



**UNDERSTANDING RESPONSES TO THE SYRIAN
REFUGEE INFLUX IN THE EUROPEAN UNION:
SHIFTING FROM NORMATIVITY?**

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Thesis for the Master's Program in Political Science and International Relations

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ETHICAL DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have conducted my work in accordance with academic rules and ethical behaviour at every stage from the planning of the thesis to its defence. I confirm that I have cited all ideas, information and findings that are not specific to my study, as required by the code of ethical behaviour, and that all statements not cited are my own.

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ABSTRACT

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Master's Program in Political Science and International Relations

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In light of the Syrian refugee influx, this research seeks to understand the shifting dynamics of the European Union (EU) and its member states in terms of their normative power. Using Ian Manners' notion of the EU's normative power as a foundation, the study critically scrutinizes both the policies and discourses of the EU and its member countries. This examination underscores the dichotomy between the EU's normative identity and the pragmatic strategies embraced in response to the challenges posed by the refugee influx. Utilizing discourse analysis, the research reveals the processes of securitization and externalization that have characterized the EU's approach, leading to the conceptualization of 'Fortress Europe'. The ascendancy of far-right ideologies and their influence on this transformation is also explored, elucidating the intricate interplay between political discourse and policy action. Through a comprehensive analysis, this thesis demonstrates the complexities and contradictions inherent in the EU's role: as a normative actor and as a collective political entity of member states that responds to contemporary migratory pressures. Furthermore, this study offers a significant contribution to the literature by bridging the gap between the theoretical framework of the EU as a normative power and its

practical engagements in the realm of migration. The findings underscore a shift in the EU's stance, revealing a departure from its normative identity towards a more protectionist and exclusionary approach, reminiscent of 'Fortress Europe'.

Keywords: Ian Manners, the EU, normative power, fortress Europe, securitization, Syrian refugee influx



ÖZET

AVRUPA BİRLİĞİNDEKİ SURIYELİ MÜLTECİ AKININA VERİLEN TEPKİLERİ ANLAMAK: NORMATİFLİKTEN KAYIŞ?

Çakar, Özgür

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Bu araştırma, Suriyeli mülteci akını ışığında Avrupa Birliği (AB) ve üye devletlerinin değişen dinamiklerini normatif güç kimliği açısından anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Ian Manners'ın AB'nin normatif gücü kavramını temel alan bu çalışma, AB'nin ve üye ülkelerin hem politikalarını hem de söylemlerini eleştirel bir biçimde incelemektedir. Bu inceleme, AB'nin normatif kimliği ile mülteci akınının yarattığı zorluklara yanıt olarak benimsenen pragmatik stratejiler arasındaki ikilemin altını çiziyor. Söylem analizinden yararlanan araştırma, AB'nin yaklaşımını karakterize eden ve 'Avrupa Kalesi' kavramsallaştırmasına yol açan güvenlikleştirme ve dışsallaştırma süreçlerini ortaya koyuyor. Aşırı sağ ideolojilerin yükselişi ve bunların bu dönüşüm üzerindeki etkisi de araştırılıyor ve siyasi söylem ile politika eylemi arasındaki karmaşık etkileşim aydınlatılıyor. Kapsamlı bir analiz yoluyla bu tez, AB'nin normatif bir aktör olarak ve güncel göç baskılarına yanıt veren üye devletlerin kolektif bir siyasi varlığı olarak rolünün doğasında olan karmaşıklıkları ve çelişkileri ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca bu çalışma, normatif bir güç olarak AB'nin teorik çerçevesi ile göç alanındaki pratik faaliyetleri arasındaki boşluğu doldurarak literatüre önemli bir katkı sunmaktadır.

Bulgular, AB'nin duruşundaki bir deęişimin altını çiziyor; normatif kimliğinden 'Avrupa Kalesi'ni anımsatan daha korumacı ve dışlayıcı bir yaklaşıma doğru bir sapmayı ortaya koyuyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ian Manners, AB, normatif güç, kale Avrupası, güvenlikleştirme, Suriyeli mülteci akını



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The founding purpose of the European Union (EU) is a complex topic that has attracted considerable academic interest. The EU was primarily established to promote economic cooperation, ensuring that the countries of Europe would be so intertwined economically that they could never go to war with one another again. It was also founded to foster peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law among its member states. Haas developed the theory of “neofunctionalism,” which explains how economic integration leads to political integration (Haas, 1958). The EU is also widely recognized as a normative power within the international arena. Its promotion of democratic values, human rights, the rule of law, and its commitment to multilateralism have established its reputation as a normative force in global affairs. The EU's emphasis on cooperation, diplomacy, and soft power tools has further contributed to its recognition and influence as a normative power. While norm means “predetermined pattern, the rule to be followed”, the word normative is used to mean “that which sets the limits and standards of behavior patterns, reveals what should be” (Vatandaş, 2018, p. 154). Per Manners' articulation (2002), normative power encapsulates the capacity to mold and define the predominant paradigms characterizing “normativity” within the realm of international relations. By setting standards, promoting norms, and influencing behavior, normative powers play a crucial role in defining and shaping the accepted norms and practices within the international system (Manners, 2002). In other words, it is the ability to bring a new breath, level, approach and normal to the realistic protectionist nature of IR. Rather than shaping the concept of normal with the policies it followed during the Syrian refugee influx, the EU has surrendered to the normal realist nature of IR in this process. In Diez's perspective, it is highlighted that the EU, along with its member states, has regrettably compromised its own values, particularly evident during the migration influx and in other instances. Furthermore, member states are accused of disregarding the principles of the rule of law and human rights, resulting in a situation where these values are being undermined (Diez, 2021).

In this context, the EU has not shaped what is normal and has contradicted the normal of its values by choosing the short-term safe path of a realist exclusionary approach. Indeed, Manners' concept of normative power holds value when analyzing the tension between realist interests and the limits of normative power identity.

According to Manners, the EU does not conform to the conventional categorization of being solely a military power, as realists might argue, or exclusively a civilian power. Instead, Ferguson and Mansbach describe the EU as a complex entity with a distinctive structure that deviates from traditional forms of politics (Manners, 2002). Manners also argued that the EU is an entity that can influence the international arena with its ideas and values and set standards. He does not claim here that military force is insignificant. What is meant to be said is that it is the producer and legitimate source of behavior patterns and standards outside the Westfalian security patterns of the EU (Manners, 2002). The stance of the EU can be discerned not through quantitative metrics, but rather through the ideological constructs and norms foundational to its architecture, epitomized as its “normative power” (Manners, 2002).

Within the context of constructivist theory, identity critically determines interests, suggesting that nations shape their priorities based on their intrinsic values and identities. Yet, certain EU member states appear to have privileged immediate national interests over their foundational commitments to shared European values. This manifests in unilateral actions, securitization of refugee dynamics, and resistance to EU-wide initiatives, signaling a waning spirit of cooperative responsibility. As this dynamic evolved, tensions between individual member states and the overarching EU institutions have been palpable. Initially, the EU acted as a mediator, seeking to bridge these divides. However, over time, there's been a discernible trend towards the EU partnering with nations criticized for questionable human rights practices, indicating a tilt towards pragmatic political considerations over foundational values.

While one might generally expect nations with a robust democratic pedigree to espouse inclusive refugee policies, the EU presents nuanced anomalies. Countries like Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Austria, all with deep-seated democratic traditions, have occasionally veered towards exclusionary refugee policies. This divergence from the anticipated trajectory intimates the influence of domestic political preferences or external factors. Although democratic nations are presumed to uphold core EU values, such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, their occasional shift towards exclusionary policies disrupts the EU's cohesive image. These variances not only present the EU as a fragmented entity but also challenge its projected normative identity on the global stage.

Furthermore, the media's portrayal of the refugee situation as a “crisis” heightens the securitization narrative, echoing Stone's (2009) definition of security as

a state's quest for protection against perceived threats. In responding to the challenges, the EU has not only engaged with regional nations like Turkey, Libya, and Morocco but also grappled with internal dissension. The absence of a cohesive and effective response to the refugee situation has exacerbated political fissures within the EU. The inability to forge a unified stance, combined with certain member states' reluctance to shoulder their responsibilities, underscores the EU's ill-preparedness for such crises. The resultant political oscillations reflect the broader challenges confronting the EU, namely the tension between its normative identity and on-the-ground realities.

The reverberations of the Syrian refugee influx within the EU have not been confined merely to policy adaptations or the securitization of borders. A profound political transformation has been taking shape across the continent. The sheer volume and rapidity of the refugee influx have precipitated a sharp rise in far-right sentiments within numerous EU nations. These sentiments, once relegated to the fringes of political discourse, have now become mainstream, resulting in the far-right parties securing significant electoral victories or entering into power coalitions in several member states. Within the member states, the influx of Syrian refugees appears to have bolstered the far-right, evident in countries like Italy, Hungary, Poland, Austria, France, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Belgium. The rise of far-right PM Meloni in Italy, characterized by her pronounced anti-immigration rhetoric, parallels the trend in France. Meloni has described pro-immigration policies as a strategy by the left to “substitute native Italians with foreign immigrants” (Farrel, 2022). In a January 2017 address, she labeled the immigration trend in Italy as an “ethnic replacement” (Farrel, 2022). This migration-induced political recalibration is further illustrated by the UK's Brexit campaign, which heavily leaned on anti-immigration sentiments, with figures like Nigel Farage questioning the viability of immigration control within the EU framework. This seismic shift can be attributed in part to the exploitation of the influx by far-right factions to further their nativist and protectionist agendas. Their narratives, built upon fear and misinformation, have found resonance among sections of the populace who perceive refugees as threats to their socio-economic stability and cultural identity. This political recalibration underscores the challenges the EU faces in preserving its foundational values amidst rising populism and nationalism, intensified by the Syrian refugee situation.

In this light, this thesis seeks to dissect the intricate balance between the EU's normative aspirations and its pragmatic responses, and the resultant political

ramifications both within and between member states. The overarching objective is to understand the multi-faceted implications of the refugee influx on the EU's identity, its internal cohesion, and its global role. In my research, I employed a diverse set of sources to comprehensively analyze the EU and its member states' evolving stance towards the Syrian refugee influx. This spectrum of resources encompassed government policies, parliamentary decisions, media discourses from policy makers, and reports from both Think Tanks, Freedom House, and eminent international organizations like Amnesty International and UNHCR. The richness of these sources, ranging from official documents to media narratives, provides a multifaceted perspective, crucial to understanding the nuanced shifts in policy and public discourse. From my list, some of the materials are primary (government or party documents, firsthand reports, media discourses), and some can be secondary (academic theses, some journal articles, some think tank reports).

The choice of these materials was deliberate. Government documents, as primary sources, offer an official stance, revealing the formal position of states. Media discourses, on the other hand, shed light on the rhetoric and narratives advanced by policymakers. Reports from international organizations provide both a macro and micro-level understanding of the situation, often backed by firsthand accounts.

The methodology I adopted was qualitative in nature, anchored in discourse analysis. This method delves into the underlying socio-cultural and political constructs illuminated by language and narratives. By examining the discourse surrounding the Syrian refugee influx within these sources, I sought to understand how the influx is constructed, represented, and subsequently, how such representations influence the EU and member states' policy orientation and normative identity. Differentiating between primary and secondary sources in my research further enriched the analytical depth, allowing for a robust interpretation of both original data and existing analyses.

1.1 Limitations

It is imperative to recognize the inherent constraints within the adopted methodology. The compendium of discourse and policy documents selected for examination might not represent a comprehensive aggregation, and the potential for biases in source selection remains. Furthermore, inherent in both qualitative and quantitative analyses is an element of subjectivity in interpretation. It should be noted that Manners' conception of normative identity is distinctly formulated within the context of the EU, circumscribing its applicability. Transposing this framework to

entities like other nations or regional blocs with analogous values may not yield congruent outcomes.

1.2 Political Discourse Analysis

According to Manners, the EU is a “normative power that can shape what is normal” in the international arena with its history, establishment stages, unique *sui generis* structure and values (Manners, 2002). In this light, this work examines whether the EU, in Manners's claim, still meets the requirements of this identity in the Syrian refugee influx. In this thesis, the Political Discourse Analysis method developed by Teun Van Dijk is employed. Van Dijk conceptualizes discourse as a crucial source that shapes people's ideas, social and political affiliations, perspectives, and knowledge. Specifically, political discourse is regarded as representations that are oriented towards the future, contributing to the ongoing production of racism and the reconstruction of power dynamics within societies (Utku and Köroğlu, 2020). By utilizing this method, the thesis aims to examine and analyze political discourse in order to gain insights into the ways in which power relations and discriminatory practices are constructed and maintained through language (Utku and Köroğlu, 2020). As described by Hall, the term “discourse” can be understood as a coherent or rational body of speech or writing, such as a speech or a sermon (Hall, 2006). In this sense, discourse refers to a specific instance of communication that exhibits coherence and follows certain rules or conventions. It encompasses the use of language in a particular context, incorporating not only the words spoken or written but also the social, cultural, and ideological frameworks that shape and influence the communication process. Discourse goes beyond individual utterances and extends to the broader social and cultural practices within which communication takes place, influencing the ways in which meaning is constructed and shared among participants (Hall, 2006, p. 201). The parties of an issue use discourses to reach a certain result and to shape reality. According to Dijk, various strategies such as disclaimers, mitigations, euphemisms, and transfers are commonly employed in social interactions as a means of denying or downplaying racism. These strategies serve as routine moves in maintaining social face, allowing individuals to reconcile their own prejudices and biases. By employing these linguistic and discursive techniques, individuals can avoid acknowledging or confronting the underlying racist attitudes and behaviors within themselves or their social groups (Dijk, 1993). This highlights the complex ways in which language and discourse are used to perpetuate and normalize discriminatory practices while simultaneously managing one's own self-

image and social relationships. In a sense, they undermine the truth in order to achieve their goals and present it to the masses in this way. The truth attains its status through the meaning given to it. Discourse is actually an important tool that determines “what to think, how to think”, that is, our socio cognitive framework and it directly determines the way what happens is interpreted and “describes” how we should view it (Dijk, 1993, p. 192). Thus, reality becomes what we create and see. Our perception turns into reality over time, and we decide and act within the framework we look at. The expressions in the meaning creation of an event, the language we use form the paving stones of the main purpose. While the importance of data and reality diminishes here, the essential thing is to activate the instinct of protection against the negated situation. Utku and Köroğlu, argue that politicians often employ a combination of negative representation of others and positive self-representation in their discourse, allowing them to engage in racist talk without making it explicit (Utku and Köroğlu, 2020). To separate and prioritize Ukrainian refugees according to socio-economic class and ignoring the situation of Middle Eastern, African refugees, commenting on the clothes they wear is an indicator of classification as “from us- not from us” and an unacceptable racism. “They or the other” is given a negative meaning and politics is built on this conflict of perception. Indeed, discourses are disseminated to the public through various channels and platforms such as media, politicians, popular culture, and education. As argued by Dijk, politicians play a significant role as central producers of discourse due to their access to and influence over these tools (Cesur, Hanquinet and Duru, 2018). I examine the discourses at the level of EU and state administrators, their effects on the public, and the process of excluding the issue by the decision-making mechanism over time. I also use documents from international organizations, academic articles and discourses of politicians and experts. A qualitative analysis will be carried out on the statements of EU officials to the press, their political decisions, reports and comments of human rights organizations. This study seeks to understand the compatibility of this process experienced by the EU with Manners' claim of normative power identity. In the perspective of Manners, normative power is characterized by its capacity to establish the parameters of what is considered “normal” within the realm of global politics (Manners, 2002). This thesis adopts an analytical form of discussion rather than technical expression.

1.3 Case Selection

The EU, a distinctive supranational institution, is frequently lauded for its

unwavering allegiance to a set of shared principles, values, and norms, encompassing human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and an unwavering respect for human rights. These foundational values, encapsulated in the Treaty on EU (Article 2), not only underpin the EU's internal governance mechanisms but also shape its external diplomatic and strategic orientations. As such, the EU's and its member states' strategies and policies in confronting external exigencies, exemplified by the Syrian refugee influx, provide a pivotal evaluative benchmark to ascertain their authentic commitment and fidelity to these espoused principles. The selected member states encapsulate a diverse array of experiences and reactions vis-à-vis the Syrian refugee situation. This gamut is instrumental in delineating both the congruence and deviation from established EU values amongst its member states, bearing in mind their individual historical trajectories, political landscapes, economic configurations, and sociocultural matrices.

The countries selected for this study encompass a representative sample of the EU, capturing both its core founding members and those that joined in subsequent enlargements. By examining these countries:

1. **Diverse Responses to the Influx:** In terms of contrasting cases for deeper insights, by including countries that have had contrasting responses - from those that were welcoming (e.g., Germany's initial “Willkommenskultur”) to those that were resistant (e.g., Hungary's fence) - the study can delve deeper into the factors that influence these policy decisions, enhancing the depth and richness of the analysis.

2. **Varied Historical and Geopolitical Contexts:** The selection spans countries with varied histories, levels of economic development, geopolitical situations, and previous experiences with migration. For instance, Eastern European countries like Poland and Hungary have different historical trajectories than Western European nations like France or Germany, leading to varied perspectives on the refugee issue.

3. **Different Levels of Exposure:** Many of the selected countries (e.g., Greece, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy) are strategically located at the forefront of migrant routes, making their responses particularly significant in the context of the influx. Their experiences provide insights into the immediate challenges faced by EU frontline states.

4. **Size and Capacity Variations:** The study considers both larger countries with more resources (e.g., Germany) and smaller nations (e.g., Estonia, Malta). This distinction allows the research to explore how size and capacity might influence

responses to the refugee influx and alignment with EU values.

When we look at the research scope, while it's valuable to consider all EU countries, the scope of a single dissertation inherently requires some delimitation. The countries were selected to offer a diverse and representative sample rather than an exhaustive list. Research decisions were partly influenced by the availability of rich and comprehensive data that would facilitate a thorough analysis. Some countries, while interesting in their own right, might not add significant depth or variation to the particular “normative identity” argument being explored.

In essence, the chosen countries encapsulate the breadth and complexity of the EU's response to the Syrian refugee influx, providing a rich tapestry for analyzing the interplay between proclaimed values and actual policy decisions. In doing so, this selection allows for a deeper understanding of the EU's evolving identity, the resilience of its foundational values, and the factors that drive divergence from these norms during times of influx.

In analyzing the responses of the EU member states to the Syrian refugee influx, one may hypothesize a potential correlation between the degree of democratic maturation and the nature of their political orientations. States with a well-entrenched democratic tradition, typically those with a longstanding affiliation with the EU, appear more inclined to adopt policies congruent with broader EU guidelines and values. These nations' democratic foundations might make them more amenable to a normative approach on refugee acceptance and integration. Conversely, states exhibiting lower degrees of democratic maturity, particularly those that acceded to the EU more recently and might not have comprehensively internalized EU democratic norms, may display a divergence from these policies. The question arises: could the level of democratic consolidation in a member state influence its alignment or discord with the EU's prescribed values concerning the refugee influx?

The relationship between political orientation toward the influx of Syrian refugees and the level of democratic maturity in EU member states is a nuanced and complex topic, but there are some general observations and arguments that can be made:

1. **Democratic Maturity and Its Influence:** Historically, countries with a longer democratic tradition and a more robust democratic institutional framework tend to place a higher emphasis on human rights, international cooperation, and multilateralism. This could make them more receptive to policies that are in line with

the EU's foundational values regarding the protection of refugees and human rights. The selected countries also represent both older EU member states (like Belgium, Denmark) and those that joined more recently (like Croatia). This distinction allows for a deeper exploration of how historical ties and durations of EU membership might influence state responses and alignments or conflicts with EU values.

2. Late Joiners and Democratic Transition: Some countries that joined the EU later, particularly in the 2000s, transitioned from communist regimes and might still be solidifying their democratic institutions. These countries might exhibit nationalistic tendencies and be more cautious or even resistant to EU norms, especially when faced with sudden challenges like the refugee influx.

3. Economic Concerns and Welfare: Highly democratic states, often with more developed economies, might be better positioned to absorb and integrate refugees, leading to more open policies. Conversely, states with struggling economies or those in the process of consolidating their democracies might perceive the influx as a strain on their resources and societal cohesion, leading to more restrictive policies.

4. Populism and Democratic Backsliding: It's also important to note that even countries with high levels of democratic maturity aren't immune to populist movements. Populist movements, which have been on the rise in various parts of Europe, often oppose open migration policies and can influence policy even in traditionally democratic states (as we witnessed during the Brexit process). Some countries selected (e.g., Hungary, Poland) have recently witnessed significant political shifts, especially towards right-wing populism. Analyzing these countries provides insights into how domestic political dynamics can intersect with broader EU values, potentially challenging the "normative identity" posited by Manners.

5. Deciphering EU Values: While the late joiners of the EU committed to its values upon accession, the practical internalization of these values might vary. The pace and depth of adopting EU values might be influenced by historical, cultural, and political factors. Some argue that certain states haven't fully internalized EU values, leading to policies at odds with EU norms.

In conclusion, while there can be a general correlation between democratic maturity and openness to refugees, various factors, including economic conditions, the rise of populism, historical trajectories, and national identities, complicate this relationship. A multi-faceted approach considering all these elements is essential for a comprehensive understanding.

In this thesis, I explore the compatibility of both intra-EU and non-EU relations and political orientations with Manners' normative power identity during the Syrian refugee influx. While doing this, I will focus on the division caused by the refugee influx within the Union and, as a result, the EU's position in terms of briefly excluding the refugee influx. I briefly touch on the Brexit process. I examine the impact of the refugee influx at the macro level in terms of EU-UK relations. How the influx is handled and what its consequences are briefly discussed. I also examine how the EU and its member states, in Manners' claim to shape the normal, over time cling to the normal (exclusion and keeping away) rather than shaping the normal. I claim that the process involves political goals aimed at not taking the initiative and keeping refugees away from the EU borders. This thesis adopts a qualitative research approach, drawing on a diverse array of sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of the topic at hand. These sources span academic articles and books that offer theoretical and contextual insights, to international reports and articles from global media outlets that capture real-time developments and perspectives. Crucially, foundational texts such as the EU's founding agreements, which enshrine the Union's core values, and the 1951 Refugee Convention, serve as pivotal benchmarks against which contemporary policies and actions are measured. Additionally, this study delves into the discourse and rhetoric surrounding the refugee issue, by analyzing statements from state leaders, politicians, and experts. Insights from the United Nations Refugee Agency and human rights institutions further enrich the analysis, offering a global perspective on the issue. Moreover, reports from entities like Frontex provide a pragmatic look at on-the-ground operations and their implications. By amalgamating these varied sources, this thesis seeks to present a holistic view of the refugee situation in the context of the EU's values and actions.

1.4 Research Question and Aim of the Thesis

This study aims to examine the hypothesis that the EU has shifted away from its principle-based identity and has instead embraced security-oriented and exclusionary policies in response to the influx of Syrian refugees. What I seek to show is that the EU has shifted from the normativity to realist-protectionist position on Syrian refugee influx. Over time, both the member states and the EU as an institution have increasingly chosen to address the humanitarian crisis by opting for exclusion rather than direct involvement. The approach has centered around finding solutions through deportation or removal of the issue rather than actively engaging with the

underlying humanitarian challenges. This policy shift is inconsistent with the normative value-based identity of the EU and is an example that shows that realist policies can be adopted as short-term solutions when “necessary”. In other words, the EU has been shaped by Realpolitik due to its internal disagreements and differentiated policy orientations and interests, rather than shaping the “concept of normal” (Diez, 2021). It emphasizes how the EU was caught unprepared for such an influx and that the principle of “solidarity”, human rights, rule of law which are some of its founding principles, was disrupted. The compatibility and incompatibility of the policies followed with this identity is emphasized, and the EU's shift from normative identity to realistic policies in the face of the Syrian refugee influx is examined through the issues mentioned above. In this light, I formulate the main research question of this thesis as the following:

In light of the Syrian refugee influx, to what extent has the European Union's normative power identity, as delineated by Manners, been challenged, and do the actions of the EU and its member states align with this purported identity?

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the EU transformation from policies grounded in normativity to those marked by exclusion, particularly in the context of the Syrian refugee influx. Utilizing Ian Manners' framework of normative power as its theoretical anchor, the thesis is systematically partitioned into four pivotal chapters.

Following a foundational introduction, which lays out the methodology, discourse analysis, rationale behind case selection, research objectives, and an outline of the thesis structure, the ensuing chapter, titled 'Theoretical Framework', delves into pertinent international relations theories, debates on power, and a critical examination of Ian Manners' normative identity paradigm. This chapter culminates with a detailed discussion on the themes of externalization and securitization.

The subsequent chapter offers a chronological account of the EU and its member states' approaches to the refugee influx since 2015. This segment, demarcated by specific subheadings, probes the multifaceted determinants influencing the EU and its member states' evolving stances.

Concluding the research, the final chapter encapsulates the primary insights, findings, and potential implications of the study, providing a holistic summation of the research trajectory.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theoretical View of EU's Normative Identity Shift: In the Context of Predictions of Realism, Idealism, and Constructivism

To elucidate a fundamental aspect of this discussion, it's essential to highlight the role of realism in international relations. This paradigm predominantly focuses on the arms races, wartime dynamics, and ephemeral coalitions grounded in nationalistic interest and survival imperatives. However, an over-reliance on a singular theoretical framework can be restrictive, as no single theory offers a holistic understanding of multifaceted geopolitical scenarios. Different theoretical approaches can be variably efficacious depending on the specificities of a situation, with some offering more comprehensive insights than others. Conversely, idealism, with its emphasis on institutions and ideals, offers insights into the status of the EU and its constituent states.

The constructivist approach, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between identity and interest, presents an optimal lens to decode the dynamics of the refugee influx. The profound influence of this influx, especially concerning the evolving incongruities between member states and the EU's institutional normative identity, warrants exploration through the prisms of all three theories: realism, idealism, and constructivism. This multi-theoretical perspective can enrich our comprehension of the intricacies inherent in the EU and member countries's response mechanisms and policy shifts during pressing geopolitical challenges.

2.1.1 In the Context of Predictions of Realism, Idealism

Within the realm of international relations, the concept of power remains paramount, characterized by its intricate dimensions and diverse interpretations. This thesis endeavors to unpack the multifaceted nature of power, striving to elucidate its role within the specific context of the EU response to various challenges. A salient feature across numerous conceptualizations of power is the capacity to wield influence and engineer outcomes aligned with individual interests. From the vantage point of realism, the international arena is often depicted as inherently anarchic, with states perpetually engaged in self-help endeavors due to the absence of an overarching authority. This anarchical landscape, reminiscent of Thomas Hobbes' portrayal in "Leviathan", is rife with uncertainties. The EU, notwithstanding its foundational values like solidarity aimed at fostering stability, grapples with the practical implementation of these ideals, encountering discrepancies between principles and

actions. Realism posits an international system governed by anarchy, wherein states, driven primarily by self-preservation, are oriented towards augmenting their power and interests, often relegating collective values to the periphery. This theory underscores that states' collaborative ventures are largely tactical, contingent upon prevailing power dynamics and limited to the extent they bolster their interests. Evidently, the EU, despite its institutional architecture and shared values designed to instill stability and cohesion, witnesses episodes where member states sidestep collective responsibilities, echoing realist tenets by foregrounding national interests over collective values. This research contends that, even in the presence of stabilizing institutions and shared values—spanning over two decades of integration, even for the newer member states—the specter of self-help and individualist pursuits lingers, occasionally surfacing within the EU's framework.

Realist theory prioritizes the state as the primary unit of analysis, suggesting that the calculus of international relations is fundamentally determined by the interactions and interests of sovereign states. In stark contrast, idealist or liberal perspectives argue that sub-state entities—ranging from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to multinational corporations—hold tangible influence in shaping policies and international outcomes. Yet, during the refugee influx, a disconcerting observation emerged: despite their advocacy and documentation, NGOs and international human rights bodies appeared largely ineffectual in halting or even mitigating the illicit actions occasionally undertaken by states. Confronted with tangible evidence and consistent reports denouncing these malpractices, certain states remained impervious, sidestepping both EU directives and admonitions from the human rights community, persisting in their actions that flouted refugee and human rights conventions.

Power, as delineated by Morgenthau (1978), encompasses an expansive realm of social relationships, manifesting the capability to establish and sustain one individual's control over another. This control is not restricted merely to overt expressions like physical coercion; it also permeates intricate psychological avenues, thereby allowing for subtle dominion where one mind influences another. Within this comprehensive understanding of power, a myriad of strategies emerge, illuminating the avenues through which individuals and collectives can wield influence in varied social and political scenarios. Concurrently, as highlighted by Savu (2021), the international system has experienced pivotal shifts, prompting an evolution in the

conceptualization of security.

Morgenthau's articulation in “International Politics” underscores “rationality” as the fundamental cornerstone of realism. Every decision anchored in rationality inherently seeks a moral justification, crafting an ethical narrative for its actions. While the EU's gradual trajectory towards protectionist, exclusionary policies may align with its immediate and intermediate interests, such a stance is antithetical to its normative power identity. This divergence brings into play Morgenthau's subsequent criterion: decision-makers operate within the realm of national interests rather than being steered by goodwill or ideology (Balci and Kardaş, 2014). For Morgenthau, goodwill and ideology are unnecessary, failing to amplify state interests, and thus, decisions cannot be made accordingly.

