



## **A TRANSIT FORTRESS: DECONSTRUCTING THE LOGIC OF RISK IN CZECH REPUBLIC'S INTERNAL BORDER CONTROLS, 2020-2024**

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### ***Abstract***

The free movement in the Schengen Area was gradually eroded by the reintroduction of Internal Border Controls (IBC), a trend currently being pursued not only by destination countries but also by transit countries such as the Czech Republic. Current literature largely employs securitization analysis with underlying existential threats, yet this approach fails to capture the logic underlying transit countries' policies. This paper aims to deconstruct the Czech Republic's IBC policy for 2020-2024, arguing that it is driven by a preventive logic of riskification. Through qualitative discourse analysis of government documents and secondary data, the study uncovers three aspects of riskification. First, the grammar justifies policies based on potential risks such as pandemics and the domino effect of migration pressure. Second, the locus of policy management of referential objects is not only migrants but also “what they carry” as evidenced by joint forces and random checks. Third, the performative effects of these policies create a new long-term border governance through intensive cooperation and joint patrols with neighbouring countries. This study demonstrates how risk management logic consistently erodes core principles of European integration, sacrificing for security measures to manage borders against future potential risks.

**Keywords:** Czech Republic; internal border control; riskification; Schengen; transit

## Introduction

Europe is arguably one of the most research-interesting continents in the realm of border policy. In 1997, Europe officially marked the historical milestone and altered the global paradigm of border studies via the Schengen Agreement, which marked the beginning of an open border policy that currently provides for the principle of free movement among its 25+4 member states (European Commission, 2025). Yet, over time, the core principle of free movement has been seriously challenged. The post-Arab Spring crisis in 2015 triggered a mass influx of asylum seekers, the vast majority of whom sought protection in Europe (Statista, 2024). Consequently, Europe has been forced to sacrifice the free-movement value due to the threat posed by this uncontrolled mass influx which often disrupts national sovereignty and governance. This has led to a new normal of European border policy, which maintains the principle of free movement with ‘exceptions’. Such ‘exceptions’ are, in fact, aligned with Chapter III of the Schengen Border Code (SBC) that regulates the reintroduction of Internal Border Control—hereafter IBC, a protocol that serves as a key requirement for Schengen member states to be granted permission to reintroduce border controls as a last resort in their domestic governance (European Union, 2016).

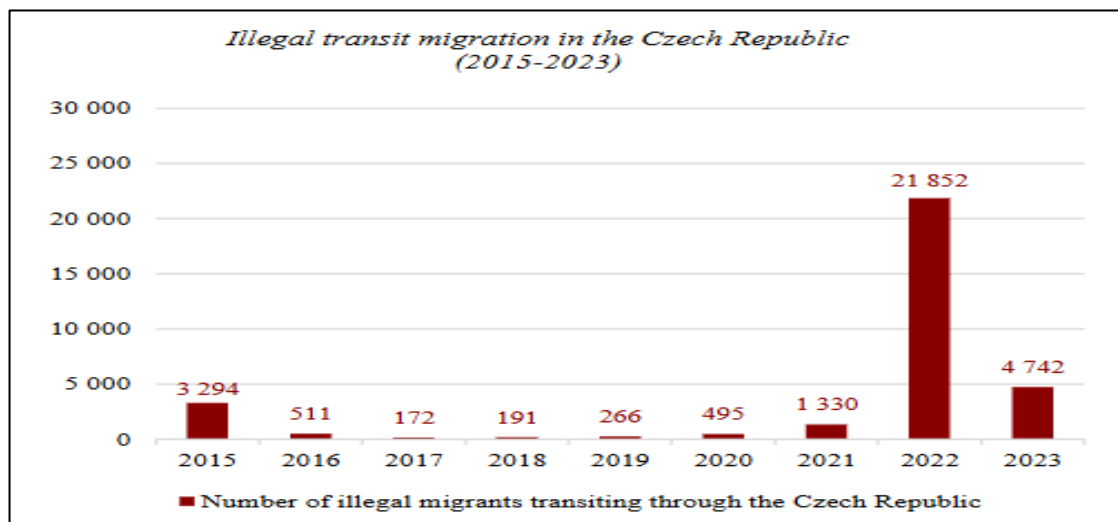
As this mechanism became mainstream at this time, synthesis began to feature in discussions regarding the principle of free movement in Europe. The migration issue proved significant enough that academics began to cast doubt on the survival of Schengen (Colombeau, 2019; Wassenberg, 2020). A recent interpretation by scholars suggests that European countries’ decision to reintroduce their IBCs to address the refugee crisis is an effort toward securitization. Narratives such as ‘serious threat’ which are frequently used as the primary justification, along with the use of security instruments in their implementation, are undeniably linked to the logic of managing existential threats through securitization (European Union, 2025; Kabata, 2022). Most of the countries that have consistently implemented IBC since then are the primary destinations for immigrants, such as Germany, Austria, France, and others (Fürst, 2023). This underscores the interconnection between migration issues in Europe and security discourses—often referred to as the migration-security nexus (Weiner, 1992).

