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# Understanding the discourse of the Visegrad Group during the migration crisis

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## Abstract

The political stance of the Visegrad Group countries was primarily criticised by other European Union Member States when the migration crisis began. Officials from these countries expressed a negative view of migration, framing it as a security issue rather than a humanitarian one. The article explores the Visegrad Group's discourse during the European migration crisis. This study stands out because it examines the collective discourse of the Visegrad Group during the migration crisis rather than analysing each country separately. Three significant terror attacks in recent EU history have been incorporated into the analysis to see if they have increased the prominence of securitisation in the discourse of the Visegrad group. As the result of the Qualitative/ Quantitative Content Analysis, we find that after the Charlie Hebdo Attack, the Visegrad Group discourse on the migration crisis began incorporating the security dimension. Following the terror attacks in Paris, the securitisation dimensions of the migration crisis intensified and remained through to the end of 2016. Our findings show that the communication style in the Visegrad group countries' declaration statements supports the security and terrorism linkage with migration.

**Keywords**: migration; security; Visegrad Group; discourse; terrorism

## 1 Introduction

The arrival of a large number of asylum seekers and migrants in a short period has presented European leaders and politicians with one of the most significant external challenges in the history of the European Union (EU). In the events of 2015, the Visegrad Group (V4), along with the majority of right-wing politicians/parties and conservative media outlets, presented asylum seekers and migrants as an existential threat to the EU's unity, security and stability. On the contrary, there were politicians and political parties, including certain members of right-wing parties, who declared a much more sensitive position towards asylum seekers and migrants. Politicians who portrayed newcomers as an existential threat claimed that the influx of undocumented immigrants should be perceived as

a 'security' risk and cannot be addressed as a purely 'humanitarian' issue. According to a study by Troszyński and El-Ghamari, the term 'illegal immigrant' was the most famous phrase across all types of the press in Poland from 2015 to 2018 (Troszyński & El-Ghamari, 2022). A study by Simonovits and Sik, which analysed the content of the media during the migration crisis in Hungary, shows that during the peak of the migration crisis in 2015, the word 'illegal' was frequently used (Sik & Simonovits, 2019).

In the case of the V4 countries, the discourse of heads of state and governments on the migration crisis centred on the idea that among a mass of mixed undocumented irregular migrants and refugees, there could be foreign fighters, potential terrorists, and enemies of European culture. At the same time, asylum seekers and migrants attempting to enter the EU illegally violate both international and EU regulations.

The objective of this paper is to contribute to the academic literature by analysing the discourse of the V4 during the European migration crisis. Furthermore, the paper aims to examine if the terror attacks in the EU elevated the significance of the securitisation discourse of the V4. The author presents the following research question and hypothesis to accomplish the study's objective: How did the Visegrad Group communicate during the migration crisis? The study hypothesises that the V4's discourse on the migration crisis between 2015 and 2016 primarily focused on the security issues and the occurrence of terror attacks in the EU, helping to establish a strong foundation for their securitisation approach.

It is essential to highlight that this paper will not separately explore each V4 country but will analyse their collective response to the migration crisis. The fundamental rationale for choosing the V4 group's collective response for the study is their continuous opposition to the EU's migration policy from the beginning of the migration crisis, which included humanitarian aspects. Moreover, the V4 persistently demanded that migration be addressed as a matter of security rather than a humanitarian one. At the same time, the current academic literature focuses on the securitisation aspects of the migration crisis separately in the V4 countries but does not address their collective response. This notable gap in the academic literature acknowledges the need for more significant research efforts in the selected topic of this paper.

On top of that, the research will focus on the timeframe spanning from 2015 to 2016. The primary motive for choosing this time range is that it incorporates three significant terror attacks in recent EU history and coincides with the peak of the migration movement. The selected terrorist attacks are:

1. Charlie Hebdo Attack – 7 January 2015
2. Paris Terror Attacks – 13 November 2015
3. Brussels Terror Attacks – 22 March 2016

Additionally, in the first theoretical section of this research, emphasis will be placed on the concept of 'security-migration'. Migration is framed and prioritised as a security issue because elites and politicians place more importance on security migration. Also, the construction of a securitisation discourse, a narrative where politicians and elites portray migration as a threat to national security, defines this phenomenon as securitisation. This process keeps migration at the top of political agendas, showing the power of elite discourse to shape policy responses associated with migration. This will be explored through an analysis of the V4 discourse and in the first theoretical research section.

Furthermore, the article will explore the concept of 'terrorism-migration' in the second part of the theoretical section and its application by elites and politicians to promote anti-immigration discourse. Additionally, it presents key scholarly findings about the impacts of terrorism on attitudes towards ingroup and outgroup immigration. Moreover, references will be provided to V4 states' political discourse, highlighting terrorism and migration.

Following the theoretical section, the paper will present the results of the author's analysis of the V4 discourse. The results section is divided into three parts: statistical findings, monthly dynamics, and chronological analysis.

