction, can we observe any parallels (or discrepancies) to other large refugee and migration movements in the past? Has the Polish own experience with emigration influenced the public discourse regarding the solidarity principle in the EU and the shared responsibility of the EU Member States in the context of refugee and asylum policies?
3. What have been the main reasons behind the rejective stance towards the relocation scheme proposed by the EU?
4. What has been the perception of the ‘obligation of European solidarity’ with regard to the migration crisis (both towards the arriving refugees and migrants and towards other EU Member States)? How did the Polish government respond to the accusations of lacking solidarity by not accepting their share of asylum seekers under the EU relocation scheme? How did the Polish government communicate their decisions domestically and internationally (EU-wide)?
5. How strong has been the coordination and cooperation with the other Visegrad states in reacting to the refugee and migration crisis? Has the V4 Group been able to act as one cohesive block?
6. Have the Polish government, academia, business sphere, civil society, the Church, and the general public been united in their reaction to the refugee and migration situation and, if not, what have been the major differences between the listed actor groups?
7. Has the political stance towards migration from Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe versus from the Middle East and (North) Africa been different and, if yes, why and how?
8. What are the underlying reasons for the predominantly rejective Polish stance towards immigration and migrants? What is the role of religion and traditional values as well as other elements that make up the Polish national identity?

Questions on national identity:

1. Which (historical) events have had significant influence on the formation as well as transformation of the Polish national identity? Which past “significant others” have influenced the formation as well as transformation of the Polish national identity? Who are current “significant others” for Poland?

2. What are important elements that make up the Polish national identity? Is there something like a common CEE identity?
3. Please assess a self-understanding on the part of the CEE politicians and society that depict their nations as “victims of great power politics”. Can we still observe anti-great-power sentiments in today’s discourses in Poland, and if yes, towards which states are they directed?
4. How strongly is religion embedded in Polish national identity?

Questions specific to the European Union and solidarity:

1. How would you define the current relationship of Poland towards the European Union? How does Poland regard the deepening and/or widening of the European integration?
2. To what extent does (the majority of) the political elite in Poland support solidarity as one of the core values of the European Union? What does solidarity mean according to them in the EU context? What has been the perception of the ‘obligation of European solidarity’ with regard to the migration crisis? (both towards the arriving refugees and migrants and towards other EU Member States)
3. Has the Polish own experience with emigration influenced the public discourse regarding the solidarity principle in the EU and the shared responsibility of the EU Member States in the context of refugee and asylum policies?
4. How does Poland understand the concepts of solidarity and sovereignty within the European/EU context?
5. In which policy area(s) do you see the agenda setting role of Poland within the EU?

Questions specific to Eastern Enlargement:

1. What is the foreign policy/general position of Poland towards Eastern Europe (and/or the Western Balkans) and further enlargement of the European Union? Which countries are considered as priority partners and **why**?
2. What is the motivation behind Polish engagement in Eastern Europe? To what extent can the Polish foreign policy towards Eastern Europe be described by using the concepts of solidarity and identity? (vs. pragmatic reasons - security, economy, ...)
3. How would you define the relationship of Poland towards the countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine)? (e.g. feeling of attachment/identification/cooperation/delimitation/indifference/...)
4. What is the role of Russia with regards to Polish engagement in Eastern Europe?
5. Has Poland been able to influence the EU agenda with regard to Eastern Europe? Has Poland acted rather bilaterally or in multilateral frameworks (e.g. within the V4 format)?

Questions specific to the Visegrad region

1. How would you define the relationship of the Visegrad states towards each other? (e.g. „preferential treatment“/cooperation/competition/...)
2. What are main division lines between the Visegrad states and what are some of the aspects that unite them?
3. Is the Visegrad cooperation based rather on pragmatic grounds or on a feeling of attachment? How solidary would these states act towards each other in times of crisis?

Additional comments:

Meeting with xy

Date: DD.MM.YYYY, hh:hh

Location: Institute, University, City, Country

Affiliation: University, Department

Short Biography:

Added value for my dissertation:

Questions specific to migration:

1. How severely was Slovakia affected by the recent refugee and migration crisis (2014+)? What was the reaction of the Slovak government and/or their contribution to solve this Europe-wide challenge? Have there been any recent developments that are worth mentioning?
2. In the reaction, can we observe any parallels (or discrepancies) to other large refugee and migration movements in the past?
3. What were the main reasons behind the rejective stance towards the relocation scheme proposed by the EU? How did the Slovak government communicate their decisions domestically and internationally (EU-wide)?
4. What has been the perception of the ‘obligation of European solidarity’ with regard to the migration crisis (both towards the arriving refugees and migrants and towards other EU Member States)? How did the Slovak government respond to the accusations of lacking solidarity by not accepting their share of asylum seekers under the EU relocation scheme?
5. How strong has been the coordination and cooperation with the other Visegrad states in reacting to the refugee and migration crisis? Has the V4 Group been able to act as one cohesive block?
6. Have the Slovak government, academia, business sphere, civil society and the general public been united in their reaction to the refugee and migration situation and, if not, what have been the major differences between the listed actor groups?
7. Has the political stance towards migration from Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe versus from the Middle East and (North) Africa been different and, if yes, why and how?
8. What are the underlying reasons for the specific Slovak stance towards immigration and migrants? What is the role of religion and traditional values as well as other elements that make up the Slovak national identity?

Questions on national identity:

1. What are important milestones in the history of the Slovak nation? Which (historical) events have had significant influence on the formation as well as transformation of the Slovak national identity?
2. What are important elements that make up the Slovak national identity?
3. Which past “significant others” have influenced the formation as well as transformation of the Slovak national identity? Who are current “significant others” for Slovakia?

4. Please assess a self-understanding on the part of the Slovak politics and society that depict the nation as a “victim of great power politics” (e.g. stemming from the Hungarian or Habsburg domination and the Soviet suppression). Can we still observe anti-great-power sentiments in today’s discourse, and if yes, towards which states are they directed?
5. What are the remaining legacies of the communist past in Slovakia?
6. How strongly is religion embedded in Slovak national identity?
7. What is the role of language for Slovak national identity?

Questions specific to the European Union and solidarity:

1. How would you define the current relationship of Slovakia towards the European Union? How does Slovakia regard the deepening and/or widening of the European integration?
2. To what extent does (the majority of) the political elite in Slovakia support solidarity as one of the core values of the European Union? What does solidarity mean according to them in the EU context?
3. Has the Slovak own experience with emigration influenced the public discourse regarding the solidarity principle in the EU and the shared responsibility of the EU Member States in the context of refugee and asylum policies?
4. How does Slovakia understand the concepts of solidarity and sovereignty within the European/EU context?
5. In which policy area(s) do you see the agenda setting role of Slovakia within the European Union?

Questions specific to Eastern Enlargement:

1. What is the foreign policy/general position of Slovakia towards Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans and further enlargement of the European Union? Which countries are considered as priority partners and **why**?
2. What is the motivation behind the Slovak engagement in Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans? To what extent can the Slovak foreign policy towards Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans be described by using the concepts of solidarity and identity? (vs. pragmatic reasons - security, economy, ...)
3. What is the role of Russia with regards to Slovak engagement in Eastern Europe and/or the Western Balkans?
4. Has Slovakia been able to influence the EU agenda with regard to Eastern Europe? Has Slovakia acted rather bilaterally or in multilateral frameworks (e.g. within the V4 format)?

Questions specific to the Visegrad region

1. How would you define the relationship of Slovakia towards other Visegrad states? (e.g. „preferential treatment“/cooperation/competition/...)
2. What are main division lines between the Visegrad states and what are some of the aspects that unite them?
3. Is the Visegrad cooperation based rather on pragmatic grounds or on a feeling of attachment? How solidary would these states act towards each other in times of crisis?

Additional comments:

Appendix E.4: Summaries of interviews

Summaries of expert interviews conducted in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia can be shared upon request.

Appendix F: National identities of the Visegrad states (summary tables)

Appendix F.1: Czech national identity

– Summary of main formative events, *significant others*, and identity elements

Formative events	Main significant others *	Main identity elements
“Golden Age” during the Kingdom of Bohemia in the 14th century	Holy Roman Empire	Self-image as a cultured and civilized nation
Hussite movement in the 15th century	Catholicism	Strong quest for sovereignty and independence Dismissal of the Catholic faith
Limited sovereignty under the Habsburg Monarchy (1648–1867) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918)	Habsburg Monarchy, Austro-Hungarian Empire	Anti-great power sentiments Czech “littleness” Dismissal of the Catholic faith and distaste towards religious authorities
Czech national movement in the 19th century	Germans living in the Czech lands	Strong quest for sovereignty and independence Dismissal of the Catholic faith and distaste towards religious authorities
Achievement of independence in 1918 and the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938)	Germany Slovakia	Democratic tradition and the tradition of a cultured and well-educated nation Feelings of belonging to the West
Munich Agreement in 1938 and the subsequent creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939-1945)	Nazi Germany “Allies” (France, the UK, the United States) Slovakia	Anti-great power sentiments Feelings of victimhood/bitterness towards the West Czech “littleness”
Soviet occupation and the period of socialist Czechoslovakia (1948–1989)	Soviet Union & communism Slovakia The West	Anti-great power sentiments Feelings of victimhood and a quest for sovereignty and independence Homogeneity of the Czech population Widespread secularism Czech “littleness”
Invasion of the Warsaw Pact armed forces in August 1968	Soviet Union & communism The West	Homogeneity of the Czech population Feelings of victimhood and betrayal
Velvet Revolution and the break-up of Czechoslovakia (1989–1993)	Slovakia Soviet Union & commun.	Feelings of belonging to the West, sense of superiority over the East
Political and economic transformation in the 1990s	EU/Western Europe Soviet Union	Democratic tradition and the tradition of a cultured and well-educated nation Feelings of belonging to the West, sense of superiority over the East
Accession to the EU in 2004	EU Germany (specifically) V4	Feelings of belonging to the West “Integration dilemma”

