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# The impact of the migrant crisis on the transatlantic relationship

An analysis on migration policy between the EU and the US from 2013 to 2017

Master's thesis in European Studies

Supervisor: Michael J. Geary

May 2019



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- Kristoffer Hansen Dahl, 12.5.2019

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## **Abbreviations**

CDSP - Common Security and Defence Policy

CEAS – Common European Asylum System

EASO - European Asylum Support Office

EU – European Union

EUAA - European Union Agency for Asylum

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States



## Introduction

And finally, we're stepping up to cooperate on global challenges. And I want to take this opportunity to commend the EU for the generosity and compassion that so many EU countries have shown desperate migrants -- men, women, and children -- who have fled to Europe. (...) I expect the EU to play a major role at our refugee summit this fall at the United Nations, where we aim to secure new contributions to address the global refugee crisis. – Barack Obama (The White House, 2016a).

This thesis analyses to what extent the migrant crisis impacted the transatlantic relationship between 2013 and 2017. During this period, the European Union (EU) experienced a massive influx of non-EU citizens. The epigraph by the former President of the United States (US) is taken from a speech after a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) meeting in July 2016. It shows how Brussels and Washington planned to step up on how to deal with the migrant crisis, which up to that point had been an important part of the political agenda. Migration policy is one of the many parts of transatlantic relations. The EU and the US share common values, with deeply interwoven economies, where both gain by cooperating on policy issues. A few months after that meeting a global United Nations (UN) summit was held, where policy solutions to the migrant crisis were discussed. The summit was held on Obama's initiative and his comments demonstrate that he expected the EU to take a major part in this meeting, pointing out that Brussels and Washington should maintain a close partnership on how to solve these issues. However, has there been a convergence or divergence in migration policy, and, more broadly, how can the crisis affect relations between Washington and Brussels? The aim of this thesis is to analyse these problems, by exploring the policies that were developed from 2013 to 2017 and how the EU and the US cooperated between each other on how to solve the migrant situation. Thus, the research question is: how has the migration inflow into the EU between 2013 and 2017 impacted the transatlantic relationship?

Furthermore, the goal of this thesis is to highlight underlining issues in migration policy within the transatlantic relationship. This includes American unwillingness to resettle migrants, Europeans scrutinizing Washington's role in the migrant situation, as well as policy approaches from both the EU and the US that were ineffective and inefficient. This has led to a divergence in the transatlantic relationship. Some of these issues include increased anti-Americanism throughout the EU,

Europeans going their own way in developing and implementing new migration policies, as well as a growth in alternative political forces in both the US and the EU. Notably, this thesis does not claim that the transatlantic relationship between 2013 and 2017 was in a complete disorganized state. Improvements in multiple policy areas between the EU and the US occurred, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Iran nuclear deal framework. In general, transatlantic relations remained close and beneficial during this period. However, the transatlantic relationship has always been prone to challenges, and the migrant crisis is a policy issue that has impacted Brussels-Washington relations in negative ways, and the thesis aims to highlight these consequences and examine why they occurred. This is to demonstrate that one policy area is able to negatively impact transatlantic relations on a bigger scale, even during a period where Brussels-Washington cooperation remained advantageous.

Defined as all the relations between Europe and Northern America, including demographics, economy, various trade and recourses, and international institutions that bridge gaps in the policy divide between Europe and the US (Wickett, 2018, p. v). Indeed, the transatlantic relationship has many benefits. The EU is the biggest trade partner to the US and vice versa, and encompasses several of Washington's most important military allies (Burns, 2018), and the transatlantic partners have advanced human rights, democracy, free trade, free internet, disarmament, and rule of law and tolerance when teamed up effectively (Scharioth, 2018). The US has been called an "indispensable" partner for the EU, and scholars characterize the transatlantic relationship as one of the key features of international relations since the Second World War (Newsome, 2018, p. 588; Riddervold & Newsome, 2018, p. 506, 511-517). Questions concerning what burdens should be shared during and after events such as the Arab Spring, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and achieving stability in North Africa have risen in recent years (Simón, 2015, p. 972-973). The EU and the US have a lot to gain by continuing an effective and cooperative relationship when faced with such a challenge. Along with these policy issues, the migrant crisis has emerged as an agenda-setting topic (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p 12).

During its peak, the migrant crisis was arguably *the* dominant issue in political agendas within the EU (Peters & Besley, 2015, p. 1371), as well as capturing the attention of politicians, the media, and the public on almost a daily basis (Kehr, 2015). Although other major agenda-setting crises occurred concurrently, such as Brexit, the migrant crisis still remained important. The number of

annual migrants applying for asylum in the EU during this period was higher than ever before (Ostrand, 2015, p. 255), and the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2019) and the UN (UNHCR, 2019) has called it a massive humanitarian crisis. Undoubtedly, the migrant situation has been a major event from the last seven years and is a relevant topic to explore in depth to get a better understanding of how the transatlantic relationship develops during political crises, particularly concerning migration policy.

### ***Literature review***

This literature review is separated into two parts. The first explores research surrounding other crises within the transatlantic relationship. This is to give perspective on how Brussels and Washington handled other policy areas, and what conclusions previous research has done about them. The second part will explore previous research surrounding transatlantic relations during the migrant crisis.

Crises have been common within the transatlantic relationship. The Suez Crisis put the US against France and the United Kingdom (UK), and disputes over NATO nuclear missile deployments created disputes who brought thousands of protesters out onto the streets of European cities in the 1980s, putting the relationship under pressure (Anderson, 2018, p. 624). Robert Kagan argues that the quarrel between the US and Europe about military spending has existed since the presidency of Kennedy, and been a source for tension within the transatlantic relationship over the last six decades (Kagan, 2003, p. 18-25). During the 1990s, the Bosnian war has been noted as a crisis who put strains on Brussels-Washington relations. Moreover, the responses from the EU and the US has been debated for decades (Wiener, 2016, p. 12-13). Kagan claims that American abstention from the conflict threatened NATO itself. Both Americans and Europeans started to question if the US was still committed to European security and if Europe needed American aid at all anymore. Ultimately, the crisis was resolved with the White House eventually intervening, but it still raised questions about the future (Kagan, 2003, p. 49-51).

Academics asserts that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 to be a noteworthy low point in the transatlantic relationship during the George W. Bush Administration. On 20 January 2003 the then French foreign minister Dominique de Ville delivered a speech to the UN, where he stated that France

would veto any military solution done by the US to intervene in Iraq, even though France believed that Iraq had an ongoing nuclear program (Dominique de Ville, 2003). However, other member states supported the war, such as Spain, showing that not all of the EU were in opposition towards the US on the matter (Pujante & Morales-López, 2008, p. 1-2). Furthermore, scholars at the time claimed that the relationship would never recover fully, with the financial crisis at the end of George W. Bush's presidency placing more strains on the transatlantic relationship (Anderson, 2018, p. 621, 624-625). Other scholars argue that several underlying factors led to a 'drift' from Europe. Policies from the previous Bill Clinton Administration that George W. Bush changed or withdrew, such as the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, are listed as one of the reasons, mainly because it had at the time become an important issue for the EU. However, it is also argued that the perceived backlash from the Iraq war was not as big or influential as once believed (Nielsen, 2013, p. 86-90). Nevertheless, when George W. Bush's presidency ended, many hoped that the transatlantic relationship would experience an upswing. However, this would prove to not necessarily be the case.

