Self-interested solidarity?

A case study of Luxembourg's support for the refugee relocation mechanism during its EU Council Presidency in 2015

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Abstract

This thesis examines Luxembourg's staunch support for the refugee relocation mechanism, a system designed to distribute migratory pressures more evenly across member states, during its 2015 EU presidency. Through an in-depth, deductive case study, this research examines the underlying motivation of Luxembourg's political position within a complementary framework of liberal intergovernmentalism and small state status-seeking. The research demonstrates Luxembourg's dependence on a robust and integrated EU and the vital importance of maintaining the Schengen area of free movement for its economic model. Moreover, the research illustrates Luxembourg's engagement in soft power tactics that resemble a status-seeking strategy. Luxembourg does this by presenting itself as a reliable partner and mediator in the negotiations on the relocation mechanism, while at the same time using its 'moral authority'. While the nuances of status-seeking need to be further explored, this study underscores Luxembourg's pragmatic advocacy of EU integration as well as its deliberate soft power strategies within the EU.

Keywords: Luxembourg, EU Council Presidency, liberal intergovernmentalism, status-seeking, EU integration, refugee relocation mechanism

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1: Introduction and research question

Luxembourg took over the rotating Presidency of the Council of Europe (hereafter the Presidency) in July 2015 in a climate of internal and external crises, ranging from the simmering war in Ukraine to Brexit talks, the financial crisis in Greece to terrorist attacks in France (Renma & Russack, 2016; Högenauer, 2016). In addition, the so-called migration crisis (from here on: the crisis) loomed over Europe and dominated political discussions throughout the Grand Duchy's Presidency (Renma & Russack, 2016; Högenauer, 2016). In 2015, a then-unprecedented number of 1.3 million people applied for asylum in Europe, many of them fleeing the civil wars in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan and the rise of ISIS in the region (Schimmelfenning, 2018). The massive arrival of migrants created a humanitarian and political crisis for the EU and many of its member states. The response to the so-called crisis was extremely divided - while some member states opted for a welcoming approach, such as Germany and Sweden in the beginning, others decided to close themselves off, most notoriously Hungary (e.g. Dingott, 2018). Solidarity between member states seemed to be at an all-time-low and political tensions peaked (Dingott, 2018). Furthermore, the dramatic influx of refugees combined with the terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris triggered a crisis in the Schengen regime - also known as the Schengen crisis (Schimmelfenning, 2018; Evrard, et al., 2020). Several member states wanted to introduce border controls or even build walls within the Schengen area (Evrard, et al., 2020).

Member states scrambled to find a common response to end the crisis but remained extremely divided (Dingott, 2018). The so-called refugee relocation mechanism (hereafter relocation mechanism) proposed by the European Commission (EC) as part of its Agenda on Migration turned out to be one of the most divisive issues during the crisis (Toygür & Benvenuti, 2016). In this context, it is worth briefly mentioning what the relocation mechanism is. The mechanism was designed to introduce a permanent burden-sharing system through the distribution of asylum seekers from the most affected states to the remaining EU countries, based on fixed quotas allocated built on several criteria. (Toygür & Benvenuti, 2016; Atanassov, n.d.) One of the objectives was a fairer distribution of responsibility among member states and to reduce pressure from frontline states. (Atanassov, n.d.; Toygür & Benvenuti, 2016) However, this sparked much debate as member states had radically different preferences (Toygür & Benvenuti, 2016; Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018). The proposal was withdrawn again in 2019 (Atanassov, n.d.).

Luxembourg held the rotating presidency for the 12th time from July to December 2015. From the beginning, the Grand Duchy made the management of the 'migration crisis' one of its priorities and took a proactive stance in mediating to find a common solution (Nienaber et al., 2015). Alongside the Dutch Presidency and some other heads of government, Luxembourg stood out for its leadership on the migration issue (Collett & Le Coz, 2018). The position of the Grand Duchy was notable: unlike most other member states, the Grand Duchy was "deeply committed to the relocation mechanism" (if@ULB). Hugo Brady describes how Luxembourg, despite its small size, "did the opposite of hiding" during the crisis (Brady, 2021). Instead, it "stood out, set the agenda, got confrontational, took leadership positions and backed them up with meaningful gestures whenever possible" (Brady, 2021). Overall, the small Grand Duchy vehemently argued for an EU solution to the crisis based on burden-sharing and solidarity (e.g. Högenauer, 2016). Luxembourg politicians repeatedly called on their counterparts to accept the Commission's relocation mechanism and warned other member states not to withdraw from the Schengen Agreement and to maintain open borders. Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn even went so far as to suggest that Hungary should be expelled from the EU for erecting fences and mistreating asylum seekers at the country's border, earning him criticism from all sides (Dingott, 2018).

At first glance, it is not so obvious why Luxembourg took this position during the so-called refugee crisis. Having received a total 2447 asylum seekers out of more than 1.3 million arriving in Europe in 2015, Luxembourg is generally not mentioned as a country of destination, nor is the landlocked duchy a country of first entry or transit (Brady, 2021; Zeke, 2015; Direction de l'immigration, 2015). From a pragmatic point of view, Luxembourg would not benefit from an EU-wide burden-sharing mechanism for asylum seekers, as it benefits from the existing Dublin system that assigns the burden of migration pressure to the frontline states (Högenauer, 2019). This begs the question of why Luxembourg took such an active role in promoting the relocation mechanism. However, literature on Luxembourg's 2015 Presidency is scant, and a thorough explanation of why the country's rationale for supporting the relocation mechanism is completely absent. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to closing that gap in the literature by answering the following research question:

 How can one explain the Luxembourgish EU Council Presidency's strong support for the refugee relocation mechanism during the so-called refugee crisis in 2015?

In comparison to most other European nations, Luxembourg suffers from a lack of research on its national policy-making and engagement with other states, whatever the nature of this engagement (Lorenz, 2013). Therefore, especially since the 2015 crisis constituted such an important and divisive moment in recent EU history (e.g. Dingott, 2018) it is deemed to be a valuable opportunity to understand more about what is shaping Luxembourg's policy-making. On top of that, Luxembourg was holding the EU Council

Presidency during this period, which amplified the Grand Duchy's voice in the EU arena and offered, therefore, an ideal moment to study the rationale behind its policy choices.

This thesis answered the research question by conducting a deductive, qualitative case study and applying the complementary theoretical lens of liberal intergovernmentalism and small-state status-seeking. Testing how well and to what extent the theories can explain the case shed some light on the drivers behind Luxembourg's support for the relocation mechanism. Luxembourg's response to the migration crisis and its support for the relocation mechanism were analyzed through the lenses of liberal intergovernmentalism and small-state status-seeking. The findings illustrate a multidimensional understanding of Luxembourg's stance, driven by its economic and political dependency on the EU and its strategic use of soft power.

The thesis proceeds as follows: in Chapter 2, I introduce the contextual background for this study, before moving on to Chapter 3, which reviews the already existing academic literature on Luxembourgish EU policy and the Luxembourgish Presidency. Next, Chapter 4 entails the theoretical framework guiding the study. Chapter 5 describes the research design, while Chapter 6 consists of the analysis. In Chapter 7 i discuss the research findings and options for further research, before concluding in Chapter 8.

Chapter 2: Contextual Background

Considering that this research consists of a case study, describing the context in which the case is embedded is of utmost importance (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Therefore, this chapter sets the scene by first briefly defining what the Council Presidency is, before providing an overview of how asylum is handled in the EU. Next, it describes how the so-called refugee crisis unfolded in 2015, before discussing how the relocation mechanism emerged in this context, and how member states reacted to the proposal.

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The system of the EU Council Presidency goes back to the very beginning of European integration (European Council, n.d.). The EU Council Presidency rotates among member states every six months and constitutes a pillar in the governance of the EU (European Council, n.d.). During this period, the Presidency is tasked with chairing meetings and helping to ensure smooth work within the Council (European Council, n.d.). Since 2009, member states have been working together in trios, deciding on a common agenda and strategy for the upcoming 18 months (European Council, n.d.) On the basis of this, each member state prepares its own, more tailored 6-month program (European Council, n.d.). The Presidency has four main tasks within the Council: firstly, ensuring that the EU agenda is maintained. Secondly, overviewing sound law-making. Thirdly, ensuring the cooperation between member states, and lastly, being responsible for the cooperation and coordination between the Council and other EU institutions (European Council a, n.d.a). To be able to fulfill these tasks, the Presidency is expected to act as an 'honest broker', regardless of its national interest, during the mandate (European Council, n.d. a).

Schengen and migration to the EU

The Schengen regime of free movement, founded in 1985, is often considered to be the greatest achievement of the European Union (Evrard, et al., 2020). However, during the so-called refugee crisis in 2015-2016, the regime came under pressure, as elaborated below. While Schengen members share a common external border, the regime abolishes internal borders and allows the free movement of goods and citizens (Schimmelfenning, 2018). However, the handling of asylum requests and the policing of the external common borders remains the responsibility of the individual member states (Schimmelfenning, 2018). The so-called Dublin system is an effort by EU member states to communitarianize their asylum policies (Schimmelfenning, 2018). It rules that the country in which asylum seekers enter the EU is responsible for handling their asylum request (Schimmelfenning, 2018). Registered asylum seekers who try to apply for asylum in another member state are returned (Schimmelfenning, 2018) In addition,

asylum seekers can only apply in one country, the outcome of which has to be respected by other member states (Schimmelfenning, 2018). As a result, the divergent asylum conditions and acceptance rates promote the secondary movement of migrants who try to reach the country in which they deem to have the highest chance of success (Schimmelfenning, 2018). While the Dublin system had always generated unequal benefits for member states, it crumbled under the asymmetrical pressure of the migration flows during the 2015 crisis (Karolewski & Benedikter, 2018). Consequently, "the system became unstable and began generating distributional tensions and politicized conflict" (Karolewski & Benedikter, 2018, citing Zaun, 2017).

Setting the scene: the unfolding of the migration crisis and the faltering of the Schengen area

The 2015 arrival of asylum seekers was, at the time, the most severe refugee crisis since the Second World War (Evrard, et al., 2020). While migration flows to the EU started to gain traction in 2013, they peaked in 2015 with around 1.3 million asylum seekers arriving at Europe's borders (Schimmelfenning, 2018; Dingott, 2018; Karolewski & Benedikter, 2018). Civil war and political repression in the Middle East forced many civilians, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq to flee their country in search of a safer place to live (Schimmelfennig, 2018). While the majority fled to Lebanon and Turkey, the worsening conditions in these countries increased migration flows to Europe (Schimmelfenning, 2018). The Schengen regime was unprepared to cope with it, and European governments struggled increasingly to agree on a common solution to handle the crisis (Börzel & Risse, 2018).

In 2015, simultaneously with the growing migratory pressure, the willingness to welcome them is rapidly declining in most European nations (Šabić, 2017). While agreeing on a common asylum and migration regime has caused controversies in the past, the disunity between member states peaked in 2015 (Dingott, 2018). Germany, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Denmark, and Norway received the highest total number of asylum applications (Karolewski & Benedikter, 2018). The most affected states per 100,000 per capita in 2015 were Hungary (1779 applications), Sweden (1667 applications), Austria (1027), Norway (602 applications), Finland (591), and Germany (587 applications) (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018). Germany and Sweden, the main destination states, initially conducted an "open door policy" and promised refugee status and residency to all Syrians arriving at their border (Dingott, 2018, page 139). Germany was widely seen as the EU key player during the crisis and the country has been extremely influential in shaping the EU response (Karolewski & Benedikter, 2018). In September 2015, Germany declared with its famous phrase "we can handle this" ("wir schaffen das") that there is virtually no limit to

the number of refugees the country can accept (Karolewski, & Benedikter). Between August 2015 and October 2017, around 1.4 million refugees arrived in Germany alone (Karolewski, & Benedikter).

Central and Eastern European member states, mainly the so-called Visegrad Four (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) build fences to keep asylum seekers out (Dingott, 2018). The frontline states, such as Italy and Greece, who were utterly overwhelmed, as well as Hungary, openly disregarded the Dublin regulation and let migrants pass through without registration (Dingott, 2018, Schimmelfenning, 2018). Consequently, this caused secondary movements of migrants to their preferred destination states (Schimmelfenning, 2018). While the Dublin system was effectively suspended, member states failed to agree on a common solution to deal with the influx of migrants (Schimmelfening, 2018).

Thus, as a result of the secondary movements in combination with the terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015) and Brussels (March 2016), member states started to unilaterally impose internal border controls (Börzel & Risse, 2018; Evrard et. al, 2020). Germany initiate this, closing its borders only two weeks after it had proclaimed refugee status for all Syrians (Brady, 2021). Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Malta, Slovenia, and France followed as well (Guild, et al., 2015). Many of them were incentivized to minimize migration pressure in order to avoid domestic pressure against rising migration (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018). While it was not the first time in EU history that some member states have made use of the safeguarding mechanisms foreseen in the Schengen agreement and introduced border controls, "the geographical and temporal scale of the restrictions is unique" (Evrard et al., 2020). Subsequently, several politicians, analysts, and scholars described the Schengen crisis as the "dismantling" or even "death" of Schengen (Evrard, Nienaber, & Sommaribas, 2020).

The EU institutional response: the development of the refugee relocation mechanism

Spring 2015

On the 19th of April 2015, just a few days before the regular meeting of EU foreign ministers, almost 800 migrants drowned in a tragic accident in the Mediterranean Sea as their overcrowded vessels tried to reach Lampedusa from Libya (Vinciguerra, 2016; Collett & Le Coz, 2018; Šabić, 2017). The enormous death toll, which was said to be the largest single loss of life in the Mediterranean in decades, shook much of Europe and resulted in a fresh EU commitment to saving the lives of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea (Vinciguerra, 2016). While there was an overarching sentiment that something had to be done, it was not easy to agree on what the solution could be (Šabić, 2017).

