



Approach and Application of the Rational Choice Theory in Decisions, Interests and Preferences of the Active Players in the Migration Crisis (2014-18): the Interactive Role of the European Union and the Turkish Policy

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ABSTRACT

The 2014 refugee crisis has led to a crisis of trust among the institutions and the leaders of the European Union (E.U) as a supra-national political instrument. Furthermore, it highlighted the disadvantageous condition of the E.U is, such as deficits in humanitarian and democratic ideals, in solidarity among member states, and the consequences of strengthened nationalistic and xenophobic stereotypes. It is claimed that an initially apparent institutional failure was just a transitional stage of an ongoing strategic game oriented by choices and preferences of the dominant players. Thus, the refugee crisis management was guided by multiple nested games, national priorities and political competition themes under the goal of achieving the premium objectives of each player. Hence, the management of the crisis formed a field against collective

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expression of common European political objectives, confirming the rationality of the individual (national) motivation based on a hierarchy of preferences. The aim of the present article is to analyse, within the scope of the rational choice theory, the strategic choices and the decisions of the member states, as well as to highlight the complexity of the refugee crisis, which in parallel with the economic crisis, contributed to the questioning of the E.U's power in its core formation.

Keywords: European union; nested games; rational choice; refugee crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Union experienced an unquestionable crisis of its institutions, as well as an impeachment of its leadership ability, by responding obviously indolently towards the exponential escalation of the refugee crisis. The issue of preparedness and effectiveness or not of the E.U's institutions [1] arose from the delay in taking community action. In this respect, the growing conversion of the migratory movements into a humanitarian crisis, was directly affecting the humanitarian and democratic ideals of the Union (solidarity, mutual understanding, equality, protection of human life and dignity, etc.). In addition, it was balancing between showcasing Europe as a 'safe heaven' on the base of shared 'international commitments and values', and an urgency for 'securing our borders' [2].

A result of this institutional and organizational difficulty, in responding to the crisis, was the fragmented dominance of the national political strategies in the hosting countries, while 'the EU never acts as the "first responder" in a crisis' [3,4]. In fact, it acts 'only at the most extreme moments of crisis when the survival of integration seemed to depend on manifest solidarity between the Member States' [5] confirming the difficulties of a fast and adequate respond at supranational level [6].

That weakness, as demonstrated by the E.U., allowed for the emergence and further strengthening of a pan-European state, in which the fundamental values of the western civilization were challenged, allowing representatives of xenophobic and racist views to take over the public political space. Moreover, it allowed the rise of a creeping populist Euro-scepticism, which is perceived as a side-product of the economic crisis [7-9].

Within the present study, an attempt is made to approach and investigate the strategic choices and decisions of the dominant players, under the scope of the rational choice theory. As dominant players are defined the institutions of the E.U.,

and the countries that showcase a high amount of influence on shaping the Union's policies (Germany, France). In addition, the definition incorporates the countries of the European South (Greece, Italy), which were facing, at the same time, issues of fiscal adjustments while in a conflicting view with the institutions of the union. The countries of Visegrad are also part of the definition, given that, they managed to peak an escalated conflicting viewpoint with the E.U. over the particular issue. Furthermore, the definition of dominant players includes Turkey as an independent player. The country is directly involved in the broader map of preferences and interests, and in the ability of each of the aforementioned players to maximize profit. In parallel with the main game of refugee crisis management, multiple nested games, aiming at achieving the sub-objectives of the players, determined the final outcome on the issue, and that is why they are considered of special importance. These games were mainly taking place at the level of national political competition and attaining social consensus [10].

The central working hypothesis is that, the management of the refugee crisis formed a field of application for each player's rational choice, against a collective expression of common European political objectives and sociocultural values and ideals. Our research field focuses on the main participants of the game: Germany, Greece, Visegrad countries and Turkey, by considering them as crucial in determining the multiple games carried out, while recognizing the importance that France and Italy had in the game.

The migration issue is virtually confined between the European Union, as a collectivity that associates various nation – states policies, and Turkey, presented as an independent power, a free player with defined choices. These choices are continuously reformed depending on the political interest of Turkey.

It can be said that even though migration is a crucial issue, its resolution is based on a weak

attempt by collectivities such as the European Union and international organizations. There is a limited number of studies on the causes and effects of the migration issue. Furthermore, there is limited research on issues tied to the policy of nation – states towards migration as well as towards the educational and occupational future of migrants and refugees in the reception countries. It is pretty certain that the specific issue can be a matter of consideration in the future as the outcome of ongoing warlike situations, civil wars, environmental crises and widespread authoritarian regimes.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present paper focuses on the problems and consequences of population mobility, especially in Europe (refugees and migration) by utilizing the combination of rational choice theory and game theory. This choice is based on a novel scientific view about the in-depth study of migration-related issues as a fact and condition within contemporary political and economic conditions. The combination of the two theories is conducive to emerging special characteristics of the phenomenon of migration because migrants, natives, political groups, the E.U. and international organizations become visible through a complex field in which the capacity of the “player” becomes particularly important, as it defines policies through developing strategies. By studying this “game” in combination with rational choice theory leads to broader fields of perception, understanding and interpretation with emphasis on the complexity of the problem and players’ involvement. At this point it is important to mention that players are considered the migrants – refugees, migration associations and nation-states. This way, we can develop deep understanding and better evaluate the different proposals for the resolution of the migration – refugee issue along with the convergence policies in different time periods and their corresponding historic elements. In this respect, the issue under exploration can be approached in a multi-faceted economic, political and cultural manner.

At this point, it is important to introduce basic elements of the two aforementioned theories as a means of interpretation of the active players’ actions and interventions in the migration issue. In the first place, basic elements of the rational choice theory are presented so as to perceive the complex setting of dynamic societies in which social phenomena and political actions take

place along with different political structures, political systems, cultures, and values systems that define and institutionalize the concepts of: a) different interests, b) political reference and political performance, c) benefits for different groups, d) monitoring – supervision of groups and e) special issues of political rights tied to the mitigation of social inequalities, handling of poverty, etc.

