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Broken Policies

The European Union and the Contemporary Migration Crisis

International Relations Master’s Thesis

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**Abstract**

As the war in Syrian moves into its ninth year, millions of displaced people continue to flee the region seeking protection. Europe is portrayed as facing an enormous crisis with thousands of refugees flocking to its shores. The media shows hundreds and thousands of refugees trying to enter into the European Union showing a lack of preparedness of the continent for the new arrivals. In light of this enormous humanitarian disaster, this paper proposes to determine why the European Union has been ineffective in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis since the onset of the Syrian civil war. It involves an examination of several EU policies and shared agreements with nearby states hosting the largest populations of refugees. The goal of this thesis is to understand whether the Common European Asylum System, European Neighborhood Policy and the EU/Turkey Refugee Deal impede or assist the ability of EU member states to effectively handle thousands of refugees at their borders. I argue, evidence shows that the EU struggles to effectively deal with the crisis within its member states due to a lack of alignment in policy implementation, which hinders efforts to establish durable solutions, ultimately leading to evolving negative social opinions of refugees within Europe and influencing new leaders coming to power across the Union.

*Keywords:* European Union, migration crisis, media, Syria, migration policy, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, European Neighborhood Policy, 1951 UN Refugee Convention, EU/Turkey Refugee Deal, Common European Asylum Policy, and refugees.

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**Introduction**

The worst refugee crisis in history enters into its ninth year with more than 11 million people displaced (International Organization for Migration (hereafter, IOM) 2019). The Syrian War has caused a massive migration ripple affecting many countries in the region. Based on the numbers reported in the United Nations’ (UN) most recent Strategic Overview of the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP), Jordan hosts 1.380 million Syrians, Lebanon has 1.5 million, and Turkey hosts 3.614 million Syrian Refugees (UN, 2019). While, these states are shouldering the majority of those fleeing the war, the European Union (EU) has been viewed as suffering from its own crisis as the region has seen large influxes in the past years of refugees and asylum seekers migrating to its borders.

Media has shown images of refugees (see *Image 1*) in loaded boats arriving on shores, others rushing borders, and waiting in masses outside of train stations (Trilling, 2018), thus marginalizing some of the world’s most vulnerable people and highlighting a serious security concern. Thousands of refugees are finding their way to the EU’s border, if they are not among the hundreds and thousands drowning in the Mediterranean Sea during the crossing from Turkey into Greece. Massive groupings of refugees are forming in Italy, Spain, Greece, and other Southern European states. Only a few European countries are making great efforts to resettle refugees while others are building barriers to prevent crossing at their borders. Meanwhile, populism is growing in Europe. New leaders are gaining widespread support and rising to power on nationalistic and anti-immigration platforms.

In order to manage refugee crises, the EU has instituted several policies including the Common European Asylum System, the European Neighborhood Policy, and the EU/Turkey Refugee Deal to assist with not only the influx of refugees on its borders but also in the neighboring states producing refugees. Despite these efforts it is not clear the policies are working. Why does the EU continue to fail at finding durable solutions for refugees seeking protection within the Union? Even though, it seems as though the EU has been caught unaware and not prepared for this migration situation, some critics argue the crisis was not a surprise[[1]](#footnote-1). The inability of the EU to effectively develop solutions to the crisis is consistently portrayed in the media; this inevitably has a prominent effect on shaping the public’s opinion regarding the crisis. The inadequacy of EU immigration policies impacts not only the EU populous, but also, the individuals who rise to power to represent them, and, unfortunately, the perceptions of asylum seekers.

*Image 1*: Line of migrants crossing into Slovenia in 2015[[2]](#footnote-2)

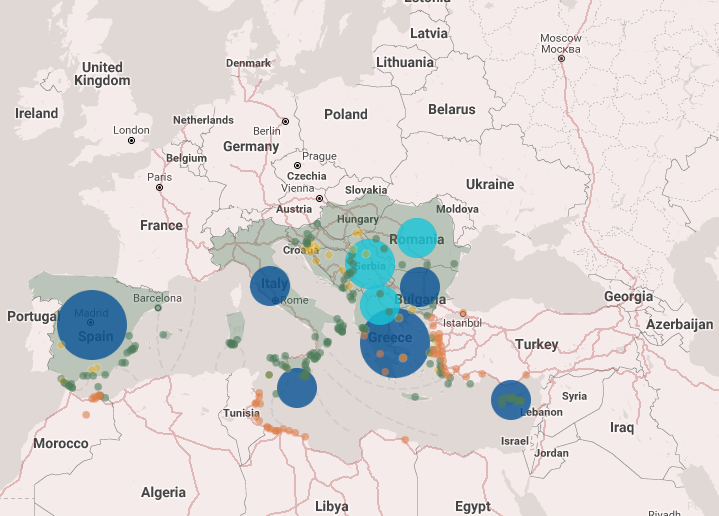


The purpose and research question of this thesis is to understand why the European Union continues to fail at finding durable solutions for refugees seeking protection within the Union. I do so by focusing on the Common European Asylum System, the European Neighborhood policy, and the EU/Turkey Refugee Deal to assist with not only the influx of refugees at its borders but also in the neighboring states producing refugees. The goal is to understand if the policies themselves are faulty or their implementation. The intention of this thesis is to be a constructive addition to the body of knowledge in the field of migration studies and to understand if the European Union has been affective in dealing with the current Syrian refugee crisis. The existing literature does examine these policies in a piecemeal fashion but there has not been an attempt to study all the policies in a comprehensive fashion to gain an overall perspective of the EU migration policies. In that sense, this thesis makes an important contribution to the literature. I begin by providing a brief overview of the current migration literature. I focus on the years since the Syrian civil war began in 2011 until 2019, while some studies are outside of this range, I include them as supplemental material to fill the void of missing research. I examine conditions that are influenced by ineffective policies. Next, I look at specific EU migration policies that are in effect today for the purpose of dealing with the refugee crisis. Upon analyzing the policies’ claims versus their effectiveness, I argue first, that there is a large gap in the field of migration studies and policy effectiveness and second that the EU migration policies are flawed and ineffective. I conclude in my thesis that there is an immense need for restructuring and updating policies to fit the current situation. I end my analysis with a list of recommendations for effective policy implementation.

**Background and Literature Review**

**European Migration Policy Background**

The current refugee crisis is not a new phenomenon. Before the Syrians, the Iraqis sought refuge, and the Palestinians before them. Refugee crises are not contained within the Middle East region either. In South Asia the Rohingyas are suffering from persecution and in the Americas the Venezuelans are seeking protection these days as well. In response to millions of people displaced by the massive destruction of two successive World Wars, European and United Nations institutions established organizations and charters whose tasks were to protect and provide assistance for those forced from their homes due to conflicts or fear of persecution in their countries. One such institution, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established as a temporary organization within the UN shortly after the war. Its mandate was to help with the refugee crisis and then dissolve after a few years. Now, 70 years later, the UNHCR is still going strong and providing services and resources to millions of displaced people.

In 1951, the United Nations founded the UN Refugee Convention (UNHCR 2010) to protect people forced to leave their homes. The status of all displaced people are defined in the Convention and it outlines who and what a refugee is as well as the rights they should be granted. This international legally binding document requires signatory states to provide rights and protection to refugees and prevents the possibility of forced return to a place where the asylum seekers risk being mistreated or seriously harmed. As a requirement, the 144 countries that have signed the Refugee Convention are obligated to grant refugees within their borders these rights. A result of the Convention, it is the states who hold primary responsibility for the protection of refugees. It is also a responsibility of states to establish binding policies and execute their mandates in an efficient manner to ensure protections of refugees are upheld.