As a response, in May 2015 the EU Commission seized the moment to present the European Agenda for Migration (Collett & Le Coz, 2018; Šabić, 2017) The Commission's proposal entailed a list of measures, immediate and long term, for member states to deal with the migration challenge (Šabić, 2017). The four main pillars to manage migration were the following: 1) A strong common asylum policy 2) The fight against smuggling and human trafficking, and the prevention of irregular migration 3) Securing the external borders and saving lives 4) a new policy on legal migration (Šabić, 2017, page 4). Some of the proposed measures to achieve this were for instance the establishment of the so-calle "hotspots" in frontline states, increasing the resources of maritime operations to save more lives at sea, or resettling 20,000 refugees from outside Europe (Collett & Le Coz, 2018; Šabić, 2017). In addition, the Agenda for Migration introduced the idea of a relocation mechanism, designed to share the burden of the migration crisis and to distribute asylum seekers across EU member states (Collett & Le Coz, 2018; Šabić, 2017). The Commission proposed distribution quotas for each member state based on four criteria (Šabić, 2017):

- Population size
- Total GDP
- The number of asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees per 1 million inhabitants for 2010-2014
- The unemployment rate

With the relocation mechanism, the Commission proposed an "alternative" to the Dublin system. (Toygür & Benvenuti, 2016, page 2). Together with the resettlement mechanism it constituted the "most sensitive and controversial ideas of the Agenda" (Toygür & Benvenuti, 2016, page 2). Angela Merkel was a driving force behind the Commission's proposal (Toygür & Benvenuti, 2016, page 2.)

Summer 2015

At the Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA) held on July 20 and that was chaired by the Luxembourgish Presidency, EU member states decided on a draft decision to establish a temporary relocation mechanism for people in clear need of international protection from Italy and Greece to other EU member states (Vinciguerra, 2016; Collett & Le Coz, 2018). The member states unanimously agreed on the distribution of about 40000 people to be relocated, and to resettle 20 000 refugees from outside of the EU (Vinciguerra, 2016). However, they failed to decide on the establishment of quotas to regulate the distribution of refugees (Collett & Le Coz, 2018). In fact, besides the core EU member states the enthusiasm for refugee distribution was not a given (Vinciguerra, 2016). Far from being convinced by the EU's narrative, a big portion of the Union, most openly the Eastern and Central European countries, were

strongly opposed to welcoming mostly Muslim refugees from the Middle East and North Africa (Vinciguerra, 2016).

Autumn 2015

As the number of arrivals in Greece rapidly increased during the summer of 2015, and the previous agreement to relocate 40000 refugees was clearly insufficient, the European Commission proposed a second relocation mechanism – this time, it was mandatory and envisioned the relocation of 120,000 refugees from frontline states to other EU member states (Collett & Le Coz, 2018; Šabić, 2017). During this period, on September 2, the picture of the dead Alan Kurid, a three-year-old Syrian boy, washed up on a Turkish beach, made the global headlines (Brady, 2021). "Riding a universal outpouring of grief" (Brady, 2021), the EU Commission President Juncker proposed the expansion of the emergency relocation program as well as the reinforcement of European asylum and border management standards (Collett & Le Coz, 2018). The proposal created fierce opposition in the European Union. Concerns about the large influx of undocumented migrants prompted the Visegrad 4 states to reject a proposal for mandatory intra-EU refugee relocation (Vinciguerra, 2016). On the other hand, Germany, Sweden, and the EU Commission leadership were backing the relocation mechanism the most (Brady, 2021). Other actors supporting it were the EU Parliament, and the UN Refugee Agency, (Brady, 2021).

The Luxembourgish Presidency put considerable effort into reaching an agreement on an acceptable relocation quota with each member state (Vinciguerra, 2016). The relocation quotas were ultimately ratified under significant pressure from Germany and mediation efforts led by Luxembourg (Renma, & Russack 2016). In the end, on the 22nd of October, the Luxembourgish Presidency controversially forced the question to a vote between interior ministers and pushed the relocation mechanism through despite objections from Visegrad 4 (Brady, 2021). This established the legally binding decision that all member states had to participate in the relocation scheme (Collett & Le Coz, 2018). Pushing the mechanism through by qualified majority voting instead of consensus was perceived as a radical move: it was the first time that the Council decision was taken by the qualified majority over unanimity in this policy area (Vinciguerra, 2016; Högenauer, 2016).

Member state response to the relocation mechanism

Despite its mandatory nature, the implementation of the relocation mechanism has largely been a failure (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018). While Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia outrightly

refused to relocate any refugees and voted against the relocation mechanism (Dingott, 2018, Brady, 2021) other member states were also "less than cooperative" (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018, p. 111). Finland abstained from the vote (Brady, 2021). Only a few heads of state, such as Anglea Merkel, backed the Commission plan fully (Brady, 2021). Moreover, as of September 2017, only 29.9% of the foreseen relocations have been implemented (Šabić, 2017). By that time, only Malta had met (and even surpassed) its relocation quota, and Finland and Ireland were closed with over 90% of the relocations performed (Šabić, 2017). The United Kingdom and Denmark opted out of the clauses from the European Common Asylum System, so they did not participate in the relocation mechanism at all (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018).

Larger member states were equally reluctant to apply the relocation mechanism. France, for instance, publically defended the burden-sharing mechanism but did little in practice to take in any asylum seekers (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018). Moreover, it is not only Central and Eastern European countries that refused to show solidarity, but also the Nordic member states (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018). Meanwhile, other countries such as the Baltic states did not accept any refugees up to that point, promising instead to compensate by providing financial assistance (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018). The proposal was withdrawn again in 2019 (Atanassov, n.d.).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter highlights the already existing academic literature in which this research project is embedded. As the research question is concerned with the motivations behind Luxembourg's EU policy, it is important to review what scholars have written about Luxembourg's foreign (and EU) policy strategies. In addition, this literature review illustrates what has already been written on the Luxembourgish EU Council Presidency, the country's support for the relocation mechanism. Therefore, this literature precedes as follows. First, I turn the attention to Luxembourg's general foreign policy strategy, before moving over to Luxembourg's role and ambitions within the EU more specifically. Thirdly, it reviews what scholars have written about the style and methods of the Luxembourgish presidency in general, before concluding with the literature on the 2015 Presidency and the "migration crisis". It is important to note that the literature on Luxembourg in general is relatively scant (Lorenz, 2013) and very, very few when it comes to the relocation mechanism. Thus, this chapter concludes by framing this gap in the literature.

Luxembourg's foreign policy

Priorities

As a very small country with limited human and material resources, scholars tend to agree that Luxembourg has to pick its foreign policy goals carefully (Hey, 2002; Hirsch, 2015; Frentz, 2016). According to Lorenz (2013), similarly to most other small states, this choice is guided by pragmatism over ideology. Jean-Marie Frentz claims that Luxembourg's foreign policy goals revolve around maintaining good relations with its neighboring countries, playing an active part in a strong European Union, economic openness as well and commitment to multilateral cooperation and internationalism (Frentz, 2016). Both Hirsch and Frentz maintain Luxembourg has to rely on its soft power to yield influence (Hirsch, 2015; Frentz, 2016). While Hirsch contends that Luxembourg pursues soft power through a dedicated nation branding strategy, Frentz writes that Luxembourgish soft power relies on "diplomatic skills" and "leading by example" (Frentz, 2016, p. 139; Hirsch, 2015). According to Frentz, the latter is for instance achieved through showing commitment to European integration (Frentz, 2016).

Foreign Policy: Internationalism/Multilateralism

Dumon and his colleagues (2015), as well as Lorenz (2013), underline that Luxembourg, mainly based on its smallness, strongly favors being part of larger multilateral organizations. Resolute commitment to multilateralism is a cornerstone of its foreign policy, as underscored by multiple scholars (e.g. Bartmann,

2012; Hirsch, 2015; Frentz, 2016). Barry Bartmann's examination of small European states' foreign policy highlights Luxembourg's extensive involvement in internationalism and the establishment of multinational organizations since its inception (Bartmann, 2012). As pointed out by both Bartmann and Dumont and his colleagues, Luxembourg is truly a foundational member and participator of the post-1945 international order (Bartmann, 2012; Dumont et. al., 2015) The authors highlight the Grand-Duchy's foundational role and membership in several pivotal international institutions, such as the UN, CoE, Benelux, EU, NATO, OECD, IMF, and World Bank (Bartmann, 2012; Dumont et al., 2015). According to Frentz, Luxembourg's security and prosperity are dependent on participation in multilateral organizations (Frentz, 2016).

Luxembourg and the EU

The literature reveals that striving to be an active and engaged member of the European Union has always been an obvious choice for Luxembourg. Besch and Lessing write that "for a small country like Luxembourg, the first lesson to be drawn from history is their need to be part of something bigger" and that historically, "the creation of a rules-based union of states [such as the EU] was a stroke of luck" for Luxembourg (Besch & Lessing, 2016, p.11). Danielle Bossart explains that Luxembourg's small size explains to a large extent why the country is so fond of European integration: the EU functions as a shelter and guarantor of peace and stability as well as a larger common market (Bossart, 2018).

Moreover, as pointed out by Besch and Lessing (2016), Luxembourg has traditionally been a staunch supporter of EU supranationalism. According to Frentz, this is because being part of the EU paradoxically increases Luxembourg's sovereignty in international politics (Frentz, 2016). Several authors highlight that, in comparison to large states, smaller states traditionally did not perceive EU integration as a loss of their sovereignty but as an enhancement of the role they can play in international politics (Hirsch, 2004; Frentz, 2016; Bossart, 2018). Therefore, Mario Hirsch maintains that there are considerable pay-offs for small states to join the European integration test, be they economic or political (Hirsch, 1976). The EU mitigates many restrictions that small countries face in international politics, as they have, for instance, the same rights as large countries under the *acquis communitaire* (Frentz, 2016I). Hirsch (2015) and Frentz (2016) agree that Luxembourg clearly has more political weight operating within the EU than outside of it.

According to Harmsen and Högenauer (2021), as well as Bossart (2018), Luxembourg, a founding member of the European Union, is characterized by being one of the most pro-European states with the widest public support for European integration. Research emphasizes that Luxembourg's governments have consistently advocated for deeper integration and the advancement of the common European project (Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021; Hirsch, 2015). According to Bossart (2018), this is also because

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Luxembourg is "condemned to a pro-active integration strategy" (Bossart, 2018, p.310). For one of the smallest EU states, "active and committed co-operation with the European institutions is considered a necessity which increases Luxembourg's visibility and strengthens the protection of its interests in Europe and the world" (Bossart, 2018, page 310). As indicated in the literature, Luxembourg's active engagement with the EU is driven by the recognition that its national interests are intricately intertwined with robust European and multilateral structures (Högenauer & Harmsen, 2021; Hey, 2002). This understanding results in the importance of the defense and development of EU institutions in Luxembourg's foreign policy framework (Högenauer & Harmsen, 2021). Jeanne Hey points out that Luxembourg's reputation as a "good EU citizen" might stem from the fact that "Luxembourg's national interests are best served by cooperating with the EU" (Hey, 2002, p. 216). Along this line, Frentz contends that part of Luxembourg's reputation as an EU model student could rely on the fact that its national interest is best served by cooperating with other member states (Frentz, 2016).

Frentz points out that thanks to this proactive stance Luxembourg maintains a disproportionally strong influence within the EU (Frentz, 2016). According to Frentz (2016) Luxembourg has managed, despite its size, to remain an active EU player and to maintain a positive reputation within the EU (Frentz, 2016). According to Jeanne Hey (2002) Luxembourg's primary EU-related foreign policy objective is maintaining its respected position within the Union. Scholars seem to agree that Luxembourg's main strategy to play an active part and to maintain its good reputation as a pro-integrationist state in the European Union is by taking on its role as "honest broker" between member states (e.g. Bossart, 2018; Frentz; 2016; Hirsch, 2015; Hey, 2002; Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021). According to Hey, the Grand-Duchy does so by assuming the role of non-threatening helper of other member states, while simultaneously serving its national self-interest (Hey, 2002). In this context, Hirsch (2015) notes that Luxembourg is frequently complimented for its ability to set aside its immediate interest in favor of the EU's common interest. Both Hirsch and Frentz point out that having a reputation as the "honest broker" is a major asset in Luxembourg's EU policy, and that maintaining this role remains an important pillar in its foreign policy (Frentz, 2016; Hirsch, 2015). Therefore, Hirsch (2015) notes that Luxembourg is dedicated to preserving its role as a "craftsman of compromise". In this context, Frentz contends that Luxembourg does not want to let the successive enlargement of the Union downgrade its relatively important position within the Union. Therefore, he maintains, that Luxembourg "finds itself obliged to constantly prove the reliability and worth of its contributions" (Frentz, 2016, p.139).

Luxembourg and the EU Council Presidency

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the literature on Luxembourg's 2015 presidency, especially when it comes to migration policy and the relocation mechanism is very scant. Nevertheless, the following section gives an overview of the existing literature. First, I am reviewing what has been written about the style of the Luxembourgish Presidency in general, before moving on to its stance on the "migration crisis" and the relocation mechanism in 2015.

