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Public Opinion and Immigration in the European Union:

Just a Question of Trust of Something Deeper?

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Abstract

Immigration policy in the European Union continues to frontline coverage of European politics. Now in its third year of economic, political, and social muddle, the EU still lacks a common immigration policy and now faces a growing force of discontent from the European people. The influx of immigrants has also instilled tensions between member states and the EU as member states take action to individually secure their borders. This paper analyzes the immigrant crisis and immigration policy challenges facing the European Union in conjunction with the influence of public voice. With shifting governance between supranational and intergovernmental institutions, the actions of subsidiarity and dissenting opinions of the people bring new contentions to governance.

**Introduction**

Penetrating Europe’s borders, the influx of immigrants has stirred tensions between the citizens of the European Union and those creating policy. Policies and public acceptance of immigrants varies among the 28 member states and their respective citizens, but the challenges presented to the EU by public opinion have strong implications to the future of immigration, integration, and Schengen. With implementation of free movement stimulating deeper integration across member states, this paper presents an exploratory analysis that will assess the immigration crisis’ impact on state decisions and country actions for establishing security. This includes the impact of these challenges on EU’s Schengen Agreement, the threat to European border security, and implementation of a common immigration policy. In addition, apparent shifts in governance will be addressed by assessing public opinion and inclusivity using information from Eurobarometer, the World Values Survey, and the European Values Survey. By all accounts, these surveys provide necessary insight into the oscillation of public views, opinions, and current motivations applicable to the crisis. Furthermore, citizens harbor various perceptions of immigrants which relegates into the overall welcome of an immigrant in a given country and the political atmosphere.

Movement of people has been a common phenomenon throughout Europe’s history as immigration deepened integration and access across the European Union (EU). The progression of open borders permitted seamless movement of transborder work, travel, education, and goods and services that have also advanced an immigration crisis of untamable proportions across the EU. Unrest in the neighboring Middle East region brought an influx of migrants penetrating Europe’s borders seeking asylum, refuge, and social assistance. The current immigration crisis stemmed from open borders and a lacking common immigration policy across the EU. Public discontent and opinion further stokes burning political passions and country elections. Contentions over policy and borders burgeoned to unseen contentious levels exploited since 2014. A crisis of constant concern, immigration related issues stressed EU countries and their immigration policies.

**Immigrants and Migrants**

From the origination of the European Coal and Steel Community and expansion to the European Economic Community, Europe’s foundations were in community, economic feasibility, and integration across borders. Advancements in policy and social changes continued to forward both Europe’s identity and citizen’s access to countries and resources via free and open borders. With this growing community shifting toward a deeper and ever closer union, nascent political, economic, and social divides quietly stressed the EU’s fabric. Growing to 28 countries through various expansions, migration and immigration today from all corners of the EU has brought waves of migrants seeking various work or educational improvements, enhanced security or ways of life, and even family reunification.

**Deciphering Migration Status**

Immigration as a whole refers to the action of coming to live permanently in a foreign country.[[1]](#footnote-1) When a person leaves their country to enter another country—legally or illegally— regardless of the circumstance, it is considered an act of immigration. With growing numbers of individuals immigrating to Europe from the Middle East, the conflation and romanticizing of the term immigrant has been modified and used with inappropriate terminology. Asylum seekers, immigrants, and refugees are terms conflated and used interchangeably in everyday language, media discourse, and academia. Such usage of these identifiers, however, incorrectly floods language and misidentifies the status of those who are immigrating and their purpose. It should be reiterated that asylum seekers and refugees are not the same as they carry different implications and immigrants also include economic migrants. Statistically speaking, immigration numbers are encompassing of individuals who have entered a country regardless of status.

Refugee and asylum seeker are often used interchangeably to describe those entering another country. Irrespective of denoting a legal status, the terminology of refugee is generally preferred and adopted to denote people displaced due to war citing the UNHCR Geneva Refugee Convention, Article 1 stating, “A refugee is someone who is unable or willing 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” (1951). This is however, incorrect. Literally speaking, the widely applied terminology of “refugee” does not apply to individuals who have fled their home due to violence of war or have left their home due to the area becoming a warzone. An asylum seeker is an individual who has applied for asylum in a country of which they have arrived. Legally speaking, refugees are asylum seekers whose asylum application has been successful. They are granted refugee status which comes with the right to work, access to state benefits (such as housing and health), and they have the right to bring their family who will also receive refugee status. While the term in the European immigration crisis is used to describe those fleeing worn torn Middle East regions, these “refugees” have been granted no legal status and are refugee a greater definition of human purpose. For citizens and their opinions on immigration, there is no distinction between terminologies; it is all encompassed under the umbrella of immigration as whether an individual is a migrant or immigrant.

**Economic Migrants**

 Considering the role of migrants traversing borders for employment, economic migrants pass through countries seeking a better way of life. Historically traversing countries after Eastern enlargements or traveling from North Africa for employment, economic migrants generally fill low-wage sector jobs and even replace other low-skilled migrant workers in more desirable countries (McDowell, 2008; Corkill, 2001). Economic migrant employment has also been subject to hiring trends at times limiting employment and specifically recruiting highly-skilled workers leaving low-skill workers seeking employment unemployed or forced to return to their home country. Regardless of the circumstances of available employment, migrants face challenges of acceptance.