Mirroring this precept, the EU's policy orientation evidences a shift. Ideologically fueled humanitarian gestures have been superseded by exclusionary policies underpinned by a security paradigm. The European Parliament's analysis corroborates this transition, highlighting that the EU's paramount agenda appears to be centered on buttressing its external frontiers, mitigating “illegal” immigration, and ensuring the repatriation of undocumented migrants (European Parliament, 2015). This accentuation on border security and repatriation seemingly obfuscates the exigency of devising strategies that champion migrant human rights and prioritize life preservation in the Mediterranean. The incongruity arises when one juxtaposes this stance with the EU's foundational ideologies—human rights, solidarity, and democracy. Faced with a humanitarian and regional exigency, the EU has exhibited a palpable elasticity in its commitment to these principles.

Morgenthau's fourth criterion posits a clear dichotomy in the realm of moral action: while individuals might navigate their decisions within the compass of universal moral principles, states are precluded from such a luxury. This perspective is anchored in the realist notion that any endeavor to act upon universal moral imperatives is not only redundant but might actually be detrimental to the national interests. The underpinning rationale is the intrinsic uncertainty and absence of a unified will in the international system. What emerges from this realist tenet is an endorsement of the “pragmatic and expedient option” in international affairs. Consequently, a policy framework that prioritizes interests invariably relegates moral responsibility to a peripheral concern.

On the other hand, idealism—which characterized the discipline's formative

years—embodies a normative stance. This theory underscores aspirational goals, adopting an optimistic view of human nature and advocating that the objectives of “good” and “right” are achievable. In essence, idealism is rooted in the domain of “what ought to be,” rather than merely cataloging “what is”. Gözen elucidates idealism as an aspiration towards an “ultimate ideal”, positing it as an elevated representation of actual conditions (Gözen, 2018). From an idealist standpoint, peace and security are byproducts of collaboration and dialogue facilitated by international institutions.

Birkenhead elucidates idealism as the essential “spirit” underpinning “ethical progress” in the realm of interstate relations (Birkenhead, 1923). As articulated by Oğuzlu, idealism propounds the notion that the foreign policies of states can be anchored in moral tenets (Oğuzlu, 2014). Furthermore, idealism places paramount importance on the nature of political regimes, contending that a regime's inherent character significantly influences both its domestic and foreign policy orientations. Given this premise, the convergence of EU member states around foundational democratic values and human rights becomes salient. However, the ostensibly democratic fabric of the EU and its commitment to human rights haven't obviated the drift of certain member states, and even the EU as a collective, toward exclusionary policies over time, manifesting a “Fortress Europe” approach.

The distinction between the “rational” and the “moral or right” is stark. Rationality mandates choices that optimize national or individual interests given prevailing circumstances. These optimal decisions, however, may not always align with moral imperatives. On occasion, interests might compel states, as was evident with the EU during the refugee influx, to deviate from actions that resonate with their foundational identity. Conversely, the notion of “what is right” is imbued with normative and ethical nuances. It's crucial to note that the EU isn't perpetually tethered to a moral compass. The construct of morality is inherently fluid, often subject to regional and cultural variations, and in the anarchic sphere of international relations, interests often reign supreme. Yet, the crux of the matter lies in the EU's purported normative identity. As Manners (2002) posited, the EU professes the capacity to recalibrate the norms of the international system through its unique normative identity. But in the throes of the Syrian refugee influx, various nations and notably the EU, seemed less an architect of its norms and more a subscriber to existing exclusionary tendencies prevalent on the global stage.

In the realm of international relations, while the EU and its constituent states

often profess commitment to normative benchmarks or the 'ideal' path, the realities of geopolitical exigencies like Syrian refugee influx frequently compel them to veer toward strategies that emphasize pragmatic interests over normative commitments. Consequently, states may opt for mechanisms such as “exclusion” as the most viable means to safeguard their interests, even if it diverges from their initial normative aspirations. A case in point is Hungary's shift towards securitization, bolstered by a targeted media narrative. The resultant public sentiment in Hungary appeared to largely validate this trajectory, underscoring that normative assessments of “right” and “wrong” can be malleable, shaped by dominant discourses and situational framings. Confronted with this, the EU grappled with the tension between rational pragmatism and ethical adherence. While initial EU actions seemed rooted in its foundational principles, as events unfolded, there was a discernible shift towards strategies that were pragmatic and, at times, deviated from its normative identity. This evolving stance ignited introspective discussions about the potential dissonance between the EU's avowed values and its practical policy implementations.

2.1.2 In the Context of Predictions of Constructivism

Constructivism is a prominent theory in the field of international relations that focuses on the role of ideas, norms, and social constructs in shaping international behavior. Unlike realism and liberalism, which emphasize the distribution of power and state interests, constructivism posits that the international system is not solely driven by material factors but is heavily influenced by the beliefs, identities, and social interactions of states and non-state actors. Wendt argues that state behaviors are not predetermined by anarchy but are rather shaped by their mutual perceptions and interactions (Wendt, 1992). Constructivists argue that ideas, such as human rights, sovereignty, and democracy, have a profound impact on states' behavior and interactions. States may adopt or reject certain ideas based on their beliefs and perceptions. Norms, both international and domestic, play a significant role in shaping state behavior. For example, the norm against the use of chemical weapons has influenced state behavior and led to disarmament efforts.

Constructivists highlight the importance of a state's identity and how it is constructed through social interactions. States may define themselves as democracies, authoritarian regimes, or other identities, which can impact their foreign policy choices. Constructivists view international institutions not only as instruments of power but also as platforms for socialization and norm diffusion. These institutions

can shape state behavior by promoting certain norms and practices. In “The Persistent Power of Human Rights: From Commitment to Compliance,” editors Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink offer an exploration of the transformative power of human rights norms in international relations. The book delves into the processes by which these norms transition from mere abstract principles to concrete changes in state behavior (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 2013). Through a series of case studies and comprehensive analyses, the authors contend that states often initially commit to human rights norms as a response to external pressures or derived from strategic interests (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 2013). However, as time progresses, domestic actors, coupled with transnational networks and societal mobilization, become pivotal in ensuring a transition from mere symbolic commitment to substantive compliance with these norms (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 2013).

Peter J. Katzenstein's work focuses on the role of culture and identity in international relations. He has explored the impact of different national identities on state behavior and foreign policy choices (Katzenstein, 1996). He challenges the traditional realist notion that power politics alone determines state behavior by introducing and emphasizing the roles of norms, identities, and cultural factors. As an example, in one of the chapters of the book, Katzenstein discusses Germany and its pacifist foreign policy stance after World War II (Katzenstein, 1996). He explores how Germany's national identity, transformed by the experiences of the Nazi era and the subsequent occupation by Allied powers, led to a strong anti-militarist norm that shaped its foreign policy behavior (Katzenstein, 1996).

Nicholas Onuf's “Constructivism: A User's Manual” chapter provides a comprehensive introduction to constructivist theory, emphasizing the role of language and communication in shaping international relations (Onuf, 2015). In this chapter, Onuf delineates the foundational tenets of constructivism, emphasizing its departure from traditional theories of international relations (Onuf, 2015). He underscores the integral role of socially constructed norms, values, and practices in shaping states' behaviors and the international system at large (Onuf, 2015). Rather than viewing states as solely driven by material interests, as posited by realist and liberal theories, Onuf argues that intersubjective understandings and social interactions play a cardinal role in the constitution and reconstitution of state identities and interests (Onuf, 2015).

My research examines the gradual transformation of EU and EU member states' identities due to their engagement with regional humanitarian challenges. This process

is analyzed through the lens of constructivist theory, which posits that identity shapes interests. In this framework, states derive their interests from their established identities, with interests not being a primary determinant of identity. For example, the perception levels of the nuclear threat against each other by the United States and the UK, both allies who share similar values, are not the same as the perceptions of the threat to North Korea's nuclear goals. The threat perceptions of countries sharing similar values and identity toward a nation with fundamentally different values inherently differ from their perceptions of each other. In the same way, North Korea also feels a great vital threat to these two states. In other words, identities have determined interests and formed the level of threat perception.

In contrast to the constructivist viewpoint, this study asserts that some of the EU member states have, over time, implemented securitization measures such as pushbacks, obstructing asylum applications, making arrests, imposing extended detention periods, using securitization language to hinder asylum requests, and fostering a negative, exclusionary atmosphere. And it also shows that the EU responds to these behaviors late, fails to impose sanctions and even, in some cases, fails to prevent human rights violations despite the open reports of international human rights organizations. While the EU upholds principles like human rights, the rule of law, transparency, and solidarity on the global stage, these values have not been sufficient to establish a coherent common policy among member states. Some case studies in this thesis will reveal that interests have increasingly outweighed identity considerations within the Union, leading to the shaping of identity by interests. This observed phenomenon deviates from the anticipations posited by constructivist theory. Through this process, it has been elucidated that identity and its concomitant obligations can be subordinated by prevailing interests and, in certain circumstances, be rendered inconsequential.

In her article “Securitizing Migration Through Immigration Detention,” Janneka Beeksma argues that immigration detention serves as a mechanism that contributes to the securitization of migration (Beeksma, 2013). She contends that it does so by embodying a set of ideational and structural constraints that limit policy development regarding migration. Beeksma suggests that the detention regime, within the context of a security community, effectively normalizes and institutionalizes the use of detention as a softened means to facilitate the return of irregular migrants (Beeksma, 2013). Through this analysis, she highlights how the detention system reinforces

security-oriented approaches to migration control and influences the community's identity, interests, and norms regarding immigration management (Beeksma, 2013).

2.2 The Concept of Power: Orientation Process From Hard Power to Soft Power

That's a succinct introduction for a theoretical section, indicating a clear direction for the discussion. It starts by acknowledging the foundational concept of power and its various indicators, then hints at delving into the more specific examination of the EU's power identity. Mustonen states that while there may be variations in the definitions of power among scholars, it is commonly understood as the capacity of one actor to modify or influence the behavior of another actor (Mustonen, 2010). This definition implies that power involves the ability to exert control, shape outcomes, and impact the actions or decisions of others. Despite the diversity of interpretations, the concept of power consistently revolves around the idea of one entity having the capability to bring about changes in the behavior or attitudes of another entity. According to Yılmaz, the perception and definition of power have been shaped by periodic indicators of prestige. In the 17th and 18th centuries, population was considered an important criterion for assessing power (Yılmaz, 2011). The ability to raise mercenary forces through taxation of the population served as an indicator of prestige during that period. This suggests that the size and capacity of a population played a significant role in determining the perceived power and influence of a state in those historical contexts.

In the 19th century, the industrial revolution brought about transformative changes in various aspects of life, including production methods, organization, and overall societal structures. These profound transformations also had a significant impact on the redefinition of the concept of power. As traditional forms of production and organization were disrupted and replaced by industrialized systems, the sources and dynamics of power underwent a significant shift. The industrial revolution's transformative effect necessitated a reevaluation and redefinition of power to account for the new economic, social, and technological realities that emerged during that era. Until the industrial revolution, France was ahead in the current definition of power. With the industrial revolution, the UK became the new power. Rising in the military sense, the UK has proved that the indicator of new power definition is not the population, but the industrial power and its outputs with the driving force of the industrial revolution. For instance, The results of the Opium wars with China in the first and second half of the 19th century are proof that modern material and industrial

power, not population, is now a valid indicator of power. In the first Opium War of 1839, Britain had only about 6,5 percent of China's population. (Our World in Data).

Industrial power has left its place to technological power after WWII. Following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers in the field of international relations. Leveraging their advanced industrial infrastructures, both countries engaged in a technological race, particularly in the development of nuclear capabilities. As a result, they became nuclear-armed nations, possessing significant military power and enjoying a certain level of military immunity. The acquisition of nuclear weapons elevated their status and influence on the global stage, shaping the dynamics of the Cold War era and significantly impacting international relations during that period. Although both of them are periodically referred to as superpowers, the economy of the Soviet Union has always lagged far behind the US economy in terms of gross national product. In addition, although the Soviet Union has a smaller population and economy, it has been able to form a balancing bloc for the United States as a nuclear power (Our World in Data, 2020).

During this era, both major global actors deployed a mix of hard and soft power strategies to amass allies within the international system, avoiding overt confrontations. The dissolution of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the USSR's subsequent disintegration, precipitated a profound shift in the global order, engendering novel conceptualizations of power and paradigms (Rüşen, 2018, p. 340). The EU, in particular, harnessed soft power effectively, not merely for its Eastern expansion endeavors but also to cultivate a favorable global image. This, however, should not imply a complete transition to a soft power-dominated international order. Post-Cold War dynamics were marked by a surge in the endorsement of liberal values by global institutions, seeking to foster a more liberal and interconnected international system. The liberal system and its values have gained a consent-based validity in the international arena. In a sense, these values act as Damocles' sword in the hands of advanced Western democracies, who are the “owners and defenders” of these values in a way. This is directly one of the main indicators of soft power. Because the EU and its criticisms towards other countries can directly affect the behavior of the countries that are the subject of the criticism or cause its behavior to change to some extent (Rüşen, 2018).

Mustonen (2010) delineates a clear demarcation between the concepts of hard power and soft power based on the mechanisms employed to induce behavioral

alterations. Hard power predominantly hinges on coercion, utilizing instruments such as military force, economic sanctions, or the threat of these means to enforce compliance. Coercion, in essence, refers to the act of forcing one entity (usually a state) to act against its wishes through either the threat of force or the actual use of force. Conversely, soft power thrives on the principles of attraction and persuasion. It endeavors to engender desired behaviors by resonating with values, cultural affinities, adept diplomacy, or the dissemination of prevailing norms and ideals. Whereas hard power encapsulates the broader concept of imposing one's will via military force, economic sanctions, soft power aspires to mold behavior via non-coercive avenues, emphasizing collaboration and consent over forceful mandates (Mustonen, 2010).

Embedded in the core of hard power is the direct, swift achievement of intended outcomes. A subset of coercion is deterrence, which is specifically the use of threats to dissuade an adversary from taking an action not yet started or to cease an action that has already begun. To achieve the desired result by using pressure on the other state with the threat or implication of using force is the essence of deterrence. The primary purpose of deterrence is to prevent undesired actions by making the costs of those actions too prohibitive in the eyes of the adversary. Notably, maintaining military prowess imposes a significant financial burden on nations, making hard power an often more expensive choice in comparison to the subtleties and cost-efficiencies of soft power.

Joseph Nye, an esteemed academic in the field of international relations, has been instrumental in elucidating the nuances of soft power (Nye, 2004). He characterizes soft power as the capacity to obtain preferred outcomes through allure and persuasion rather than through overt coercion or monetary inducements. This form of power emanates from a nation's cultural appeal, its political doctrines, and its policy orientations, which collectively foster reverence, esteem, and a sense of mutual values within the global community. Nye underscores that soft power is anchored in a country's influential ideas, its intrinsic values, and its cultural ethos, endowing it with the ability to direct and modulate the comportment of other global actors. He further posits that the potency of soft power is contingent upon the legitimacy of our actions and our perceived identity "in the eyes of others" (Nye, 2004). Intrinsically woven into soft power is the principle of consent, which, in turn, strengthens legitimacy and permanence. The synchronization or acceptance of thought that comes with the acceptance of thought also means the acceptance of values and its outputs.

From its inception, the EU has meticulously curated its soft power, basing it predominantly on its foundational values. Such a strategy is pivotal, given that the EU's affluence and magnetism have elevated the legitimacy of its core tenets, engendering global associations of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law with its identity. This legitimization of values not only strengthens the EU's normative standing but also amplifies the global acceptance and gravitas of these norms. This projection of normative power, in essence, bestows upon the EU both the “authority and obligation” to address infringements of human rights, wherever they might manifest. This stance can be likened to the EU asserting a proprietary stake in these identity-based normative values as a form of soft power within international relations. The ability to proffer credible critiques on pressing human rights transgressions in diverse regions, ranging from China to Russia and Turkey, is a quintessential manifestation of the EU's soft power prowess.

States have increased their investments in soft power tools after the 1990s. These tools can be diversified as culture, universities, non-governmental organizations, human rights organizations, media and business (Rüşen, 2018). These institutions are the producers and exporters of soft power. These soft power tools create a positive point of view on the peoples of other countries and the positive image produces soft power in the medium and long term. The EU has created its soft power in this way for many years and has become a center of attraction as a Union. So much so that other states and their peoples have been making efforts to become a member of the Union by meeting democracy, human rights and the rule of law, also known as the Copenhagen criterias, for many years due to their positive feelings on the EU. Turkey is one of these countries and has been trying to become a member of the Union for over 60 years. Turkey has changed many of its domestic laws in order to integrate into the EU legal system and achieve full member status. However, despite being at one of the worst levels in the history of relations, the goal of EU full membership still continues to be a desired result by Turkish society today. For instance, Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı stated in a panel speech on 20 October 2022 that 88 percent of the Turkish society supports EU membership regardless of current developments (Directorate for EU Affairs, 2022).

The EU's soft power can be seen in its efforts to promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as its emphasis on multilateralism and cooperation

(Cross, 2011). The EU's normative power and its ability to inspire and set standards in various policy areas contribute to its soft power. On the other hand, smart power refers to a combination of both hard power and soft power approaches (Wagner, 2014). It involves utilizing a range of tools, including both coercive and persuasive measures, to achieve desired outcomes. The EU may employ smart power strategies in certain situations, blending elements of both soft power and hard power, to effectively address challenges and pursue its interests. By acknowledging the EU's possession of both soft power and smart power features, Cross highlights the diverse strategies and approaches that the EU adopts to exert influence and achieve its objectives in international affairs.

According to Martynov, the integration process of the EU can be seen as an experimental form of peace-based integration as a norm. This suggests that the EU's integration project is not only focused on economic and political cooperation but also driven by the aim of fostering peace and stability among its member states. By bringing together countries that were previously engaged in conflicts and wars, the EU seeks to establish a framework of cooperation and shared values that promote peaceful relations and prevent future conflicts. The EU's integration process encourages dialogue, compromise, and the pooling of sovereignty, thereby creating a structure where conflicts are resolved through negotiation and cooperation rather than through military means (Martynov, 2020). However, as Nielsen also argued, the Union, unlike a state, has a narrower room for maneuver and has not been able to act faster in its foreign policy, and it does not have a fully common foreign policy among its members for over two decades (Nielsen, 2013). This situation caused a weakening in the narrative of the EU's soft power image and a value-based unity. The EU took pride in its role as a worldwide influencer in establishing norms, advocating for human rights, fostering democracy, and being the primary contributor of official development assistance (Kugiel, 2017).

However, “the norm-setter” identity, which constitutes the backbone of soft power, could not prevent protective and exclusionary orientation of the Union and its countries during the refugee influx. Kugiel outlined the erosion of the Union's reputation during this period and argued that the refugee influx transitioned the Union's stance from openness to control and defensiveness, raising doubts about its commitment to upholding lofty moral standards; the rise of populism and Euroscepticism throughout the EU exposed vulnerabilities in the democratic principles of several Member States; and ultimately, the British voters' choice in the June 2016

referendum to exit the EU dealt a significant blow to the European project as a whole (Kugiel, 2017). The EU's image and solidarity have been marred by the failure of member states to collectively address the refugee influx with a shared sense of purpose. According to Tsourdi and De Bruycker, the EU has been caught in a fundamental contradiction since its inception, torn between its obligation to establish and advance asylum policies and its inclination to outsource these responsibilities to peripheral third countries (Tsourdi and De Bruycker, 2022). All states have resorted to measures that prioritize their own interests and positions in both examples. According to Popescu, the EU is seen as an institution that cannot find a solution in the refugee influx process (Popescu, 2016). Nye highlights the detrimental impact of policies that prioritize short-term interests, disregard the viewpoints of others, and lack genuineness, as they have the potential to undermine and diminish soft power in both domestic and foreign policy arenas (Nye, 2023). According to Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo, a Professor of asylum law at the University of Palermo, argues that the increase in deaths at sea during the pandemic can be attributed, either directly or indirectly, to the EU's approach of closing off all avenues to Europe and the growing practice of outsourcing migration control to countries like Libya (Tondo, 2021).

2.3 Ian Manners and the Normative Power Concept

The concept of normative power has emerged in literature since the latter half of the 20th century. It would be appropriate here to make a very brief distinction between soft power, military power and normative power. Soft power refers to the ability of a country or entity to influence others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. It relies on the appeal of a country's culture, values, and policies to shape the preferences and actions of others. On the other hand, hard power pertains to the capacity of a country or entity to use force, or the threat of force, to achieve its objectives. It involves the military capabilities, resources, and strategies that can be employed to defend interests or project power. When we talk about normative power, it focuses on the ability of a country or entity to shape and promote norms, values, and principles that are widely accepted and followed by others. While soft power and normative power share similarities in their non-coercive nature, soft power encompasses a broader range of persuasive tools, including cultural and economic influence, while normative power specifically emphasizes the promotion and diffusion of norms and values. The essence of military power lies in its potential for coercion—either through direct action or the implicit threat of action. It's a more direct,

often overt approach to influencing the behavior of other states or actors. In contrast, soft power and normative power aim to shape behaviors and outcomes through attraction, values, or moral authority, rather than through force or fear.

Duchene interpreted the international position of the EU as a civilian power and emphasized that it has a responsibility to “spread civilized values to the World” (Vatandaş, 2018, p. 159). While doing this, the EU must be an economic power and it can consolidate this position as an economic power. Hedley Bull, on the other hand, adds military power to Duchene's argument and argues that the Union will be inadequate without military power (Manners, 2002). Manners argues that, without excluding civil and military power, the main focus should be on the Union's ability to “shape the normal” and act on this normative ability (Manners, 2002). Normative power is the power of thoughts and ideals. Ideals set a purpose, and this purpose brings with it a “good-oriented” responsibility. In a system where there is sometimes compromise and sometimes anarchy, the power of “shaping the normal” brought by these norms has a “good” meaning. “Good”, is an abstract concept defined as regionally and one-sided. “Normal”, on the other hand, refers to a situation that is “less good” or has a standard difference with the values of the Union. Closing this standard gap is also a moral responsibility of the EU. Therefore, there are some criteria for fulfilling this responsibility and forming a normative power identity. According to the Vatandaş, ensuring the integrity of the norm depends on four conditions; norm action consistency, the actor's ability to act *rule-like*, the sanction power of the norm, and finally the normativity level of the norm (Vatandaş, 2018). Regarding expectation-behavior compatibility, Parsons defines norms as a prediction of future concrete actions (Parsons, 1968).

The normative concept of power, which was interpreted and defined also by scholars such as François Duchene and Johan Galtung, was later interpreted by Ian Manners (Rüşen, 2018). According to Wagnsson and Hellman (2018), Diez and Manners propose that normative power differentiates itself from traditional forms of power by exhibiting a higher level of reflexivity and placing less emphasis on military force. They argue that when normative power heavily relies on military force, it becomes less distinguishable from traditional forms of power because it no longer relies primarily on the power of norms itself (Wagnsson and Hellman, 2018). To Duchene, the EU military power in the 1970s lagged behind its civilian power (Manners, 2002). Manners claims that at the end of the Cold War period, normative

values were effective, not empirical power. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the EU has become a center of attraction with the attractive and persuasive power of normative values and has launched the Eastern expansion. According to Oren, Luck, and Miles, an entity that possesses the ability to create, delete, or modify norms within an institution is considered to have normative power over those specific norms (Oren, Luck and Miles, 2010). Manners puts forth the main argument that the EU functions as a normative power due to its identity as both the “founder and defender” of certain norms. According to Manners, the EU plays a significant role in shaping and upholding norms, and its actions and policies reflect a commitment to promoting and protecting these norms.

Manners argues that the EU has consistently held a normative power status throughout its existence, currently, and will continue to do so in the future (Manners, 2008). This is a very bold claim and in the face of major internal, regional or global crises, what is expected from the EU is policies compatible with its normative identity/position and principles. As posited by Manners (2002), the EU's distinctive normative identity is a product of its unparalleled historical evolution and its adoption of a supranational governance framework. Manners articulates that the EU's present-day normative configuration has been half a century in the making, punctuated by the ratification of numerous foundational agreements (Manners, 2002). The EU delineates its identity through an array of foundational treaties, agreements, and statutory instruments. These pivotal documents serve a dual purpose: they prescribe the operational framework for the EU and concurrently enshrine its cardinal values, guiding principles, and overarching objectives.

The Treaty of Rome (1957), formally recognized as the “Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community,” stands as a cornerstone in the edifice of European legislative texts. Predominantly focusing on the inception of a unified economic ambit and a harmonized market, this treaty also encapsulates post-World War II Europe's aspirations for enduring peace and integrated unity.

Transitioning to the Maastricht Treaty, or the “Treaty on European Union” (TEU), it heralded an era of augmented political integration. An illustrative component of this treaty, Article 2, enumerates the foundational values of the EU, emphasizing human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and an unwavering respect for human rights, inclusive of minority rights.

Subsequently, the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) accentuated and expanded the

tenets laid out in the Maastricht Treaty, placing heightened emphasis on the cardinality of non-discrimination and human rights advocacy. Similarly, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), albeit not a treaty, remains instrumental in demarcating the EU's identity. This charter meticulously details the civil, political, economic, and social rights endowed upon European citizens and residents, enshrining provisions such as safeguarding human dignity and proscribing discrimination on a plethora of grounds.

Further reinforcing the EU's identity is the Treaty of Lisbon (2007). Amending both the TEU and the “Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union” (TFEU), it amplifies the EU's commitment to its foundational ethos. Emblematic of this is Article 3(3) of the TEU, which extols the EU's cultural and linguistic plurality, simultaneously underscoring the preservation and enhancement of Europe's invaluable cultural legacy.

In summation, the EU's identity, as manifested in these treaties, underscores its allegiance to peace, unity, democracy, rule of law, human rights, societal cohesion, and cultural and linguistic diversity. Collectively, these documents elucidate the EU's vision of itself: not merely as a cohesive economic bloc but as a consortium anchored in shared values and principles, striving to ameliorate the lives of its denizens while exerting a profound influence on the international spectrum.

The EU, a distinctive supranational institution, is frequently lauded for its unwavering allegiance to a set of shared principles, values, and norms, encompassing human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and an unwavering respect for human rights. These foundational values, encapsulated in the Treaty on EU (Article 2), not only underpin the EU's internal governance mechanisms but also shape its external diplomatic and strategic orientations. As such, the EU's and its member states' strategies and policies in confronting external exigencies, exemplified by the Syrian refugee influx, provide a pivotal evaluative benchmark to ascertain their authentic commitment and fidelity to these espoused principles. The selected member states encapsulate a diverse array of experiences and reactions vis-à-vis the Syrian refugee situation. This gamut is instrumental in delineating both the congruence and deviation from established EU values amongst its member states, bearing in mind their individual historical trajectories, political landscapes, economic configurations, and sociocultural matrices. To Alston and Weiler, the issue of human rights cannot be kept separate from each other in domestic and foreign policy, and both are like “two sides of the same coin” (Alston and Weiler, 1998, p. 664).

According to Manners, normative power involves the capacity to influence the prevailing notion of what is considered “normal” in the international arena. He argues that during the founding phase of the EU, there was a concurrent period of post-nationalism marked by conflicts and devastation. The primary objective of the EU, as Manners asserts, was to establish peace in the region. In other words, the EU, which has established its own values over time in an international system where war, individual realist and protectionist interests are taken for granted, chaos is considered normal, is a normative power identified with these values. Manners, who states that the EU has a special structure unique to it, states that this special structure has developed over time, differentiates from other actors in the international arena as a consensual, value-based Union. In Manners' perspective, this unique and distinct form of hybridity places growing emphasis on certain principles that are shared among the member states. The evolving hybridity highlights the commonality of these principles and their significance within the EU context (Manners, 2002). Norms serve as glue and normative values are the guarantor of the image and sustainability of the Union, both internally and externally. These values form the basis of the EU's sole identity on the continent, which seeks to bring post-war ultimately peace. Members who have adopted these values will establish peace both within themselves and outside the Union. The principles of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, mutual cooperation, and solidarity, along with the EU constitution and various foundational agreements, have contributed to establishing a normative image for the EU within the international arena. These principles, enshrined in the EU's framework, serve as the basis for its normative power and influence on the global stage.

We can define the normative power structure of the EU as its sui-generis supranational structure, its evolution process and its redefinition and reshaping of what is normal in IR. According to Therborn (1997), the ability of “Europe” to become a normative power and dictate political, economic, and social institutions to other parts of the world is unlikely without the support of force and a willingness to employ it. Therborn suggests that normative power requires a certain level of coercive capability to effectively influence other regions (Therborn, 1997). However, Manners opposes this and talks about the fact that the unique structure of the EU naturally pushes it towards a normative identity. In other words, the historical process and conditions that formed the EU naturally pushed it to a normative identity.