Luxembourg and the EU Council Presidency

Due to its longstanding EU membership, Luxembourg is perceived to be one of the most experienced countries when it comes to the EU Council Presidency (Vinciguerra, 2016; Vaznonytė, 2022). Frentz argues that traditionally, Luxembourgish presidencies have been defined by Luxembourg's long-standing position and policy objective within the EU, which have been highlighted in the previous section (Frentz, 2016). In addition, thanks to its status as a founding member, Luxembourgish officials benefit from intimate knowledge of the EU's inner workings (Frentz, 2016). Frentz maintains that this has particularly enabled Luxembourg EU presidencies to leave their mark on the recent history of European integration (Frentz, 2016). He adds that the success of Luxembourgish presidencies has been to a large extent based on their close working relationship with the EU Commission and the commitment to seek consensus and compromise (Frentz, 2016).

Hirsch maintains that the previously-mentioned role of Luxembourg as the "craftsman of compromise" becomes particularly evident when Luxembourg assumes positions of high responsibility, such as the rotating presidency of the EU council (Hirsch, 2015) The author also states that the Luxembourgish presidencies have historically been successful due to the country's capability to set aside national interest in order to serve the common good (Hirsch, 2004; Hirsch, 2015). According to Hirsch, this characteristic can explain the trust put in Luxembourg in European circles, which it tries to use for its own benefit (2004).

Luxembourg's style during the EU Presidency in 2015

According to Mario Hirsch (2015) Luxembourg embarked on the 12th Presidency in 2015 with the conviction that it can advance the Union thanks to its considerable experience in the position. Luxembourg's role as mediator between member states "remains a strong asset in its European approach" during this Presidency (Hirsch, 2015). Anna-Lena Högenauer (2016) maintains that the 2015 Presidency

was perceived to be consensual and European in its approach (Högenauer, 2016). Högenauer argues that the climate of crisis in which Luxembourg took over the Presidency in 2015 offered the country an opportunity to demonstrate leadership (Högenauer, 2016). She concludes that Luxembourg's 2015 Presidency was relatively successful in advancing several important dossiers, which can also be traced back to national conditions: a high level of experience in EU institutions, and a national culture of trust and consensus-seeking, which allowed the Presidency to focus completely on taking the role of the honest broker. According to Högenauer, this attitude can partially be explained by the fact that small states are aware of their relatively low weight in the Council. However, according to Högenauer, this is not the only reason, as Belgium and Latvia, both considered small states as well, took the approach of trying to gain influence through the Presidency (Högenauer, 2016).

Luxembourg and the 'migration crisis'

In general, according to Högenauer, Luxembourg is adamant, based on the principle of solidarity with Southern member states, that the EU should have a common asylum and migration policy that includes the distribution of asylum seekers across member states (Högenauer, 2019). According to Högenauer, this is a sign that Luxembourg's support for EU integration surpasses a simple cost-benefit calculation, as the small, landlocked country is benefiting from the current Dublin system (Högenauer, 2019). When it came to the so-called migration crisis in 2015, Högenauer contends that Luxembourg was "firmly committed to a European solution to the migration crisis an approach that respects established European values and the rule of law" (2016, page 96). She writes that the Luxembourg Presidency managed to broker a number of difficult agreements on migration and that the crisis offered Luxembourg an opportunity to take on a stronger "agenda-setting role", while the large disagreement between member states also made it difficult to perform the role of 'mediator' and to settle on a compromise (Högenauer, 2016, p. 96).

This is based on its support for a common policy on migration, including a fair distribution among member states, despite being a landlocked country without external borders and therefore benefiting from the current Dublin system (Högenauer, 2019). Luxembourg is adamant that the EU should have a common migration policy, especially for refugees, where all member states should be obliged to accept a certain number of refugees on their territory. This is seen as a crucial sign of solidarity with those Southern European countries that are the most severely affected by refugee streams. (Högenauer, 2019).

Vaznonytė (2022) highlights Luxembourg's long-standing experience as an EU member state and its well-established institutional contacts. According to him, these factors can partially explain why Luxembourg took, in comparison to the preceding Latvian Presidency, a more proactive stance on the migration file and cooperated on a more equal level with the Commission. According to Vaznonytė

(2022), Luxembourg's choice to prioritize qualitative majority voting over consensus seeking was, in fact, supported by the Commission, as making progress within the Council seemed out of reach.

In her work, Maria Vinciguerra (2016) examined the differentiated approach and success of the Latvian and Luxembourgish Presidencies in mediating the negotiations around the relocation mechanism. She concludes that Luxembourg was able to be much more proactive and assume more of a leadership role, which she explains based on several factors. First, similarly to Vaznonytė (2022), Vinciguerra contends that Luxembourg benefited from its position as a founding member and therefore being one of the most experienced member states when it comes to the Council Presidency, having held the position 11 times before. Secondly, while domestic pressure against the relocation mechanism and anti-immigration protests only allowed Latvia to assume a neutral stance, according to Viniguerra this domestic backlash was absent in Luxembourg. In this context, Vinciguerra points to the relative weakness of Euroscpeticism and right-wing populism in Luxembourg. In addition, Vinciguerra maintains that Luxembourg took on its institutional role of providing full support to the Commission's proposal during the negotiations. According to her, Luxembourg's advantage to Latvia during the negotiations was also based on the Grand Duchy's "long-established and institutionalized regional coordination with Germany, France, and its Benelx partners" (Vinciguerra, 2016, p. 199).

Lastly, Hugo Brady (2021) provides some insight into Luxembourg's policy choices during the Presidency. Brady writes that Luxembourg is a "rare example of a nation seemingly comprised of middle class liberals" and that Luxembourgers "saw a quasi-total equivalence between progressive ideals, openness to immigration and pro-Europeanism" (Brady, 2021). According to Brady, "Luxembourg backed Germany *Sondermoral* one thousand percent". Brady maintains that for theGrand-Duchy, a reversal of Europe's "virtuous path" and straying from its principles and values (following the example of leaders such as Orban and Kaczyński) might as well result in a reversal of European integration (Brady, 2021). In addition, he contends that a vital objective for Luxembourg was to protect and uphold the "community method", which rules that individual countries cannot veto the will of the majority and that the Parliament and the Commission have a full role in decisions (Brady, 2021). According to Frentz, this community method allows Luxembourg to have a disproportional voice compared to its small size in EU policymaking (Frentz, 2016). Furthermore, Brady believes that Luxembourg's position on the crisis is influenced by its self-perception as the "epitome of the "good European", and by the "huge ownership" the country feels for the EU, which is Luxembourg "shelter" that it helped to build over the previous decades (Brady, 2021). In addition, Brady mentions that it is important to keep in mind that at the time Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker had been Luxembourg's very pro-integrationist prime minister for almost 20 years prior to the crisis. Lastly, Brady mentions that Luxembourg could easily

advocate for the relocation mechanism, as the country was not attractive for migrants and the government did therefore not have to fear the creation of a pull factor.

Lastly, it should be briefly mentioned that Léa Lemaire is currently conducting a research project aiming to explain why Malta and Luxembourg were so extraordinarily committed to the relocation mechanism (If@ULB, n.d.). However, at the time of writing this thesis, the research has not been completed yet.

Literature Gap

Based on the literature review, it can be noticed that the literature is sparse, especially when it comes to explaining Luxembourg's take on the migration crisis during the Presidency. Until Léa Lemaire's research on Luxembourg's support for the relocation mechanism is available, there seems to be no comprehensive answer for why the Grand-Duchy chose this particular stance. While Högenauer writes that Luxembourg's stance on European migration policy surpasses a simple cost-benefit calculation, it does not explain why this is the case, besides mentioning that Luxembourg is deeply pro-European (Högenauer, 2019). Vinciguerra (2016), on the other hand, provides insights into how Luxembourg was involved in the negotiation of the relocation mechanism but, besides mentioning Luxembourg's support for the EC, does not go into depth about why Luxembourg was so supportive of the relocation mechanism.

Arguably, Hugo Brady (2021) comes closest to providing an explanation for Luxembourg's policy position, but his take cannot explain the entire picture. While Brady maintains that Luxembourg's support for the relocation mechanism can be traced back to the country being "ideologically pro-migrant" (Brady, 2021), this seems too simplistic, and other sources indicate that this is not the case. For instance, Léonie De Jonge (2019) notes that the Luxembourgish political elite is very aware that the country's success depends on the foreign workforce and that the government has therefore traditionally opted for a xenophile discourse. However, this does not automatically mean that Luxembourgish society is more open to (especially non-European) migrants. For instance, it has been shown that Luxembourg is selective in its migration policies, and has historically consciously recruited Italian and Portuguese labor migrants to avoid relying on a non-European workforce (De Jonge, 2019). In addition, De Jonge (2019) suggests that the Luxembourgish population is only slightly more xenophile than its neighboring countries, in particular when it comes to non-European immigration. The idea that Luxembourgers are inherently "pro-immigration" and against ethno-nationalism, as suggested by Brady, cannot be explained entirely while Luxembourg took its specific position during the crisis. In conclusion, there is an important gap in the literature when it comes to explaining Luxembourg's advocacy for the refugee relocation mechanism. This case study therefore contributes to closing this gap and generating a deeper understanding of some of the underlying motivations of Luxembourg's policy during the "refugee crisis".

Chapter 4: Research Design

This section outlines the chosen methodology and analytical framework used to investigate the reasons behind Luxembourg's advocacy for the refugee relocation mechanism during the 2015 Presidency. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the existing knowledge on why Luxembourg promoted the relocation mechanism is limited, which is why a qualitative case study is deemed to be a particularly appropriate method to answer the research question: whereas the quantitative approach focuses on a few variables, qualitative research seeks to understand a variety of factors that may be influencing the situation, and can therefore provide a more holistic view of the topic (Algozzine, & Hancock, 2017). In addition, case studies allow the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon that is not so thoroughly understood yet (Yin, 2003, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008). By conducting a single case on the Luxembourgish Presidency, I examine this case as the object of interest in its own right, within its context (Bryman, 2016). Single case studies are not an ideal method to make claims on the generalizability of the findings to other cases, (Meyer, 2001), nor is that the goal of this study. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of Luxembourg's EU policy and its rationales driving it during this period. Due to the broad nature of case studies, it is particularly important to define the scope of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case studied in this project is limited by time and topic: I focus on the period of the Luxembourgish Presidency from 1 July to 31 December 2015.

Deductive case study

In order to answer the research question posed in this project, I conducted a deductive qualitative case study. I choose a deductive approach, as it helps frame the case study, which otherwise risks "providing description without meaning" (Hartley, 1998, as cited in Meyer, 2001, p. 331). The departure point of a deductive case study is to create a theoretical proposition based on the literature (Boyatzis 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006; Hyde 2000, as cited in Pearse, 2019). Therefore, I began the research project by reviewing the existing literature and determining what theoretical and conceptual frameworks might be useful to guide my data collection and analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, cited in Pearse, 2019). Based on the literature review and contextual readings, I found the theory of *liberal intergovernmentalism* and *small state status-seeking* to be particularly well suited to better understanding my case. On the one hand, liberal intergovernmentalism is a widely understood and one of the grand theories of European integration, making it interesting to explore why Luxembourg could potentially push

for more EU integration[1] during the so-called refugee crisis (Hooghe & Marks, 2019). Liberal intergovernmentalism offers a perspective based on rationality, as it claims that states are rational actors driven by domestic (economic) interests that determine their (un)willingness to accept more EU integration (Moravcsik, 1998; Kuhn, 2019). Therefore, this theory is well suited to examine whether Luxembourg's preferences for the relocation mechanism are based on pragmatic motivations. It should be noted that although liberal intergovernmentalism consists of three theoretical components, this research focuses on only the first, namely 'national preference formation' (Kleine & Pollack, This will be explained further in Chapter 5.

On the other hand, status-seeking by small states is based on a more constructivist perspective on state behavior and takes into account social constructs such as status and identity (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014; Wohlforth et al., 2018). As described in more detail in the literature review, soft power plays an important role in Luxembourg's foreign policy strategy, which is why it should be examined whether this is also the case during the 2015 presidency. Furthermore, complementing a rationalist theory with a constructivist theory arguably provides a more holistic understanding of the case under study.

Propositions

However, a case study is mostly suited to test some snippets of a theory, not entire theories, as this would lead to "'spreading oneself too thin' in a case study research, and ultimately losing one's way" (Priya, 2021, p.100). To avoid this, I determined some followed Pryiq's suggestion to determine some propositions based on the theory and to examine the case based on these (Pryia, 2021). Propositions are useful to define the boundaries of the case study that is studied in this research, as they delineate the scope (Robert, 2018). The propositions are based on the theoretical framework that guides this study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Robert, 2018). This table provides an overview of the propositions I derived from the theory that will loosely guide my data collection and analysis to keep the case within its limits and focused on the research question. It should be noted that 'code' does not refer to a classic coding process, but is used to signify that a passage in the data is linked to the respective proposition.

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[11] In this context, the relation between EU integration and the relocation mechanism should be noted, as the terms are sometimes used somewhat interchangeably. EU integration is an umbrella term rerfer to cooperation between EU member states, and it usually "implies greater shared decision-making, shared laws, and shared legal system" (What is EU integration?, 2016). This means that the relocation mechanism would fall lead to more EU integration, as it creates a legally binding, supranational mechanism Common European Asylum System (CEAS) (Atanassov, n.d.). Therefore, when Luxembourg is in favor of the relocation mechanism it is at the same time in favor of deepening EU integration.