* sometimes identification, sometimes opposition, sometimes both

Source: Own table

Appendix F.2: Hungarian national identity

– Summary of main formative events, *significant others*, and identity elements

Formative events	Significant Others *	Main identity elements
The founding of the state and the acceptance of Western Christianity (1000)	Western Europe	Christian tradition Hungary as a (cultural) part of Western civilization
The Mongol invasion in the 13th century	Mongol tribes	“Bulwark of Europe” & sense of victimhood
“Golden Age” period in the 14th and 15th centuries	Western Europe	Heroization of Hungary’s history (economic and cultural “greatness”; perceived “weight” in European politics)
The Battle of Mohács (1526)	Ottoman Empire	“Bulwark of Europe” & sense of victimhood
The Turkish and later Habsburg occupation (1526-1848)	Ottoman Empire Habsburg Monarchy	Sense of victimhood & high sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty (continued struggle for independence often followed by defeat)
The Revolution and the War of Independence (1848-1849)	Habsburg Monarchy	Heroization of Hungary’s history & pride in national resistance (failed struggle for independence, yet considerable autonomy achieved)
World War I (1914-1918) and the Peace Treaty of Trianon (1920)	Germany Entente powers (the United Kingdom, the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire) Little Entente of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia	Experience of defeat Feeling of injustice & sense of victimhood (territorial and population loss; economic and diplomatic isolation; diminished status and influence in Europe) Attachment to Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries Homogenization of the Hungarian population
World War II (1939-1945)	Germany Anglo-American coalition & Soviet Union Jewish community in Hungary	Experience of defeat Homogenization of the Hungarian population Attachment to Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries
The Communist era (1948-1989)	Soviet Union The West	High sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty Great power complex Feelings of betrayal/abandonment & “historical debt” of Russia and the West Homogenization of the Hungarian population

The 1956 Revolution	Soviet Union The West	Great power complex Pride in national resistance (failed revolution, yet economic reforms) Feelings of betrayal & “historical debt” of Russia and the West
The New Economic Mechanism (1968) – the economic reform that replaced the earlier central planning system – and “Goulash Communism”	Soviet Union The West	National pride (“happiest barrack” of the socialist camp; most “westernized” and liberal country in the former Eastern bloc) Perceived political, economic, and cultural ties to the West
Founding of a democratic state in 1989 and the period of transformation	Soviet Union → Russia The West Visegrad countries Germany	Heroization of Hungary’s history & pride in national resistance (Hungary creating the first breach in the Iron Curtain) “Return to Europe” (perceived political, economic, and cultural ties to the West) versus voices calling for a “return to the past” National pride (Hungary as a “post-communist success story” and an “ideal reform country”) Attachment to Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries
2010 parliamentary elections and the “constitutional revolution”	EU Germany (specifically) Russia Visegrad countries Western Balkans Eastern Europe	Increased focus on Christian cultural values, patriotism, and attachment to homeland and family Tension between adherence to Western liberalism and the “Opening up towards the East” policy Attachment to Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries Superiority and inferiority complex

* sometimes identification, sometimes opposition, sometimes both

Source: Own table

Appendix F.3: Polish national identity

– Summary of main formative events, *significant others*, and identity elements

Formative events	Significant Others *	Main identity elements
Conversion to Latin Christianity in the 10th century	The West The “barbaric” East	Perceived ties to the Western culture “Bulwark of Europe” Roman Catholic Church as the established religion
Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>) and Poland as a regional power (Poland’s “Golden Age”)	Lithuania Eastern Borderlands The “barbaric” East	Poland as a regional power (myth of the Eastern Borderlands, the <i>Kresy</i>) Poland as a martyr and savior of Western, Christian civilization / a “bulwark of Europe” Heroization of Poland’s history
Russian-German (and Austrian) domination and three partitions of Polish territories (1772, 1793, and 1795)	Kingdom of Prussia Russian Empire Austrian Empire	Great power complex Feelings of betrayal and victimhood Sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty Focus on historical, linguistic, and ethnic aspects of national identity Polarization of the Polish society (beginnings)
First World War and the restoration of Polish sovereignty after 123 years	United States Lithuania, Ukraine, and the Eastern Borderlands	Sense of victimhood Sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty Superiority over Eastern territories
Second World War, the German-Soviet aggression, and related events such as the Katyn massacre and the Warsaw Rising & border shifts and population transfers after the war	Germany Russia Western Allies Lithuania, Ukraine (interethnic animosities)	Great power complex Sense of victimhood Feelings of betrayal & “historical debt” of Russia and the West Homogenization of the Polish population
Communist regime and the Polish resistance movement <i>Solidarność</i>	Soviet Union The West	Feelings of victimhood Sensitivity with regard to national sovereignty Homogenization of the Polish population Important role of the Catholic Church Pride in national resistance
Transformation period in the 1990s and the economic “shock therapy”	The West Soviet Union/Russia	Polarization of the Polish society Perceived ties to the Western culture (“return to Europe”) Superiority and inferiority complex
Accession to Euro-Atlantic structures	EU Germany (specifically) United States former Soviet Bloc V4	Sense of being a “bridge” between the East and the West Superiority and inferiority complex Opposition to the “multiculti” character of the West Fierce attachment to Christian values

* sometimes identification, sometimes opposition, sometimes both

Source: Own table

Appendix F.4: Slovak national identity

– Summary of main formative events, *significant others*, and identity elements

Formative events	Significant Others *	Main identity elements
<p>Great Moravian Empire of the 9th century as the first independent statehood (the “first Slovak state”) & Arrival of the Byzantine missionaries Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia in the years between 863 and 867</p>	<p>Slavic tribes The Christian West versus the “barbaric” East</p>	<p>Perceived belonging to the Slavic tradition and the Western culture Roman Catholic Church as the established religion Civilizing and Christianizing mission of Slovakia (Slovaks as “civilizers” and guardians of Christian western civilization against “Eastern barbarism”)</p>
<p>Development under Hungarian domination (10th century–1918) & national movement in the 18th and 19th centuries (incl. the armed uprising of Slovaks during the 1848-1849 Revolution and the Magyarization of the Slovak population)</p>	<p>Hungarian Kingdom / Austro-Hungarian Empire</p>	<p>Great power complex Sense of victimhood Strong quest for sovereignty and independence Beginnings of ethnic nationalism</p>
<p>Codification of the Slovak language in the 19th century</p>	<p>Hungarian Kingdom / Austro-Hungarian Empire Czech lands</p>	<p>Linguistic conception of nationhood (notion that Slovak national identity rests primarily upon language) Striving for recognition as an independent entity with distinct national identity</p>
<p>World War I and the idea of “Czechoslovakism” (unification of the Czech lands and Slovakia in one state) → Declaration of an independent Czechoslovak state in 1918 → First Czechoslovak Republic in the interwar years</p>	<p>Austro-Hungarian Empire Czech lands Hungarian minority living in Slovak territory</p>	<p>Strong quest for sovereignty and independence/autonomy Striving for recognition as an independent entity with distinct national identity Perceived inequality between Czechs and Slovaks (e.g. lower level of economic development) Rise of ethnic nationalism</p>
<p>Declaration of an independent “Slovak Republic” on 14 March 1939 & the existence as a German satellite during World War II (Slovak Republic 1939-1945)</p>	<p>Czechs Nazi Germany Roman Catholic Church Hungary & Hungarian minority living in Slovak territory</p>	<p>Strong quest for sovereignty and independence (achievement of a longstanding goal of independent statehood, despite being under German tutelage) Important role of the Roman Catholic Church Controversy in Slovak historiography</p>
<p>Slovak National Uprising of 1944 & liberation of the Slovak territory by the Red Army</p>	<p>Tiso’s regime Nazi Germany Russia Western Allies</p>	<p>Pride in national resistance; heroization of Slovakia’s history Feelings of victimhood & anti-great power sentiments Strong quest for sovereignty and independence/autonomy</p>

Reestablishment of Czechoslovakia as a federation of two equal states & significant population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary	Czechs Hungarian minority living in Slovak territory	Strong quest for sovereignty and independence/autonomy Homogenization of the Slovak population
Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948 & Communist period (including the Warsaw Pact invasion ending the “Prague Spring” in 1968)	Czechs Soviet Union/Communist regime	Feelings of betrayal and victimhood Strong quest for sovereignty and independence/autonomy Striving for recognition as an independent entity with distinct national identity Anti-great power sentiments (including against the Czechs as a “superior” nation) Important role of the Roman Catholic Church
Velvet Revolution in 1989 & achievement of independence → Division of Czecho-Slovakia in 1993	Czechs Soviet Union/Communist regime	Strong quest for sovereignty and independence Striving for recognition as an independent entity with distinct national identity Perceived inequality between Czechs and Slovaks in the federation National pride (achievement of a victory in the “thousand-year-struggle” for recognition as a separate political nation) Attachment to Christian values
Political and economic transformation in the 1990s & the era of “Mečiarism”	The “West” symbolized by Euro-Atlantic structures Visegrad Group Eastern Europe	Historically conditioned fears of international isolation Linguistic conception of nationhood (superiority and dominance of the Slovak language over other languages in Slovakia) Ethnic instead of civic definition of the Slovak nation (ethnic nationalism)
Accession to Euro-Atlantic structures	The “West” symbolized by Euro-Atlantic structures (mainly the EU & NATO) Visegrad Group Eastern Europe and Western Balkans	Perceived ties to the Western culture (“return to Europe”) Intention to belong to the European “core” Interplay of national, Visegrad, and European positions

* sometimes identification, sometimes opposition, sometimes both

Source: Own table

Appendix G: MAXQDA

Appendix G.1: MAXQDA Codebook

Table G.1.1: Solidarity in the context of the refugee and migrant crisis
(solidarity with EU Member States and with asylum seekers)

Code name (solidarity principle)	Code definition (the motivation to express solidarity depends on ...)	Examples
Proximity	... the quality of the bond to the EU and its Member States / the strength of the sense of attachment towards the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expressed feelings of attachment to the EU and its principles and values expressed willingness to contribute to European solutions references to shared history, cultural proximity, and/or economic bonds with other EU Member States expressed sense of moral guilt or feelings of historical responsibility towards other EU Member States juxtapositions of national sovereignty and European solutions
	... the notion of historical, cultural, religious, and/or emotional closeness with the incoming migrants and refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> references to shared history with migrants' and refugees' countries of origin references to ethnical, cultural, and/or religious proximity to migrants and refugees expressed sense of moral guilt for the fate of migrants and refugees expressed feelings of historical responsibility towards migrants and refugees
Need	... the perceived level of plight and need of fellow EU Member States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognition of the precarious situation of other EU Member States and their need of assistance (e.g., due to facing increased migratory pressures) recognition of the crisis as a joint European problem
	... the level of compassion for the fate and/or suffering of migrants and refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expressed compassion for the precarious situation of the fleeing refugees and migrants recognition of the migrants' and refugees' reasons for leaving their home countries
Deservingness	... the self-effort made by those EU Member States wishing to receive solidarity (acknowledged deservingness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> references to the matters of responsibility for the crisis and (non)compliance with EU rules and provisions reciprocal provision of solidarity (also potential denial of solidarity if perception of lacking historical solidarity)
	... the deservingness and self-effort made by refugees and migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acknowledgement of the refugees' eligibility for international protection recognition of the migrants' and refugees' reasons for leaving their home countries

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition of refugees' and migrants' self-effort to follow rules (e.g., to integrate) • sympathy for the plight of refugees and acknowledgement of their deservingness of help based on own migration experience
Self-preservation	<p>... the perceived capacity to participate in EU-wide solutions</p> <p>... the desire to be recognized as a relevant European/ international actor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • references to the level of capacity to accept asylum seekers • emphasis on own solidarity contributions • expressed desire to act as a constructive international actor • declared readiness to assume responsibility • pursuit of emancipation / intention of overcoming a sense of inferiority
	... the perceived capacity to accommodate asylum seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • references to the level of capacity to accept asylum seekers