The rational choice theory focuses on the comprehension of economic and social behavior, meaning that the individual adopts a cost-effective analysis to decide on the appropriateness of their choices. It puts forward the idea that the decisions of the individual players can generate a collective social behavior. In this respect, the individuals are able to express their preferences and alternatives. The instrumental rationality, a version of the rational choice theory, applies more cost-effective methods without taking into consideration the value of the goal. This helps the selection of the appropriate pattern of action and prediction of the result, since every choice has a result. The potential area and actions are selected in relation to economic, legal, social and natural restrictions faced by the active player. It must also be noted that the concept of rational does not refer to something sensible or predictable, but it is rather a narrower concept in the sense that it can be applied in different time periods and different conditions [11].

According to the game theory, a game is defined as an interaction, which includes a sum of players, a sum of strategic choices, and a sum of returns for each player. It is obvious that the total returns derive from the strategies each player will select among a plethora of available options, its interaction with the choices made by the rest of the players, that is, the sequence of movements that follow or precede other players, and the information being available before each move. There are different types of games. One can indicatively refer to cooperative game in which the players make combinatory commitments, form alliances and take cooperative actions. It describes the structure, strategies and benefits of the alliances and how the processes can affect the allocation of benefit in each alliance. On the other hand, in a non-cooperative game, the active players cannot form alliances. In the symmetric game, the benefits of each strategy depend on the other strategies, not on the players, whereas in the asymmetric game different strategies apply. In the zero-sum game

all players benefit, whereas in the non-zero sum game a player can benefit; yet, not at the expense of other players. In the simultaneous game the players who participate in the game later in time are unaware of the other players' actions. On the contrary, in the sequential game, the players who participate later in time are aware of other players' previous actions [12].

The combinatory study of the rational choice theory and game theory, through which an attempt is made to approach the phenomenon of migration, lead to different questions. However, we focus on the following questions: a) which is the role, discourse and dynamics of the E.U., b) which is the discourse generated by the Visegrad countries in the formation of policy, c) which is the policy of Turkey and d) how is the policy in Greece developed [13,14].

Therefore, this paper attempts to approach the political discourse of nation-states and the E.U., as they are all involved in the migration issue by putting forward their policies which can be referred to as deliberation, negotiation, definition of policy and operational readjustments.

The starting point of our approach is the hypothesis that, the behaviour of the players constitutes an optimal reaction within the given environment as defined by the institutional framework (rules) and by the other players. In this respect, the adopted viewpoint states that *'the undertaken action was premier and that he would have adopted the same way of action in the same situation'* [15].

An important tool in understanding the respective conditions of conducting two-dimensional games, based on internal and external negotiations, is the one suggested by R.D.Putnam at the level of international negotiations [16]. It can be claimed that the type of game under discussion does not fall under the category of a two-level game. That is because, the players are moving into two interactive and interrelated levels. However, the conditions within which the game is conducted are changing. At an internal level, the limitation of consensus between the political leadership and the pressure groups does not form a decisive factor in shaping the political agenda based on which the negotiation of the second, exterior, level is made. The cases of Greece, Turkey, and the Visegrad countries, are not characterized by the exercise of a policy that was the result of consensus and alliances' formation on the

interior, which specifies their starting position on the negotiations with the rest of the member states or with the E.U. In these cases, it is suggested that the political leaders are shaping a political position that derives from the ideological framework that is recommended for the masses, rather than a consequence of joint formulation. At the same time, the negotiation within the context of the decisions adopted by the E.U., takes place within a given institutional framework that is commonly or by majority accepted, but in any case, it is given and binding.

Therefore, the approach presented in this paper falls into the logic of nested games; the games taking place in multiple arenas, where the player is involved in an entire complex of games, in which whatever appears to be inferior within the context of a given game, is in fact superior if examined within the context of the entire complex of games [15]. In this case, the rules of the game become the subject of the strategic interaction between the acting players, but in a different direction, depending on their interests and preferences. In this way, the strategic choices made by the players appear to be irrational, but in reality, they are evolutionary manifestations of a long-term agenda that aims at transforming the rules or achieving an earlier, in terms of hierarchy, preference.

As stated above, the central hypothesis regards the obvious weakness of coordination among the member states in a collective action, meaning, the ability of a group of people to cooperate for mutual benefit [17]. That is because, within such process, their preferences and interests are not satisfied, i.e. there is no maximization of their benefit.

Consequently, the focal point of our examination is whether the result is collectively inferior, as it has already been suggested that there could have been proposed solutions and options that would have maximized the position of at least one participant, without burdening the others [18]. It is about a perception of politics as a series of dilemma proposals for collective action, suggesting that the E.U. forms a characteristic instrument in applying respective strategic options.

At a second level, an attempt is made to explore the individual motives that were offered to each member of the team, reinforcing the decision to accept the cost or the weight of effort in achieving the purposes of the team [19].

The issue of changing the game in this case, as it will be proved later, is due to: the change in outcomes for each player, the conduct of intense and parallel nested games (determining in some cases), and the attempt to change or renegotiate the already existing rules of conduct towards achievements in other political arenas.

To sum up, the aim of the present study is, under the methodological restriction of the basic players mentioned, to develop, describe, and interpret the complex of political relations, interests, and decisions that appeared and amended during the evolution of the refugee crisis. The study does not have the ambition to extract a model of interpretation that is universally applicable or has a predictive ability.

3. THE REFUGEE CRISIS

The E.U. policy on migration was relying on the common implementation of 'views and practices that dominated at national level after the 1970's', which were oriented towards the protection of the borders against illegal inflows [20]. The Directive 2008/115/EC defined the common practices of addressing the issue of the illegal entry, stay, and residence of third-country nationals, as well as the procedures for their return back to their country of origin, by ensuring respect for the international agreements relating to the rights of migrants [21]. The consequence of this doubtful, institutional and organizational, structure of the E.U. in facing the migration crisis was the fragmentary domination of national political practices in the reception countries of refugee flows, by maintaining the issue at a national level with emerging issues relating to its effectiveness. The already existing pressure, in Greece for example, before 2014 during the beginning of the economic crisis, is found on the level of a need for a systematic application of the national policies and demonstration of European solidarity [22].

The aforementioned crisis was an, obviously, indicative approach of an '*ignored crisis*' [23]. In addition, it can be an indicative approach to their fear that the crisis would result in '*reducing public confidence in their leadership*' [24], or of the view that '*problems are tackled as they arise and new legislation is rolled out accordingly*' [25]. Gradually, the migration flows had already established conditions of an unprecedented and uncontrollable crisis posing terms of a generalized threat and urgency for a collective response to the issue, by validating the limited

'*European capacity*' to deal with a '*trans-boundary crisis*' [26].