Theory	Code	Proposition	Source
Liberal Intergovernmentalism	affectedness	A state's position during a crisis depends on its affectedness and asymmetrical interdependence	e.g. Schimmelfenning, 2018 Zaun, 2019 Biermann et al, 2018
Liberal intergovernmental	burden-minimizing	A state conduct rational cost-benefit calculation, chooses the less costly alternative	e.g. Schimmelfenning, 2018 Biermann et al., 2018
Liberal intergovernmentalism	domestic (economic) preference	State preferences on EU integration are based on domestic interests	e.g. Kleine & Pollack, 2018 Zaun, 2019
Status-seeking	visibility	Small states seek to to be noticed or seen by large states (specifically for taking a little bit of responsibility international peace and security)	De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014
Status-seeking	reliable partner	Small states seek to be recognized by Great Powers as reliable partners in multilateral or hegemonic setups	De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014
Status-seeking	moral authority	Small states seek to demonstrate 'moral authority', based on the three strategies described by Wohlforth et al., 2018	De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014; Wohlforth et al., 2018
Status seeking	Competition	Small states are competing for the reputation of 'good states' with their peer group	De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014; Wohlforth et al., 2018

Data collection and sources

A key aspect of case study research is the use of multiple sources of data, which allows for a more holistic understanding of the topic in question and enhances the credibility of the analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This allowed me to collect data from a variety of different sources that are used together to address the research question, with each piece of data acting as a "piece of the puzzle" to understand the whole phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554). Importantly, unlike other qualitative approaches, conducting case studies allows me to incorporate quantitative data such as surveys or statistics (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Data collection was guided by the theories defined above (Baxter & Jack, 2008), as well as by the literary and contextual background of this study. I initiated the data collection processes by skimming countless potential sources online, looking for data that could roughly be interesting within the established theoretical framework. When I found data that seemed within the frame of the study, I uploaded it in the software Ligre, which allowed me to store and categorize that data.

This research is based on a variety of data, which I divided into primary and secondary data. The latter consists of contextual literature, academic literature, and policy reports. I found the vast majority of this data on Google Scholar, the AAU online library, the online collection of the National Library of Luxembourg, or the Migration Research Hub database. The former is mostly directly or indirectly linked to the Luxembourg government.

The different types of primary data are the following:

Qualitative data

- parliamentary debates

- publications by the Luxembourgish government on the official website of the 2015 Presidency (www.eu2015.lu.eu)

- publications on the website (www.europaforum.lu), which contains news on Luxembourgish EU politics with the goal of bringing the EU closer to the citizens

- (snippets) of interviews given by Luxembourgish policymakers reproduced on the same websites (if I could not access the original)

- Interviews given by Luxembourgish politicians, which I could find in various newspapers such as Reutlinger General-Anzeiger, Luxemburger Wort, or Le Figaro

- Interviews given by economists or business women and men on the topic of the Schengen crisis

- Booklet, programs, and reports published by Luxembourg for the event of the Presidency

Some of the data was also **quantitative**

- statistics on the number of asylum applications per country

In total, I collected 40 such sources to analyze.

There were some important limitations to the data collection. First of all, the data I was able to access was limited. For instance, due to the high-level nature of the case and the fact that it happened 8 years ago, I could not make any observations. Nor could I conduct interviews, as I do not have access to any policymakers or the staff of ministries in Luxembourg. This has the disadvantage that I had to build the research on the pieces of data I could find online, which were not tailored to my specific research question in the way that interviews could be. In addition, much of the data was produced by the Luxembourg government, often for the Presidency. This is the case, for example, with the publications on the official website of the 2015 Presidency (https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/) or the interviews given by politicians in the context of the Presidency. This type of data is produced by the government with an agenda in mind and cannot be understood as a neutral representation of events. While it is still interesting to examine, for example, the arguments and approaches put forward by Luxembourg, this must be borne in mind.

A third limitation when it came to data collection was that when I studied a case from 2015, much of the data was no longer available online. I was able to access much of it using the website Wayback Archive (https://wayback.archive.org/). However, when it came to interviews with politicians, especially on radio or television, these were often no longer available online. I could often find a version of them on the Luxembourg Presidency website, but sometimes they were shortened or paraphrased. In general, a wider choice of data and access other sources, especially interviews, would have also increased the nuance and credibility of my findings (Algozzine, & Hancock, 2017).

Moreover, I faced one of the key challenges of case study research: the seemingly limitless amount of data. While I identified 40 primary sources to be analyzed, I spent countless days and even weeks reading through all the data I could find to identify potentially useful sources for my framework. In this sense, the delimitation of the research and data frame through propositions was crucial to not get lost in the process. Lastly, when it comes to the secondary data, one downside was the relative scarcity of literature I could find on Luxembourg, which resulted in the same group of authors being referenced over and over again. This creates of course a less nuanced picture than if there is more scholarly work available.

Analytical framework

With the theoretical framework in place and the data collected, I began the process of data analysis. I loosely followed the analytical framework of pattern matching, as outlined by Pearse (2019), in order to

gain an understanding of Luxembourg's rationale for advocating the implementation of a refugee relocation mechanism. Following the principle of pattern matching, and as mentioned earlier, I defined the theoretical framework prior to data collection and analysis (Hyde, 2000; as cited by Pearse, 2019). To better manage the theory, I then broke the theory down into propositions to apply to the data, as explained in the previous section on 'propositions'. Although this was a deductive study, the propositions were not completely rigid and left some room to 'stray' a little when interesting but related things were revealed within.

To analyze the data, I proceeded as follows: first, I uploaded the primary data on the software Ligre. This software provides an easy way to store, 'encode', and categorize data. Once the data was uploaded, I carefully read all the text, looking for patterns that matched the propositions I had identified in the table above. Whenever I came across a quote or passage that had the same 'pattern' as the theory, I 'coded' it by marking it with the respective 'code'. In this way, I could establish how well the patterns I found in the data match the theoretical framework established the the beginning of the study.

In addition to this, I also relied heavily on the so-called 'academic literature' to provide data for pattern matching or to support my claims. Based on this, I was able to determine the extent to which the theories were suitable to explain the reasons for Luxembourg's approach to the relocation mechanism (Hyde, 2000, as cited in Pearse, 2019). While pattern matching is typically applied to multiple case studies in order to compare multiple events, this was not possible within the scope of this study, which focuses on the single case of the Luxembourg Presidency (Pearse, 2008). When pattern matching is applied to a single case study, it is important to use at least two theories, as was done in this paper (Yin, 1981, cited by Pearse, 2019). However, while theories are often compared with each other in single case studies (Yin, 1981, as cited by Pearse, 2019), I have followed the 'complementary approach', in which the theories are used in a complementary way to obtain a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied (Hopper & Hoque 2006, as cited by Pearse, 2019). The limitation of this analytical framework is that I did not follow pattern matching rigidly, as it did not seem feasible within the scope of this study, which could hurt the credibility of the findings.

Chapter 5: Theoretical and conceptual framework

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework that is guiding the research. As explained in Chapter 4, the theoretical framework for deductive case studies derives from the literary and contextual knowledge of the topic. Based on the contextual and academic literature, I determined that the following two theories are the most suited to frame my study. To begin with, liberal intergovernmentalism offers a perspective based on rationality, as it claims that states are rational actors driven by domestic (economic) interests that determine their (un)willingness to accept more EU integration (Moravcsik, 1998; Kuhn, 2019). Therefore, this theory is well suited to examine whether Luxembourg's preferences for the relocation mechanism are based on pragmatic motivations.

On the other hand, status-seeking by small states is based on a more constructivist perspective on state behavior and takes into account the importance of social constructs such as status and identity (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015; Wohlforth et al., 2018). As described in more detail in the literature review, soft power plays an important role in Luxembourg's foreign policy strategy, which is why it should be examined whether this is also the case during the 2015 presidency. Furthermore, complementing a rationalist theory with a constructivist theory arguably provides a more holistic understanding of the case under study.

Liberal intergovernmentalism

Liberal intergovernmentalism (LI), as described by Kuhn (2019) and Moravcsik (1998), places nation-states and their rational (economic) interests at the forefront of European integration. According to this theory, European nation-states are the primary actors driving European integration. It views European integration as a result of a rational and deliberate process among national governments, where they carefully assess the costs and benefits of cooperation in light of their national interests. Liberal intergovernmentalists argue that states are more inclined to delegate power in areas of 'low politics', such as economic cooperation, but are reluctant to surrender sovereignty in areas of 'high politics' closely tied to national sovereignty (Moravcsik, 1998).

Core assumptions of liberal intergovernmentalism

A liberal intergovernmentalist explanation for European integration rests on three fundamental pillars: (economic) interest, relative power, and credible commitments (Kleie & Pollack, 2018). Briefly put, liberal intergovernmentalism posits that, first, state preferences for EU integration are the result of a national preference formation process, second, power differentials between Member States decide which

preference shapes EU policy, and third, the institutional framework that comes with EU policy is an expression of Member States (un)willingness to make credible commitments and ensure enforceability. (Moravcsik, 1998, as cited in Zaun, 2017).

National preference formation

As this thesis aims to understand why Luxembourg opted for its particular policy position during the so-called refugee crisis and is not necessarily interested in the bargaining process or the outcome of the negotiations, it will focus on the first part of LI theory, namely the national preference formation when it comes to EU integration. As mentioned before, a key to understanding liberal intergovernmentalism is the premise that rational individuals and private groups are the fundamental actors in international politics. National actors are in constant competition for influence on the state, and the dominant domestic actors get to define the preferences that the government pursues in interactions with other states (Kleine & Pollack, 2018). In other words, we cannot understand state behavior without understanding that the fundamental interests are shaped on the domestic level (Kleine & Pollack, 2018). In both normal and crisis times, liberal intergovernmentalism contends that national preferences align with the predominantly economic interests of influential domestic groups (Moravcsik, 1993, as cited in Schimmelfenning, 2018). However, while liberal intergovernmentalism has a strong focus on economic interests Moravcsik links governments' responsiveness to the general societal interests to their interest in pleasing voters and maintaining themselves in office (Moravcsik, 1993, as cited in Zaun, 2018). The less pressure domestic groups exert on the government, the more leeway they have in the policy direction pursued (Zaun, 2018).

National preferences during the (Schengen) crisis

International interdependence is a necessary condition for and a driver of political (non)reform on integration (Biermann et al., 2019). During a crisis triggered by a shock and a failure of the existing integration regime, member state governments engage in intergovernmental conflict over sharing the burdens of the crisis, with outcomes determined by disparities in interdependence and bargaining power (Schimmelfenning, 2018). External shocks may render some member states sensitive or even vulnerable, reducing the benefits of unilateral actions while increasing the potential benefits of multilateral cooperation (Biermann et al., 2019). National interests are shaped by the degree to which states are negatively impacted by the crisis (Moravcsik, 1993, as cited in Schimmelfenning, 2018). When the (non)response to a crisis in one EU member state causes negative impacts on other states, it is likely for the negatively impacted state to ask for a coordinated response to the crisis (Biermann et. al, 2019). However, interdependence varies across issues as well as across states, resulting in divergent preferences for political reform, since some states are more impacted by crisis and external shocks than others (and they have different abilities to absorb shocks) (Biermann et. al, 2019). The ability of states to absorb

shocks depends for instance on their geographic position, their economic structure, their exposure to financial risk, and more. (Biermann et. al, 2019). A state's preference is shaped by how strongly and negatively it is affected by the crisis (Schimmelfenning, 2018). During a crisis, governments calculate the national material consequences of the crisis and the national cost of alternative adjustment options and they orient the policy towards the least costly option (Schimmelfenning, 2018).

According to Biermann and his colleagues (2019), the government's position during the migration crisis on whether or not to reform the status was dependent on their asymmetrical affectedness and the country's bargaining power. The authors argue that in the refugee crisis, reform-minded governments of heavily affected states were pitted against those who were not exposed to refugee flows, and therefore in favor of the status quo. States that are confronted with intense migration pressure are expected to push for reforms and more burden-sharing. At the same time, those experiencing a low influx of migrants should have an interest in maintaining the legal status quo and its implementation. (Biermann et al., 2019).

Small state status-seeking

According to De Carvalho and Neuman (2014) the end of the Cold War and the "bipolar freeze" came with some changes in the study of international relations. Social constructivism, in particular, with its focus on international norms, identity, and ideas, has contributed to opening the field to small-state studies. The recognition that not only relative power but also ideational factors matter allows more attention to the margin of maneuver for small states in their foreign policy.

In this context, De Carvalho and Neuman (2014) examine the importance of status-seeking in the foreign policy of small states, specifically in the case of Norway. The authors argue that status is a key driver in the politics of small states in the everyday life of international society, more so than for great powers: the traditional power game is generally not an option for small states, which is why they tend to focus on status-seeking.

Conceptualizing status

Status is social because it is related to other states in the system and is malleable. It refers to the place a state occupies in the social hierarchy of states (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014; Wohlforth et al., 2018). Status is linked to a state's reputation, and reputation is linked to identity - it refers to how a state perceives itself and is perceived by others (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014). Status in international politics is a state's "standing, or rank, in a status community", which, in turn, is related to "collective

beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes" (Wohlforth et al., 2018, p. 527). This reputation may be recognized, in the sense that it may inform the actions of others (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015).

Status and identity are linked. A state's identity is linked to a state's reputation, and status emerges in the process of creating a reputation (De Carvalho & Neumann). According to Wohlforth and his colleagues, status is "about social facts, that is, widely-held but malleable beliefs in a community" (Wohlforth et al., 2018, p.) In addition, states' identities are hierarchized, which is why status-seeking refers to acts undertaken to maintain or better one's placement [in the state hierarchy] (De Carvahlo & Neumann, 2014). This is important, as, according to De Carvalho and Neumann, a state's place in the hierarchy of states is also its place on the political map of the world. Status-seeking is, therefore, a sub-category of state identity politics, which holds out a narrative of who states are (De Carvahlo & Neumann, 2014). Furthermore, De Carvalho and Neumann maintain that the prestige that states may receive from status can be turned into power or influence. For instance, Norway's reputation as a peace mediator leads to it being regularly approached by state and non-state actors seeking its help in brokering deals, and so Norway is recognized in the field of peace and reconciliation (De Carvahlo & Neumann, 2014).