Nevertheless, these contemporary developments have revived the debate over Europe’s borders. The Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 was a pivotal point when most

Schengen member states brought back their IBCs for prolonged periods, regardless of whether their countries were primary destinations for immigrants or not (Guild, 2021). This period was a crucial moment because, since then, the implementation of IBC has become the new normal within the Schengen framework when the pandemic is associated with major issues such as people movement. In fact, countries which are categorized as transit countries have also reintroduced IBC policies, such as the Czech Republic, Belgium, Austria, and Germany, all of which are dealing with the secondary movement countries that often serve as transit points for immigrants before they reach their final destination (Czech Statistical Office, 2023b; European Union, 2025; Radjenovic, 2017). Looking at the logic laid out in the SBC, this dynamic suggests that transit countries for immigrants have come to perceive the main migration channels as being just as dangerous as being the final destination for immigrants.

This reality has become a portal for countries that encounter the secondary movements to 're-enforce' their national sovereignty in the governance of their borders. Among these transit countries, the Czech Republic has seen a significant increase in illegal transit cases over the past three to four years.

**Figure 1 — Data on the increase in secondary-movement criminal activities in the Czech Republic 2015-2023.**



Source: Šenk et al. (2024).

This significant rise, especially in 2022 and 2023, becomes reasonable when considering the fact that the Czech Republic is one of the transit countries facing two major migration routes in Europe, namely the Eastern and the Balkan routes (Frontex, 2024). Its geographical location at the heart of Europe and its strategic position relative

to immigrant destination countries—such as France, Spain, and others—make the occurrence of secondary movements in the Czech Republic unavoidable. This is one of the main reasons why the Czech government has reintroduced internal border controls in certain periods.

The evidence above underpins the notion that the nexus between migration and security is strengthening in transit countries such as the Czech Republic, while at the same time suggesting that conventional explanations of securitization remain inadequate to explain this case. The threat posed by migrants who are ‘just’ transiting cannot be equated with the threat faced in the migrants’ destination countries—where existential threats directly threaten state governance and social stability. In transit countries such as the Czech Republic, data on illegal transit migration does not represent a direct threat to governance, but a potential threat due to the absence of legal documents and other factors.

Herein lies the relevance of a new paradigm shift in security studies. The current discourse on the intersection of migration and security in European border studies is overly dominated by securitization analysis and an emphasis on existential threats (Asderaki & Markozani, 2021; Ceccorulli, 2019; Jacobs & Kabata, 2024). Scholars such as Corry (2012) and Paul (2024) argue that contemporary security logic has shifted from defending the real threats to preventing risk. Risk security, which offers a scientific perspective as a new synthesis in the reintroduction of IBC, remains limited to a broader level of analysis—Europe (Karamanidou & Kasperek, 2022). Therefore, this article seeks to fill the gap left by securitization analysis with the concept of *riskification* by Corry (2012) whose main argument is that threats are concrete and identifiable, while risks are potential—a future danger that must be anticipated and mitigated before it materializes.

This research argues that the Czech Republic reintroduced the IBC not based on the logic of existential threats of classical securitization but on the logic of potential risks. This study attempts to deconstruct the Czech Republic’s IBC in 2020-2024, an intense period of border policy implementation. With this argument, this study aims to provide an in-depth empirical contribution to the case study of the Czech Republic, a transit country that is often neglected in European migration literature compared to primary destination countries. This paper also theoretically seeks to expand studies on the application of riskification concepts in the analysis of internal border policies, an area that remains under-explored compared to external borders. By highlighting the shift from the

logic of existential threat to the logic of risk, this study offers critical insights into the future of the Schengen Area and the challenges it faces, showing how preventive measures that seem rational can erode a key pillar of European integration.