According to Manners' definition, the most important thing that makes the EU a normative power is its power of idea, not use of force. It is not a physical power, not a concrete one, and the relationship with the world should be built on this basis in a normative context (Rüßen, 2018).

<i>Founding Principles</i>	<i>Tasks and Objectives</i>	<i>Stable Institutions</i>	<i>Fundamental Rights</i>
Liberty	Social solidarity	Guarantee of democracy	Dignity
Democracy	Anti-discrimination	Rule of law	Freedoms
Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms	Sustainable development	Human rights	Equality
Rule of law		Protection of minorities	Solidarity
			Citizenship
			Justice
Treaty base – set out in art. 6 of the TEU	Treaty base – set out in arts. 2 of TEC and TEU, arts. 6 and 13 of TEC	Copenhagen criteria – set out in the conclusions of the June 1993 European Council	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

Figure 1. The EU's normative basis (Source: Manners, 2002).

According to Manners, the identity of the EU as a normative power does not necessarily imply the pursuit of an explicitly ethical foreign policy. Instead, he argues that the EU's normative power lies in its ability to transform and shift the norms, standards, and expectations of global politics beyond the traditional focus on nation-states. In this view, the EU's normative power stems from its capacity to influence and reshape the dynamics of world politics by promoting alternative approaches and frameworks (Manners, 2008). He stated that the EU serves as an institution that not only promotes but also implements a range of norms that are also recognized by the United Nations (Manners, 2008). Indeed, according to Manners, the normative power of the EU is driven by an underlying ethic aimed at fostering a more just and cosmopolitan world. He suggests that the EU's normative power is not solely focused on promoting its own interests but is rooted in a broader vision of advancing principles of justice, inclusivity, and global cooperation. The EU's normative power seeks to contribute to the construction of a more cosmopolitan and equitable international order. These norms reflect the EU's commitment to advancing principles that contribute to a just and cosmopolitan world. The success of the EU's normative

power is evaluated based on how well its actions align with these principles and the impact they have in promoting positive change and shaping international norms and standards.

Manners, who first started with the concept of sustainable peace, talks about a number of measures and tools to ensure EU internal security and international security. According to Manners, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU encompasses various tasks and operations aimed at ensuring security and promoting peace. These include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peacekeeping tasks, as well as tasks of combat forces in influx management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilization (Manners, 2008). These activities form part of the EU's efforts to contribute to global security and stability while aligning with its normative power identity (Manners, 2008). While we see a well summarized and organized EU on paper, the real life counterpart is different. According to Price, in practice, most states exhibit rational behavior by considering the structural distribution of power in the international system and not sacrificing their vital national interests for the sake of pursuing normative agendas. This suggests that while normative power and the promotion of values and principles are important, states are also mindful of their own strategic interests and the power dynamics that shape international relations. States tend to strike a balance between normative aspirations and the pursuit of their national interests, taking into account the realities of power and the constraints they face in the international system (Hyde-Price, 2008).

According to Michael Diedring, the Secretary General of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, there has been a lack of response from the EU regarding calls for search-and-rescue efforts in the Mediterranean. Diedring specifically mentioned that their appeals have not been heeded, except for the commendable efforts of the Italian navy. He expressed his view that the EU has been failing to take appropriate action in addressing the humanitarian situation in the Mediterranean (Borger, *The Guardian*, 2015). In 2023, Italy's far-right government created a Code of Conduct that would hit the search and rescue operations of NGOs and came into effect. Accordingly, after the ships have completed their first rescue operations, it obliges them to go ashore even if it is publicly known that other refugees have been lost at sea, and imposes heavy penalties in case of non-compliance (Liboreiro, 2023).

Moreover, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention, although the comment

that this agreement would probably not be implemented was made by experts at the UN Refugee Agency, the agreement came to life. To Watchdogs, refugees should not be returned to countries that are unable to ensure their rights. Watchdogs have identified certain countries, such as Turkey, as not being able to guarantee the rights of refugees. This highlights the importance of considering the human rights situation in destination countries when making decisions regarding the return or resettlement of refugees (The Guardian, 2016). As I mentioned, Manners evaluates these values of the EU in the context of Principles, Actions and Impact in the international arena. In the perspective of Manners, discussions about the European Union (EU) as a civilian power or a military power should be complemented by an emphasis on its normative power of an ideational nature. This form of normative power is characterized by the common principles shared by the EU member states and a willingness to go beyond the traditional Westphalian conventions of state-centric politics. By emphasizing shared principles and challenging conventional notions of sovereignty, the EU's normative power can have a significant impact on international relations (Manners, 2002). In other words, the difference in Manners' definition of normative power is that more weight is given to the ability to shape the normal. Neither civilian power nor military power is excluded, but the main focus is on reinterpreting and shaping the normal. The EU has a special position in the international arena as a value-based Union that contributes to the reinterpretation and shaping of the “normal”.

According to Amnesty International (AI), out of 200 refugees attempting to irregularly travel from Turkey to Greece in 2015 and 2016, many were pressured and coerced into “voluntarily” returning to Syria and Iraq. Such actions blatantly contravene international law, which expressly prohibits the forced repatriation of individuals to nations where they would face life threats or freedom curtailments. This report accentuates the imperative of adhering to international legal commitments and ensuring refugee rights. It underscores the essentiality of upholding non-refoulement principles and guaranteeing the safety of those seeking international protection (Amnesty International, 2016).

Saatçioğlu's incisive critique posits that the EU-Turkey refugee accords typify the EU's inclination to elevate its regional strategic interests above its foundational normative obligations (Saatçioğlu, 2017). Such a trend hints that, in the intricate realm of international diplomacy and policy making, pragmatic considerations occasionally overshadow the EU's proclaimed dedication to its intrinsic values and tenets. The

emerging patterns can be traced back to a confluence of factors: the escalating challenge the EU faces in effectively addressing the refugee situation, the inherent diverse political stances and orientations among member states, and security apprehensions explicitly stemming from the massive influx of refugees. Furthermore, internal pressures induced by the heightened securitization of the refugee issue have played a role. The amplified securitization and security concerns are further intensified due to the varied adoption and implementation of core values across member states.

2.4 Foundational Framework: Securitization and Externalization in Migration and Asylum Policies

In a comprehensive 2021 analysis, Asderaki and Markozani examine the EU's transition towards the securitization of irregular migration. They trace the path from initial securitized dialogues to the eventual militaristic strategies adopted by European policy. Their analysis posits that the complete securitization of the irregular migration topic had not taken place until the emergence of the recent refugee influx (Asderaki and Markozani, 2021). This influx marked a pivotal moment, meeting both the discourse and legitimization facets of the securitization theory, which then justified the adoption of extraordinary policy measures (Asderaki and Markozani, 2021). Beginning in 2013, the EU's policy narrative increasingly framed irregular migrants as a significant security dilemma. This perspective was accompanied by robust militaristic responses, such as strengthening FRONTEX, initiating naval operations in the Mediterranean, and collaborative efforts with NATO (Asderaki and Markozani, 2021). Asderaki and Markozani's (2021) discourse analysis of EU documents, spanning 2013 to the end of 2017, uncovered an amplification in the securitized rhetoric, particularly pronounced during 2015-2016. Upon reviewing the EU's external border control strategies, they deduced that Europe's militaristic policy shift was influenced by the increasingly securitized dialogue, sanctioning the EU's unprecedented measures in response to migrant and refugee movements (Asderaki and Markozani, 2021).

Externalization of migration controls refers to a set of extraterritorial strategies and actions employed by states to preemptively deter migrants, including asylum seekers, from accessing the territories or legal jurisdictions of destination nations, often without assessing the individual merits of their protection claims (Frelick, Kysel and Podkul, 2016). Such strategies can range from law enforcement operations against smuggling and trafficking networks to enhancing deterrent mechanisms to discourage

potential migrants. This approach often intertwines with certain political narratives. Some assert security concerns, hypothesizing that terrorists could masquerade as refugees. Others challenge the legitimacy of migrants' asylum claims, arguing they are primarily economic migrants in search of better livelihoods rather than genuine refugees in need of protection. Particularly in the European context, there's a prevailing notion that refugees should seek asylum in geographically proximate countries, implying that their movement towards Europe is driven less by the quest for safety and more by the allure of a higher standard of living (Frelick, Kysel and Podkul, 2016).

This externalizing approach can be observed in structured migration policies, visa regulations, inter-state policy initiatives, and even spontaneous practices, with the intent either to directly inhibit the entry of migrants or indirectly influence migration patterns. According to Lember-Petersen (2019), “externalization” can be conceptualized as a series of strategic processes and practices. Within this framework, entities supplement their internal migration control policies by initiating measures that exert control beyond their territorial limits, often delegating such responsibilities to alternative public or private institutions (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2019).

Mirjana Bobić and Danica Šantić believe that the recent 'migration crisis' has been portrayed as a threat to the EU (Bobić and Šantić, 2020). At the same time, countries near the EU, but not part of it, are being pushed to watch and close their borders to stop migrants (Bobić and Šantić, 2020).

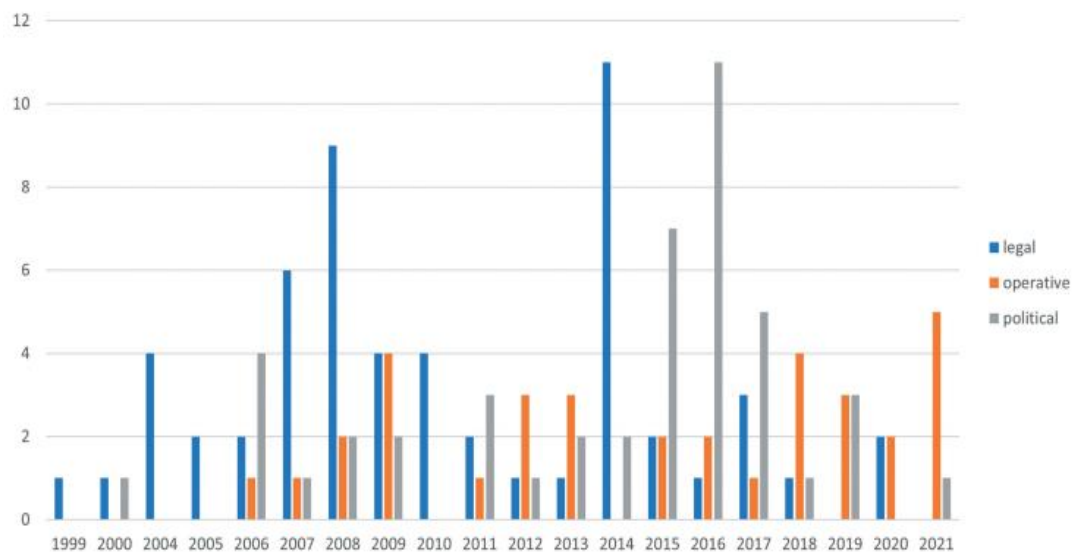


Figure 2. EU Migration Policy's External Dimension: A Timeline by Identified Tool Categories (Source: Fontana and Longo, 2022).

The visual representation delineates the temporal progression of strategies incorporated within the external dimension of the EU migration directives spanning from 1999 to 2021. Strategically, these instruments have been bifurcated into three distinct categories: Legal instruments, evidenced in blue, encompass formal juridical commitments and accords; Operative mechanisms, indicated in orange, allude to actionable frameworks or operational endeavors; whereas Political strategies, illustrated in grey, encapsulate political covenants, discourses, or strategic alignments. A discernible trajectory in recent years illustrates a heightened inclination towards the employment of political and operative methodologies, thereby relegating legal instruments to a subsidiary stance. This evident shift could be attributed to the EU's adaptive strategies, notably the proliferation of informal readmission agreements and the expansion of migration dialogues with emergent third-country collaborators. Concurrently, a recalibration in the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) priorities signals a pivot towards initiatives that prominently address migratory concerns. Intriguingly, an overarching analysis suggests that the bulk of these instruments, irrespective of their categorical delineation, predominantly concentrate on facets of border surveillance, control modalities, return and readmission protocols, and initiatives aimed at curbing human trafficking. A minuscule fraction is dedicated to arenas such as international protection, asylum facilitation, and legal migratory pathways, underscoring the EU's pronounced focus on border governance over asylum and legal migration facilitation. Collectively, this data offers a panoramic insight into the EU's metamorphosing migratory strategies, indicating a contemporary proclivity towards operative and political maneuvers as opposed to entrenched legal accords.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS: MEMBER STATES AND THE EU

3.1 From Normativity to Securitization and Externalization

The EU has grappled with various regional migration events in recent history. Notable instances include the Kosovo Conflict in the late 1990s, the Balkan Wars in the 1990s, the ongoing Ukraine Conflict since 2014, and the North African Migrant Crisis that began in 2011. Additionally, labor migration from the Baltic States to other EU member states in the early 2000s is of relevance. While these events differ in scale from the Syrian refugee influx, they present significant challenges for the EU's capacity to uphold its core values and respond effectively.

The Syrian refugee influx stands apart due to its distinct economic, political, security, and values-related facets. Economically, Syria's prior middle-income status contrasted with the massive economic strain placed on both Middle Eastern host countries and European nations, necessitating extensive support in areas such as housing, healthcare, education, and employment for millions of refugees. In contrast, other events, such as Baltic States migration, generally involved internal displacement or smaller-scale migration, posing less substantial economic burdens.

Politically, the Syrian conflict remains a complex and ongoing civil war with multiple international factions, creating formidable diplomatic challenges.

Security-wise, the Syrian influx's involvement of extremist groups heightened concerns about terrorism and radicalization, presenting unique security challenges and potential threats to host countries. While security issues existed in other regional crises like the Balkan Wars, the scale and complexity of security concerns in the Syrian crisis were unparalleled, posing a greater challenge to the EU. In the course of this influx, the adoption of securitization discourse by certain media outlets and policymakers has elevated the prominence of security considerations within the discourse surrounding the issue.

In terms of values, the Syrian refugee influx posed an extraordinary test of the EU's commitment to humanitarianism, solidarity, and human rights. It raised profound questions about the EU's capacity to respond effectively to a humanitarian emergency of unprecedented magnitude. While the EU faced value-based challenges in other regional migration crises, they were generally of lesser magnitude and did not attract the same level of global attention and scrutiny as the Syrian influx.

In summary, the Syrian refugee influx distinguished itself from other regional migration events by virtue of its unparalleled scale, economic impact, ongoing nature, complexity, and the distinct security and values challenges it presented to the EU. These distinctions underscore the unique character of the Syrian crisis and the profound test it posed to the EU.

While the general principle suggests that countries with a longer democratic tradition are more receptive to policies in line with human rights and refugee protection, there have been instances where even these countries have adopted measures or engaged in discourses that appear exclusionary or restrictive towards refugees. For instance, With a rich democratic tradition, the UK has been reluctant in recent years to accept a significant number of Syrian refugees compared to Germany or Sweden. The Brexit debate, for instance, saw concerns over immigration (including refugees) being a prominent issue. Additionally, the UK has had debates over the “hostile environment” policy, which aimed to make staying in the country as difficult as possible for undocumented migrants. On the other hand, despite its democratic legacy and being the birthplace of human rights declarations, France has faced criticism over its treatment of refugees and migrants, particularly in areas like Calais, where makeshift camps have frequently been dismantled by authorities. Firstly, In 2015, Former French President Hollande proactively addressed France's stance on the escalating refugee situation. He articulated the nation's resolve to amplify its humanitarian support, pledging to accommodate an additional 24,000 refugees (France 24, 2015). Moreover, subsequent to this pronouncement, President Hollande delineated plans to dismantle the migrant encampment situated in Calais, a pivotal transit nexus for those aiming to reach the United Kingdom (UK). This encampment had historically been a focal point of contention between the UK and France. French officials posited that the camp's infrastructural inadequacies rendered it unfit from a humanitarian standpoint, proposing a temporary dispersal of its inhabitants to diverse regions within France (Euronews Türkçe, 2016). Euronews Türkçe (2016) further insinuates that France's reticence to establish fully equipped humanitarian shelters might be strategically designed to dissuade asylum seekers.

While Hungary is a newer democracy compared to the previous examples, its shift towards an illiberal democracy under the leadership of Viktor Orbán has seen significant anti-refugee sentiments. Hungary erected a fence along its border with Serbia and Croatia during the peak of the refugee influx, and Orbán's government has

been vocally against refugee quotas proposed by the EU.

On the other hand, both Germany and Finland serve as notable counterpoints in the context of the Syrian refugee influx. Under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany notably opened its borders at the height of the refugee influx in 2015. Merkel's decision was encapsulated in her phrase “Wir schaffen das” (“We can do it”). The country subsequently saw the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees. Germany's approach was seen as a significant affirmation of its commitment to the values underpinning the EU, particularly given Germany's economic and political clout within the EU.

Despite its geographical distance from the primary routes of the refugee influx, Finland displayed a commitment to EU quotas and values. The Finnish government worked on effective integration programs to facilitate the social and economic inclusion of incoming refugees. It's also noteworthy that Finland's then-Prime Minister, Juha Sipilä, even offered his own home to refugees, symbolizing a personal commitment to the cause.

These examples from Germany and Finland underscore the point that political leadership, national narratives, and public sentiment play pivotal roles in shaping responses to crises, even in countries with deeply rooted democratic traditions. They demonstrate that commitment to democratic values can lead to more inclusive and cooperative approaches during challenging times.

Indeed, the response to the Syrian refugee influx by various European countries has been multifaceted and influenced by a range of factors beyond just democratic traditions. Let's delve deeper into the dichotomy I've presented and the particular situation of Germany:

Even within countries that have a longstanding democratic tradition, public opinion, political leadership, historical precedents, and economic conditions play a significant role in shaping policies. The internal dynamics, political discourse, and the rise of right-wing or populist movements can affect how these countries approach the refugee issue. For example, as previously mentioned, despite their deep-rooted democracies, both the UK and France displayed reservations and, in certain instances, reluctance in their approach to the refugee influx.

How can we justify Germany's position? One of these is historical Responsibility. Given Germany's history, especially after World War II, there's a strong sense of historical responsibility to prevent human suffering and to champion

human rights. This historical backdrop influenced Germany's response.

The second one and I think one of the most powerful reasons is economic factors in Germany, with its strong economy, had the capacity to absorb and integrate a large number of refugees. Furthermore, given its aging population, migrants could potentially fill gaps in the labor market.

The other, which is an undeniable reality is Chancellor Angela Merkel's leadership played a decisive role. Her decision to welcome refugees was not just a reflection of economic pragmatism but also a moral stance rooted in humanitarian principles. Merkel faced significant intra-party dissent and encountered mounting criticism for her stance. Nonetheless, she remained resolute in her policy direction, even in the face of declining public approval ratings.

The fourth reason is public sentiment. While there was significant support for Merkel's decision among many Germans, it's essential to note that the decision also led to debates, challenges, and the rise of opposition from certain quarters, including the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

Some countries with younger democratic traditions, influenced by EU aspirations or strong leadership committed to EU values, also played a collaborative role during the influx. However, this collaboration was not uniform across all newer EU members. Let's delve into specific examples of newer democracies within the EU that had varying responses to the refugee influx:

Slovenia and Portugal have taken a more collaborative stance. As a newer member of the EU (joined in 2004), Slovenia largely complied with EU regulations concerning the refugee influx. While there were challenges and concerns raised (I will mention the issue of push back later, one of the concerns), Slovenia, a small country situated on the southern border of Central Europe, found itself in the path of the Western Balkan route during the Syrian refugee influx. In 2015, as countries like Hungary erected barriers and tightened their border controls, large numbers of refugees and migrants shifted their route towards Slovenia in their quest to reach countries like Germany and Sweden. In October 2015, Slovenia started to face thousands of daily arrivals. In response to this unexpected pressure, Slovenia requested EU assistance, emphasizing the need for solidarity and cooperation.

The other collaborative newer democracy example is Portugal. Though not a "new" democracy in the strictest sense (Carnation Revolution was in 1974), Portugal is a relatively recent addition to the EU (joined in 1986). Portugal showcased a

willingness to accept more refugees than allocated under the EU quota system, emphasizing solidarity and humanitarian responsibility.

A less collaborative or resistant stance is observed in Hungary, Poland, and Czechia. Hungary, which transitioned to democracy in the 1990s and joined the EU in 2004, adopted a more resistant stance during the refugee influx. Led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Hungary erected fences on its borders with Serbia and Croatia and adopted stringent measures against migrants. Poland, another state that joined the EU in 2004, also expressed reservations about accepting refugees, especially under the EU's quota system. The Polish government raised security concerns and emphasized its Christian identity as factors in its decision-making process. A member since 2004, Czechia displayed skepticism toward the EU's refugee quota system and was hesitant to accept a significant number of refugees. The government frequently voiced security and cultural integration concerns.

While these countries all joined the EU relatively recently, their responses to the refugee influx varied significantly. Factors such as political leadership, public sentiment, historical experiences, and security concerns played pivotal roles in shaping their respective stances.

In conclusion, while democratic maturity can provide a foundational perspective on a country's potential response to crises like the refugee influx, it's crucial to understand that actual responses are shaped by a dynamic interplay of historical, political, economic, and societal factors. Germany's case underscores the complexity of these determinants, illustrating that even within a singular nation, multifaceted factors can influence policy decisions.

Due to the intricate dynamics at play, member states' responses to the refugee influx have varied considerably, leading to a seemingly fragmented Union with member countries displaying disparate stances. Lavenex contends that the EU's protectionist strategies and policies verge on hypocrisy. She posits that, given its nature as a multi-tiered entity aiming for political unification, the EU is especially defenseless to such incongruities. While the EU has endeavored to steer its member states towards a unified approach grounded in shared values, the ultimate resolution appeared to pivot towards externalization. Although the EU has exhibited points of resistance, its efforts to enforce EU regulations and impose sanctions on non-compliant member states have been tentative and not thoroughly executed.

This thesis will not delve into the myriad reasons underpinning the diverse

reactions of member states but will instead focus on the ultimate repercussions of the Syrian refugee influx on individual countries and the EU as a whole. The findings suggest that, in contrast to Manners' assertions, the EU cannot unequivocally be upheld as a normative power. The various contradictions that emerged during this period have significantly diminished its purported normative stance.

The EU and its member states began responding to the Syrian refugee influx in its early stages, with various statements and actions aimed at addressing the humanitarian aspects of the influx. However, it's challenging to pinpoint a specific date for when the EU started giving normative messages, as responses evolved gradually in line with the unfolding events in Syria. The EU and its institutions began expressing concerns and providing assistance to Syrian refugees and affected regions from the early years of the conflict, which escalated in 2011. However, the influx reached a climax in 2015/16 when the image of Alan Kurdi, a Syrian toddler who drowned while attempting to reach Europe, gained widespread international attention. Normative messages emphasizing humanitarian principles and solidarity were integrated into the EU's response throughout the influx at the beginning. Specific statements and actions may have occurred at various times, but there isn't a single date that marks the beginning of normative messaging in response to the influx.

Greece's position at the southeastern edge of Europe made it one of the primary gateways for refugees, particularly Syrians, seeking asylum in the EU. From 2015 onward, Greece witnessed an unprecedented influx of refugees, primarily arriving on its Aegean islands, such as Lesbos, Chios, and Samos. The infrastructure on these islands was quickly overwhelmed, leading to an urgent humanitarian situation with overcrowded camps and strained resources.

Nevertheless, the EU initially conveyed normative and solidarity messages during the early stages of the issue; however, it shifted toward a realist, protectionist, and exclusionary stance over time. In this orientation, the lack of solidarity among the members of the Union and the differences of opinion on how to solve the "crisis" have been effective. Some countries within the EU have rejected and resisted the proposals given by the EU on the way to solve the refugee influx. A group has formed within the EU, which complicates the situation and refuses to cooperate with other countries rather than taking a common position. Theresa Gessler and Sophia Hunger postulate that the heightened focus of mainstream parties on immigration was influenced not solely by the immediacy of the influx but also significantly by the

pronounced emphasis the radical right parties placed on the subject (Gessler and Hunger, 2022). According to ontological security, preserving the existing identity is preferable to “uncertainty”, even if the actions to be taken conflict with the identity, even if it leads to greater conflict or destruction, and even if it conflicts with rationality (Chernobrov, 2016). The role of perception and linguistic representation is pivotal in engendering ontological insecurity. The re-characterization of the situation from a “human tragedy” to a “crisis” has precipitated a shift in perception, propelling the narrative towards a securitization paradigm. Alkopher (2018) posits that the initial response, especially from the Visegrad Four, is characterized by the securitization of self, driven by underlying sentiments of anxiety and ontological vulnerability. Such a stance emphasizes the reinforcement of national historical narratives and immigration policies, which may inadvertently challenge and counteract broader supranational European strategies (Alkopher, 2018). Kılıç argues that the Commission and High Representative's viewpoint on refugees, being perceived as “an existential threat and crisis,” is evident in their interpretation (Kılıç, 2018). In its annual report, the Council of Europe Committee against Torture (CPT) has highlighted the presence of discernible trends involving physical mistreatment of individuals attempting to cross borders. Instances were recorded where refugees and asylum seekers were subjected to acts of violence such as punching, slapping, and being beaten with truncheons, weapons, sticks, or branches. The perpetrators of these acts, often police or border guards, frequently resorted to removing their identification tags or badges (Rankin, 2023).

To comprehend the developmental trajectory of the Syrian refugee influx within the framework of this study, we will initiate a historical analysis, commencing from the pivotal year 2015. This choice reflects the climax of the influx. Our examination will delve into the perspectives and actions of both EU member states and the EU itself, focusing on their evolving approaches and potential conflicts related to this issue.

In the context of equitable burden-sharing, a proposal for mandatory quotas, jointly presented by Germany and France in 2015, was met with varying degrees of support within the EU. Chancellor Angela Merkel indicated that this proposal would be subject to discussions among ministers, while opposition to the idea of a mandatory quota was voiced by the United Kingdom and several Eastern and Central European countries (Harding, Nolan and Chirisafis, 2015). While the French PM at the time,

Manuel Valls, announced that a humanitarian camp would be built in the Calais region, which is planned to be funded by the EU budget, Austrian interior minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner argued that members who refused the quota system and were afraid to take responsibility should not be able to benefit from the EU budget (Harding, Nolan and Chirisafis, 2015). The camp, which was closed by the French government in 2021, has led to the UK's thesis that the camp encourages refugees because it is the area used as a transit point for immigrants and refugees, and the UK has criticized France from time to time. Rishi Sunak, PM of UK, announced that he will establish a detention center in the north of France to stop the refugees trying to cross the English Channel during his trip to France on March 10, 2023. French president Emmanuel Macron and PM Sunak announced they agreed on 500 additional officers, new system drones and more French border patrols (Guardian News, 2023).

The UK has taken a similar attitude since the beginning of the issue and has continued the policy of “let them stay away, let them not come” despite intense and harsh criticism from the internal public opinion and opposition parties. Valls, who supported Merkel in the early stages of the humanitarian tragedy, said Valls voiced his concern about the refusal of numerous countries to fulfill their responsibilities, stating that such behavior contradicts the essence of European values and is something that cannot be tolerated (Harding, Nolan and Chirisafis, 2015). Hungary, which constructed fence to its borders in this process, was not content with just this, and also wanted to pass a bill through parliament on entering private property without court permission if the presence of illegal immigrants was suspected, but the party turned away from this decision at the last moment due to intense criticism (Scheppele, 2015). Hungary is among the countries that have sharply externalized a humanitarian situation, with the authorization of the police to use hard force, rubber bullets and dogs, and it is leading the way in this regard. In 2015, Vincent Cochetel, the UNHCR Regional Refugee Coordinator for Refugees in Europe, called upon Hungary to ensure the proper registration and provision of suitable conditions for arriving refugees and migrants (UNHCR, 2015). Hungary's stable anti-immigrant and anti-refugee hate approach, regulations and practices that harm refugee and human rights have received intense criticism from other European countries, the EU and international human rights organizations. In the case brought by Ilias Ilias and Ali Ahmed against Hungary, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) found that the confinement of the

applicants to the transit zone constituted a de facto deprivation of liberty. This ruling indicates that Hungary's treatment of refugees violated their rights and restricted their freedom (ECHR, 2017). Expressing his deep dismay over the treatment of refugees at the Serbia-Hungary border, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon emphasized that these individuals are fleeing from war and persecution, deserving to be treated with full respect for their human rights and human dignity (Charbonneau and Nichols, 2015).

The stance of founding members like the Netherlands and Belgium regarding the Syrian refugee influx and its alignment with the EU's core values offers an insightful perspective on the broader EU response. At the onset of the refugee influx, the Netherlands, like many other EU countries, experienced a surge in asylum applications. The Dutch government initially took steps to accommodate refugees, setting up reception centers across the country. The issue of refugees has been politically charged in the Netherlands. The rise of right-wing parties, especially the Party for Freedom (PVV) led by Geert Wilders, amplified skepticism towards immigration and refugees. This political pressure has, at times, influenced the national discourse and policy orientation.