## 2 Security and migration

Many scholars argue that the security discourse started to be linked to migrants after the Cold War (Collyer, 2006; Wohlfeld, 2014). Traditional international relations theorists, who regarded states as the sole essential players throughout the Cold War, considered security in broad, military terms. Lippman suggested that 'a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war' (Lippmann, 1943, p. 51).

According to Wohlfeld, the so-called new security agenda, which was constructed at the end of the Cold War and led to a widening and deepening of our knowledge of what defines a security threat or challenge, contains one of the most mentioned, yet also most controversial, topics: international migration (Wohlfeld, 2014). Koser argues that in recent years, the acceptance of migration as a threat to national security has unquestionably increased, in part because of the dramatic increase in the number of migrants, in particular, illegal or irregular migrants (Koser, 2011). Moreover, it is essential to note that real or imagined linkages to terrorism, health risk factors and organised crime are at the centre of the idea that irregular migration presents a security threat (Wohlfeld, 2014).

Huysmans remarks that once turned into a security issue, the immigrant appears to be an outsider who has entered a peaceful environment and harmed the harmony by entering it (Huysmans, 1995, p. 59). Furthermore, he argues that simply stopping the use of security discourse towards migrants will be enough to erase security issues because if the issue is no longer recognised and addressed as a security problem, it ceases to be a security problem (ibid., p. 65). However, Wæver and Roe reject Huysmans's idea by arguing that if migration is considered a security matter, it is highly challenging to reverse course, to de-securitise and perhaps even logically impossible (Roe, 2004).

At the same time, it is important to differentiate between securitisation and politicisation of migration issues as these two concepts partly overlap but also have distinct and crucial theoretical differences. Politicisation of migration involves framing migration as a political issue, leading to political discussions, negotiations and policy preferences among various actors. On the other hand, the Copenhagen School of Security Studies interprets securitisation as a process in which supposedly non-security subjects (such as immigration) become security issues due to securitising speech acts (Buzan, 1983). During this process, elites in power, politicians and experts identify and characterise risks and threats in concrete moments and at different levels regional, global and national (Estevens, 2018).

Then, they should justify the credibility of threats against society and neutralise them whenever possible.

Gigitashvili and Sidlo argue that in the Visegrad countries, through speech acts demonstrating migrants and asylum seekers as a threat to the nations, the securitisation of the refugee crisis was implemented (Gigitashvili & Sidło, 2015). The main features of the securitisation discourse identified are internal security (including economic security), sovereignty (i.e. state security), and (Christian) culture and identity (i.e. societal security). According to their study, refugees and migrants were portrayed as terrorists who wanted to impose their own (Islamic) values and cultures and get access to V4 countries' assistance, all with Brussels's approval and to enforce refugee quotas against the wishes of the governments (and people) of the Visegrad countries (ibid).

Securitisation is believed to begin when elite actors adopt existential threat rhetoric to bring 'low politics' public policy concerns into the sphere of 'high politics' (Messina, 2017, p. 27). According to Messina, the securitisation process is fundamentally intersubjective, and the elite's securitising acts consist of a speech, a report or legislation (ibid.). At the same time, the process must be justified by objective facts. However, it was argued that the concept of securitisation was not restricted to speech acts but was also deeply grounded in institutional development (Karyotis, 2007). Kazharski and Tabosa suggest that in the case of the Visegrad group countries, the political elites have been using speech acts to securitise migration and processes associated with it in various sectors, including: 'as a threat to national and regional security, as a threat to the state's sovereignty and its ability to decide upon immigration policies, as a threat to the national economy, and as a threat to 'us,' in identarian terms' (Kazharski & Tabosa, 2018, p. 78). Also, a study by Barlai et al. indicates that initially, migrants were portrayed as a threat to social and national security in Poland and Hungary (Barlai et al., 2017). Kabata and Jacobs point out that the Polish ruling party (Law and Justice) used securitising discourse from 2015 to 2017 on the migration crisis (Kabata & Jacobs, 2022). They identified five different elements: 'Security', 'Muslim other', 'We want to help, but . . .', 'The EU has gone astray' and 'Our other' (ibid., p. 11).

In summary, reviewing the 'security-migration' concept highlights the significance of elites and politicians shaping the perception of migration as a security issue. At the same time, discourse on migration as a threat to the state's national interest has intensified due to the nature of migration in recent years, including illegal/irregular migrants. Additionally, as revealed by earlier studies in the case of the V4 countries at the beginning of the migration crisis, migrants and asylum seekers were portrayed as a threat to national security through the speech acts of politicians and elites.


## 3 Terrorism and migration

Since the 9/11 terror attack, there has been a growing linkage between migration and terrorism. As a result of the 9/11 terror attack, the connection between migration and international terrorism appears to have reappeared due to a lesson learnt by states: terrorism is no longer restricted to nations or regions (International Organization for Migration, 2010).