Economic migrants are widely documented within the EU regarding ethnic standards, job locations, economic influences, post-enlargement migration, and even economic movement during recessions (McDowell; Zaiceva & Zimmermann, 2016; Zalatel, 2006; Galgoczi, Leschke, & Watt, 2009). Part of the EU’s migration system, economic migrants have been controversial yet integral to Europe’s workforce; however, economic migrant influence does not come unburdened. With the growing anti-immigrant sentiments across the EU, economic migrants also face an abrasive welcome and lack of opportunities similar to those illegally entering the country seeking social incorporation and refuge. Acceptance for immigrants around the EU is concerning as immigrants seek a place to work and live. Each classification of immigrant has individual justifications and reasons for their decision to leave their country. Rejecting immigrants has negative effects across the board but varying degrees of severity. By rejecting the economic migrant, he or she stands to lose a better way of life whereas the refugee migrant stands to lose his or her life.

**Immigration and the European Union**

The immigration crisis is more than a call for immigration reform. It is an organic entity affecting EU social and political decisions. Further, it demonstrates the involvement of member states and their citizens on the policies and immigration reform. Common immigration policy failures headline EU affairs accompanied by a myriad of issues feeding into the overall problem. The desire to create and implement a common immigration policy is masked as country policies focused on immigration compete against EU policies focused on an ‘ever closer Union’. EU policies have been evolving since expansion in the 1970s to reflect fundamental rights of foreigners and citizens. Policy measures across time continue to portray deliberate distinctions between EU-citizens and foreigners fracturing unity and implementing perceptions of “outsiders” and “others” (d’Appollonia, p. 205, 2008). Such actions of policy occur on the nation state level incurring various levels of inclusion, discrimination, and perceptions of immigrants contradictory to the purpose of the EU.

Supranationalism, intergovernmentalism, sovereignty, and subsidiarity represent an amalgamation of issues surrounding why the EU does not have a common immigration policy. Utilizing subsidiarity, countries undertake individual initiative where the EU fails to assume responsibility. Key to making subsidiarity workable, supranational and intergovernmental institutions must keep close working relationships which tend to conflict with one another. States use national jurisdiction and subsidiarity to assume control of immigration reform creating country personalized rules and policies for managing immigrants within their borders.

**Supranationalism and Intergovernmentalism**

Functioning on different levels, supranational and intergovernmental governance are continually in conflict. Intergovernmentalism is driven by a desire for state sovereignty, while supranationalism is focused on the centralization of power and a limitation of state sovereignty. Intergovernmentalism within the EU has had a changing political face since its inception. During this formation, however, the integration of policy formation across the EU has been orchestrated by national leaders and their preferences for Europe (Moravcsik, 1998). Based on Moravcsik’s analysis, at least up to the Maastricht Treaty, the EU’s overarching institutions have been developed and supported by economic motivations and the choices of individual nation states. One of the best comprehensive and literary works on the dynamics of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism, Tsebelis and Garrett (2001) discuss the academic interpretations and definitions of these forms of governance and the institutional foundations of EU governance. Comparing and contrasting leading scholarly work on intergovernmentalism, the work of Tsebelis and Garrett leads the reader into an explanation of intergovernmentalism shaping the EU’s supranational institutional composition and vice versa.

An issue foreseen with current literature like Bickerton, Hodson, and Puetter (2015) is the academic attempt in trying to solve the answer for the shift in governance by coining the term “new intergovernmentalism.” By introducing new terminology, the authors and scholars alike seek to furnish answers for the changing nature of governance between the EU and member states rather than identifying key protagonists and issues that explain the lack in cooperation. This literature on intergovernmentalism magnifies the paradox of governance seeking to explain the shift in power within the EU stating how member states have “pursued integration…at an unprecedented rate and yet have stubbornly resisted further significant and transfers of ultimate decision-making power to the supranational level along traditional lines” (p.4). This is magnified by today’s struggles with immigration policy, but nothing new to the already present literature and nature of intergovernmentalism.

The current field of scholars researching and publishing on intergovernmentalism is rather small; thus, available information and research on intergovernmentalism and supranationalism writes about “new intergovernmentalism” and the future of integration using “new intergovernmentalism” to reference the decline of the European Commission in this role (Glencross, 2016; Nugent & Rhinard, 2016; Schmidt, 2016; Werts, 2015). Relevance of this literature, while informative, places a definitional solution lacking the explanation and research reflective of addressing the correlation of governance issues magnifying current policy disconnect.

As states move away from relinquishing key decision-making powers to the EU Council and Commission, neofunctionalism continues to struggle under the current weight of social and economic issues. While Tsebelis and Garrett provided key foundational information to the success of EU institutional transformation up to Maastricht, the political behavior of member states today stretches the fabric of the EU’s ability to integrate and resolve key economic and social issues plaguing the Union as a whole. Perhaps successful governance pre-Maastricht was due to joint motivations to build a truly successful union. The desire for European integration does not seem as pressing with today’s Union as it did even pre-EU-10.

**Sovereignty and Subsidiarity**

Key to member state sovereignty, member states are choosing to maintain greater control over their borders using their power, authority, and capacity to monitor and regulate access. The theoretical approach for understanding intergovernmental and supranational governance of EU immigration policy is assessed through the concept of subsidiarity. Under the principle of subsidiarity, member states maintain specific governing abilities. Much like state rights versus federal rights in the United States, subsidiarity allows EU member states similar rights but with less federal influence. A principle established by the treaty of Maastricht (1992), subsidiarity ensures that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the desire of its citizens. In addition, it provides the ability for constant checks to verify action at the Union level is justified in light of other possibilities available at national, regional, or the local level (Report from the Commission, 2014). Such a policy enables countries to maintain a level of state sovereignty regardless of EU decisions.