Generally, scholars argue that the transatlantic relationship has been marked by ups and downs during Obama's presidency (Dimitrova, 2014, p. 1-5). His foreign policy during the second term was characterized with an increased focus on the Middle East and North Africa issues such as the Islamic State, counterterrorism, and a higher willingness to confront situations more realistically and agree that the US' actions sometimes did not align with its ideals (Bentley & Holland, 2017). In an increasingly globalized world, what was once local problems has impacts felt almost everywhere, such as the inflow of migrants into Europe (Bell, 2009, p. 89). However, Obama's presidency did not bring a new golden age in transatlantic relations as many Europeans thought it would. This golden age would completely leave behind the general unilateralist foreign policy the Bush Administration had towards their European allies. However, after stepping into office, Obama declared that American security concerns had shifted from Europe towards Asia, identifying himself as America's first Pacific President (The White House, 2009). Examples of this can be seen at the beginning of the Arab Spring that quickly showed both sides had different strategies to deal with it: the American focus was more towards a rebalancing of relations in the Middle East and North Africa, while the EU prioritized migration and energy concerns. Nonetheless, they both agreed to that authoritarian regimes were no longer a good option for stability in the region (Tocci & Alcar, 2012, p. 17-18).

Obama barely mentioned Europe in his speeches before becoming president, and his impatience with the EU did get noticed (Nielsen, 2013, p. 90-91, 103). Research focus on events such as the Russian intervention in Ukraine in 2014 and the joint work on a treaty concerning Iran's nuclear program, to be proof of a success in bettering the transatlantic relationship during Obama's second term, even though the beginning of his second Administration initially started rough with the NSA leak from Edward Snowden (Anderson, 2018, p. 630-634). Positive developments in the transatlantic relationship during this period is also something that has been addressed by the EU. The European Commission reported in 2018 that American investment within the EU is three times higher compared to that of Asian nations, and EU investment in the US is eight times the amount of European investment in India and China, which makes it the most integrated economic relationship in the world, as well as defining the shape of the global economy as a whole (European Commission, 2018). Furthermore, the EU holds regular dialogues with the US concerning everything from security policies to problems concerning the environment. However, it is clear that most scholars today regard the relationship as being in a weakened state, and that Washington and Brussels have diverged on a number of policy areas.

Some claim that this divergence is a result of the EU's own, internal policies, but also as a result of a changing US administration and diverging perspectives, policies, and positions on international issues (Riddervold & Newsome, 2018, p. 517-518). Others argue that it is a consequence of increased unity between EU member states in on issues like environmental policies, while the US continues to be reluctant on similar topics they are not familiar (Smith, 2018a, p. 547). The EU is going its own way when dealing with international issues, relying less on American cooperation. There is a decline in the salience and solidarity of the broader transatlantic relationship. Some even conclude that transatlantic relations are effectively dead when it comes to environmental issues, particularly with the American exit out of the Paris Agreement (Cross, 2018, p. 583-584). Similarly, scholars have also noted a weakened transatlantic relationship in areas of security and defence, as a result of an increasingly united EU as a security actor, which relies less on NATO and American military support (Smith, 2018b, p. 605, 614-616). In general, scholars maintain the position that the transatlantic relationship has experienced problematic times, as well as rewarding periods, but currently is in a weak state. This is important for the thesis since the already weakened state could make the impact of the migrant crisis more

severe. The next part of the literature review will explore previous research during the migrant crisis.

The migrant crisis has divided member states on what policy approach should be taken to create a solution (Peters & Besley, 2015, p. 1371). Previous research points out that this divide is a possible challenge to the transatlantic relationship. Oliver and Williams (2016) argue that fragmentation in the EU's defence cooperation reflects weakened European unity, with issues such as the economic crisis, and the migrant crisis causing support for nationalist parties and Euroscepticism to reach new heights. This has allowed for alternative political forces to grow, who are generally anti-American. This has further led to scepticism towards how Brussels has dealt with it and arguably influenced how events such as Brexit came to be. Psychologists claiming that the many different cultures and nations within the EU make it harder to create a proper, effective response to the migrant crisis, as well as battling the rise of alternative political ideas, compared to the US who is one nation with a more homogeneous culture (Postelnicescu, 2016). This also includes European countries becoming more sceptic towards each other. Nationalism within the EU is on the rise, and the transatlantic relationship can suffer as a result. Oliver and Williams (2016) also note that US attention is moving away from the EU, towards Asia. This comes as a result of Obama's pivot towards Asian countries. Another issue they note is American irritation at European nations' low military spending, leading to doubts in how much Washington is willing to do for European security. Lastly, they claim that the US is also experiencing similar challenges as the EU, with increased populist agendas within American politics and policy approaches, with more people questioning the US' traditional institutions and sources of authority.

The American response to the migrant crisis is another factor that affected the transatlantic relations according to some scholars. Some scholars are critical towards the Obama Administration's policy towards the Middle East, claiming that the US is not taking proper responsibility. Lucassen (2018) argues that the American occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan did not bring long-term stability, and coincided with the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2013. This caused the massive influx of migrants into the EU. Paul Williams (2016) heavily critiqued the Strategic Absence program; a policy which emphasizes absence in foreign politics, rather than taking an active part. According to him, this has led to a degradation of American influence in the region, ultimately aggravating the conflicts seen in Syria, as well as Yemen, Iraq, and Libya

(Williams, 2016, p. 83-85, 98-101). Similar claims are made by other scholars, pointing out the US as one of the main contributors to the migrant crisis, along with countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Iran (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p. 16). American resistance to take in a meaningful number of migrants caused much resentment from European countries who considered themselves forced to deal with the majority of the crisis (Wickett, 2018, p. 37-38). However, Barack Obama stated in a speech to the UN on 20 September 2016 that “we all know that what is happening in Syria, for example, is unacceptable. And we are not as unified as we should be in pushing to make it stop” (The White House, 2016b, 4:48). This shows signs of acknowledgement from the American president that the transatlantic relationship was under pressure when it came to policies concerning migration. However, the total amount that was accepted into the US was a million less compared to the European countries accepting the most, like Germany (Momin, 2017, p. 72). This shows a divergence in how the two transatlantic partners approach a crisis like this.