Source: Own table

Table G.1.2: Solidarity in the context of further EU enlargement (solidarity with the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states)

Code name (solidarity principle)	Code definition (the motivation to express solidarity depends on ...)	Examples
Proximity	... the sense of attachment to and feeling of responsibility towards Eastern European and/or Western Balkan countries and their populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • references to similar historical experience and resulting kinship • references to historical and cultural ties as well as geographic proximity • expressed feelings of attachment towards own minorities living in Eastern Europe and/or Western Balkans • expressed desire to prove the country's rightful belonging to the West and disseminate Western values further East • expressed perception of being a bridge between the East and the West
Need	... the perceived need of states aspiring for EU membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressed compassion for the difficulties faced by states aspiring for EU membership • declared need to take care of own minorities living in Eastern Europe and/or Western Balkans
Deservingness	... the self-effort made by states aspiring for EU membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insistence on the implementation of necessary reforms and compliance with EU accession criteria • references to the provision of reciprocal solidarity
Self-preservation	... the desire to share own experience with transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • declared aspiration to participate in EU decision-making processes and shape the enlargement agenda • expressed eagerness to share own experience with transformation and Euro-Atlantic

	<p>... the perceived capacity to participate in EU-wide solutions</p> <p>... the desire to be recognized as a relevant European/international actor</p>	<p>integration (incl. highlighting own “success story” and the resulting credibility to support others in a similar situation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-portrayal as a connoisseur of the Eastern Partnership and/or Western Balkan regions (ambition to receive recognition for its unparalleled expertise)
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Source: Own table

Appendix G.2: Overview of MAXQDA documents

Table G.2.1: Refugee and migrant crisis & the Czech Republic

Nr.	Document	Date	Link
1	Premiér Sobotka: ČR chce dále podporovat pomoc EU v oblasti migrace, stanovení povinných kvót odmítá	13.05.2015	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/premier-sobotka-cr-chce-dale-podporovat-pomoc-eu-v-oblasti-migrace--stanoveni-povinnych-kvot-odmita-130190/
2	Projev prezidenta republiky při 29. Schůzi Poslanecké sněmovny Parlamentu ČR	19.06.2015	https://www.prvnizpravy.cz/sloupky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-29-schuzi-ppsp-cr/
3	Ministr Zaorálek pro Právo: Hlavní je ochrana vnější hranice Unie	22.06.2015	https://www.cssd.cz/media/cssd-v-mediich/l-zaoralek-hlavni-je-ochrana-vnejsi-hranice-unie/
4	Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro Parlamentní listy	28.06.2015	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/rozhovor-prezidenta-republiky-pro-parlamentni-listy-394581.htm
5	Ministr Zaorálek pro E15: Mafiáni vydělávají na migraci miliardy	29.06.2015	https://www.e15.cz/rozhovory/lubomir-zaoralek-mafiani-vydelavaji-na-migraci-miliardy-1204328
6	Komentář předsedy vlády k procesu migrace	08.07.2015	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/komentar-predsedy-vlady-k-procesu-migrace-132707/
7	Ministr Zaorálek pro MF Dnes: Uprchlíky musíme vracet, není ale kam	27.07.2015	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy...nistra_zaoralka_2015/x2015_07_27_ministr_zaoralek_pro_mf_dnes.html
8	Projev prezidenta republiky při přijetí vedoucích zastupitelských úřadu ČR v zahraničí	25.08.2015	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-prijeti-vedoucich-zastupitelskych-uradu-cr-v-zahranici-221283.htm
9	Češi nejsou rasisti. Bojí se.	31.08.2015	https://www.tyden.cz/tema/cesi-nejsou-rasisti-boji-se_353059.html
10	Projev prezidenta republiky při tiskové konferenci prezidenta republiky	31.08.2015	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-tiskove-konferenci-prezidenta-republiky-336191.htm
11	Projev předsedy vlády v Poslanecké sněmovně 15. září 2015 k situaci v oblasti migrace	15.09.2015	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/projev-predsedy-vlady-v-poslanecke-snemovne-15--09--2015-k-situaci-v-oblasti-migrace-134692/
12	Unie nás kárá, ale neposlouchá	15.09.2015	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy...ky_a_projevy_ministra_zaoralka_2015/x2015_09_15_unie_nas_kara.html
13	Ministr Zaorálek pro Deník: Kvůli uprchlíkům o svůj životní styl neprijdeme	21.09.2015	https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/zaoralek-kvuli-uprchlikum-o-svuj-zivotni-styl-neprijdeme-20150919.html
14	Komentář premiéra Sobotky k rozhodnutí ministrů vnitra EU ve věci migrace	22.09.2015	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/komentar-premiera-sobotky-k-rozhodnuti-ministru-vnitra-eu-ve-veci-migrace-134985/

15	Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro Parlamentní listy	25.09.2015	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/rozhovor-prezidenta-republiky-pro-parlamentni-listy-93263.htm
16	Projev předsedy vlády v Poslanecké sněmovně 1. října 2015 k situaci v oblasti migrace	01.10.2015	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/projev-predsedy-vlady-v-poslanecke-snemovne-1--rijna-2015-k-situaci-v-oblasti-migrace-135392/
17	Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro časopis Reflex	08.10.2015	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/rozhovor-prezidenta-republiky-pro-casopis-reflex.htm
18	Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro Parlamentní listy	17.10.2015	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/rozhovor-prezidenta-republiky-pro-parlamentni-listy-166920.htm
19	Projev prezidenta republiky při vzpomínkovém aktu událostí 17. listopadu	17.11.2015	http://www.vlasteneckenoviny.cz/?p=108324
20	Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro Blesk	20.11.2015	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/rozhovor-prezidenta-republiky-pro-blesk-716757.htm
21	Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro Mladou frontu Dnes	26.11.2015	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/rozhovor-prezidenta-republiky-pro-mladou-frontu-dnes-404397.htm
22	Vánoční poselství prezidenta republiky Miloše Zemana	26.12.2015	https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/109979210/71-vanocni-poselstvi-prezidenta-republiky-milose-zemana/215411033221226/
23	Projev předsedy vlády v Poslanecké sněmovně 21. ledna 2016 k situaci v oblasti migrace	21.01.2016	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/informace-vlady-ceske-republiky-o-migracni-krizi--139321
24	Ministr Zaorálek pro Social Europe: A Visegrad Plan For Rebuilding European Cohesion	16.03.2016	https://www.socialeurope.eu/visegrad-plan-rebuilding-european-cohesion
25	ČR podpořila dohodu EU s Tureckem, cílem je zastavení nelegální migrace	18.03.2016	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/cr-podporila-dohodu-eu-s-tureckem--cilem-je-zastaveni-nelegalni-migrace-141546/
26	Projev předsedy vlády v Poslanecké sněmovně 22. března 2016 k situaci v oblasti migrace	22.03.2016	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/projev-predsedy-vlady-v-poslanecke-snemovne-22--brezna-2016-k-situaci-v-oblasti-migrace-141708/
27	Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s vedoucími zastupitelských úřadů ČR v zahraničí	24.08.2016	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-vedoucim-zastupitelskych-uradu-cr-v-zahranici-12846
28	Ministr Zaorálek pro Právo: Svatoušci, moralizování a podrazy	01.11.2016	http://www.irucz.ru/cz/zpravy/1-/102000000000-ceska-republika/000-/102000610000-praha-hlm/409-politika-mezinarodni/31254-ministr-zaoralek-pro-pravo/
29	Vánoční poselství prezidenta republiky Miloše Zemana	26.12.2016	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/vanocni-poselstvi-prezidenta-republiky-milose-zemana-2-13103
30	Premiér Sobotka: Dohoda lídrů EU pomůže výrazně	03.02.2017	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/premier-sobotka-dohoda-lidru-

	potlačit nelegální migraci ve Středomoří		eu-pomuze-vyrazne-potlacit-nelegalni-migraci-ve-stredomori-153223/
31	Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s vedoucími zastupitelských úřadů ČR v zahraničí	30.08.2017	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-vedoucim-zastupitelskych-uradu-cr-v-zahranici-1-13561
32	Projev prezidenta republiky v rámci 72. zasedání Valného shromáždění OSN	19.09.2017	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezidenta-republiky-v-ramci-72.-zasedani-valneho-shromazdeni-osn-13605
33	Ministr Stropnický pro Právo: Evropa už nemá bezbřehou náruč	05.02.2018	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_stropnickeho/x2018_02_05_ministr_stropnicky_pro_pravo.html
34	Ministr Stropnický: Kvóty migraci do EU nevyřeší	12.02.2018	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_stropnickeho/x2018_02_12_kvoty_migraci_do_eu_nevyresi_LN.html
35	Prohlášení předsedy vlády k aktuálnímu vývoji debaty o evropské migrační politice	11.06.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/prohlaseni-predsedy-vlady-k-aktualnimu-vyvoji-debaty-o-evropske-migracni-politice-166521/
36	Prohlášení předsedy vlády ke konání nedělního minisummitu k migraci	23.06.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/prohlaseni-predsedy-vlady-ke-konani-nedelniho-minisummitu-k-migraci-166951/
37	Lídři EU dosáhli přelomové dohody v migraci: kvóty jsou minulostí	29.06.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/lidri-eu-dosahli-prelomove-dohody-v-migraci-kvoty-jsou-minulosti-167155/
38	Vláda schválila 25 milionů korun na pomoc s migrací na Balkáně a rozhodla o zpřístupnění dalších databází jako otevřená data	24.07.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vlada-schvalila-25-milionu-korun-na-pomoc-s-migraci-na-balkane-a-rozhodla-o-zpristupneni-dalsich-databazi-jako-otevrena-data-167705/
39	Andrej Babiš na poradě velvyslanců: Chtěl bych vám poděkovat za vaši práci, kterou odvádíte pro naši zemi	27.08.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/andrej-babis-na-porade-velvyslancu-chtel-bych-vam-podekovat-za-vasi-praci--kterou-odvadite-pro-nasi-zemi-168137/
40	Projev ministra Jana Hamáčka na poradě vedoucích zastupitelských úřadů ČR	27.08.2018	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministra/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_povereneho/x2018_08_27_projev_ministra_jana_hamacka_na_porade.html
41	Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s vedoucími zastupitelských úřadů ČR v zahraničí	29.08.2018	http://www.zemanmilos.cz/cz/clanky/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-vedoucim-zastupitelskych-uradu-cr-v-zahranici-552555.htm
42	Ministr Hamáček pro Mladou frontu DNES: Zakažme si mnichovanství	01.10.2018	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministra/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_povereneho/x2018_10_01_ministr_hamacek_pro_mladou_frontu_dnes.html
43	Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s tiskem u příležitosti setkání prezidentů zemí V4	12.10.2018	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-tiskem-u-prilezitosti-setkani-prezidentu-zemi-v4-14321