EU governance and the very essence of the EU’s institutional core are based on two fundamentally competing ideas: supranational rule and national sovereignty through intergovernmentalism (Heidbreder, 2013). Sovereignty is a foundational problem associated with immigration in the European Union; however, its relevance and acceptability in the political sphere is becoming convoluted (Bellamy & Castiglione, 1997). Addressing the contemporary transformation of states, Axtmann (2004) magnifies the issue of sovereignty in regard to the concept of homogeneity of the EU, whereas others (Goldmann, 2001) differentiate between capacity of the state and defining sovereignty as a legal state right.

States utilize subsidiarity to create policies to best reflect the will of the people. If state policy is enacted under the rule of subsidiarity, the EU has little authority to require the state to change. Subsidiarity enables states the ability to maintain sovereignty and circumvent policies outlined by the EU. This action renders EU authority ineffective and decreases the power of supranationalism. Utilizing the principle of subsidiarity, member states tend to strengthen the position of their national governments (van Kersbergen & Verbeek, 2004). Juxtaposition of subsidiarity and EU policymaking violently clash obstructing future policy implementation efforts.

Sovereignty and subsidiarity have a symbiotic relationship to state governance but endure the struggle to remain beyond the grasp of supranationalism. The capacity to create laws under subsidiarity enables states to maintain levels of sovereignty previously removed on the supranational level. States enacting policies under the rule of subsidiarity have the ability to maintain sovereignty and circumvent policies outlined by the EU. This action renders EU authority ineffective and decreases the power of supranationalism. Supranationalism and intergovernmentalism conflicts demonstrate the shortfall of understanding immigration policy at both the federal and state level. The desire for states to enact subsidiarity further complicates border control and the future of immigration (Gotev, 2015; Hanf, 2014; Maurice, 2015).

**Borders and Jurisdiction**

Europe, like other regions, struggles with integrating migrants and asylum seekers culturally and politically. Open borders allow for easier movement of people among countries permitting settlement in more desirable areas. As a result, states utilize national jurisdiction and subsidiarity to assume control of immigration reform creating country personalized rules and policies for managing immigrants within their borders. Utilizing subsidiarity, countries undertake individual initiative where the EU fails to assume responsibility to state standards and choose whether to have a broader or narrower application of subsidiarity (Blockmans, Hoevenaars, Schout, & Wiersma, 2014). Countries are implementing their own policies to counter EU requests leaving EU immigration policy incapable of handling country cooperation and immigration.

Support for immigration governance is a spectrum of conflicting preferences of control. With harsher demands coming down from the EU, country leaders are swiftly acting on their own national interests to enforce tougher border policies and asylum restrictions not in accord with EU unity and solidarity (Yardley, 2016). International migration and what occurs at the borders defines the countries and their relationship with immigrants. Immigration terminology can carry a negative connotation but how immigration is viewed in a positive or negative denotation relies heavily on the decisions of destination countries (Geddes & Scholten, 2016). Brash decisions regarding immigration may only be ephemeral, but the current state of welcome employed by barbwire and chain link provides a telling story of how member states are independently addressing immigration.

**Schengen**

The Schengen Agreement was monumental when signed in 1985 to abolish internal border controls for participating member states. Since Schengen’s implementation to EU law in 1999, and the 2004 directive allowing extra-communitarians (non-EU citizens) to move freely across EU borders, Schengen has become one of the four basic freedoms of the EU. With the enactment of the Single Market, free movement of goods, services, and capital were widely accepted, but much like the sovereign concerns of border control, acceptance and free movement of people faced greater resistance. Open markets but restrictive states continued to fight back against deeper integration (Hollifield, 2000). The Schengen agreement represents a unified European Union wide common policy of member states in a time when cohesion and unity are off keel. State sovereignty and immigration contentions increase Euroskepticism as constancy and consensus across the EU raises realistic questions about a European Union in the near future. European breakup is again a concern for officials instigated by the United Kingdom exit, the immigration crisis, and a “lack of compromise and stubbornness which is now seeping into the cornerstones of the EU ever more” (Casert, 2016). The recent referendum of the British exist was headlined by anti-immigration rhetoric and the UK’s already strict opt-out immigration policies.

It can be ascertained that open and free borders are in fact not free; rather, borders reflect sovereign strategies of political inclusion and exclusion between citizens and the rest of humanity (Johnson & Jones, 2011). The EU claims it has an established policy to help member states build up sound and consistent external borders with an Internal Security Fund to provide for member states (Communication from the Commission, 2015). For member states, this security fund has not lived up to its potential for increasing border security and assisting in political inclusion and migration flow. Consequently, member states over the past year have engaged in actions contrary to open border policies of Schengen by sporadically closing their borders, providing their own increased border security and policies, and even halting movement into their country.