Other scholars further argue similar points. Akasemi Newsome (2018) compares the transatlantic responses on the Kosovo war and the Syrian Civil War. She claims that the transatlantic relationship has weakened in human rights issues, with the withdrawal of American leadership as the main reason. During the Kosovo crisis, US leadership resulted in EU states agreeing to host migrants affected by the war, leading to a strengthening of transatlantic relations under American hegemony. Comparably, the Syrian crisis saw both Brussels and Washington act on their own, leading to *unravelling relations*. However, it is not claimed that the absence of US leadership is the only explanation to the inability for the EU to act in the Syrian migrant crisis (Newsome, 2018, p. 599-600).

Nicole Ostrand’s comparison of the responses to the Syrian refugee crisis from Germany, Sweden, the UK, and the US stresses that a more even distribution of Syrian migrants between industrialized states is needed to ease the burden on certain regions (Ostrand, 2015, p. 273-274). Noting that the White House has contributed a disproportionate share financially compared to bigger EU nations like Spain and France. By January 2015, the European Commission along with its member states had contributed 3.5 billion USD to humanitarian aid, development, economic and stabilization assistance to Syrian migrants. Between 2012 and 2014 the US donated 2.9 billion, with more than 1.4 billion being allocated to help migrants displaced in the Middle East and North Africa. Clearly,

economic aid is an important part of how Washington and Brussels approach these policy issues. Other academics claim that while the EU's response to the migrant crisis was relatively poor, it is still more capable than the UN in taking responsibility (Niemann & Zaun, 2018). Hence, the EU's policy towards humanitarian aid and migrant help is generally effective. However, Ostrand further states that the financial support given so far is not enough to properly help all of the displaced migrants, noting that not all donations reach their targets, like the Syrian Regional Response Plan which only reached 61 percent of the estimated 3.74 billion USD needed to properly cover the needs of all Syrian migrants and host communities in 2014 (Ostrand, 2015, p. 265-266). Conclusively, this literature points out that the EU and the US show different policy approaches on how to deal with the migrant crisis, particularly policy approaches on how to deal with humanitarian aid.

Arguments have been made that are not as critical of how the transatlantic relationship has dealt with humanitarian issues such as the migrant crisis. *Geography* and *proximity* are important factors when it comes to policies concerning migration. The US' relative geographical isolation allows for greater control of migration inflows, compared to European countries. This has also led to a feeling of vulnerability among some member states (Wickett, 2018, p. 13, 33-34). Hence, one cannot be as critical towards the US and their policy approaches to the migrant crisis, because of their geographical location, which naturally leads them to have other focus when setting the political agenda.

Conclusively, there are no studies concerned if the transatlantic relationship has been affected either negatively or positively as a result of the migration situation from 2013 to 2017. Newsome's article explores how the Syrian Civil War has affected the transatlantic relationship on humanitarian issues and does not explore migration as a whole during this period. Moreover, Ostrand, Wickett and Newsome's articles are case and comparative studies, not policy analysis. Using a mixed methods approach to answer the research question will make it possible to analyse if the migrant crisis has affected certain parts of transatlantic relations or the entire relationship in general. Moreover, no studies examine the various cooperation between Brussels and Washington throughout this period, but rather focus on how the transatlantic relationship has experienced setbacks in policy areas such as humanitarian aid. This thesis will fill these research gaps.



## ***Methodology***

This thesis will use a mixed methods approach to analyse and answer the research question. It is based on an inductive design and a qualitative exploration if one policy area could affect the much bigger area that is the transatlantic relationship. Process tracing, causality, and policy analysis are used to get an understanding of how Brussels and Washington responded to the migrant crisis. It is important to note that this thesis will be guided by these concepts to answer the research question, and not follow each of their steps. Both the existing and new policies developed to tackle the migrant crisis by the EU and the US are going to be analysed. Meetings between European and American leaders who sat in office concurrent with the migrant crisis will also be explored. Ultimately, this will show if the transatlantic relationship is at a better or worse place in 2017 than in 2013, or if nothing has changed at all.

Chapter I will trace the development of the migrant crisis, and look at the causality between the statistics, and the reasons for why the migrant crisis happened. Process tracing is strong on questions of how and interactions and includes documents, historical memoirs, and press accounts. It is qualitative in nature and is compatible and complementary to a range of other methods, including content analysis (Checkel, 2005, p. 6). Therefore, it is natural to use in this thesis along with policy analysis. By analysing the development of the migrant crisis, as well as using statistics from the EU on the annual inflow of migrants, will make it possible to see the causality between vital events that contributed to the worsening of the crisis. Policy analysis will also be applied in this chapter when analysing the policies the EU implemented during the crisis.

Chapter II and III will apply a policy analysis. It is an efficient method for this thesis because it can explore the various migration policies implemented by the EU and the US, on both a small and bigger scale. This means it is possible to see the short-term and long-term impacts of them, and how they influenced transatlantic relations. It is important to point out that there is no universally recognized methodology for policy analysis. It can involve deductive methods—the application of general concepts, principles, and theoretical propositions to observed phenomena—as well as inductive analysis, in which generalizations are drawn from careful observations of empirical phenomena, which are then tested against other cases (Vogel & Henstra, 2015). However, the generally accepted definition of it from Lasswell (1970), makes this is a practical method to use. According to Lasswell policy analysis produces knowledge *of*

policy as well as knowledge *for* policy. Moreover, it has according to Scholten & Nispen (2015) become a relevant method in explaining events such as the migration crisis. Policy issues such as migration and asylum seekers became increasingly more contested and politicized throughout the 2000s, leading to increased anti-migration sentiments and more opposition towards multiculturalism. As a result, migration and integration research has increased. This has called for more research concerning how the EU develop and implement its policies for migration (Scholten & Nispen, 2015, p. 2-3). Ultimately, this is making the issue this thesis is exploring considerably relevant.

The policy-making process contains five steps: agenda setting, policy formulation, adoption or decision making, implementation, and evaluation. Figure 1 illustrates how the development and implementation of new policies happens. The different ‘environments’, such as the migrant crisis, creates pressure for politicians to create new policies to solve them. After the new policy is implemented, a researcher can analyse how effective and efficient they are. Migration policy in the EU develops through these stages. The Dublin Regulation is the cornerstone of the European asylum system, with a focus on fighting illegal migration. The European Commission has taken a larger part in setting the agenda for migration policy this decade, as well as a new emphasis on cooperation with countries of transit in managing the migration flows (Wallace, et. al., 2016, p. 380-383). Lastly, this thesis will be partly based on the Five-E model proposed by Karen K. Kirst-Ashman (2016). This model evaluates policies on 1) effectiveness, 2) efficiency, 3) ethical considerations, 4) evaluation of alternatives and 5) establishment of recommendations for positive change. This model will be used when analysing the different policies that were implemented by the EU and the US, with a focus on their effectiveness and impact. When reasonable, the other steps in the model will be applied. The migration situation has been on the agenda to Brussels for many years, and somewhat for the US as well with their border to Mexico. Analysing what policies, where discussed, mentioned and implemented by the US and the EU, will show if they were effective and if their impact has influenced the transatlantic relationship.