44	Vize budoucnosti Evropské unie	18.10.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/vize-budoucnosti-evropske-unie-169262/
45	Premiér Babiš na bezpečnostní konferenci: Nesmíme polevovat v boji s kriminalitou, terorismem a hybridními hrozbami	01.11.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/premier-babis-na-bezpecnostni-konferenci-nesmime-polevovat-v-boji-s-kriminalitou--terorismem-a-hybridnimi-hrozbami-169577/
46	Ministr Petříček pro Právo: V paktu OSN chybí jasné odsouzení nelegální migrace	10.12.2018	https://www.cssd.cz/media/cssd-v-mediich/t-petricek-pro-pravo-v-paktu-osn-chybi-jasne-odsouzeni-nelegalni-migrace/
47	Ministr Petříček pro Právo: Žádná zadní vrátka migraci neotvíráme	20.12.2018	https://www.cssd.cz/media/cssd-v-mediich/t-petricek-pro-pravo-zadna-zadni-vratka-migraci-neotvirame/
48	Projev předsedy vlády na konferenci 15 let členství České republiky v Evropské unii	16.05.2019	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/projev-predsedy-vlady-na-konferenci-15-let-clenstvi-ceske-republiky-v-evropske-unii-173770/
49	Úvodní projev ministra zahraničních věcí na poradě vedoucích zastupitelských úřadů ČR 2019	28.08.2019	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_petricka_2019/x2019_08_28_uvodni_projev_ministra_zahranicnich_veci.html

Source: Own table

Table G.2.2: Refugee and migrant crisis & Hungary

Nr.	Document	Date	Link
1	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech in the European Parliament	19.05.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-in-the-european-parliament
2	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's response to questions from Members of the European Parliament	20.05.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-response-to-questions-from-members-of-the-european-parliament
3	Viktor Orbán: We should not use only the language of strength	03.06.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-we-should-not-use-only-the-language-of-strength
4	Speech by Viktor Orbán at the Round Table of the Bratislava Global Security Forum	19.06.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/speech-by-viktor-orban-at-the-round-table-of-the-bratislava-global-security-forum
5	Those who are overwhelmed cannot offer shelter to anyone	03.09.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/those-who-are-overwhelmed-cannot-offer-shelter-to-anyone
6	If we do not protect our borders, tens of millions of migrants will come	04.09.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/if-we-do-not-protect-our-borders-tens-of-millions-of-migrants-will-come
7	Viktor Orbán's speech at a meeting of the heads of Hungary's diplomatic missions abroad	09.09.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-s-speech-at-a-meeting-of-the-heads-of-hungary-s-diplomatic-missions-abroad
8	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's reply in Parliament	23.09.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-reply-in-parliament
9	Statement by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the international press conference	25.09.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/statement-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-international-press-conference
10	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's interview with Swiss weekly Weltwoche	12.11.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-interview-with-swiss-weekly-weltwoche
11	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's interview given to the Czech daily newspaper Lidové noviny	19.12.2015	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-interview-given-to-the-czech-daily-newspaper-lidove-noviny
12	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's statement at the joint press conference with Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland Beata Szydło, following their meeting in Budapest	08.02.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-statement-at-the-joint-press-conference-with-prime-minister-of-the-republic-of-poland-beata-szydlo-following-their-meeting-in-budapest

13	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement following the meeting of the Visegrád Group	15.02.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-press-statement-following-the-meeting-of-the-visegrad-group
14	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement following the summit of the European Council	19.02.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-press-statement-following-the-summit-of-the-european-council
15	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press conference	24.02.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/hungarian-government-decides-to-call-referendum-on-compulsory-resettlement-quotas
16	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's closing speech at the conference held to mark the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Law of Hungary	09.05.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-closing-speech-at-the-conference-held-to-mark-the-5th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-fundamental-law-of-hungary
17	Viktor Orbán's press conference after an extraordinary meeting of the European Council	16.09.2016	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/viktor-orbans-press-conference-after-an-extraordinary-meeting-of-the-european-council-full-text-in-english/
18	I love this country, and I do not want to see anyone change it under orders from outside	22.09.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-i-love-this-country-and-i-do-not-want-to-see-anyone-change-it-under-orders-from-outside
19	Provided there are Christians there will be a spiritual upturn	30.09.2016	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/provided-there-are-christians-there-will-be-a-spiritual-upturn/
20	Viktor Orbán's press conference after the announcement of referendum results	03.10.2016	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/viktor-orbans-press-conference-after-the-announcement-of-referendum-results/
21	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press conference in Brussels after the EU summit	21.10.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-press-conference-in-brussels-after-the-eu-summit
22	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's doorstep statement before the meeting of the European Council	15.12.2016	http://abouthungary.hu/prime-minister/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-doorstep-statement-before-the-meeting-of-the-european-council/
23	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press conference after the meeting of the European Council	22.12.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-press-conference-after-the-meeting-of-the-european-council
24	Viktor Orbán's speech at the ceremonial swearing-in of new border hunters	07.03.2017	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-ceremonial-swearing-in-of-new-border-hunters
25	Viktor Orbán's doorstep statement before the meeting of the European Council	09.03.2017	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/viktor-orbans-doorstep-statement-before-the-meeting-of-the-european-council/
26	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press conference after the	10.03.2017	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-

	meeting of the European Council		minister-viktor-orban-s-press-conference-after-the-meeting-of-the-european-council-20170310
27	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech in the European Parliament	26.04.2017	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-in-the-european-parliament/
28	Viktor Orbán's reply in the European Parliament	27.04.2017	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/viktor-orbans-reply-in-the-european-parliament/
29	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's statement before the meeting of the European Council	22.06.2017	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-statement-before-the-meeting-of-the-european-council
30	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press conference after the meeting of the European Council	23.06.2017	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-press-conference-after-the-meeting-of-the-european-council-20170626
31	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the closing event for the National Consultation	29.06.2017	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-closing-event-for-the-national-consultation
32	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech at the 7th Plenary Session of the Hungarian Diaspora Council	09.11.2017	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-7th-plenary-session-of-the-hungarian-diaspora-council
33	Viktor Orbán's speech at the Visegrád Group conference "The Future of Europe"	30.01.2018	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-visegrad-group-conference-the-future-of-europe/
34	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech at Christian Democrat International's conference on interfaith dialogue	26.02.2018	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-christian-democrat-international-s-conference-on-interfaith-dialogue
35	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the final Fidesz election campaign event	07.04.2018	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-final-fidesz-election-campaign-event
36	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement after his meeting with the Interior Minister of Italy Matteo Salvini	29.08.2018	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-press-statement-after-his-meeting-with-the-interior-minister-of-italy-matteo-salvini
37	Address by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in the debate on the so-called "Sargentini Report"	11.09.2018	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/address-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-in-the-debate-on-the-so-called-sargentini-report
38	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the 8th plenary session of the Hungarian Diaspora Council	23.11.2018	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-8th-plenary-session-of-the-hungarian-diaspora-council
39	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's address at Mathias Corvinus Collegium's international conference, "Budapest Summit on Migration"	23.03.2019	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-address-at-mathias-corvinus-collegium-s-international-conference-budapest-summit-on-migration

40	Press statement by Viktor Orbán after talks with Matteo Salvini, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister of Italy	02.05.2019	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/press-statement-by-viktor-orban-after-talks-with-matteo-salvini-deputy-prime-minister-and-interior-minister-of-italy/
41	László Trócsányi's "sin" is that he helped protect the country from migration	27.09.2019	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/laszlo-trocsanyi-s-sin-is-that-he-helped-protect-the-country-from-migration
42	Address by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the 2nd International Conference on the Persecution of Christians	27.11.2019	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/address-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-2nd-international-conference-on-the-persecution-of-christians/
43	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's New Year international press conference	09.01.2020	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-new-year-international-press-conference/
44	Viktor Orbán at the International Conference National Conservatism	04.02.2020	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-at-the-international-conference-national-conservatism

Source: Own table

Table G.2.3: Refugee and migrant crisis & Poland

Nr.	Document	Date	Link
1	Prime Minister on accepting refugees: Poles also were helped out in the past	11.07.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-on-accepting-refugees-poles-also-were-helped-out-in-the-past.html
2	Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz: “Poland to admit 2,000 refugees. It’s a sign of the European solidarity”	21.07.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-poland-to-admit-2000-refugees-its-a-sign-of-the-european.html
3	Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz on the problem of migrants in the EU: We won’t be blind to the humanitarian crisis	03.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-on-the-problem-of-migrants-in-the-eu-we-wont-be-blind-to-the.html
4	Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz: Poland doesn’t shirk responsibility for the migration crisis	04.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-poland-doesnt-shirk-responsibility-for-the-migration-crisis.html
5	The prime minister on the migration crisis in the EU: I won’t take any actions which would destabilise Poles’ life	05.09.2020	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/the-prime-minister-on-the-migration-crisis-in-the-eu-i-wont-take-any-actions-which-would.html
6	Migration crisis in the EU: conversation with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon	07.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/migration-crisis-in-the-eu-conversation-with-un-secretary-general-ban-ki-moon.html
7	Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz: Poland should speak with one voice on the migration crisis in the EU	08.09.2020	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-poland-should-speak-with-one-voice-on-the-migration-crisis-in.html
8	Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz: I won’t let the Europe’s migration crisis affect Poles’ life	14.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-i-wont-let-the-europes-migration-crisis-affect-poles-life.html
9	Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz at the Sejm: Solidarity should work in two directions	16.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-at-the-sejm-solidarity-should-work-in-two-directions.html
10	Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz: Poland is and will be safe, pro-European and tolerant	20.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-pm-ewa-kopacz-poland-is-and-will-be-safe-pro-european-and-tolerant.html
11	EU has taken decisions on admitting refugees. Rafał Trzaskowski: absolute majority of Polish demands have been fulfilled	22.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/eu-has-taken-decisions-on-admitting-refugees-rafal-trzaskowski-absolute-majority-of-polish.html