How can small states increase their status?

According to De Carvalho and Neumann, this quest "largely unfolds towards the great powers through the routine of institutionalized diplomatic exchanges" and by making themselves "useful" to greater powers (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014, p.1). While Great Power status is about being a state to be reckoned with, small-power status is about "being noticed or seen" (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014, p.2). De Carvalho and Neumann as well as Wohlforth et al. (2018) argue that being noticed or seen also includes taking (a small part) responsibility for matters of international peace and security.

So how do small states make themselves useful to and try to be noticed by greater powers? Small states are competing with their peer group for the reputation of "good" power (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015; Wohlfort et al., 2018). "Good" is defined in a double sense: On the one hand, "small states will play on their 'moral authority' when seeking to increase their status. On the other hand, they seek to be perceived as good, reliable partners in a hegemonic arrangement or within a multilateral set-up" (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014, p.10-11). According to the authors, while small states are not in the position to be a source of defining morality, as this is a task for the Great Powers, they can represent morality by upholding and taking responsibility for the maintenance of an orderly international system, and assisting the Great Powers in maintaining peace and security (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014).

Wohlfort and his colleagues (2018) maintain that small states can strategically display moral authority in three ways. Firstly, they might draw inspiration from a tradition, an abstract set of principles. For instance, European humanism serves as one such tradition. In everyday Western discourse, moral conduct

primarily refers to this type of behavior. One example of such a strategy would for instance consist in calling great powers out for their misconduct and their preference for power over moral behavior. Secondly, small states can demonstrate moral behavior by maintaining the social order, which is often referred to as 'system maintenance'. Supporting an existing hegemonic order is one possibility of this approach. Thirdly, acting in accordance with 'moral authority' can mean supporting the hegemonic power itself. This approach can sometimes be linked to humanitarian strategies, but also by supporting the hegemon, for instance, in military endeavors.

Being a 'good power' in that sense allows small states to be noticed among other small states, and to share the limelight with greater powers (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015). In this context, the authors illustrate the case of Norway's involvement in the Oslo peace process, mediating the significant Middle East conflict. Despite being a small state, Norway assumed the role of peacemaker, earning public recognition for this by greater states. The authors argue that when studying status-seeking, it's crucial to identify situations where the pursuit of recognition and status explains actions that fear and gain (security and prosperity) alone cannot explain.

Lastly, it should be noted that status-seeking is crucial for small states (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014). De Carvalho and Neumann argue that the status-seeking of small states must be distinguished from that of Greater Power. Small states have little or no power resources, so consequently, "aiming status may well be the only game in town" (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014, p. 16). Due to their small size, small states tend to go unnoticed. Thus, achieving status is a guarantee for small states to be seen (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014). While obtaining status is essential for small states, it only has value if states can engage with other actors. Confirmation of this status occurs through interactions with other states, which in turn paves the way for broader engagement on increasingly significant levels (leading to more influence for small states). Thus, small powers often adopt a strategy of being perceived as 'good powers', aligning with prevailing norms to enhance their status and influence (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014).

In summary, the pursuit of status plays a more significant role in their foreign policy compared to great powers (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014). Small states generally aim to position themselves just below great powers, seeking a status alongside the dominant player in the international setting (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015). As they do not have the resources to engage in meaningful competition or conflict, small states pursue status by demonstrating their utility through peaceful cooperation and by proving that they are 'good powers' (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014; Wohlforth et al., 2017)

Chapter 6: Analysis

This chapter contains the analysis of the data, as described in Chapter 4, to understand the underlying motivations behind Luxembourg's advocacy for the refugee relocation mechanism. The analysis is softly guided by the propositions defined in the methodological chapter. Based on these, it is determined that the theoretical perspective helps to understand Luxembourg's position on the relocation mechanism or not.

Liberal intergovernmentalism: states as rational actors

Propositions

The propositions developed based on liberal intergovernmentalism are the following:

1) A state's position during a crisis depends on its affectedness and asymmetrical interdependence
2) States conduct rational cost-benefit calculations on EU (dis)integration and choose the less costly option (burden minimizing)
3) States are in favor of EU integration if this is in line with their domestic (mostly economic) preferences

To begin with, Schimmelfenning (2018), as well as Biermann and his colleagues (2019), maintain that the desire for more or less EU integration during the 'migration crisis' depended on a country's geographical position in the EU and its affectedness by the migration pressure. In general, while destination, transit, and countries of first arrival experienced high pressure and pushed for burden-sharing among member states, the less affected states were opposed to the relocation mechanism, as it would have increased their number of asylum seekers (Schimmelfenning, 2018; Biermann et al., 2019). At first glance, it is not completely clear what category Luxembourg falls under. In general, the Grand Duchy is not mentioned among the main destination states, which are commonly known to be Germany, Sweden, Austria, Norway, and Denmark (e.g., Karolewski & Benedikter, 2018). Some maintain that Luxembourg, as a small, landlocked county that is not at an EU border usually escapes the brunt of the migration pressure (Högenauer, 2019). Others, such as Hugo Brady, maintain that Luxembourg is "not attractive to migrants" and that the country "did pretty much what it wanted" during the crisis as it did not fear the creation of a pull factor for asylum seekers (Brady, 2021). In addition, in the words of an asylum seeker interviewed in Luxembourg during that period, "Most of us found ourselves here by mistake" (Zeke, 2015). Other sources state that while Luxembourg is doubtlessly an immigration country, migration in search of international protection remains generally limited in the Grand Duchy (Prague Process, n.d.). In addition,

the 2447 asylum seekers arriving in Luxembourg, as well as the 557 migrants that would come under the relocation mechanism until 2017 are a drop in the ocean in comparison to the number of refugees arriving in Europe during the period (Direction de l'immigration, 2015; Zeke, 2015).

However, on the other hand, looking at in terms of per capita, the number of refugees hosted by Luxembourg is relatively high. Therefore, some scholars place Luxembourg on the list of affected countries (Biermann et al., 2019; Zaun, 2019). In terms of demands for asylum per capita (taking out Hungary, as the government officially claimed that there are no asylum seekers in Hungary), Luxembourg ranked number five with 447 asylum claims per 100,000 residents in 2015 (Biermann et. al., 2018; Eurostat, 2016). The Eurostat news release in March 2016 showed that the demands for asylum in Luxembourg per capita per million inhabitants were about twice as high as the EU average, with 4 194 and 2 470, respectively (Eurostat, 2016). Luxembourg also showed the 6th highest increase in asylum applications between 2014 and 2015 (+129%), right after Finland (+822%), Hungary (+ 323%), Austria (+233%), Belgium (+178%), Spain (+167%), and Germany (+155%) (Eurostat, 2016).

Thus, while Luxembourg is in total numbers far from one of the main destination countries, in proportion to its small size it clearly was affected by the inflow of refugees. As a result, based on liberal intergovernmentalism it would then make sense that Luxembourg is in favor of the relocation mechanism. Luxembourg was proportionally relatively strongly affected by an external shock, in the form of the "refugee crisis", which makes cooperation and integration more interesting than acting unilaterally (Biermann et al, 2019; Schimmelfenning; 2018). To sum up, as liberal intergovernmentalism contends that every state engaged in burden-minimizing and that their position on the relocation mechanism was often dependent on their relative affectedness by migration pressure (e.g. Biermann et al., 2019), it makes sense that Luxembourg, as a country that is proportional to its size relatively strongly affected by migrant flows, wishes to introduce a burden-sharing mechanism.

Luxembourg and Schengen

Arguably, however, Luxembourg's the number of asylum seekers in Luxembourg does not explain entirely why the small state was, in the words of Léa Lemaire, "deeply committed to the relocation of migrants" (IF@ULB, n.d.). Finland and Austria, for instance, had a higher number of asylum demands per capita, but had some reservations when it came to the relocation mechanism (e.g. Biermann et al., 2019). Although Austria was one of the main destination states and felt the need to erect internal borders to manage the flow of migration, it still only reluctantly accepted the proposition to introduce a burden-sharing mechanism (Dingott, 2018). Finland, which received far more asylum seekers per capita than Luxembourg, also had reservations and abstained from voting on the relocation of 120,000 asylum seekers in Europe, (Šabić, 2017).

In addition, judging from the quotes and statements made by Luxembourgish officials, one would not assume that the country was worried about the inflow of refugees – in fact, to my knowledge, there is no statement by any decision-maker warning that Luxembourg that too many asylum seekers arrive in Luxembourg. In general, the worries of Luxembourgish policymakers regarding the Schengen crisis revolved around the threat it posed for the Schengen area of open borders. For instance, in an interview given in the context of the September Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council, during which the relocation of 120,000 asylum seekers was negotiated, Jean Asslborn, Luxembourg's minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, maintained that this meeting was the most important day of their Presidency (Schumacher, 2015). He claimed that "today was about the destiny of the refugees, but also about EU values and solidarity. Europe can only function if we show solidarity". Moreover, he stated that "we cannot risk the Schengen agreement. Temporary exceptions can be allowed under exceptional circumstances, but we cannot shake the principle. Schengen is the biggest achievement of our Union" (Schumacher, 2015; translated by the author[2]).

This attachment to the Schengen acquis is also frequently brought up in the governments' calls for solidarity and the relocation mechanism. In an interview with the German radio channel RBB, for example, Jean Asselborn notes that no EU country, not even the Visgrad group wants the Schengen area to fail, as „Schengen is the greatest achievement of the EU and it must not be broken. The question of refugees cannot be solved if we retreat on a national level." (Extraordinary JHA Council, 2015; TBA). In addition, he warns of the devastating consequences if EU countries lack solidarity and explains that "If the EU fails during this challenge, then Europe will not exist in its current form anymore, then our values don't exist anymore. Everything that we achieved since the end of the Second World War will fail" (Extraordinary JHA Council[3], 2015; TBA). Another example of many is Jean Asselborn stating in an interview that "The European Union can break apart. This can go incredibly fast, when isolation instead of solidarity becomes the rule internally and externally … We may only have a couple of months" He adds "If we do not find a European solution to the migration crisis, if more and more countries believe that they can approach the issue only nationally, then Schegen is dead" (Oliveira, 2015).

According to Biermann and colleagues (2019), the asymmetrical preferences and the cost of non-reform shape whether a member state is in favor of more integration during the crisis or not. Those who are affected by the malfunctioning status quo, which is, in this case, a Dublin system, that is not properly implemented, resulting in secondary movements and border closures, who would like to see a reform of

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[2] Due to the large amount of quotes I have translated, "translated by author" will from here on be abbreviate as TBA.

[3] Many of the primary sources, such as this, have no author but a very long title. In the case that it is too long too add to an in-text citiation, I provide only the first few words of the title.

the system, for instance through the relocation mechanism. They are pitted against those who are barely affected and therefore prefer to maintain the status quo, as they are benefiting from it (Biermann et al., 2019). In the following, the cost of non-reform for Luxembourg is examined.

National preference formation: economic structures

Luxembourg's position can be better understood by also considering the Grand-Duchy's economic structures and its dependence on open borders and an integrated European economy. As outlined in the context chapter, there were serious fears among EU leaders that the Schengen regime would falter under the so-called refugee crisis (e.g. Traynor & Smith, 2016; Leggett, 2015). Both the primary and the secondary data suggest that Luxembourg was afraid of the economic damage Luxembourg would likely suffer if the Schengen agreement of free movement collapsed. This is for a good reason: Luxembourg's economic transformation from a poor agricultural state to a service-based economy would have been impossible with European integration and a common EU market (Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021). Luxembourg is today the most open economy in Europe, and one of the most open in the world (Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce, 2020). Open borders are deeply anchored in both the economic and societal model of Luxembourg, and its prosperity depends strongly on the Grand-Duchy's openness to the world (Evrard, et al., 2020; Hirsch; 2015).

As a consequence, Luxembourg was particularly negatively affected by the reintroduction of border controls during the Schengen crisis (Besch & Lessing, 2016) While the reintroduction of border controls within the Schengen area had negative impacts on the daily functioning of border regions all across the EU, for obvious reasons, the regions with the most established and pronounced cross-border cooperation suffered the higher damages (Evrard et a., 2020). This was clearly the case of Luxembourg, which is a member of, and deeply involved in, the Greater Region, a cross-border cooperation area established in the 1970s (Evrard et al., 2020). It involves Lorraine (France), Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland (Germany), and Wallonia (Belgium) (Evrard et al., 2020). This region is characterized by extensive transnational commerce and produces the greatest concentration of cross-border commuters in the EU (Evrard et al., 2020; Bess & Lessing, 2016. The flows mostly lead into the more wealthy Luxembourg: at that time, around 170.000 crossed borders every day from France, Germany, and Belgium to reach Luxembourg, which added up to about to around 40% of the country's labor force (Evrard et al., 2020, Bess & Lessing, 2016). As a result, Luxembourg is part of an exceptionally dense network of cross-border relations that are vital to its daily functioning (Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021).

When France and Germany decided to unilaterally suspend the open border regime as a result of migratory pressure, Luxembourg immediately felt the shock (Evrard et al., 2020). For instance, in 2015, more than 80,000 French commuters coming to Luxembourg for work every day had to line up for hours

(Besch & Lessing, 2016). Along these lines, the economist from the Chamber of Commerce reported in an interview that Luxembourgish companies immediately felt the impact of border controls, as their cross-border employees had to take leave or arrived at work late (Evrard et al., 2020). He reportedly added that restrictions on the free movement of cross-border workers could lead to a significant drop in productivity, and worried about the domino effect closing of borders could unleash on EU internal trade (Evrard et al, 2020). In a similar vein, the Managing Director of Crémant (a Luxembourgish sparkling wine) Hubert Clasen revealed in an interview with Caroline de Gruyter that "In fact, [Luxembourg] is so small that our business model is more regional than national. Seventy percent of our private-sector employees are foreigners. Many live over the border in France, Belgium, or Germany. Not having borders is natural for us, even essential" (De Gruyter, 2016). This economic shock experienced by businesses in the heavily regionalized Luxembourgish economy hints towards the liberal intergovernmnetalist theory, which contends that governments' position on EU integration is influenced by, and mostly aligns with, the (economic) interests of domestic actors (Schimmelfenning, 2018; Moravcsik, 1993). In Luxembourg, this also seems to be the case, as Frentz maintains that in the small country, business groups have easy access to governments, and can thereby influence foreign policy decisions (Frentz, 2016). In general, the Luxembourgish government tends to avoid making decisions against strong business interests (Frentz, 2016). As can be seen in the above-mentioned examples, the preferences of business owners are most likely EU integration and a common market.