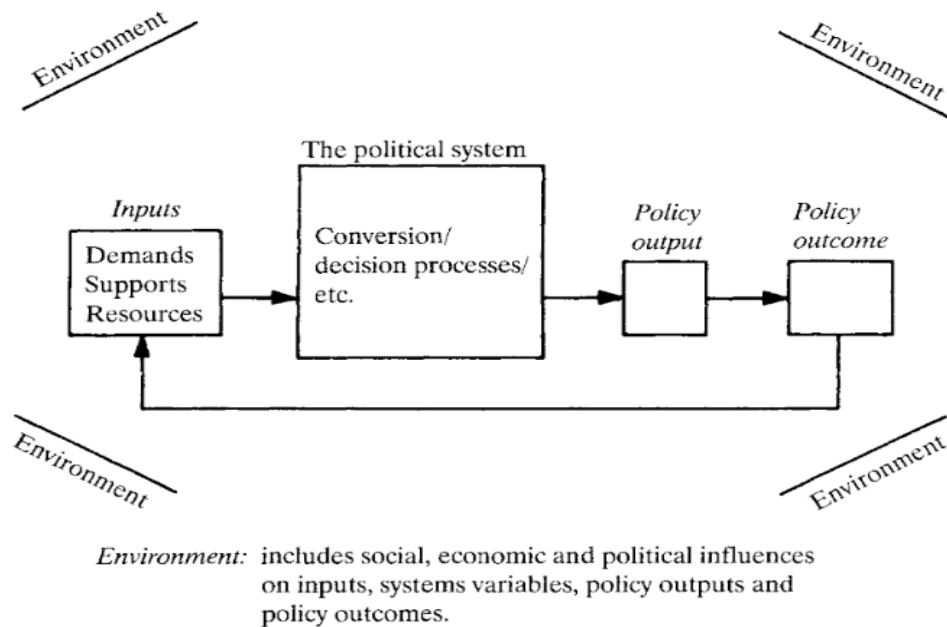


Figure 1: System model of the policy process (Hill, 2014).

Effectiveness is defined as to which extent a policy accomplishes its goals, what the outcomes of it are. When analysing this, critical thinking is vital, and ask questions to seek the correct information. Efficiency explores how economical a policy is. To which extent does the policy address the problem with the least expenditure of time, effort and money? Policies regarding migration usually involve humanitarian aid through economical means, which makes it difficult to judge a migration policy on its expenditure of money. However, policies analysed in this thesis will be explored through how efficient they were in regards to time and effort (Kirst-Ashman, 2016). Ethical considerations explore how a policy respect people’s right to dignity, confidentiality, and self-determination. This will be relevant when analysing the US and the EU’s involvement in Syria and other war-torn nations. Evaluation of alternatives explores how the policy propose the best way to address the use or solve the problem. Establishment of recommendations for positive changes analyses how the policy can be amended so it becomes more effective, efficient and ethically sound. It also considers if a policy should be removed and a new take its place.

It is important to note some weaknesses in the chosen methodology for this thesis. This is to be aware of the pitfalls one can encounter by using them, and how to avoid them. Process tracing is weak at establishing structural context and takes a significant amount of time and data (Checkel,

2005, p. 6). Because of time and space constraints in this thesis, Chapter I will focus on the most important events that took place between 2013 and 2017 and establish causality between them. The biggest limitation of the policy analysis used in this thesis is that effectiveness is difficult to measure. However, by examining how much of its goals the various policies achieved, will give an answer on how effective they were with dealing with the challenges the EU and the US faced. Moreover, the most important approach to overcome these limitations is to use critical thinking and ask questions to seek information (Kirst-Ashman, 2016, p. 234). The Five-E model examines how economical a policy is when examining how efficient it is, but also how much time and effort it takes to implement. This thesis will only focus on time and effort because big parts of migration policy are humanitarian aid, where the goal in many cases is to increase economic spending. This will make it hard to measure and properly examine the efficiency of migration policies, when the Five-E model is based on the least expenditure, the better (Kirst-Ashman, 2016, p. 235). Lastly, since this thesis analyses the development and implementation of policies that occurred during a time where it was important to save time and be as efficient in implementing them as possible, makes it natural to focus on the time and effort that it took to create new policies.

Moreover, this thesis will focus solely on EU-US relations, non-EU European states are not taken into consideration when exploring how the effects of migration influenced the transatlantic relationship. When referring to Europeans throughout the thesis, EU-citizens are what is meant. Most importantly, when arguments are made that state the transatlantic relationship has experienced negative consequences, divergence, and other problems as a result of the migrant crisis, this can refer to how Europeans regard the US, disparities in how Brussels and Washington approach policy-making and policy issues, as well as the EU going their own way in dealing with international problems. To avoid exploring migration developments that are too recent, where one risk to study topics that quickly changes, not achieving the best possible result and conclusions, 2017 has been chosen as a cut-off date.

Lastly, it is important to note the difference between an *asylum seeker*, defined by the UN as a person who has fled his or her own country and seek sanctuary in another but has not yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting for a decision on their asylum claim (UN, 2018), a *refugee*, a person fleeing their own country because they were at a serious risk of human rights

violations, and a *migrant*, a person who are both forced to flee, but also include those who moved freely. Generally, it is a person who lives in another country than they were born. According to the UN “the dominant forms of migration can be distinguished according to the motives (economic, family reunion, refugees) or legal status (irregular migration, controlled emigration/immigration, free emigration/immigration) of those concerned” (UNESCO, 2017). This thesis will focus on the former, use the term migrant when referring to refugees, asylum seekers and other non-EU citizens. This is to be sure that the thesis examines the total amount of non-EU citizens that migrated. *Migration* refers to both political and economic migration that was registered by various organisations and organs within the EU. The statistics regarding migration in this thesis will be about *legal* migration into the EU. Ikenberry (2008) defines a *crisis* as ‘an extraordinary moment when the existence and viability of the political order are called into question’. In regard to this thesis, a situation where it is vital for the EU to function properly to overcome it. The UN and the European Parliament emphasises the number of refugees globally (40 million) when explaining why we are experiencing a migrant crisis (UN, 2018; European Parliament, 2017a). Since all migration will be explored, this thesis will use the term migration crisis, not a refugee crisis.