12	Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz was a guest of “Dziś wieczorem” programme	28.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-was-a-guest-of-dzis-wieczorem-programme.html
13	Prime Minister Beata Szydło in Brussels: the issue of immigrants will be solved outside the EU	29.11.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-in-brussels-the-issue-of-immigrants-will-be-solved-outside-the.html
14	Prime Minister Beata Szydło in Brussels: the agreement on the migration crisis is good	18.12.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-in-brussels-the-agreement-on-the-migration-crisis-is-good.html
15	Debate at the European Parliament attended by Prime Minister Beata Szydło	19.01.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/debate-at-the-european-parliament-attended-by-prime-minister-beata-szydlo.html
16	Meeting of Prime Minister Beata Szydło with the representative of the parliamentary groupings	21.01.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/meeting-of-prime-minister-beata-szydlo-with-the-representative-of-the-parliamentary.html
17	Prime Minister Beata Szydło in London: Poland will allocate EUR 3 million for humanitarian aid for Syria	04.02.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-in-london-poland-will-allocate-eur-3-million-for-humanitarian.html
18	Prime Minister Beata Szydło in Berlin: we want to support and develop the cooperation as well as good relations with Germany	12.02.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-in-berlin-we-want-to-support-and-develop-the-cooperation-as.html
19	Prime Minister Beata Szydło in Prague: the migration crisis affects all of us	15.02.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-in-prague-the-migration-crisis-affects-all-of-us.html
20	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: EU made huge step towards easing migrant crisis	08.03.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-eu-made-huge-step-towards-easing-migrant-crisis.html
21	EU-Turkey: work on the migrant agreement attended by Prime Minister Szydło finalised	17.03.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/eu-turkey-work-on-the-migrant-agreement-attended-by-prime-minister-szydlo-finalised.html
22	Prime Minister Beata Szydło on the EU-Turkey migrant agreement: it's good for all parties	18.03.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-on-the-eu-turkey-migrant-agreement-its-good-for-all-parties.html
23	Prime Minister Szydło in Prague: we shall strengthen the role of V4 in building good future for Europe	08.06.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-szydlo-in-prague-we-shall-strengthen-the-role-of-v4-in-building-good-future.html

24	Beata Szydło: Strong EU guarantees Poland's security	26.08.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/beata-szydlo-strong-eu-guarantees-polands-security.html
25	Meeting of Prime Minister Beata Szydło with the Prime Ministers of the Visegrád Group countries	06.09.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/krynica-zdroj-meeting-of-prime-minister-beata-szydlo-with-the-prime-ministers-of-the.html
26	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: Discussion opens on reform and modification of the European Union's migration policy	21.10.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-discussion-opens-on-reform-and-modification-of-the-european.html
27	"We keep our word. It was a good year built on three pillars: family, development and safety," said Prime Minister Beata Szydło on the first year of her government being in power	15.11.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/we-keep-our-word-it-was-a-good-year-built-on-three-pillars-family-development-and-safety.html
28	Prime Minister Beata Szydło in Brussels: The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement has been saved	16.12.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-in-brussels-the-eu-ukraine-association-agreement-has-been.html
29	Prime Minister Beata Szydło during an informal summit in Malta: EU migration policy starts to head in the right direction	03.02.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-during-an-informal-summit-in-malta-eu-migration-policy-starts.html
30	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: Around PLN 4 million for rebuilding of homes in Syria	11.04.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-around-pln-4-million-for-rebuilding-of-homes-in-syria.html
31	Prime Minister Beata Szydło to opposition at the Sejm: You do not care about Poland	07.04.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-to-opposition-at-the-sejm-you-do-not-care-about-poland.html
32	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: Poland's security is a priority	01.05.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-polands-security-is-a-priority.html
33	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: "Nothing is more precious than the security of homeland and our citizens"	24.05.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-nothing-is-more-precious-than-the-security-of-homeland-and-our.html
34	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: Migration policy must be pragmatic and efficient	23.06.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-migration-policy-must-be-pragmatic-and-efficient.html

Source: Own table

Table G.2.4: Refugee and migrant crisis & Slovakia

Nr.	Document	Date	Link
1	Slovensko nemá problém s islamom, bojovať treba proti extrémizmu a neznášanlivosti	22.01.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/slovensko-nema-problem-s-islamom-bojovat-treba-proti-extremizmu-a-neznasanimivosti
2	Intenzívne rokovanie Rady pre zahraničné veci v Luxemburgu	20.04.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/spravy_s_fotogaleriou/-/asset_publisher/1tL4NDgU7nRj/content/intenzivne-rokovanie-rady-pre-zahranicne-veci-v-luxemburgu
3	Kiska negotiated with French President	19.06.2015	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-rokoval-s-francuzskym-prezidentom-hollandom/
4	M. Lajčák so slovinským partnerom o probléme migrácie	01.09.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/spravy_s_fotogaleriou/-/asset_publisher/1tL4NDgU7nRj/content/m-lajcak-so-slovinskym-partnerom-o-probleme-migracie
5	Kiska: Attitude to refugees will define the heart and soul of Slovakia	07.09.2015	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/vyhlasenie-prezidenta-kisku-k-teme-utecencov/
6	Ministri V4 s partnermi z Nemecka a Luxemburska o migrácii	11.09.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/spravy_s_fotogaleriou/-/asset_publisher/1tL4NDgU7nRj/content/ministri-v4-s-partnermi-z-nemecka-a-luxemburska-o-migracii
7	President Kiska: We should be in a different position in the EU	07.10.2015	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-vystupil-s-prihovorom-pred-poslancami-v-narodnej-rade/
8	President Kiska: We need Europe that is united	05.11.2015	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-kiska-potrebujeme-jednotnu-europu/
9	Terrorism and refugee crisis in the global context	06.11.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/13720/12th+ASEM+Foreign+Ministers+Meeting.pdf/0bae7bb5-d422-4d80-8636-ef74e486e564
10	Podpora krajín V4 pre západný Balkán	13.11.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/podpora-krajin-v4-pre-zapadny-balkan
11	M. Lajčák odovzdal humanitárnu pomoc pre riešenie migračnej krízy v Taliansku	18.11.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-odovzdal-humanitarnu-pomoc-pre-riesenie-migracnej-krizy-v-taliansku?p_p_auth=Fuf3Zaht
12	Najskôr bezpečnosť, potom ostatné	01.12.2015	https://komentare.hnonline.sk/komentare/545011-najskor-bezpecnost-potom-ostatne
13	Stotisíc eur na pomoc Srbsku s utečeneckou krízou	04.12.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/zahranicna_politika/ludske_prava-ludske_prava_aktualne_spravy/-/asset_publisher/OrQIpNqiT3eP/content/stotisec-eur-na-pomoc-srbsku-s-uteceneckou-krizou
14	New Year's address by Andrej Kiska	01.01.2016	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-v-novorocnom-prejave-este-je-cas-zatlacit-na-politikov/

15	PREMIÉR: Sú potrebné urýchlené rozhodnutia o zostavení európskej pobrežnej stráže	08.01.2016	https://www.vlada.gov.sk/premier-su-potrebne-urychlene-rozhodnutia-o-zostaveni-europskej-pobreznej-straze/
16	Robert Fico exkluzívne pre HN: Po Kolíne	12.01.2016	https://komentare.hnonline.sk/komentare/545922-robert-fico-exkluzivne-pre-hn-po-koline
17	Slowakei: Bloß keine Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge	28.01.2016	https://www.zeit.de/2016/05/slowakei-fluechtlingspolitik-robert-fico?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F
18	M. Lajčák v Slovinsku: Migračnú krízu možno vyriešiť len spoločnými silami	29.01.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/es/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-v-slovinsku-migracnu-krizu-mozno-vyriesit-len-spolocnymi-silami?p_p_auth=wjYRBhDq&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fes
19	SR-Grécko: Pripravenosť pomôcť pri zvládaní migračnej krízy	09.02.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/de/web/en/news/current_issu es/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/sr-grecko-pripravenost-pomocet-pri-zvladani-migracnej-krizy/10182?_101_INSTANCE_lrJ2tDuQdEKp_redirect=%2Fde%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fnews%3Frok%3D2016%26mesiac%3D1
20	Minister M. Lajčák v Bruseli na GAC o príprave Európskej rady o Turecku a migrácii	15.03.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/minister-m-lajcak-v-bruseli-na-gac-o-priprave-europskej-rady-o-turecku-a-migracii
21	Minister M. Lajčák v Berlíne o migrácii a európskom predsedníctve	08.04.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/pl/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/minister-m-lajcak-v-berline-o-migracii-a-europskom-predsednictve?p_p_auth=Ii8IKpom&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fpl%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2016%26mesiac%3D3
22	M. Lajčák: Riešenie migračnej krízy sa dostáva do zásadnej novej etapy	10.04.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/sl/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-riesenie-migracnej-krizy-sa-dostava-do-zasadnej-novej-etapy?p_p_auth=BklxVFnl&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fsl%2F
23	Ministri EÚ o externých aspektoch migrácie i o Východnom partnerstve	23.05.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/uk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/ministri-eu-o-externych-aspektoch-migracie-i-o-vychodnom-partnerstve/10182?p_p_auth=BJKHiRsM&_101_INSTANCE_oLViwP07vPxv_redirect=%2Fuk%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fnews%2Fminister__activities%3Fstrana%3D9
24	Ficov prvý rozhovor: Bojovali sme s mimovládny sektorom, ktorý bol často dotovaný zo zahraničia	25.05.2016	https://dennikn.sk/470467/fico-poskytol-rozhovor-tasr-bojovali-mimovladnym-sektorom-ktory-bol-casto-dotovany-financovany-zo-zahranicia/

25	M. Lajčák rokovoal so šéfom Medzinárodnej organizácie pre migráciu	28.06.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/zh/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-rokoval-so-sefom-medzinarodnej-organizacie-pre-migraciju?p_p_auth=QUFzytBa&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fzh%2Faktuality%2Faktivita_ministra%3Fstrana%3D58
26	Speech by Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico in the European Parliament	06.07.2016	https://sk16.eu/m5/en/speeches-and-statements/speech-by-slovak-prime-minister-robert-fico-in-the-european-parliament.html
27	Slovakia's Fico: high risk of more attacks after unchecked migration	29.07.2016	https://de.reuters.com/article/us-europe-attacks-slovakia/slovakias-fico-high-risk-of-more-attacks-after-unchecked-migration-idUSKCN10915N
28	President Kiska at UN session: It is our moral duty to help	20.09.2016	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-kiska-na-pode-osn-zabudame-co-sme-dosiahli/
29	M. Lajčák v New Yorku: Na zvládnutie migrácie treba rozšíriť a zintenzívniť medzinárodnú spoluprácu	20.09.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/sr/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-v-new-yorku-na-zvladnutie-migracie-treba-rozsirit-a-zintenzivnit-medzinarodnu-spolupracu?p_p_auth=4HqFLdm3&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fsr
30	Účasť na Obamovom summite na podporu utečencov je uznaním príspevku SR k riešeniu migračnej krízy	21.09.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/ucast-na-obamovom-summite-na-podporu-utecencov-je-uznanim-prispevku-sr-k-rieseniu-migracnej-krizy
31	Kiska on European Union: We have to find new passion	12.12.2016	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-hovoril-v-berline-o-obnoveni-dovery-v-europsku-uniu/
32	Kiska at the UN: We need leadership without egoism	19.09.2017	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-kiska-v-osn-ukoncime-nasledky-sebectva/
33	Robert Fico: Slovensko sa stáva proeurópskym ostrovom v strede Európy	23.10.2017	https://www.vlada.gov.sk//robert-fico-slovensko-sa-stava-proeuropskym-ostrovom-v-strede-europy/
34	»Migration ist keine bürokratische Angelegenheit«	27.11.2018	https://www.koerber-stiftung.de/themen/europa-zusammenhalten/beitraege-2018/interview-lajcak
35	Lajčák: ochrana hraníc a podpora návratov sú našou prioritou	22.03.2019	https://www.mzv.sk/pt/web/en/ministry/minister/activities/-/asset_publisher/nNnVuDsSsgB1/content/lajcak-ochrana-hranic-a-podpora-navratov-su-nasou-prioritou/10182?_101_INSTANCE_nNnVuDsSsgB1_redirect=%2Fpt%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fministry%2Fminister%2Factivities
36	Kiska in his last address at Globsec: We need a strong and united Europe	06.06.2019	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-kiska-na-globsecu-potrebujeme-silnu-a-jednotnu-europu/
37	M. Lajčák vo videokonferencii podporil posilnenie globálnej úlohy EÚ a spoločný postup v oblasti migrácie	13.03.2020	https://www.mzv.sk/de/ministerstvo/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-vo-videokonferencii-podporil-posilnenie-globalnej-ulohy-eu-a-spolocny-postup-v-oblasti-migracie?p_p_auth=9OrcK4RO&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fde%2Fministerstvo%2Fminister-aktivita_ministra