*Image 2*: Map depicting key transit routes from the Near East and North Africa into Europe as of March 2019[[3]](#footnote-3)

As a unique and exemplary society, Europe is increasingly becoming the destination of many asylum seekers fleeing from wars in Africa, the Middle East and beyond (see *Image 2*). Thousands are hoping for the opportunity of protection and security necessary to regain a small semblance of their former lives in the democratic and economically strong societies of ‘the West.” Therefore, it is surprising that the EU countries are not more receptive to the plight of refugees and more welcoming to those who seek protection within their borders. Based on current reactions to refugees seeking asylum in the EU’s borders, it appears that the EU and its member countries may have forgotten their own not too distant migration history.

Desperate people will develop creative solutions to overcome obstacles. Because the process of status determination is extensive and arduous, many migrants prefer to gain access to the European system by arriving to the nearest European country and applying for protection status there. This is the cause for the massive influx of asylum seekers leaving North Africa to cross the Mediterranean destined for southern European countries. For example, countries such as Spain, Italy, and Greece are often seen as the first points of contact in this specific migration route. Those coming from farther east aim for Turkey and gaining access through its EU border states.

With the world suffering from the largest human displacement in history, I ask, has the European Union been effective in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis? To discover the answer, we must first situate this question into the larger migration research to understand the broader issues contributing to the proposed ineffectiveness, which we will learn, is a lack of research and comprehensive implementation strategies. As it currently stands, the majority of migration literature is focused on the internal impact of refugees or migrants on a country and theories about how refugees should be integrated. In the following pages, I will organize the literature under the categories of distribution, templates, definitions, information, perceptions, case studies, and relevance. I mention studies that focus on specific issues like healthcare or labor mobility, but there will be a noticeable absence of studies highlighting migration policy effectiveness.

*Distribution*

Migration scholarship is being produced mostly out of wealthy western countries. It is from those studies that the majority of migration statistics is gathered about refugees while the largest amounts of refugees are hosted by developing countries (Taylor, Filipski, Alloush, Gupta, Valdes, & Gonzalez-Estrada, 2016, 1). In fact, there were 60 million displaced people throughout the world in 2015. 86 percent of those forced to leave their homes and cross borders were hosted by neighboring countries who also happen to be developing countries, some with extremely poor infrastructure, and others with the lowest per capita income (Ghosh, 2015, 160). While it is most often the case that countries near to refugee producing states provide temporary protection to the fleeing people, it is often the lesser-developed countries that happen to be in the neighborhood of conflict zones.

In 2018, de Bocanegra, Carter-Pokras, Ingleby, Pottie, Tchangalova, Allen, and Hidalgo (5), conducted research focusing specifically on policies regarding healthcare, in particular, refugee’s accessibility to healthcare in host countries. In their research, they differentiated between the health resources available for irregular or undocumented migrants versus those with an official asylum application. By suggesting that access to healthcare is related to policy implementation based on who is considered ‘official’ asylum seekers versus those migrants who are undocumented, or ‘unofficial’ shows that there is a direct correlation between policies and resources. Not surprisingly, they also mention that developed countries are better suited to be hosts since they have more accessibility to resources for newcomers. However, resources do not always mean accessibility, but it can also mean foundations, structures, and procedures in place to define who is able and who is not able to access or receive resources. The researchers note, “High-income countries have unique resources for sheltering refugees, but they shoulder only a small part of the burden compared to many low- and middle-income countries” (*Ibid.*, 2), the ‘sheltering’ in the high-income countries is not always adequate, as we will see from the European context. While, de Bocanegra, et al. request that migration in the form of refugees and asylum seekers to wealthy countries must be supported with social programs that provide healthcare access, Constant and Zimmermann (2017) argue migration can burden the hosting countries even if they are among the wealthy and are considered able to provide significant resources. These countries, as can be observed in the European context, may still not be able to offer appropriate resources for ease of integration, which causes a strain on the hosting country’s economy and can create negative sentiments among the native population towards those in need.

Efficient policies are key to effective burden sharing. While, de Bocanegra, et al. and Constant and Zimmermann are comparing developed versus developing countries, the same argument can be applied to the European case study. For example, the economically weaker southern states are suffering the most, simply as a result of geography. Due to the location of the refugee hosting countries, in order to gain access to Europe, the refugees must first enter the Union from the south and southeast. These states are on the front lines while the wealthy northern states have the luxury to wait for asylum or resettlement applications to be processed before accepting refugees. While the wealthier, northern countries are more often the intended destination due to their perceived financial stability, the structure of the asylum policies makes it extremely difficult for refugees to gain access to the ‘more stable’ northern states of the EU.

*Template*

With inconsistencies between those countries that have the resources available to support refugees and those who actually host the majority of the refugees, the policies in place need to evenly distribute the burden. I suggest an effort to develop a migration template is necessary to personalize and apply to various regions attempting to manage refugee crises. Unfortunately, a template does not exist and there lacks an international guidance on the topic of migration. As recently as 2015, in her article, ‘International Migration and Global Governance’, Susan Martin (2015) called for, though she admits it is unlikely, a global migration regime. Currently, as the system stands, migration issues are dealt with on a regional and localized basis. This is not always negative, as I mentioned above, because states are equipped to deal with crises differently. However, without a global migration authority or even a regional template to set the standard for a streamlined asylum process or even to provide examples for effective policy implementation, states, like the EU, are failing at solving refugee crises.

*Definitions*

Clear definitions are imperative to effective policies. This is a crucial resource that can be in the form of policies that define or categorize refugees, asylum seekers, or migrants. In some cases, solutions are possible just in changing or modifying the way the crisis is viewed and/or those who are in need of protection are classified. For example, few years before the Syrian refugee crisis began, in 2009, a consortium of European institutions conducted a study to examine undocumented migration and the effects on the European sub-continent. The study involved twelve EU states and three non-EU members who share external borders with the EU and have been identified as prime transit countries for migrants, they included Morocco, Turkey and Ukraine. Even then, scholars recognized the need for further migration research in Europe. Similar to ongoing issues found today, the research included factors like biased and highly politicized discourse, a lack of data, and poor quality of findings comparable across countries (Düvell & Vollmer, 2009, 5). Additionally, the scholars found an absence of a definition was a key issue. There was no clear distinction between irregular border crossings of the neighborhood countries’ citizens and migrants from countries further away(*Ibid.*). Düvell and Vollmer’s (2009, 5) study showed there was no discrepancy between migrants going to Europe from neighboring countries and auxiliary countries. This lack of a definition was filled later in 2016, when the EU moved to categorize Turkey as a safe country of origin to justify the decision to send Syrians illegally crossing to Greece back to their host country. Additionally, the scholars found migration “flows are mixed and little distinction is made between those in need of international protection (refugees, minors) and other (economic) migrants” and “there is no internationally agreed definition of transit migration” for those who pass through southern European states to gain access to the Nordic states (*Ibid.*).

