VIADUCT Student Paper

THE MIGRATION CRISIS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION BETWEEN 2015 AND 2018: COOPERATION WITH TURKEY

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Introduction

Migration is currently an important issue affecting multiple countries and regions in recent years. The European Union (EU) is strongly affected by the consequences of the so-called migration crisis. This crisis reached its peak point in 2015 with more than one million refugees and migrants crossing Europe's borders according to the International Organization of Migration (IOM).[1] Ever since the 2015 migration crisis, the EU has tried to develop coping mechanisms and tools to deal with the flux of immigrants. Since the EU is composed of twenty-eight member states, the capacity of the EU to deal with the crisis depends on a consensus and a unified response, which has turned out to be extremely difficult in the context of the crisis. Neither EU member states nor the EU institutions were able to formulate a coherent solution to deal with this issue. Therefore, it seems crucial to evaluate how this crisis started, how the member states reacted, which member states were affected most, as well as the elaboration of EU-level responses and the role of cooperation with neighbouring countries like Turkey.

The migrants entering the EU came from multiple different regions and countries from the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. On the one hand, Syrians composed the largest group applying for asylum, followed by migrants from Afghanistan and Iraq. Most of the refugees travelled through sea routes via Greece. Germany received most asylum applications, followed by Hungary, Sweden, Austria, and Italy.[2] Also, the accidents on the Mediterranean Sea in which many refugees died led the EU to take certain actions. According to Eurostat Data, the EU protected 333.350 asylum seekers in 2015, indicating an increase of 72% compared to 2014. In 2016, 1.3 million asylum seekers applied to EU.[3] In 2017, this number decreased to approximately 650.000. In the second quarter of 2018, the number was close to 136.000.[4] According to Eurostat, in 2015 there were 2.2 million illegal migrants in the EU whereas this number decreased to 617.000 in 2017.[5]

This paper evaluates the EU responses to the migration crisis by taking the European Council and the Justice and Home Affairs Councils' decisions as the reference points. The meetings starting from April 2015 and June 2018 are taken as examples. Afterwards, the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism is applied to explain why an EU level response has not been developed regarding the migration crisis.

Tackling the Crisis: EU Responses to the Migration Flows

In 2015, on 23rd of April, a Special Meeting of the European Council was conducted to find solutions to the crisis. The EU declared that their immediate priority was to prevent the deaths caused by migration routes and targeted four main areas: strengthening their presence at sea, fighting traffickers, preventing illegal migratory flows, reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility. In addition, it asked the Commission to prepare a European Agenda on Migration which was adopted on 13 May 2015 and suggested a more comprehensive way to tackle the crisis. This agenda explains how the EU should deal with this crisis by setting out four measures: to reduce the incentives for irregular migration, to save lives and secure the ex-

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[1] BBC, December 22, 2015, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35158769.

[2] BBC, March 04, 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911.

[3] Eurostat, September 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/asylum-q2-2018.

[4] Eurostat, March 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/asylum2017.

[5] Eurostat, September 2018, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/asylum-q2-2018.

ternal borders, a strong asylum policy, a new policy on legal migration.[6] In comparison to the declarations of the Special Meeting, the European Agenda on Migration is highly detailed regarding the measures that are to be implemented by the EU. Within this report, a temporary relocation and resettlement system was proposed on the basis of population, GDP, asylum applications, the number of refugees in those states and the unemployment rate. 40.000 refugees would be relocated in accordance with these terms. According to these rates, Germany would receive the most refugees, followed by France, Italy, and Spain. Furthermore, the cooperation with third countries represented another crucial part of the European Agenda on Migration, which is illustrated by the agreement between EU and Turkey.[7]

The Council of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA Council) deals with the problems of the EU regarding migration.Especially after the 2015, the decisions discussed by the council became more salient. Therefore, key JHA Councils will be evaluated to understand how the EU reacted. On June 2015, the JHA Council met to discuss the aspects of the agenda on migration. In June , it was stated that the migration agenda would be taken into consideration in the implementation of the European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015-2020.[8] The next JHA Council was more comprehensive in comparison to the previous one because of its content in terms of resettling and relocation of the migrants.[9] However, these resolutions did not satisfy all member states of the EU, as some of them

did not support the relocation of refugees and rejected the European quotas. During the summer of 2015, member states like Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic declared that they would only want to receive Christian refugees. Hungary declared they would build a wired fence and start to control their border strictly.[10] There were declarations among the German government emphasizing the importance of cooperation. Chancellor Angela Merkel emphasized the importance of Europe acting as a whole to help the refugees and said, "If we don't succeed in fairly distributing refugees then, of course, the Schengen question will be on the agenda for many".[11]

The JHA Council conducted on 14 September 2015 provides a crucial turning point. The topics discussed were related to Greece and Italy. Since these countries are those particularly dealing with new refugees because of their geographic location, the Council decided to support them upon new regulations. Greece would receive monetary support from the EU and the council decided that the policy to relocate 40.000 refugees from Greece and Italy to other member states would become operational. In addition, it was stated that meetings with Turkey will continue to deal with the refugee crisis.[12]

The following week, on 22 September 2015, an extraordinary JHA Council was gathered to discuss the relocation of 120.000 refugees which would be added to the original 40.000 refugees. The policy was adopted by a majority of votes.[13]   Not all

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[6] Council of the EU, 23 April 2015, news release, April 23, 2015, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/23/special-euco-statement/pdf.