In terms of policy adjustments over time, the Dutch government implemented stricter asylum policies. This included fast-tracking the assessment of asylum applications from specific countries deemed “safe” and expediting the return of rejected applicants. Integration Efforts. Despite the tightened policies, the Netherlands has also focused on the integration of refugees, emphasizing language learning, and employment as key integration pillars.

Belgium also saw a rise in asylum seekers in 2015. The country, despite having its own challenges with regional differences between Flanders and Wallonia, aimed to provide shelter and basic amenities to the incoming refugees. Belgium's complex political landscape, with multiple parties representing linguistic, regional, and ideological divisions, meant that the refugee issue became part of broader political negotiations. Right-wing parties, like the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), have advocated for stricter immigration controls.

Policy adjustments, similar to the Netherlands, Belgium has adjusted its asylum procedures over the years. The government increased the capacity of its Immigration Office to process more applications within shorter timeframes and also made efforts to return those whose applications were rejected. There have been notable community-

level efforts in Belgium to support refugees, from local integration initiatives to civil society organizations offering aid and resources.

Both the Netherlands and Belgium, as founding members, have a deep-seated commitment to the core values of the EU. While they've both grappled with domestic political pressures and have made policy adjustments in response to the refugee influx, their overall approach has been a balance between managing the immediate logistical and political challenges while striving to uphold the principles of human rights and dignity. The expectation that founding members should exemplify EU values adds an extra layer of scrutiny to their actions and policies. It's worth noting that both countries, like many others in the EU, have faced the challenge of reconciling national interests and domestic political dynamics with broader European values and solidarity.

When we look at Austria's response to the Syrian refugee influx and its alignment with the EU's core values has been multifaceted, reflecting both the nation's internal political dynamics and broader European trends. At the beginning of the refugee influx around 2015-2016, Austria, given its geographical location as a transit and destination country, received a significant number of refugees, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Austria initially displayed a relatively open approach. In 2015, the country received around 90,000 asylum applications, one of the highest per capita in the EU.

On the other hand, in the initial phase of the refugee influx, Spain, like many other EU countries, committed to the EU's relocation and resettlement schemes. The country pledged to take in a quota of refugees, although actual numbers resettled have often lagged behind commitments. Given its geographical position, Spain has been more prominently affected by migratory pressures from North and West Africa, rather than the Syrian refugee routes that mainly impacted the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece and the Central Mediterranean route to Italy. This distinct migratory pressure has meant that Spain's primary focus in terms of migration has been the Western Mediterranean route, particularly the sea route to its enclaves in North Africa, Ceuta and Melilla, and the Strait of Gibraltar. The refugee and broader migration issue has been a topic of debate within Spain but perhaps hasn't had the same divisive effect as seen in some other EU nations. The main parties have generally supported the notion of Spain contributing to European solidarity by accepting refugees. However, there are regional variations, with some autonomous communities being more proactive in expressing their willingness to host refugees. Spain has a history of integrating

migrants, particularly from Latin America, and has sought to extend similar integration policies to refugees. This includes language courses, job training, and education.

The EU's foundational values center on human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and respect for human rights. Spain's response to the refugee influx can be seen as an attempt to balance these values with practical challenges. While Spain's primary migratory pressure is different from the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes, it has still sought to contribute to European solidarity. However, like many member states, there have been challenges in fully realizing commitments, and Spain has faced criticism for delays in the resettlement and relocation of refugees. Spain, like the rest of the EU, has been focusing on broader migration issues, including addressing root causes in countries of origin and transit and strengthening the EU's external borders.

Germany, the EU's most open country regarding refugees, has declared that it will evolve into a tighter orientation in its refugee policy, as it has determined that most of the refugees come from Afghanistan, not Syria (Connolly, 2015). According to the news of the Guardian, some policy makers in the Berlin administration think that Merkel intends to export the issue to non-EU peripheral countries rather than to handle the issue in the Union (Traynor, 2015). In 2016, the EU and Turkey brokered an agreement aimed at curbing the flow of migrants into Europe. Under this deal, all new irregular migrants arriving in Greece would be returned to Turkey. In return, the EU pledged financial aid to Turkey and to resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey directly. This deal significantly reduced the number of arrivals but raised concerns among human rights advocates regarding its compatibility with international asylum standards. It has been reported by sources close to Merkel that she reached the conclusion that, when it comes to Turkey as the primary source of migrants heading for Europe, interests hold greater importance than values (Traynor, 2015).

This perspective appears to underpin the EU's evolving stance, marked by collaborations with regional countries like Turkey, Libya, and Morocco. These engagements, while bearing semblance in overarching aims, differ considerably in their specifics and ramifications, indicating the EU's quest for diverse solutions in managing its “crisis”. Turkey's geographical adjacency to major countries of refugee and migrant origin magnifies the import of the EU's pact with it. Turkey's strategic positioning as a linchpin in migratory corridors accentuates its pivotal role as a buffer in moderating irregular migration trajectories towards Europe. As such, the EU-

Turkey accord transcends its functional role in migration regulation, emerging as a geopolitical tool aimed at reinforcing the EU's external boundaries in a climate of escalating migratory impetuses. In contrast, the EU's engagements with Libya were often channeled through UN agencies or encapsulated within broader initiatives, such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa. Morocco, although historically entwined with the EU on migration, lacks a codified agreement akin to the EU-Turkey deal.

The UK, on the other hand, continued to be very cautious, criticizing EU policy and keeping away from the subject. David Miliband, the head of the International Rescue Committee, strongly criticized the United Kingdom's policy, describing it as cold, reluctant, and exclusionary (Borger, 2015). He also highlighted the significance of regional countries such as Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey, emphasizing that these nations observe and take note of the disparity between the UK's words and actions. Miliband stressed the importance of British citizens comprehending that other countries, including Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey, keenly observe the disparity between the statements made by the UK and its actual actions (Borger, 2015). Although this criticism was actually made specifically for the UK, it also includes a criticism of the difference between what is said and reality, which is the subject of this thesis, through the EU. The community campaign group Citizens UK in the UK is lobbying for both increased pressure on the government and an inclusive policy for refugees. Neil Jameson, the executive director of Citizens UK, expressed the belief that civil society has the capacity to demonstrate the inherent generosity of the British people. With the assistance of religious institutions such as churches, mosques, and synagogues, they aim to identify vacant properties that can be utilized to accommodate refugees (Wintour, 2015). Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the leader of the the Catholic church in England and Wales, strongly condemned the situation, describing it as disgraceful. He expressed deep concern about the loss of lives and the sight of dead bodies on the beaches, emphasizing that Europe, being a region of significant wealth, should be capable of formulating not just a long-term response but also an immediate solution to the influx at hand (The Guardian, 2015).

Here we see that the UK public and important authorities and non-governmental organizations are giving inclusive messages as Alan Kurdi's photos deeply affect the world public opinion. Yvette Cooper, who was a candidate for the Labour Party leadership and also served as the Shadow Home Secretary at that time, accused Prime Minister Cameron of maintaining silence and disregarding the

profound human tragedy unfolding before them. Cooper described the UK government's relocation to the UK of a total of 20,000 refugees by 2020, 4,000 per year, as insufficient (BBC, 2015). In response to Yvette Cooper's remarks, Theresa May stated that it would be more suitable to collaborate with the UNHCR and local authorities in order to accommodate the most vulnerable refugees. She indicated that providing a precise number at that moment was not feasible (BBC, 2015). However, despite all this, the UK reminded of its attitude and position and stated that it has already made the financial assistance that falls on it. It was also entirely up to the UK because of the fact that the UK was not in the Schengen area and whether he would participate in the refugee-sharing quotas system through a joint initiative.

Denmark's approach to the Syrian refugee influx reflects a combination of its traditionally strict asylum policies, domestic political considerations, and broader European trends. During the height of the refugee influx in 2015, Denmark witnessed a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers as other European countries. In contrast to its neighbors, Denmark introduced measures to deter refugees. In September 2015, Denmark temporarily suspended train operations from Germany to avoid large numbers of refugees. The Danish government also took out ads in Lebanese newspapers discouraging refugees from coming to Denmark, highlighting the country's stringent regulations and reduced social benefits. Denmark's center-right government, backed by the right-wing Danish People's Party (DPP), pushed for tighter immigration rules. The DPP had significant influence, and its stance was more restrictive concerning refugee policies.

When we look at Italy, the process of evolution from Mare Nostrum to Triton and then to Code of Conduct applications is especially important in terms of showing the point that Italy and the Union have reached over time. It was more attractive for Italy to get rid of the financial burden of Mare Nostrum and critics towards operations from other member states. Because the Triton was to be financed entirely from the EU budget. What is actually happening here is both to get rid of the high budget of Mare Nostrum and not to withstand the criticisms made by some other EU countries and Britain for fear of attracting more immigrants. Such nations advocated for the cessation of search and rescue operations and the non-establishment of fundamental humanitarian facilities as potential deterrents for refugee influx. In lieu of this, there was a proclivity to augment support for Triton, an operation characterized by a more circumscribed approach (BBC, 2014). Initially, this viewpoint predominantly

resonated with the UK, but as the influx evolved, it permeated the policies of several other member states. Aldırmaz (2017) observes a discernible inclination amongst EU nations to accentuate reactive measures such as fortified border controls and augmented security provisions. This approach places them in a delicate position, balancing the principles of the rule of law, human rights, and solidarity that underpin their core values, with the interests and objectives of the Union (Aldırmaz, 2017). With the transition from Mare Nostrum to Triton operation, the scope and budget have been significantly reduced. The operation Triton, as expected by many European NGOs, did not function as a search and rescue mission. This operation had a more security-centric mandate and a reduced area of operation compared to “Mare Nostrum”. Italy felt the burden of the refugee influx, especially as the Dublin Regulation dictates that refugees should seek asylum in the first EU country they enter, which, given Italy's geographical location, often meant Italy. Unlike Mare Nostrum, Triton had a restricted scope and operated within a distance of no more than 30 nautical miles from Italy and Malta. Consequently, it operated far from the regions where refugee-carrying boats frequently encountered accidents, resulting in capsizing and sinking (Bayraklı and Keskin, 2015). During this period, Italy frequently called for a more unified EU response to the influx, emphasizing the need for solidarity and burden-sharing among member states. Italy's then-Prime Minister, Renzi, often criticized the EU for not doing enough to help frontline states like Italy and Greece.

The 2015 refugee influx into the EU unveiled several shortcomings in the bloc's external border, asylum, and migration policies. This precipitated a cascade of EU actions, formulated through various legal and policy instruments. While recent efforts have notably fortified the EU's external borders and fostered collaborations with third-party nations, Member States continue to exhibit hesitance in expressing genuine solidarity and assuming equitable responsibility for asylum-seekers. This discrepancy in response has been starkly evident in the face of evolving crises. For instance, while Member States openly exhibited solidarity towards Ukrainian citizens fleeing war, their stance turned ambivalent concerning migrants rescued from the Mediterranean in November 2022. This latter episode underscored the pressing need for a robust mechanism to handle irregular migration.

Though international law mandates states to uphold the welfare of refugees within their confines, the obligations of sharing these responsibilities are nebulous. Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) establishes

a pivotal principle guiding the EU's policies on asylum, migration, and border control. It underscores that the governance and execution of these policies should be anchored in the principle of solidarity and equitable distribution of responsibility. This notion of responsibility extends beyond mere policy implementation; it also encompasses the financial implications tied to these policies. Thus, Article 80 TFEU emphasizes that Member States should not only collectively shoulder the operational challenges posed by migration and asylum but also share the fiscal burdens that arise from these challenges. This embodies the EU's commitment to fostering a united front where all Member States participate collaboratively in addressing the multifaceted dimensions of migration, ensuring that no single state bears a disproportionate burden, be it operational or financial.

Overlaying this intricate scenario is the principle of “burden sharing,” which delineates the equitable division of responsibilities among EU nations. It embodies a commitment to address challenges, especially when certain states bear disproportionate burdens due to geography or other elements. The EU's struggle in harmonizing burden sharing with actionable policies has been evident since the onset of the refugee influx in 2015. While solidarity emphasizes unity and mutual support, burden sharing grapples with the practical distribution of duties. This dichotomy has been a central challenge for the EU: while it vocally upholds solidarity, tangible mechanisms to equitably share responsibilities remain elusive. The ongoing inertia in overhauling the EU's asylum system and the preference for temporary, ad hoc solutions underscore a pervasive solidarity influx demanding urgent resolution.

According to the statements of EU officials, although there was a common asylum policy that was tried to be created in Triton, it shifted from a more humane program that prioritized the lives of refugees to a stricter and more secure structure (Bayraklı and Keskin, 2015). This axis shift is also valuable in terms of showing the position of the EU and its members. The idea of pushing the issue to external borders has been adopted as an increasingly acceptable solution over time with tensions and disputes within the EU. Thus, the EU could not find a solution by getting to the root of the problem. Hardening the legal ways and allowing more deaths by not rescuing people from the sea is not the solution. After all, risking death is the choice of people who have no other choice in the place where they live. The tragic incident involving the drowning of 800 people served as a clear indication that Triton was not an adequate solution following the end of Mare Nostrum. European Home Affairs

Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom made a clear statement, emphasizing that Triton could not act as a replacement for Mare Nostrum (ANSA, 2014). From Mare Nostrum to Triton, the defined scope was narrowed, thus allowing people to die before arriving on the continent. In the Code of Conduct application, maximum life saving in minimum time was legally prevented, and NGO ships were imposed penalties that they almost could not afford, so that people did not reach Italy and the continent. The decisions taken at the last point seem to have evolved from rescue to not rescue.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, advocated for a significant overhaul of the varying immigration policies within the EU. He called for a reevaluation of the Dublin system and proposed a compulsory and equitable distribution of 160,000 individuals among other EU countries, specifically those in Italy, Greece, and Hungary, through a quota system (Marszal, 2015). Britain, Ireland and Denmark were excluded from this scope due to EU agreements. Juncker also called for the creation of a coast guard force to cover the borders of the Schengen area. Juncker's call for this plan, which includes both land and sea, makes sense of the Figure below. Figure 3 shows the numbers and migration routes of refugees and migrants migrating to Europe both by sea and land.

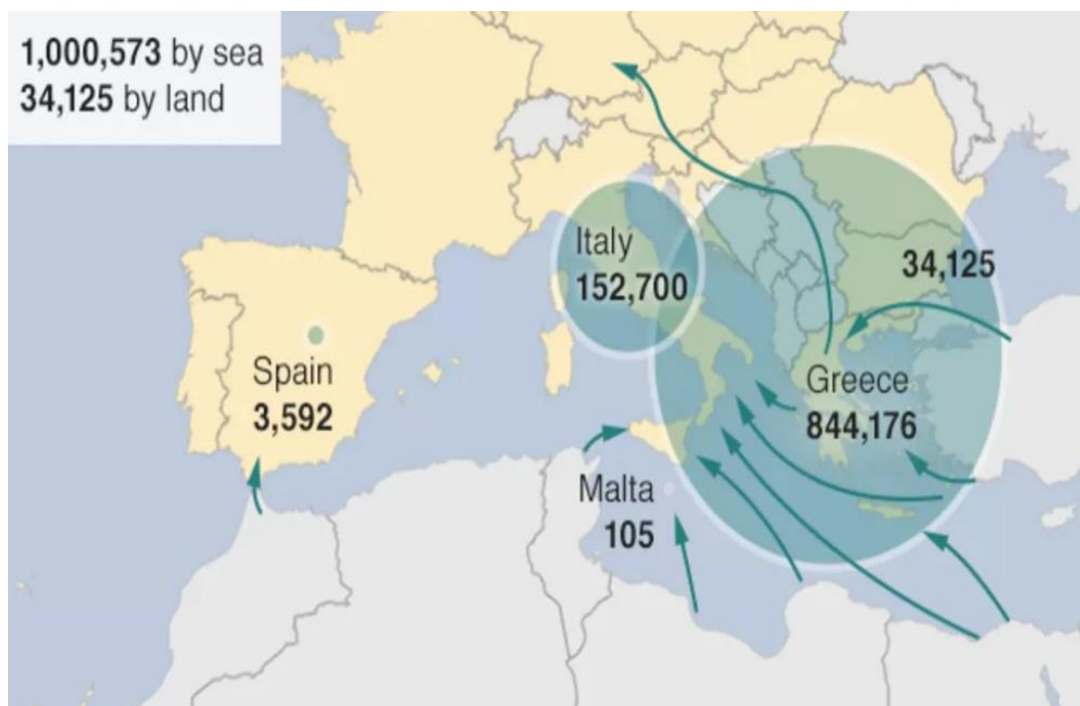


Figure 3. 1 million arrivals by sea and land (Source: BBC, 2015).

The United Kingdom and several Central and Eastern European countries

responded with strong opposition to the quota plan. Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico explicitly stated that his country would not yield to the demands of Germany and France, emphasizing that quotas were irrational (Traynor, 2015). According to Czech State Secretary for European Affairs, Tomas Prouza, the quotas were regarded as nonsensical and ineffective in solving the problem at hand (Aljazeera, 2015). The candidate for PM of Poland at the time, the nationalist right-wing Beata Maria Szydło, stated that her country was under pressure from Brussels over the quota system and that their government should not bow to it (Traynor, 2015). Germany, on the other hand, was voicing support for this plan by Merkel, arguing that the EU needed such a mandatory plan. We also see that there are dissatisfied criticisms of some policies between those who put forward this idea and those who support it. Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council, issued a warning, stating that the primary wave of immigrants was yet to come. He criticized Chancellor Merkel and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, urging them to address the flaws in their open door and window policies (Traynor, 2015).

During the ongoing discussions, the parties involved persisted in blaming one another. The situation was further complicated by Balkan countries closing their borders, and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's decision to construct a 200-kilometer-long barbed wire fence along its borders. Orban's assertion that each country has the right to determine its stance on accepting a large number of Muslims contributed to a fragmented depiction of Europe (Amnesty, 2016). According to the study conducted by Göbl and Szalai, refugees in Hungary were depicted using various adjectives, including “terrorist, disrespectful, shifty, parasitic, deviant, Muslim, violent, anti-women, lying, and ungrateful” (Szalai and Göbl, 2015, p. 20). Such language shifts in the media have also fed far-right and anti-refugee governments among member states. Williams and Pisani argue that migration is portrayed as an existential menace to the security of both the EU and its individual member states. This portrayal serves as a rationale for implementing stricter border security policies, the militarization of the Mediterranean region, and the extensive use of barriers such as fences and barbed wire. These measures are particularly evident along the central Balkan route leading to Germany (Vaughan Williams and Pisani, 2020). In the referendum held in Hungary, 98 percent of the people voted against refugees. This result is not surprising, especially considering the influence of the Orban Government on media companies. The contribution of this language change in the media in

the context of damaging the EU's value-based normative power identity is quite important. Accusing Merkel of moral imperialism, Orban claimed that Greece had failed to protect its borders and that this task should be given to a pan-european power, but he did not have support within the Union, and there were only two ways for him; protecting the fences he had constructed on the borders of Serbia and Croatia, and sending refugees entering Hungary directly to Europe (Traynor, 2015).

Croatia's position on the Syrian refugee influx has been influenced by its geographical location along the Balkan route, and its status as an EU member state. In the latter half of 2015, as Hungary closed its borders, thousands of refugees and migrants started moving through Croatia in an attempt to reach Western Europe. Croatia initially kept its borders open, allowing for the transit of refugees. With the continuous influx and the broader European dynamics, Croatia started implementing stricter border control measures. The country also engaged in regional cooperation, especially with Slovenia and Serbia, to manage the flow of people. Croatia occasionally closed specific border crossings, leading to tensions, especially with Serbia.

During the influx of Syrian refugees, the power struggle of a number of Eastern European countries with EU institutions has revealed the existence of a bloc with a different view within the Union. This conflict was not a clash of arms between countries, but a conflict of power over authority and interests. These countries have adopted a populist and security oriented approach in their internal politics and have seriously opposed EU institutions and decisions. The struggle of power is not referring here to a physical power struggle or conflict. The term is used in the context of influencing the roadmap for how to deal with the refugee influx. This power struggle within the EU has caused the policy distinction to rise even higher. An example of this is the fact that Hungary, which opposed the EU's decision to relocate Syrian refugees in the first place, brought the issue to the ECJ, suspended the Dublin system and closed its borders. Hungary cited the arrival of approximately 60,000 asylum seekers within that year as the reason for taking this action (BBC, 2015). The Dublin regulation remained an inadequate regulation, which only specifies which states should evaluate the asylum application and is far from regulating large immigration waves. In 2016, the Commission acknowledged the shortcomings of the existing Dublin system and highlighted the need for a more equitable and effective approach to address the challenges posed by significant and uncontrolled arrivals of asylum seekers (European

Commission, 2016). Zoltan Kovacs, the government spokesman of Hungary, has stated that his country suspended the Dublin system in order to safeguard Hungary's interests, using the phrase "the boat is full" and he emphasized the need to protect Hungarian interests and the well-being of the population while expressing a desire for a European solution (The Guardian, 2015). This statement highlights the government's stance on immigration and its prioritization of national interests in the context of migration issues. Meloni and her party also have criticized the EU's approach to the migrant and refugee crisis, especially the Dublin Regulation, which they argue places an undue burden on frontline states like Italy. They have called for a more equitable distribution of migrants and refugees across EU member states. Amidst these developments, the EU exhibited a decisive response, prompting Hungary to rescind its decision promptly the following day. Furthermore, certain nations, including Germany and Finland, adopted a policy refraining from returning migrants to their entry country, citing concerns of overcrowding in Greece and Italy (BBC, 2015). In an interview with the German publication Bild, Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, justified his nation's rejection of the EU-wide refugee relocation quota, articulating a perception of refugees as Muslim invaders (Staudenmaier, 2018). Similarly, in France, the far-right leader, Le Pen, who committed to halting immigration during her campaign, exhibited a stringent stance towards an EU exit (BBC, 2017). The transformation of France's policy discourse from normativity and value-centricity to a security-focused protectionist and exclusionary perspective, coupled with Germany's cessation of its open-door policy, signifies pivotal moments in the EU's trajectory towards protectionist-realist strategies. Consequently, such developments imply a suspension of foundational principles as preemptive protective measures.

In January 2016, Denmark passed a controversial law that allowed the police to seize assets over 10,000 DKK (about 1,500 EUR) from asylum seekers to cover their living expenses. The law drew international criticism, with some arguing that it was not in line with the EU's values of human dignity and respect for human rights. The controversial legislation in Denmark parallels initiatives undertaken by the Orban administration in Hungary. Notably, the Hungarian government, under Orban's leadership, endeavored to introduce legislation allowing property access without judicial authorization based merely on suspicions. However, this effort by the Orban government did not come to fruition. The push for the return of Syrian refugees remained particularly contentious, given the ongoing instability in Syria. The

enactment of such a policy by Denmark, a nation often perceived as having a more robust democratic framework and a superior human rights record compared to Hungary, stands in stark contrast. This divergence underscores the tension between value-driven commitments and interest-based considerations.

We also see a shift to a restrictive stance over time for Austria. As the number of arrivals increased and the initial wave of pan-European solidarity began to wane, Austria started to adopt more restrictive measures. In early 2016, Austria announced a cap on the number of asylum seekers it would accept daily and annually, a move that attracted criticism from other EU member states and the European Commission. The country also bolstered its border controls, especially on its southern frontiers, and invested in border infrastructure to manage and reduce the inflow of refugees.

As mentioned before, we see a very fragmented and divided Europe in the face of a regional humanitarian crisis. So much so that UN secretary-general Ban-Ki Moon mediated the talks so that this messy image could be put an end to and the leaders could discuss each other, and invited Slovakia, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Greece and Germany to discuss the issue mutually. However, this did not work, and in the first months of 2016, some cracks began to appear in the Schengen Agreement. According to Amnesty International, the Schengen Agreement, which eliminated border controls among internal borders of the EU, displayed signs of strain as Germany, Austria, Hungary, Sweden, and Denmark temporarily suspended its provisions (Amnesty, 2016). During this time, Bulgaria was building a fence between its Turkey. Figure 4 shows closed borders, fence construction borders and the impact of refugee influx in the Schengen area.



Figure 4. Main Migrant Route to Germany (Source: BBC, 2015).

While all these was happening, with the rhetoric of *wir schaffen das* (we can manage it), Germany continues its open-door policy, and after the attacks and violent incidents that occurred throughout the country, Despite the attacks and violent incidents that took place in Germany, Chancellor Merkel persisted in maintaining an open-door policy. She reiterated that there exists a humanitarian obligation and that Germany is committed to fulfilling this responsibility. Merkel acknowledged that the task at hand would not be easy but reiterated her belief that Germany could successfully manage its historic responsibility, even amidst the challenges of globalization. She emphasized that just as the country had overcome numerous challenges in the past, it could rise to the occasion once again (Connolly, 2016). In the first 11 months of 2015, Germany welcomed and provided asylum to nearly 1 million refugees and asylum seekers (Connolly, 2016). However, Merkel was actually playing a big political gamble because criticism of her was rising in her own country and party, as well as throughout the EU. In response to the violence in Germany in 2016, which was associated with some refugees, Chancellor Merkel made a statement to counter far-right sentiments and alleviate fears in society. She

emphasized that refugees should not be equated with terrorism and emphasized that Germany recognizes and embraces an Islam that adheres to and operates within the framework of the constitution (Neustrelitz, 2016). Her intention was to emphasize the importance of integration and the adherence to constitutional principles (Neustrelitz, 2016). A month later, German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel criticized the migrant policy and the rhetoric of *wir schaffen das* (we can manage it) in an interview given as the orientation towards the far-right AFD party in the country was increasing (Reuters, 2016).

Former German FM, Sigmar Gabriel stated that the rules should be implemented without delay, while the EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos gave a message of working together as a Union, and in this process, Avramopoulos often stated that there was still no solidarity between states (BBC, 2017). Nagy (2017) argues that Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) establishes a direct link between solidarity and the equitable distribution of responsibility. It considers them as integral components of a single principle that applies to various policies within the realm of freedom, security, and justice, including asylum policy. This highlights the importance of both solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility in addressing migration and asylum-related challenges (Nagy, 2017).

In 2017, it was revealed that the relocation program did not work between countries and that the same countries resisted and did not fulfill their responsibilities. In AI's 2016-2017 report specific section to Estonia, it was highlighted that the asylum applications in the country were notably fewer in comparison to other EU member states. An approximate total of 130 applications were submitted during the initial nine months of 2016. Moreover, the European Commission raised concerns regarding Estonia's approach, emphasizing that the government declined relocation petitions from asylum-seekers, often without furnishing well-grounded reasons or on bases that were deemed unjustifiable. According to Commission data, only 8 percent of the target of 160,000 relocations in 2015 was achieved and only Malta and Finland did their part (Boffey, 2017). EU Commissioner of Migration Dimitris Avramopoulos announced that measures, including fines, would be implemented in cases of failure to fulfill responsibilities regarding refugee relocation. He emphasized that there were no longer any valid excuses for member states to not fulfill their obligations. Avramopoulos expressed confidence that it was both possible and feasible to relocate all eligible individuals from Italy and Greece by September (CNN, 2017).

Furthermore, Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos highlighted the crucial role of solidarity in achieving a fair distribution of responsibility. He emphasized that responsibility and solidarity are interconnected and cannot be separated. Avramopoulos stressed that member states should not selectively choose which obligations to fulfill but should instead commit to all measures collectively (CNN, 2017). As it can be seen, the EU adopts a governance style that strives to create an order and roadmap in line with values, despite the harsh opposition of the member states and even their failure to fulfill their responsibilities. However, the reaction of the member states to this authority and the fact that their responsibilities are not fulfilled despite the EU is an indication that the process has not been managed well.

Over time, there has been a noticeable drift in the EU's approach from its normative underpinnings to more protectionist-exclusionary policies, resulting in discernible policy divergences within the Union. As stipulated by EU protocols, the initial entry of an asylum seeker or refugee into European territory renders that specific member state primarily accountable. Tsourdi and De Bruycker (2022) elucidate that while the distribution of refugees should ideally be aligned with economic benchmarks and demographic factors, real-world scenarios frequently place the onus on geographically accessible nations. At the height of the 2015 refugee influx, marked by significant humanitarian challenges, frontline nations such as Greece and Italy bore the immediate brunt and subsequently appealed for collective EU support. Countries such as Italy and Greece which are suffering from the issue due to sudden influx of refugees and insufficient equipment, called for cooperation. Parallely, influential member states like Germany and France promulgated discourses steeped in humanitarian and normative values. Matteo Renzi, Italy's erstwhile Prime Minister in 2015, underscored the Mediterranean situation as emblematic of a profound humanitarian quandary. Renzi contended that the onus should not be exclusively borne by Italy and Malta, invoking the collective negligence witnessed two decades prior during the Srebrenica tragedy as a cautionary historical precedent (Hürriyet, 2015). However, the scheme faced resistance from several EU countries and fell short of its targets. The efforts of many international institutions, the EU itself, human rights organizations and the UN, including the commission's fine warnings, must have been insufficient, which fell far short of the 160,000 target set in 2015.