## Literature Review

### *Understanding Riskification: The Grammar of Risk Security Vs. Securitization*

In deconstructing the case of the Czech Republic and its IBC policy, this article uses an analytical lens in the form of *riskification*. This conceptual framework represents a development of an existing concept, namely Securitization. The distinction between the two concepts is highlighted by Corry (2012) because, according to his observation, contemporary security policy practices are increasingly dominated by ‘risk’ justifications—grounding the legitimacy of security policies in prevention, probability, and the management of risk diffusion—rather than countering or defending against actual threats. However, for him, the Copenhagen School’s concept of securitization does not yet accommodate this logical shifting since its traditional definition still relies on speech acts that successfully legitimize extraordinary actions by referencing existential threats. The issue, for him, is that if the logic of *riskification* differs from the securitization paradigm, then there must be a clear conceptual distinction to avoid homogenizing analyses across different studies, thereby maintaining the analytical sharpness of a security policy.

Therefore, Corry attempts to provide a new synthesis by combining the classical concept of securitization in the Copenhagen school with the logic of Risk Society taken from the theses of scholars such as Beck and Foucault (in Corry, 2012). The combination of these two concepts rests on how the concept of securitization stands as the primary tool defining the justification for extraordinary policies due to existential threats targeting the referent object (the state), and how the concept of the risk society offers a new paradigm for reinterpreting the ‘threats’ cited as justification for security policies. The risk-security literature of Beck adopted in Corry’s concept of *riskification* argues that in a society living in the midst of modernity, the dangers that are sought to be managed tend to be a set of manufactured risks, such as climate change or global terrorism (in Corry, 2012). For Beck, the idea of control and certainty collapses, and security shifts from the logic of ‘to defend’ to ‘managing uncertainty.’ Moreover, Foucault’s perspective adopted in this

concept is one that interprets risk not merely as a sociological feature adopted by society through risk society but also as a governmentality rationale. For Foucault, the state actively governs through risk. It means it uses the concept of *riskification* as a tool to legitimize the expansion of power technologies such as surveillance, profiling, and monitoring of the population, thereby bringing more aspects of life under government control (in Corry, 2012).

The combination of Securitization logic and Risk Society produces a risk-security paradigm with the concept of *riskification* which offers three main distinctions from the concept of Securitization. The first is the **Grammar**. This aspect tries to differentiate between the interpretation of existential threats and potential risks. The second one is the **locus of political imperatives**, which is, in this case study, trying to identify the locus of security policy based on the construction of causal hazards. And the last is the **performative effects** of politics and permanent governance, which it shows from its name, that focuses on how the policy affects on how the actor builds new permanent government for the upcoming risk measures.

## Research Method

This paper employs a qualitative descriptive research approach which relies on the ability of this method to describe, record, analyse, and interpret the conditions that exist in a phenomenon (Mardalis, 2003). This study aims to describe information as it is, based on the available variables. Therefore, the author chose this research method with the hope of explaining effectively how the Czech Republic perceives its status as a transit country and relates it to the domestic security risk context through internal border controls from 2020 to 2024.

In consequence, this descriptive analysis will be based on document-based data and secondary data sources. These data are obtained from primary documents on the Czech Republic's IBC for the period 2020-2024, as well as all secondary sources related to the direct implementation of the Czech Republic's IBC to enrich existing perspectives and facts (Lamont, 2022). These primary data sources will be obtained from—but not limited to—document databases, government statements, and interview reports that are scattered across the internet (Lamont, 2022).

In order to analyse it, the data obtained will be interpreted using a discourse analysis model. Discourse analysis is used because of its ability to provide linguistic interpretations of each piece of documentary evidence and secondary data (Lamont, 2022). These linguistic interpretations will focus on intersubjective understanding of who is interpreted as what in each piece of available evidence in order to understand how linguistic interpretations describe the phenomenon of IBC in the Czech Republic in dealing with human migration and its status as a transit country.

## Result

The three aspects of *riskification* above will be explored in the case study of the Czech Republic as a transit country that constantly faces the phenomenon of secondary movement. In fact, this phenomenon has led to consistent IBC policies, as illustrated by the following timeline:

**Table 1 — Notification and Allocation of the Czech's IBC 2020-2024**

Date	Dur	Notifications	Joint Forces
14/03/2020 - 30/06/2020	108 days	coronavirus Covid-19; land borders with Austria and Germany, air borders.	Health Workers, Police
01/07/2020 - 28/09/2022	790 days	—VACUUM—	
29/09/2022 - 12/12/2022	74 days	Irregular migration, activity of organised groups of smugglers; the land border with the Slovak Republic	Customs, Police
12/12/2022 - 04/02/2023	54 days	High pressure of irregular migration in transit, activity of organised groups of smugglers, deterioration of the migratory and security situation at the EU's external borders; the land border with the Slovak Republic	Customs, Military, Police
05/02/2022 - 03/10/2022	240 days	—VACUUM—	
04/10/2023 - 02/02/2024	121 days	Significant increase in illegal secondary migration; increase in activity of organised groups of smugglers; deterioration of the migration and security situation at the EU's external borders; internal borders with Slovakia.	Customs, Military, Police

Source: compiled by the author.