## ***Structure of the thesis***

### *Chapter I: The origins and development of the migrant crisis from 2013 to 2017*

This chapter analyses the development of the migrant crisis between 2013 and 2017. Generally, the chapter highlights various impacts the development of the crisis had on the transatlantic relationship, which will be further explored in depth in chapter II and III. The first part of the chapter will analyse the origin and development of the crisis from 2013 to 2015. The second part of this chapter explores why the influx of migrants into the EU has decreased from 2015 to 2017. The third and final part will analyse the new policies proposed and implemented by the EU.

### *Chapter II: EU-US cooperation during the migrant crisis*

This chapter will bring up multiple points that show how the EU and the US rarely directly discussed how they could cooperate in the migrant crisis, even though they on many occasions championed for increased transatlantic solutions. The first part examines meetings between Barack Obama and various EU presidents, which further proves this argument. The second part analyses criticisms from political commentators, politicians, and scholars on American policy towards the Middle East and the handling of the migrant crisis. The most important point of this chapter is to point out underlining issues between Brussels and Washington that would eventually lead to bigger consequences, leading into the third and final chapter.

### *Chapter III: The impact of the migrant crisis on transatlantic relations*

Chapter III analyses if the criticism raised by commentators, politicians, and scholars in chapter II are reflective of what the majority of Europeans feel. Surveys show that distrust towards the US and Obama remained sizeable, with a massive increase in 2017. It also explores domestic opposition towards the resettlement of migrants. Domestic opposition in both the EU and the US created obstacles to create a proper, effective response in how the resettlement of migrants should take place, leading to increased scepticism from member states in the EU, as well as putting blame on the Obama Administration for creating the migrant crisis, undermining the transatlantic relationship.

# Chapter I

## The origins and development of the migrant crisis

### *Development of the migrant crisis from 2013 to 2015*

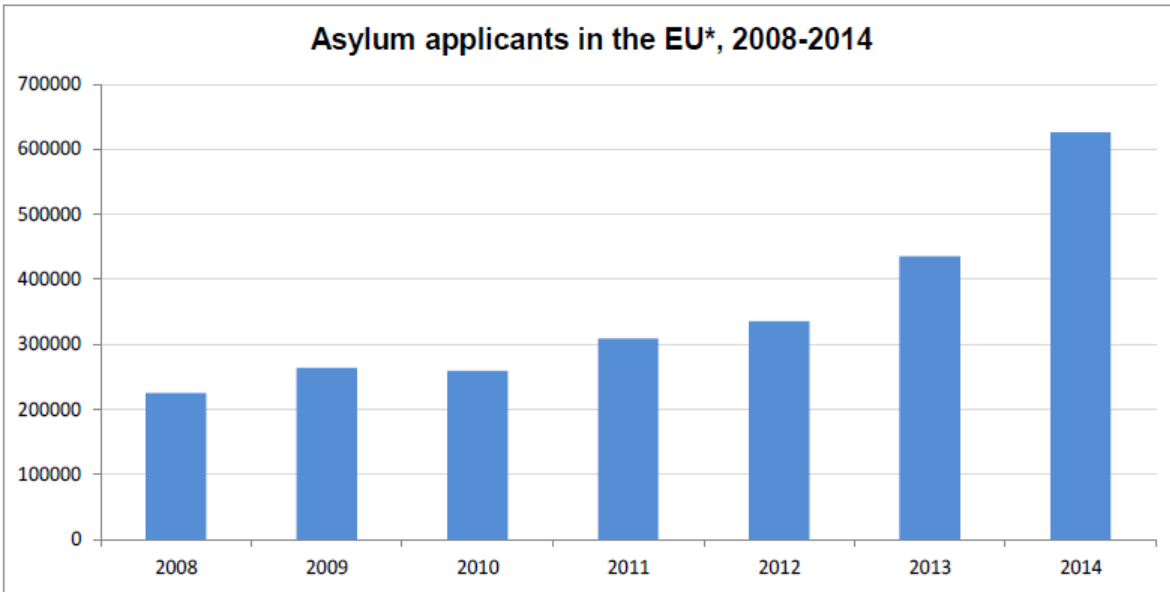
Why did the influx of migration of non-EU citizens increase drastically between 2013 and 2015? The worsening of the Syrian Civil War is often claimed to be the main reason for the migrant crisis (Tyyska, et. al., 2017 & Carlier, 2016). Originally, it started as an armed conflict between the government forces of President Bashar Al-Assad and various rebel groups. However, it progressed into a multinational sectarian war between the influential and political powerful Shiite minority and the Sunni majority. The foundations for this conflict were arguably created in the early 1970s with the Arab Ba'ath Party and then President Hafiz Al-Assad adopting an ideology of pan-Arabism against the Sunni Arabs, ultimately creating deep divides between the majority ethnic group and the minorities. The intervention of other countries added another layer to the conflict, and the EU and US' role in the conflict has been both controversial and complex (Tyyska, et. al., 2017, p. 2-5). Arguments in Brussels and Washington about what policy approach would be the best for Syria were on the top of the political agenda for months. Security concerns regarding the Middle East have always been important in the transatlantic relationship, with American and European presence in Iraq and Afghanistan exemplifying this. Syria is now the most recent issue of how transatlantic cooperation should be implemented in the Middle East. Additionally, with the growth and conquests of the Islamic State, unrest further increased, causing more Syrians to be both internally and externally displaced, as well as increased pressure on the US and the EU to deal with the situation (Carlier, 2016, p. 57). Their attacks showed an ethnic side to the war, with violent clashes between Kurdish military groups, and the persecution of non-Muslim minorities.

Ultimately, all these factors ruined the Syrian infrastructure. From the start of the Arab Spring to 2015 the Syrian economy had been gradually weaker with every year passing. An increasingly higher annual amount started to move through Turkey or over the Mediterranean Sea into the EU. With one in five migrants being Syrian, it is clear that the Syrian Civil War acted as a catalyst for the massive influx in migrants. The bleak future that most Syrians felt they faced in their home nations is also an important factor for why the increase in migrants reached new heights in 2015.

After four years of civil war, reports about a sense of hopelessness surfaced (Lehne, et. al., 2015). Additionally, being a migrant in the neighbouring countries to Syria, especially Jordan and Lebanon, is living in limbo: Syrians are not available to work, have restricted movements, and only surviving on aid. Migrating further away became a better solution. The EU, with its close geographical location, was the natural destination. This is an important point when analysing how this has influenced transatlantic relations, because the US' location makes it much more difficult for African and Middle Eastern migrants to travel there, hence creating the massive pressure that the EU experienced.