*Information*

Clearly definitions matter and so does information. Voting patterns require informed decision-making. For example, economics play a very important role in migration policy implementation. Not only do representatives need to be aware of how migration affects economies, also citizens need to be provided with all of the information to make educated and informed decisions. Constant and Zimmermann argue that, “Rising concerns about even intra-EU mobility in the political debates before and after the Brexit vote in many European member-states suggest insufficient understanding of the substantial benefits of migration and a convoluted understanding of the value of the EU in general” (2017, 5). They even go so far as to say that in some cases, and Brexit is one policy example, European citizens are not always voting with all the information and the facts to make sound decisions (*Ibid.*).

Effective policymaking requires informed decision-making. By not utilizing the advantages of migrants for the subcontinent, Europe is not successfully dealing with the refugee crisis. For instance, research shows that the Union is in need of migrants in the declining workforce to fill gaps, a result of the quickly aging populations. At various points in European history, economic migration has been encouraged. Historically, asylum seekers have been grouped in with economic migrants seeking employment within the EU and have been discriminated against based on economic concerns. In the current situation, while economic opportunities are sometimes the end goal for integration, Syrian refugees are not economic migrants, they are refugees created by war, they seek protection (Kratochvíl, et al., 2015, 2). Constant and Zimmermann (2017) emphasize the key role of migration for both EU citizens and foreign-born migrants to support this system. They provide evidence that shows migration actually helps to aid these aging economies and do not economically hinder their societies. The scholars suggest this is a significant argument to use for changing the perceptions of European citizens who believe that refugees are taking jobs from natives instead of realizing the jobs need to be filled in order to keep their economies prospering. They argue, “Europe is at the crossroads to either collapsing to single, egotistic and nationalistic states or finding the political resolve to stabilize and continue the integration process” (*Ibid.*, 3).

Furthermore, the democracy deficit is a significant obstacle for effective policies. Since the onset of the European Union, there has been an active effort to close the democracy deficit and bring the policies closer to the people. It is recognized that individuals are the ones who make the policies (representatives) and individuals who are affected by the policies (citizens and refugees). Policies are two-fold; they flow inward and outward. Inward in the sense of from the EU organization, to the heads of the 28 member states, and down to the citizens- this is channeled back as voting patterns reflect public sentiment. Outward in the sense that as the EU matures, regional and neighborhood policies are ratified with nearby surrounding countries- directly affecting the relationship between the citizens of the EU and the partnership country’s citizens.

Specifically, and more pertinent to my project, much of the research that has already been conducted on the topic of the European Asylum system looks at case-by-case situations regarding policies. For instance, there are several critical discussions by Kochenov, Seeberg and Shteiwi on how the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) affects bilateral relations between the EU and third party states, but not much is considered about how the ENP affects refugee-producing countries specifically. Therefore, an essential examination of how the ENP is adhering to the European Asylum process is missing from the literature.

*Perceptions*

Negative refugee coverage in recent media influences the European public’s perceptions, which also affects the EU’s ability to make or implement policies successfully, because the leadership is left responding to public pressure or acquiescing to the rising tide of nationalist views in direct response to media coverage. Over the past few years, media outlets have reported hordes of fleeing refugees washing up on southern European beaches and crossing treacherous land routes for the safety and stability that the EU emanates. Europe is portrayed as suffering from the worst refugee crisis in history. This is partially true. According to the UNHCR, the world is suffering from the largest displacement of people it has ever experienced. Scholars remind **“**as attention remains focused on the growing numbers of refugees from Syria seeking asylum in the European Union, it is important to acknowledge that the challenges facing the frontline states of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt dwarf those facing Europe” (Murphy, Woodman, Roberts, & McKee, 2016, 1). Specifically, Turkey has been the top refugee hosting country worldwide for more than four years now. Lebanon hosts more refugees per inhabitant than any other country in the world. Jordan has the second highest amount of refugees based on its population, hosting almost 1.4 million Syrians (IOM, 2018).

*Case Studies*

There is a deficit in the literature for research comparing effects of migration policies. For example, a comparison of the EU/Turkey deal to the ENP to determine whether there is a breakdown in the EU’s asylum system and how these regional policies have hindered the EU’s ability to affectively deal with the refugee crisis is not available. Chow (2018) suggests the issue of inadequate policies goes back to the very beginning of EU refugee policies to 1951, where a revisiting and redefining of the very first asylum policy, the UN Refugee Convention, is necessary. I tend to agree that the general asylum policy of the EU focuses on other areas of refugee issues mainly those from the end of World War II until the end of the Cold War. Clearly there is a need for the policies to be updated so they can inform the European governments and their populations on opportunities for providing durable solutions during contemporary refugee crises.

*Relevance*

This research is relevant because individuals matter, individual Europeans matter and individual refugees matter. Understanding the connection between individuals and policies is imperative. It is important to understand how policies can cause repercussions among the European population and their perceptions of newcomers. In other words, based on the organizational structure of the EU, policies have a direct effect on public opinion and vise versa. The particular focus on the Syrian crisis is chosen because what is happening within Europe at this moment is significant and the information has been drawn from research conducted within the past seven years. As a matter of fact, most of the sources consulted for this project have been written in the past five years, highlighting the timeliness of research pertaining to the current refugee crisis but, at the same time, exposing the need to contribute more research to a comprehensive body of knowledge in the field of migration studies and policy implementation.

In the following pages, I analyze specific regional EU policies that are strategic to Syrian refugees seeking asylum to examine effectiveness these policies have within the EU as the region works to alleviate the crisis. I begin by outlining the asylum regime, which is comprised of a layering of policies beginning as far back as the 1951 Refugee Convention and leading up to 2016 with the most recent revisions. My research begins with the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, then the Dublin Convention, followed by the Common European Asylum System; these policies represent the foundation for the EU Asylum regime. My main focus is on the European Neighborhood Policy and the EU/Turkey Refugee Deal. The ENP, because of the effects this policy has on stabilizing the refugee crisis before it enters into European territory and the EU/Turkey Refugee Deal because of its third party relationship between only one EU member state; Greece and Turkey.

I attempt to understand the impact these specific EU policies have on the European Union’s ability to deal with the crisis once it reaches its borders. Because, the EU is known for utilizing its position to revise and update polices to better suit its agenda as a regional influencer, the policies examined expand over a large swath of time.Therefore, the bulk of my research involves looking at specific terms of the policies to examine the effect on their unique relationship with countries hosting the largest amount of Syrian refugees and compare what they claim to what is actually happening. If the polices prove to be ineffective, then this exposure of inadequate polices is the first step to improved understanding of the cause of the ongoing migration situation. With this weakness revealed, the importance of finding efficient solutions for effective policy implementation can be brought to light and utilized.

