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Topic: An Analysis of Refugee Movements Across the European Union in the European Refugee Crisis

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Declaration

I declare that this assignment is my own work and does not involve plagiarism or collusion. The sources of other people's work have been appropriately referenced, failing which I am willing to accept the necessary disciplinary action(s) to be taken against me.

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Abstract

The European Refugee Crisis has been a long-standing issue that has affected member states within the European Union, which have yet to come to a consensus to resolve the problem. In this paper, I aim to examine the movement patterns of refugees within the bloc by examining the various push and pull factors at play by carrying out a case study where I compare two states with different attitudes and policies towards refugees. I will then to a conclusion regarding which factors actively play a part in influencing refugee movements across the bloc, and the relationships between them.

Chapter 1: Introductory Chapter

1.1 Background

“That a global refugee problem exists cannot be denied. Refugees are everywhere — a by-product of wars, military coups, and massive human rights violations. Every year, new accumulations of people are displaced as old problems remain unsolved and new ones emerge” (Dowty and Loescher, 1996). Refugee crises have not been a new issue, and have affected individuals and societies in many aspects. With the new threats of the stability of states, people resort to leaving their country-of-origin and move to other countries in search of peace and security. The resulting changes in the receiving nations often sparks a wide range of responses, from the rise of populist movements to policies to accept such people. This paper compares two different member states in the European Union (EU) with vastly different attitudes and policies towards refugees, and analyses the factors that affect refugee movements in these two countries.

This paper posits that refugees move to different nations in the EU based on different factors that affect their decisions. In *status quo*, there are different factors at play that possibly affect the movements of such refugees, *inter alia*, access to different services such as education and healthcare, policies implemented by EU member states and employment opportunities.

1.2 Rationale

This paper aims to shed light on how the decisions of refugees are affected. The bulk of the current research focuses on the aspects of the crisis such as the different attitudes countries have towards such migrants. This paper adds on to prior research by examining different factors before identifying which are the most significant in affecting the decision making calculus of refugees.

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the prominent factors affecting refugee movements in the EU?
- What are the relationships between these factors?

Given that the European Refugee Crisis is still an ongoing issue, and demographics of refugees may shift should new trends arise, or should a new development in the crisis occur, my findings may prove inconclusive.

1.4 Thesis Statement

In this paper, I suggest that government policies, especially those by far-right populist movements are the most prominent factor affecting such refugee movements in the EU. Other factors may have an influence on these policies, and consequently, refugee movements as a whole; but they may not play as major a role.

1.5 Scope of Research / Delimitation(s)

Data used for this research will be taken from between 2015 to 2018, given that the crisis mainly began in 2015 with an increased influx of refugees due to various events, and that information for 2019 has not been fully released. This paper will also serve as a case study specifically between Germany and Hungary, and will compare factors present in these two EU member states only. Additionally, I will also be looking mainly at Syrian refugees, given that they make up the bulk of refugees in the EU following violence in Syria that caused them to leave.

1.6 Significance of Research / Usefulness

In addition, this paper uses a case study approach so as to be able to draw a direct comparison between two differing camps in the European Union with regard to the refugee crisis. This would then allow for deeper insight as to how and why these factors affect the way refugees move within the EU as well as their final destination where they are eventually granted asylum. Should such factors be identified, and their overall importance on refugee movements be ascertained, it will be easier to predict trends in their movements. This would allow the EU to better manage the crisis and come up with solutions that can adequately address the root of the issue; thus relieving the strain on countries which have taken in large numbers of refugees, and ensuring that other member states meet their refugee quotas.

Apart from a quicker resolution of the refugee crisis, future patterns can be studied and compared to build up on this research to allow for a more comprehensive outlook as to how exactly refugee movements are affected, which factors are the most prominent and why so; as well as how they are interrelated and thus have a cumulative effect on refugee movements in the EU. Refugee movements in other case studies can also be analysed to see the differences in findings and the attributing factors.