**State Authority and Schengen**

The year 2015 provoked the greatest threat to Schengen and movement through Europe since Schengen’s implementation to EU law. After the terrorist attacks at Charlie Hedbo in Paris in January 2015, EU-level initiatives for tightening and enhancing overall security were a major push for the EU, but these practices and initiatives challenged the freedom of movement around Europe (Bigo et al, 2015). Furthermore, individual nations began to enact subsidiarity to address an immediate need not resolved by supranational authority. Actions against Schengen continue to transpire on a country by country basis but these counteractions by countries are not new. In 2012, Greece built a fence along its Turkish border to deter land crossings. Spain fortified its Moroccan border in 2014 fortifying its territories. More recently, Hungary constructed a controversial fence along its Serbian and Croatian border in 2015.

Demonstrated by increased border security in Hungary or curfews and temporary border checks in France, Belgium, and even Sweden, the original seamless movement between EU countries into border checks and restrictions demonstrates backwards momentum to the EU’s future and integration beyond the nation state level. Additional terror attacks at the end of 2015 further escalated Schengen tensions. The deepening of Schengen originally instilled by country cohesion now splits at the seams tearing the fabric of EU integration. Public outcry denouncing increased immigration continues to affect movement questioning country decisions to continue to process immigrants and abide by EU direction of solidarity.

Beyond European borders, the view of immigrants grows dim. Already facing challenges internally with Schengen immigration, the stress of accepting non-European migrants negatively affects perceptions of immigrants. Tensions regarding internal and external security have been a pressing issue with enlargement and integration with expansion to Central and Eastern Europe (Grabbe, 2000). A decade ago the countries showed signs of stress with accepting high levels of economic migrants. Immigration within Europe was a concern with Eastern enlargement in 2004 fearing waves of immigrants from the former Soviet bloc would migrate west saturating the labor market. Increasing EU membership by one-third, the additional countries only added an additional 5 percent to the EU’s overall GDP stressing concerns about immigration (Yesilada & Wood, 2010). With regional disparity still existing today, there are currently not enough benefits from EU policies to adequately cover the unraveling costs of integrating immigrants. Offsetting growing costs and economic concerns, European countries seek to create policies immediately. The lackadaisical temperament of policy formation on the supranational level leads countries to swiftly act, sometimes against EU policy.

**State Border Struggles on Immigration**

Due to border access, some states inherently have higher numbers of immigrants; consequently, these countries face higher financial and social burdens of providing for immigrants. Overcrowding in camps and facilities while awaiting refugee status, entry countries struggle to provide services to growing numbers of immigrants. In an attempt to help disperse the vast numbers of immigrants in a handful of countries, in September 2015, the European Commission approved a quota system to relocate 120,000 refugees (Peralta, 2015). Although the quotas were agreed upon on the supranational level by most states, several member states refused to accept both the designated quota and the refugees. By early 2016, several countries across the EU openly rejected quotas, held country referendums, and the European Commission recognized another botched attempt at mandating policy on unwilling countries (Holehouse, 2016; Moraga & Rapoport, 2015; Pop, 2016; Traynor, 2016). Attempting to rectify the failed relocation effort and push against policy, the EU stated it would impose fines of hundreds of million Euros per rejected refugee. Although subject to approval by member states, the process was reflective of continued failed attempts to integrate policy on the

**The State of State Affairs**

Schengen and border travel focuses on solidarity of movement and country responsibility to integrate. Amidst citizen uproar, the EU seeks open borders and integration; member states want more responsibility and sovereignty in their border controls and immigration policy as positions and policy trends in Europe vary across the spectrum of inclusivity. The trend of moving away from more liberal open policies is seen across many member states while others maintain positions welcoming of immigrants and integration in juxtapose with EU policy. Although state governance dynamics are trying to work with supranational institutions, there is a movement from the people and anti-government parties making a prominent stance in the upcoming elections across member states. These country positions and recent actions over the past few years demonstrate state resilience and a stance against EU policy.

**Member States and Immigration Policy**

EU countries are implementing their own policies to counter EU requests leaving EU immigration policy incapable of handling country cooperation and immigration. Support for immigration governance is a spectrum of conflicting preferences of control. Falling back on old alliances, countries are pooling their interests to handle immigration on a regional level. The Balkans and Eastern European countries, including Austria, are pooling their border enforcement to more rigidly screen and prevent immigrant passage. Major migrant entry points, like Greece and Italy, plead for EU assistance as their ports, borders, and islands become saturated with stranded immigrants while these countries seek more open borders and access for immigrants.

As a frontrunner in immigrant acceptance, Germany remains strong in their stance to not impose border controls in opposition to the demands of the people rejecting immigrants. Other countries like those in the Baltic area may not agree with policies, stressing their discontent, but they ultimately pledge their support to Brussels in fear of backlash to their small countries. Regardless of country size, Belgium even began the process of increased border checks at their French border, a formally smooth passage for travelers. Since the increase in terrorist attacks on French soil, French borders have been the strong subject of closure and restriction. More inclined to handle border policies on their own, closing individual borders is another strike against Schengen and free movement among countries. Schengen and border travel focuses on solidarity of movement and country responsibility to integrate. Amidst citizen uproar, the EU seeks open borders and integration, member states want more responsibility and sovereignty in their border controls and immigration policy.

**States Managing Borders**

Countries experiencing uncontrolled influxes of migration face daunting political and economic challenges. Resources and institutional capacities of member states become overwhelmed leaving migrants overflowing into cities unable to manage or place the sheer number of people. Consequently, a country incapable of accommodating migrants becomes a less desirable location as migrants flee to locations with better conditions and acceptance. Furthermore, member states that do not have the resources or experience to process and handle high levels of migrants facilitate travel and relocation elsewhere by closing borders and implementing deterrence policies.