The challenge of managing a massive migratory movement exceeded the criticism and organization of the national political institutions and immediately signalled the existing weakness, in the first place, in managing the crisis at a supranational level. The institutional accountability of the E.U. in addressing the challenges was constantly emerging as a core topic in the public, political and social agenda, as well as the scope of the Union's control. The aforementioned were emerging in conjunction with the already existing fully developed weakness in exercising a financial policy to exceed the solutions of imposing horizontal austerity measures of compulsory financial control in the countries of the European South [27,28].

Based on the rational choice theory, migration, as a social phenomenon, should be approached by taking into consideration the particular economic, political and cultural consequences. The E.U. member-states assume the role of players who can shape political strategies in an attempt to settle an issue. The concept of rationalism entails the "construction" of rational resolution and, consequently, the "political truth". According to the game theory, emphasis is placed on the combination of different games which are developed and changed within a dynamic view of interests, the E.U. work efficiency, the nation-states' fulfilment and reinforcement or enfeeblement of powerful players. Thus, the historic time alternatively includes a series of political, economic and social situations, namely the economic crisis, while the players' choices are differentiated so as to be vague or unclear. These choices eventually end up in selective combinations of symmetric, asymmetric, zero sum, non-zero sum, simultaneous or sequential games [29].

E.U. was found in a tug of war among strategic choices relating to the level of its involvement and the application of its policies [24]. The question of E.U.'s jurisdiction in facing the issue against the national strategies arises reasonably, but also the one relating to the '*divergent interests*' of the member states [30].

The absence of a framework for facing similar conditions, at a common decision level, has managed to bring back the issues of jurisdiction and dominance of the supranational policy

against the national. It also demonstrated a series of other parameters relating to the character, the scope, and the quality of the union as a supranational union based on solidarity, mutual understanding, equality [31] and protection of human life, dignity, and justice.

3.1 The European Agenda on Migration

Since the mid-80's the migration and asylum policy were integrated into the agenda of cooperation between the member states. Such integration was the natural consequence of the 'establishment of free movement and the abolition of internal borders' [20]. As a result, they shaped the terms for the development of European policies on limiting and controlling the flows by showcasing, at the same time, the need to strengthen cooperation through the definition of common criteria for political practice [32,33]. The discussion on migration evolved around an intense social, political, and cultural problem, in its very core, as a potential threat against the social class and the protection of the national stability. In parallel, there were considerations regarding the strength of the welfare state and the cultural composition of the states [34].

The European Council in Tampere (October 1999), presented within its conclusions the first European policy agenda for a progressive creation of a common European migration policy framework. The policy agenda focused on the fair and non-discriminatory treatment between the national workers and those from third countries. Up until the presentation, in 2001, of the legislative initiative from the European Commission with a directive that offered common norms relating to the labour migration of people coming from third countries, the issue remained at the level of national strategies. Gradually, the E.U. formed the path for the institutional establishment of the European migration policy by approving directives (Blue Card Directive (2009/05/EC), [35] Single Permit Directive (2011/98/EU) [36], Long-Term Residents Directive (2003/19/EC) [37], Family Reunification Directive (2003/86/EC) [38], Seasonal Workers Directive (2014/36/EU) [39], Intra-Corporate Transferees Directive (2014/66/EU) [22], Students and Researchers Directive (2016/801/EU) [40] offering a common, minimum, starting level that the national governments had to take into consideration within their national institutional composition and compliance [41].

However, the issue of migration took the form of a 'meta-issue' [42], that is, an operative cause of multiple other issues. Its relevant upgrade is obviously presumed, from the outbreak of euro-scepticism and the selection of inward looking policies in many members of the E.U.

On May 2015, the *European agenda on migration* recognizes the problematic situation, but also accepts the criticism expressed, while setting its assumptions. Thus, the open criticism and controversy towards the E.U. is clearly identified, in relation to whether '*our migration policy is equal to the pressure of thousands of migrants, to the need to integrate migrants in our societies, or to the economic demand of a Europe in demographic decline*' [2].

The selected option is concerned with the complete engagement of stakeholders: member states, European institutes, international organizations, the civil society, the local authorities, but also third countries in an effort to establish a common European migration policy that is able to send '*a clear message to citizens that migration can be better managed collectively by all EU actors*' [2]. The failure in facing the issue, during the initial period, and the consequent negative social impressions by multiple drowning incidents, were posing urgent issues on the ethical principles and commitments of the E.U. Simultaneously, the countries neighbouring the ones receiving the flows, announced strict controls along their borders, creating in this way confinement conditions for the migrants, with every possible consequence. It is also important to mention that, for the first time, the borders of the E.U.'s member states were perceived as the borders of the union, in an emphatic manner [43,44]. The aforementioned, defined the undertaking of greater responsibility in protecting them, at least at the level of preventing new deadly wrecks.

The actions of the E.U constituted a '*blueprint*', on how to address a respective future situation, which was mainly concerned with: a) '*saving lives at sea*', b), '*targeting criminal smuggling networks*' c) '*relocation*', d) '*resettlement*' and e) '*working in partnership with third countries to tackle migration upstream*' [2].

Frontex was called upon to take a dual role; the cooperative operational border control of the member states and assistance in the rescue attempts. The migration crisis is intensively promoted as an action field with references on

the common defense and security policy, which further strengthens 'militarization' on migration policy [45,46].

Within the agenda, the submission of a proposal for the temporary allocation of the people under the status of international protection was announced, ensuring, in this way, an equal and fair participation for all member states in the joint effort. At the same time, the competences of the first registration and examination of applications were defined, as well as the algorithm for the mandatory participation of the E.U.'s member states in reallocating the refugees from Italy and Greece [47]. The text with an, unprecedented for the European standards, indicative style recognizes the contribution of some member states against the zero contribution of others, in accepting asylum applications, and in providing financial support for the efforts made by other countries.

However, the cynical wording as expressed by the E.U. is of high interest. The statement suggested that, the E.U. will continue to provide protection to those in need instantaneously towards the perception that the need for a well-performing economy requires the skills of human resources. These human resources could not immediately and always be found within the European labour market, or they need time to be developed. The statement was expressed as an additional argument of positive reception of migrants in the European hosting countries, a position that mainly expresses the strategic analysis of preferences and interests of Germany [48].