The spontaneous terror attack presented an opportunity and played a significant role in the rise of the 'securitisation' of the migration concept (Zucconi, 2004). This was supported by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, which stresses that states should

> Prevent the movement of terrorists or terrorist groups by adequate border controls and controls on issuance of identity papers and travel documents, and through measures for preventing counterfeiting, forgery or fraudulent use of identity papers and travel documents (Art.2(g)). (United Nations Security Council, 2001, p. 2)

Additionally, an IOM report published in 2010 stated that a significant impact of the 9/11 terrorist attack was that migration became more strongly linked to national security concerns (International Organization for Migration, 2010). Karyotins, in his paper, mentions that the securitisation of migration in the EU only intensified after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, the 9/11 attacks did not generate the 'insecurities, uncertainties, ambiguities and complexities regarding migration policy' but intensified processes already profoundly established in the emerging European internal security framework (Karyotis, 2007, p. 13).

According to the research of Cruz, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg, which tested the relationship between terrorism and immigration, terrorism impacts attitudes towards ingroup and outgroup immigration unevenly. In countries plagued by terrorism, the probability of favouring outgroup immigration decreases. However, the opposite is occurring regarding ingroup immigration (Cruz, D'Alessio & Stolzenberg, 2020).

Bove and Böhmelt find that terrorism can travel from one destination to another via migration, but immigration is unlikely to impact the rise of terrorism (Bove & Böhmelt, 2016, pp. 584–585). The theoretical framework of their research stresses that immigration from terror-prone states can be explored by a terrorist organisation that uses migrant communities as a recruitment pool (ibid.).

On the other hand, Iov and Bogdan mention in their work that the relationship between international migration and extremist and terrorist actions is used as a tool to increase the sense of insecurity in the host society by certain politicians or state representatives in their speeches (Iov & Bogdan, 2017, p. 15). When the mass migration movement peaked in 2015, political actors of the V4 countries claimed that the migration crisis was linked with terrorism. They increased their discourse on the securitisation of borders to avoid potential terrorists. For example, the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán told public radio while commenting on the terrorist attack in Nice: 'If we do not want to see cases such as those in Nice, we must not allow them. Apart from the few already here, we do not want new entrants, especially not [illegal] migrants' (Hungary Today, 2020). In the case of Poland, President Andrej Duda said: 'There is no doubt that the growing wave of terrorism is linked to migration' (Radio Poland, 2017).

At the same time, then Czech President Milos Zeman, in his speech at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, said:

> Migration is partially provoked by terrorist actions, for instance in Syria or in Iraq. But on the other hand, migration is connected to terrorism because some jihadists are hidden inside the migration wave. And in Europe and everywhere, they create sleeping units, lonely wolves and so on. (Prague Castle, 2017)

The Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said:

There is an absolute link between migration and terrorism. It is clear that potential terrorists might have used uncontrolled migration, not only for passage, but also to bring weapons and explosives. Therefore, the probability there might be more individual terror attacks is very high because there is potential for such attack. (Deutsche Welle, 2016)

With the beginning of the migration crisis, the securitisation of migration and the linkage between migration and terrorism increased in the discourse of the politicians as they realised potential threats from the migration movement. A scholarly study shows that terrorism may use migrant populations for recruitment and has different impacts on sentiments towards ingroup and outgroup immigration. As noted above, the heads of state of the V4 countries frequently referenced migration-terrorism connections to justify security measures on migration.

## 4  Methodology

This study will use Qualitative/Quantitative Content analysis research methodology to analyse the collected data. Quantitative content analysis will assist us in quantifying and categorising particular elements within a dataset, but qualitative content analysis will be helpful in understanding and comprehending the underlying meanings, contexts, and nuances inside a dataset. Given the large amount of data and the systematic structure of the material to be assessed, content analysis is the most appropriate study method for this project.

In this study, the joint declarations and statements of the V4 were collected as a data source to analyse their discourse on the migration crisis. Within the framework of the research, a total of 23 materials were collected for the analyses, precisely 14 in 2015 and 9 in 2016. The collected materials for the analysis are listed in Appendix A and Appendix B.

On the other hand, after collecting the materials for analysis, dividing them into segments and identifying the research question, the next step was to build a coding frame. This study combines concept-driven (deductive method) and data-driven (inductive approach) approaches in the coding frame's structure. After building a coding frame, materials were separated into coding units (segments). Overall, from the selected materials in 2015, 61 segments and 60 segments were generated for the content analysis in 2016. The segments differ in one aspect: while some consist of only one or two sentences, others include a whole paragraph.

The next step was to test the coding frame using double coding to assess its reliability and coherence. Once the coding frame was finalised after the testing through double coding, the primary analysis started. In this study, to analyse the collected materials, four main categories were identified: 1) Humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis, 2) Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees, 3) Security aspect of the migration crisis, and 4) Measures to strengthen security.