Guided by this timeline and allocation system, the interpretation of the implementation of IBC as a security policy by the Czech government will be analyzed based on the three main components of the *riskification* concept in the following sections: (1) *Grammar* of the IBC Policy in the Czech Republic; (2) *Locus of its political*



*imperatives; (3) Performative effects and long-term governance* built by the reintroduction of Czech's IBC.

***Grammar: The Rationale for the Czech's IBC and the Schengen-Sovereignty Dilemma***

According to Corry (2012), the primary factor that enables a security policy to be considered *riskification* is how policymakers justify the rationale behind the policy—referred to as "Grammar". In this context, this rationale can be identified by analyzing how the Czech Republic, as the authority and sovereign entity controlling its borders, implements the IBC policy during the period from 2020 to 2024. For this purpose, in this section, the author will attempt to analyze how relevant government agencies in the Czech Republic identify the underlying threats justifying the implementation of this policy and how this policy is perceived as a second-order security measure to prevent potential constitutive causes in the future. Indeed, all the grammatical evidence that can be analyzed indicates that the logical basis for the Czech Republic's IBC policy during this period was risk narrative. The dynamics of this policy, which was initially based on health risks—the Covid-19 pandemic—and left room for compromise with economically oriented policies, has slowly shifted towards a full security-oriented policy, intensifying the presence of the *Schengen-sovereignty dilemma*.

A review of official Czech border regime documents reveals that the initial justification for reintroducing the IBC on **March 18, 2020**—the first time the Czech Republic has reintroduced this policy since 2015—is indeed rooted in a narrative of second-order security. This is based on an official statement from the Czech Ministry of the Interior stating that they would close most of their land borders with Germany and Austria, as well as all their air borders, on the premise of an “imminent threat to public order and internal security caused by the spread of Covid-19” (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 2020a, 2020b; Tvoříme Evropu, 2020). This is consistent with the Czech government's justification submitted to the European Commission, namely ‘coronavirus Covid-19’ (see **Table 1**). In its official documents, the Czech Ministry of the Interior explicitly stated that these extraordinary measures were deemed necessary under the State Border Protection Acts and Article 28(1) of the Schengen Border Code (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 2020a). From this, it can be interpreted that the Czech Ministry of the Interior, as the primary authority for national border management, has



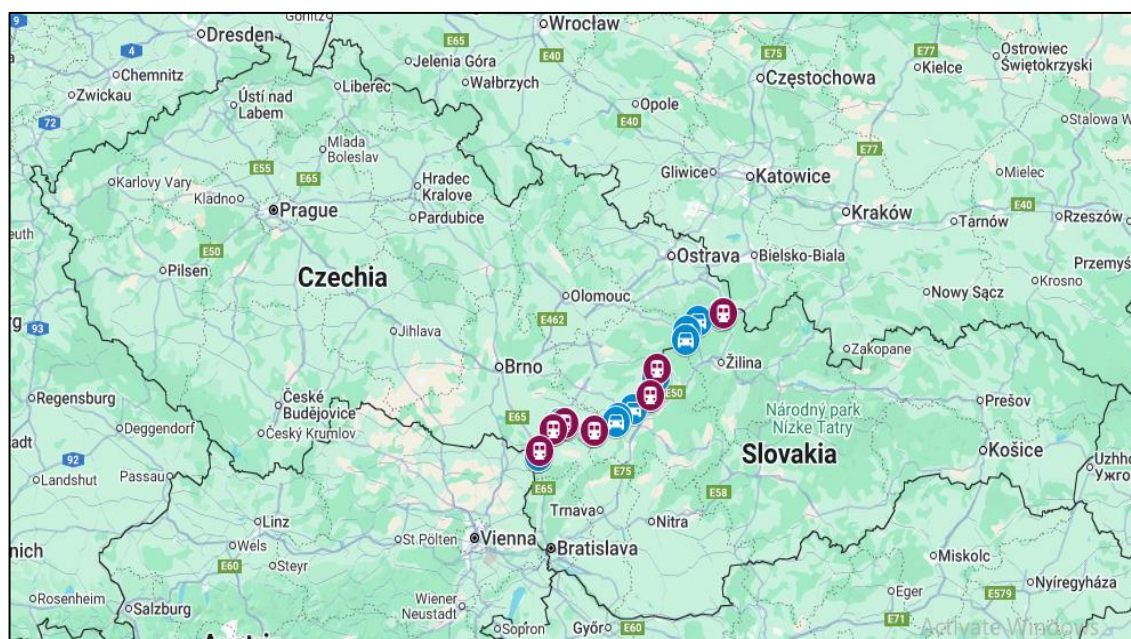
identified Covid-19 as an imminent threat. Although in its official documents the Czech government claims this measure to be an extraordinary approach—based on Article 28 (1) of the SBC, which interprets the IBC as a last resort (European Union, 2016)—which is grammatically closer to the logic of securitization, the identification of Covid-19 as the permissive cause for the government to implement this policy cannot be separated when the logic of public stability and internal security becomes the main concern. This narrative builds a clear perception of risk from the Czech Republic that if the borders are not closed, it will create an imminent threat that will truly have an effect on national instability and security. This logic is highly related to the definition of second-order security, which is based on the constitutive cause of a greater threat if a security policy is not immediately taken.