After recognising the devaluation of the initial number of 40.000 relocations, Germany suspended (August 2015) the Dublin's regulation for the Syrian refugees, allowing migrants to submit their asylum application in Germany, even though it might not be the country of first entry within the E.U. The German chancellor A. Merkel, explicitly gave the outline of her political determination not only within the country, but mainly towards her partners within the union, by stating that '*Germany is a powerful country (...) we have done so many, we can do it, we can do it wherever something is happening, it should be overcome*' [49].

All in all, the outcome of internal deliberation encompasses the policies put forward as the E.U. standpoints that represent the welfare policy as well as the policy of monitoring and security.

In this sense, there is a policy on migrant-refugee education, a policy on healthcare and broader welfare policies to meet immediate needs. At a different level, another policy is formulated on migrant-refugee flows supervision in collaboration with non-E.U. countries, such as Turkey and the U.S.A. [50,51]. As already foretold, these policies can change in the sense that various issues are categorized within the E.U. and the policies are readapted. Thus, an active game forms the basis on which the political field of intentions of member-states, international organization and migrant-refugee pressure groups are put forward along with the utilization of the scientific view as this is showcased through the evolution of sciences, namely the political science, sociology, technology, etc.

3.2 The European South

The European South constituted the geographic location of first choice for the migration flows [52]. In the middle of a severe economic crisis, these countries developed ad hoc national strategies. Both, Italy and Greece, were unable to manage the mass movements in respect to the first registration, acceptance of asylum applications, and hosting, by applying a silent policy, suggesting the seamless transition of the migrants towards their north borders, leading to Central Europe [53,54].

Despite the serious financial difficulties of the member states in the south, the proposal to transfer financial resources from the funding packages of ESF (European Social Fund) and FEAD (Fund for European Aid to Most Deprived), in an effort to address the migration crisis, constituted a suboptimal perspective [55]. Gradually, the spectrum of other programs was widened in order to include actions targeting the migrants (ERDF – European Regional Development Fund, EARDF – European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, EMFF – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) [56]. ESF and FEAD contributed with 86.4 and 3.8 billion euros respectively to fund the programs for the relief of population groups that are under threat due to the economic crisis. In the cases of Greece and Italy, the respective funding amounts against the social exclusion of vulnerable groups were in total 4 and 11 billion euros respectively.

The AMIF program (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), with an initial amount of funding flows at 3.31 billion euro, and after a

recent adjustment at 6.6 billion euros, was an important financial boost, equal to the issue. The total amount financed by AMIF (period 2014-20) for Greece and Italy, as the main beneficiaries of the program [52], was at 463 and 477 million respectively, in addition to the emergency aid that was offered. However, during the late 2017, when the migratory movements returned to normal in contrast to 2015, the received funding was 35% in Greece, 30% in Italy, and 34% in Spain, with an average of 32% at European level, against the planned inflows [56].

The encouragement of the E.U. towards the member states to transfer funds from the financial support funds targeting poverty, education, and other fields towards the area of migration, had obviously posed an added economic, social, and political cost. Especially in what regards Greece, the polarized political setting, in addition to the intense expressions of social outrage resulting from the country's strict fiscal adjustment after the two memoranda of the country's financial rescue, promoted the migration crisis into an issue of competition between the political parties.

3.3 The countries of Visegrad

The expression of reluctance of the Visegrad countries, after the first phase of cooperation, was transformed into a conflict after the submission of the mechanism concerning the refugees' allocation among the member states. A great amount of criticism against the European policy on migration was expressed within the statements issued by the leaders of the countries, questioning the effectiveness of the *European Agenda on Migration* on the compulsory character of the obligation that member states had in relocating the refugees [4]. Hungary applied the most extreme solution against the migration crisis, as it had already become the third among the most burdened countries within the E.U. [57]. The ambivalence of the Visegrad countries was expressed with a statement of respect for the European legislation regarding the asylum policy (September 2015). The statement also included counterproposals oriented towards the application of rules for the process of first registration in the reception countries suggesting the undertaking of a decisive responsibility by all member states in ensuring their external borders by introducing, in this way, the stakeholders' agenda with 'international players, including the USA and Russia' [4]. The proportional system of allocation

was approved only by Poland and its decision was based on special geopolitical and sociocultural aspects of the country's relations with Ukraine and Russia [58]. Germany played an important interventional role when Poland was taking this decision of differentiation from the rest of the Visegrad countries [59]. The change of government in Poland (elections of fall 2015), brought back the Polish rhetoric to its initial position. Slovakia and Hungary rejected the system, which was approved by the Council of the E.U., and submitted their rejection in a written complaint letter to the European Court. The Czech Republic also rejected the proportional system, but did not follow the extreme position of its partners in V4 [57].

The disagreement between the E.U. and the V4 emerged again during the spring of 2016. The European Commission introduced the discussion of refinement of the asylum policy in the report '*Towards a Reform of the Common European Asylum System and Enhancing Legal Avenues to Europe*' [51,51], making it clear that the use of the relocation mechanism would constitute a common practice, and not an extreme solution to the migration crisis. During the Slovak Presidency of the Council, the country proposed an alternative system of flexible solidarity, with which the countries of V4 were in agreement. Furthermore, the countries agreed on the need for cooperation with countries outside the borders of the E.U., as well as on the support for renewal of the Schengen system. During the late 2016, a meeting between the ministers of interior of the V4 countries summarized their positions on the migration crisis. They agreed that the compulsory relocation mechanism and the ad hoc solutions are not effective, as they are not preventing the entry of migrants in Europe, and that they divide the E.U. countries into hosting camps for the refugees and migrants. Their central proposal was concerned with the establishment of a response mechanism against the migration crisis ('*Migration Crisis Response Mechanism*'). The mechanism's main aim was to create a platform in which information could be exchanged. The states could share their needs, and cooperate in joint actions relating to migration. It was about an unofficial forum that would replace, at a great extent, the activities and jurisdictions of the E.U. [57].