# 5 Results

This section of the paper presents the results of the author's analysis regarding the discourse study of the V4. It is divided into three sections: statistical findings, monthly dynamics, and chronological analysis.

## 5.1 Statistical findings

Figure 1 shows that in 2015–2016, the *'humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis'* category in the discourse of the V4 countries was practically identical. In 2015, the overall percentage for this category was 3.28 per cent, while in 2016, it was 3.3 per cent (2 codes each year). The results for the *'measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees'* category suggested only minor differences in 2015 and 2016. This category stood at 9.84 per cent (6 codes) in 2015 but decreased to 8.33 per cent in 2016 (5 codes). The findings from our analysis indicate that the percentage gap between years hugely widens for the latter two categories. The percentage of codes in the category measuring the 'security aspect of the migration crisis' increased from 29.51 per cent (18 codes) in 2015 to 51.67 per cent (31 codes) in 2016. Moreover, the overall percentage of the *'measures to strengthen security'* category in 2015 was 83.61 per cent (51 codes), but it slightly decreased to 80.00 per cent in 2016 (48 codes).

It is essential to highlight that in our analysis, the *'measures to strengthen security'* category had the highest percentage in 2015–2016. Another security-focused category, *'security aspects of the migration crisis',* had the second highest percentage for the defined time range of analysis. At the same time, the percentage of both humanitarian-focused categories was significantly lower than security-focused categories in 2015 and 2016. Furthermore, the *'humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis'* category had the lowest percentage among all the categories during the selected time frame. Based on our analysis, we can confirm that during 2015–2016, the discourse of the V4 predominantly focused on security dimensions over humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis. Nevertheless, the presence of humanitarian discourse in the published materials of the V4 is somewhat minimal.

Furthermore, Table 1 and Table 2 explain and illustrate the subcategories of the main categories discussed earlier. Referring to the tables provided below, we can find the key elements and themes used in the V4 discourse in 2015 and 2016.

Representation of the humanitarian side of the migration crisis within the discourse of V4 is categorised under the main category, '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis'.* This main category includes the subcategory *'protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees',* which had 2 codes for 2015 and 2016, as indicated in Table 1 and Table 2.

Under the *'measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees'* category for 2015, 2 segments were coded under the *'access to asylum procedures'* and *'providing humanitarian assistance'* subcategories. Furthermore, *'providing funds to support humanitarian assistance'* and *'religious support'* has 1 code for each. On the other hand, the subcategory of *'providing humanitarian assistance'* was only coded once in 2016, while *'access to asylum procedures'* was coded 4 times.
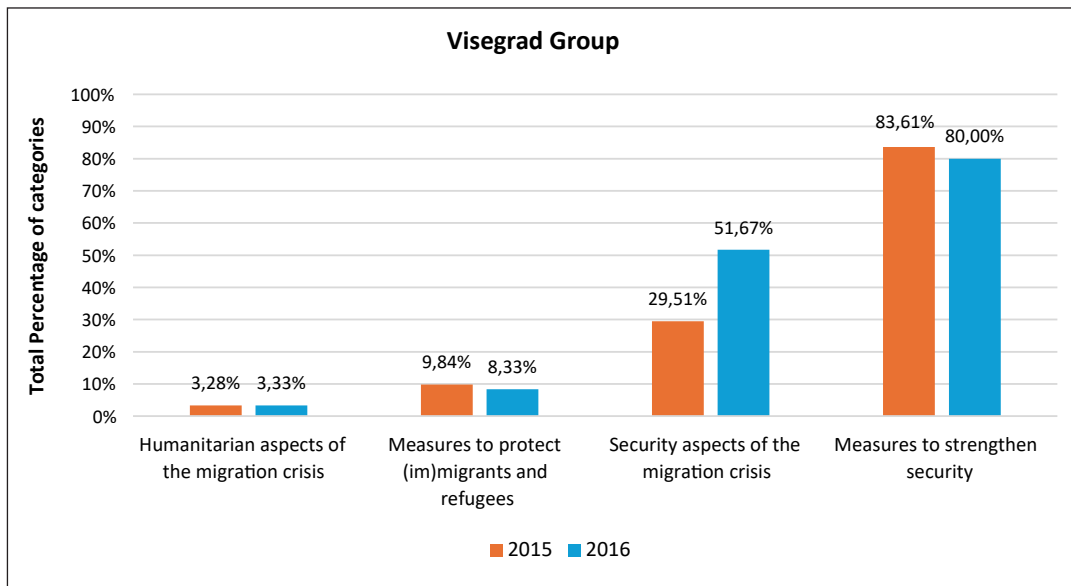
**Figure 1** Visegrad Group Discourse 2015–2016

*Source:* Author's analysis – The results of the Qualitative/Quantitative Content analysis are explained in this Figure.