Another factor that further strengthens the basis for the IBC policy as a measure to address potential risks rather than an existential threat is the fact that the Czech government made compromises during and after its implementation. This further compromise is also the beginning of the so-called *Schengen-sovereignty dilemma* in this chapter. The above argument is underlied by the fact that in its development, the IBC policy, which was initially designed to last only four days, had to be extended five times—until June 30, 2020, or 107 days—with the control design also undergoing changes, including slightly relaxing land border controls to a random check mechanism (Atoz, 2020; Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 2020c; Prague Morning, 2020). After June 30, 2020, Covid-19 was no longer cited as the reason for implementing the Czech Republic's IBC, although some restrictions on certain health procedures remained in place (Castorina, 2021). For then-Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, the lifting of these controls was a step toward relaxing restrictions to normalize the Czech economy (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020). In fact, the reintroduction of the IBC did have a significant economic impact on the Czech Republic due to its considerable effects on cross-border workers (Haist & Novotný, 2023), although during its implementation the Czech government made some adjustments that exempted cross-border travel for business purposes (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022). Through this fact, it can be observed that even though Covid-19 posed a serious threat at that time, including to other European countries that also implemented their own border controls (Montaldo, 2020), compromises were still made in the business sector. This contrasts with the logic of

securitization, which dictates that extraordinary measures should not be compromised because the threat is existential. The Czech Republic's compromising behavior aligns more closely with the *riskification* narrative, where a security policy must be compromised with the logic that the risk occurrence is still a possibility. However, it is also important to note that this compromise, aside from being a manifestation of a strong risk logic, is also an indication that the *Schengen-sovereignty dilemma* was truly considered during this period, where Schengen—with its free movement—is operated based on business logic, while sovereignty is operated based on the logic of protecting every aspect of the state.

Since July 30, 2020, the Czech Republic had not implemented the IBC for at least two years until it was reintroduced in **September 2022**. The second implementation of the IBC was particularly intensive, as it was only suspended for eight months before it was resumed until February 2024, based on the same underlying notification: pressure from illegal migration at the Western Balkans entry points (see **Table 1**). This prompted the Czech Republic to immediately request the implementation of IBC on September 29, 2022, at its border with Slovakia, citing “a 1,200% increase in illegal migration in the Czech Republic and zero tolerance for organized crime,” with the following implementation points.

**Figure 2 — Czech's IBC Implementation Points for 2022-2024 at the Border with Slovakia.**



Source: Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic (2022).

The implementation during this period had been extended until February 2023 with varying extension durations. It also saw a shift in justification to “the increase in cross-border activities by organized smuggling groups, transit, and the deteriorating migration and security situation at the external borders of the European Union” in the submission at the end of 2022 (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023f). This shift in rationale will certainly be noted, but after the implementation of the IBC was temporarily halted, another point worth noting is that the October 2023 application for the implementation of the IBC also experienced a shift in its justification, namely “illegal secondary movements and effectively hindering smuggling groups” (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 2022d, 2023a, 2023d, 2023b, 2023e, 2023c, 2024). The above shift in rationale is supported by the fact that the legal basis for the implementation of the IBC by the Czech Republic also changed, from initially being based on Article 28(1) of the SBC—which had a more “policy to address direct effects” nuance—to Article 25 of the SBC—which had a “policy as a regular procedure” nuance (Honusková & Zaimović, 2024). These shifts in background are certainly worth discussing as they reflect the Czech government’s evolving approach to potential risks. The initial background was based on the fact of “increased illegal migration in Europe,” which developed into a more specific and nationally sovereign-oriented reason, namely “protecting state governance from cross-border and criminal acts,” which reflects the possibility of increased danger if this illegal migration pressure is not immediately addressed by tightening border security. The reasons related to secondary movements and the handling of smuggling groups clearly reflect that the resurgence of illegal migration could become a constitutive cause of danger to the national governance of the Czech Republic, even if it does not directly harm it. The shift in the legal framework also demonstrates the Czech Republic’s commitment to implementing the IBC as a form of second-order security focused on preventing potential security threats, even if the legal framework must be adjusted accordingly.