As a reminder, liberal intergovernmentalism contends that countries are in favor of more integration, through a reform of the Dublin system and the installation of the relocation mechanism, if the cost of non-reform is higher than the costs of more integration and reforming the status quo (Schimmelfenning, 2018; Biermann et al., 2019). In this case, non-reform and no additional EU integration means that the overwhelmed countries of first arrival wave migrants through to the North under the (non-functional) Dublin system (e.g. Brady, 2021). As a consequence of these secondary movements, destination and transit states closed their borders (Brady, 2021; Schimmelfenning; 2018). As established further above, Luxembourg is proportionally relatively affected by the migration pressure. However, even if the country wanted to follow the lead of some of its neighbors and close the borders to avoid the arrival of more asylum seekers, its economic model prohibits this. Considering the horrendous costs that the end of free movement would bring about for Luxembourg's businesses and consumers, Schengen is for Luxembourg without an alternative (Besch & Lessing, 2016). Thus, while many member states would be economically impacted by the unraveling of the Schengen agreement (Börzel & Risse, 2018) Luxembourg's economic model could not survive without it. This arguably contributes to Luxembourg's call for more EU integration through a burden-sharing mechanism, which distributes migrants in an orderly and fair manner

from the 'hotspots' to the other EU member states. The hope, arguably, was that this would enable the restoration of unity and the free movement in the Schengen area.

To sum up, liberal intergovernmentalism puts nation-states and the rational interest of nation-states at the center of European integration (Kuhn 2019). If one has a closer look at Luxembourg's economic reality, it becomes apparent that advocating for EU solidarity during the crisis (through the promotion of the relocation mechanism) is the pragmatic and less costly choice for the small country. As established above, a country of such a small size and, consequently, with such a small market, has no other option than to rely on an open EU market (Besch & Lessing, 2016). This also puts Luxembourg in a position in which it is more dependent on other countries and their decisions, as could be witnessed when its neighbors unilaterally decided to suspend open borders. For Luxembourg, the cost of non-reform is higher, and therefore, according to liberal intergovernmentalist theory, Luxembourg prefers the less costly alternative, which is the introduction of a burden-sharing mechanism.

National preference formation: political structures

While liberal intergovernmentalism traditionally centers on domestic economic preferences, Zaun (2019) maintains that the theory also has space to inquire about other aspects of domestic politics. Therefore, I think it is worth delving very briefly into the political structures that might influence Luxembourg's position on the relocation mechanism. Besides its economy, Luxembourg is Luxembourg is also politically dependent on a well-functioning EU, as has been established in the literature review. Very small states like Luxembourg are aware that they need to integrate into a bigger unit to ensure their security and stability (Bossart, 2018; Besch & Lessing, 2016). Luxembourgish national and domestic security cannot exist outside Schengen along with the exchange of data and close policy cooperation in the Schengen area (Besch & Lessing, 2016).

This sentiment was also reflected in a newspaper by Jean Asselborn with the German newspaper Reutlinger General Anzeiger in 2016, where he stated that the EU is facing an existential crisis. As a Luxembourger, he continues, there is no other choice than being terrified by the uncertain future of the EU: "Our destiny is linked to the destiny of the EU. If you think about it for a bit, in our country, you realize that EU integration is the only option that we have. If we go back to a Europe of nation-states, small countries will be steamrolled. Luxembourg is an accident of history. We only exist, because Germany, Belgium, and France never really knew what to do with us" (Rahming, 2016; TBA). Similarly, MP Lydie Polfer, claimed that during the parliamentary debate on Luxembourg's foreign policy approach "Today, I believe, no one can imagine Luxembourg without a Europen Union. But of course also vice-versa! We do not want to imagine a European Union without Luxembourg. Because, and this is something that we can agree on, our country has benefited immensely from Europe and our future

depends largely on the success of Europe, and on the way in which Europe develops." (Chambre des Députés b, 2015; TBA). As a result of this dependency on the EU, Luxembourg has, in contrast to other European states, no interest groups, no business stakeholders nor any political party lobbying for leaving the EU (Besch & Lessing, 2016). In contrast to many other EU capitals, the Luxembourgish government was spared from the influence of far-right and Eurosceptic parties during the refugee crisis, as those were virtually non-existent in Luxembourg at that time (Besch & Lessinge, 2016, De Jonge, 2019).

Liberal intergovernmentalism contends that the less pressure domestic groups exert on the government, the more leeway they have in the policy direction pursued (Zaun, 2017). In line with this, the lack of domestic pressure seemed to have influenced the Luxembourgish government's response to the relocation mechanism, or at least given it a bigger margin for action. In contrast to many other EU states (e.g. Zaun, 2019), the government in Luxembourg did not have to consider domestic pressure from Euro-sceptic or anti-immigration parties in its policy approach to the relocation mechanism. Maria Vinciguerra's (2016) analysis of the negotiations around the relocation mechanism shows that this mattered for the stance of the Luxembourgish government. Vinciguerra illustrates that, while the preceding Latvian Presidency could only take a neutral stance on the relocation mechanism due to mounting domestic pressure and anti-immigration sentiments, the Luxembourgish government was not restrained by such factors, and could proactively pursue the file (Vinciguerra, 2016). This is in line with liberal intergovernmentalist theory maintaining that to other EU integration domestic politics need to be taken into consideration (Kleine & Pollack; 2018, Zaun, 2019). While there is no evidence that there was any pressure from the Luxembourgish electorate to favor the relocation mechanism, there was also no opposition, effectively giving the government a free hand.

To sum up, in the first part of the analysis Luxembourg's response to the migration crisis and its support for the relocation mechanism were analyzed through the lenses of liberal intergovernmentalism. Despite not being a primary destination for migrants, Luxembourg's proportional affectedness by migration pressure as well the fear of Schengen agreement disruption compelled Luxembourg to advocate for the relocation mechanism, ensuring order in migrant distribution and safeguarding open borders.

Small state status-seeking

In this part of the analysis, Luxembourg's response to the relocation mechanism is examined in light of small-state status-seeking. The propositions loosely guiding this part of the analysis are the following:

1) Small states seek to be noticed or seen by large states (specifically for taking a little bit of responsibility for international peace and security)

1) Small states seek to be recognized by Great Powers as reliable partners in multilateral or hegemonic setups

2) Small states seek to demonstrate 'moral authority', based on the three strategies described by Wohlforth et al., 2018

3) Small states are competing for the reputation of 'good states' with their peer group

Being noticed as a good state

As elaborated on in the theoretical chapter, Carvalho and Neumann maintain small state status is about "being noticed or seen" for their efforts to contribute to international peace and harmony, particularly by Great Powers (2014, p.2). The goal is then to share the limelight with the great powers. If Luxembourg engages in status-seeking, it should then strive to be 'noticed' for its actions during the Council Presidency.

When reading through the publications, speeches, and debates from Luxembourgish policymakers around the time of the Presidency, I could find a considerable amount of statements showing the importance of the visibility Luxembourg can achieve through the Presidency. For instance, at a press conference prior to the Luxembourgish Presidency, Prime Minister Xavier Bettel stated that "all the spotlights are on us", and that their Presidency would be "very important" due to the crises that Europe was facing at the time ("La Présidence est une chance pour notre pays", 2015; TBA). In addition, the prime minister highlighted that the Presidency will be an ideal "opportunity to showcase our attachment to European integration" ("La Présidence est une chance pour notre pays", 2015; TBA). In addition, Jean Asselborn highlights in an interview with the Luxembourgish newsagency Tageblatt that the 12th Presidency enables Luxembourg to achieve "important visibility", which is valuable and should not be underestimated (Jean, Asselborn, interwewé par Tageblatt, 2015; TBA). Along these lines, MP Lydie Polfer contributed that "we cannot forget that the Presidency will provide Luxembourg with some visibility internationally, which we must not underestimate. Therefore, we should use this stage systematically to prove that the European project is not the problem, but the solution to the problems." She added that "our country will for several months be in the spotlight of Europe. This is a big chance to showcase our strengths and distance ourselves from the image, which has already been brought up, that Luxembourg is merely a financial center" (Chambre des Députés, 2015; TBA). Also in this debate, MP Laurent Moser added that "the Presidency offers us a niche where we can show that, as a small country, we have a lot of europolitical competence" (Chambre des Députés, 2015; TBA). In addition, in another parliamentary debate, Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn upheld that Luxembourg cannot support a retreat to nationalism

during its Presidency, as "there is a lot at stake for Europe, but also for the prestige of our country" (Chambre des Députés, 2015a, TBA). Lastly, during his speech on the national holiday in 2015, Xavier Bettel maintained that "the Presidency of the EU Council offers us the opportunity to make our own message heard. We can present ourselves as what we are: a constructive partner that one can rely on, who is looking into the future and shows courage when courage is necessary" (Message du Premier Ministre Xavier Bettel, 2015; TBA). These examples suggest that on the one hand, Luxembourgish politicians perceived the Presidency as a good opportunity to "being noticed or seen" (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p.2), and on the other hand, hint at Luxembourg wanting to be perceived as a "constructive partner", in the words of Xavier Bettel, by its EU neighbors. The latter will be elaborated on further below.

Status seeking by being a useful partner in multilateral negotiations

So, does Luxembourg seek status by being a "good, reliable partner in a hegemonic or multilateral set-up" (Carvalho & Neumann, p.11)? To answer this, I analyzed the data by looking for suggestions that Luxembourg is presenting itself as a useful partner in the multilateral setup, which is, in this case, the EU. While analyzing the data, the pattern that stood out the most was the countless examples of Luxembourgish officials highlighting the country's role as a mediator, often mentioning that this is in the service of the EU. Due to space limitations, they cannot all be reproduced, but I will provide some examples to showcase what these statements look like.

For instance, in the parliamentary debate on Luxembourg's foreign policy, MP Laurent Mosar mentions that "Luxembourg is worldwide seen as a model student for cooperation, and we can all agree on the fact that this is a good thing. During the Luxembourg Presidency, we must therefore keep the lead in this issue", which receives support from other MPs (Chambre des Députés, 2015; TBA). In the parliamentary debate on the upcoming Luxembourgish Presidency, MP Claude Adam claimed "In a year we will take over the EU Council Presidency. And there we have a chance to show that Luxembourg, thanks to its multilingualism and openness, has to continue taking on its important role as a mediator. We have to find more common ground on an EU level, and not only talk on with the EU in mind but act with the EU in mind […]" (Chambre des Députés, 2015a; TBA). During another parliamentary debate, Jean Asselborn maintained that the government is looking forward to the Presidency with confidence, and maintains that he is "convinced that we will also manage this time to advance the Union with our big devotion and deep European and multilateral commitment" (Chambre des Députés, 2015; TBA). Similarly, in the parliamentary debate on the government's approach to the "refugee crisis", Prime Minister Xavier Bettel claims that "in these months [Luxembourg] is particularly challenged on the European level. It is our 12th Presidency of the Council of Europe. It will be one of our most difficult Presidencies, and it will be dominated by the refugee question and we have been given the task of building bridges between EU

member states and EU partners. It is not easy to link the diverse national interests with the EU's principle of solidarity and EU values" (Chambre des Députés, 2015b; TBA).

 This perception of the role Luxembourg should play was not only voiced within the parliament but also during many radio and newspaper interviews. For, in an interview with the radio station Bel RTL and Radio 100.7 Bettel highlighted the "mediating role" Luxembourg wishes to play when it comes to handling the arrival of refugees in the EU. He explains that he is in "discussions two or three times per day with Heads of State and Governments" to find a solution to the humanitarian crisis in Austria, Germany, and Hungary. He adds that "Luxembourg is coordinating" the policy response and is "seeking to bring people together around the table" (Xavier Bettel, 2015). Moreover, in an interview with the Dutch journalist Caroline De Gruyter, Xavier Bettel claimed that "being a bridge builder is our duty in this difficult period of the European Union" (De Gruyter, 2016).

This idea could also be found in publications by the government: for instance, in the booklet on Luxembourg's relation with the EU published for the event of the Presidency, it was stated that Luxembourg's influential role within the EU was largely based on its "way of tackling issues in a community-based approach, their credibility as well as ability to drive Community integration while disregarding purely national interests, to assume presidencies of the Council of Ministers as honest broker, to make themselves available as a discreet mediator between dissenting views" (Besch & Lessing, 2016, p.15). Lastly, concluding the Presidency, in front of the European Council, Bettel reiterated that the Luxembourgish Presidency was marked by an unprecedented refugee crisis, but that the Grand-Duchy managed to "play the role of mediator and to find common solutions". Overall, he judged it to have been a successful Presidency that proved that "small states are perfectly capable of taking their responsibility and advancing Europe, even in particularly difficult times" (Xavier Bettel presented a preliminary review, 2015). Due to the space limitations, and because it is relatively repetitive, I could not list all the examples of Luxembourgish politicians emphasizing Luxembourg's role as a mediator during the so-called refugee crisis, but the instances were abundant. Arguably, being a skillful mediator who aims at advancing the EU in difficult times could be characterized as being a "reliable partner in a multilateral set-up" (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p.12), which would suggest that Luxembourg might engage in status-seeking.