**Table 1** Visegrad Group discourse (main – sub categories) 2015

| VISEGRAD GROUP – 2015 |
|---|
| **Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 2 codes** |
| Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) – 2 codes |
| **Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 6 codes** |
| Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) – 2 codes |
| Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) – 0 code |
| Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) – 2 codes |
| Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) – 1 code |
| Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) – 1 code |
| **Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 18 codes** |
| Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) – 0 code |
| Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) – 14 codes |
| Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) – 4 codes |

| Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) – 0 code |
|---|
| **Measures to strengthen security: A total of 51 codes** |
| Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) – 6 codes |
| Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) – 5 codes |
| Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat) – 11 codes |
| *Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) – 2 codes* |
| *External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) – 9 codes* |
| Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) – 15 codes |
| Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) – 14 codes |

*Source:* Author's analysis – This table provides the qualitative/quantitative content analysis results. Also, with the help of this table, we can understand the discourse of the V4 on the migration crisis of 2015.

In 2015, the *'security aspect of the migration crisis'* main category included subcategories such as *'border/territory control'*, which accounted for 14 codes, and *'terrorist threats'*, which comprised 4 codes. Nevertheless, in 2016, the number of segments classified under the subcategory *'border/territorial control'* increased to 27, a significant rise from the previous year. Also, 4 segments were coded under the *'public security threat'* subcategory. The main difference in this case is that in 2016, border and territory control issues gained statistical significance, and public security features appeared while the terrorism threat subcategory disappeared. Also, it is essential to mention that illegal migration and V4 opposition to the mandatory quotas were considered border control issues in this context. Illegal migration exists where border control is not effective, and mandatory quotas undermine the state's ability to control who enters and stays in its territory.

The subcategory of *'cooperation with third (transit) countries'* under the main category *'measures to strengthen security'* had 15 codes in 2015 and 2016, making it the most coded subcategory overall. Regarding the *'cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries'* subcategory, 14 codes were assigned. In comparison, 11 segments were coded for the *'cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries'* subcategory in 2016.

The *'cooperation with third (transit) countries'* subcategory comprises hotspots, camps, and registration segments. Nevertheless, the *'cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries'* subcategory contains information that addresses concerns, including causes and repatriation.

Moreover, 11 segments in 2015 were coded for *'border control measures'* (2 were in the 'internal border control' subcategory, and 9 were in the 'external border control' subcategory). In 2016, 13 segments were categorised under *'border control measures'*, explicitly falling into the *'external border control'* subcategory. This suggests that in 2016, discourse within the V4 did not focus on internal border control challenges but instead emphasised efforts to protect external border control.

Furthermore, references to *'anti-terrorist measures'* occurred in 6 segments in 2015 and increased to 7 in 2016. In 2015, there were 5 segments coded under *'fight against human smugglers/traffickers'*, whereas in 2016, this number decreased to 2 segments.

**Table 2** Visegrad Group discourse (main – sub categories) 2016

| VISEGRAD GROUP – 2016 |
| --- |
| **Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 2 codes** |
| Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) – 2 codes |
| **Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 5 codes** |
| Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) – 4 codes |
| Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) – 0 code |
| Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) – 1 code |
| Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) – 0 code |
| Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) – 0 code |
| **Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 31 codes** |
| Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) – 4 codes |
| Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) – 27 codes |
| Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) – 0 code |
| Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) – 0 code |
| **Measures to strengthen security: A total of 48 codes** |
| Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) – 7 codes |
| Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) – 2 codes |
| Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat) – 13 codes |
| *Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) – 0 code* |
| *External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) – 13 codes* |
| Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) – 15 codes |
| Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) – 11 codes |

*Source:* Author's analysis – This table provides the qualitative/quantitative content analysis results. Also, with the help of this table, we can understand the discourse of the V4 on the migration crisis of 2016.

## 5.2  Monthly dynamics

This section presents an analysis to illustrate the monthly fluctuations in the dynamics of each main category from 2015 to 2016.