1.7 Limitations

Given that the crisis is still an ongoing issue, the issue may still be evolving on the ground. Furthermore, the factors discussed were decided on the basis on how often they appeared within news articles and other research conducted on the crisis. As such, other factors that may not have had such a significant effect on refugees may not have been discussed within this paper. Additionally, I was unable to secure first-hand interviews with refugees within Europe to find out the factors that affected their decision to apply for asylum within their host country; however, it was possible for me to look into studies conducted with these refugees, along with factors that have been underlined in previous research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Causes of the Crisis

The Crisis rose as a result of several factors, especially those concerning security and stability within the Middle East, particularly in Syria where the bulk of these refugees come from.

2.1.1 Pre-Syrian Civil War

“Long before the current violence, this was a country of multifaceted problems: unemployment, income inequality, suppression of minorities, suppression of opposition is just a few issues to name. If one wants economic drivers for migration, the average GDP per capita in Syria has been about a third of –or less- that is in Turkey, and about a tenth of the averages in most European countries. This means even without the current violence, there were adequate reasons for many Syrians to leave.” (Yazgan, Utku and Sirkeci, 2015). This suggests that there were prior reasons for Syrians to leave their country before the outbreak of violence in the Syrian Civil War and the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The suppression of minorities and opposition are enough to qualify people belonging to these groups that left Syria as refugees, as outlined in the 1967 UNHCR Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Ultimately, these reasons for people leaving Syria would be supplemented by war and violence that further saw people killed based on their religion, or even as civilians in war that were the victims of collateral damage. These reasons would most probably explain Syrian refugee trends before the sudden increase in 2015, as there were no major widespread causes that forced Syrians to flee. The ensuing Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, has resulted in at least 5.6 million refugees (UNHCR). The continuation of hostilities in the conflict, which is currently being fought by at least 4 factions and with foreign intervention from Hezbollah, Iran, Russia and the United States-backed coalition may result in even more refugees as the Syrian government and its allies attempt to reclaim territories currently being held by other opposing factions.

2.1.2 Syrian Civil War

“The Syrian Civil War is an ongoing war affecting the lives of millions of people within the country, in neighboring countries, and overseas. The Syrian Civil War began during Arab Spring in early 2011, initiated by Syrian protests against President Bashar Al-Assad’s

government. Protest in different cities of the country turned into a rebellion of different military groups (Aydin & Kaya, 2017; Icduygu, 2015; Jones, 2015).” (Yigit and Tatch, 2017). The conflict will force refugees to leave, and further atrocities committed by the belligerents, including the use of chemical weapons by Assad’s forces, could drive more people to leave the country. Violent crackdowns by different factions would also cause people to leave out of the fear of persecution.

2.1.3 Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

“Most important, however, has been the rise of a brutal terrorist organization, the Islamic State (IS) – also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) (Carasik, 2015; Gilsinan, 2015; Jones 2015) within territories of both Syria and Iraq.” (Yigit and Tatch, 2017). ISIS has been guilty of atrocities against civilians, including beheadings and executions. This widespread use of violence employed by the militant group has further forced people in Iraq and Syria to leave their homes in fear of religious persecution under ISIS or to escape possible conflict. ISIS’s conquest to create a caliphate within the Middle East further saw it capture large swathes of territories in Iraq and Syria, which resulted in even more people fleeing from conflict.

2.2 Measures Taken by the EU

While the EU has attempted to respond to the crisis, action is often blocked by certain states that oppose refugee-related policies. This results in a limited number of people that can be helped at any point in time, as states continue to take matters into their own hands and push differing policies and agendas with regards to refugees. Other factors may also affect its overall handling of the crisis

2.2.1 Limited Action

“In September 2015, EU ministers agreed to resettle 120,000 migrants—a small fraction of those seeking asylum in Europe—from Greece and Italy across twenty-three member states. (Greece and Italy will not be required to resettle more migrants, and Denmark, Ireland, and the UK are exempt from EU asylum policies under provisions laid out in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty.) This plan was approved despite the vocal objections of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. This agreement builds upon a previous voluntary quota system that called on member states to resettle forty thousand migrants from Greece and Italy over a two-

year period.” (Park, 2015). While action has been taken by the EU to mitigate the crisis, there is opposition to such action, especially from Eastern European countries that tend to be governed by more Eurosceptic leaders, such as Hungary’s Viktor Orban, who have campaigned on populist, anti-refugee and anti-immigrant platforms.