Falling back on old alliances, countries are pooling their interests to handle immigration on not just the state but regional level. The Balkans and Eastern European countries, including Austria and the Slovakian region, are pooling their border enforcement to more rigidly screen and prevent immigrant passage. Major migrant entry points, like Greece and Italy, plead for EU assistance as their ports, borders, and islands become saturated with stranded immigrants while these countries seek more open borders and access for immigrants. As a frontrunner in immigrant acceptance, German government remains strong in their stance to not impose border controls in opposition to the demands of the people rejecting immigrants. Other countries like those in the Baltic area may not agree with policies, stressing their discontent, but they ultimately pledge their support to Brussels in fear of backlash to their small countries. Regardless of country size, Belgium even began the process of increased border checks at their French border, a formally smooth passage for travelers.

**Austria.** Discontent with the passage of immigrants through Hungary into Austria has affected governance and border control. Mass movements of migrants resulted in Austria temporarily sealing their borders to immigrants and surrounding countries in 2015 (EurActiv, 2015). Identity checks and turning migrants and asylum seekers away has also become a standard in Austria. Advancing their anti-immigrant and anti-EU government position, the Austrian government has been seeking advice on how to turn away migrants and to institute a cap on the number of asylum requests they accept (EurActiv, 2016). Austria’s position of formulating more stringent border policies continues grow and develop as the immigration crisis continues.

**Belgium.** The center for EU governance, Belgium has long been considered a country of perpetual immigration. Generally welcoming to immigrants, Belgium too has found itself in difficult situations of acceptance after terror attacks and areas of their country unsafe for non-immigrants to enter; however, anti-immigrant sentiments are not at the frontline of Belgium policies. Belgium welcomes immigrants and generally stays out of media prominence regarding immigration unless there are specifics referencing the EU Commission and supranational institutions centered in Brussels.

**Denmark.** Making monumental statements regarding immigrants, Denmark has felt overburdened by migration flows and social burdens and is working to lock every door accessible for immigrants. In 2015, Denmark experienced a large wave of migrants and since has worked to modify and create policy. In January 2016, Danish parliament implemented the “jewelry bill” to legally seize valuables and possessions from migrants passing Danish borders in order help pay for the upkeep of asylum seekers (Asher-Shapiro, 2016). Strengthening local governance, in August 2016, the Danish government proposed a law giving local law enforcement the ability to reject asylum seekers (Deacon, 2016). August 2016 brought the lowest immigration levels to Denmark since the waves began in 2014.

Increased separation from the EU has been a growing trend in Denmark since it was the first country that rejected a common EU constitution in 2005. The country stands in a unique situation permitted by the EU in general due to granted opt-outs and exclusions granted by Dublin II and the Danish constitution (Hofmann, Rowe, & Türk, 2011). In Denmark’s situation, the Union enhances state sovereignty and intergovernmental power by lacking authority to mandate state policy changes. Unable to use authority to implement consistent immigration policy, state sovereignty increases while EU centralization decreases.

**France.** The position of France has been one of controversy in recent years and their political stances have not so much been around immigration, but targeting religion, specifically, Muslims. With those who are immigrating from the Middle East more traditionally being followers of Islam, the population of Muslims in France has raised drastically. The largest population of Muslims in Europe at 4.7 million (exchanging first and second continually with Germany), France has reacted to the increase in immigration and the Muslim population by enacting policies targeting Muslims, citizens or not, in the midst of a 20% increase in asylum seekers. In 2004, France’s anti-veil policy in public spaces directly targeted Muslims and many Arab immigrants hailing from MENA, the largest group of immigrants for the state (Gökariksel & Mitchell, 2005). In the month of August 2016, France again attacked Muslim culture as certain areas tried to push through a ban of a particular Islamic swimwear called a “burkini.” While as many as 30 French areas enforced burkini bans on their beaches, the French high court—The Council of State— in a battle of cultures and discrimination against inclusiveness across France, suspended all burkini bans (Bitterman, McKenzie, & Soichet, 2016).

Since the increase in terrorist attacks on French soil, French borders have also been the strong subject of closure and restriction. More inclined to handle border policies on their own, closing individual borders is another strike against Schengen and free movement among countries as France makes statements to reclaim their borders and increase passport checks, something eliminated in Schengen not just for EU citizens, but extra-communitarians. The French outlook on immigration policy and shifts away from EU governance continues to grow with the upcoming election and the apparent shift to the more right leaning governing body.

**Germany.** As the second most popular migration destination in the world behind the United States, Germany is a land of immigration. Like other countries in Europe though, acceptance of both policies and immigrants are mixed due to the conflict between German citizens and German government. The voice of acceptance for EU policies and incorporation of immigrants entering Europe, Germany leadership has generally been welcoming to immigrants, but raising voices of the people have muted the motivations of the German government.

Country acceptance of immigrants in Germany has been the most vocal in the current situation by welcoming the throngs of immigrants with open borders and a plea for the rest of the European countries to be more accepting in managing the crisis. Calling for equal distribution among all member states, Germany became the bane of a majority of other member states against quotas and acceptance of EU policies. After a week of alleging openness to all migrants, Germany faltered and reimposed controls on its open borders (Smale & Eddy, 2015). Unrest among residents and the other provinces of Germany to handle the swarms of migrants presented too much of a challenge. Last year, with Oktoberfest and an estimated 6 million visitors coming through train stations, officials feared an escalation among immigrants and patrons (Smale & Eddy). Fear and intolerance continue to threaten the immigration situation and a common policy for countries.