Figure 2 demonstrates the monthly dynamics of each main category while the table below highlights three vertical lines implying terrorist attacks (January 2015 – Charlie Hebdo Attack; November 2015 – Paris Terror Attacks; March 2016 – Brussels Terror Attacks), which helps us understand how each attack elevated the discourse on securitisation in the V4 context. For example, following the Charlie Hebdo Attack, there was a steady increase across all categories, with the third and fourth categories outperforming the others in March. Also, there was considerable activity in the third category in June. At the same time, shifts were noted in three categories in September, except the first, followed by the fourth category reaching its highest. This can be explained by the fact that in September, the head of states of the Visegrad Group adopted a Joint Statement following the extraordinary Summit on Migration, and the Visegrad Group Ministers of Foreign Affairs released a joint communication. This shows that the securitisation discourse dominated the two press releases from separate events.
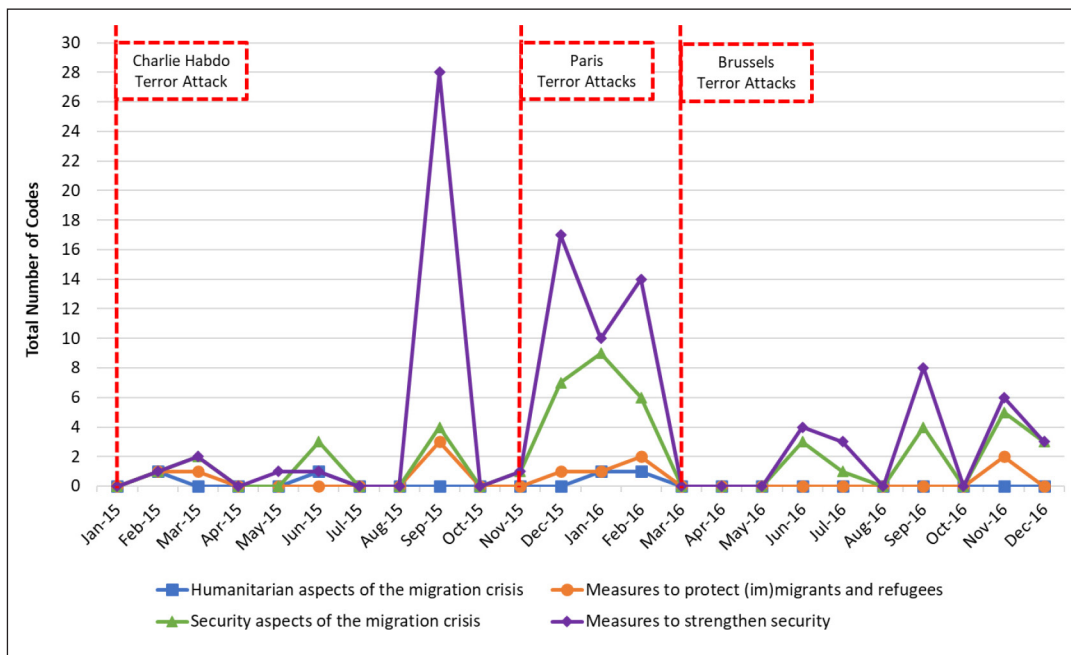


**Figure 2**  Visegrad Group discourse – monthly

*Source:* Author's analysis: This figure presents the results of a quantitative content analysis. Additionally, it helps in understanding the monthly fluctuations in the discourse of the V4 on the migration crisis in 2016.

On top of that, Figure 2 highlights the V4's immediate reaction to the Paris terror attacks. Both categories reflecting securitisation discourse increased sharply in December, January and February. Additionally, January was the best-performing month for the third category. In contrast to the swift responses to the Paris terror attacks, the V4's response to the Brussels terror attacks was observed in June 2016, with a minor rise prolonging into July. Furthermore, there was an increase in the categories corresponding to security in September and November. It is worth noting that the second category also showed a modest increase in November.

Figure 2 illustrates that after the Charlie Hebdo attack, there was a modest increase in the securitisation discourse. However, security-related categories reacted quickly following the Paris terror attacks. In contrast, there was no immediate reaction to the Brussels terror attacks, as there had been after the Paris attacks. Instead, the third and fourth categories showed a response in the later months.

## 5.3  Chronological analysis

The V4 countries have been the most prominent advocates for the securitisation approach since the beginning of the migration crisis. This section of the study provides a chronological explanation to understand key developments in the statements of the V4 on the migration crisis.

Following the Charlie Hebdo Attack at the start of 2015, the issue of terrorism appeared in the discourse of the V4. The statement on 25 February 2015 by the Foreign Affairs Committees of V4 parliaments highlighted terrorism as a threat to European security and civilisation and urged the EU to intensify its fight against terrorism. On the other hand, a document released by the V4 Representatives of Parliament urges their governments to assist in fulfilling the needs of internally displaced people, refugees, and religious minorities, especially Christians.

Moreover, the analysis results demonstrate that another element of securitisation, such as cooperation and strengthening of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), was included in the V4's discourse by the end of April. The following must be noticed: in the aftermath of the 23 April 2015 extraordinary European Council meeting, EU Foreign and Defence Ministers decided to establish EUNAVFOR Med as a naval force and begin the CSDP mission in the Mediterranean on 18 May 2015. The main priority was to dismantle criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers in order to preserve lives (Latici, 2023).

Concerns about the mandatory redistribution scheme for asylum seekers were raised while examining key developments in the V4 statements on the migration crisis in the first half of 2015. Also, V4 called for a more effective return process, border management, and the fight against hybrid threats, terrorism, organised crime, foreign fighters, and irregular migration.

The heads of state of the V4 highlighted measures on 4 September 2015, following the extraordinary Visegrad Group Summit on Migration, to reduce push factors and secure the external borders of the EU and the Schengen Area, namely by:

- Enhancing bilateral assistance and aid schemes with particular focus on countries of transit and origin.
- Providing experts and technical equipment for: EU external border protection, asylum procedure and relevant support actions and assistance to the border protection and migration management of the countries of the Western Balkans. (Visegrad Group, 2015a).