It is worth pointing out that the Luxembourgish government consciously chose to display its *reliability* during the Presidency as part of Luxembourg's nation-branding campaign. Nation branding is part of Luxembourg's efforts to increase its international standing through exercising soft power (Sprinelli, 2021). The goal is to promote a positive image to the rest of the international community and to obtain benefits based on this (Sprinelli, 2021). The so-called LuxLeaks scandal, which revealed in November 2014 that Luxembourg had issued preferential tax rulings to hundreds of multinational companies, damaged the Grand-Duchy's image internationally (De Gruyter, 2016; Jean Asselborn, 2015). As a

result, the Luxembourgish government implemented a nation-branding strategy to rectify Luxembourg's image and to increase its soft power on the international stage (Jean Asselborn, 2015). The former Minister of Economic Affairs Francie Closener described it as"putting Luxembourg on the map" after receiving international criticism for its banking style (Spirinelli, 2021). The strategy was launched in 2014, and Luxembourg's key values to be conveyed to the world were determined to be "reliability, dynamism, and openness" (Spirinelli, 2021). The creative team behind the campaign decided that Luxembourg's international "personality" should be that of an "ally" (Sprinelli, 2015). Thus, it can be argued Luxembourg's nation-branding strategy seems to really be geared towards showing its value in multilateral cooperation.

In addition, the 2015 Luxembourgish Presidency was deemed a particularly opportune moment to invest and showcase Luxembourg's new brand (Jean Asselborn, 2015), and it was even said to be a key objective for that period (Ducat, 2014). During a press conference on the nation's branding strategy, Jean Asselborn pointed out that the 2015 Presidency offers a "unique chance to present Luxembourg in the world with a positive image" and to demonstrate that Luxembourg can "do a good job for the EU" (Jean Asselborn a livré quelques précisions, 2015). The final report published by the Luxembourgish government on the achievements of the Presidency also supports that the government used the period to promote its new nation branding strategy. It is stated that Luxembourg is "committed to the European project as well as to the values and principles of the European Union" and that "the Presidency allowed the Grand Duchy to put some of its essential qualities at the service of the EU: the aptitude to build bridges, the ability to reconcile a variety of different positions and traditions in its role as an honest broker, and the willingness to seek compromise […] Luxembourg has sought to implement its key values – reliability, dynamism, and openness – in the context of the Presidency and at the service of the EU" (A Union for its citizens, 2016).

Arguably, the above-mentioned clearly suggests that the Luxembourgish government viewed the Presidency as an opportune moment to increase its reputation, especially in the aftermath of the Luxleaks scandal, in the European and international arena. As explained by De Carvalho and Neumann (2015), reputation is linked to states' identities (how they are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves). State identities are hierarchized and are linked to their status (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014), While Neumann and Carvalho provide the example of Norway being recognized for having a good reputation (and therefore acquiring the status) of being an international peacebuilder, Luxembourg has "consistently enjoyed the reputation of being one of the most pro-integrationist of the member states" (Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021, p.2). Based on the above-mentioned data it can be argued that Luxembourg seizes the opportunity of the Presidency to reinforce this good reputation as a reliable EU partner. The Grand-Ducy does this by really immersing itself in the role of pro-integrationist mediator,

which is, in the words of Asselborn, ready to "do good work for the EU" (Jean Asselborn, 2015). This is in line with the literature review, that highlights that Luxembourg's identity as being the "craftsman of compromise" between EU member states is the most important asset in its foreign policy repertoire (Hirsch, 2015).

According to Jeanne Hey (2002), Luxembourg's overarching EU policy strategy is to maintain its good reputation and respected position in a growing Union. In addition, Frentz (2016) argues that Luxembourg pursues this by constantly proving its reliability and valuable contributions in the EU context. Arguably, as the so-called refugee crisis resulted in a very difficult period for the EU, it was an ideal moment for Luxembourg to showcase this contribution through its pro-integrationist stance, its role as mediator, and its identity as "the heart of Europe" (Jean, Asselborn, interviewé par Tageblatt, 2015). Ultimately, it should be mentioned that these are qualities of Luxembourg that are perceived as positive by other member states (e.g. Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021), which is important, as a state identity as hierarchized and social, and a state's standing in the hierarchy of statuses depends on how other states perceive them (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015; Wohlforth et al., 2018).

Status-seeking through "higher moral authority"
Besides being a "good state" through being a useful partner in multilateral cooperation, De Carvalho and Neumann claim that small states can increase their status by playing the card of having the 'moral highground'. To briefly recap, according to Wohlforth and his colleagues (2018), small states can demonstrate moral authority by 1) drawing on abstract principles, which is in the West commonly European humanism 2) by maintaining the social order, which is referred to as 'system-maintenance, and 3) by providing support to the hegemonic state.

To begin with, it seems clear that Luxembourg recurs to a discourse on human rights, EU values, and humanitarianism when arguing why welcoming and relocating migrants within Europe is necessary. The examples of reference to the importance of human rights and saving lives are countless, and the most common "code" I came across during the analysis of the data. It is not possible or useful to provide a long list of examples of such statements, which I found in parliamentary debates, interviews, government statements, and more. However, I will provide two codes below exemplifying such rhetoric used by the Luxembourgish government. For instance, when asked about the question of what principle should guide Europe's asylum policy in an interview, Asselborn responded that "Europe is a peace project. It is built, among others, on the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. In this [charter] it is stated that every person who is persecuted receives protection in Europe. [...] Since the end of the Second World War we have not experienced such a humanitarian disaster" (Sabharwal, 2015; TBA). He added that the Council meeting to decide on the relocation mechanism will be the most important day of the Luxembourgish

Presidency, as "it is not about the Euro, not about growth, not about taxes, but about human lives. This challenge is extremely important" (Sabharwal, 2015; TBA). The main strategy of the Luxembourgish Presidency according to Asselborn is to "protect these people and show solidarity" (Sabharwal, 2015; TBA). Or, as another example, upon his arrival at the informal Minister of Foreign Affairs meeting in September to discuss the relocation mechanism, Jean Asselborn calls for a European solution to the "refugee crisis" as "Europe is synonymous with values, international law, and humanity. Europe is at risk of losing face and its essence and will be blameworthy if these values are called into question", he insisted, adding that "the image of Europe worldwide is at stake" (Migratory pressure at the heart of statements, 2015).

However, Luxembourgish officials are not only using this rhetoric in relation to the EU but also to separate, indirectly, Luxembourg from EU member states who might not share the same perspective on the relocation. For instance, regarding Budapest's unwillingness to participate in the relocation mechanism, Asselborn said that "Hungary has decided not to be part of a European solution […] they do not want to be part of the European mechanism. He added that "sometimes one has to be ashamed for Victor Orban […] this man has destroyed much in Hungary, but also a lot in regards to EU values" (Nienaber, 2015). Moreover, in an interview with the French newspaper Le Monde, Jean Asselborn was confronted with his statement that one should be "ashamed" of Victor Orban for his treatment of asylum seekers. He added "I don't want to put myself in the position of a moral reference, but let's not play with fire and risk our own human values, especially when it's about humans who have suffered the worst atrocities" ("Europe must show her greatness", 2015). Thus, Luxembourg is demonstrating its prevailing moral high ground based on so-called EU and humanitarian values, which they present to be threatened by states such as Hungary.

This is also reflected in other remarks, in which the Luxembourgish politicians indirectly suggest their 'moral superiority' in comparison to member states with a different approach. Thus, concluding the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council in September, Jean Asselborn stated that "Even a small country like Luxembourg can take in a few hundred people of a different religion or whose skin is a different color, and that should also be the case in larger countries […] We need to overcome this fear, which is not everywhere, but our Presidency is going to help everyone move in the right direction." (Extraordinary JHA Council, 2015). Similarly, the government's 2015 report on Luxembourg's EU policy stresses Luxembourg's position on the "good side" when it comes to EU policy. It stated that "In the year 2015 we witnessed the rise of important rifts between the member states of the European Union and we are more than ever in a situation in which our values and principles are put into question […] While many European actors with good intentions, including Luxembourg, try to find a European solution to solve the crisis, others, whether from the EU or outside, try to make benefit from the situation. We have to show

more than ever that we believe in Europe and that we have the will and the capacity to overcome this crisis" (Rapport sur la politique européenne, 2016; TBA). In doing so, arguably, Luxembourg is positioning itself 'coalition of the good EU states' that are working hard to find a European solution, while those who do not agree with the approach destroy the EU values. This is similar to Brady's interpretation of Luxembourg's approach during the crisis, which was already touched upon in the literature review. He writes that Luxembourg "saw a total equivalence between progressive ideals, openness to immigration, and pro-Europeanism" (Brady, 2021). In his words, for Luxembourgers, "deportation, building fences and holding camps belonged to the darkest chapter of Europe's past", and Luxembourg believed the EU was created to prevent such inhumane behavior (Brady, 2021). Brady writes that although Luxembourg has no considerable Muslim population within its nation, Jean Asselborn confronted and blamed the Visgrad group for their perceived ethno-nationalist approach, which is, from the Luxembourgish point of view, anti-European (Brady, 2021). Brady's account suggests that the Grand-Duchy came across as sitting on its high horse, advocating for liberal values and condemning those who did not agree with this approach.

Based on the above mentioned, one can argue that besides seeking status by acting as a useful mediator, Luxembourg followed the strategy of demonstrating "moral high ground" as the good, European model student, who is always ready to show solidarity and uphold EU values. This resembles the first strategy described by Wohlforth and his colleagues (2018), which contends that moral authority can be derived from referring to abstract principles, such as European humanism or human rights. As mentioned by the authors, another strategy to achieve status can be based on supporting the hegemon. De Carvalho and Neumann (2015), furthermore maintain that small states seek status by making themselves useful to a hegemonic state, from which they are hoping to receive recognition. Therefore, it is worth questioning if there is a "great power" in the European context that Luxembourg is trying to get recognition from, or support as part of a status-seeking exercise.

What Great EU power is Luxembourg seeking status from?

Mario Hirsch writes that Luxembourg is traditionally recognized for its ability to set aside its own immediate interest during the rotating EU Presidency. According to the Luxembourgish politologue, some cynic commentators would argue that this praise is dependent on Luxembourg's (and other small states) ability to implement the will of bigger EU countries (Hirsch, 2015). Along these lines, De Carvalho and Neumann (2014) maintain that small states seek status by making themselves useful in the

eyes of Great Powers. This begs the question of who Luxembourg is aligning itself with during the Presidency

Germany, the UK, and France, the largest (former) member states with the most resources, are considered to be the leading EU powers (Lehne, 2021). Generally, Germany is considered to be dominating EU politics, and some even argue that the country has a hegemonic status within the Union (Cuhna, 2021). On top of that, Germany was widely considered to be the leading European power throughout the crisis (Karolewski, & Benedikter, 2018; Krotz & Schild, 2019) a. France is the close second, and the country traditionally acts as Germany's partner in the so-called Franco-German axis (Cuhna, 2021). France and Germany are often considered to be the driving powers of EU integration (Leuffen et al., 2013). Britain, another major EU power before Brexit, opted out of migration affairs in the EU and was therefore not directly involved (Biermann et. al., 2018). Germany, who took by far the most asylum seekers among EU member states was pushing for the relocation scheme (Karolewski, & Benedikter)

Besides supporting the Commission's plan, it seems as though Luxembourg was mostly supporting Germany's preferences during the so-called refugee crisis. According to Vinciguerra (2016), the relocation mechanism was not completely in line with the preferences of the Luxembourgish Presidency. In contrast, Luxembourg was in favor of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), a scheme developed in the aftermath of the Balkan war to deal with the mass influx of people fleeing war, violence, and human rights violations (Vinciguerra, 2016). Insofar as the TPD would only apply to Syrians, Luxembourg would have preferred it over the relocation mechanism, which has already been tested (and failed) on a much smaller case in Malta (EUREMA I & II) (Vinciguerra, 2016). However, the German government was opposed to the TPD, as they would not be able to cope with the influx of more refugees (Vinciguerra, 2016). Therefore, it was decided that the Commission would propose a small-scale EU relocation mechanism that could be reused in the future if successful (Vinciguerra, 2016). France, the other major EU state, was more reluctant when it came to the relocation scheme and developing a more fair burden-sharing mechanism (Brady, 2021: Biermann et. al., 2018). However, according to Brady, the country needed to stay aligned with Berlin, at least officially (Brady, 2021) Thus, France was officially in favor of the mechanism, with some reservations (Biermann & colleagues).

Thus, instead of pushing for its own policy preferences, the TPD, Luxembourg followed Germany's preference for the relocation mechanism (Vinciguerra, 2018). In Brady's words, "Luxembourg backed Germany's *Sondermoral*[4] one thousand percent" (Brady, 2021). On the one hand, this fits the theory of status-seeking, which contends that small states achieve status by making themselves useful to Great Powers (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015). In addition, Wohlforth and his colleagues (2018) maintain that

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[4] Define Sondermoral, Germany's attitude to accept many refugees

one strategy for attaining 'moral authority' for small states is to support the endeavors of small states. However, on the other hand, it is not clear how much choice Luxembourg actually had in this position, as it is highly unlikely that the small state could oppose itself to the preferences of Germany. What points towards status-seeking is perhaps the strong support for the relocation mechanism Luxembourg demonstrated after it had been decided on, instead of choosing a more neutral position, such as Latvia. Nevertheless, it is admittedly difficult to argue with any degree of certainty if Luxembourg actually engages in status-seeking. This will be further elaborated on in Chapter 6, which contains a discussion of the findings.