German government remains the champion of EU solidarity. Trying to welcome immigrants and align with EU policies and values, German governance is currently struggling with the success of their platform as citizens begin taking to the polls for the 2017 elections with anti-immigration parties are on the rise (Waters, 2016). Germany is a case of country conflict due to citizens against supranationalism and the desire for sovereignty. As the country comes to a new election cycle, the shift away from supranational governance is more pressing than ever.

**Greece.** The face of immigration woes, Greece’s large water access and land border to the Middle East through Turkey makes Greek entry to Europe—and eventually the EU—a desirable entry point. Unfortunately, the high number of immigrants waiting and settling in Greece has left the government at a loss for accommodating immigrants and asylum seekers. In 2015, out of 700,000 migrants and asylum seekers, 560,000 arrived by sea. The crisis led Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to make public statements about the shame felt over the inability of Europe to deal with the omnipresent human drama and loss of life (Graham-Harrison, 2015). European leaders called for reception camps to be boosted in Greece, but it was Greece and Italy who in 2015 voiced needed assistance from the EU to help with asylum relocation (Guarascio & Macdonald, 2015). While the EU attempted to relocate 120,000 migrants, the imposed quotas were angrily rejected by countries and by offering buyout options, demonstrated another breakdown of unity in policy and supranational governance.

**Hungary.** A vocal country completely against EU quotas and immigration, Hungary adamantly stands against EU policy. Blatant shifts by member states to secure external border security were magnified by Hungary’s actions of constructing a fence the length of their Serbian border (Moffett & Feher, 2015). Inundated by immigrants, Hungary resorted to building the fence in an effort to halt overwhelming numbers of immigrants. Borders continue to close or threaten closure to deter immigrants access to European borders while others clamor to allow access. A myriad of opinions from citizens, officials, and authority figures to remedy to the situation continue to grow, but a policy directive from European officials remains unseen with the political situation of immigration changing daily. In addition, Hungary proves noncompliant in accepting any form of direction from the supranational authority. In accordance with other countries, Hungary too is holding an anti-immigration referendum aimed at the supranational authorities in Brussels in record numbers.

In a staunch move of subsidiarity and state rights in response to the lack of the EU failing to agree on a common policy or resolve to the immigration crisis, Hungary passed a law to deport and jail refugees illegally entering Hungary. EU Schengen policy allows member states to impose temporary controls of their borders for security reasons and this action continues to be utilized by several other countries struggling with immigration. Hungary’s membership in the EU and unique placement on the European continent makes them the transit country into the EU for mass migrants fleeing the war regions of the Middle East. Feeling overwhelmed by immigrants and the lack of EU policy, Hungary firmly stands against any EU policy.

**Italy.** Completely overwhelmed by the immigration influx, Italy is a country swamped by immigrant numbers they can no longer support, house, or relocate and plea for the EU to provide assistance. Not entirely anti-immigration, Italy is at the disposal of EU governance to help relieve the country of the vast numbers of immigrants entering their borders by sea. Even now, immigration continues to soar in Italy and the country continues to rescue migrants from the sea and bring them safely to land. Welcoming of immigrants, even Italy reached a breaking point by using private charter jets to deport immigrants back to their home country. Immigrants are stranded across the country and are awaiting EU direction for relocation and assistance within Italy’s borders. EU attempts at instilling quota mandates to member states was met with mixed levels of rejection and acceptance (BBC, 2015).

**Slovakia.** Throes of migrants are the greatest concern the European region has seen in decades and in some areas influx of migrants create new records and strain on the country. Countries continue to make statements and stances to deter immigrants choosing their country as a final destination, and Slovakia joins those countries. Coming forward in direct response to accepting migrants, Slovakia stated “[We] will only take Christian migrants” (Smith-Spark, Cotovio, & Damon, 2015). The problem with such a claim is Slovakia’s denouncement verbalizing what migrants will bring to their community, a phobia of alleged religious tendencies against the foundation of their country, and a phobia of the integration of immigrants to Slovakian culture. Slovakia determined the political reason for not accepting migrants, especially from the Middle East was based on their low level of mosques and resources to benefit and integrate specific groups of migrants (Smith-Spark, Cotovio, & Damon). Such actions were also at the plight of the people not wanting their culture overrun by immigrants.

**Sweden.** Joining in 1995, Sweden is a poster-child success story of joining the European Union and magnifying compliance. Initially a country to proverbially drag its feet in the beginning, the country has gone from skeptic to exceptionally Europeanized during its time in the EU. The reluctance of the country has changed over the years becoming one of the more welcoming and compliant nations in the EU (Hegeland, 2015). The policies of Sweden tend to fall in congruence with EU policy but citizen discontent is rising. Sweden has taken in more immigrants per capita than any other European nation, and while they continue to accept immigrants they also express the exhaustion of their social systems (Hurd, 2015).