2.2.2 Far-right Populism

“But Orban has kept the issue front and center by warning of the “Muslim invasion” to come in “Christian Europe,” and fingering “the international speculator” [George] Soros as its mastermind.” (Witte, 2018). This could result in further backlash from other populist, far-right wing groups within other EU states that would similarly push for such action. Moreover, the strong opposition from certain EU states meant that only a small portion of the crisis could be dealt with at once. Soros has been consistently attacked by Orban, who criticises his human rights and civil liberties efforts in post-Warsaw Pact states. As more countries turn to right-wing parties and put them in power, they follow precedents set by other states in terms of dealing with the crisis, including stricter border controls and the refusal to grant asylum applications.

2.3 Conclusion

The crisis was formed mainly out of exacerbated violence in Syria that prompted more to flee from fear of political and religious persecution. On a second level while the EU attempts to deal with the issue, far-right governments mean that only limited action can be taken.

Chapter 3: Definition of Terms

3.1 Refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recognises a refugee as such: “A refugee, according to the 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.” (Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967).

Chapter 4: Methodology

I intend to conduct a case study between two nations with opposing attitudes towards refugees. Two groups of nations present within the EU include: nations that have adopted an open-door policy such as Germany, and states that actively oppose refugees and refuse to admit them such as Hungary. Within the paper, I will examine Germany and Hungary and compare how prominent factors affect the movement of refugees. I will compare the refugee population between both nations and observe any trends. Following that, factors that possibly have an impact on refugee movements towards these countries will be analysed and then evaluated to identify which of these are most prominent in impacting refugee movements.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Analysis

4.1 Policies by Host Countries Towards Refugees

In many cases, refugees are often impacted directly by policies by host countries. As previously underlined, there is a direct impact on refugee movements should states choose to act independently from regional blocs such as the EU and pass their own policies that can both positively and adversely affect refugees. This is often done when governments are dissatisfied with the EU failing to take a stronger stance against refugees, as seen with Eastern European states blocking refugees. The rise of far-right, populist movements within EU member states such as Hungary and Spain has resulted in the shutting of borders to restrict refugee and migrant movements.

4.1.1 Hungarian Response to Refugees

There is a tendency for far-right governments to demonise migrants, and by association, refugees. Orban previously stated in 2015 that “the continent [Europe] is under threat of an ever-growing modern exodus” and has labelled asylum seekers as “illegal aliens” (Karnitschnig, 2015). Continuously, Orban has pushed a hostile attitude to such refugees by claiming that they are part of a migration wave designed to remove Christianity within Europe. The consistent antagonisation of refugees has thus legitimised policies pushed forth by the Hungarian government in response to refugees. These policies include the construction of border fences along the country’s borders designed to prevent refugees from entering.

4.1.2 Implications

Hungary’s policies, along with the EU’s inability to act, set a precedent that other nations could adopt in the crisis. “In the meantime, the lack of a coordinated and proportional EU response to irregular migration in the near-to-mid-term could continue to feed sentiments that push individual countries to emphasize national security over international protection. This could make closed borders, barbed-wire fences, and maritime pushbacks the policy norm rather than the exception.” (Park, 2015). Already, certain states, particularly those that refugees tend to pass through have begun to restrict the movement of refugees and migrants by setting up physical barriers. “Other nations soon followed in closing their crossings, and for the past two years, the once-saturated refugee trail has been largely empty.” (Witte, 2018). A continuation of such policies would result in refugees either being unable to move within the EU, or result in them taking alternative routes and attempting other points of entry, such

as through the Mediterranean. As seen from this, the policies pushed out by EU member states will have an impact on the number of refugees moving through their countries and the EU as a whole, and could possibly alter existing refugee routes.