Source: Own table

Table G.2.5: EU enlargement & the Czech Republic

Nr.	Document	Date	Link
1	Projev premiéra Topolánka v Evropském parlamentu	14.01.2009	https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/dokument-projev-premiera-topolanka-v-evropskem-parlamentu.A090114_105500_domaci_kot
2	Aktuální výzvy českého předsednictví – „2G“, finanční krize, Východní partnerství	29.01.2009	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/aktualni-vyzvy-ceskeho-predsednictvi--2g--financni-krize--vychodni-partnerstvi--52984/
3	Projev premiéra Mirka Topolánka na konferenci „Rozšíření EU - 5 let poté“	02.03.2009	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/vyznamne-projevy/projev-premiera-mirka-topolanka-na-konferenci-rozsireni-eu---5-let-pote-2--3--2009-54342/
4	Zahajovací projev Mirka Topolánka na summitu pro Východního partnerství	07.05.2009	http://www.eu2009.cz/cz/news-and-documents/speeches-interviews/zahajovaci-projev-na-summitu-vychodniho-partnerstvi--21165/index.html
5	Projev předsedy vlády Jiřího Rusnoka na recepci u příležitosti Dne nezávislosti Ukrajiny	04.09.2013	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/projev-predsedy-vlady-jiriho-rusnoka-na-recepci-u-prilezitosti-dne-nezavislosti-ukrajiny--4--zari-2013-110574/
6	Ministr Kohout: Východní partnerství je naší dlouhodobou prioritou	28.11.2013	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti_a_media/archiv_zprav/rok_2013/x2_str_kohout_vychodni_partnerstvi_je_nasi_dlouhodobou_prioritou.html
7	Východní politika Evropské unie – naše práce pokračuje	13.01.2014	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archiv/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_kohouta_2013/x2014_01_13_vychodni_politika_evropske_unie_nase_prace_pokracuje.html
8	Pomožme Ukrajině, o své budoucnosti ale musí rozhodnout sama	18.03.2014	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archiv/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_zaoralka_2014/x2014_03_18_pomozme_ukrajine_o_sve_budoucnosti_ale_musi_rozhodnout_sama.html
9	Projev prezidenta republiky při zahájení zasedání k 5. výročí Východního partnerství	24.04.2014	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-zahajeni-zasedani-k-5.-vyroci-vychodniho-partnerstvi-11434
10	Projev prezident republiky při tiskové konferenci u příležitosti Setkání k 5. výročí Východního partnerství	25.04.2014	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezident-republiky-pri-tiskove-konferenci-u-prilezitosti-setkani-k-5.-vyroci-vychodniho-partnerstvi-11435
11	Novoroční projev ministra Zaorálka k představitelům diplomatického sboru	13.01.2016	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archiv/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_zaoralka_2017/x2017_01_13_novorocni_projev_ministra_zaoralka_k_diplomatickemu_sboru.html?fbclid=IwAR3tUdnbyglVrlnmjYhZ3Uc6UCx-mLQqrWCuQbaaNiLF_uNS9IEB9Nkya4M
12	Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s tiskem u	06.04.2016	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-

	příležitosti návštěvy prezidenta Černé Hory		prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-tiskem-pri-navsteve-prezidenta-cerne-hory-12583
13	The Visegrad Group & the Western Balkans: Enhanced cooperation towards a common future	12.04.2016	https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2016/04/12/the-visegrad-group-the-western-balkans-enhanced-cooperation-towards-a-common-future/
14	Projev prezidenta republiky při setkání s tiskem u příležitosti návštěvy srbského prezidenta v ČR	29.11.2016	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-setkani-s-tiskem-u-prilezitosti-navstevy-srbskeho-prezidenta-v-cr-13049
16	Projev předsedy vlády při novoročním setkání s diplomatickým sborem	23.01.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/projev-predsedy-vlady-pri-novorocnim-setkani-s-diplomatickym-sborem-162901/
17	Projev ministra Stropnického k vedoucím zastupitelských úřadů ČS EU a západního Balkánu	06.02.2018	https://www.mzv.cz/public/e7/1a/18/2744890_1880892_Projev_ministra_Stropnickeho_k_vedoucim_zastupitelskych_uradu_CS_EU_a_zapadniho_Balkanu.pdf
18	Vláda schválila mandát pro premiéra na summit EU-západní Balkán	16.05.2018	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vlada-schvalila-mandat-pro-premiera-na-summit-eu-zapadni-balkan-165770/
19	Projev ministra Jana Hamáčka na poradě vedoucích zastupitelských úřadů ČR	27.08.2018	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archiv/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_povereneho/x2018_08_27_projev_ministra_jana_hamacka_na_porade.html
20	Projev prezidenta republiky při tiskové konferenci u příležitosti pracovní návštěvy prezidenta Makedonské republiky v ČR	04.10.2018	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-tiskove-konferenci-k-pracovni-navsteve-prezidenta-makedonske-republiky-v-cr-14300
21	Nástupní projev ministra zahraničních věcí Tomáše Petříčka	18.10.2018	http://www.amo.cz/cs/agenda-pro-ceskou-zahranicni-politiku/nastupni-projev-ministra-zahranicnich-veci-tomase-petricka-2/
22	Projev ministra Petříčka k diplomatickému sboru	24.10.2018	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archiv/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_petricka_2018/x2018_10_24_projev_ministra_petricka_k.html
23	Evropská unie: 10 let s východními partnery	01.02.2019	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archiv/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_petricka_2019/x2019_02_01_evropska_unie_10_let_s_vychodnimi.html
24	Projev předsedy vlády u příležitosti deseti let Východního partnerství	16.04.2019	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/projev-predsedy-vlady-u-prilezitosti-deseti-let-vychodniho-partnerstvi-173066/
25	Premiér: Po vstupu do NATO je třeba naše členství v EU považovat za návrat svého druhu do Evropy, kam patříme a vždy jsme patřili	30.04.2019	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/premier/projevy/premier-po-vstupu-do-nato-je-treba-nase-clenstvi-v-eu-povazovat-za-navrat-sveho-druhu-do-evropy--kam-patrime-a-vzdy-jsme-patrili-173324/
26	Projev prezidenta republiky při tiskové konferenci při návštěvě Srbské republiky	11.09.2019	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-

			prezidenta-republiky-pri-tiskove-konferenci-pri-navsteve-srbske-republiky-14995
27	Projev prezidenta republiky při hospodářském fóru v Bělehradě	11.09.2019	https://www.hrad.cz/cs/prezident-cr/soucasny-prezident-cr/vybrane-projevy-a-rozhovory/projev-prezidenta-republiky-pri-hospodarskem-foru-v-belehrade-14996
28	Tisková konference po jednání premiérů V4 a představitelů regionu západního Balkánu	12.09.2019	https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/tiskove-konference/tiskova-konference-po-jednani-premieru-v4-a-predstavitelu-regionu-zapadniho-balkanu--12--zari-2019-176479/
29	Porevoluční naděje, evropská očekávání a jak společně dál	06.12.2019	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archiv/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_petricka_2019/x2019_12_06_projev_ministra_tomase_petricka_v.html
30	Novoroční projev ministra Tomáše Petříčka k diplomatickému sboru	24.01.2020	https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archiv/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_petricka_2020/x2020_01_24_novorocni_projev_ministra_tomase.html

Source: Own table

Table G.2.6: EU enlargement & Hungary

Nr.	Document	Date	Link
1	Viktor Orbán's press conference with Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia	10.02.2015	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-s-press-conference-with-irakli-garibashvili-prime-minister-of-georgia
2	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press conference after his talks with Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic	01.07.2015	https://kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches?items=30&page=24
3	Viktor Orbán's press statement after his talks with Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia	05.09.2016	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/viktor-orbans-press-statement-after-his-talks-with-aleksandar-vucic-prime-minister-of-the-republic-of-serbia/
4	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement after the meeting of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrád Four and Ukraine	11.09.2016	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-press-statement-after-the-meeting-of-the-prime-ministers-of-the-visegrad-four-and-ukraine-full-text-in-english/
5	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the Serbian-Hungarian business forum	22.11.2016	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-serbian-hungarian-business-forum
6	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement after his meeting with Prime Minister of Ukraine Volodymyr Borysovyh Groysman	24.11.2016	https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s...ting-with-prime-minister-of-ukraine-volodymyr-borysovyh-groysman
7	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the Hungarian-Ukrainian Business Forum	25.11.2016	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-hungarian-ukrainian-business-forum/
8	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement following his meeting with Prime Minister of Montenegro Duško Marković	25.02.2017	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-press-statement-following-his-talks-with-prime-minister-of-montenegro-dusko-markovic/
9	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement after his talks with Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili	21.04.2017	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-press-statement-after-his-talks-with-prime-minister-of-georgia-giorgi-kvirikashvili/
10	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement following his meeting with Macedonian party leader Nikola Gruevski	29.09.2017	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-press-statement-following-his-meeting-with-macedonian-party-leader-nikola-gruevski/
11	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the 6th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region	19.10.2017	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-6th-annual-forum-of-the-eu-strategy-for-the-danube-region/
12	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement following a	09.02.2018	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-press-

	joint session of the Hungarian and Serbian cabinets		statement-following-a-joint-session-of-the-hungarian-and-serbian-cabinets/
13	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement after his meeting with President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić	26.03.2018	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-press-statement-after-his-meeting-with-president-of-the-republic-of-serbia-aleksandar-vucic/
14	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech at the inauguration of the Vojvodina Sports Academy	27.09.2018	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-inauguration-of-the-vojvodina-sports-academy/
16	Statement by Viktor Orbán at a press conference following the Serbian-Hungarian intergovernmental summit	15.04.2019	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/statement-by-viktor-orban-at-a-press-conference-following-the-serbian-hungarian-intergovernmental-summit/
17	Statement by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán after his talks with Milorad Dodik, President of Bosnia and Herzegovina	18.06.2019	https://kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches?items=25&page=8
18	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press statement at the summit of heads of government from the Visegrád Four and Western Balkan countries	16.09.2019	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-press-statement-at-the-summit-of-heads-of-government-from-the-visegrad-four-and-western-balkan-countries/
19	Viktor Orbán's Presseerklärung nach seiner Unterredung mit Ion Chicu, dem Ministerpräsidenten der Republik Moldau	12.03.2020	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/viktor-orbans-presseerklarung-nach-seiner-unterredung-mit-ion-chicu-dem-ministerprasidenten-der-republik-moldau/
20	Press statement by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán after his talks with the President of Serbia	15.05.2020	http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/press-statement-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-after-his-talks-with-the-president-of-serbia/
21	Statement by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán following his talks with Alexander Lukashenko, President of the Republic of Belarus	06.06.2020	http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/statement-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-following-his-talks-with-alexander-lukashenko-president-of-the-republic-of-belarus/