The consequences of the development in the Syrian Civil War is illustrated in figure 2, where the number of asylum applicants the EU received between 2008 and 2014 increased from over 200,000 annually to over 600,000. Multiple reports from Eurostat show that the beginning of the decade experienced a generally stable amount of non-EU citizens applying for asylum annually (Eurostat, 2015a & 2015b). The years 2008 to 2012 received around 200,000 to 300,000 asylum applicants annually, as shown in figure 2. The largest group all these years were Syrians (European Commission, 2014, p. 4). During 2015 and 2016, over 1,300,000 and 1,200,000 applied for asylum, both being the years who experienced the highest influx (Eurostat, 2018a & European Commission, 2017a). This period also saw an increase in migrants from nations that the EU had not usually received large amounts from previously, as reported by the high amounts of first-time asylum applicants (Eurostat, 2016). Nationals from Libya, Eritrea, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen, were among the biggest demographics during this period, along with Syrians. The civil wars in Somalia and Eritrea were the biggest contributors to this, including the disintegration of the central Libyan state that opened new passages into the EU (Geddes & Scholten, 2016). Nevertheless, the biggest group continued to be Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis throughout this period. It is important to note that these numbers are just the official total for all asylum applicants the EU got and that the total number of non-EU citizens who migrated during this period is likely higher. The European Parliament (2017a) reported that at the height of the migrant influx, over 2.2 million people were illegally present in the EU. However, they also stated that this number has steadily dropped and in 2017 it was considered to be around 600,000.





\* EU refers to EU27 (excluding Croatia) for the years 2008 to 2012 and to EU28 for 2013 and 2014.

Figure 2: Asylum applicants in the EU from 2008 to 2014 (Eurostat, 2015b). It is important to note that these show only asylum applicants and not the total amount of migrant resettled within the EU each year.

Certain member states' open border policy during 2015 are also mentioned, if not blamed, by some politicians when explaining the large migrant influx. French mayor of Calais, Natacha Bouchart, stated British benefit systems were the reason for the migrant crisis in Western Europe. She claimed migrants moved to France to enter the UK through the port of Calais or the Channel Tunnel. This was in response to the now-closed Calais Jungle, a massive migrant camp hosting over 8,000 migrants at its peak (Kern, 2016). When examining the annual inflow in France and the UK in figure 3, it is clear that the former resettled a higher amount of migrants, giving Bouchart's statement credence. However, the Calais Jungle shut down in October 2016, and France has continued to experience annual increases in migrants. Thus, there are other contributing factors to the crisis, also in regards to France. Other commentators claim the West cannot be blamed for the situation in the Middle East, pointing out Arab nations' history of human rights violations as the true reason for the crisis (Berry, et. al., 2016, p. 47, 152-179). Furthermore, Germany's role in the migrant crisis has been important, as their policy approaches greatly influenced the rest of the EU. This includes the public opinion on migration, which would further influence the transatlantic relationship. Figure 3 illustrates the disparity in the amount that Germany resettled compared to other member states. Taking a leading role within

the EU on how to respond to the migrant crisis, Germany announced in 2015 that the Dublin Regulation would be suspended for Syrian migrants.

The Dublin Regulation determines which member state is responsible for examining a given asylum application. Under the “sovereignty clause” in the regulation, Germany became the member state responsible for processing all Syrian refugee claims, which permitted the entry of the 1.1 million migrants in 2015. This amount far exceeded the number of migrants German authorities predicted to resettle that year, which led to reception sites being overwhelmed (Momin, 2017, p. 67). Moreover, after a meeting with a Palestinian migrant in July 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced to take in Syrian migrants in August the same year. The meeting and decision received international attention, and caused controversy around German migration policy, and has been cited as another reason for the overwhelming amount of migrants that arrived throughout 2015, particularly the concern that certain member states resettled an uneven amount compared to others (Connolly, 2015 & Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p. 14-15). Conclusively, these controversies show that tension began spreading throughout the EU as a result of the crisis.

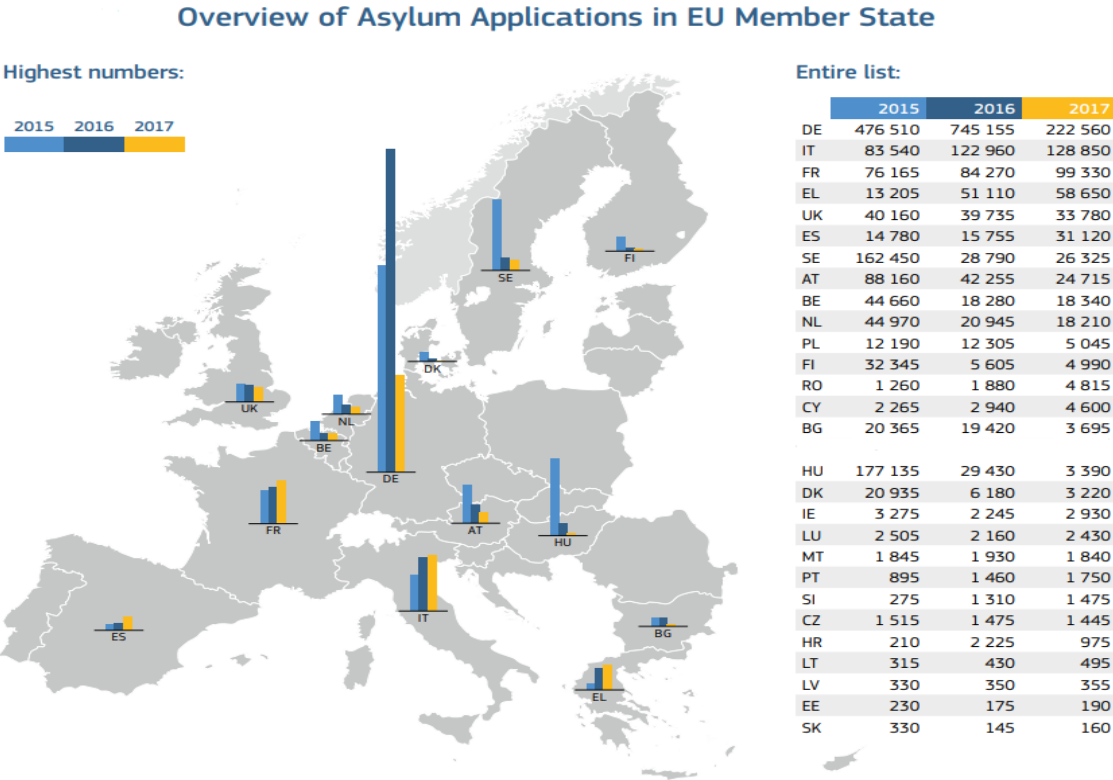


Figure 3: Overview of Asylum Applicants in the EU from 2015 to 2017 (European Commission, 2018).

The Syrian Civil War, liberal migration policies, and the temporary abandonment of the Dublin Regulation could be evidence of the escalation in annual asylum applications. However, it is also imperative to analyse the consequences of the asylum system within the EU at the beginning of the crisis. Before the migrant crisis, the legal framework for migration policy was the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Work began already in 1999 to create a common asylum policy which eventually leads to the CEAS (European Commission, 2019b). It covers all aspects of the asylum process, including the minimum standards for the treatment of all asylum seekers and applications. It has a support agency, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), which has the task of making sure every member state adheres to the CEAS.