Countries such as Italy and Greece which are suffering from the issue due to sudden influx of refugees and insufficient equipment, called for cooperation. Greece

and Italy advocated for a shared European solution, emphasizing the principle of European solidarity. The EU introduced a relocation scheme aiming to distribute asylum seekers more evenly across member states. However, the scheme faced resistance from several EU countries and fell short of its targets. The efforts of many international institutions, the EU itself, human rights organizations and the UN, including the commission's fine warnings, must have been insufficient, which fell far short of the 160,000 target set in 2015.

On June 13, 2017, the European Commission initiated infringement procedures against several countries that had failed to fulfill their obligations regarding refugee relocation. The Commission stated that despite its repeated calls for action, these countries (specifically the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland) were in breach of their legal obligations and had shown disregard for their commitments to Greece, Italy, and other member states. Furthermore, the Commission urged member states to reconsider their positions, highlighting that the target of relocating 160,000 refugees set in 2015 had only been met with 20,283 relocations as of June 9, 2017 (Commission, 2017).

Slovakia was one of the EU member states that initially voiced strong opposition to the EU's proposed refugee quota system. Then-Prime Minister Robert Fico publicly rejected mandatory quotas, emphasizing concerns about the integration of refugees from predominantly Muslim countries and potential security risks. In these unfortunate confluence of discourses, refugees were associated with Islam, which in turn was conflated with ISIS. This chain of associations imposed a monolithic identity and status upon individuals, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds and personal beliefs, many of whom the general public had never encountered and likely never would. For this reason, It is imperative to highlight how the atmosphere of trepidation, propelled by the rise of ISIS, has been strategically leveraged by certain EU nations to weave a narrative of 'security' in domestic discourses, thereby facilitating externalization of the refugee issue. Over time, there has been a discernible shift in both media and governmental narratives, which increasingly conflated the refugee influx with ISIS, pivoting the conversation from a humanitarian stance to one rooted in the primal instincts of security and survival. This redirection of public apprehension towards refugees was bolstered by prevailing misconceptions about their affiliations. A study conducted across Europe revealed pronounced political divergences in perceptions surrounding Muslim endorsement of ISIS (Wike, Stokes and Simmons,

2016). Remarkably, the majority in none of the surveyed countries believed that 'very few' Muslims supported ISIS, and in five nations, a sizable segment opined that 'many' or 'most' Muslims were in allegiance with extremist factions like ISIS. Such insights underscore the heterogeneous and often unfounded beliefs permeating European societies regarding Muslim alignment with extremist entities.

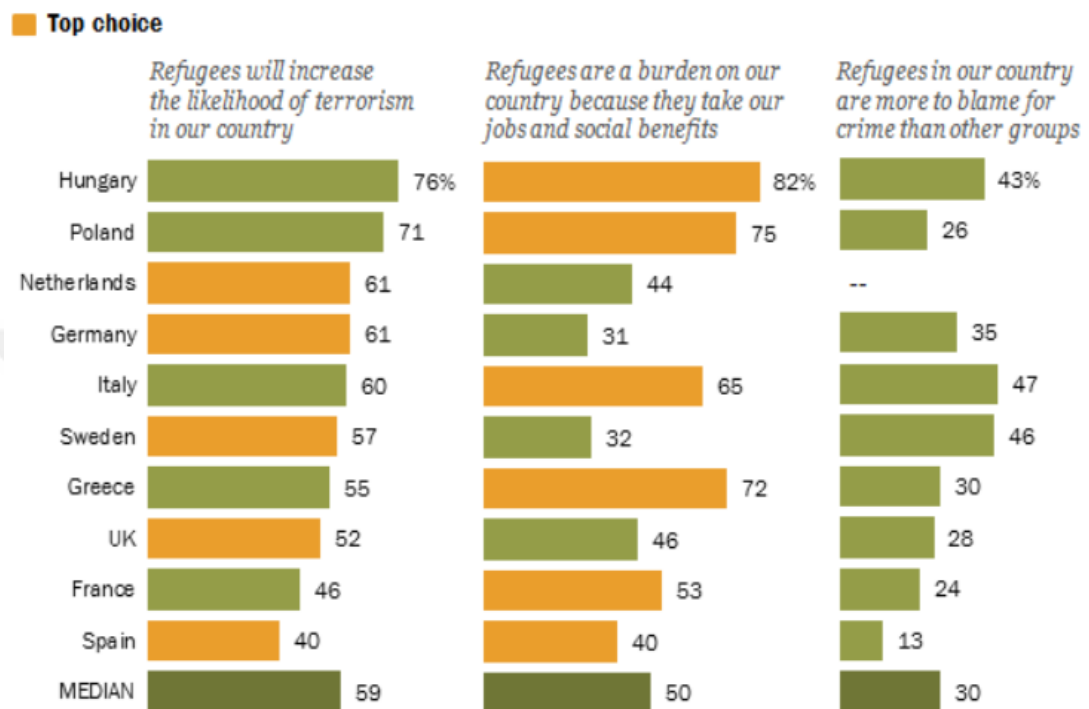


Figure 5. Numerous Europeans express apprehensions about security and economic impacts due to the refugee influx (Source: Pew Research Center, 2016).

The influx of refugees into Europe has notably influenced the discourses of right-wing parties throughout the continent, often forming a core component of their anti-immigrant narratives. This phenomenon has also been pivotal in shaping debates, such as those surrounding the UK's decision to depart from the EU. Concurrently, Europe has witnessed terror attacks in cities like Paris and Brussels, intensifying public anxieties regarding potential security threats. A study conducted by Pew Research Center in 2016, delineates a palpable connection between the refugee influx and prevailing fears of terrorism among Europeans. The survey data reveals that in eight out of the ten European countries examined, a majority of the respondents associate the influx of refugees with an augmented risk of terrorist activities in their respective nations (Wike, Stokes and Simmons, 2016).

In his analysis of news coverage on immigration matters within two Italian and two German newspapers from 2015 to 2016, Galantino elucidates the circumstances

under which discourse on terrorist threats converges with narratives on immigration and underscores the prevalent narrative thread linking acts of terrorism to recent immigrants and refugees (Galantino, 2022). This portrayal of immigrants as embodiments of threat also provides a compelling insight into the interplay of interest and normative identity, the central theme of this thesis. In September 2015, Fico mentioned that Slovakia would prefer to accept Christian refugees, arguing they would have an easier time integrating into Slovak society.

In response to the European Commission's decision to launch infringement procedures against Czechia for non-compliance with refugee relocation obligations, the Czech Prime Minister criticized the EU and announced that his government would not participate in the quota system. He argued that the security situation in Europe had worsened and that the quota system was not functioning effectively. The Czech government expressed its readiness to defend its position within the EU and in relevant judicial institutions (Wintour, 2017). Former Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema emphasized the importance of upholding European values and human rights, stating that the EU should not tolerate the refusal of certain countries to respect laws and human rights. D'Alema argued that the only viable solution to the influx was a fair burden-sharing among EU member states. He criticized the situation where Germany accepted one million refugees while some other EU states simply refused to participate. D'Alema suggested that sanctions should be imposed on countries that did not fulfill their responsibilities in addressing the refugee influx (Wintour, 2017). Orban accused Brussels of blackmailing, while the Polish interior minister, like UK PM Cameron, said that relocation would attract more refugees to the EU and that this solution was insufficient. In the 2015 vote, Poland voted in favor with the majority, rather than against, unlike Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. According to Amnesty International's researcher Dalhuisen, European states have shifted away from a search and rescue strategy that was effectively reducing the loss of life at sea. Instead, they have adopted a different approach that has resulted in thousands of drownings and left vulnerable individuals, including men, women, and children, trapped in Libya, where they are exposed to severe abuses (Dalhuisen, 2017). Hungary and Slovakia have initiated a "Stop Brussels" campaign opposing the mandatory refugee relocation scheme proposed by the EU. The campaign and legal action reflect their resistance to the EU's efforts to enforce refugee quotas among member states.

In September 2017, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled against the complaints raised by Hungary and Slovakia regarding the mandatory refugee relocation scheme proposed by the EU. The ECJ rejected their arguments and upheld the legality of the relocation mechanism. This decision affirmed the EU's authority to implement measures aimed at ensuring the fair distribution of refugees among member states (ECJ, 2017). Hungarian FM, Peter Szijjarto strongly criticized the ECJ's decision, considering it irresponsible and claiming that it puts the security and future of all of Europe at risk. He expressed his concern that politics had violated European law and values with this ruling. On the other hand, Hungarian PM Viktor Orban characterized immigration and refugees as a “Trojan Horse of terrorism”, suggesting that they pose a threat to European security (Euronews, 2017). The ECJ and the Commission again warned Hungary and Slovakia, which has not changed the place of a single person until this date, and the Czech Republic, which has not yet made an offer to replace them, and reminded them of the sanctions, to do their part. As an illustration of the EU's operational dynamics and its capacity for imposing sanctions on member countries, it is noteworthy that in April 2020, the ECJ found three member states to be in violation of their obligations under the refugee relocation program and EU legislation in response to the refugee influx. This ruling, arriving five years after the influx climaxed in 2015, raises questions about its effectiveness given that the relocation program had already concluded in 2017, highlighting challenges in achieving timely justice among EU member states.

This shows that Hungary and Slovakia, which did not accept a single quota until this date, or the Czech Republic, which accepted only 12 people, no longer have to accept asylum seekers. Apart from that, the endless, ambiguous and sanction-free conflict process of the EU with these countries offers us a good indicator in the context of the EU-state conflict. It is a good example of the process where the conflict of powers between the EU and states cannot find a solution to a humanitarian crisis. Slovakia, like many other EU countries, focused on broader issues such as border protection, external migration management, and cooperation with third countries. Slovakia participated in various EU initiatives, including contributing to the EU's border and coast guard operations and supporting EU efforts to enhance partnerships with countries outside the EU to manage migration more effectively. Slovakia's initial resistance to refugee relocation quotas was seen by some as being in tension with these values, especially regarding human dignity and solidarity among EU member states.

Central and Eastern European countries have implemented a policy of creating politics of fear and emergency as much as possible by associating the issue with security, and political conflicts have occurred between Western Europe and countries that are directly exposed to immigration. Poland justified its refusal to comply with the relocation mechanism by emphasizing the need to safeguard the safety and internal security of its people. They argued that the decision was motivated by the aim to protect Poland against uncontrolled migration and its potential implications (Reuters, 2017). The most important goal of government policy is to ensure the safety of our citizens” (Stavis-Gridnef and Pronczuk, 2020). The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued a ruling on October 3, 2017, condemning Spain for conducting “hot returns” of migrants at its border with Morocco. The court deemed these actions illegal and in violation of Article 9 of Directive 2013/32/EU and the European Convention on Human Rights. The ECHR's statement emphasized the unlawful nature of Spain's practice and its failure to adhere to the legal obligations outlined in the directive and the convention (ECHR, 2017). In a significant development, the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) made its entry into the German parliament for the first time since the 1960s. The party's strong anti-refugee and anti-immigrant stance resonated with a portion of the German population, contributing to its electoral success. The AfD secured 13,3 percent of the vote, becoming the third largest party in the country (Vonberg and Nadine, 2017). The AfD defines itself through anti-refugee and anti-Muslim rhetoric and has built its campaign on that. The fact that the far-right party of a country like Germany, which has unpleasant memories of the far-right in its history, can get such high votes due to the influx of refugees and xenophobia, has also created a question mark for the future of the EU. Under the pressure of this, EU countries realized that they could not solve the issue within the EU and started to find it appropriate to export the issue to the peripheral countries. The “crisis” should have been exported even if its compliance with the periphery human rights record or the 1951 refugee convention was questionable.

The refugee influx also played a pivotal role in Austria's domestic politics, amplifying the influence of right-wing parties like the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). The FPÖ, traditionally Euro-skeptic and anti-immigration, capitalized on the public's concerns about the refugee influx. Their political narrative frequently emphasized national security, cultural preservation, and the alleged economic burden of refugees. This culminated in the FPÖ becoming part of a coalition government in 2017, further

solidifying a more restrictive stance on migration. The EU's foundational values emphasize human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and respect for human rights. The handling of the refugee influx by member states, including Austria, brought these values into sharp focus. Austria's restrictive turn, especially the imposition of asylum caps and enhanced border controls, raised questions about its alignment with the EU's commitment to international protection and human rights. However, Austria's stance was not an isolated one. Several EU member states adopted similar measures, reflecting a broader tension within the EU between upholding human rights values and addressing domestic political pressures.

Lavenex posited that nations with an established history of asylum policies, such as Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, implemented tighter asylum reforms (Lavenex, 2018). These reforms included halting family reunification rights for those granted subsidiary protection, broadening criteria to exclude individuals from refugee status, and reducing the provisions for reception conditions (Lavenex, 2018).

2018 witnessed a significant political shift in Italy with the formation of a coalition government between the Five Star Movement and the far-right League party. Matteo Salvini, leader of the League and Italy's Interior Minister, adopted a hardline stance against NGOs operating rescue ships and refused them to dock in Italian ports, a move that garnered significant attention and exacerbated tensions within the EU. After that, financial penalties on NGO rescue ships were reduced, and more ports were reopened. However, the issue of migration remains a politically charged one in Italy, with debates on EU values, burden-sharing, and the right approach to asylum and migration continuing to be at the forefront.

On June 29, 2018, the EU announced that it had agreed on a migration agreement, but the plan was not entirely clear to solve the issue. There had to be a plan that would please the Central and Eastern European and Western European countries and create a common denominator with Italy, which threatened to end the talks if the meeting did not go as they wanted. The only plan that could achieve these three balances was the idea of a protective, exclusive "Fortress Europe". The only thing that the countries could agree on was "keeping the problem away" by establishing migration processing centers in North African countries and giving money to some other countries. Leaders also expressed support for plans aimed at strengthening the EU's external border. These plans, which enjoyed

broad consensus among member states, included providing additional financial support to countries like Turkey and Morocco to assist in preventing migrants from leaving for Europe.

Additionally, the establishment of processing centers in countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia was also discussed (Henley, 2018). Furthermore, countries agreed to promptly explore the concept of regional platforms in close cooperation (Rankin, 2018).

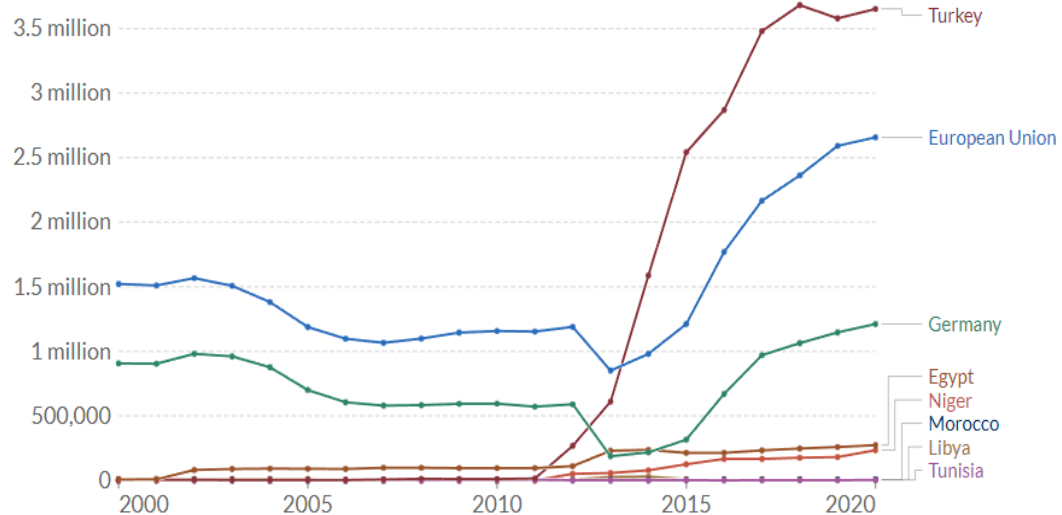


Figure 6. Refugee population by country or territory of asylum, 2000 to 2020 (Source: UN High Commissioner for Refugees via World Bank, 2020).

Figure 6 shows the countries that the EU wants to keep refugees in and the number of refugees these countries currently host. The fact that the EU considers Turkey and other countries in North Africa that host relatively few refugees and migrants, as it is a transit point for refugees, is logical in line with EU's intentions in this context. AI contends that the EU has externalized the refugee issue by shifting responsibility to other countries where human rights violations against refugees and migrants have been documented (Amnesty International, 2018). According to AI, European governments have utilized various means, such as aid, trade, and leverage, to encourage and support transit countries in implementing stricter border control measures without ensuring adequate human rights guarantees. This critique suggests that the EU's approach to addressing the refugee issue has prioritized border control and migration management over the protection of human rights. AI's argument raises concerns about the potential impact on vulnerable individuals seeking asylum and the overall respect for human rights within the context of migration policies.

According to AI's report, Italy's cooperation with Libya has been criticized for its impact on refugees and migrants attempting to cross the central Mediterranean. The 2016-2018 term meant a hardening stance and internal changes for Italy. Italy made an agreement with Libya to train and equip the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept migrant boats, mirroring the EU-Turkey deal in 2016. This has been criticized by lots of human rights groups who have highlighted the inhumane conditions in Libyan detention centers. The report states that Italy worked together with Libyan authorities and non-state actors to limit irregular migration, leading to the disembarkation and confinement of refugees and migrants in Libya. In Libya, these individuals faced human rights violations and abuse. AI highlights that migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers in Libya have been subjected to widespread and systematic serious human rights violations and abuses. These violations are attributed to various actors, including detention center officials, the Libyan Coast Guard, smugglers, and armed groups. The report suggests that Italy's cooperation with Libya in controlling migration has contributed to the precarious and dangerous conditions experienced by refugees and migrants in the country (Amnesty International, 2018).

When we look at Turkey, the EU wants to keep refugees away from its territory by pleasing Turkey (Demir and Soyupek, 2015). The 2016-2018 term is also significant for the EU and Turkey relations, because the EU-Turkey Statement of March 18, 2016, represents a pivotal moment in the EU's strategy for managing the refugee influx. Initiated as an emergency measure to counter the surge of refugees and migrants traveling from Turkey to the EU, this agreement primarily targeted the influx of Syrian refugees, a consequence of the protracted Syrian conflict. At its core, the deal sought to dismantle the business model of human smugglers by replacing the perilous, irregular journey across the Aegean Sea with a legal channel for Syrian refugees. The 'One-for-One' arrangement epitomized this, stipulating that for every Syrian returned from the Greek islands to Turkey, another would be legally resettled from Turkey to an EU member state. This strategy was underpinned by two significant commitments from the EU: a promise of visa liberalization for Turkish citizens by June 2016 (a point that remains contentious) and a financial package amounting to €6 billion aimed at supporting Syrian refugees within Turkey. Furthermore, the deal deepened the EU's engagement with Turkey, emphasizing the rejuvenation of Turkey's EU accession negotiations and the enhancement of the pre-existing Customs Union. On the other hand, the framework of the agreement has not been without controversy.

Human rights organizations express persistent concerns over its implications, questioning both the conditions for refugees within Turkey and the EU's broader inclination towards outsourcing its migration control, potentially at the expense of its foundational humanitarian principles. This development, encapsulated by the EU-Turkey deal, underscores the complexities the EU grapples with, striving to navigate between its normative ideals and the practical challenges of migratory dynamics. Bill Frelick, Ian M. Kysel, and Jennifer Podkul believe that no matter what happens with the EU-Turkey agreement, the main focus of the EU's migration approach is now on externalization (Frelick, Kysel and Podkul, 2016).

While the agreement succeeded in drastically reducing the number of migrants arriving in Greece via the Aegean Sea route, its consequences have been multifaceted and, at times, controversial. The deal led to an immediate and significant decrease in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece, which was the primary objective of the agreement from the EU's perspective. One of the unintended consequences of the deal has been the strain on refugee camps on the Greek islands. These camps, initially designed as transit points, have become long-term accommodations, often leading to overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and mental health challenges among refugees.

Human rights organizations have raised concerns about the conditions faced by refugees in Turkey and the potential for forced returns. The EU's outsourcing of its migration control has come under criticism, with claims that it's compromising on its foundational humanitarian principles. While the Aegean route saw a decrease in traffic, there was an observed increase in attempts to cross the Mediterranean via the more dangerous Central Mediterranean route, leading to further loss of life.

The deal, while being a significant point of collaboration, also became a contentious issue in EU-Turkey relations. Promised incentives such as visa liberalization for Turkish citizens and the rejuvenation of Turkey's EU accession talks have not fully materialized, leading to frustrations on the Turkish side.

The EU pledged €6 billion to support Syrian refugees in Turkey. However, questions arose about the transparency and efficacy of the fund's utilization. The agreement made the EU somewhat dependent on Turkey's continued cooperation. There have been occasions where Turkey threatened to “open the Gates”, potentially allowing a surge in migrants towards Europe, usually in response to political disagreements with the EU.

The deal led to challenges in European courts, particularly concerning the designation of Turkey as a “safe third country” for the return of migrants, which many argue doesn't align with the factual conditions on the ground.

In summary, while the EU-Turkey deal has achieved its immediate objective of reducing irregular migrant arrivals via the Aegean route, it has also illuminated the complexities and challenges inherent in attempting to manage an influx of such magnitude through bilateral agreements. The deal's consequences underscore the tensions between immediate political imperatives, human rights obligations, and long-term strategic interests. Neuberger (2018) posits a prevailing inclination within the EU to prioritize alleviating migratory strains, even at the expense of democratic ethos and human rights in partner countries. This underscores a compelling dynamic where immediate migratory challenges overshadowed the EU's commitment to democratic ideals and human rights protection. Furthermore, the EU's immediate recognition of Turkey as a safe country has drawn criticism from human rights organizations. These organizations argue that Turkey fails to meet certain criteria required to be considered a safe country, highlighting concerns regarding the designation. As Saatçioğlu stated, “the EU's insistence on such agreements casts a shadow on its identity” (Saatçioğlu, 2017, p. 233). In other words, the EU faces challenges in effectively promoting and upholding its ethical norms when they conflict with the economic or political interests of individual member states (Noureddine, 2016).

Perhaps this is because the political design that comes from the natural configuration of the EU (the supranational structure) is naturally unable to cope with a major regional and global humanitarian crisis as happened in the Syrian refugee influx. In other words, with the real conditions gradually shaking and shaping the intra-European balances, the common European policy that is being tried to be formed, and the refugee flow defined in the media as a “crisis”, the export of the “problem” is the last solution produced by EU system that has not fully become a state and has a supranational structure. Perhaps this is the process of the EU, which claims to be normative power, value-based formation (it is generally accepted as such), coming under the natural blockade of polyphony and individual interests in the face of real influx.

The report criticizes Italy and the EU for cooperating with Libya and its institution, the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), where very serious violations of fundamental human rights have occurred. The EU and

specifically Italy have turned their backs on their own values at the expense of reconciliation with a country where its most fundamental values have been violated and this is obvious. Figure 7 shows the human rights index of the countries with which the union wants to cooperate to keep refugees and migrants away from their lands. I specifically chose Hungary, which has the lowest democracy and human rights index in the Union, so that comparison can be made more easily. Figures 7 and 8 show the human rights levels and political regimes of the countries, respectively. Figure 7 shows that ranging from 0 for closed autocracies to 3 for liberal democracies. In both Figures, there is no correlation with regard to liberal democracy or human rights in the EU's determining these countries. Here I mean that the fact that these countries have a closed autocracy or liberal democracy or a very high or low human rights index is not an indicator why these countries are selected by the EU. The only motivational factor is that regionally these countries are located just like fortresses around Europe. By giving money to these countries and building migrant processing centres, it was aimed to “solve” this “problem” before it came to Europe. Reynolds suggests that despite the use of progressive terminology such as “shared responsibility” and “solidarity,” the underlying politics of the process referred to a more controlled and restrictive approach to immigration, rather than addressing the root causes of migration or promoting genuine partnership and resilience (Reynolds, 2020). The term “Fortress Europe” is often used metaphorically to describe the perception of the EU's immigration and border control policies as exclusionary and focused on protecting its external borders. The term implies that the politics of the countries and the EU, whatever it may be, prioritize managing and controlling migration rather than addressing the complex issues surrounding migration, such as the push and pull factors that drive people to move and the need for meaningful partnerships with countries of origin and transit.

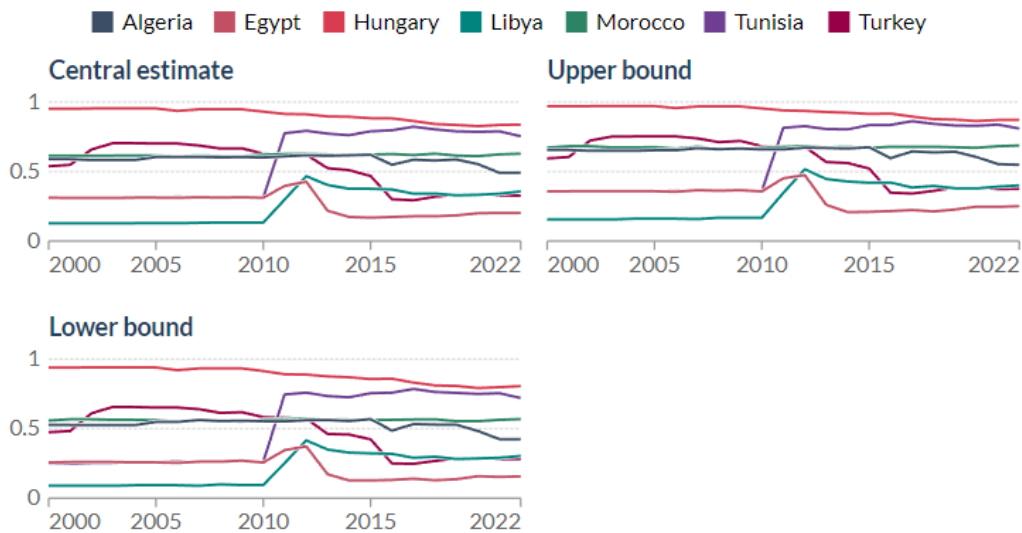


Figure 7. Human Rights Index, 2000 to 2022 (Source: OWID based on V-Dem (v13), 2023).

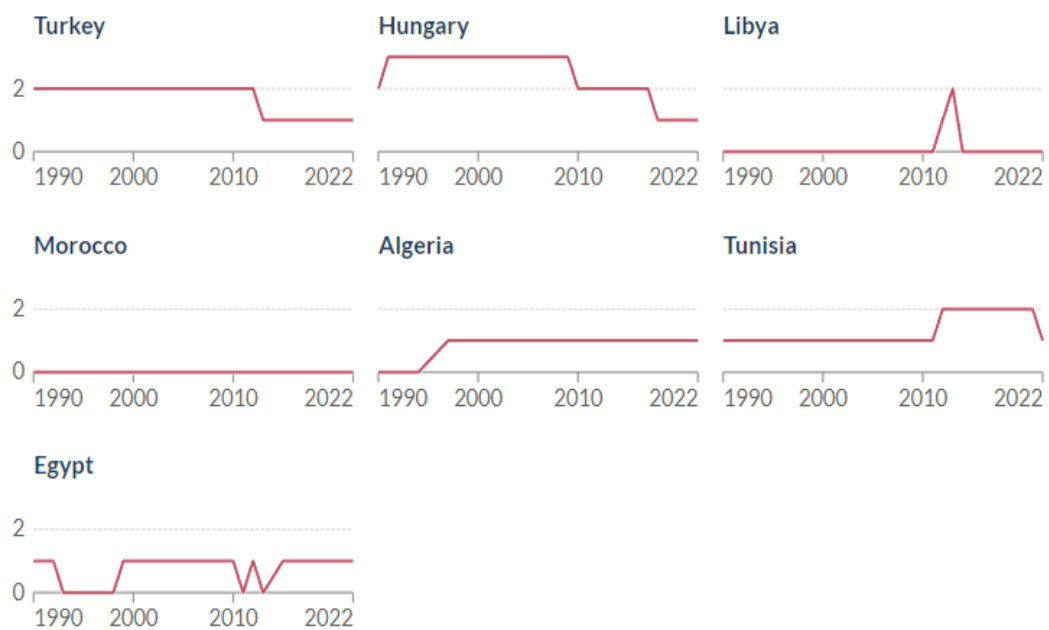


Figure 8. Political Regimes (Source: OWID based on Lührmann et al. (2018); V-Dem (v13), 2023).