Source: Own table

Table G.2.7: EU enlargement & Poland

Nr.	Document	Date	Link
1	The Prime Minister on the difficult process of bringing Poland and Belarus closer together	24.06.2009	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/aktualnosci/the-prime-minister-on-the-difficult-process-of-bringing-poland-and-belarus-closer.html
2	Meeting of Prime Ministers of Poland and Moldova	18.02.2010	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/meeting-of-prime-ministers-of-poland-and-moldova.html
3	Meeting of Prime Minister with President of Georgia	11.03.2010	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/meeting-of-prime-minister-with-president-of-georgia.html
4	Meeting of Polish and Armenian Prime Ministers	12.03.2010	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/meeting-of-polish-and-armenian-prime-ministers.html
5	Prime Minister supports Moldova's integration with the European Union	29.03.2011	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-supports-moldovas-integration-with-the-european-union.html
6	Prime Minister: Moldova belongs to Europe, even though it is outside the EU yet	30.03.2011	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-moldova-belongs-to-europe-even-though-it-is-outside-the-eu-yet.html
7	Premier in support of Ukraine's European aspirations	13.04.2011	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/premier-in-support-of-ukraines-european-aspirations.html
8	Polish and Swedish prime ministers: We have a common vision of EU development	30.05.2011	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/polish-and-swedish-prime-ministers-we-have-a-common-vision-of-eu-development.html
9	PM's meetings on events in Belarus and economic situation in the EU	06.09.2011	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/pms-meetings-on-events-in-belarus-and-economic-situation-in-the-eu.html
10	Eastern Partnership Summit ends in Warsaw	30.09.2011	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/eastern-partnership-summit-ends-in-warsaw.html
11	Prime Minister: Poland will continue in its efforts to tighten the ties between Ukraine and the EU	14.11.2013	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-poland-will-continue-in-its-efforts-to-tighten-the-ties-between-ukraine-and.html
12	Prime Minister: EU and Poland have been consistently building up a plan for bringing Ukraine closer to Europe	02.12.2013	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-eu-and-poland-have-been-consistently-building-up-a-plan-for-bringing.html
13	Prime Minister Tusk after the EU summit: the door for Ukraine must be open	20.12.2013	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-tusk-after-the-eu-summit-the-door-for-ukraine-must-be-open.html
14	Talks on Ukraine: Prime Minister Tusk's visit to Moldova	06.02.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/talks-on-ukraine-prime-minister-tusks-visit-to-moldova.html
16	Prime Minister: supporting democracy in Ukraine is in Poland's interest	24.02.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-supporting-democracy-in-ukraine-is-in-polands-interest.html
17	PM: Polish eastern policy must be active and reliable	18.03.2014	premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/pm-polish-eastern-policy-must-be-active-and-reliable.html

18	Prime Minister Tusk's address: Poland means „freedom"	19.03.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-tusks-address-poland-means-freedom.html
19	PM Tusk's visit to Moldova	28.03.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/pm-tusks-visit-to-moldova.html
20	The Prime Minister during the Cabinet Council session: we need to maintain international unity in view of the situation in Ukraine	08.04.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/the-prime-minister-during-the-cabinet-council-session-we-need-to-maintain-international.html
21	Donald Tusk's meeting with Moldova's Prime Minister	14.05.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/donald-tusks-meeting-with-moldovas-prime-minister.html
22	Donald Tusk in Brussels on Europe's energy security	21.05.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/donald-tusk-in-brussels-on-europes-energy-security.html
23	The Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz in the Parliament: Winning the peace for Ukraine is the responsibility of Polish politics	06.11.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/the-prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-in-the-parliament-winning-the-peace-for-ukraine-is-the.html
24	Humanitarian aid for Ukraine. Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz: Ukrainians can rely on Polish solidarity	17.12.2014	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/humanitarian-aid-for-ukraine-prime-minister-ewa-kopacz-ukrainians-can-rely-on-polish.html
25	Visit to Ukraine. Meetings with President Poroshenko and Prime Minister Yatsenyuk	19.01.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/visit-to-ukraine-meetings-with-president-poroshenko-and-prime-minister-yatsenyuk.html
26	Support for reforms in Ukraine	19.01.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/support-for-reforms-in-ukraine.html
27	Eastern Partnership Summit: talks on visa liberalisation	22.05.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/eastern-partnership-summit-talks-on-visa-liberalisation.html
28	Meeting with the Prime Minister of Ukraine "Poland does support and shall support Ukraine in its pro-European aspirations"	09.09.2015	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/meeting-with-the-prime-minister-of-ukraine-poland-does-support-and-shall-support-ukraine.html
29	Prime Minister Beata Szydło in Krynica-Zdrój: Free, democratic and independent Ukraine is a guarantee of security for Europe and Poland	07.09.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-in-krynica-zdroj-free-democratic-and-independent-ukraine-is-a.html
30	Prime Minister Beata Szydło in Brussels: The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement has been saved	16.12.2016	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-in-brussels-the-eu-ukraine-association-agreement-has-been.html
31	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: We seek for solutions to strengthen the European <u>union</u>	19.06.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-we-seek-for-solutions-to-strengthen-the-european-union.html
32	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: I think there will be more and more common goals and areas	20.06.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-i-think-there-will-be-more-and-more-common-goals-and-areas-for.html

	for cooperation between Poland and Sweden		
33	Prime Minister Beata Szydło: We will be ambassadors of the Eastern Partnership countries	24.11.2017	https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/prime-minister-beata-szydlo-we-will-be-ambassadors-of-the-eastern-partnership-countries.html
34	Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership foreign ministers meet in Bratislava	07.05.2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/visegrad-group-and-eastern-partnership-foreign-ministers-meet-in-bratislava
35	Polish-Armenian political consultations in Warsaw	22.05.2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/polish-armenian-political-consultations-in-warsaw
36	Minister Jacek Czaputowicz visits Georgia	11.07.2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/minister-jacek-czaputowicz-visits-georgia
37	Minister Jacek Czaputowicz visits Moldova	12.07.2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/minister-jacek-czaputowicz-visits-moldova
38	Polish-Georgian consultations in Warsaw	29.10.2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/polish-georgian-consultations-in-warsaw
39	Deputy Minister Marcin Przydacz attends Polish Eastern Policy conference	27.11.2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/deputy-minister-marcin-przydacz-attends-polish-eastern-policy-conference
40	Minister Jacek Czaputowicz's consultations with heads of Eastern Partnership diplomacies	08.05.2020	https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/minister-jacek-czaputowiczs-consultations-with-heads-of-eastern-partnership-diplomacies

Source: Own table

Table G.2.8: EU enlargement & Slovakia

Nr.	Document	Date	Link
1	Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič Pays an Official Visit to the Republic of Moldova	20.06.2007	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/indexd080-2.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=4453&language=en
2	President of the Republic of Macedonia Branko Crvenkovski pays official visit to the Slovak Republic	11.03.2008	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/index2077.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=5820&language=en
3	President Ivan Gašparovič on Official Visit to the Republic of Serbia	04.12.2009	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/index2f1b.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=9906&language=en
4	Ivan Gašparovič Pays Official Visit to Ukraine	08.10.2010	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/index90f4.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=11809&language=en
5	President of Montenegro Pays Official Visit to the Slovak Republic	13.09.2011	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/index5ec8.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=4729&language=en
6	Slovak President Arrives in Montenegro for an Official Visit	14.09.2011	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/indexa590-2.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=13685&language=en
7	Prejav predsedu vlády SR Roberta Fica na fóre GLOBSEC v anglickom jazyku	12.04.2012	https://www.vlada.gov.sk/prejav-predsedu-vlady-sr-roberta-fica-na-fore-globsec-v-anglickom-jazyku/
8	Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič Pays an Official Visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina	28.11.2012	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/index5177.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=16126&language=en
9	President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić Pays an Official Visit to the Slovak Republic	22.01.2013	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/index85ce.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=16543&language=en
10	President Gašparovič and Catherine Ashton Discuss Western Balkans and Ukraine	27.02.2013	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/indexc0cc.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=16692&language=en
11	Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's Speech at the International Conference GLOBSEC 2013, Bratislava, Slovakia	18.04.2013	https://www.vlada.gov.sk/slovak-prime-minister-robert-ficos-speech-at-the-international-conference-globsec-2013-bratislava-slovakia/
12	Slovak President met with President of Montenegro Filip Vujanović	12.06.2013	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/indexfd25.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=17235&language=en
13	Slovak President Receives Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister	13.09.2013	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/index1648.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=17733&language=en
14	Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič at the mini-summit marking the 5th anniversary of Eastern Partnership	24.04.2014	https://archiv.prezident.sk/gasparovic/index328a.html?nahlad-foto&gallery_id=18665&language=en