However, besides the above facts that clearly indicate the use of *riskification* in the implementation of the IBC during this period, the other evidence also shows the development of the *Schengen-sovereignty dilemma* into a more security-oriented nuance without any compromises. Prime Minister Petr Fiala, at the beginning of the reintroduction of the IBC, stated, “We must take these preventive measures... to prevent illegal migrants from using this route” (iROZHLAS, 2022). This is closely linked to some

news reports indicating that the German government, as a destination country for immigrants bordering the Czech Republic, has also pressured its government to urgently implement the IBC to facilitate the management of existential threats in their country (Seznam Zprávy, 2022). This was further confirmed by Interior Minister Vít Rakušan's statement that the IBC policy must be implemented by the Czech Republic as a consequence of the domino effect of migration in Europe (Česká televize, 2023). This fact emphasizes that the Czech Republic developed more security-oriented nuance in this period since they are actually facing not an immediate threat but rather the long-term negative effects that may also be a consideration if this policy is not adopted. This also highlights the escalation of the dilemma between the principle of free movement and national sovereignty that has led to the Czech Republic re-emphasizing its sovereignty over border control, making it increasingly intensive and seemingly becoming the new normal. The *dilemma*, which initially still had room for compromise in the economic sector, has gradually shifted to prioritize security interests and the orientation toward national sovereignty to control its own borders.

### ***Locus of Political Imperative: Who Is the Problem?***

Another important point for Corry (2012) to analyze is how the locus of the security policy has shifted in terms of its objectives. Corry states that in the design of the implementation of actions based on *riskification* policies, the focus is on regulating or managing reference objects that are considered as threats, rather than focusing on measures to defend against those threats, as seen in securitization. For this reason, in this section, the author will begin the analysis by outlining the evidence of the implementation of IBC by the Czech Republic as an effort to reduce the degree of potential risk posed by migration as the reference object. As a consequence, evidence reveals that the Czech Republic clearly views migrant flows as the primary referent object that must be managed by joint forces consisting not only of police but also other units, depending on the specific referent object they are addressing during the first and second phases. This not only elevates the migration-security nexus from an existential threat to a potential risk; it also signifies that the reference object of migration is no longer solely the human beings but also what they 'carry' with them.

The first is regarding the allocation of border guard units deployed by the majority of the Czech National Police, which demonstrates a serious approach to handling the referential objects mentioned in the document. Existentially, the distribution of police station posts in the Czech border region is evenly spread, with control organized by each district police department (Policie České republiky, 2024). The existence of these police station posts in the border region will undoubtedly facilitate force allocation if extraordinary circumstances such as IBC must be implemented. During the initial implementation of IBC during the Covid-19 pandemic, Czech Police Colonel Ondřej Moravčík stated that, as part of emergency response measures, all Czech police forces had additional responsibilities for deploying personnel under IBC policies and for restricting mobility through random land-based checks and inspections of domestic flights (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 2020c; Policie České republiky, 2020). The organized deployment of police forces continued during the intensive implementation of IBC from 2022 to 2024 (see **Table 1**). Since its reintroduction in September 2022, this iteration of the IBC had involved an even larger deployment, with over 500 police officers mobilized from various posts—not just police stations bordering Slovakia (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 2022e; Policie České republiky, 2023). Indeed, during this second phase, the deployment of police forces gradually decreased along with the intensity of the situation, which also relaxed over time. However, the fact that the Czech Republic systematically and strategically deploys police forces at border posts and even beyond border posts demonstrates their commitment to ‘managing’ the risks associated with human movement, whether due to the rising number of epidemic-related cases or various incidents stemming from irregular migration. Additionally, according to a report by Lazarova (2023), the cost of extending the IBC during this session was quite high—approximately Kč50 million. This indicates that there is a potential increase in security risks from both of these issues, which are being addressed by deploying police forces and allocating significant funds to conduct inspections of civilians, who are the primary referent object of these operations.