There have been various reports, especially from NGOs and rights groups, alleging mistreatment of migrants and refugees at Croatia's borders, including push backs and violence. The Croatian government has largely defended its border practices, emphasizing the importance of EU border security. These actions have raised concerns about the compatibility with EU values centered on human rights and humane treatment. While the initial response was largely in line with EU humanitarian principles, later border control measures and allegations of mistreatment have raised

concerns. Looking at the BVMN (Border Violence Monitoring Network) , an organization that monitors and exposes pushbacks and human rights abuses within European borders, report for 2020, we see that Spain, Italy, Croatia, Malta and Greece are among the countries that saw pushbacks (Tondo, 2021). Moreover, it revealed that torture and ill-treatment, both prohibited by Frontex and prohibited by international law, were committed frequently and systematically. BVMN has documented the systematic use of torture and ill-treatment by Croatian and Greek authorities, as well as the widespread use of torture and abuse during chain-pushbacks conducted by inland European countries such as Austria, Italy, and Slovenia. The report suggests that these practices go beyond the actions of specific countries at their borders and involve collaboration or direct involvement of multiple European countries in these alleged human rights violations (Network, 2021). The term “chain-pushbacks” typically refers to the practice of forcibly returning individuals or groups of migrants or asylum seekers from one country to another without proper legal procedures or consideration of their individual circumstances. The report's findings highlight concerns about human rights abuses occurring during migration processes and point to the involvement of various European countries, indicating a broader issue that extends beyond the actions of individual nations. These findings raise questions about compliance with international human rights standards and the need for accountability and improved safeguards in migration policies and practices. This is clearly a violation of Frontex, a clear violation of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and a clear violation of human rights. BVMN determined that these pushbacks in 2020 originated from Kosovo, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, North Macedonia and Bulgaria.

We also see a shift towards temporary protection in Denmark (2019-2021). In the years that followed, Denmark continued its restrictive stance. Notably, it leaned towards offering temporary protection rather than permanent residency to Syrian refugees, suggesting that parts of Syria, like Damascus, were safe for returns. In 2021, Denmark became the first European country to revoke the residency permits of some Syrian refugees, arguing that they could return to certain regions in Syria. Denmark's policies, especially the 2016 legislation and the more recent revocations of residency, sparked debates about their alignment with these values. Additionally, Denmark's opt-out from the EU's Justice and Home Affairs area gives it leeway to pursue more independent migration and asylum policies. An “opt-out” means that a country has negotiated an exemption or exception and is not bound to fully participate in all aspects

of that specific policy area. The other two countries that have an opt out option are the UK (not an EU member since 2020) and Ireland. While the country's policies resonate with a segment of its population, they've also raised questions about their alignment with the foundational values of the EU.

The statement by Tidona, a migration researcher for Europe at AI, suggests that there is evidence of close coordination among multiple arms of the Greek authorities in apprehending and detaining individuals who are seeking safety in Greece (Amnesty International, 2021). Tidona highlights that many of these individuals are subjected to violence during their apprehension and subsequent transfer to the banks of the Evros river. The report claims that they are then summarily returned to Turkey without proper procedures and safeguards in place. The statement implies that there are concerns regarding the treatment of asylum seekers and migrants in Greece, including allegations of violence and the violation of their rights. The mention of “summary returns” suggests that individuals may be forcibly sent back to Turkey without the opportunity to present their asylum claims or have their cases properly assessed. According to the 2022 report of the same organization, there are ill-treatment of Lithuanian refugees and asylum-seekers, automatic arbitrary arrest, direct rejection of asylum, pushbacks are verbally condemned by the EU, but it is claimed that there is not enough evidence, and in the context of the action and nothing is being done about it by the EU (International, 2022).

As of January 2022, the situation surrounding refugees and migration remains a pertinent issue in Austrian politics, though the intensity has decreased compared to the peak years of the influx. Austria, like many EU nations, has emphasized the need to address root causes of migration and work on external solutions, such as bolstering the EU's external borders and partnering with third countries to manage migration. Austria's approach to the Syrian refugee influx, while initially open, became more restrictive due to a combination of political dynamics and genuine challenges posed by the scale of the influx. This evolution in policy and attitude is emblematic of broader tensions within the EU about reconciling internal pressures with the union's foundational values.

The EU's border agency Frontex's investigation of allegations about illegal pushbacks has come to the agenda. The principle of non-refoulement, enshrined in Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, prohibits the expulsion or return (“refoulement”) of a refugee to any territory where their life or freedom would be

endangered based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion (Weis, 1951). In the opening section of Article 5 of Frontex, all participants have made a commitment to operate in complete adherence to the 1951 Refugee Convention. They strive, while fully upholding the principle of non-refoulement, to ensure that individuals seeking international protection are duly acknowledged, provided with sufficient assistance, appropriately informed about their rights and relevant procedures, and directed to the relevant national authorities responsible for processing their asylum claims (Frontex). But what we see is illegal pushbacks, human rights violations and torture on EU's border. According to the 2020 BVMN, six distinct forms of violence and torture have been documented during pushbacks from Croatia and Greece, as well as during chain-pushbacks carried out by North Macedonia, Slovenia, and Italy (Network, 2021). The report specifically highlighted the unlawful trend of Greece conducting pushbacks into Turkish territorial waters, and stated that 89% of pushbacks conducted by Greek authorities involved one or more instances of violence and mistreatment that can be categorized as torture or inhuman treatment, and 52% of the groups subjected to torture or inhuman treatment by Greek authorities during pushbacks included children and minors (Network, 2021). To summarize, the EU is an actor whose members prioritizes their individual interests in a regional humanitarian influx, has difficulty creating a common policy spirit, has left its soft power behind its hard power, and has experienced fluctuations in its soft power oriented image in recent years.

In its 2022 report, AI called on the EU to initiate an infringement process against Lithuania (Amnesty International, 2022). Prior to the enactment of the draft law, the EU Human Rights Commissioner penned a letter to Lithuania in February 2023, advocating for the cessation of pushback actions and the safeguarding of the rights of individuals seeking to exercise their human rights. In the letter, Mijatović (2023) emphasized the imperative for border control to be conducted in complete accordance with a state's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, including the absolute prohibition of refoulement (Mijatović, 2023). In 2023, the Lithuanian parliament approved the law legalizing pushbacks and paving the way for voluntary civilian support for border guards, despite the rules and obligations of international law. Despite the condemnation from many academic circles, EU institutions, NGOs, and international human rights organizations, this law was passed

(Exiles, 2023). As a result of this decision, which is against European human rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an infringement decision has still not been taken by the EU. The EU is obliged to initiate the legal procedure in order to ensure harmonization at the point of detecting the incompatibility of the legislation adopted in the member states with the EU rules. However, this has not yet been implemented. On the other hand, as in the case of Hungary, which did not comply with the relocation agreement and refused to fulfill its obligations despite the infringement process, it was not subject to any sanctions as a result. Such examples will pave the way for EU member states to resort to illegal means and illegal pushbacks and chain pushbacks, and will cause them to become widespread. In a nutshell, the concept of chain pushbacks is an illegal way of working, in which legal ways are circumvented by illegal cooperation between countries and thus they do not fulfill their obligations. This kind of silence or failure to take action and initiate an infringement process will encourage member states in this direction or provide them with maneuvering space in the context of illegal actions. At the same time, such examples are good indicators in the context of the struggle and conflict of the EU member state authority.

According to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the largest NGO in Denmark, a total of 2,162 push backs were identified between January and April 2021. These pushbacks encompassed various types, such as chain pushbacks. Furthermore, testimonies collected at different borders suggest the existence of cooperation practices among EU Member States, which appear to serve the purpose of evading responsibility and forcibly expelling undesirable groups from the EU (DRC, 2021). According to the findings of the DRC in 2021, more than one-third of the documented pushbacks involved violations of rights. These violations included denying individuals access to the asylum procedure, instances of physical abuse and assault, theft, extortion, and destruction of property. The perpetration of these acts was attributed to national border police and law enforcement officials (DRC, 2021). Of these, 176 were chain pushbacks, and these pushbacks and chain push backs are only the part that can be recorded and detected. In this way, the states are relieved of their most fundamental obligation. The map below shows the pushback numbers of countries.



Figure 9. Between January and April 2021, a total of 2162 pushbacks (Source: Danish Refugee Council (DRC), 2021).

According to the same report, French coast guard teams claiming that the incoming asylum seekers do not have such a right, sent some of the refugees back to Italy (2021). And, hotspots in Greece, called hotspots, function to prevent incoming asylum seekers and refugees from accessing mainland Europe, and according to Provera, the hotspots have been transformed into detention centers over time (Provera, 2016). States have made commitments to uphold the conditions necessary for individuals to exercise their right to seek asylum. Additionally, they have agreed to abide by the principle of non-refoulement, as outlined in international instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. These agreements emphasize the importance of protecting individuals from being returned to a country where they may face persecution or serious harm. As can be seen, the gap between EU values and practice has gradually widened, and EU countries have resorted to behavior patterns that diverge from their values.

3.1.1 Is the Main Reason In The “Export of The Problem” Economic?

In this section, I will briefly take a look at some basic economic indicators. Because the issue has been built both by the far right and by the UK by claiming that refugees and asylum seekers are burden on the economy. Especially in the UK, workers' fear of Muslim immigrants and refugees taking away their jobs has been used in the process of leaving the Union. I will briefly look at the EU's unemployment

rates in recent years and in which direction the refugee influx has affected the EU. The following Figure 10 shows the unemployment rates of the EU between 2006 and 2021. During the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the subsequent European debt crisis, the EU's unemployment rate increased, but after the 2014-15 period, when the refugee influx began to seriously affect Europe, the Union's unemployment rate and the country's unemployment rates experienced a decrease. In the Figure 10 below, Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain are selected as the major countries most affected by the European debt crisis. The unemployment rates of Hungary, the UK, Germany and the EU are given below. Of these countries, Hungary and the UK have been specifically mentioned as countries that make policy and make important decisions on refugees.

Figure 10 below shows us that the Union and countries seem to have reduced unemployment rates, which rose to very high levels after the economic crisis, over time. While the effects of the European debt crisis decreased, unemployment peaked in 2013 and reached 11,38. After that, it showed a regular downward trend. When we come to 2021, the unemployment rate was 7.04 percent all together. According to Eurostat's current data for March 2023, the unemployment rate in the Eurozone is 6,5 percent and the unemployment rate in the EU is 6,0 percent (Eurostat, 2023). The unemployment rate appears to have declined steadily during and after 2015-16, when the refugee influx reached its highest levels. After 2020, there is a limited increase in countries and the EU with the effect of the coronavirus epidemic. Despite the assertions made by far-right parties in Europe, as well as Brexit supporters in the UK and the far-right UKIP, it is important to note that the influx of refugees and migrants did not lead to an increase in the unemployment rate in Europe. Numerous studies and analyses have consistently demonstrated that there is no significant correlation between the arrival of refugees or migrants and negative impacts on the employment prospects of native-born individuals in host countries. Factors such as economic conditions, labor market dynamics, and policy measures play more significant roles in determining employment outcomes. It is essential to rely on accurate information and empirical evidence when evaluating the impact of migration on labor markets, rather than succumbing to unfounded rhetoric. Nevertheless, supporters of Brexit have argued that public institutions face pressures due to the increasing number of immigrants and that wages of British workers are being affected. The notion that jobs are being taken away, coupled with concerns about increasing immigration and the

dissemination of a pessimistic outlook for the future by the media, has generated a sense of ontological insecurity within society. Hungarian politicians, who presented immigration as “a multi-faceted source of danger, defined it as a phenomenon that could steal their identities, lives, and job markets” (Slazai and Göbl, 2015, p. 3). Interestingly, such discourses emerged prominently during the Brexit proceedings in the UK, a nation traditionally regarded as a bastion of human rights, the rule of law, and democratic values. Notably, these sentiments were not confined to UKIP alone but were also articulated by certain members within the government. These factors have become significant pillars of the Brexit movement, shaping public sentiment and contributing to the decision to leave the EU.

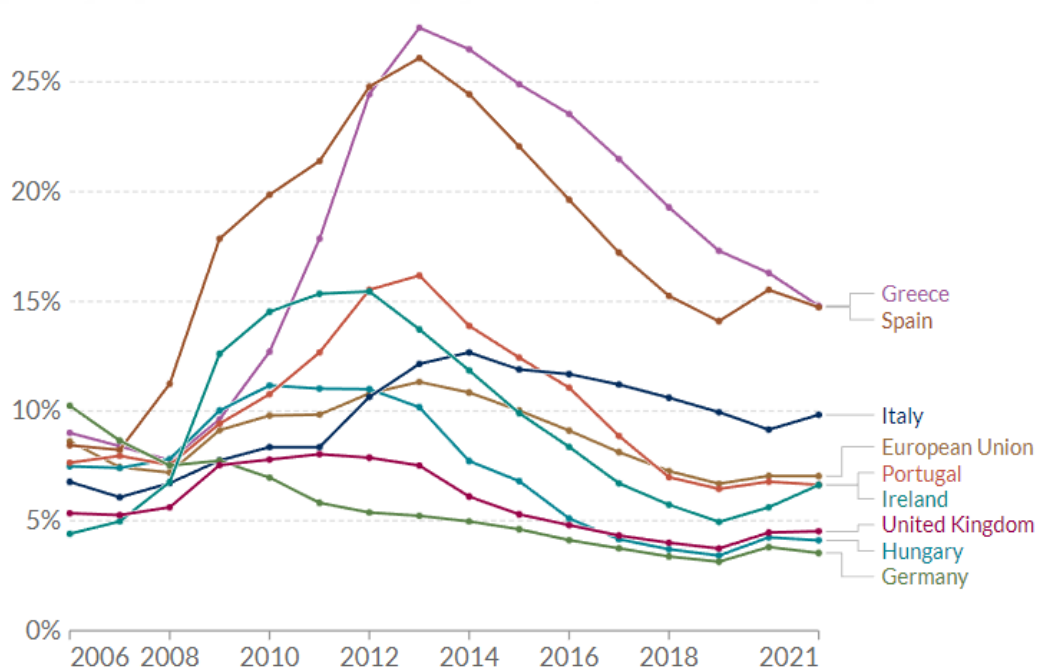


Figure 10. Unemployment rate, 2006 to 2021 (Source: International Labour Organisation (via World Bank), 2022).

In light of the two Figures below, it can be claimed that the capacity of refugees and asylum seekers to affect general unemployment rates is very limited. As mentioned before, the ratio of the number of refugees and asylum seekers to the population of the EU with a population of 446 million and 27 states is around 0,6 percent. Despite the very low human rights and democracy indexes that are far from the standards of the EU, the EU and its members make agreements with these countries on refugees and migrants. EU members were not making these agreements only for Syrian refugees. According to information presented by Pai in 2020,

Marco Minniti, the former interior minister of Italy, implemented measures to reduce the influx of immigrants and refugees from Africa. One of the approaches employed was providing technical support to the Libyan coast guard (Pai, 2020). However, it is also stated that the Libyan coast guard has been criticized for disregarding the basic human rights of refugees in Libya. The situation regarding the treatment of refugees in Libya and the involvement of the Libyan coast guard has been a subject of concern and debate, with various human rights organizations raising issues about the conditions and treatment faced by refugees in the country (Pai, 2020).

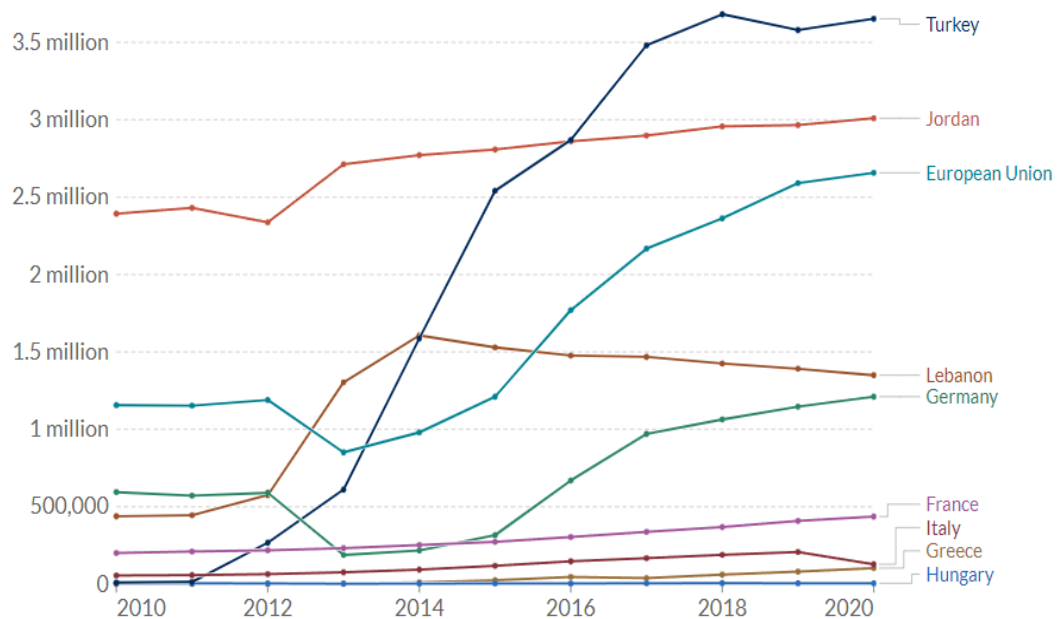


Figure 11. Refugee population by country or territory of asylum, 2010 to 2020 (Source: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (via World Bank), 2021).

As can be seen in Figure 11 above, the total number of refugees in the EU is 2.66 million as of 2020. These countries, which have a larger population and a higher level of economic development, will certainly not have the same level of meeting and managing such a tragedy in terms of population and per capita national income, unlike non-EU countries. According to 2020 data, Turkey alone hosts 3.65 million refugees, and Jordan hosts 3.01 million refugees with a limited economy and less national income per capita. Lebanon hosts 1.35 million, Germany 1,21 million, France 436,100, Italy 128,033, Greece 103,136, Hungary 5,898, respectively. I find it important to compare the EU with other less developed countries in the region, which are not members of the EU, in order to help us make a more accurate analysis.

The EU has a rising trend of hosting refugees, but this ratio does not seem to be homogeneously and fairly distributed among member countries as well. Germany

alone has almost half of the refugees in the EU, and France hosts one-third of Germany's refugees. In September 2020, the EU introduced a new migration pact aimed at more equitably distributing the responsibility for asylum seekers among its member states. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasized that the pressing issue for EU states is not about the choice of contributing but how they opt to do so (RFI, 2020). The proposed enhanced procedures seek to unambiguously define responsibilities, with the overarching goal of fostering renewed mutual trust within the Union. Echoing the sentiment for a united front, France's Interior Minister, Gerald Darmanin, underscored the imperative of heightened “European solidarity” in managing asylum applications, suggesting that migration challenges can only find resolutions through a unified European strategy (RFI, 2020). Ylva Johansson, the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, expressed optimism that the newly proposed policy could potentially harmonize the varying positions on migration held by member states (RFI, 2020). Conversely, skepticism persists, as exemplified by Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who criticized the idea of mandatory refugee quotas across the EU. He asserted that previous endeavors to ensure an equal distribution of asylum seekers and burden sharing throughout Europe have proven ineffective, a viewpoint shared by multiple member states (RFI, 2020).

Lebanon and Jordan, on the other hand, have felt the humanitarian crisis much more regionally, as their populations and economies are much smaller when compared to the EU. Hungary, on the other hand, hosts only about 6,000 refugees as of 2020, as a result of a very strict attitude and an exclusionary policy since the very beginning of the issue. There are huge differences in numbers between the Union and the non-member countries. It seems to be the same situation within the Union. The countries of the Union also have quite different proportions due to political differentiation, which cannot be one in itself.

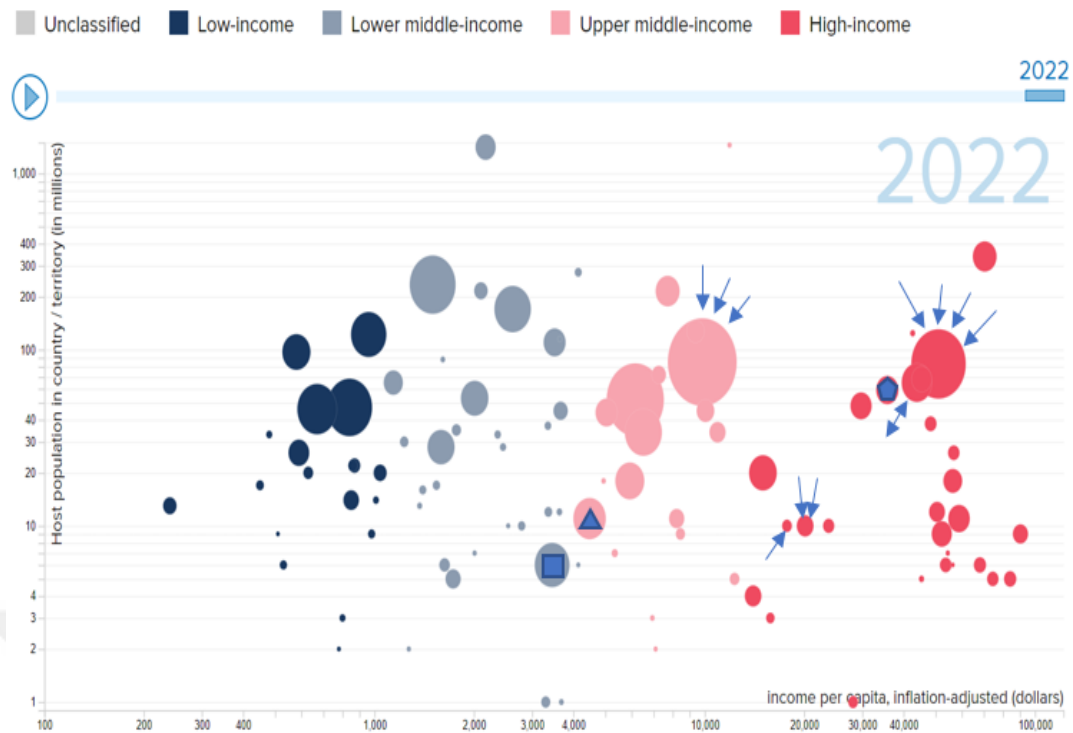


Figure 12. Relationship between countries' populations, income levels and the number of refugees hosted in the country (Source: UNHCR, URL: [https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/refugee-host-countries-income-level.html]).

According to the UNHCR in 2022, the graph above illustrates the relationship between countries' populations, income levels, and the number of refugees hosted in each country. The size of the bubble on the graph represents the number of refugees, while the color coding indicates the income level or the developed/developing status of the country (UNHCR, 2022). And I have marked some countries with some indicators. These countries are represented as follows in the correct order from a single arrow to more arrows. The single arrow represents Hungary, the two arrows Greece, the three arrows Turkey, the four arrows Germany, the two way arrow France, the triangle Jordan, the quadrilateral Lebanon and the pentagonal Italy.

The information I give below is completely taken from Figure 13. Again, in order to understand the EU's situation, I suggest we look at the situation within the Union after making comparisons with a few non-member countries. In this orientation of the EU, it is aimed to explain the increasing politicization and eventually exclusion of the issue as a result of not being able to achieve political unity on the basis of ideals, not total economic based problems. Because the economic situation data of the EU shows us that the EU can handle the issue so comfortably that it cannot be compared

with the economic levels of other non-member countries.

First, let's take a look at Germany, the country with the highest number of refugees. As of 2022, Germany has a population of 83 million and its Income per capita (IPC) is \$51,000. The number of refugees in Germany is 2.23 million. The IPC of France, which has a population of 65 million, is 43,880 US dollars and the number of refugees it has is 613,272. These two countries are the two countries with the largest economies and populations in the EU. When we look at the total population/refugee population ratios, while refugees in Germany constitute 2,7 percent of the total population, they constitute 0,95 in France. When we look at the 27-member Union, as of 2022, according to Eurostat data, the EU population is 446.7 million (Eurostat, 2023). According to the current Eurostat EU 2021 total Gross Domestic Products data, the total income of the Union is 14,5 trillion Euros and the GDP per inhabitant is 32,330 Euros (Eurostat, 2022). On the other hand, Turkey hosts 3,67 million people with a population of 85 million and an annual income of 9.830 US dollars per capita, while Jordan, with a population of 11,3 million and a per capita income of 4.480 US dollars, hosts 715.440 internally displaced persons and 3,04 million refugees according to World Bank (World Bank, 2021). This rate corresponds to 26,7 percent of Jordan's population. Lebanon, one of the countries most affected by the Syrian refugee influx, hosts 815.714 internally displaced persons and 1,3 million refugees with a population of 6 million and an income of 3.450 US dollars per capita (World Bank, 2021). This makes 21,6 percent of the Lebanese population. This rate has increased even more in 2023, according to World Bank data. In other words, non-member countries due to the influx of Syrian refugees have to manage a larger portion of their population with less budget. This comparison is important so that we can understand and see the actual conditions of the EU with regards to refugee influx. The EU is an economic power not only in the regional sense, but also in the global sense. The Figure 13 below is from Eurostat and shows the Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) and shares of World GDP. As per Eurostat's data from 2020, the gross domestic product (GDP) of the EU-27 accounted for 16.0% of the global GDP, measured in purchasing power standards (PPS). China and the United States were the two largest economies, with shares of 16,4% and 16,3% respectively (Eurostat, 2020).

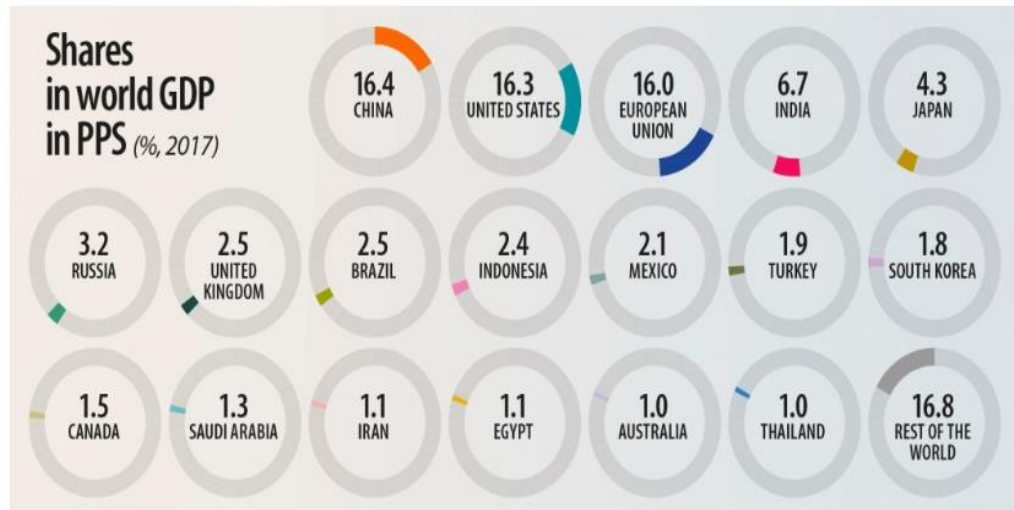


Figure 13. Shares in world GDP in PPS (Source: Eurostat, 2020).

When we look at the countries within the EU, we see lack of solidarity. Because Hungary, whose population is the same as Greece, has only 31,510 refugees in total, according to 2022 data, although there is not much difference in per capita income with Greece. Greece, on the other hand, hosts 147,420 refugees. Being one of the most prosperous regions in the world with its GDP and per capita income, the EU and its members have turned Europe into a fortress by moving away from managing this tragedy over time and transferring the problem to foreign countries. It is clear that the main reason is not economic reasons. It is clear that accepting fewer refugees and asylum seekers and reducing the scope and capacities of maritime operations, including readmission agreements with countries in the region have an economic motivation and also political motivation. According to Poddar's statement in 2016, the influx of refugees to the EU brings several benefits to the economy. These benefits include increased aggregate demand due to higher public spending and increased tax revenue resulting from employment growth. However, it is also noted that the migrant influx can lead to various political problems, such as the rise of xenophobia and anti-EU sentiments (Poddar, 2016). The economic and political impact of the refugee influx is a complex and multifaceted issue that can have diverse implications in different contexts and regions. Bayraklı and Keskin, who stated that the annual cost of a refugee to Germany is 13 thousand Euros, emphasized that keeping refugees in countries like Turkey means 26 billion Euros of savings per year, even for Germany alone (Bayraklı and Keskin, 2015). This means that the EU, which is in a much better position economically compared to other countries in the

region, uses this process as a resource to take care of its aging population, and also gets rid of an economic burden by making agreements with the countries in the region.

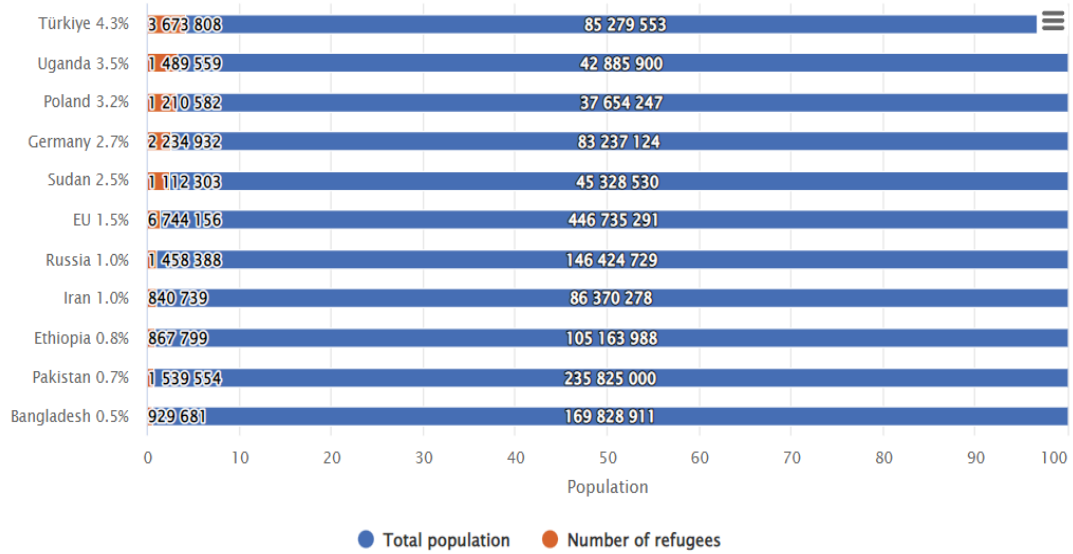


Figure 14. Ten countries hosting the most refugees and the EU in mid-2022 (Source: UNHCR, URL: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en#illegalbordercrossings]).