3.4 Turkey as a Freelancer

The strategy of Turkey was favourable during the period between 2011 and 2014 in relation to the

mass movements of Syrian refugees, since the country did not regard them as 'refugees', but rather as 'guests' [60], in accordance with the 2009 doctrine of '*common destiny, common history, common future*' [61]. At the same time, Turkey was rejecting the request for support from the western world, hoping to activate the collapse of Assad's regime [62], so that Syrian 'guests' of a new, friendly to Turkey regime would return to their homeland. Gradually, Turkey realized the failure of its strategic planning and proposed threats relating to the country's security and to the financial difficulty in managing the refugees [63].

During the third meeting between the European Council and Turkey [64], a progress was observed on the basis of the 29th November 2015 joint action plan. The progress was concerned with: the opening of the Turkish labour market for Syrians who were under the state of temporary protection, the introduction of new requirements for the issuance of visas for Syrians and other nationals, the increase of security by the Turkish coast guard and police, and the improvements in information management [64]. From their side, the E.U., or to be more precise, the European leaders, declared the payment initiation of a financial aid of 3 billion euros to Turkey for infrastructures to host the refugees. At the same time, the 7th March 2016 agreement with Turkey concerning the immediate return of all the migrants, who were not under the state of temporary protection, and who were transferred from Turkey to Greece, and the re-receiving of all the illegal migrants that had been intercepted within the Turkish territorial waters, was highlighted. Finally, the agreement of common response against the illegal migrant traffickers, with the contribution of military forces from NATO in the Aegean was confirmed. It is obvious that the E.U. promoted the matter of restricting the mass migration flows and externalization of border control [53], with Turkey playing a critical role depending on the country's capabilities or willingness.

4. THE STRATEGIES OF THE PLAYERS INVOLVED WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE RATIONAL CHOICE

4.1 Germany

Starting from the logic of collective action that the E.U. proposed or the powerful countries imposed, an attempt is made to investigate, at first place, the motives that imposed the option of

collective action. Without having the ability for an empirical hierarchical review, it is suggested that the motives of the most powerful forces within the E.U., that shaped the final decisions of the union, derived from: a) the national or supranational interests, b) an institutionalized code of principles relating to the European ideals, and c) a realist reading of the present reality relating to the massive migration flows and the economic conditions.

Starting from the latter, the need for controlling the migration flows towards the European South is acknowledged. The need is expressed as a condition for the safeguard and strict supervision of a possible threat, according to which the E.U.'s policy could be perceived as a silent invitation of migrants of all types, and not only of the refugees coming from war and other zones of the globe. This standpoint derives from the articles 77, 78, 79 and 80 of the Treaty on the functioning of the E.U. Furthermore, the threat of unimpeded access of migrants and refugees to the countries of high preference, in the Central and Northern Europe, was real. The aforementioned, during the first period of the crisis, was chosen as a de-bottlenecking strategy, by the countries of the South, with the collapse or deficit operation of the institutionalized control procedures in Italy and Greece.

The ideals of the union relating to the rule of law, the liberal democratic values, and the need to showcase a humanitarianism that corresponds to the historical and cultural past of Europe, were dominant throughout the period. These ideals were mainly expressed by Germany at both levels, the one of political stake and the one shaping the discussion agenda to the media in Europe [65]. The protection of this code of principles, in parallel with the need to demonstrate active solidarity to the refugees, as well as to the countries of the South was presented, in the first place, within the need for a union's ad hoc institutional response, and in second place, within the re-planning process of the permanent strategic frameworks. By adopting Shepsle's view that each institution forms a sum of equilibrium points, meaning a sum of responses on issues of collective action that serves the sum of those involved, there is identifiable willingness of the E.U. to redefine the institutional framework. Such process would shape new equilibrium point(s), by placing the crisis on the unwillingness or rejection of the participants to follow the rules [17].

Under the first category, the following needs are recognized: a) to restrain the budget, b) to strengthen the transparency in managing the financial aids for facing the crisis, and c) the further proportional, in respect to the immigration burden, financial support of the member states, as well as third countries, mainly Turkey. Moreover, the formation of the emerging conditions for the discussion on the settlement of a common European foreign policy implied the need for the expansion of the union's responsibilities in the fields that were not falling under its jurisdiction. That meant a more active involvement of FRONTEX (Triton & Poseidon) as a proof of the effectiveness of a common operation by the army and the police for rescuing and protecting the borders, with a visible potential for the creation of a European army. Finally, the need for age renewal relating to the prediction for an 'aged' population in Europe [40] is directly related to sustainability of the public health care expenditure [52].

However, the slow institutional change that was decided was due to the uncertainty of the political institutions that was exceeding the immigration crisis and incorporated the demand for a financial loosening, as expressed by the countries of the European South. Germany preferred to 'utilize' the time by checking the estimated and final outcomes of the games. At the same time, however, despite the realization that the institutional framework was insufficient and that there is a possible agreement on its change, Germany decides, against the amendment, the ad hoc formation of additional institutional interventions, of small scale, by obviously taking into consideration the expected cost. As G. Tsebelis describes, the strategy that is followed in similar cases is the one expecting that *'the external conditions will act on your behalf'* in the future [15]. Without doubt, the strategy that was selected by Germany was the one suggesting the alternation of the games' matrix of outcomes. In other words, the transformation of the game that was taking place between Greece and the European South, from a 'Prisoners' Dilemma' game into a 'Chicken Game', by introducing favourable terms for the adoption of cooperative solutions.

4.2 The European South - Greece

By investigating the action motives of the European South, it can be inferred that there is a series of differentiated parameters that present, however, strong elements of party competition. In

Greece, the parties of the governing alliance (SYRIZA and ANEL) succeeded, in three elections (national elections of January and September, referendum in July 2015), to shape the confrontation terms with the E.U. by presenting the union as an important factor influencing the ongoing financial and social crisis. Both government partners, despite suggesting different ideological references, were expressed uniformly by stating the government's proposal in promoting the issue at the level of the union's subsidiary action [66]. Despite the difficult financial position of Greece, an unofficial framework for the protection of migration flows was formed, based mainly on individual volunteers and organizations. The framework was initiated on the basis of protecting the common humanitarian ideals of the European Union, but also on the given malfunctions of the institutional framework.