**Defining Concepts**

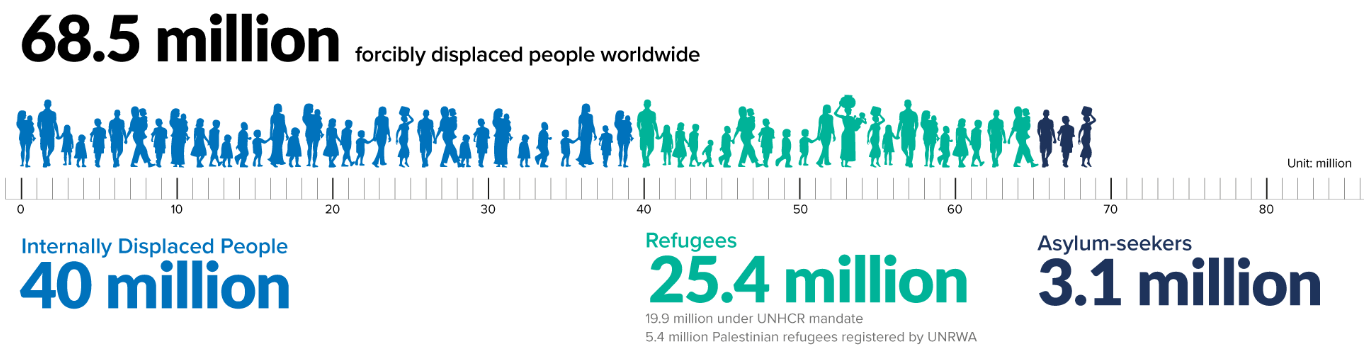
Within the confines of this thesis, the decision to focus on the correlation between how the failure to implement policies effect the crisis from being efficiently resolved, at least in the European realm. By analyzing regional policies, I will outline what framework successful policies follow, in order to determine the EU’s effectiveness. I consider these policies because they are agreements between the EU and the top refugee hosting countries, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. I will use the criteria outlined by Niemann and Zaun (2018, 4) to shape my analysis in comparing the policies to understand whether they have been affective in dealing with the refugee crisis.

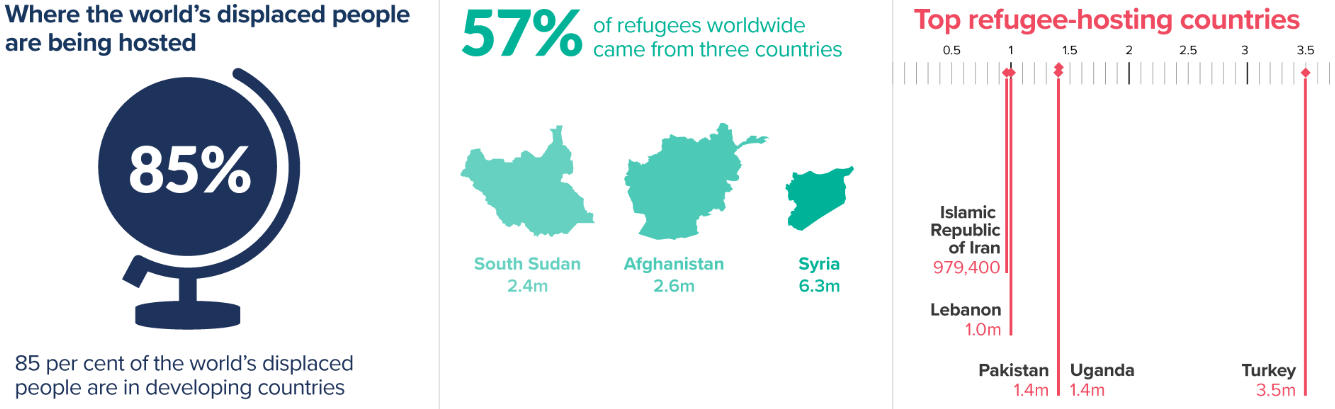
The independent variable criteria I use is policy. The baseline criteria for effective policies contain the following points:

* measures on burden-sharing through relocation and resettlement
* policies of externalization
* redefinition of who is in need and has a right to asylum through the introduction of new safe countries of origin
* prevention of irregular migration through external border control and measures against smuggling
* stopping the departure of refugees from their countries of origin and transit countries

The following is a list of key terms and their definitions used throughout this paper.

*EU Asylum regime* | The EU’s asylum regime is based on the 1951 Refugee Convention which states who a refugee is and the rights they are granted; the Dublin Convention outlines the state responsible for processing asylum claims once the refugee reaches Europe; and the Common European Asylum System is in place to enforce standards across the European states and aids in distributing asylum applicants evenly. The European Neighborhood Policy is a regional agreement implemented to enhance relations (mostly economically and developmentally) between the EU and the states directly to the south and east the Union’s borders. The EU/Turkey Refugee Policy is one of the only policies that deals directly with one European state on the sole context of finding solutions to the refugee issue: Greece.

*Effective Policies* | Since, Europe is an influential regional power with a strong economy and a very central location, it assumes responsibility for managing neighboring crises. When a crisis occurs that produces refugees, it is more likely that Europe will have refugees seeking protection from all over the region. In order to manage all these crises, the goal of the EU Asylum Regime is to protect external borders against illegal migration, and also to stay within receiving quotas to ensure that no one European state suffers more of a burden then others.Therefore, a policy can claim success when what they intend is actually followed through. When the review and assessment of the main deliverables of a policy can be clearly articulated and shown as being implemented, then the policy is considered effective. If the policies claim to find durable solutions to prevent illegal migration and no such action is taken or the policy falls sort, then it is considered ineffective. Niemann and Zaun’s criteria listed above will help guide this comparison.

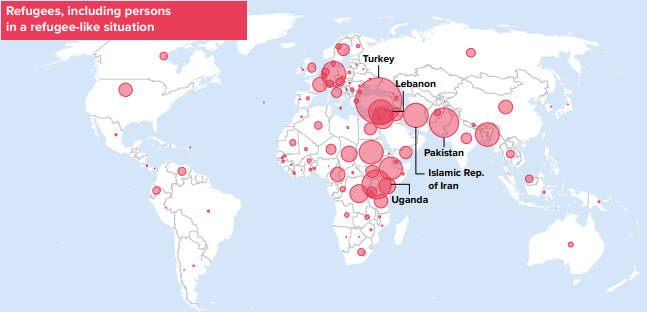


*Image 3*: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: Figures at a Glance[[4]](#footnote-4)

*Refugees/Asylum Seekers/Displaced People* | According to the Open Society Foundations (2016), “A refugee is someone fleeing war, persecution, or natural disaster.” More specifically, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2010, 3) defines a refugee, based on the 1951 Convention, “is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” The UNHCR states that due to some type of violence or conflict, currently 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes (UNHCR 2018). This includes asylum seekers, those who have “the legal permission to stay somewhere as a refugee, which brings rights and benefits. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker” (Open Society Foundations, 2016).

Stateless people are also included in the millions displaced, as well as those internally displaced within their home country, and fleeing migrants who are in the process of or hoping to gain refugee classification at some point. Of those nearly 70 million people (see *Image 3*), 40 million are internally displaced within their home country. 3.1 million are classified as asylum seekers. 25.4 million of the 68.5 million are refugees; this number has increased from 21.3 million in 2015 (UNHCR 2018). Moreover, of the 25.4 million refugees, 19.9 million are protected under the UNHCR’s mandate and more than 6 million of those are Syrians, the remaining 5.4 million are Palestinian refugees registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and more than 6 million of those are Syrians (*Ibid.*). With the help of Marbach, Hainmueller, and Hangartner (2017, 3), I define internally displaced people as those who have been forced to leave their homes but still remain within their country. Externally displaced includes those who have crossed borders fleeing from their country due to conflict, persecution, or other dangers. Asylum seeker is referring to anyone who has filed an application for asylum in another country. A refugee is someone has fled their home country and whose application for asylum has been approved and can receive temporary protection in a host country.