According to the UNHCR report in the European commission report, the above Figure shows the population of the countries and regions, the number of refugees and the ratio of the number of refugees to the population (Commision, 2022). While the number of refugees in the EU constitutes 1,5 percent of its population, this rate is 2,7 for Germany. As the country that hosts the most refugees in the Union, Germany has been at the forefront of the countries that constantly remind the Union values to the member countries and call for a common policy by emphasizing the values. Despite the fact that Poland has made harsh opposition within the Union, it is far above the Union average.

As a result, while the EU is investing in its future as an Union with an aging population, it also makes regional agreements with the countries of the region where human rights are ignored and many violations are experienced, and tries to keep the influx in its outer territories by establishing camps. We have seen from the data in this section that, contrary to the arguments of the far right and Brexit supporters, the refugee influx did not increase unemployment. According to the findings presented by Andersson, Eriksson, and Scocco in 2019, the increasing share of refugees and immigration in the EU has had a limited overall impact on the growth of the low-wage

sector over the past two decades (Andersson, Eriksson and Scocco, 2019). This suggests that the presence of refugees and immigrants in the EU has not significantly contributed to a substantial expansion of the low-wage sector. Political reasons and created economic fears served to the understanding of “Fortress Europe”. The EU, one of the most economically powerful Unions, turned its back on the human tragedy and took steps to strengthen the walls of “Fortress Europe”.

3.1.2 Brexit's Nexus with the Syrian Refugee Influx: A Critical Examination

From the UK's point of view, it has taken a number of measures that will make it difficult for refugees to claim asylum based on its borders until leaving the union in 2020, and it has not been included in the EU's relocation program. Some of these measures are the policies of ensuring the export of the subject to transit and third countries, its refusal to participate in search and rescue operations with Italy and the EU, increasing the number of coast guard boats in the English Channel. In 2014, Baroness Anelay, the Foreign Office minister of the UK, expressed the belief that certain factors, such as search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, could unintentionally act as a pull factor, encouraging more migrants to undertake dangerous sea crossings. This, in turn, could lead to an increase in tragic and unnecessary deaths (Taylor, 2015). And while the UK was heading for Brexit, it was dissatisfied with Europe's migrant and refugee policy, and politicians had declared migrants and refugees scapegoats as responsible for everything. As mentioned, former PM May commented that the EU did not have a good immigration policy, referring to the human tragedy and drowning people in the Mediterranean.

On the other hand, according to Özerim, the UK is the country that provides the most economic aid in the region after the United States (Özerim, 2017). This approach is also compatible with former PM Cameron's view. PM Cameron said that the solution is not to constantly take more refugees and that the problem can be solved by bringing peace to the Middle East and regional development, that they do not want to be included in the relocation program created by the EU, this program will encourage other refugees and attract more refugees and he continued to take a stern stance, claiming that it is indistinguishable who is an economic migrant or a refugee (Wintour, 2015). British liberal democrat Catherine Zena Bearder stated that the European partners are tired of the UK's stubborn refusal of a joint effort, while Glenis Willmott MEP, Labour's leader in the European parliament, stated that UK PM Cameron should

lead an active relocation program rather than isolation (Traynor, 2015). “The EU has failed us all” and “We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders” are slogans used by Nigel Farage and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) to express their dissatisfaction with the EU and advocate for greater national control over borders (Cohen and Lapinski, 2016). These statements reflect a particular viewpoint and rhetoric employed by Farage and UKIP, emphasizing concerns about perceived shortcomings of EU membership and the desire to regain sovereignty over border control.



Figure 15. UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage introduces the poster he will use in his Brexit campaign to the press (Source: Stefan Wermuth/Reuters, 2016).

Given the need for legitimizing restrictions on immigration or the lack of legislation supporting minorities, it is likely that negative portrayals of immigrants, refugees, or minorities will ensue (Dijk T. A., 1993). Farage, as Dijk predicted, did not see himself as a racist and hid behind the thesis that he was just defending his country's interests, and claimed that others were spreading hatred. As described by Dijk (1993), subtle forms of derogation, which can involve the use of language or discourse, often necessitate corresponding strategies of positive self presentation and denial. In order to maintain a positive self-image and avoid acknowledging or confronting their own biases or discriminatory behaviors, individuals may employ various discursive tactics to downplay or dismiss the derogatory nature of their words or actions. These strategies of denial serve as a means of self-justification and enable

individuals to distance themselves from responsibility or accountability for their prejudiced attitudes or behaviors. By employing positive self-presentation and denial, individuals can manage their social interactions and preserve a positive perception of themselves, even in the face of engaging in subtle forms of derogation (Dijk, 1993). The caption “Breaking Point” in big red letters on a photo full of refugees was not evoking a human tragedy, but rather a scourge to be avoided. Refugees' backgrounds, where they came from and why they came lost their importance at this point. The subtext of this form of humiliation lies in us who are good and others who are not good. During this time, some politicians implemented a policy of creating a perception of fear towards immigrants and refugees during the Brexit process. Refugees and immigrants were associated with Islam, and Islam was associated with the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks. According to Nicholas Bratza, former President of the European Court of Human Rights, and Lord Nicholas Phillips, former President of Britain's Supreme Court, the measures introduced and implemented by the UK government concerning immigrants and refugees are severely insufficient. They further argue that the government's actions create complications regarding the fundamental right to asylum, which is the most essential right for refugees (Reuters, 2015).

Supporters of leaving the Union constructed refugees and migrants as the root cause of the economic situation and the pressure on social services. Farage underscored his stance by referencing the initial designation “EU” present on British passports (Euronews, 2016). He posited that EU affiliation impeded the UK's sovereignty in orchestrating comprehensive immigration strategies. This campaign was propelled by the perception that blue-collar employment was being usurped by workers from both within and outside the EU, coupled with an anti-Arab immigration sentiment. Notably, for the UK—a pivotal member of the EU and a stalwart proponent of values including democracy, human rights, and the rule of law—embracing such a discourse appears to be at odds with its foundational principles. So much so that this rhetoric both raised the far right and sowed the seeds of hate crimes. Labor MP Jo Cox, who was campaigning to remain in the Union, was killed by a far-right one week before the election, and this person was shouting “This is for Britain” while killing Cox (BBC, 2016). The campaign was mainly based on the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee approach. Campaigning to stay in this period, PM Cameron and his supporters emphasized the positive aspects of immigration, the universal and embracing values

of the EU and the UK, the contribution of immigrants to the economy, and democratic values and human rights (Freedom House, 2018). A survey conducted during this period shows that both the political parties and the people were split in two, and the people saw immigration as the biggest problem and then the EU. According to Dijk, in the context of political polarization within the political process, it is common to observe a tendency for individuals or groups to positively evaluate themselves and their actions, while simultaneously negatively evaluating others and their actions (Dijk T. V., 1997). This implies that individuals or groups involved in political polarization often engage in biased perceptions and judgments, favoring their own side and holding a more critical view of the opposing side. Such evaluative tendencies can contribute to the intensification of political divisions and the formation of ingroup-outgroup dynamics within the political discourse. All the positive narratives here are based on “we”, while “other or them” represents the opposite values.

As can be seen in Figures 16 and 17, voters think that the biggest problem in the country is the immigration issue and is more important than the economy and poverty. Apart from this, approximately 75 percent of the voters who see the problem as immigration show the behavior of voting to leave the Union. In Figure 16, while the overwhelming majority of UKIP voters want to leave the Union, about 60 percent of conservative party voters want to leave. Other party voters prefer to remain in the Union.

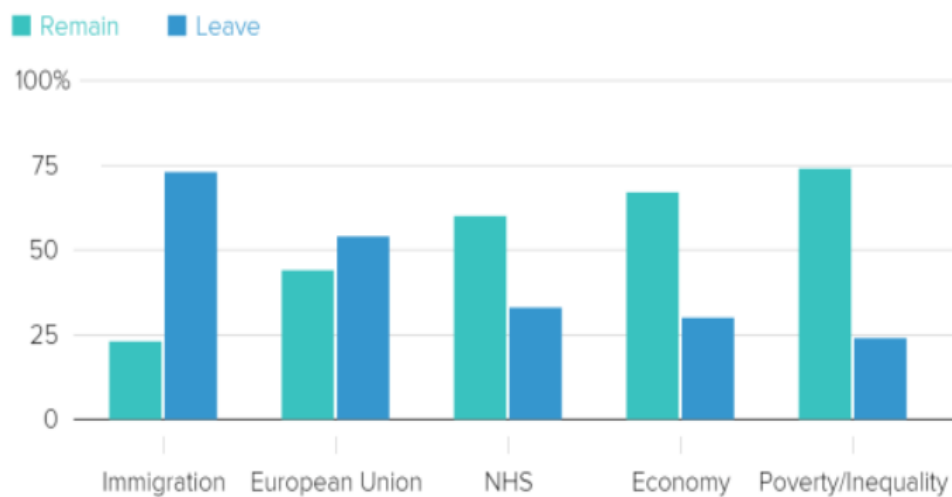


Figure 16. Vote choice by most important issue (Source: NBC News, 2016).

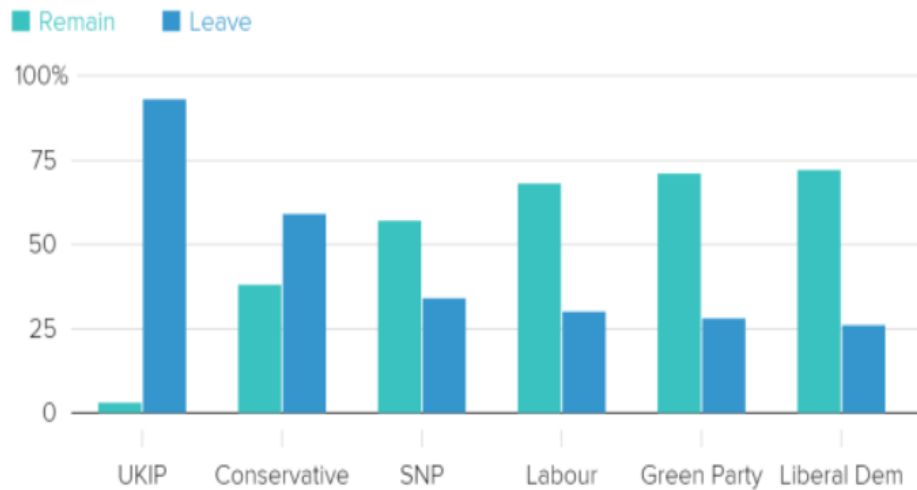


Figure 17. Vote choice by party (Source: NBC News, 2016).

The UK has narrowly decided to leave the EU. After that, PM Cameron resigned and May was elected as the new PM. May, while campaigning on the remain side, had promised to limit immigration in order to gain the support of pro-Brexit supporters in the process. May, known for her anti-immigration thoughts and hard-line approach to the refugees, defined immigrants as a burden on public institutions, schools, hospitals, increasing unemployment, lowering wages and zero economic contribution and claimed that immigration was harming the UK (James, 2015). The fact that a country that has all the founding EU principles creates such a discourse in its campaign when it comes to EU solidarity is an important indicator in the context of realist interests. The influx of refugees has been used intensively in the Brexit campaign to create a valid basis for the idea of leaving the EU. Chernobrov (2016) argues that when faced with the presence of others as an alternative to oneself and the uncertainty brought about by unexpected events, the self is challenged and its identity boundaries are questioned. In response, the self engages in a process of ontological securitization, seeking to establish a sense of security and stability in its own existence (Chernobrov, 2016, p. 584). This policy against immigrants and refugees began to have consequences, and regarding a violence in Essex, Junker said of the beatings of Polish workers in Essex; “never accept Polish workers being beaten up and harassed on the streets of Essex” (BBC, 2016). The rhetoric of the secessionists and UKIP built Muslims and immigrants and refugees as the basis of the problems in general, and they created a discourse in this direction. The consequences of this were increased racist attacks and hate speech against these groups. UK police records show racist and religious hate crimes have increased by 18,2 percent compared to last year

(Freedom House, 2018). In 2018, there was a noticeable escalation in reported hate crimes targeting immigrants and Muslims. Some analysts attributed this rise to the anti-immigrant rhetoric prevalent during the controversial 2016 EU referendum campaign and a string of terrorist attacks in 2017 (Freedom House, 2018).

A study conducted by Cardiff university for the European press found that the right-wing press exhibits a significantly exclusionary and empathy-free attitude towards refugees and migrants in the UK (UNHCR, 2015). This study focuses on the press of five countries (Germany, Sweden, Italy, Spain and the UK) and examines in detail the media coverage of refugees and migrants. According to the report, left-wing media outlets portrayed refugees and migrants as people migrating to Europe to find work and escape poverty, while right-wing media interpreted them as pressure on the NHS, housing and welfare. Dijk suggests that media representation of ethnic minorities embodies a form of “modern racism” (Van Dijk, 2000). In this context, “the other” is not portrayed as being biologically lesser but rather as distinctly “different” from the majority, typically in a negative light. The narratives concerning ethnic minorities span a wide range of topics. Predominant among these are governmental reactions to migration and the associated challenges in areas such as housing, employment, and social welfare (Konings and Notten, 2021). Additionally, frequent media coverage revolves around unauthorized migrant entries, cultural disparities, integration disputes, and perceived dangers from migrants, especially in relation to violence, criminal activity, narcotics, and vice activities (Van Dijk, 2000). At this point, May's discourses and the discourses of the right-wing press create parallelism. The Daily Mail portrayed the arrival of refugees as the UK's appealing prosperity and economy rather than the driving force of human tragedy and civil war. The study conducted by UNHCR revealed that certain patterns were evident in the news coverage. Notably, newspapers such as the Sun and the Mail exhibited a lower emphasis on reporting mortality rates and search and rescue operations. This disparity can be attributed, to some extent, to their greater concentration on events in Calais rather than in the Mediterranean, in contrast to the other newspapers examined in the study. (UNHCR, 2015). However, the report shows that there is no political party advocating a more liberal, more open immigration system in the UK and the press is aware that the public has a negative view of issues in general, and the language of the press has shifted in this direction. To same study, it was observed that although many news bulletins presented compassionate accounts of the plight experienced by

refugees and migrants, there was a noticeable lack of advocacy for expanding refugee quotas or establishing secure migration pathways. Alternatively, the focus predominantly revolved around the issue of “illegal” migration, leading to an emphasis on stricter border enforcement (UNHCR, 2015).

In an environment where it was generally accepted by the parties that refugees and asylum seekers were a big problem, but political parties themselves and society were divided about the solution, the press was also divided. The findings from the UNHCR report (2015) indicate that a considerable percentage of press articles failed to explore potential solutions to the migration influx. This trend was particularly evident in newspapers like the Sun and the Mirror. The study shows the methods and proportions of the press regarding the solution below. 56 percent of the press in the UK has no solution to the issue.

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>	<i>Daily Mail</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Daily Mirror</i>	UK Press Average
Aid/assistance	20.2%	19.3%	9.7%	9.5%	0.0%	11.7%
Reduce migration/remove migrants	10.6%	8.8%	12.9%	9.5%	4.2%	9.2%
Greater restrictions on benefits/aid	2.9%	5.3%	24.2%	11.9%	0.0%	8.9%
Taking in refugees/more legal channels for migration	12.5%	12.3%	3.2%	7.1%	0.0%	7.0%
More security at borders	7.7%	12.3%	6.5%	2.4%	4.2%	6.6%
UN Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme	9.6%	5.3%	0.0%	2.4%	12.5%	6.0%
United/EU Response	13.5%	10.5%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	5.4%
Conflict resolution	9.6%	5.3%	0.0%	2.4%	4.2%	4.3%
Act against jihadis/ISIS	0.0%	3.5%	1.6%	2.4%	0.0%	1.5%
Search and rescue operations should be increased	1.9%	0.0%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Change foreign policy	2.9%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Action/prevention taken on smugglers/traffickers	1.0%	1.8%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Replacing Mare Nostrum	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
No solution in	44.2%	42.1%	48.4%	61.9%	83.3%	56.0%

Figure 18. UK media solutions to the refugee/migrant influx (Source: UNHCR, 2015).

Britain was applying methods to deter migration and refugees. As per the findings of Freedom House, it has been reported that the government has maintained the policy of holding children within immigration detention centers. (Freedom House, 2018). The UK interior ministry's report on Hate Crime, England and Wales, for the

year 2016/17 disclosed that the police registered a cumulative number of 80,393 offenses where one or more hate crime strands were identified as contributing motivations. There was a significant increase of 29 percent in hate crimes recorded in 2016/17 compared to the previous year, with a total of 80,393 incidents. This rise represents the largest percentage increase observed since the inception of the series in 2011/12. In 2015/16, there were 62,518 recorded hate crimes (O'Neill, 2017). We can read this data as a result of the harsh foreign, immigrant and anti-refugee language in the Brexit campaign. The negative image of refugees and immigrants was used to leave the EU, and Britain, the birthplace of values such as democracy and human rights, left the union by blaming this human tragedy on the Union's refugee and immigration policy and refusing to take any more responsibility.

Examining the results of the study conducted in other countries and the UK may help us to understand the power and influence of the media. In the German and Swedish media, which were considered countries more open to accepting refugees in Europe, the terms “asylum seeker” or “refugee” were predominantly used. Conversely, the media in Italy and the UK had a stronger preference for the term “migrant”. In Spain, the term “immigrant” was more commonly employed (UNHCR, 2015). The intensity of humanitarian themes in the Italian press was more than in the other five countries, and the study showed that Sweden was the country whose media was the most positive towards refugees, while the UK was the most negative, aggressive and polarized. The result of this report also shows that the media of societies have an important ability to build and shape the ideas of societies.

On the other hand, study provides insights into the division in Europe and the fragmentation of these EU countries. The UK, which has the most aggressive media towards refugees and asylum seekers among the five countries, has also made the decision to leave from the Union by a very small margin. Even today, PM Sunak (who was also a supporter of the leave campaign in the Brexit) is criticized by international human rights organizations and EU institutions for his strict refugee and immigration policy. Sunak's Illegal Migration Bill aims to stop people entering the UK for claiming asylum and this bill is evaluated for violations of basic refugee and human rights by international human rights groups, NGOs and EU. The law includes sending people arriving in small boats to Rwanda or a safe third country as soon as possible (Sinmaz, 2023). And it prohibits deported people from returning and obtaining UK citizenship in the future and it violates the 1951 Refugee Convention and the European

convention on human rights. Because the 1951 convention states that countries should not complicate the ways for people who will seek asylum, and this is a very clear violation of rights.

The archbishop of Canterbury, in a speech to the House of Lords, argued that the law was “morally unacceptable” and would harm the country's reputation and interests in the international arena (Syal, 2023). The law has not yet been approved by the House of Lords and discussions are ongoing. Although Sunak seeks support for this plan from the international community and its European allies, the EU and some countries claim and criticize this plan as a violation of human rights. The birthplace of human rights and democracy, the UK, which turned to realistic protectionist policies in the face of a regional humanitarian crisis, seems to have chosen to circumvent the law for its short-term interests. In conclusion, the effect of this human tragedy, which has regional and even global effects, in the UK-EU relations has resulted in “divorce”. As one of the biggest defenders of the values of the Union, the UK has returned to its harsh and exclusionary “normal” in the issue of refugees and immigrants. The chart below shows the number of people crossing the English Channel by boat. The main purpose behind Sunak's fervent persuasion efforts to his allies is that what he wants to do is accepted as legal and is to get the growing numbers sent as soon as possible.

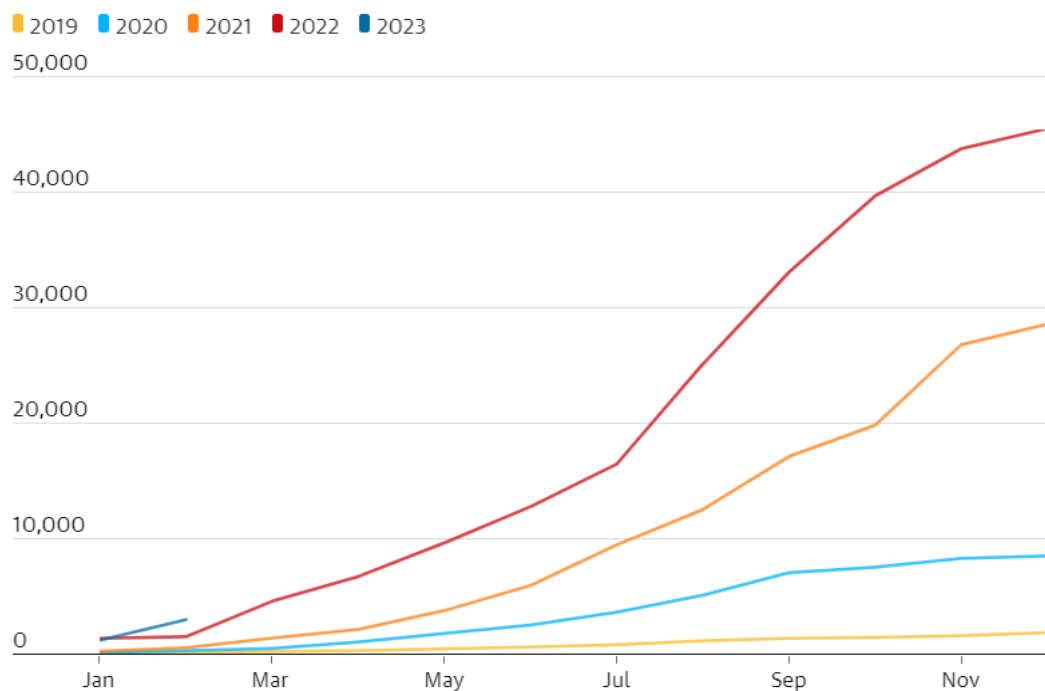


Figure 18. Numbers of asylum seekers who crossed the Channel by years (Source:

Home Office, Ministry of Defence, 2023).

3.1.3 Refugee Influx Fueling Far-Right And Nationalism?

To begin, it is imperative to elucidate the academic discourse surrounding the interplay between the radical right and the refugee influx. Is the surge of refugees a pivotal factor in strengthening the far right, or is its impact on this phenomenon relatively insubstantial? Dustmann, Vasiljeva, and Damm (2016) leverage a unique dataset spanning 13 years of Denmark's random refugee dispersal policy, covering three key electoral cycles. The authors further contend that refugee migration doesn't merely bolster vote shares far-right parties but may crucially underpin their emergence and subsequent prominence in electoral politics, thereby establishing refugee resettlement as a pivotal driver of the ascendancy of populist entities championing stringent anti-immigration stances (Dustman, Vasiljeva and Damm, 2016).

In their comprehensive scholarly investigation, Theresa Gessler and Sophia Hunger analyzed a corpus of 120,000 press releases from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland spanning from 2013 to 2017. Their empirical results illuminate that the refugee influx provided significant impetus to the ascendancy of radical right-wing parties (Gessler and Hunger, 2022). However, noting that there is limited evidence that mainstream parties have adopted the positions of the radical right, Gessler and Hunger conclude that the far right has been effective in pressuring other parties by drawing attention to the refugee influx (Gessler and Hunger, 2022). Gessler and Hunger (2020) observed consistent effects across the three countries studied. Based on their findings, they inferred that, despite national differences, radical right parties serve a comparably influential role during influxes across varied contexts. In the study by Landmann, Gaschler, and Rohmann (2019) published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, the researchers elucidate the intricate relationship between perceived threats from refugees and the ensuing emotional and attitudinal responses. Each threat dimension was found to invoke negative emotions, culminating in unfavorable attitudes towards refugees and endorsement of restrictive immigration policies (Landmann, Gaschler and Rohmann, 2019). A notable discovery, termed the “altruistic threat paradox”, indicated that concerns over refugee care significantly predict support for stringent policies, potentially due to a diminished emotional engagement with this form of threat (Landmann, Gaschler and Rohmann, 2019). It seems that while individuals may recognize the “threat” or challenge of caring for refugees, they don't necessarily connect with this threat emotionally. Because there isn't a strong emotional

response (like fear or anger), these individuals might lean towards a more “logical” or “practical” response, such as supporting stricter policies to reduce the perceived burden or challenge of refugee care. In simpler terms, the paradox is that people who express concern for the well-being of refugees might also support policies that restrict refugee entry or rights. The potential reason is that their concern doesn't translate to a deep emotional connection, leading them to favor policies that might reduce the perceived “problem” or challenge of refugee care.

Steinmayr (2021) delved into the dynamics of exposure to the refugee influx and its consequential influence on electoral preferences. In his analysis, Steinmayr also underscores that, at the macro-level, platforms such as social media, along with political discourse and broader media narratives—where there is limited direct engagement—tend to cultivate adverse sentiments toward refugees (Steinmayr, 2021). Contemporary media narratives surrounding refugees often reveal deep-seated biases, particularly in the choice of language, which can underscore latent racism or regional prejudice. The Ukrainian migration influx in 2022 presented an illuminating case in point. Charlie D'agata of CBC News, in a broadcast on February 25, 2022, made a telling observation. He noted, “But this is not a place, with all due respect, you know, like Iraq or Afghanistan that has seen conflict raging for decades. You know, this is a relatively civilized, relatively European... city” (NowThis News, 2022). This statement insinuates an expectation of peace and stability in 'civilized' European regions, as opposed to 'conflict-prone' regions like Iraq or Afghanistan.

Similarly, On February 25, 2022, Kelly Cobiella of NBC News articulated a stark differentiation, emphasizing, “These are not refugees from Syria. These are refugees from neighboring Ukraine. I mean, that, quite frankly, is part of it. These are Christians. They are white” (NowThis News, 2022). This overt distinction based on religious and racial lines suggests a hierarchy of refugees in global discourse. Further reinforcing this Eurocentric perspective, February 27, 2022, Lucy Watson from ITV News stated, “Now the unthinkable has happened to them. And this is not a developing Third World Nation. This is Europe” (NowThis News, 2022).

Al Jazeera English's Peter Dobbie also treated this line, commenting, “These are prosperous, middle-class people; these are not obviously refugees trying to get away from areas in the Middle East that are still in a big state of war. These are not people trying to get away from areas in North Africa. They look like any European family that you would live next door to” (NowThis News, 2022). Such comments, while

perhaps unintentional, perpetuate a narrative that elevates the suffering of 'European' refugees above others. This comparison suggests a distinction between different groups of refugees and implies that the Ukrainian refugees are somehow different or more deserving of empathy and support due to their perceived similarity to European families. However, it is important to note that the characterization of refugees based on their appearance or socio-economic status can perpetuate stereotypes and contribute to the marginalization of other refugee groups. These discourses underscore the necessity for introspection and critical evaluation of media narratives, especially given their profound influence on public perception and policy frameworks concerning refugees globally.

Against this backdrop, it becomes crucial to recall the principles enshrined in international refugee conventions. According to Kale (2017), states bear a direct obligation to ensure the absence of discrimination among refugees. She posits that the responsibilities incumbent upon states adhering to the 1951 Convention are comprehensive (Kale, 2017). Specifically, she contends that these states must accord rights to refugees that are at least equivalent to those granted to other foreign nationals residing within their jurisdiction (Kale, 2017). The dichotomy between these foundational principles and the narratives propagated by certain media outlets underscores the necessity for introspection and critical evaluation of media narratives, especially given their profound influence on public perception and policy frameworks concerning refugees globally.

According to results, exposure to transiting refugees, especially without meaningful contact, led to an increase in Far Right gains (Steinmayr, 2021). Macro Level exposure pertains to broader, more generalized exposure to an issue, often mediated through platforms like traditional and social media or political rhetoric (Steinmayr, 2021). In the context provided, the significant surge in Far Right support during 2015 seems to be largely attributed to macro level exposure, given the overwhelming salience of the refugee situation in media and political discourse. This exposure type acts as the primary mechanism in shaping public opinion at a broader scale. Given that individual nations and the broader EU populace are not inherently possible to direct interaction and empathy with the refugee influx, the predominant mediums shaping public sentiment are the media, political rhetoric, and social media platforms. And according to Steinmayr's findings, voting preferences can be expected to shift to the extreme right in forms of exposure where there is no direct interaction,

no direct contact and communication (Steinmayr, 2021).

