

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the political responses of Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic to the Schengen crisis in 2015. It specifically examines how the leaders of these countries constructed the collective identities of refugees and used the crisis as an opportunity to assert their national sovereignty. Employing a constructivist perspective in International Relations (IR) theory combined with Critical Discourse Studies, this dissertation analyses how the crisis was portrayed as an imminent threat to cultural identity and national safety. The research combines Qualitative Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate parliamentary debates and prime ministerial statements, aiming to reveal narratives that portray refugees as potential risks to the nation's stability. These narratives played a crucial role in providing reasons to oppose the EU's refugee redistribution mechanism, the quota system, and resisting influence from supranational entities. The research findings indicate that political leaders in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic regularly portrayed refugees as potential threats to national security, economic burdens, and cultural challenges. This discussion not only strengthened the nation's authority but also brought together domestic audiences in opposition to external demands from the European Union. Specifically, the leadership of Hungary utilised a strongly nationalist narrative, positioning itself in contrast to what was presented as an excessively intrusive EU policy. Similarly, Slovakia and the Czech Republic capitalised on refugee identities to uphold a position of opposition against the quota system.