In order to gain refugee classification an appeal has to be sent to the UN. Unfortunately, there is a complicated intertwined relationship “between voluntary and forced migration that challenges the asylum systems adopted by States to distinguish between refugees and other migrants” (Martin, 2001). But, it is the UN’s and, in some cases states’, responsibility to determine the difference between asylum seekers and voluntary migrants and process each case accordingly. Once this process is approved, the displaced person is granted official refugee status, and thus, can apply for resettlement. It is common for applicants to wait several years for this process. While they have lost their home and fled their country, sometimes the only waiting rooms available are crowded camps in surrounding states. Throughout this paper I use the terms asylum seeker and refugee to refer to those seeking refuge in Europe.



*Image 4*: Map depicting top refugee hosting countries[[5]](#footnote-5)

*Syrian Refugees* |Recently, Europe has seen an influx of refugees from farther east of Syria and from North Africa. Even newer trends show asylum seekers coming from the southern Arabian Peninsula. All types of refugees are owed consideration and each of the current crises should be examined, unfortunately due to the constraints of space, I must narrow the focus to only one. As a result, my research purposely focuses on the Syrian crisis because of its location and close proximity to the external borders of Europe. In some cases, refugees coming from further than Syria are trying to pass as Syrians to gain access and resources. This makes the situation a pressing security concern to the EU and its member states as well as European citizens, thus causing specific policies to be drafted in order to deal directly with the crisis.

*EU Neighbors*| To understand the regional agreements between the EU and third party states, I had to further narrow my focus to include only Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. These three countries are host to the largest amounts of Syrian refugees. Turkey has been the top refugee hosting country worldwide for more than four years now, Lebanon hosts more refugees per inhabitant than any other country in the world, and Jordan has the second highest amount of refugees based on its population, hosting almost 1.4 million Syrians (UNHCR, 2017, 3). These countries are also in the EU’s sphere of influence by sharing regional policies, which have direct impact on the refugee crisis as it moves from the Middle East west and enters into the EU’s domain.

*Europe* **|** Lastly, Europe is the main focus of my topic because it tends to be the final destination for many refugees in the region seeking asylum and protection in stable democratic society. In light of the dual nature of the European Union, I look at the overarching organization and the individual member states that comprise it because the policies of the EU affect what is happening on the ground in the individual member states and their ability to find solutions to the refugee crisis. Additionally, the EU has grown to become an important regional actor and initiator of policies with states in North Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. These regions have proven to be strategic due to their position as transit zones for refugees and/or the initial catalyst for producing refugees.

**Method**

The methodological approach I use is based on the framework of a Comparison Case Study of EU migration policies and their effectiveness. The method I use involves systematically comparing European policies by analyzing policy reports, data and literature to obtain a better understanding of whether the EU has been affective in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis. My fundamental question is, why is there a refugee crisis in Europe? Is it because the policies are flawed? I seek to clarify, if the policies are, in fact, flawed or are they just not adequately implemented. Therefore, my dependent variable is the refugee crisis. The independent variable I use is policies, specifically EU Asylum policies. Borrowing from Niemann and Zaun, the baseline criterion for effective policies are measures on burden-sharing through relocation and resettlement, policies of externalization, redefinition of who is in need and has a right to asylum through new safe countries of origin, preventing irregular migration through external border control, and deterring the departure of refugees from their countries of origin and transit. I apply these factors to systematically compare what each of the below policies claim and the actual conditions on the ground.

* The EU’s asylum regime foundation policies; the 1951 UN Refugee Convention the Dublin Convention, and the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), as well as the
* European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the effects this policy has on stabilizing the refugee crisis before it enters into European territory, specifically Jordan and Lebanon, and the
* EU/Turkey Refugee policy and the repercussions in the European states bordering Turkey

My research begins with a detailed account of the refugee situation in the European context, then an analysis of a variety of qualitative research commenting on European policies that are in place with the intention to alleviate the refugee crisis. I follow with a discussion regarding my findings and close with a section for recommendations. I argue there is a divide between the policies’ claims and the actual situation thus influencing public perception and causing barriers to establishing durable solutions for those seeking protection within the EU. Moreover, I argue, the EU struggles to effectively deal with the crisis in the region due to a lack of alignment in policy implementation. Based on my research, this non-alignment hinders humanitarian efforts to establish durable solutions. Thus, leading to frustrations evolving into negative opinions of refugees among the European populous.

**Burden-Sharing**

*The Dublin Convention* | The Dublin Convention establishes “the criteria and mechanisms for determining the member state responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national” (European Commission 2018) and specifies that asylum seekers must remain in the first EU state they enter until their asylum process is completed (Bilgic & Pace, 2017, 90). Niemann and Zaun (2018, 6) explain that “the background for introducing the relocation scheme is the de facto failure of the Dublin system to meet the challenges of the massive influx of asylum-seekers into the Union, putting a disproportionate responsibility on those countries with EU external borders, particularly Greece, and Italy.” The Dublin Convention causes mass grouping of asylum seekers at the borders of the most easily accessible, and consequently most vulnerable, European states such as Italy and Spain, who are points of entry for asylum seekers fleeing through the southern Mediterranean/northern African states as well as those states to the east like Greece and Hungary who share borders with Turkey. These states face enormous strains on their infrastructure (IOM 2018). For example, Niemann and Zaun (2018, 6) reported that by September 2017, Member States committed amongst themselves to relocate 160,000 asylum seekers from Italy, and Greece. However, according to the Commission, (2017a), only about 25% of the relocation quota was reached by July 2017.

Despite decreasing asylum application numbers from 2016 to 2017, there is still an enormous issue regarding the countries of first contact. Nancheva (2015, 5) explains “the imbalance is caused by the requirement that the first member state which asylum seekers reach is in most circumstances the one responsible for taking charge.” Hungary represents the most extreme case where a country of first contact is retaliating through pro-nationalistic and anti-immigrant rhetoric among political parties.[[6]](#footnote-6) This is a great burden for first arrival countries in the Mediterranean whose economies are not as strong as those to the north. One such state is Greece who has struggled with the responsibility of processing thousands of migrants. As a solution, offshore reception centers have been created as a way to process asylum seekers before they touch down on the mainland of the EU. The EU practices protection for refugees by establishing these offshore reception centers which “are intended to separate out potential asylum seekers and vulnerable persons from migrants who do not fulfill the conditions for regular stay in Greece” (Frontexit, 2014, 67). Lavenex (2006, 343) expounds, “After determination of an asylum claim in such a centre, one of three ‘Durable Solutions’ shall apply: repatriation to the home country (where there is no longer need for protection), local integration of refugees ‘into the community of a host country’ and, in cases where neither of these two options are possible, resettlement to a third state” within the EU.

*The European Neighborhood Policy* |The intergovernmental solution of the ENP puts more focus on controlling the flow of migration rather than investigating the motives behind the need to move (Lavenex, 2006, 333). Lavenex continues (2006, 344), the ENP “towards the eastern and southern neighbours addresses this challenge [of offshore reception centers] and opens the perspective for the furthest possible association below the threshold of membership. At the same time, it expects cooperation by the neighbouring countries in addressing common security challenges.”