To sum up, it can be argued that Luxembourg's small state status-seeking strategy was suggested by its efforts to enhance its visibility and reputation within the EU. As the rotating EU Presidency, Luxembourg showcased its mediation skills, positioning itself as a reliable partner, and asserted a higher moral authority by championing European adherence to human rights principles and EU values. Through these efforts, Luxembourg strategically sought recognition and respect, solidifying its position as a valued participant in the European Union, which is in line with its major EU and foreign policy goals (e.g. Frentz, 2016; Hey, 2002). However, it remains difficult to determine whether this is a case of status-seeking, or another strategy to achieve soft power, such as nation branding.

Chapter 6: Discussion: Luxembourg, the self-interested mediator?

Based on the findings of the analysis, what can liberal intergovernmentalism and status-seeking contribute to understanding Luxembourg's support for the EU integration and the refugee relocation mechanism during 2015 Presidency? Overall, it can be argued that this policy was in line with Luxembourg's general tendency to pursue a pragmatic foreign policy approach (Lorenz, 2013), as it follows two of Luxembourg's traditional EU policy positions, namely pro-integrationism and taking on the role of mediator between states

The first part of the analysis shows that the theoretical component of liberal intergovernmentalism, which focuses on national preference formation, is helpful in examining Luxembourg's rationale behind supporting the relocation mechanism. Although the relocation mechanism was not Luxembourg's first choice to respond to the crisis (Vinciguerra, 2016), it seemed at the time that the Schengen system could falter if member states wouldn't find an alternative way to handle the "refugee crisis". In liberal intergovernmentalist theory, governments calculate the cost of cooperation vs. disintegration and choose the less costly alternative (Schimmelfenning, 2018). Considering how dependent Luxembourg is economically and politically on the EU, disintegration can hardly ever be the better alternative. In the words of MP Claude Adam during the parliamentary debate on Luxembourg's foreign and EU policy: "A country, which is as dependent on its neighbors and the European institutions as [Luxembourg] cannot afford to show a lack of solidarity" (Chambre des Députés, 2015b). This is in line with the argument of several scholars that Luxembourg's staunch defense of supranationalism is linked to a recognition that its domestic interests are best defended by cooperating with the EU (Besch & Lessing, 2016; Frentz; 2016). However, while liberal intergovernmentalism can explain why Luxembourg favors EU integration over disintegration during the crisis based on a rational cost-benefit perspective, it does not provide insight into why Luxembourg was so committed to being the constructive mediator in that file. This is where the more constructivist theory of status-seeking come into play to complement the insights.

Thus, secondly, it can be argued that the crisis in combination with Luxembourg's role as EU Council President offered Luxembourg an ideal opportunity to play out one of its main assets in EU policy: its ability to advance the EU by taking on the role of skillful mediator (e.g. Hirsch, 2015). Arguably, the spotlight created by the Presidency in combination with the difficulty of the relocation mechanism negotiations (Vinciguerra, 2016) offered Luxembourg an ideal chance to demonstrate its mediation skills and an "opportunity to showcase our attachment to European integration" ("La Présidence est une chance pour notre pays", 2015; TBA). This was particularly important in light of the government's nation-

branding campaign launched simultaneously with the Presidency, which was hoped to improve Luxembourg's reputation as it suffered some cracks due to the Luxleaks sandals (e.g. Jean Asselborn, 2015). As explained in Chapter 4, reputation, identity, and status are linked, and a state can better its ranking in the hierarchy of statuses by receiving positive recognition from greater powers in the international, or in this case European, arena (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015). Arguably, therefore, Luxembourg's efforts to boost its image as the "craftsman of compromise" (Hirsch, 2015) was part of a status-seeking exercise, during which Luxembourg attempted to maintain (or even improve) its respected position in the European Union. This is important, as it seems based on the literature on Luxembourg that this reputation as mediator and pro-European state is what Luxembourg's status in the EU is built on (e.g., Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021; Bossart, 2018). In addition, maintaining this reputation is an important foreign policy strategy of the Grand-Duchy (Frentz, 2016). Frentz maintains that Luxembourg needs to defend its respected position in a growing EU and therefore "finds itself obliged to constantly prove the reliability and worth of its contributions" (Frentz, 2016, p.139). This supports the argument that Luxembourg engages in status-seeking during the Presidency to 'remind' the other member states of its value as a mediator, especially in such difficult negotiations.

There are two main limitations to this theoretical insight. First, taking on the role of mediator between member states and supporting the EU Commission is part of the institutional role of the EU Council Presidency (European Council, n.d.a; Vinciguerra, 2016). Therefore, it could be argued that Luxembourg's advocacy for other member states to agree on the relocation mechanism proposed by the EU Commission is simply based on trying to meet the basic expectations during the Presidency and that there are no further objectives pursued. However, while it is likely true that Luxembourg did indeed take on the role of mediator as part of its institutional responsibilities, I argue that it cannot be reduced completely to this. First, Luxembourg was much more dedicated to the relocation mechanism than most other states in general (e.g. Info@ULB, n.d.; Brady, 2021), and remained dedicated to the principle of burden-sharing well after the Presidency (e.g. Georgiev, 2022). In addition, Luxembourg was from the beginning of the Presidency very proactive in the negotiations of the relocation mechanism, surpassing the institutional expectations of the Presidency (Vaznonytė, 2022). On top of this, Luxembourg's national branding strategy that was specifically launched for the event of the Presidency is clearly aimed at portraying Luxembourg as a "constrictive partner that one can rely on" (Message du Premier Ministre Xavier Bettel, 2015). The latter, linked to the overwhelming data referring to the importance of Luxembourg taking on its traditional role as a mediator during this Presidency shows that this is key in Luxembourg's foreign policy beyond the EU Council Presidency.

Secondly, while it seems reasonable to believe that Luxembourg was engaging in some sort of nation branding strategy, which is linked to soft power (Sprinelli, 2021), the data that was accessible is

admittedly not sufficient to determine with certainty if Luxembourg was indeed specifically engaging in status-seeking. While some findings point towards status-seeking, such as Luxembourg's clear efforts to pose as a reliable partner in a multilateral set-up or as a 'morally good power', other elements of status-seeking do not show up in an obvious way. For instance, the status-seeking theory maintains that small states compete with their peer group for the status of being the best 'good power', which is allowed to share the limelight with the Great Powers (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015). However, I could not find any indication of Luxembourg competing with any other small states in this regard.

In addition, status-seeking theory usually focuses on the Great Powers, such as the US, and their international political endeavors, mostly linked to peace and security (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2014; Wohlforth et al., 2017). Arguably, the EU offers a different framework. While Luxembourg supports Germany, which is said to be the leading EU power at that time (e.g. Karolewski & Benedikter), the Grand-Duchy also offered full support to the Commission, as expected of the EU Council Presidency (Vinciguerra, 2015). This is also in line with Luxembourg's traditional approach during its Council Presidency (Frentz, 2016). Then again, the Commission's prosal for the relocation mechanism has been heavily influenced by German preferences (Vinciguerra, 2016; Karolewski & Benedikter, 2018). In the end, in a multilateral context such as the EU, in which supranational actors play a role in decision-making, it is not as easy to pin the 'Great Powers' that small states are supposedly trying to get positive recognition from, or if the 'Great Powers' could potentially even be institutions.

Moreover, status-seeking theory pertains that small are recognized as good states by Great Power for contributing a small part to the maintenance of international peace and security (Carvalho & Neumann, 2014). This theoretical base is not ideal for studying the much smaller unit of the EU arena, in which concerns about peace and security in the traditional sense were not an issue. It could, however, be argued that while Luxembourg was not supporting a Great Power in the management of the international system, it was supporting the EU Commission and Germany in the attempt to reinstall a functional Schengen area and to appease the conflict between member states on the distribution of asylum seekers. In a way, this could be said to be a form of "system maintenance" within the context of the EU (Wohlforth et al., 2018). Again, the EU offers a different framework to study status-seeking than international politics as theorized by status-seeking theory (Wohlforth et al., colleagues, 2018; Carvalho & Neumann; 2014). Further research, with a different set of data, ideally, interviews with Luxembourgish decision-makers, would be necessary to determine if status-seeking was indeed the goal of Luxembourg's policy position, or if it was another form of 'soft-power seeking'.

Further research

In the end, it can be concluded that Luxembourg's policy stance on the relocation mechanism is in line with its general EU policy strategy, as has been outlined in the literature review. However, it would be somewhat unfair to ascribe Luxembourg's support for EU solidarity and burden-sharing completely to self-interested and pragmatic motivations, such as elevating its status and securing its economic prosperity. While it fell outside the theoretical framework established for this case study and was therefore not included in the analysis, I came across a relatively important amount of evidence suggesting the ideological factors and Luxembourgish public opinion are also important to take into account.

Luxembourg is widely seen as a deeply "Europeanized" society, in which the government's pro-integrationist attitude rests on widespread public support (e.g. Besch & Lessing, 2016; Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021). In 2016, foreign residents, mostly from EU countries, made up around 46.7 percent of the Luxembourgish population (Besch & Lessing, 2016), which, according to Harmsen & Högenauer (2021) has consequences for the population's psychological set-up and pro-European attitude beyond economic considerations. In Eurobarometer surveys, between 80 and 90 percent of the Luxembourgish population indicate that they feel like European citizens (Harmsen & Högenauer, 2021). Some even argue that being pro-European is part of Luxembourg's DNA (Besch & Lessing, 2016). Lastly, Luxembourgish citizens were even awarded the Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen for services to European integration in 1986 (Besch & Lessing, 2016). Therefore, further interest would be interesting to determine to what extent such 'pro-European feelings' can create a true sense of collective European solidarity, and willingness to share burdens with other EU member states, especially when it comes to sensitive topics such as migration.

Based on this, an interesting theoretical perspective for further research could be a post-functionalist analysis of EU integration. Post-functionalism moves away from a purely rationalist understanding of EU integration and contends that national identity, ideology, and public opinion play an important role in EU integration and disintegration (Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Kuhn, 2019). In the case of Luxembourg, this could become particularly interesting in the common years: in the national elections of October 2023, the populist, right-wing party, and Eurocritic party ADR (Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei) made relatively strong electoral advances, while being previously marginalized (Camut, 2023; De Jonge, 2019). It will remain interesting to see if the rise of such a party indicates a shift in Luxembourgish public opinion on EU integration and solidarity, and if this shift in public opinion could influence the pragmatic course of Luxembourg's EU policy, which is to a large extent based on economic and political dependence.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

To conclude, this research set out to understand the underlying reasons behind Luxembourg's strong support for the refugee relocation mechanism during the 2015 Presidency by conducting an in-depth, deductive case study based on the complementary analytical framework of liberal intergovernmentalism and small state status-seeking. The findings showed that to understand Luxembourg's stance, one has to take into account its dependency on the EU, both economically as well as politically, as well as its foreign policy approach that is heavily centered on soft power and maintaining an active participation in a robust, well-integrated EU.

Liberal intergovernmentalism is well suited to provide a multifaceted explanation of Luxembourg's support for the relocation mechanism in 2015. According to this perspective, Luxembourg's push for the relocation mechanism aligns with the theory's premise that states act in their rational self-interest, driven by economic and political considerations (e.g. Moravcsik 1998). Despite not being one of the main destination countries in terms of total numbers, Luxembourg's proportional impact of the migration pressure was significant. More importantly, however, as a small nation highly dependent on open borders and an integrated European economy, any disruption in the Schengen agreement had severe economic repercussions. This dependency created a strong incentive for Luxembourg to advocate for the relocation mechanism, ensuring an orderly distribution of migrants and a return to open borders. Furthermore, Luxembourg's political structure reinforces its commitment to EU integration, and the lack of domestic backlash over migration issues allowed the government to pursue its traditional pro-integrationist path. As a very small state, it recognizes the importance of integrating into a larger unit for security and stability. EU integration is not just a preference but a necessity for Luxembourg's national and domestic security.

When it comes to small state status-seeking, an analysis of Luxembourg's approach during the Schengen crisis reveals a conscious effort by Luxembourgish policymakers to engage in nation branding, which could potentially be understood status-seeking behavior as described by Neumann and Carvalho (2014). The small-state status-seeking strategy, which emphasizes "being noticed or seen" as a "good power" (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015 p.2), was suggested by Luxembourg's efforts to present itself as a good and reliable partner within the European Union. This strategy encompassed the demonstration of higher moral authority, by emphasizing human rights and so-called EU values, and the positioning of Luxembourg as a constructive mediator.

The data analysis revealed, firstly, that Luxembourg continuously emphasized its role as a reliable partner within the EU framework. Arguably, the country strategically used its position as the rotating EU Presidency to demonstrate its ability to effectively mediate and find common ground among member states on the difficult issue of refugee relocation, with the ultimate goal of reinforcing its identity as a constructive and reliable EU partner. Second, the data suggests that Luxembourg put an effort into demonstrating 'higher moral authority, which could be understood as part of a deliberate effort to strengthen its status within the EU. By championing European humanitarian values and emphasizing the importance of respecting international and EU conventions Luxembourg positioned itself as a defender of moral principles and EU values. In particular Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, articulated strong rhetoric rooted in human rights and EU values, separating Luxembourg from those states that did not want to participate in the relocation mechanism.

However, some elements of status-seeking, such as the relation to the hegemonic power, the contribution to international peace and security, or the competition with other small states for recognition from the Great Powers were not so evidently detectible in the set of data available for this research. Therefore, while it is arguably clear that Luxembourg was engaging in some form of nation branding during the Presidency, further research would need to be conducted to obtain a more nuanced understanding of what the nature of this nation branding is, and if it can be defined as status-seeking.

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