Furthermore, the main goal of the EASO is to make sure that individual asylum cases are handled in a coherent way across all member states. This is to avoid conflicts and unjust treatment. However, as reported by the European Commission, the CEAS has since its inception been criticized for an unbalanced treatment of member states, that can almost be described as arbitrary. Notably, member states vary in their recognition of it (European Commission, 2016a). The EASO lacked the funds and power to sanction member states that did not adhere to the CEAS, further creating an asylum policy lacking coherence. Ultimately, it represented a weak institution within the EU that were not able to properly respond to the migrant crisis (Newsome, 2018, p. 596-600). The EASO lacked funds to properly implement the policies of the CEAS, not meeting the needs of the EU when it was truly needed. Based on this, and in accordance with the Five-E policy analysis approach, the EASO and CEAS lacked effectiveness and efficiency.

The Dublin Regulation has also received criticisms for being ineffective. The European Commission pointed out that the crisis exposed weaknesses in the Dublin Regulation, particularly with how the increase in irregular entries created massive pressure on certain member states, while others resettled a much smaller amount (European Commission, 2019a). Germany's suspension of it during 2015, gives further proof to the claim that it was yet another inefficient institutional tool within the EU to tackle the migrant situation. Moreover, this gives support to this chapter's claim that the asylum system that was in place within the EU at the onset of the migrant crisis was not adequate, being one of the sources that created transatlantic tensions as a result.

Ultimately, the EU was unprepared to deal with the migrant crisis. Step four in the Five-E approach is to evaluate potential alternative policies. It is rational to assume that proper implementation of

the CEAS by member states, along with a more influential EASO, including a revised Dublin Regulation could have changed the migrant situation early on. A more evenly distribution of migrants between member states could have avoided conflicts within the EU on how to deal with the situation. Nevertheless, with migration into the EU decreasing in the early years leading up to 2013, and the quick escalation of the Arab Spring, it is hard to say with certainty if a new and updated CEAS, a more powerful EASO and a more efficient Dublin Regulation, could have handled the migrant crisis in a more effective and efficient way. Even if EU asylum policies were more coherent and better implemented before 2013, the task of an even resettling of migrants throughout the EU, would still be massive and most likely lead to friction between member states nonetheless.

### ***Development of the migrant crisis from 2015 to 2017***

Further examination of figure 3 shows that after 2015, the influx of migrants has decreased. 712,000 migrants applied for asylum in an EU member state in 2017. During the following year, the total amount went down with 10% (Eurostat, 2018c). Why did the influx of migration of non-EU citizens decrease from 2015 to 2017? The EU's resettlement plan with Turkey played an important part. On 18 March 2016 the EU Heads of State and Government together with Turkey came to an agreement regarding the irregular migration from the Turkish border into the EU. It stated that migrants who had crossed the border into Greece illegally would be returned to Turkey (European Commission, 2016b). However, the EU-Turkey deal is not the only explanation for why the annual number of migrants decreased after 2015. As figure 4 shows, border crossings into the EU through Greece, already declined before the passing of the EU-Turkey deal. Other factors also play into this, such as seasonal effects and the closure of the Balkan route (van Liempt, et. al., 2017, p. 8). Moreover, another explanation is that by the time the EU-Turkey deal came into effect, most migrants from Syria had already left and most were stuck in Greece. Staying in yet another limbo in Greek migrant camps would be so unappealing to those who still were on the move that they decided to wait or use other routes into the EU. Lastly, the EU-Turkey deal also aims to get the number of deaths on the Mediterranean down by working against smugglers, which, as seen in figure 4, went down in 2016. Conclusively, even when considering other explanations for the decline in irregular migration, the EU-Turkey deal

has still proven to be an effective policy. The amount of annual irregular arrivals has continued to decrease (European Council, 2019), including deaths on the Mediterranean (see also figure 7, p. 40). The goal of the policy has been reached, and other alternatives to it as the situation is today would be illogical, since they would most likely take much time and money to develop and implement, thus not being efficient enough to compete with the already established deal.

Irregular migration has declined as a result of the EU-Turkey deal as reported by the European Council. This is also illustrated in reports from Eurostat (2018c). Moreover, the European Commission reported that 709,200 people applied for asylum during 2017, a decrease of 43 percent compared to 2016 (European Commission, 2018). Syrians continued to be the biggest group. Interestingly, when analysing figure 3, member states such as Greece, Italy, France, and Italy continued to experience an annual increase, while other member states had massive decreases. This is because of their locations. Southern European member states are often the first countries non-EU citizens file asylum applicants to. They will naturally receive more asylum applications, and most likely stay there while their application is being reviewed. Another important point in the new policy approaches by the EU is that other member states should aid Greece, Italy, and France in resettling migrants (European Commission, 2018, p. 6), giving more support to the assertion that they continued to experience increase in asylum applicants after 2015 as a result of their geographical locations. Nonetheless, figure 3 clearly shows that Northern, Western, and Central European member states received much fewer applicants after 2015. This points to these member states implementing policies to resettle fewer migrants (European Commission, 2018), and a shift in the approach the EU took in dealing with the migrant crisis.

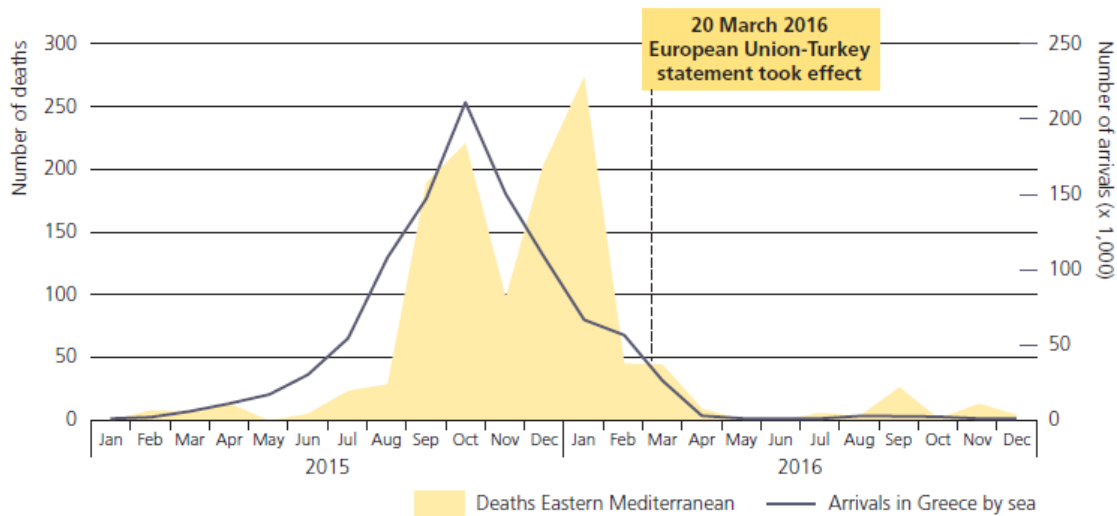


Figure 4: Number of arrivals and deaths in the Eastern Mediterranean from 2015 to 2016 (van Liempt, et. al., 2017).