Furthermore, a released statement by the V4 as a result of the extraordinary meeting notes that vital aspects of the EU's common strategy for the upcoming months should include in particular: effective control and protection of the EU external borders; fulfilment of legal obligations by all Member States and of responsibilities by EU institutions; preserving the voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures; swift implementation of hotspots under the June European Council conclusions; strengthening the fight against organised crime and trafficking (ibid.).

On the other hand, a collective statement issued by the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group following their discussions with counterparts from the Luxembourg Presidency and Germany on 11 September 2015 mentioned the importance of putting attention on the Western Balkan migration route, stabilisation of the European neighbourhood, fighting against human trafficking and smuggling, and development and humanitarian assistance to countries of origin and transit of migration.

One interesting observation is that after the 13 November 2015 Paris terror attacks, the emphasis on terrorism started to increase in the V4 statements. Our findings demonstrate that the V4 continuously stressed the need for a fight against terrorism in the timeframe between the Paris and Brussels terror attacks (see Table 3). For example, between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks, the terms 'Terrorism,' 'Terror,' and 'Terrorist' appeared a total of 19 times in the selected publications of the V4. At the same time, addressing the root causes of migration, enhancing the protection of the European Union's external border and objection to the automatic permanent relocation mechanism were repeatedly expressed in the discourse of the V4 after the Paris terror attacks.

Furthermore, on 3 December 2015, the Prime Ministers of V4 countries issued a joint statement stressing that terrorism threatened EU security and called for the European Council to have a firm position on fighting terrorism and strengthening the security of the EU's external borders. The joint statement notes that:

Given the nature and scope of this security challenge the European Union has to act. We underline that the upcoming December European Council must take a clear stance on fighting terrorism. The discussion should build on the action taken so far, identify further possible elements of a united and complex response of the European Union to the current security challenges and make sure this response is implemented quickly and effectively. All relevant means of countering terrorism must be mobilised. We place particular emphasis on the need to improve information and intelligence sharing within Europe, to finalise the Passenger Name Record Directive, on measures aimed at combatting financing terrorism and organised crime, as well as on a conclusive debate on a transparent EU framework for firearms control. (Visegrad Group, 2015b)

**Table 3** Visegrad Group Discourse – number of the terms

| Charlie Hebdo Attack to Paris Terror Attacks | | |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Terrorism | Terror | Terrorist |
| 6 | 1 | 2 |
| 9 | | |
| 10 - Documents in total | | |
| **Paris Terror Attacks to Brussels Terror Attacks** | | |
| Terrorism | Terror | Terrorist |
| 16 | 0 | 3 |
| 19 | | |
| 7 - Documents in total | | |
| **Brussels Terror Attacks - End 2016** | | |
| Terrorism | Terror | Terrorist |
| 4 | 0 | 1 |
| 5 | | |
| 6 - Documents in total | | |

*Source:* Author's analysis – The table presents the findings from a quantitative content analysis. It offers a detailed account of the frequency of selected terms within the chosen documents, focusing on the analysis of V4 during 2015-2016.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that on 15 February 2016, V4 released a joint statement in which they reiterated their objection to the automatic permanent relocation mechanism. At the same time, they urged the Council's position on the European Border and Coast Guard, on the effective management and control of EU external borders, and on a significant increase in the efficient return of irregular migrants.

The Joint Declaration of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers on 8 June 2016 underlined how urgent it is to deal with migration by seeking European solutions that deal with the root causes, like resolving the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Also, the document stressed the significance of swift EU action to preserve trust in its institutions, assisting frontline and Eastern Partnership countries and pushing for consensus-based policies that protect external borders, hotspots, and returns. Additionally, Prime Ministers advocated for evidence-based rather than drastic modifications, opposing mandatory redistribution of asylum seekers, and promoted progressive reform of the Dublin system.

Furthermore, on 21 November 2016, V4 Interior Ministers proposed solutions to address the root causes of migration, which should decrease the number of illegal migrants entering the European Union, granting restored control over managing mixed migratory flows. The statement suggested that in order to achieve the goal of assisting third coun-

tries hosting large numbers of migrants, supporting effective processing of asylum claims, including tackling the phenomenon of the abuse of international protection for unjustified illegal entry into the EU, improving return and readmission rates of migrants not eligible for international protection in the EU (Visegrad Group, 2016).

Moreover, a joint statement by the heads of government of the V4 countries on 15 December 2016 emphasised the necessity of a solid external border system for European migration policy to fight migratory pressure effectively. They prioritised internal security and supported policies to increase public trust and safety, such as the Passenger Name Record and Counter Terrorism Directives.