**United Kingdom.**  The largest contention in the battle between supranationalism and state authority, the UK and their recent vote to leave the EU stunned the world. Termed “Brexit”, leaving the EU has been a process and motion speculated for years finally coming to fruition. For the UK, their removal from many aspects of the EU has dominated their state policy options via opt-outs from EU policies, not joining the Eurozone, and maintaining circulation of their own currency, the UK has been removed from key EU policies, including those on immigration, for decades. On the supranational level, the EU has allowed disunity in policy to exist. The United Kingdom already possessed strict opt-out immigration policies and with the EU mandating quotas to accept immigrants, Brexit from the UK perspective had the argument of the threat of immigration backing those in favor of leaving the EU. Not wanting the EU to mandate or control their policies any longer, Brexit demonstrated a show of “taking back its country” and shaking up the future of supranationalism in the EU (Michaels, 2016). For EU-UK relations, immigration policy may have been the final straw to determine a successful Brexit vote. Ramifications of Britain’s exit felt across the EU are still uncertain as other countries face growing discontent with EU supranationalism.

**Public Opinion and EU Citizens: The Political Divide**

In regard to country acceptance of migrants, Germany has been the most vocal in the welcoming the throngs of immigrants. In 2015, Germany called for equal distribution of immigrants among all member states, much to the ire of other member states. Shortly after these statements and with Merkel pledging open borders for immigrants, Germany reimposed controls on its open borders to a smaller scale while still allowing influxes of immigrants (Smale & Eddy, 2015). With an acceptance rate at roughly 15-20% in favor of welcoming immigrants, Italy, Estonia, the Czech Republic, and Latvia join Slovakia in their immigration decision to be restrictive and deny quotas, while Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom do not need to participate in quotas or mandatory acceptance of migrants due to opt-outs (Paterson, 2015). Unrest among residents and the other provinces of Germany to handle the swarms of migrants presented too much of a challenge. Sweden presents the only favorable numbers of non-EU immigration with upwards of 75% of the country accepting of immigrants (Paterson, 2015). Sweden has taken in more immigrants per capita than any other European nation, and while they continue to accept immigrants they also express the exhaustion of their social systems (Hurd, 2015). Other countries still sit significantly below the 50% mark.

**Shifting Trends**

Rising anti-immigration groups continue to rally and gain ground protesting the growing numbers of immigrants and refugees flooding into the arms of unwelcoming citizens. Amidst growing anti-immigrant groups and sentiments the people continue to express discontent and negativity to immigrants in their neighborhoods. Europe-wide hate groups and growing street militia groups in the EU are taking street policing of immigrants into their own hands. People infuriated with lax border security, immigration policy, and the perceived take-over by immigrants are finding hope and support with anti-immigrant groups. Such groups are seeing their numbers and membership increase on a daily basis across Europe (Bojesson, 2016). Frustrations from the people transcend upwards warning causing state leaders to battle with country desires and EU level desires. While EU policy flows top- down, the voice of the people is affecting immigration and governments from the bottom-up.

Institutions on the EU level have mixed results involving public opinion. According to PEW research, although the EU had an initial increase in their handling of economic affairs, public opinion for the EU is again failing shifting public desires more toward the state level (see Figure 1). During a similar period according to Eurobarometer, 69% of Europeans, up 2% from the previous survey, are in favor of some form of common policy on migration (European Commission, 2016).



Figure 1

In another study conducted on views of the migration crisis and influx of refugees, countries express their various concerns regarding security and economic repercussions of the immigration crisis (see Figure 2). Compared to country and citizen views previously explained in relation to immigration and governance, the views moderately reflect current political trends and policies from each country. Figure 2 provides an informative picture on the three questions asked and how countries react to refugees—immigration crisis—in their country. Although not feeling a major threat for crime in the country, the numbers are stark regarding the increase in terrorism.

**Values and Perceptions of Immigrants in Europe**

Figure 2

Growing immigration concerns in Europe bring views and perceptions of immigrants to the forefront of media boasting current polls and numbers regarding the situation as demonstrated with Eurobarometer. The influx of data assists in gauging perceptions towards immigrants in an era where academic literature and reports are dated as measurements of country perceptions remain spurious due to inconsistent and incomplete data (Carr &Yesilada, 2015). Using information available from the World Values Survey/European Values Survey (WVS/EVS), the data portrays people perceptions on an array of questions not limited to but inclusive of immigrant and immigration specific inquiries. Sorting through over 30 years of available data, it was discovered the survey questionnaire included inquiries pertaining to specific concerns of immigrants in society but zero data existed as the questions were never asked over this entire period. This revelation is striking considering information derived from other questions within the surveys demonstrated negative attitudes towards immigrants. Association and acceptance of immigrants in the community, especially as neighbors, has been decreasing since data was first recorded reflecting increasingly negative perspectives of immigrants. Using the WVS/EVS and the question of whether a person wanted an immigrant as their neighbor, the data revealed significant increases in the mentioning of immigrants as people they did not as their neighbor.

Figure 3 outlines the perspective of people towards immigrants as their neighbor demonstrating growing negative sentiments. The highest negative sentiment was 37% of Estonians surveyed mentioning they did not want immigrants as their neighbor demonstrating an increase of 97% from the first recorded wave. In Germany, 21.5% did not want immigrants as their neighbors recording the largest increase in negative sentiments of 199%. Missing data on a country per country and wave basis is noticeable; however, 10 countries report increases in negative perceptions between their first and last recorded statistic and three countries present in only a single wave (Latvia 18.3%, Lithuania 29.3%, France 36.6%) demonstrate negative sentiments significantly higher than the country averages of their respective waves. It is noted there are six countries with documented decreases in negative sentiments when mentioning wanting immigrants as their neighbors. With the exception of Spain and Sweden, these countries were either of communist rule or were involved in the Balkan crisis posting negative immigrant sentiments higher than the average for their respective waves. Of these six countries, Sweden, Spain, Slovenia, and Poland are the only countries reporting consistent decreases across all waves. Romania initially declined but data reveal an increase in negative perceptions towards immigrants; Slovakia remained the same.**Figure 3**

A strong correlation between perceptions of the public and opinion on immigration appear throughout public opinion polls and available civic data. In the most recent Eurobarometer survey (see Figure 4), although dropping 3 percentage points to 45% from the previous survey, immigration remains as the most pressing public opinion issue and is reflected with current election trends followed by concerns with terrorism (Eurobarometer 86).