4.1.3 German “Open-door” Policy

Germany had previously adopted an “open-door” policy whereby it took in large numbers of refugees starting in September 2015, with the first intake of refugees under Chancellor Angela Merkel’s policies. Prior to the move, Hungary had placed refugees suggestively on the Austrian border. It was decided by Merkel and Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann to allow some 10,000 refugees into their countries, with trains to transport them to Munich and Vienna from border towns. Germany then continued to take in the largest number of refugees within the EU due to pro-refugee policies.

Merkel’s coalition was eventually at risk following strong opposition to its policies on refugees, after a series of attacks by failed asylum seekers. Her coalition suffered further losses in the 2017 German elections, where the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) entered as the third-largest party in the Bundestag. The AfD has gravitated to the far-right end of the political spectrum, being seen as the dominant anti-immigrant, anti-refugee and Eurosceptic party in Germany. Merkel was then forced to relook her policies, as her Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) coalition allies demanded an end to the “open-door” policy, threatening to shut Germany’s borders as their leader, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer has the capability to do so. Such a move would undermine the strength of the coalition and could have resulted in Merkel’s loss of power. (Frej, Pfahler, 2018). The demands were made before the upcoming Bavarian state elections in October 2018 where the CSU lost its absolute majority, with the AfD gaining seats. Many in Bavaria were strongly opposed to Merkel’s refugee and immigration policies, and Seehofer’s hard-line stance on refugees that prompted the near-collapse of the CDU/CSU coalition caused the CSU to lose large amounts of voters to other opposition parties. (Connolly, Le Blond, 2018).

4.1.4 Comparative

When compared, it can be seen that the Hungarian government repeatedly attempted to decrease the number of refugees passing through its territory through the shutting of borders, or by attempting to move refugees out of the country. Hungary’s repeated attempts to prevent refugees from even entering demonstrate that government policies are capable of altering

refugee movements, as refugees are now unable to transit through Hungary and have to seek alternative routes to arrive at other destinations such as Germany. Germany has resorted to accepting these refugees in progressively larger numbers as part of government policies that included the suspension of the Dublin Procedure for Syrian refugees by the Bundestag that was one of the first actions in its “open-door” policy. Policies by the German government were then aimed at bringing in more refugees and accepting more asylum applications until public opinion turned against it. It can thus be seen that should refugee policies lose the support of the public, governments are also forced to act on this change and bring about amendments to appease voters. The “open-door” policy has shown that it was able to bring in refugees to Germany in large numbers, therefore also affecting the movements of these refugees.

4.2 Social Integration

The attitudes towards refugees by the people can affect the movements of the latter. In the EU, should the people feel resentment towards these refugees, they may spark social movements that campaign for action against refugees, On the other hand, people can also help these refugees, through distributing food and other supplies. Refugees need to integrate into the societies of their host countries in order for them to be able to gain employment, given that social integration would mean they will be accepted within their new communities. Given Hungary’s anti-refugee approach, it would be expected to make integration harder and less achievable due to national policies and the lower number of refugees it takes in; Germany would thus be more likely to be more accepting and welcoming towards such refugees.

Social integration is not just affected by refugees themselves. Oftentimes, the public is a major deciding factor as to whether refugees are able to successfully integrate within their host countries. A populace that is anti-refugee may choose to vote in leaders that pass laws against refugee integration, such as by segregating refugees and the public; thus decreasing employment opportunities.

4.2.1 German Attitudes Towards Integration

At the start of Merkel’s “open-door” policy, the values of “solidarity”, “responsibility” and “Willkommenskultur” (culture of welcome) became “central themes in the German

response to the crisis, especially in the German-language press.” (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016). Under this the German public became more accepting towards these refugees and public sentiment was generally in favour of helping these people. This was seen when after being rejected and placed in camps on the border by Hungary, these refugees were allowed into Germany and Austria, as examined earlier. Germans gathered at these train stations to welcome these refugees, and handed out food and drinks to them. The promotion of such a culture of hospitality towards these refugees, especially in the press, would mean that more people would adopt such attitudes towards refugees.