Elias Dinas, Konstantinos Matakos, Dimitrios Xefteris, and Dominik Hangartner (2019) posit that islands experiencing a significant yet transient influx of refugees immediately preceding the September 2015 election witnessed an incremental rise in vote shares for Golden Dawn (considered one of Europe's most extreme-right parties) by 2 percentage points. This equates to a 44 percent surge at the average (Dinas, Matakos, Xefteris and Hangartner, 2019). Their research underscores the significant revelation that mere exposure to the refugee influx can bolster support for extreme-right entities, offering crucial insights into the underlying catalysts of the anti refugee sentiment (Dinas, Matakos, Xefteris and Hangartner, 2019). "Mere exposure" refers to the simple act of being introduced to or made aware of something, without necessarily having a deeper or more nuanced understanding of it. The term implies that just being exposed to the refugee influx, even in a superficial or brief manner, is enough to increase support for extreme-right parties. In accordance with Steinmayr's 2021 research, these results align similarly, underscoring their validity and relevance in the context of this study.

In the intricate multi-party landscape of Greece, GD emerged as the third-largest party, positioning itself as a minor opposition (Dinas, Matakos, Xefteris and Hangartner, 2019). As a result of this standing, it was accorded certain constitutional entitlements, which included the privilege to nominate the second deputy Speaker of the house and secure pivotal vice-chair roles within parliamentary committees (Dinas, Matakos, Xefteris and Hangartner, 2019). This ascent mirrors the trajectory of various far-right parties across the EU (Just like Italy, Hungary, Poland, Austria, France, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Belgium) culminating in their significant presence within legislative assemblies.

During the local state elections in Germany in 2016, the AfD party obtained a significant 25 percent of the total vote share. The party has a political line that represents the far right, which has come to the fore with its heavy anti-immigrant and anti-refugee language and its rhetoric towards Muslims. Sylke Tempel, affiliated with the German Council on Foreign Relations, described the AfD party in Germany as opposing established conventions and embodying an ideology that opposes "the establishment, liberalization, European integration, and virtually everything that has become the norm" (Times, 2016). The AfD has rhetoric that is diametrically opposed to Merkel's European values and open door policy towards refugees. The

party's success is interpreted as a message of anger at Merkel and her policies. The party emerged not only over immigrants, but at the time of Europe's debt crisis and has recently become the second largest party in some states with anti-refugee and anti-Muslim rhetoric. The leader of the party stated that if the situation demands it, law enforcement should be prepared to employ firearms. It was emphasized that this approach is not their preferred choice, but rather a measure to be taken only when all other options have been exhausted. (Connolly, 2016). AfD, which became the third largest party in the country in 2017, gained representation in the federal parliament with 88 seats. Having the support of xenophobic, the EU and anti-refugee and anti-immigrant circles, the party managed to become the second party in the states of Saxony Brandenburg in 2019. In the parliamentary elections held in 2021, the AfD, which fell by 2 points to 10,3 percent of the vote, seems to have received the majority of votes from the eastern states of the country. These states are located on the borders with other countries that are the entry points of refugees to Germany. It is known that among the MPs who entered the parliament in 2021, there are names with ties to neo-nazi groups and who were suspended from army duty for defending the Nazi term (BBC, 2021).

Compared to 2021, it increased its votes from 8 percent to 9,1 percent in the regional elections held in 2023 (Politico, 2023). Although there is an orientation towards the party, the party is generally the fifth largest party in Germany after the SPD - Social Democrats, CDU/CSU - Christian Democrats, Grüne – (Greens), FDP - Free Democratic Party. And these are the parties that generally do not like to come together with the AfD. In 2022, a German court determined that the far-right party, Alternative for Germany (AfD), could be designated as a potential threat to democracy. Consequently, this ruling permits the domestic intelligence agency to monitor the activities of the opposition party. Additionally, Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) characterized the AfD as a “suspected case of right wing extremism” (Guardian, 2022). At this point, the attitude of Germany's judicial institutions to suppress the far right is quite clear. However, according to a voting intention survey, it is seen that the total voting rate for the AfD has increased by 4 percent in the last 3 months, and by 8 percent since June last year, to 18 percent.

When we come to France, The National Rally (NR) seems to be more effective in its populist far-right policies than the AFD in Germany. The far right in the country seems to be symbolized with Le Pen. Although it has a rising trend, the far-right

rhetoric in Germany, which is not expected to come to power under the current conditions, enabled Le Pen to receive 41,5 percent of the votes in the second round in the French Presidential election. The fact that Le Pen has such a high vote rate is an example that shows that the values of the Union have still not fully settled even in France. Le Pen also used the rhetoric of Muslims, immigrants and refugees, and anti-EU rhetoric, which constituted the general discourse of the far right. Associating immigrants and refugees with Muslims and terrorism, Le Pen argues that there are jihadists in her country, praying in an open space is an occupation, her own policies are similar to those of Putin and Trump, anti-Semitism actually stems from the Islam that has settled in the country (Jack, 2022). Le Pen stated in interviews that she would leave the EU if elected, and she constantly criticized Merkel's refugee policy. In addition, the far-right Le Pen's rhetoric seems to have gained support in French society and politicians as well. The mayor of Belfort in Eastern France says he does not want to host Muslim immigrants and claims that there are many like-minded people (DW News, 2015).

While Le Pen received 33,9 percent of the vote against his rival Macron in the 2017 presidential elections, this rate increased to 41,5 percent in the 2022 elections 5 years later (Euronews, 2022). According to a survey conducted as the most recent data, from July 2022 of last year to April 5, 2023, the NR increased its vote rate by 5 percent (Politico, 2023). Thus, there is only 1 point between the other biggest party in the country and according to the survey, it is the second party in the country that has the potential to receive the most votes. The fact that Le Pen has such a high vote rate is an example that shows that the values of the Union have still not fully settled even in France.

The far right politician, who criticizes the EU and EU institutions with the discourse of France's interests first, adopts a political language based on refugee, anti-Islamism. Le Pen says she will hold a referendum on immigration if elected president in 2021 (Meyssonnier, 2021). Le Figaro, one of the country's most influential newspapers stressed that the French people demand better guarded borders, not a better migrant distribution system (Mortimer, 2022). As a result of the EU summit held in February 2023, a consensus was reached on the decision to accelerate the deportation process and strengthen the EU-Turkey border. And when we look at the newspapers of the countries, we see that these decisions are interpreted differently in each country. We see this division in the press throughout Europe as well.

Sweden's Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) is a party that wants to put EU membership to a referendum, demanding very strict restrictions on immigration. And for the first time in October 2022, it began to provide external support to the government by signing an agreement with three center-right parties (Henley, 2022). While other parties did not want to cooperate with the party with neo-Nazi roots, Anna Kinberg Batra, the leader of the conservative Moderate party, who accused him of being racist, came to an agreement with him (Jones, 2023). This is interpreted as the first time in Swedish history that a far-right party will have so much influence on the government. Because the three centre-right parties will need more support from the far-right Sweden Democrats in the coalition they will form as a minority government. This seems to increase the influence of the far right in the decisions to be taken by Sweden Democrats in the future. When we look at the vote rates, the party, which became the second largest party in the country by increasing its votes by 3 points with 20,2%, increased its vote rates regularly in the last nine elections (Crouch, 2022). The first effects of this partnership are expected to be in the direction of Sweden, which took the EU rotating presidency after the election, to further slow down the partnership policy on the EU migration and refugee approach, which does not already exist (Rankin, 2022). As outlined in the party program of Sverigedemokraterna, their stance on immigrants and refugees emphasizes the necessity to redirect attention from accepting additional asylum seekers in Sweden towards offering foreign aid to refugees in dire circumstances (Sverigedemokraterna, 2023). Like its other examples in Europe, the party introduces itself by associating Islam with extremism and makes this presentation on the basis of the “us-them” theory: Sverigedemokraterna's program states that they will never yield to “Islamism or any other extremist ideologies”, as they firmly believe in upholding Sweden's democratic values and principles of equality (Sverigedemokraterna, 2023).

Finland's far-right Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset) is a party that emphasizes Christian values, claims that nationalist values have been eroded by the EU, and has anti-EU rhetoric. In the general elections held on April 2, 2023, the centre-right party became the first party with 21 percent of the votes, while Finns Party became the second largest party in the country with 20 percent of the votes. It has increased its vote rate by 3 percent since the election in 2015, when immigration and refugees were felt intensely. In the party program of the Finns Party, it is expressed that the continued prosperity of Finnish democracy and the cherished “welfare society” relies on Finland

freeing itself from the influence of Brussels, which they perceive as intruding into various facets of everyday Finnish life (2019). The party, which argues that the EU should have a very strict legislative stance on immigration laws, claims that no solution could be found among the EU institutions in this process, and that skilled workers from Eastern Europe and Baltic countries increased unemployment rates in Western European countries (2019).

When we look at Italy, Giorgia Meloni, the leader of the Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), became the country's first female PM in 2022 since WWII. Before she came to power, like many far-right parties across Europe, Meloni's party had shown Eurosceptic tendencies. She has criticized the EU for perceived overreach and for undermining Italian sovereignty. Meloni has advocated for stricter controls on immigration. Her party has voiced concerns about the potential security risks associated with unchecked migration and the strain on Italian resources due to the influx of refugees. In the 2018 elections, the party garnered a modest 4,4% of the vote. However, by 2022, its electoral fortunes dramatically shifted as it emerged as the leading party, securing 25,99% of the popular vote. Meloni, the far-right leader in Italy, consistently employed anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout her election campaign. Moreover, she emphasized a distinct divergence from EU policies, asserting that under her leadership, the primary focus would be on Italy's national interests rather than conforming to the broader European agenda (Euronews, 2022). Attributing her campaign to values through the trio of god, family, and fatherland, Meloni portrays an extreme right-wing and fascist image with her discriminatory and strict discourses against homosexuals, abortion, refugees and immigrants (Giuffrida, 2022). Meloni, who was added to the group of other right-wing leaders in Europe and elected as the head of the government, is an issue that needs to be examined in this process, her approach to EU institutions and policies on immigrants and refugees. At the EU summit, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy advocated for more stringent immigration regulations and called for augmented investment in Africa, positing such initiatives as a strategy to deter migrant influxes (Euronews, 2023). The fact that one of the most influential European powers of the EU, such as Italy frequently states that it will not pursue policies compatible with the EU will damage the EU's normative identity. And this situation will pave the way for and accelerate the shift to realist and individual policies, both within the EU. According to Giuffrida, Meloni has advocated for the navy to repatriate migrants to Africa (Giuffrida, 2022). A week after the new

PM was appointed, he appointed a man who had previously worn a nazi band on his arm as minister. The new far-right power, which tries to make arrangements for homosexuals not to have children, continues to carry out politics over the traditional family emphasis. Due to their anti-immigrant views and criticisms towards the EU, they draw a tough and unruly image similar to Hungary and Poland rather than a pro-EU position. The ruling party and its coalition partners consolidated their power by winning over 50 percent of the vote in the regional elections held just 5 months after coming to power (Balmer and Amante, 2023). Meloni, who supported Sunak's Illegal Migration Bill, which was criticized by the EU and human rights organizations, stated that she definitely agreed with Sunak's migration policies (Wintour, 2023). Fulfilling a promise made during the election process in January 2023, Meloni took a decision to undermine NGOs' search and rescue efforts at sea within the context of the Code of Conduct rules. According to the decision, NGOs that survive on donations will face harsh financial sanctions. That means more deaths in the Mediterranean.

Poland's populist far-right ruling party Prawo Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) appears to have increased its vote from 37,6 percent in the general elections in 2015 to 43,6 percent in the 2019 elections. In the other general election, which is planned to be held in October/November of 2023, even though it lost votes according to the voting intent survey. There are some factors underlying this success of the party, which still maintains its vote rate at 35 percent (2023). According to Aleks Szczerbiak of the University of Sussex, economic support to society (500 plus programme) and creating the image of a party representing national values, national identity and Christian values and claiming that these values are under “a great offensive of evil” (wielka ofensywa zła) one of the main reasons for this success (Szczerbiak, 2023). Szczerbiak states that the party is supported by society because it “defends these values against the EU” and is against the quota system that allows refugees and migrants to enter the country. However, the far-right administration, which is constantly in conflict with the EU, adopts a tendency to leave the Union. Despite this direction of the administration, which is experiencing tensions with the EU in many areas from the judiciary to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) rights, from media freedom to refugees and immigrants, 80 percent of the Polish people still seem to be in favor of staying in the Union, according to the surveys (Henley and Rankin, 2021). The government, which is in good relations with the Roman Catholic church, provides financial support to the media and broadcasting organizations established by

the clergy, and this situation is very similar to Hungary (House, 2018). As in other far right governments or parties, the perception of Islam-terrorism towards refugees and immigrants is also present in Poland. As per findings, there has been a notable increase in hate crimes, specifically targeting individuals perceived as Muslims, by their perpetrators, during the past two years (House, 2018). According to Dijk, ideological groups and categories tend to define themselves, as well as their objectives, based on their most cherished and preferred values (Dijk T. V., 1997). As reported by the BBC, a law passed in 2021, purportedly aimed at “assisting refugees”, grants border guards the authority to directly expel immigrants who cross the border “illegally”. Additionally, it empowers them to reject international asylum seekers without undergoing a formal evaluation process (BBC, 2021). According to the international non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch, the Polish government characterized the influx of refugees channeled through Belarus in 2021 as constituting a form of “hybrid warfare” against the Polish state (Watch, 2021). This framing situates the migration phenomenon not merely as a humanitarian issue, but as a strategic and security challenge intentionally engineered to destabilize national order. Furthermore, a state of emergency was declared along the border, accompanied by the prohibition of NGOs from entering the affected region, as reported by Watch (Watch, 2021). This framing situates the migration phenomenon not merely as a humanitarian issue, but as a strategic and security challenge intentionally engineered to destabilize national order. As highlighted by Freedom House, the actions taken to restrict the entry of NGOs into the region have resulted in the impediment of their assistance to asylum seekers and migrants. Moreover, certain members of NGOs have been detained and charged with facilitating illegal transit (Freedom House, 2023). International Amnesty (2022) reports that despite numerous human rights organizations documenting illegal pushbacks in Eastern European countries, including Poland, these rights violations persist. As a result, asylum seekers are unable to exercise their fundamental right to claim asylum and instead face inhumane treatment and physical abuse, including beatings (International Amnesty, 2022).

Özerim and Tolay provide a summary of populist discourse in literature, outlining the following key characteristics (Özerim and Tolay, 2021). These are respectively: Utilization of a straightforward message aimed at attracting a large following, adoption of a dichotomous perspective that categorizes the world into

“good vs. bad” actors, creation of a narrative that aims to alienate and polarize these two groups, emphasis on the “good people” in contrast to an identified “elite” or “establishment” viewed as the adversary, identification of specific issues of concern perceived as threats, such as globalization, immigration, or consensus politics, presence of a leader who embodies and embodies the populist discourse (Özerim and Tolay, 2021).

As can be seen, the far right in Europe regularly politicized the situation of immigrants and refugees in the last elections, they associated a human tragedy with terrorism, claimed that refugees and immigrants increased unemployment, reduced wages, threatened their identities with similar discourses and claims. And they also created an atmosphere of fear about the EU and its countries as if they are in a war. Far right parties have increased their voting rates regularly, with the claim that the EU as an institution that “imposes” its rules on the countries. Some of the far-right parties are already in power or have just come to power. Poland and Hungary has been in conflict with the EU regarding refugees and asylum seekers for a long time, and infringement processes have been initiated against them on the grounds that they do not apply EU rules and violate human rights in line with authoritarian decisions. As a newcomer to power, Meloni is a leader with rhetoric and political views close to Orban, and this presents a great deal of uncertainty for the EU. On the other hand, it is expected that a far-right party, whose weight in power has increased so much for the first time in history, will influence the decisions to be taken in Sweden and pull it further to the right. When we look at these parties, they have either managed to maintain their vote share enough to be in power, or they have received votes effective enough to become partners in power with rising vote shares. Le Pen's vote rate, which reached 41,5 percent, mirrored France's increasing discontent with the EU, refugees and immigrants, foreigners and Muslims.

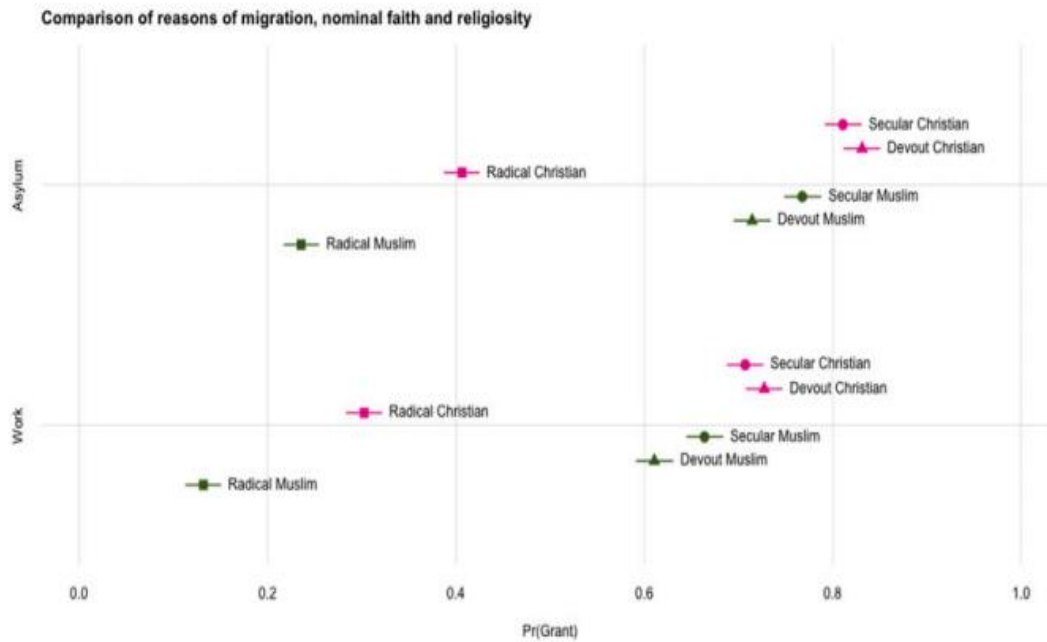


Figure 19. Likelihood of immigrants receiving approval based on their migration motives, declared religion, and level of religious devotion (lines represent 95% confidence range) (Source: Helbling, Jäger and Traunmüller, 2022).

In 2022, Helbling, Jäger, and Traunmüller noted from their research across five nations that the prevalent bias against Muslims primarily stems from the intensity of the migrants' and refugees' religious devotion. Specifically, they found that Muslims who are secular or devoutly religious tend to receive a more positive perception compared to fundamentalist believers from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds (Helbling, Jäger and Traunmüller, 2022). Additionally, as religiosity rises, the likelihood of gaining access decreases more for Muslim immigrants in comparison to their Christian counterparts. As previously highlighted in this research, it is unsurprising to observe such outcomes, especially considering that the majority of societal perspectives are molded by the media and the narratives promoted by politicians who have direct influence over media content. Given the study's recent nature and its span across five nations, it offers a broad viewpoint. Helbling, Jäger, and Traunmüller's (2022) research corroborates that, within distinct categories, Muslims are invariably perceived less favorably than Christians. Notably, the reception of Muslim migrant workers is especially less favorable (Helbling, Jäger and Traunmüller, 2022). These trends align with previous academic studies suggesting that refugees tend to be perceived more favorably than migrants primarily seeking employment opportunities (Helbling, Jäger and Traunmüller, 2022). Such contrasting perceptions

can potentially be traced back to prevalent apprehensions regarding employment competition.

All far-right parties have similar discourses and similar power practices in this context. In this context, the EU has fallen short of managing the national states and their anti-EU political orientations in the growing anti-refugee and anti immigration environment, and it does not seem very possible to create a common policy that will please everyone. The EU did not take the necessary steps not to raise the far right even further in the face of the clear violations of human rights by the far-right governments, and it has evolved to a point where its short-term interests conflict with its long-term identity. And this conflict is growing day by day.

In November 2022, a collaborative declaration from Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and Malta highlighted the asymmetrical challenges these nations encounter in addressing Mediterranean migration dynamics (European Parliament, 2023). This advocacy for a reformed asylum policy, rooted in the tenets of solidarity and burden sharing, emphasizes a pressing demand for more shared accountability. The document's emphasis on a “persistent burden-sharing framework” further illuminates the present system's limitations, wherein the initial point of entry bears the predominant obligation (European Parliament, 2023). Such a framework becomes particularly complex when private entities, devoid of state regulation, undertake disembarkations. The concluding appeal for enhanced coordination within the Mediterranean punctuates the immediacy of the challenges and underscores the imperative for augmented joint initiatives. Despite the elapse of seven years since the EU experienced the zenith of the humanitarian crisis's implications, it remains evident that the principle of equitable responsibility distribution among member states has neither been actualized nor institutionalized.

In recent years, a notable strain has manifested between two pivotal EU nations: Italy and France. This discord is underscored by Italy's recent decision to restrict access to its ports for humanitarian rescue ships, resulting in a palpable standoff with various charities operating in the Mediterranean region. It's noteworthy that this issue, arising primarily in November 2022, revolves around the legal and humanitarian obligations to rescue distressed individuals at sea. Italy's position, articulated by the far-right-led government, posits that the onus of taking responsibility for these migrants falls upon the countries under whose flag the rescuing ships operate. This perspective has been rejected by a consortium of humanitarian groups, maritime legal experts, and human

rights activists. Legal specialists, including members of the ECRE (European Council on Refugees and Exiles), argue that such selective disembarkation contravenes various international conventions, including the UN Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECRE, 2022a). Furthermore, it presents a questionable interpretation of the International Law of the Sea (ILOS) (ECRE, 2022a). While Italy's actions signify an alarming departure from collaborative efforts, the muted or divisive responses from fellow member states further underscore the EU's internal rifts.

The crux of the dispute can be distilled from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 98, which mandates the provision of assistance to any endangered individual at sea. In accordance with this provision, charity organizations maintain that rescuing migrants, often from precarious and non-seaworthy vessels, is not only a moral duty but also a legal obligation. Further complicating matters is the designation of a 'safe place' for these migrants. Both Italy and Malta have been increasingly reticent in providing such locations, which is antithetical to international maritime law (AP News, 2022). This reluctance accentuates the glaring gaps in the EU's unity, especially when juxtaposed with the treatment of migrants in Libya - a nation supported by Europe yet plagued by human rights violations (ECRE, 2022b).

The standoff between Italy and France not only underscores the fragmentation in the EU's response to the refugee influx but also raises pivotal questions regarding international law and obligations. The inconsistencies in Italy's treatment of various rescue ships and the ambiguous invocation of European norms to justify these actions cast shadows over the EU's normative identity. By contrast, France's call for enhanced European solidarity underscores the broader EU struggle to balance sovereign interests with collective responsibilities.

The chasm between Italy and France, representing two of the EU's linchpins, underscores a broader challenge: the EU's struggle to preserve its normative identity amidst the exigencies of *realpolitik*. Despite the noble tenets inscribed in international treaties, the application remains mired in national interests and political calculus. This tension between Italy and France symbolizes the EU's broader struggle: to forge a unified front while wrestling with deep-seated national interests.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

The Syrian refugee influx, one of monumental humanitarian challenges of our era, has placed a spotlight on the EU's shifting approach towards migration. This research, driven by the objective to understand the nuanced interplay between the EU's normative identity and its real-world policy decisions during the influx, adopts the lens of discourse analysis as its primary methodological tool. With the foundation built upon the EU's identity as a normative power as claimed by Ian Manners, the study dives deep into the policies and discourses emerging from the Union and its member states during this critical juncture.

Our discourse analysis, methodically examining texts and spoken words to identify patterns and meanings, illuminated the EU's shift towards securitization and externalization. These processes, contrasting sharply with the EU's normative values and identity, have culminated in the conceptual framework of 'Fortress Europe'. This concept vividly encapsulates the EU's protectionist and exclusionary direction—a reaction to the multifaceted challenges posed by the refugee influx.

The unfolding of the Syrian refugee influx, juxtaposed against the backdrop of the EU's evolving stance on migration, necessitated a critical re-evaluation of its policy architecture. A salient finding has been the pronounced shift in the perception of asylum-seekers within the EU post-9/11; while initial reactions did not overtly securitize these individuals, the period between 2015 and 2016 marked a significant transformation (Leonard and Kaunert, 2022). The ascendancy of far-right ideologies, galvanized by the refugee influx, has reshaped political landscapes in numerous European nations—either catapulting these factions into power or bolstering their influence in coalition governments. Comprehensive multi-country surveys corroborated the evolving skepticism of EU citizens towards Muslim immigrants and refugees. This sentiment, in turn, precipitated distinct nationalistic policies, accentuated Euro-skepticism, and strained inter-member relations within the EU. Such divergences have critically impeded the formation of a cohesive EU policy since 2015. Reflecting upon the initial hypothesis, it is evident that the Syrian refugee influx has not only tested the EU's normative identity but has, to a significant extent, realigned its migration stance towards a more protectionist and exclusionary approach. The trajectory of these developments underscores the veracity of the study's hypothesis, spotlighting the EU's departure from its normative underpinnings in the realm of

migration policy.

Additionally, this research briefly delved into the nexus between democratic maturity and immigration policies. It was observed that foundational EU members and newer entrants exhibited certain unexpected convergences in their policy trajectories, underscoring the intricate nature of the relationship between democratic consolidation and migration policy formulation. The political orientations and decrees of nations like Denmark, the UK, Austria, and Italy—traditionally viewed as the EU's pillars of democratic maturity—were scrutinized. Our findings highlighted that despite their long standing democratic traditions or foundational roles in the EU, these countries were not immune to the allure of securitizing and externalizing policies. Interestingly, this shift toward such policies was also mirrored in nations that either entered the EU more recently or are often characterized as having lesser democratic maturity, such as Hungary, Poland, and Czechia. This convergence in policy approaches, irrespective of democratic lineage or tenure in the EU, underscores the complex interplay of factors shaping immigration stances across the union. This shared trajectory among diverse member states bolsters the central hypothesis of this thesis, demonstrating the multidimensional influences driving the EU's approach to migration.

The Syrian refugee influx also provided a significant backdrop to the tumultuous political landscape in Europe, with the Brexit decision in the UK being a prominent example. To elucidate, while various factors influenced the Brexit vote, immigration stood out as a dominant concern among a large section of the voting populace. A notable survey conducted in the UK revealed that nearly 75 percent of those advocating to leave the EU primarily cited immigration as their rationale. Interestingly, more than half of this segment attributed the EU as the main source of their concerns regarding immigration. These figures emphasize that, contrary to popular discourse suggesting the NHS, economic factors, poverty, or inequality as core Brexit motivators, the primary catalyst was indeed immigration. In the context of this research, such findings underscore the substantial influence of migration, specifically the Syrian refugee influx, in reshaping the political and societal narratives of EU member states. This serves as a testament to the powerful interplay between migration-related concerns and pivotal political decisions, further accentuating the shifts in the EU's normative identity amidst complex migratory pressures.

Within the scope of this research, it has been underscored that societal perceptions, to a large extent, are molded by media narratives and the discourses

propagated by politicians with prominent media presence. This positioning of the media imparts it with a pivotal role in shaping and influencing policy frameworks. The findings of the study elucidate that much like the EU member states, the media landscape in the EU is fragmented, often inhibiting a unified approach to addressing the refugee influx. Concurrently, it was discerned that the media's discourse, at times inadvertently, manifested racial undertones towards Syrian refugees, consistent with Dijk's postulations. Such manifestations undeniably underscore the palpable influence of securitization and externalization within the EU's migration policy dynamics.

In the context of this research, a significant observation was made concerning the EU stance vis-à-vis surrounding regions. Despite the EU's relatively favorable position in terms of economic development and demographic profile compared to its neighboring countries, the Union has demonstrated a shift towards policy orientations that effectively externalize the refugee issue. This evolution in strategy distances the EU from being a primary stakeholder or solution provider for the refugee influx. This inclination towards externalization, especially when the EU possesses the capabilities to play a more central role, challenges our initial hypothesis about the Union's normative commitments and raises questions about its long-term strategic objectives.

Furthermore, within the scope of this research, a notable contradiction emerged regarding the EU's approach to the refugee influx. The EU, while externalizing the refugee challenge through regional pacts, often pursues these strategies in a manner incongruent with its professed values. The Union collaborates, directly or indirectly, with nations that have evident infrastructure inadequacies and notable records of human rights and refugee rights violations, as highlighted by reputable human rights organizations. Yet, the EU and its member states persist with such agreements and cooperation. This underscores a tension in the EU's identity, suggesting a prioritization of realpolitik considerations over its foundational normative principles.

This research elucidates the metamorphosis and its resultant impacts, enhancing comprehension of the EU's shifting global persona and the intricacies linked to normative identity investigations. The study emphasizes the imperative for continued inquiry and scrutiny of the intricate ramifications of this transition, aiding enlightened policy decisions and stimulating dialogues about the prospective direction of the EU's normative essence amidst humanitarian challenges.

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