*The Common European Asylum System* |The CEAS declares asylum should not be a lottery for those who seek it and that EU member states have a shared responsibility to welcome asylum seekers in a dignified manner, ensuring they are treated fairly and that their case is examined to uniform standards so that, no matter where an applicant applies, the outcome will be similar (European Commission 2018). This policy has not been applied consistently because EU states are allowed to pick and choose the applicants they wish to accept based on criteria, like country of origin. As a result of this policy, specific nationalities are discriminated against and Germany and France have been forced to shoulder the weight of the burden for processing and accepting the majority of claims for international protection (IOM, 2017, 2). Furthermore, the Open Society Foundations (2016) points out, “Implementation of CEAS varies throughout the European Union. A number of EU states still do not operate fair, effective systems of asylum decision-making and support, leading to a patchwork of 28 asylum systems producing uneven results.” Even though, the countries are dealing with the same refugee populations, asylum rejection rates are much higher in some EU countries than in others (Kratochvíl, et al., 2015, 5).

In order to share responsibility and alleviate the burden that first contact countries are experiencing, some EU member countries are stepping in to aid in processing and resettlement. The UNHCR recently reported that, “Member States welcomed 1,132 asylum-seekers from Greece under the relocation mechanism and pledged 1,550 new places in January 2017. At the end of January, over 8,400 relocation candidates had departed or were scheduled to depart from Greece to another EU Member State” (UNHCR: Update, 2017, 2). While these numbers look promising, based on the First Quarter Review of the International Organization for Migration reports show there is still a great divide between states who are accepting the most relocation cases, like France and Germany, and those who are welcoming just a few like Poland and Sweden (IOM, 2017, 2). Fortunately, Lavenex (2006, 335) provides some optimism, “The newest proposals on burden-sharing, which envisage establishing an EU wide resettlement system, show how far internal agreement has become conditional on the mobilisation of third countries.” However, it is unfortunate that this process can take an absurd amount of time, Biehl (2015, 58) says, “The application process both for refugee status determination and for third country resettlement can take up to several years, and asylum seekers often find themselves in situations of indefinite and unpredictable waiting between each step of these procedures.” This has drastic implications for those migrants who risk their safety to cross the sea and end up waiting in those offshore reception centers.

**Externalization**

*The European Neighborhood Policy* |The ENP looks at solutions to migration both beyond the neighborhood and within the direct region of the EU and declares that the EU “will pursue its interests which include the promotion of universal rights… and the new ENP will take stabilization as its main political priority in this mandate” (European Commission, 2015, 2). Additionally, the ENP seeks increased partners beyond the neighborhood; support for those countries receiving and assisting refugees; solutions for root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement; and on returns and readmissions and sustainable reintegration.

**The** European Commission (2016) reports that for the period 2014-2016, the EU's assistance to Lebanon amounted to €147 million. But it was not until 2016 that the EU-Lebanon compact was established with a priority on the Syrian crisis. The Commission reports around €880 million has been provided for assistance to refugees and vulnerable communities in Lebanon since the beginning of the crisis. Allotments have gone to support Lebanese institutions and refugees, provide access to basic services such as education, training, livelihoods and health for vulnerable Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees, as well as support for democracy and human rights, and considerations for durable solutions for the Lebanese host communities and the national administration (*Ibid.*).

As part of the ENP with Jordan, the EU-Jordan Compact was established much earlier than the pact with Lebanon, in 2010 and updated in 2012. The ENP provides funds to help alleviate the cost of “providing education for Syrian refugee children in Jordanian public schools and studying opportunities for University students and for livelihoods actions” (Bilgic & Pace, 2017, 93). **According to** Bilgic and Pace (2017, 93) t**he** compact is designed to provide up to 78,000 Syrian refugees permission to work. Unfortunately, “the requirement to provide a health certificate and an ID card in order to be eligible for work is no easy task for Syrian refugees. As of late July 2016, only 20,000 Syrians had been granted a work permit” (*Ibid.*).

Furthermore, evidence shows that the ENP has been unsuccessful in providing support for addressing the root causes for producing refugees. For example, in March 2011, at the very onset of the Syrian war, the EU “decided to suspend all preparations in relation to new bilateral cooperation programs and to suspend the ongoing bilateral programs with the Syrian authorities” (Council of the European Union, 2011). Schimmelfennig (2005, 17) points out, “the EU has had no positive impact on the overall political and human rights situation in its neighboring non-candidate countries, and the are no theoretical or empirical reasons to assume that this will change under ENP.” Though the EU has good intentions for sending plenty of money to Jordan and Lebanon, the conditions are not improving for many of the refugees living in those countries. This is a main motivation factor for them to seek asylum in the EU and has caused uneven distribution of asylum applications for resettlement among the EU states.

**External Border Control**

*The EU/Turkey Refugee Deal* |The EU/Turkey Refugee Deal was established in order to stop the flow of illegal Syrian asylum seekers entering into Greece. EU member states agreed to increase resettlement of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey to Europe. In so far as there would be an exchange for each illegal person sent back to Turkey from Greece. The EU pledged to provide €3 billion to Turkey in order to assist with procuring resources and shelter for the millions of refugees housed in camps. EU member countries also promised to begin the process of resettling 22,000 Syrians into Europe, out of Turkey’s 3.5 million total refugees. According to the IOM (2019), “1,824 migrants and refugees have been readmitted to Turkey from Greece between 4 April 2016 and 24 January 2019.” Unfortunately, the EU has not followed through with upholding its end of the deal on this policy by following through on only a small percentage of the promises. Furthermore, the EU offered financial assistance, accelerated visa liberalization for Turkish nationals, to boost existing financial support for Turkey’s refugee population, and renewed and rapid negotiations for EU accession. However, as a repercussion of the 15 July 2016 attempted coup in Turkey, the EU punished the state by suspending the deal and threatening to freeze all accession agreements. Elicin (2018) and Schoenhuber (2017) argue the implications that the crisis has on Turkey is not sustainable and Schoenhuber specifically criticizes the European Union's Refugee deal with Turkey as being unethical and inhumane.

**Safe Countries of Origin**

*1951 United Nations Refugee Convention* |As discussed earlier, the UN Convention provides a baseline criteria of who is in need and has a right to asylum through new safe countries of origin. “The principle of non-refoulement is so fundamental that no reservations or derogations may be made to it. It provides that no one shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee against his or her will, in any manner whatsoever, to a territory where he or she fears threats to life or freedom” (UNHCR, 2010, 3).

*The EU/Turkey Refugee Deal* |One of the critiques regarding the EU/Turkey Refugee Deal, since its entering into force in 2016, is that the refoulement (sending back) of Syrians from Greece back to Turkey is a violation of human rights and against the very essence of the EU. Also, this policy is in direct violation of the UN Refugee Convention stating the rule to not forcibly send refugees seeking asylum back to a country they fear they are in danger, which in this case would be Turkey. But, in order to maintain the ability to send refugees back to Turkey, the EU had to determine that Turkey is considered a safe third country. Many critics argue that Turkey is not a safe third country because it cannot guarantee protection of asylum seekers because it does not have the proper resources to support so many refugees. In order to circumvent this issue, the EU changed Turkey’s classification for the purposes to legitimate the EU/Turkey Refugee Deal (Bilgic & Pace, 2017, 91).