“Some have filled up their cars with shopping, and distributed clothes, nappies, food and cuddly bears. Others have offered German lessons, translation and babysitting.” (Harding, Oltermann and Watt, 2015). This is indicative that the German public had taken a more open attitude towards these people. Interaction between the public and refugees would allow for a closer relationship between these two groups. Furthermore, the learning of the local language means that refugees are now able to access a wider range of employment opportunities given that they can now communicate with others without the presence of a language barrier. Additionally, the provision of supplies for refugees by Germans would show that the public sees a need to help such refugees. This simultaneously reduces the living expenses for these refugees, and they can now focus on finding employment and ensuring long-term wage and job security instead of devoting their attention to household expenses due to the high cost of living within the EU. Employment would further allow for integration as refugees can now access better services and interact with other groups of people within the community.

4.2.2 Hungarian Attitudes Towards Integration

In Hungary, Orban, emboldened by his election win, pushed out anti-refugee legislation informally called the “Stop Soros” bill. “Controversially, the bill declares that any NGOs that “sponsor, organise or support the entry or stay of third-country citizens on Hungarian territory” will be viewed as a “national security risk”.” (Wallen, 2018). In most cases, NGOs play a vital role in refugee integration, whereby they provide refugees with basic necessities. Without the ready support of such NGOs, refugees will face increased economic pressure due to the daily costs of living; and will also have to deal with a more apathetic and at times, hostile public that does not see a need to help them. NGOs often raise awareness for refugees so as to allow for more public support. With Orban’s legislation, NGOs have to seek

government consent before carrying out any activities to help refugees, else they face punitive measures.

4.2.3 Conclusion

Public attitudes towards refugees impact how successfully they manage to integrate into their new communities. National policies will also have an effect, as governments can either support or oppose integration, as seen between Germany and Hungary. Other groups such as NGOs do play a part in integration as well, as they can raise awareness for refugees that causes the public to be more compelled into taking action. Should their operations be hampered, it may be significantly harder for them to integrate as NGOs at times may be the most vital source of aid for these people. Integration also aids in employment, and betters the prospects of these refugees, yet this is contingent on public sentiments. Employment, while giving refugees a stable source of income, would also allow them to further integrate with the local community, given that they are able to learn local languages and interact with others. The media could also be an influence on such integration, as seen with the German press advocating a welcome attitude towards refugees. Should the press take an openly hostile stance, readers may accept anti-refugee opinions and in turn refuse to aid in the integration of refugees.

4.3 Religion and Consequent Anti-Refugee Sentiments

A majority of these refugees in Europe tend to be Muslim, with most fleeing violence in Syrian. On the other hand, the dominant religions within Europe would be Christianity and Catholicism. There is thus a difference in religion between the major stakeholders within this crisis which could possibly affect refugee movements given the cultural and religious differences between their country-of-origin and host country, and that there may be strong sentiments against the religion of refugees in potential host countries.

4.3.1 Orban's Rhetoric Towards Refugees

Orban has released statement after statement in which he criticises refugees, once saying that the arrival of asylum seekers in Europe was akin to “a poison”, adding that Hungary did not wish for or require a “single migrant” and that “every single migrant poses a public security and terror risk” (UK Guardian, 2016). He previously claimed that “We (Hungary) see them (Muslim refugees) as Muslim invaders”, and that Hungary “doesn't want to be forced” into accepting people from Muslim-majority countries (Staudenmaier, 2018). He has attempted to

characterise Europe as mainly Christian, and then frame refugees as “aliens” attempting to stay within Europe with ulterior motives. This rhetoric had massively increased in intensity and frequency when Orbán ran exclusively on an anti-immigrant, anti-refugee platform in the 2018 Hungarian elections. He presented a dichotomy to voters, either vote for his party and have a “national government” or face the prospect of an “immigrant country” ruled by George Soros, the Hungarian-American investor funding civil rights movements in post-Communist states who had also been demonised by Orbán (Walker, 2018). Before the elections, posters were set up depicting crowds of migrants with a bright red “STOP” sign in the foreground, with the aim of advancing Orbán’s anti-immigrant and anti-refugee message to voters (Walker, Boffey, 2018). This presents the Hungarian government as a saviour, and a party that stands up against “invaders”, and casts migrants and refugees negatively by presenting them as coming over to Europe to take up resources.