The defective protection of the country's north borders, during the first phase, which allowed or encouraged the unimpeded transfer of the migrants towards the Balkan countries in an effort to enter the countries of Central and North Europe [67] and the unwillingness for checking and registering them at the hotspots, could not solely be interpreted as institutional weaknesses. In other words, the intention of the Greek government to raise awareness, to move the pressure towards the Southeast Europe, and challenge institutional processes within the E.U, forms a serious parameter relating to the action motives.

It can be suggested that Greece's action motives can be identified at two primary levels: the response to the migration crisis and the strengthening of arguments in the negotiation with the partners, over the parallel, yet dominant, game of the financial dimension for the country's rescue that required institutional revision. Even if the ideological and political identity of the dominant party entities forming the government alliance responded in a satisfying manner, in what regards the first level, on the second level the formulation of working assumptions and their future control, remained open. At the level of formulation as a result of working assumptions, the following proposals are included: a) the possible trade-off for managing the migration flows as pressure for the Greek issue under dispute relating to the reduction of the debt, by utilizing the positive positions of the International Monetary Fund (International Monetary Fund, 2015). b) The additional raise of European funds

for managing the crisis, of 2 billion euros (885 million euros for Italy and 708 million euros for Spain respectively), to the initial national financial burdens [68] and the high potentials for the improvement of the economy as a whole [69-71], despite the contradicting indications for negative consequences on the economy due to the migrants' presence [72]. c) The promotion of the issue about the border control of Greece, as the borders of the E.U. with unprecedented consequence the undertaking of European responsibility against their Turkish questioning strategy. Obviously, the aforementioned formed, at the same time, the preferences/interests of the Greek side, in a broader complete complex of nested games related to Greece [73]. A clear matching of targets and strategies of the Greek side on the migration crisis management can be perceived. In addition, there is an intention to promote the crisis in multiple games of competition for achieving the maximum possible outcome, within the national framework, due to party competition. The intention concerns also the establishment of national standpoints on international problems, and the inter-community level by strengthening the negotiation power in the field of economics.

Within the nested games tied to Greece, the dominant players that shape the outcome and the expected outcome yields, are identified. During the period under dispute, Greece's attempt to set up an alliance of countries, facing similar financial problems in the region of the European South, with main aim the change of the institutional framework for the support of the countries in supervision, is of high interest. In this way, Greece promotes, while not being able to impose, a common front to claim institutional changes by investing national political capital on the basis of non-satisfaction of the country's interests from the already existing institutions. It is about a straight challenge of two potential scenarios. Either all the E.U. members chose to respect the agreements, which for the European South are not favourable at the moment, or they prefer to violate the institutional framework that is supported by the minority. As a result, the first possible scenario forms a game of pure coordination, a position that is supported by the majority of the member states, while the second is incorporated in a 'Prisoners' Dilemma' game that however, does not have the capability to be imposed by the alliance of the South.

The specific time period is distinguished for the policies developed by the left government that

formulated a policy in various fields which derived from mediations and different strategic players involved in the formation of political standpoints. The structure of the left government was characterized by two schemes: the left wing SYRIZA and the right wing ANEL. What is put forward as uniformity conceals the fact that SYRIZA and ANEL represented completely different political intentions articulated by different political groups. The internal game is shaped and developed within and between SYRIZA and ANEL so as to promote the governmental proposals, standpoints and policies. This developing game of political correctness includes different players, the social and political fields up to the E.U. in which, besides the negotiations on the migration policy, strategies for the political supervision of Greece are also developed through the imposed procedural policy on Greece which resulted in the economic crisis. The political game becomes more interesting as it is interpreted by the Minister of Economics Y. Varoufakis who analyses the role and strategies of the E.U. players regarding the imposed memoranda and political supervision of Greece. Another interesting point is the comparative approach of political correctness of choices and nested games formulated by the subsequent right wing government, the winner of 2019 elections, and would be favourable for convergences and identifications with the E.U. and migration flow supervision policies in collaboration with the E.U., the U.S.A. and Turkey. At this point it is important to underline the political construction of emotions which are the outcome of strategies that put forward issues that were handled by the SYRIZA and ANEL government. Such issues are related to "moments" of enthusiasm and national pride through the promotion of Greece as a country that addresses the "leading" groups of Europe as equal partners [74].

4.3 The countries of Visegrad

Given the comprehension of a compromise and consensus culture within the decisions made by the E.U. as a result of achieving unanimous decisions more frequently than required, the dominant issue of conflicting logic in relation to the search for an explanatory interpretation for the breakdown or questioning of the 'good chemistry' between the partners, reasonably emerged [75]. The change of the terms aiming at achieving the consensus within the decisions made by the institutions, and not their ability or effectiveness, usually with the use of extra-

institutional, unofficial, or time-consuming norms of conduct and management between the member states, was identified as a serious possible scenario after the enlargement of the E.U. in 2004 [76]. This was due to the inclusion of ex-communist states that did not have a long political interaction with the values incorporating the liberal democratic function. These countries, especially the Visegrad countries, could not be addressed within the broader sphere of responsibilities and decisions of the E.U. as a combat subset of joint action [77], divisiveness, and rising of obstacles. However, their joint engagement in the matter of the migration crisis, with a direct questioning of the European decisions, was an undoubted fact.

At this point, it is crucial to evaluate the quantity of the collective good that will be achieved from the members of the team, the cost that needs to be undertaken, and the balance of its distribution among the members, the possible relations between cost and profit, and the allocation of the possible profit or loss [19]. Are Visegrad countries 'free-riders'? Definitely they are not, since we do not have the case of a public good that will be distributed among the members of the team, irrespective of their effort or contribution. Moreover, the evolution of the migration crisis strengthens the position in response to the profits, for the Visegrad countries, deriving from the positive decision and contributions of the other members in facing the migration crisis. Visegrad countries did not operate as free-riders, since there is not a clear, better position that results for them based on the outcome of the collective action, but also there is not an expectation relating to the distributed profits, and in their case, added outcome yields, as a result of their defection [78].

The resistance against the decisions made by the majority of the E.U. incorporates confrontational views in between the individual and collective benefit. By using the question of D.North, on the terms of voluntary self-imposed application and compliance with the agreements, he answers that this will happen when compliance with the agreements can result in the benefit of the contracting parties. In other words, this happens when the expected profit exceeds the transactional cost (North, 1991). It appears that the Visegrad countries did not specify their strategic preferences in accepting migrants. Moreover, despite their initial participation, the dimension of the European imposition managed to place them directly outside of the collective

action. This was due to the fact that, the mutual benefit was not so mutual in accordance with their preferences and interests, or because these countries defined their own benefit differently, which was contradicting the mutual or collective benefit. Within this scope, the Visegrad countries, by moving along the line of their own preferences and interests, acted in a rational manner by aiming at the maximization of their benefit against an altruistic or ideological starting point.