[7] European Commission, 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf.

[8] Council of the European Union, 2015, http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9798-2015-INIT/en/pdf.

[9] Council of the European Union, July 20, 2015, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/jha/2015/07/20/.

[10] Euobserver, August 21, 2015, https://euobserver.com/justice/129938.

[11] The New York Times, September 01, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/01/world/europe/germany-migrants-merkel.html.

[12] Council of the European Union, 2015, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21906/st12002-re01en15.pdf

[13] "Justice and Home Affairs Council, 22 September 2015,

member states supported this plan, the Central and Eastern European countries were most vocal in opposition. For instance, Victor Orbán, the Hungarian Prime Minister declared that they would take the EU to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) because the quota distribution system was adopted by Qualified Majority Voting in which 55% of member states representing 65% of the EU population would be enough to pass a resolution. Hungary was one of the states who rejected this system and demanded decision-making by consensus, along with Romania, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic.

In the second half of 2015, the meetings with Turkey and the EU increased as the EU considered Turkey a crucial partner for dealing with its refugee crisis. At a meeting on 29 November Ahmet Davutoğlu (Prime Minister of Turkey at that time) was representing Turkey and a Joint Action Plan was adopted to solve the crisis. On 18 March 2016, an agreement was signed following the previous meetings between the EU and Turkey to stop the influx of Syrian immigrants from Turkey to the EU. The agreement contained key statements like "new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey; for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled to the EU; Turkey will take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for irregular migration opening from Turkey to the EU". In return, the EU offered visa liberalization with the aim of lifting visa requirements for Turkish citizens at the end of June 2016."[14] An-

other incentive to be given to Turkey was the distribution of three billion euros for its role in alleviating the refugee crisis on top of the regular EU financial aid. In addition, the opening of Chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy was discussed during the negotiations of the Joint Action Plan, and it was decided to open the negotiations on Chapter 33 on financial and budgetary provisions.[15]

The Joint Action Plan may be beneficial for both but, using Turkey as a "gatekeeper" may create long-term results for EU as well. After the signature of the Plan, Turkey used its leverage over the EU by threatening and demanding certain incentives, since the migration crisis has not only affected the EU: Turkey is one of the countries that have been hit hardest by the crisis because of its geopolitical position.[16] There are over 3.6 million refugees in Turkey according to official numbers.[17] The burden of the refugees for Turkey has not only been economic and political but also cultural. The integration of the refugees has been causing problems. The unfulfilled promises by the EU, like the payment of money and the visa liberalization are mostly the centre of those threats. EU's securitization of its borders may benefit the EU, yet it did not decrease the deaths in the Mediterranean Sea contrary to the claims of a report.[18] Within the report it is claimed that "from 10,000 in a single day in October 2015, daily crossings have gone down to an average of around 43 today, while the number of deaths in the Aegean decreased from 1,145 in the year before the statement to 80 in the year which followed".[19] But the reason for the decrease was not just the cooperation with Turkey,

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http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/agenda/2015/09/22-conseil-jai/index.html.

[14] Ignazio Corraro, November 20, 2018, , accessed December 08, 2018, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-eu-turkey-statement-action-plan.

[15] Consilium, March 18, 2016, accessed March 02, 2019, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/.

[16] The International Spectator 51, no. 4 (2016): doi:10.1080/03932729.2016.1235403.

[17] https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113.

[18] The Conversation, December 10, 2018, http://theconversation.com/refugees-out-of-sight-out-of-mind-two-years-on-from-eu-turkey-deal-93451.

[19] "EU-TURKEY STATEMENT Two Years on," April 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180314_eu-turkey-two-years-on_en.pdf.

but also that refugees started to depend on smugglers and made increasingly use of the North African migration route.

In the following, JHA Councils and other institutional meetings migration played an important part as well. The meetings failed to adopt an adequate policy on migration due to disagreements among the member states. For instance, the JHA Council of June 2018 touches upon the migration problem but only on the surface. Provisions related to migration were about the cooperation with Turkey, ensuring the funding of the Trust Fund for Africa and supporting partners in the Western Balkans which shows that the level of the response is still not sufficient to solve the crisis.[20] Furthermore, in June 2018, the EU decided to give an additional 3 billion euros to Turkey due to the refugee crisis. As it can be seen, EU relies on its partnership with Turkey, which is an important transit country between the Middle East and the EU.