The management of these referent objects was further enhanced by the deployment of additional forces beyond the police force, which also demonstrated the extent of the migration-security nexus with justification that no longer relied exclusively on existential threats but was instead based on potential risks that must be managed not only by security



forces. During the Covid-19 pandemic, health workers were deployed in both land and air sectors to carry out specific health procedures for border crossers entering and exiting the Czech Republic (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2020). In the second period, hundreds of military and customs personnel were also deployed to perform checks on the carried goods of migrants, who were also the referent objects in question, with the aim of increasing the risk—in this case, smuggling (see **Table 1**) (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 2022f). Although the number of military and customs personnel fluctuated in the context of the second period in line with the number of police personnel, this does not negate the fact that the Czech Republic's border guard apparatus—comprising a combination of these three forces—does not only consider humans as the primary focus but also other threats that could pose potential risks, namely health administration and smuggling-prone luggage. This analysis complements the focus of the Czech Republic's IBC policy implementation plan, which, once they became aware of the increased health risks and irregular migration risks, promptly established a border guard system that incorporated various border agencies to reduce the risk levels associated with this migration phenomenon. This trend has become the main foundation for the evolution of the migration-security nexus, which has developed into an issue that must be addressed not only through the deployment of security forces, but also through the deployment of specific task forces depending on what is considered to be the referential object of risk.

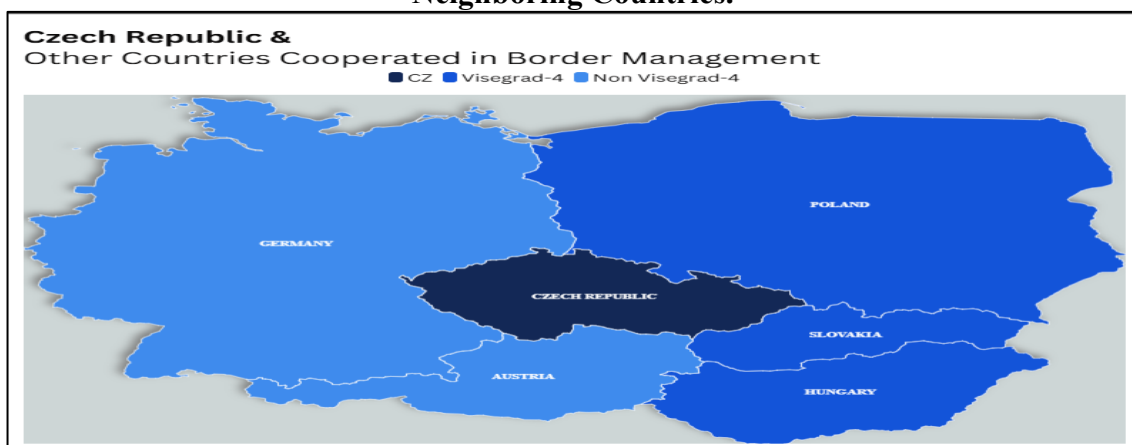
Another factor that confirms the *riskification* logic in this aspect is the implementation of a random spot check system at land borders, which has become commonly used in Czech border control mechanisms since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic until it seems to be a new normal that sacrifices Schengen core value—the free movement. This mechanism is conducted by police officers who will randomly stop certain vehicles and carry out identity and luggage checks (Expats, 2023). Interpretively, this mechanism is far from the locus of securitization-based policy which focuses on actions to defend against threats, but rather as an interpretation that the potential dangers faced are being mitigated. This reduction in potential danger is positively reflected in the data showing a decrease in illegal transit migration in 2023 to 4,742 people (Czech Statistical Office, 2023a), indicating that the random spot check system is effective in reducing potential security risks. Based on this fact, random checks, which serve as the

main indicator that the object in reference is a risk rather than an existential threat, seem to be a temporary solution presented with the expectation that this will reduce the constitutive cause that may arise. However, this actually strengthens the argument that IBC exists only as a temporary solution, an expectation that must be paid for by sacrificing free movement as the core value of Schengen itself.

### ***Performative Effects: A Long-Term Governance of The Czech Border***

No less important for Corry (2012) in applying risk logic to security policy is the resulting effect on new governance. Corry argues that new governance often arises as a consequence of *riskification* logic, as actors consider the current status quo of governance inadequately equipped to manage potential risks. Therefore, in this section, the focus of the discussion will shift to the long-term derivative policies of the IBC in developing a new border management system based on a precautionary and preemptive approach. The findings strongly indicate that Czech's IBC Policy implied how the government manages its long-term border control management in the form of border cooperation with its neighboring countries. This form of 'new border governance' also shows that the *status quo* of border governance should be improved in order to defend Czech Republic's sovereignty on its border control without prolonging IBC Policy. The map below shows the projection of the Czech Republic's connection with its neighboring countries during the period from 2020 to 2024:

**Figure 3 — Overview of Cooperation Between the Czech Republic and Its Neighboring Countries.**



Source: compiled by the author.