**Deterring Transit**

*The Dublin Convention* |The Dublin Convention states that if a refugee aims to gain asylum in Germany once they reach the southern shores of the EU, instead of heading directly to Germany, refugees are forced to apply for asylum in the first country of contact. Then, they wait for processing or exit the EU’s territory and travel north through unwelcoming states such as Macedonia and Serbia to Hungary, which are faced with same problems as Greece (Kratochvíl, et al., 2015, 4). Scholars argue this policy to be **“**obsolescent due to both its flawed institutional design and the ever growing gap between the legal provisions and the inability or unwillingness of the member states to comply with these rules” (Bechev, 2016, 3). This is illustrated in the closure of the over-land Balkan route between the Bulgarian-Turkish border in the summer of 2014. The Bulgarian government erected a nearly 20 mile-long fence and deployed additional staff to police the border against those asylum seekers attempting to gain access to the EU from Turkey into Bulgaria (*Ibid.*).

*The EU/Turkey Refugee Deal* |Initially, the policy was successful because it essentially “brought migration flows through the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkan route to a relative standstill” after cutting off the illegal migration of asylum seekers leaving Turkey for Greece (IOM, 2017, 1). However, the closure has forced desperate people to find creative solutions. For instance, new migration routes have opened up through other EU member states to circumvent Greece in order to prevent the possibility of being returned to Turkey. Moreover, this deal continues to prove to be unsuccessful because the attempt to quell those trying to cross the border was inefficient as it has forced thousands of migrants to employ smugglers to aid in their border crossing (Open Society Foundations 2016).

**Discussion**

In light of these findings, I argue, the EU struggles to effectively deal with the crisis in the region due to a lack of alignment in policy implementation. This non-alignment hinders humanitarian efforts to establish durable solutions. Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan maintain partnership agreements with the EU based on their shared policies, the EU is not providing the protections that refugees and asylum seekers coming from these transit countries are hoping for when they reach the European border. These protections are rights and agreements maintained in the very EU policies that are in place to assist border states with processing refugee’s asylum claims and other states with resettlement and integration.

The increased attention in the news regarding refugee efforts to reach Europe has affected both the societies in the countries receiving refugees and the political opinions of the citizens and their representatives. Clearly, frustrations are evolving into negative opinions of refugees among the European populous. Therefore, if the policies are not providing the basic structures to support European efforts in dealing with the crisis efficiently, then it causes discontent and anger amongst everyone involved. This disjunction between ideal and actual is causing dissatisfaction among the European citizens who are dealing directly with the current refugee crisis. This frustration breeds anti-immigration sentiment and negative refugee perceptions among European citizens, the policies of the member states are still highly influenced by these opinions. Media, policies, and public opinion all have a critical impact on the experience Syrian refugees face once they cross over the European border and if they remain negative it further exasperates and slows the process of finding sustainable and durable solutions for refugees.

Furthermore, I argue that the EU has not been successful in dealing with the current refugee crisis because, its actions are rooted in the international relations theory of Realism, which argues that states will act in a self-interest fashion in order to maintain security. Welcoming millions of refugees into its borders is not in the best security interest of the EU as a whole, because maintaining external border security is top priority. Therefore, the EU enacts policies that do their best to keep the crisis from reaching its borders. But this is not effective policy implementation. Not only are the policies unsuccessful in providing the outcomes they intend, but they are also causing uneven burden sharing among neighboring countries as well as among EU member states thus negatively influencing the opinions of those coming to power.

Ineffective policies also impact the survival of the EU institution as a whole, thus weakening a powerful regional actor’s ability to alleviate the crisis. It is crucial to understand how policies impact the plight of refugees. Policies are critical for states. They act as guidelines and regulations stating the proper protocol for specific scenarios. If policies are not in place to provide explanations or procedures then there is ambiguity. If faulty or ineffective policies are in place then interpretation and loopholes are possible resulting in gaps and failures. These gaps can be as minimal as needing updated revisions to incorporate changing definitions of who is a refugee. Failures can result in issues like negative perceptions, uneven burden sharing, or inhumane border control, and sometimes even death. If Europe cannot successfully deal with its crisis that is minimal compared to the weight that surrounding countries are shouldering, how can there be any hope or example set for lesser-developed and not so wealthy states to find durable solutions for their refugee population?

Before I make recommendation suggestions for more effective migration policy implementation; I would like to provide a more detailed outline of the theoretical nature of the EU and the intention behind policymaking. We must keep in mind that the EU is a *sui generis* institution. Which means, it often possesses dual natures simultaneously and operates with state-like functions. For example, if we were to consider the EU as an international organization (IO), Margulis argues that IOs serve as agents of social construction, teachers, and norm creators. He explains that, “Norms are the underlying cognitive framework that shape actors’ identities and preferences and construct the principles, rules, and institutions that constitute the international system” (Margulis, 2013). Therefore, the EU acts as an “agent of social construction” by exploiting the successful reputation of the EU with regards to exporting stability and norms such as democracy, rule of law, human rights, and good governance to countries interested in joining the Union or at least establishing a deep alliance with it. By entering into agreements with third countries and instituting itspolicies like the ENP, the EU is using its norms and reputation to shape its region.

Furthermore, if we were to examine the EU as a regional actor, it uses the common history and shared sense of identity of the region to determine interactions with nearby states. Which explains the rising nationalistic views and anti-immigrant rhetoric. For example, in Hurrell’s (1995, 65) theoretical discussion on regionalism, he explains the “process by which new communities are created and sustained” through the use of a constructivist lens. He argues, “both interests and identities are shaped by particular histories and cultures, by domestic factors, and by ongoing processes of interaction with other states” (Fawcett & Hurrell, 1995, 65). Though immigration has been an important part of the European narrative both internally and from beyond its borders, it has also been imperative for the economic survival of the Union.

Additionally, “constructivists emphasize the importance of shared knowledge, learning, ideational forces, and normative and institutional structures” (Fawcett & Hurrell, 1995, 65). Because, in the field of international relations, it is often important to consider the perspective of the state and how it chooses to demarcate itself, through its own narrative or opinion, versus always having a definition applied to it from outsider or scholarly perspectives. For instance, states often express themselves by what they consider themselves not to be. Thus by creating a shared historical narrative in the region it excludes those who were not apart of it. As a result, I argue that with these qualities in mind, the EU uses identity politics to develop migration policies.

For example, the recent actions of Germany shed light on the concept of identity and how this can change course rapidly. In 2015 German citizens showed large-scale and widespread support for welcoming Syrian refugees. But once thousands of Syrians began to cross into the country, the populous suddenly changed their mindset. Mackert & Turner (2017, 153) suggest that collective identity can change into an irrationality that “turns out to be a central factor in organizing a long-term perspective that reaches beyond the rational motivation of individuals.” Börzel and Risse (2018, 83) agree, “The mass influx of migrants and refugees changed identity politics, since Eurosceptic populist parties framed the Schengen crisis in terms of borders, advocating for an exclusionary ‘fortress Europe.’” In this case, migration becomes less of a common humanitarian responsibility and more a part of the political agenda of the EU.