By being in parallel nested games, they are trying to alter the rules of interaction in their benefit. It is about a position expressed by G.Tsebelis that, the institutional solutions are the conscious choices made by those involved, at the moment they realize that the already existing institutions are found in an ongoing conflict with their interests [15]. The cross linking of their interests as a motive for the establishment of a common front of political representation, is against the expansion of the union's responsibilities over the national policies. The preservation of the national sovereignty's status quo on issues that, directly or indirectly, doubt the national homogeneity, in terms of language and religion, which are characteristic elements of cultural nationalism, is found on the top of the agenda of their political and social imperative. As a result, their preferences and interests exceeded every counter benefit that was offered, by maintaining, at the same time, the right to disagree on matters relating to the common action, without a direct threat or the potential imposition of 'punishment' consequences. The available imposition mechanisms against the individual actors of excellent collective choices were not obviously sufficient, while an ad hoc composition would signal a high transactional cost. In relation to the latter, '*in the real world, high costs of negotiating and enforcing such agreements prohibit them*', given also that '*seldom do winners voluntarily compensate losers*' [79]. The increased cost of negotiation and the comparative institutional and procedural advantage of the E.U. were strongly emerged in the case of Greece during the first semester of 2015 [73]. In line with it, it appears that the Visegrad countries did not face a similar suffocating environment, given the absence of a strict time limit for the completion of the negotiation processes.

The motives provided by the E.U. towards the Visegrad countries for undertaking collective action are not visible, and in any case, given the

outcome, they were not sufficient to dominate over the parallel nested games. Hirschman suggests that *'that voice is nothing but a basic portion and function of any political system, known sometimes also as «interest articulation»'* [80]. Is the case of the Visegrad countries a fragmented and limited interpretation of the complaint, or do the fields of disagreement gradually enlarge to incorporate other fields that constitute the terms of a future withdrawal? Our position is that, it is about the formation of a common front of joint political and social arguments and views, which are concerned with: the future of the E.U., the dominance of the national policies over the E.U., the national political competition, and the populism that is often presented as nationalism. The aforementioned are not forming the terms of a withdrawal, but the terms for a request for the change in the direction of the E.U., which will form an open confrontation field. However, the question of choice for the withdrawal of these states is of high interest, their willingness, meaning the potential. Given the answer, the formulation of a disagreement, appears to be the only way to express dissatisfaction and set the conditions to redefine the institutional setting of the E.U. over the already existing conditions of power. As long as the disagreement escalates and widens, the opportunities for withdrawal will be reduced and as a consequence, the disagreement would take the form of a veto with unpredictable projections. The absence of withdrawal willingness derives from their willingness to complain and raise objections over the potential claims under their interest. Their non-compliance with the 'collective' decisions worsens the complaint, and maybe it exceeds, by creating an unofficial environment of partial or dispersed withdrawal. The disagreement or the, given the circumstances, abstention or withdrawal certifies, in part, the view that this will operate effectively against a clear statement of withdrawal. Against a definite settlement that would occur with the definite withdrawal, as *'reaction of last resort after the voice has failed'*, it appears that the latter could be *'substitute for the exit, as well as a complement to it'* [80].

To sum up, it can be said that certain policies are developed while they incorporate the intention for distinguishing the Visegrad countries as unusual democracies within the E.U., that contradict Germany and the E.U. in an attempt to limit their dominance. What seems to be a unified Visegrad policy is actually the outcome of nested games

that formulate a political rationality. As a result, these countries, characterized by different political culture, maximize their interest – benefit from their participation in the E.U. Moreover, internal political contrasts are of special interest, namely Bulgaria, about the construction of the "other", "foreigner", "homosexual", "woman" etc. in terms of political and social rights. Therefore, the internalized political theoretical field of each state includes these value policy ties that correspond to nested games with broader players, e.g. the Church, pressure groups, etc. This means that it is important to promote not only the Visegrad policy within the E.U., but also the internal balancing or contrasting political ties conducive to highlighting the complexity of intentions towards the formation and operation of institutional carriers and political structures. Thus, within the micro-level of nested games, the nested game could be put forward so as to make clear how it can formulate projected policies and standpoints within the E.U. [81].

The participation of countries in the Visegrad group, which is differentiated from other countries or the E.U. policies, mitigates the vibrations for excluding others through the projection of a dynamic policy which, theoretically, each Visegrad country puts forward as national success in the sense of sovereignty in the E.U. Thus, both internal and external games are apparently complex, a fact which serves the system equilibrium to readapting policies.

4.4 Turkey as an Independent Player

Turkey, during the migration crisis remained focused on achieving the targets of its foreign policy, which were expressed, for a long period of time, by Ahmet Davutoglu, who managed the agreement between Turkey and E.U. The country was acting like a powerful national player and a crucial factor in setting the balances in the Middle East by capitalizing in the international community, the country's position as a decisive player in solving both, the humanitarian and political problems [60,63]. At the same time, by silently allowing the mass illegal transfer of migrants via its maritime borders to Greece, Turkey moved the issue at the doorstep of the E.U. That move did not take place only at the level of social and political pressure, but also at the level of geopolitical co-competence and control of the vital, for the country and its interests, area of the Aegean Sea, in a nested

game with Greece for the responsibility of the marine space. At the same time, as Turkey developed military operations on a controllable scale in Syria, it applied its policy relating to the state's security against the Kurdish, and in recognizing its role in the progress of the Syrian issue by Russia and USA.

In line with the aforementioned, Turkey managed, in an environment of diplomatic extortion towards the E.U., to achieve the promotion of its preferences, as an alternative choice against the failure of its initial interests. The signing of the agreement with the E.U. brought into the surface a series of favourable perspectives. Turkey gained financial aid for the management of the immigration crisis without the required transparency in terms of their allocation, due to the delayed financial payments and achieved the opening of Chapter 33 of the country's accession negotiations. Furthermore, the country was established as an influential external player for the developments in the broader region, with the potentials of choosing and exercising extra-institutional functions and unpredictable political manipulations depending, each time, on its special interests and demands from the E.U.