4.3.2 CSU Policies in Bavaria

In Germany, losses in the 2018 Bavarian and Hessian state elections prompted Merkel to step down after 2021. CSU leader Seehofer, in an attempt to tackle widespread religious backlash by the largely conservative voter base in Bavaria, had to pass laws requiring the crucifix to be hung in all public buildings, with CDU Bavarian state premier Markus Söder stating the move was to “reinforce Bavarian identity” after the surge of Muslim immigration. Bavaria has experienced the brunt of the crisis, when a large number of refugees entered Germany through the state, boosting the popularity of the AfD 50% of voters identify as Catholic in Bavaria, with 19% Protestant and 4% Muslim, and 56% of voters said they were in favour of the policy. The move divided religious leaders, with several leaders of the Catholic church and theologians stating it was “divisive” (Connolly, 2018). Full-face Islamic veils were also banned. Refugees may move away from these areas due to such laws conflicting with their religion, which at times makes up a key part of their identity.

4.3.3 Overall Impact

While there may not be an observable direct impact due caused by a religious divide, it is evident that such an issue exists within both Hungary and Germany. Leaders in these two countries are forced to pander to voters of the majority religion, in the case of Europe, Christianity and Catholicism. As a result, religion will have an impact on government policies in some form, as seen with Bavaria, where the CSU actively pushed out religious-oriented laws to appeal to largely conservative voters to remain in power. Despite electoral

losses, religious divides were clearly exposed through controversial policies that while the majority in the main voter base agreed with, drew condemnation from several religious figures and teachers. Furthermore, the shift in voters to the political right as a result of the crisis has legitimised candidates campaigning on partly religious grounds where they can now make statements that come across as religiously insensitive at times. This shift would also be partly attributed to the use of religious rhetoric by candidates to gain votes, especially in highly conservative areas. The use of certain derogatory terms would also be legitimised, given their increasingly prevalent use and the political polarisation already taking place within EU member states. When voters turn to these anti-refugee candidates, as seen in Hungary, they in turn elect such candidates to represent them and allow these politicians to advance party agendas. More laws can thus be passed that influence refugee movements, such as border restrictions, the refusal to grant asylum, or even clampdowns on refugees and their rights as a whole.

On a second level, refugees may choose not to go to such areas where there is a strong backlash against refugees given that they now face being ostracised and discriminated against. They may also turn away from certain areas, such as Bavaria, given that the laws there go against certain religious principles or teachings, such as the banning of full-face Islamic veils. As such, they may move to other areas where they do not face active discrimination.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Overall, government policies are the most prominent factor that affects the movements of these refugees among the factors identified. Furthermore, government policies were affected by issues such as religion, which also affected the social integration of such refugees. Europe is characterised as largely Christian by most right-wing leaders, such as Orban; who appeal to voters based on religious grounds. Governments in turn enact policies based on religion that result in social integration of refugees being harder to achieve, and even put in place policies to restrict their movements within the EU.

Additionally, the public and media both play a role in influencing policies, with a more religious, homogenous populace being able to affect regional and national policies towards refugees, as leaders seek to gain their votes in elections by taking a hard-line stance against refugees. The media, with its capability to increase the dissemination of information can be used by governments to advocate for increased support for refugees or to stir up anti-refugee sentiments in the public. However, this is seen mainly in Hungary, as the German government has not allowed religion to play as significant a role in federal policies regarding refugees; despite the implementation of religious-oriented laws in individual states. Such policies may also entail different impacts on different scales, with some capable of affecting refugees on a community level through making it harder for them to integrate with the rest of society in host countries; or through a national level by nationwide restrictions on entry and exit from the country, as well as the provision of supplies and daily necessities. Should voters feel displeased with government policies, they also affect policies at the ballot box by voting for other parties that better represent their stance.

These attitudes thus result in policy changes towards refugees that can affect their movements within the EU.

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