The findings from this section of the study indicate that the security aspect of the migration crisis already featured in the V4 discourse after the Charlie Hebdo attack. However, due to the Paris terror attacks, the security dimension of the migration crisis started to intensify and continued until the end of 2016. The main security elements in the V4 discourse included the fight against terrorism and illegal migration, protecting external borders, managing the root causes of migration and preventing the EU's proposed automatic permanent relocation mechanism. It is important to note that the analysed documents of the V4 discourse included certain aspects of policy recommendations for EU institutions on how to fight terrorism and manage migration.

# 6 Conclusion

Our analysis confirms that between 2015 and 2016, the V4 placed greater emphasis on security aspects rather than humanitarian issues when discussing the migration crisis. The published materials from the V4 contained limited discourse on humanitarian topics, reflecting a broader trend in the group's strategic communications.

At the same time, our findings suggest that the securitisation elements on the migration crisis in the discourse of the V4 were visible after the Charlie Hebdo Attack but peaked after the Paris terror attacks and remained prominent following the Brussels terror attacks. This shows that the discourse of the V4 has been influenced by significant terror attacks in Europe, leading to an increased emphasis on security concerns. The V4 discourse included key security components such as the fight against terrorism and illegal migration, protection of external borders, managing the root causes of migration and preventing the EU's proposed automatic permanent relocation mechanism. Moreover, the figure that provided information about the monthly fluctuations of each main category confirms a slight increase in security discourse following the Charlie Hebdo attack, but security-related categories had a substantial rise following the Paris terror attacks. In contrast, there was no quick reaction to the Brussels terror attacks.

It is important to note that the Charlie Hebdo and Paris terror attacks strengthened the V4 group's position on the securitisation approach to the migration crisis. Additionally, the communication style in the V4 group's declarations and statements supports the linkage between security and terrorism with migration. The fundamental principles of the V4 group's discourse identify the migration crisis as a security threat.

This study could be further developed at the EU level, where it would examine EU institutions' discourse to determine if the V4 group's stance on migration impacted how

the EU institutions changed their communication style from a humanitarian approach to a securitisation one. Furthermore, future research could expand on this study by analysing how the V4's securitisation discourse has developed post-2016, particularly considering new global migration patterns and international relations developments.

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## Appendix

### A. Collected Data for the Analysis in the Case of the Visegrad Group – 2015

V4 Countries Progress in Defence Cooperation; Prague, 17 December 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/v4-countries-progress-in

Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group countries; Brussels, 17 December 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/download.php?docID=283

Joint Statement of Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group and the President of the Republic of Korea; Prague, 3 December 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/joint-statement-on-the

Joint Statement of the V4 Prime Ministers; Prague, 3 December 2015 – https://www.visegrad group.eu/calendar/2015/joint-statement-of-the-151204

"We Offer You Our Helping Hand on the EU Path" – Joint letter of V4 Foreign Ministers published in Western Balkan dailies; Prague, 11 November 2015 – https://www.visegrad group.eu/calendar/2015/v4-ministers-in-joint

Joint Communiqué of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Foreign Affairs; Prague, 11 September 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-communique-of-the-150911

Joint Statement of the Summit of Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group Countries/Joint Statement; Prague, 4 September 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-statement-of-the-150904

Press Statement of the Summit of V4 Prime Ministers and the President of France; Bratislava, 19 June 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/press-statement-on-the

Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers; Bratislava, 19 June 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-statement-of-the

Bratislava Declaration of the V4 Heads of Government on Stronger CSDP; Bratislava, 19 June 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/bratislava-declaration

V4 and Turkey: Share Interest in Regular Dialog (V4 + Turkey Foreign Ministerial Meeting – Press Release); Antalya, 12 May 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/v4-and-turkey-shared

Joint Communiqué of V4 Ministers of Defence; Tomášov, 23 April 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-communique-of-the

Co-Chairs' Statement of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of V4 + NB8 Countries; High Tatras, 12-13 March 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/co-chairs-statement

Conclusions from the Meeting of Foreign Affairs Committees of V4 Countries; Bratislava, 25 February 2015 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/conclusion-from-the

## B. Collected Data for the Analysis in the Case of Visegrad Group – 2016

Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the V4 Countries (V4 Prime Ministers); Brussels, 15 December 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/joint-statement-of-the-161215-1

Joint Statement on the Migration Crisis Response Mechanism (V4 Interior Ministers); Warsaw, 21 November 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-of-v4

Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the V4 Countries; Bratislava, 16 September 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-of-the-160919

Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the V4 Countries; Warsaw, 21 July 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-of-the-160721

Towards Union of Trust and Action – Joint V4 Prime Ministers' Statement; Brussels, 28 June 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-of-the-160629

Joint Declaration of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers; Prague, 8 June 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/joint-declaration-of-the-160609

Joint Statement of V4 Prime Ministers on Migration; Prague, 15 February 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-on

Joint Statement of V4 Prime Ministers on the 25th Anniversary of the Visegrad Group; Prague, 15 February 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-of-the

Joint Declaration of the Interior Ministers of the Visegrad Group and Slovenia, Serbia and Macedonia; Prague, 19 January 2016 – https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-declaration-of