The political game between Turkey and the E.U. reflects the different policies on the relation between Turkey and the E.U. regarding the legalization of internal policies in Turkey. Alternative policies, representative of different games and symmetric, asymmetric, zero sum, non-zero sum, simultaneous or sequential transitions, articulate the different policies of Turkey in relation to Greece and the E.U. Thus, the migration issue becomes an advantageous field for Turkey in an attempt to increase its interests and performance in order to balance the inner contrasts after the political persecutions of public-opinion makers, such as teachers, journalists and politicians. Within the political game, the "legalization" of inner anti-democratic policies is realized in the name of religious correctness and political dynamics in relation to the formulated policies in the E.U. This game of inner strategies regarding Greece could also include the policy of Turkey on Cyprus. National projections and monitoring on a micro and macro level of political over-determinations regulate a form of normality in Turkey in combination with the culture of the powerful player and the relation between past and present (Ottoman Empire) [82].

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The management of the issue by the E.U. benefited the development of a pan-European environment, challenging the fundamental principles of the western civilization. Such environment allowed representatives of xenophobic and racist views to occupy the public political space. These representatives were directly undermining the European construct. The extended willingness to redefine the political framework constituting the union forms a paradox, as well as a documented reality. The aforementioned, intensifies the concern for the future of the union, and restructures the discussion relating to the crisis of democracy. The challenge of migration, in conjunction with the economic crisis, formed triggering points for expressing reviewing trends, predicting an important challenge in the alteration process and in the further integration of the union itself.

Our intention was to showcase that an enlarged game between multiple participants was taking place, with different action motives, and with different hierarchies of interests and preferences. The game was taking place in multilevel strategy games, in an ongoing evolving framework. The emerging migration crisis, at the time conjecture of the financial crisis that was peaking, contributed in challenging the power of the latter within the core of its formation. The importance of nested games and their correlation with the broader, central game was promoted by identifying fields of interests' articulation that had greater dynamics than the 'social club' or the collective action, constituting the players as rational actors towards the maximization of their benefit. The ad hoc solutions of the institutional framework formed the answer in issues of collective action, by shaping new equilibrium points as a result of the unwillingness or denial of the participants to follow the rules.

The structure of the interest fields that were defined in the broader game of the migration crisis, illustrated the asymmetry of the relation interests/preferences of the players and the limited matching expressed by some of the players. In a hierarchical illustration, we should have defined the given Status Quo that justifies the starting basis of the negotiations. Given the definition of the preferences/interests of the players, the political choices and strategies, even though appear to be suboptimal, they do incorporate the expectation of a higher return in a different field, which is placed higher in the

hierarchy. It is about a game of ongoing interactions and exchanges that leads into new balances and constantly evolves within the strategic moves of the players. This parameter is of high importance in understanding the strategic moves of the Visegrad countries, as well as the moves of Turkey. This is because they appear to be suboptimal (in some fields of exchanges and outcomes) while ignoring their hierarchical preferences and interests.

The persuasion of the status quo's alteration or maintenance incorporates the strategies of nested games among the players. Such games have direct references and priorities at the national level, while others, side-transnational matters, concern directly the E.U. (the accession negotiations with Turkey, the control of the migration flows, etc.). Therefore, there is no possibility to quantify the intensity, but there is a possibility to include the intensity within the interpretive framework of the changes that the players' are introducing.

Given the hypothesis of rationality, meaning, the decision of a rational player to divert by improving its position against its previous behaviour [15] as demonstrated in the case of V4, the possibility of succeeding in future factions within the E.U. can be noted. Finally, the strategy of 'disagreement' against the one of 'withdrawal' appears to be safer, if not the only option, within the given environment of structuring the relations of power within the E.U. and the high outcomes, which are, mainly, of financial nature [83].

Each player promoted its own interests/preferences in a game of profit maximization given the offered yields. Thus, a minimum consensus was created with difficulty, despite any other individual difficulties. However, it remains unclear if the migration crisis of 2015 completed its cycle, given the persistent, and difficult financial situation of many underdeveloped countries.

The issue of Turkey's future options, within the scope of a destabilizing policy in the region of Eastern Mediterranean that is directed towards the imposition of projected rights over the wealth-producing resources, is definitely of high importance. The previous is further strengthened, by the increased numbers of refugees and migrants that Turkey hosts. This is because these can incorporate terms in the redefinition of a new migration crisis. By maintaining a crucial

instrument for the exercise of pressure towards the E.U. and the USA, the transformation of migrants into a tool used within the context of negotiations, aiming at serving the country's interests and preferences becomes a current matter.

Both rational choice theory and the game theory, as an interpretative scheme, seem to provide a dynamic contrast through fragmented policies in partial units and themes so as to showcase the political correctness as a complex process of rescheduling and recomposing of partial policies within an active, dynamic state or correlations, redefinitions and revisions. The policy of games, as part of the more general context of policy formation and the evaluation of selected policies, contributes to showcasing the political players. They play with political principles, values, standpoints and they reform political strategies, virtually shifting the interest to a certain policy or they maintain the existing policies through technical enrichment so as to conceal concepts such as progress, stagnancy, and development. Within this setting of strategies there are no clear theoretical references to integrate into certain patterns. The dynamics of economic, social and cultural environments generates the needs, thus, leading to redefined alliances and relations. The concepts of speed and development are usually adopted within time to define changes in technology. In our case, the developments are even faster meaning that studying a phenomenon is technically confined in order to study internally the discussions, international organization and nation-states, the archive material, the selection and participation of groups, formal and informal policy to the extent at which this can be allowed by our resources. Therefore, the more information, knowledge and scientific theory we get the better we approach the construction of political correctness and broaden our knowledge about the political game which becomes more complex as a number of factors are involved, such as culture, value systems, normative principles, political morality, and social emotions through a framework of political over-determinations that define and provide feedback for the political system.

This study opens up a new field of exploration by taking into consideration the fact that there is neither an absolute interpretation nor the possibility to generalize the results. It definitely enriches the approach to the migration issue through complex theoretical fields, the rational choice theory and the game theory, and is

conducive to broadened fields of discourse between theoretical and exact analyses.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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