The concept of citizenship is important for establishing strong identities. It also grants rights to those who hold the classification. Europeans are permitted such privileges that are not readily extended to those migrants who are applying for residence within the EU. For instance, Dell'Olio (2017, 1) suggests, “The idea of a common citizenship across all of the EU member-states, which could eventually serve as the basis for a European identity, legitimises privileged access to rights to which not all individuals legally residing in the EU are entitled.” There is a danger to this because; “The opportunity structure is therefore highly exclusive, because community membership at the supra-national level relies on the condition of nationality. This creates an unequal distribution of social rights between citizens and legally resident non-citizens, and it impedes the independent operation of social rights afforded on bases other than nationality” (*Ibid.,* 2). Therefore, non-citizen residents remain outside of the sphere of inclusion. Though thousands of migrants are coming to Europe from countries who have policy agreements with the EU, they are being denied opportunities because they lack exclusive benefits of citizenship.

**Recommendations**

With the above-mentioned thoughts in mind, and based on available evidence and findings, I have the following recommendations to take steps in improving the effectiveness of EU migration policy implementation.

* To begin with, clear definitions are necessary. As Chow suggests, an update and redefining of the 1951 UN Convention and the Protocol are required.
* Once accurate and contemporary updates are made to the foundation asylum policies to effectively address the current situations, then it would be beneficial for EU member states to establish, implement, and uphold an actual Common European Asylum System. This would allow the states to more evenly ‘burden share’ application processing for the asylum seekers so that certain states are not crushing under the weight of the Dublin Convention.[[7]](#footnote-7) Kratochvíl, et al., suggest, a more pro-active approach by the European Asylum Support Office into a full-fledged Common European Asylum Service. They argue, “the financial needs of the new institution should preferably not be paid directly by member states’ contributions, but from the EU budget, thus securing its greater independence and space for autonomous action” (2015, 5).
* Then, with a more fluid and enforced asylum system that is equally supported throughout the entire Union, a change in norms and values is necessary. With an effective asylum system in place, it will allow for the European populous to make educated, accurate, and informed decisions when it comes to voting and selecting representatives.

For example, Constant and Zimmermann (2017) highlight,

Current public debates in Europe suggest that the long-term political consensus that migration is beneficial is broken or at least it is in substantial challenge. Still shared largely by the elites, it gets declining support in elections. This correlates with a rising disinterest in evidence-based policy making and in looking at hard facts. However, the free movement of citizens has been an essential part of the European dream of a better and more equal society of diverse people. Restricting labor mobility would come in the long-run at large economic and social costs. (p. 13)

* However, not only will a norm change work, but there needs to be a more intensive move towards integration solutions. Accepting the fact that when the war in Syria is finally finished it will be a very long time before the country is able to welcome and support the millions externally displaced. By utilizing the various studies focusing on resources and their availability, more effort for host communities to support and eventually integrate migrants is required. Most importantly are economic resources. Scholars are examining economics from a variety of angles such as, labor mobility- the issue of migration for economic purposes (Constant & Zimmermann, 2017; Makovec, Purnamasari, Sandi, & Savitri, 2016), the impact on hosting economies with large populations of migrants (Tumen, 2016), and the benefit of migrants on hosting economies (Constant & Zimmermann, 2017).
* With better decision making abilities the EU will effectively begin to close the gap of the democracy deficit and provide evidence for policy support. However, Constant and Zimmermann (2017) also warn that the EU runs the risk of going down two paths when it comes to reacting to migration situations. They argue there are two possibilities,

The first scenario is the “my country first” approach. This is the current path for the UK under Brexit and for the U.S. under President Trump. Other countries in the EU are on this way, or may be after the upcoming elections. This is equivalent to the isolationist view of “fencing ourselves in” pretending we keep others out. The second scenario is more complex. It is the political and economic union, “a kind of United States of Europe”, in the vision of Winston Churchill and Robert Schuman, equipped with mechanisms to balance the interests between the member-states. Such a Europe will be able to withstand the current rocky road and deal with migration properly, providing flexibility and security to its peoples. (p. 11)

* Lastly, there are other possible solutions that can be pulled from efforts being made by institutions and organizations who are focusing on a broader, bigger approach. These efforts are being made at great costs, by using the structures in place from the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan[[8]](#footnote-8), the UNDP Sustainable Development Goals[[9]](#footnote-9), and the IOM’s Global Compact for Migration[[10]](#footnote-10), the EU can build proven solutions from these organizations into the new or updated migration policies.

**Conclusion**

The response of governments to migration should be a proactive one, not reactive. This is even more so the case when refugees are involved. The Syrian situation does not stand alone as the only crisis worth investigating. Sadly, there are horrible migration situations happening all over the world today. Which is why I feel this research is imperative. It is up to migration scholars, heads of organizations working on the ground, and leaders of the EU to consider root causes for migration issues and explore solutions for creating a template that can be transposed on reoccurring crises and customized to fit the unique situations. As the situation stands currently, the European Union has not been effective in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis. I have suggested one of the reasons for this failure is due to inadequate policies. Even though, the EU has responsibility to react to the crisis in a solution based way, which policies, behaviors, norms, resources, etc., it is not solely the job of the EU to solve the crisis in its neighborhood. The solution to the crisis is not for states to keep refugees at bay by sending relief funding to the countries who are hosting the majority of those displaced within camps. Neither should it be left only to the UN refugee and humanitarian relief agencies for finding durable solutions. Nor should it be solely left to the regional hosting countries to absorb the newcomers.

Effective policies are essential to survival of a state or group of states. They are important not only to the refugees who are seeking protection, but also to the European societies who are providing resources and assistance in this crisis. I feel this research is necessary because the situation in the region and the European policies are affecting the people: refugees and citizens of host societies, the economies of all the states involved, it is not just an isolated situation but one that has an impact on a variety of sectors as well as the future: ability of refugees to integrate, the voting patterns of Europeans, and new leaders coming to power. If there is to be any future of durable solutions like resettlement or integration of Syrian refugees in Europe, then the effectiveness of the policies to support the host societies’ efforts is imperative, but it will require a change in the norms and values of European citizens.

It will take a massive group effort from all sectors, regimes, and individuals to help alleviate the current crisis. It calls for a more direct connection between policies and public opinion. The solution requires a change in the norms and identities that refugees are often associated with and characterized as. Therefore, providing resources, assistance, resettlement, and integration opportunities for refugees is a responsibility of both the international community and individual states by establishing a holistic asylum regime. By tackling the issue from the broader, bigger picture through efficient policies and from changing individual perceptions through managing social norms and opinions of citizens, all aspects of the issue can be addressed.

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1. See 2016 article by Marc Pierini, “Is the European Union Standing the Mediterranean Test? The Lack of a European Foreign and Security Policy in the Face of the Current Turmoil” located at: https://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxius-adjunts/anuari/med.2016/IEMed\_MedYearBook2016\_EU%20Security%20Migration\_Marc\_Pierini.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Image courtesy of the Guardian’s article “Five Myths about the Refugee Crisis” located at: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jun/05/five-myths-about-the-refugee-crisis [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://migration.iom.int/europe?type=arrivals [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017.* Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html. pg10. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For more information on Hungary’s most recent election, see Cas Mudde’s 10 April 2018 article: “Orbán’s Hungary is not the future of Europe: it represents a dying past” in the Guardian at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/10/orban-election-hungary-europe-future-past [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. As mentioned above, the Dublin Convention states that asylum seekers must remain in the EU member state where they have entered the EU and submit their asylum claim from there. See Bilgic & Pace’s, The European Union and refugees: A struggle over the fate of Europe (2017), for more information. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation\_reports/file/syria\_sr\_strategic\_overview\_2019.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration [↑](#footnote-ref-10)