16	Ukrajina: Konkrétna pomoc SR a V4 pri reformách	16.12.2014	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/ukrajina-konkretna-pomoc-sr-a-v4-pri-reformach
17	SR-Moldavsko: Silná podpora na ceste k reformám	26.01.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/sr-moldavsko-silna-podpora-na-cestech-k-reformam
18	Slovenská republika ponúka Albánsku pomoc s transformáciou aj integráciou do EÚ	09.03.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/slovenska-republika-ponuka-albansku-pomoc-s-transformaciou-aj-integraciou-do-eu
19	Potenciál intenzívnejšej spolupráce Slovenska a Albánska	10.03.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/potencial-intenzivnejsej-spoluprace-slovenska-a-albanska
20	M. Lajčák privítal na pôde rezortu srbského premiéra A. Vučića	02.04.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-privital-na-pode-rezortu-srbskeho-premiera-a-vucica
21	Vystúpenie M. Lajčáka na úvod tlačovej konferencie	15.05.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/13720/150515_Lajcak_TK_Uvod_V4_EaP.pdf/ce486da8-37e3-40c1-9d13-f66c1b7b3f12
22	SR – Čierna Hora: Podpora integračných ambícií	19.05.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/sr-cierna-hora-podpora-integracnych-ambicii
23	In Ukraine Kiska enquired about reforms and how Slovakia could help	20.05.2015	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-sa-v-kyjeve-pytal-na-reformy-a-moze-slovensko-pomoc/
24	Kiska met the Presidents of Croatia, Georgia and Macedonia	19.06.2015	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-sa-stretol-s-prezidentkou-chorvatska-a-prezidentmi-gruzinska-a-macedonska/
25	Kiska at Globsec Conference: We need bold new decisions	20.06.2015	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-na-globsecu-potrebuje-odvazne-nove-rozhodnutia/
26	M. Lajčák v Bosne a Hercegovine: Najcennejšia pomoc sú skúsenosti z našej transformácie	10.11.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-v-bosne-a-hercegovine-najcennejsia-pomoc-su-skusenosti-z-nasej-transformacie
27	FAC: Budúcnosť Východného partnerstva a nová dynamika rozširovania EÚ	14.12.2015	https://www.mzv.sk/de/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/fac-buducnost-vychodneho-partnerstva-a-nova-dynamika-rozsirovania-eu?p_p_auth=mDxZu89V&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fde%2Faktuality%2Faktivita_ministra
28	M. Lajčák: Ukrajina si nemôže dovoliť luxus čakať s reformami	18.01.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/spravy_s_fotogaleriou/-/asset_publisher/1tL4NDgU7nRj/content/m-lajcak-ukrajina-si-nemoze-dovolit-luxus-cakat-s-reformami

29	M. Lajčák v Kyjeve: SR podporuje politickú stabilitu a ekonomickú prosperitu Ukrajiny	02.02.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-v-kyjeve-sr-podporuje-politicku-stabilitu-a-ekonomicku-prosperitu-ukrajiny
30	SR-Čierna Hora: Záujem pomôcť v prístupovom procese	05.04.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/zh/ministerstvo/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/sr-cierna-hora-zaujem-pomoc-v-pristupovom-procese?p_p_auth=mXyXl96b&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fzh%2Fministerstvo%2Fminister-aktivity_ministra%3Fstrana%3D25
31	Vysoké ocenenie pre Slovensko a M. Lajčáka v Čiernej Hore	21.05.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/es/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/vysoke-ocenenie-pre-slovensko-a-m-lajcaka-v-ciernej-hore?p_p_auth=Qx0KyCJk&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fes
32	Kiska in Georgia: Opportunities for business development exist	30.05.2016	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-v-gruzinsku-su-tu-prilezitosti-pre-rozvoj-podnikania/
33	NR SR súhlasila s ratifikáciou prístupového protokolu Čiernej Hory do NATO	14.06.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/de/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/-nr-sr-suhlasila-s-ratifikaciou-pristupoveho-protokolu-ciernej-hory-do-nato?p_p_auth=OaCFsBVL&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fde%2Faktuality%2Faktivity_ministra
34	M. Lajčák: Východné partnerstvo EÚ musí ostať na programe dňa	29.08.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-vychodne-partnerstvo-eu-musi-ostat-na-programe-dna?p_p_auth=fILfvQEb
35	M. Lajčák: Bez západného Balkánu nebude európsky projekt kompletný	04.09.2016	https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/lajcak-zapadny-balkan/215718-clanok.html?fb_comment_id=106728199992748_1067804496607165
36	M. Lajčák: Viac bezpečnosti v susedstve EÚ znamená viac bezpečnosti pre nás	09.09.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-viac-bezpecnosti-v-susedstve-eu-znamenava-viac-bezpecnosti-pre-nas
37	Minister M. Lajčák na výročnej porade veľvyslancov Čiernej Hory	12.10.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/minister-m-lajcak-na-vyrocnjej-porade-velvyslancov-ciernej-hory
38	Minister M. Lajčák sa zúčastnil na ministerskom stretnutí krajín V4 s partnermi zo západného Balkánu vo Varšave	29.11.2016	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/minister-m-lajcak-sa-zucastnil-na-ministerskom-stretnuti-krajin-v4-s-partnermi-zo-zapadneho-balkanu-vo-varsave?p_p_auth=OrYKpdac
39	M. Lajčák: „Čierna Hora môže aj naďalej počítať so všestrannou podporou Slovenska“	26.01.2017	https://europskenoviny.sk/2017/01/29/m-lajcak-cierna-hora-moze-aj-nadalej-pocitat-so-vsestrannou-podporou-slovenska/

40	M. Lajčák na Mníchovskej bezpečnostnej konferencii: „Západný Balkán vždy zohrával jednu z kľúčových úloh v koncepte európskej bezpečnosti“	16.02.2017	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-na-mnichovskej-bezpecnostnej-konferencii-zapadny-balkan-vzdy-zohravaj-jednu-z-klucovych-uloh-v-koncepte-europskej-bezpecnosti-
41	M. Lajčák: „Západný Balkán predstavuje pre nás strategickú investíciu do bezpečnosti a prosperity Európy“	28.02.2017	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-zapadny-balkan-predstavuje-pre-nas-strategicku-investiciu-do-bezpecnosti-a-prosperity-europy-?p_p_auth=j7D3611P
42	M. Lajčák na FAC: „Na Balkáne musíme ukázať viac politickej empatie, rozhodnosti a vyváženosti našej politiky“	06.03.2017	https://www.mzv.sk/pl/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-na-fac-na-balkane-musime-ukazat-viac-politickej-empatie-rozhodnosti-a-vyvazivosti-nasej-politiky-?p_p_auth=yvJfLIP&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fpl%2Fdomov
43	M. Lajčák v Kyjeve: „Za ostatné tri roky urobila Ukrajina väčší pokrok, než v predchádzajúcich dvadsiatich“	11.04.2017	https://www.mzv.sk/ko/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-v-kyjeve-za-ostatne-tri-roky-urobila-ukrajina-vacsi-pokrok-nez-v-predchadzajucich-dvadsiatich-?p_p_auth=lQq5B0hW&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fko%2Faktuality%2Faktivity_ministra%3Fstrana%3D10
44	Kiska congratulates Ukrainians on visa-free travel to the European Union	11.06.2017	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/andrej-kiska-zablahozelal-ukrajincom-k-europskej-unii-bez-viz/
45	President Kiska to diplomatic corps: EU enters 2018 stronger	11.01.2018	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/andrej-kiska-prijal-zahranicnych-diplomatov/
46	Minister Lajčák diskutoval v Ženeve o Západnom Balkáne	02.10.2018	https://www.mzv.sk/pl/podnikajme_v_zahranici/detail/-/asset_publisher/885ROfbYvA6I/content/minister-lajcak-diskutoval-v-zeneve-o-zapadnom-balkane?_101_INSTANCE_885ROfbYvA6I_redirect=%2Fpl%2Fpodnikajme_v_zahranici%2Fdetail%3Fstrana%3D102
47	Kiska: We look forward to Ukraine being in the EU and NATO	24.11.2018	https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-tesime-sa-ked-bude-ukrajina-v-eu-a-nato-ide-dobrym-smerom/
48	Miroslav Lajčák apeloval v Davose na integráciu krajín západného Balkánu	25.01.2019	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/miroslav-lajcak-apeloval-v-davose-na-integraciu-krajin-zapadneho-balkanu?p_p_auth=v07bcWig
49	M. Lajčák ukončil návštevu Čiernej Hory	08.05.2019	https://www.mzv.sk/pt/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-ukoncil-navstevu-ciernej-hory?p_p_auth=morDP6BK&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fpt%2F
50	Podpora integračných ambícií bola hlavnou témou rokovania krajín Vyšehradskej	28.05.2019	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/podpora-integracnych-ambicii-bola-hlavnou-temou-

	štvrky a západného Balkánu		rokovani-krajin-vysehradskej-stvorky-a-zapadneho-balkanu?p_p_auth=dV7JYfIg
51	M. Lajčák navštívil Bosnu a Hercegovinu v pozícii úradujúceho predsedu OBSE	20.06.2019	https://www.mzv.sk/sr/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-navstivil-bosnu-a-hercegovinu-v-pozicii-uradujuceho-predsedu-obse?p_p_auth=4iXAfBJe&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fsr
52	M. Lajčák vystúpil na výročnom zasadnutí Európskej rady pre zahraničné vzťahy v Lisabone a rokoval s novým moldavským šéfom diplomacie	25.06.2019	https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-vystupil-na-vyrocnom-zasadnuti-europskej-rady-pre-zahranicne-vztahy-v-lisabone-a-rokoval-s-novym-moldavskym-sefom-diplomacie?_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fcestovanie_a_konzularne_info%2Fdetail%2F-%2Fasset_publisher%2FIw1ppvnScIPx%2Fcontent%2Fportugalska-republika%3FdisplayMode%3D1
53	M. Lajčák oficiálne otvoril Veľvyslanectvo SR v Baku	28.11.2019	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-oficialne-otvoril-velvyslanectvo-sr-v-baku?p_p_auth=nez32tQ5
54	Minister M. Lajčák otvoril slovenské veľvyslanectvo v Jerevane	24.02.2020	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/minister-m-lajcak-otvoril-slovenske-velvyslanectvo-v-jerevane?p_p_auth=MxCZvtjE&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2F
55	Minister I. Korčok na prvej videokonferencii Rady EÚ pre zahraničné vzťahy potvrdil podporu Ukrajine	22.04.2020	https://www.mzv.sk/ko/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/minister-i-korcok-na-prvej-videokonferencii-rady-eu-pre-zahranicne-vztahy-potvrdil-podporu-ukrajine?p_p_auth=XwDDm3F6&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fko%2Faktuality%2Faktivita_ministra%3Ftknfv%3D1AB42F30XUTUXLEVNAUMUTUUDBBY759B%26amp%3Bstrana%3D9%26strana%3D9
56	Ivan Korčok: pomáhame západnému Balkánu v boji proti pandémie, pričom nezabúdame na svojich krajanov	15.05.2020	https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/-ivan-korcok-pomahame-zapadnemu-balkanu-v-boji-proti-pandemii-pricom-nezabudame-na-svojich-krajanov?p_p_auth=ITQ4UUZ9&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2F

Source: Own table

Appendix G.3: Results MAXQDA

A schematized collection of statements for every case study and every country, sorted according to the respective categories (i.e., codes and subcodes), can be shared upon request.