With that projection, the Czech Republic practically cooperated with all its neighbours, both with Visegrad-4—with Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary—or with non-Visegrad countries. Firstly, it is the communication in 2020 when the Czech Republic made significant progress in establishing new border management measures to improve the *status quo*. The Czech Republic was one of the first countries to radically implement the IBC due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as other Visegrad-4 countries adopted the same policy afterward (European Union, 2025). Although coordinated governance had not yet been established during this period, the domino effect of the Czech Republic that caused its neighboring countries to implement the same border control policies could be interpreted as a ‘rush’ to adopt policies based on the same potential risk, i.e., the pandemic. Coordinated governance regarding border control first emerged when the IBC policy was evaluated. The IBC policy, which was implemented hastily during this period, caused significant economic shock, leading to the Visegrad-4 Presidency in Poland in 2020. Border policies became a focal point, with the outcomes of the meeting contributing significantly to the border regime at four Eastern entry points of Schengen by intensifying border police cooperation among the four countries, managing security to counter illegal migration from the Eastern and the Western Balkans entry points, and lobbying on the implementation of the Frontex program (Visegrad Group, 2020). This proof shows that a ‘new border governance’ is starting to emerge through cooperation with neighboring countries, confirming the risk logic assumption that there is always a new long-term form of addressing potential risks due to the inadequacy of the current system. Although the IBC policy initially appears to be a policy adopted independently by each country, the development of communication between Visegrad-4 members in post-implementation of the IBC is a concrete manifestation of the Czech Republic’s efforts to establish new border control mechanisms by collaborating with countries facing similar concerns. In this phase, the threat of Covid-19 has triggered a domino effect in the implementation of border controls and its impact on the economies of the Czech Republic’s neighboring countries.

A new governance model in the context of cooperation with other countries also emerged in the implementation of the Czech Republic’s IBC strategy during the 2022-2024 period, where coordination was initiated even before the Czech Republic implemented this policy. Policy coordination for the IBC during this period began with

coordination with Poland, then it was followed by more comprehensive discussions with other Visegrad-4 member states at a meeting on November 24, 2022, as a continuation of the Joint Statement during Hungary's presidency in February (Polskie Radio, 2023; Smith, 2022). Although Slovakia, as the country referred to by the Czech Republic during this period, was initially resistant due to concerns that this action would be harmful to them, they eventually also implemented IBC at their border with Hungary due to the same potential risks, i.e., pressure from Western Balkan migration (European Commission, 2024; McEnchroe, 2022). After coordination with Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia had been established, during the same period, this coordination even expanded to countries outside the Visegrad-4, specifically Austria and Germany. Cooperation with these two countries took the form of enhancement of cross-border cooperation and joint patrols in the border areas of each country, promoting openness and the exchange of border security information (EU Monitor, 2023; Federal Ministry of the Interior of Germany, 2023). This fact highlights the significant shift in risk logic regarding long-term planning compared to previous periods, where communication with other countries—including those outside the Visegrad-4 group—was initiated even before the Czech Republic adopted the IBC policy, with more intensive cooperation, including joint border patrols. This underscores the Czech Republic's consistency in continuing to enhance its border management status quo by continuously updating the design of its cooperation with neighboring countries. In fact, this approach effectively emphasizes that while the Czech Republic's IBC policy has ended, the border control exists with a fresh approach and still upholds the Czech Republic's sovereignty over its own borders.

## **Conclusion**

Conclusively, by deconstructing the Czech Republic's Internal Border Control (IBC) policy in 2020-2024, it proves that the reintroduction of IBC is not based on the logic of securitization of existential threats, but rather on the logic of *riskification*—a shifting perspective that views migration not as a direct threat, but as a potential risk that must be managed. Analysis of the grammar reveals a consistent justification with the risk prevention narrative, with dynamics evident in how economic considerations were negotiated at the start of the pandemic, then shifted to more security-oriented when dealing with migration pressures. Furthermore, the locus of policy focuses on the

management of risk referential objects, where not only migrants are targeted, but also ‘what they carry’, requiring the deployment of joint forces and amplifying the security-migration nexus beyond existential threat and humanitarian issues. The implementation of random checks serves as tangible evidence of how Schengen’s core values are being sacrificed for risk mitigation. Ultimately, the performative effects of this policy create a ‘new long-term governance’. Although the IBC was not prolonged, coordination and joint patrols with neighboring countries establish a new lasting status quo. Thus, the results not only contribute empirically to the often neglected case-study of the Czech Republic as a transit country, but also theoretically expand the application of the concept of *riskification* to internal border policies, and offers critical insights into how preventive measures can erode the foundations of European integration.

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