**Elections and the Rise of Right Government**

Figure 4

Protesting the growing number of immigrants, anti-immigrant and anti-Islam parties have gained popularity through country elections. In 2016, right-wing and far-right parties saw a surge in power across several countries (see Figure 5). Taken from various European election, government, and inter-parliamentary union websites, Figure 5 represents a compilation of election data for selected countries and includes 2016 presidential election results in Austria and Bulgaria. Red indicates right-wing populist and far-right parties. Public opinion on border security, immigration policy, and the perceived take-over by immigrants are finding solace and support with anti-immigrant parties. It is apparent by the EU election results that trends with the rising right are reflective of current public discontent. Anti-Europe, anti-immigration, and anti-Islam sentiments are championed as the platform position of right parties. Although there are concerns with the rise of the right, the results of the recent Dutch election speak to a different move with latter elections. With a conservative-liberal prime minister, Rutte, winning seat over the far-right competitor, Wilders, in the March 2017 election, Rutte’s party lost nearly 30 seats (Roberts, 2017). Future results of the French, German, and even Italian elections will further define the position and power of right governance and play a critical role in the reflection of public opinion and continued right extremist moves.

 Figure 5[[2]](#footnote-2)

The influencing voice of the people presents a major impact on immigration as seen with current election shifts. Furthermore, with historical trends on the state level gradually shifting away from historically liberal views, and voices becoming more anti-EU and anti-immigration, immigration across the EU is being affected by public opinion. Reflective in quarterly polls or historical trends, voices of frustration are overwhelming member states and the voices are becoming increasingly more anti-immigrant in an already struggling environment. The fate of Schengen and border control remains in jeopardy due to the clamorous voices of anti-immigration groups and shifts in political parties.

Countries experiencing uncontrolled influxes of immigration face daunting political and economic challenges. Resources and institutional capacities of member states become overwhelmed leaving immigrants overflowing into cities that are unable to manage or place the sheer number of people. Consequently, a country incapable of accommodating immigrants becomes a less desirable location and immigrants flee to locations with better conditions and acceptance.[[3]](#footnote-3) In addition, member states that do not have the resources or experience to process and handle high levels of immigrants facilitate travel and relocation elsewhere by closing borders and implementing deterrence policies.

**Further Assessment**

Data demonstrate that increasing anti-immigrant sentiments are a growing trend among EU member states counter to EU pushes and desires for integration and solidarity. Over 30 years, it can be seen that such trends are not isolated to particular regions or dependent upon the length of time a country has been integrated into the EU. To identify if religious views or materialism were indicative of the increase in negative sentiments, a crosstabulation was computed using an autonomy index and a post-materialist index and results determined the opposite. Autonomy of citizens indicated that over time, religiosity did not make a person less or more likely to not want a neighbor as an immigrant. In contrast, post-materialism of citizens indicated that over time a shift towards materialism had greater negative sentiments of wanting to have an immigrant as a neighbor.

**Conclusion**

The populous demonstrate a myriad of negative discourse further deepening the struggles affecting member states’ lack of EU direction and management on immigration. The current migration crisis magnifies the pitfalls of the EU and how supranational and intergovernmental policies clash to find resolution to a growing policy contention. Cacophony of public voice and opinion demonstrate the barriers toward reaching resolution. Perceptions toward immigrants reflect the negative sentiments and challenges associated with the future of freedom of movement and acceptance of immigrants. Furthermore, these perceptions appear to have a growing impact on governments and government policy. Negative discourse from the public and growing country sentiments reflecting public perceptions threatens plans for deepening integration. The future of Schengen and struggle for European integration also remains in jeopardy as immigrants attempting to settle amidst discontent.

Pressing forward with unrestricted borders remains highly questionable as countries enact their ability to close and enhance border checks amidst national crises. Perceptions toward immigrants demonstrate a growing trend of dislike accompanied by election shifts. Immigration policy and control of borders on a country level provoked by public demand will enhance an already hostile environment should the populous continue to express discontent at the polls. With driving negative sentiments continuing to rise across the EU, Schengen, integration, and immigration acceptance are at risk of failure in the battle against supranationalism. European border security and a common immigration policy stand at odds with the member states as citizens push back against overarching EU authority.

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2. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/05/22/world/europe/europe-right-wing-austria-hungary.html>. Does not reflect current Dutch election results. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Immigration trends and “migrant destinations” are noted through data on immigration. Where records of the largest quantities, concentrations, and sheer numbers of immigrants are settling can be found through numerous data sources: Eurostat explains migration and migrant population statistics in Europe, however, their data stands to be updated: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics>; Migration Policy Institute tracks data worldwide with mid-2015 data of total immigrant populations by country: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/international-migration-statistics>; Pew Research Center provides tracking information on immigrant, refugee, and asylum data: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)