Overall, it is not possible to state that the EU reached a common policy on migration. The solutions that were established are too general and a unified resolution hasn't been found yet. The extent of opposition by EU member state governments indicates that finding an EU level response to tackle the crisis remains an extremely difficult task.

Explaining the Migration Crisis with Liberal Intergovernmentalism

Liberal Intergovernmentalism, a theory developed by Andrew Moravcsik, aims at explaining why and how European integration occurred. Liberal Intergovernmentalism emphasizes interstate bargaining and claims that major agenda-setting decisions in the history of the EU are negotiated intergovernmental.[21] Since migration is an area that is politically salient and where nation-state preferences play a vital role, this paper expects the theory to apply to this case.

Even though there were many Justice and Home Affairs Council resolutions in response to the problems, some member states (especially transit countries) did not want an EU level response because of how it would affect them. Resolutions had to result from intergovernmental bargaining,[22] yet in the case of this crisis, bargaining mostly resulted in divergent ideas which did not advance integration. The interests and positions of countries like Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Hungary did not converge with what the Commission was trying to achieve. For this reason, the response of the EU was not concrete and uniform enough to tackle the crisis effectively.

One of the aspects of liberal intergovernmentalism is the concept of two-level games, i.e. the argument that bargaining does not only occur at the international level but also at the domestic level. For example, the Interior Minister of Germany, Horst Seehofer, who is a more rightist politician, proposed securing German borders and limiting the influx of migrants, but Chancellor Angela Merkel was not in favour of this since it would harm the EU which needed to find a way to assist frontier states like Italy and Greece. However, despite her preference for European solidarity, Angela Merkel had to agree to border camps for asylum seekers and to tighten the border with Austria to save the government to secure the union of CDU and CSU[23] in Germany. Thus, the international bargaining depends to some extent on what has been agreed domestically.

[20] Council of the European Union, news release, June 4&5, 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/36284/st09680-en18.pdf.

[21] Andrew Moravcsik, 1998, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066100006002002.

[22] Andrew Moravcsik, 1993, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1993.tb00477.x.

[23] This is the ruling coalition in Germany in which Angela Merkel was the leader of Christian Democratic Union

According to liberal intergovernmentalism, there is a tripartite explanation of the integration in which the consensus of the big states, like Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, is necessary to boost the European integration.[24] In order to understand the complexity of European integration, it is crucial to assess the preferences of these three member states. Integration would be unlikely to move forward if those three states do not agree to proceed. However, in the case of migration policy, the driver within the EU was only Germany. The United Kingdom was not part of migration policy since Tony Blair opted-out in 1997, a position that was confirmed during the crisis. In 2015, Theresa May said that "not in a thousand years" would she take part in a new common immigration policy.[25] Since these three important members cannot reach a common policy, having an EU level response is not possible.

Moreover, the assessment of Turkey's role within the migration crisis of the EU is another crucial component. Since the member states could not achieve a common response to the crisis due to their domestic dissents and national interests, using Turkey as a buffer zone was beneficial for them. The pact with Turkey demonstrates that the EU can act as a whole when a solution reconciles national interests. Using Turkey as a transit country would benefit the interests of the big member states, like the UK, Germany and France, and that of many smaller ones. Instead of giving concessions, using a third and enthusiastic country who would want other benefits from the EU helped them to limit the migration crisis.

Conclusion

Migration is an ongoing phenomenon all around the world and the EU is one of the actors that has been affected the most. Therefore, evaluating the migration crisis the EU has been struggling with is crucial to research. Accordingly, this paper aimed to introduce the developments from 2015 to 2018 regarding the EU's migration crisis. In the first part, the events were reviewed. The European Council decisions, the JHA Council decisions and the contributions of the European Commission were explained. Furthermore, Turkey has an important role in dealing with the European crisis and became an actor that reconciled the national interests of the EU member states. Therefore, the Joint Action Plan conducted with Turkey was also reviewed. Lastly, the migration crisis of the EU is explained by using liberal intergovernmentalism. The focus is on liberal intergovernmentalism since the integration process regarding the migration crisis is shaped by member state preferences and intergovernmental bargaining. Yet, a completely adequate EU level response to the crisis could not be adopted due to conflicting national interests. Therefore, explaining the developments during the migration crisis with liberal intergovernmentalism explains the lack of EU level responses to the crises.

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until November 2018, Horst Seehofer is the leader of Christian Social Democrats.

[24] Frank Schimmelfennig, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12789.
[25] The Guardian, March 01, 2017.

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The **historical complexity and volatility of EU-Turkey relations** are reflect-ed by **research and teaching** in this field. There are international research projects as well as many smaller and na-tionally funded studies and pro-jects dealing with Turkey, including its relationship with the EU. Linking these different projects, diffusing knowledge on the European Integration process and exploiting synergies between international players constitutes real added-value for European Integration studies.

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