The argument that a shift in the policy approach within the EU happened after 2015 is further supported when analysing how Germany developed its migrant policies. By 2016, German authorities, along with other EU member states, introduced a stricter policy towards migration, even tightening free movement rules; not allowing migrants to leave the zones for their Foreigner Registration Office. Reasons for this are varied. Some claim the media backlash from the terror attacks in Paris in November 2015 by Islamic terrorists and the sexual assaults in Cologne, Hamburg and other cities on New Year's Eve that followed in December 2015, caused a shift in the political and public mood towards migrants (Mushaben, 2017). The Berlin terror attack on 19 December 2016 that took 12 lives and injured 50 at a Christmas market, further increased scepticism towards Merkel's approach to the crisis, even though many Berliners took to the street in solidarity in wake of the incident.

The concern that high levels of migration of non-EU citizens could lead to events like these had already been mentioned by certain member states before they happened. Like previous research points out: different philosophies on how to approach the migrant crisis started to appear within the EU (Peters & Besley, 2015). Suddenly, those championing for stricter border controls were able to achieve much more influence on the political agenda. As a result, anti-migration policies became more accepted after 2015, including increased scepticism towards Brussels and the EU in general. Ultimately, national security concerns became a bigger concern in 2016, leading to a more stifled migrant resettlement. Based on this it is reasonable to claim that a shift occurred

within the EU, making stricter migration laws and policies more acceptable. This new approach in migration policy, along with a bigger acceptance for anti-migration discourse, is one of the key factors to why the EU has seen an increase in anti-Americanism, which will be explored in depth in Chapter II.

### ***Policy approaches to the migrant crisis within the EU***

Before the Syrian Civil War worsened, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the member states knew about the problems within the EASO and CEAS. It was generally accepted that the EU never truly had a ‘common’ asylum policy, but they disagreed on the methods that could be used to make it more coherent. Already in 2009, the Parliament argued for improvements to the system, claiming national solutions are no longer sufficient to solve migration and asylum issues (Newsome, 2018, p. 596-597), and it pointed out in 2014 that the EASO needed more funding (European Parliament, 2014, p. 2-3). Furthermore, the European Parliament argued that the Dublin Regulation was ineffective and created a discrepancy between member states that received a much higher influx of migrants compared to others. Especially between member states that were poorly prepared to handle a massive amount of non-EU citizens. It claimed member states usually forged their own individual paths on issues of migration and chose not to cooperate with each other to adhere to the Dublin Regulation. However, the European Commission and various member states disagreed with the European Parliament on how much reform was needed. Again it is clear that the effectiveness and efficiency of the already existing policies were not adequate. However, because of disagreement between the Commission and Parliament, the development of a new policy did not take place, thus never moving past the second stage in policy making, namely policy formulation. In regards to figure 1 (p. 13), the EU did not agree internally on the decision process, so no policy output got implemented.

Then-president of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, said in 2013 that the EU needs better-coordinated responses, and a fairer system for the relocation of migrants (European Parliament, 2013). He stated the same in April 2015, as well as stating that the EU needs to do more to save lives in the Mediterranean that is “turning into a graveyard” (European Parliament, 2015b). Furthermore, in 2013, after a visit to a migrant camp in Italy, then President of the European

Commission José Manuel Durão Barroso, said the EU is working towards a common asylum and migration policy, that will aid in a more efficient mechanism in dealing with migrants (Barroso, 2013). Interestingly, even though it was on the agenda for the European Commission and European Parliament for years, the adoption and implementation of it, remained non-existing. In accordance with the Five-E model: both the presidents of the European Parliament and the European Commission championed for a more effective and efficient asylum policy for the EU after the migrant crisis landed on the agenda setting. This resulted in alternatives being taken for a positive change. The development and push for policy change within the EU show similarities to how Obama pushed for reform in the American asylum system (Obama, 2013, 3:50), but disagreements in the government made this difficult.

It was not until May 2015 that policy changes were made, finally allowing the policy-making process within the EU to move past stage two, and into implementation. This allows for analysis of the outcome of it. This new policy approach would also create a greater convergence in the asylum system of the EU (European Commission, 2015). At this point, reaching a consensus on the migration issue was vital. The same month, the EU foreign policy chief, serving as the President of the Foreign Affairs Council, Federica Mogherini, sought authorization by the UN Security Council to use military force against human smugglers and their boats (Park, 2015). The proposal did not come into implementation, with Russia claiming they would veto any proposal aiming to destroy smuggler's boats. However, the proposal's idea of military force shows that the EU at this point was considering rather alternative ideas. Nevertheless, between 2015 and 2017 several reforms and legislative proposals from the European Commission was adopted by member states and the European Parliament to create a more efficient common asylum policy. This process is called the *European Agenda on Migration*.

Figure 4 shows every reform and legislative proposal that were adopted by member states and the European Parliament from May 2015 to September 2015. These marks the 15 first reforms proposed by the European Commission in the Agenda. The ones marked green was adopted, while the ones marked red are still waiting to be adopted. As figure 5 illustrates, all except one were adopted, illustrating a willingness from both the European Parliament and member states to reach solutions for the migrant crisis. Most likely this is because of the massive pressure the EU felt during the heights of the crisis. Most noticeably, the Agenda on Migration developed without no



influence from the US, giving support to how the literature claim that the EU and the US on migrant policy are diverging from each other, or failing to cooperate properly (Ostrand, 2015: Momin, 2017: Newsome, 2018). This is a vital point, as the Agenda is the most important policy approach and response from the EU, and will be analysed in depth in Chapter II.

Figure 4 illustrates that the EU focused on resettling migrants from Southern European member states, such as Italy and Greece. This comes as no surprise; as they had for a long period struggled with the massive pressure the influx had put them on, along with their own domestic issues. Most likely, this was also because to mitigate the growth of tension felt in these countries, including the sentiment that Brussels and the rest of the EU are leaving them to deal with the crisis themselves. It would be the first steps towards a more evenly distributed resettlement program. Moreover, another big part of the first 15 reforms was to contribute with more financial support to various emergency foundations within the EU, as well as to nations plagued by conflicts, such as Syria and various African nations.

Ultimately, the European Agenda on Migration's two main goals were to put in place tools that could better manage migration flows, and to move from a system characterised by poor design and implementation, to one that controls irregular migration flows with unity among member states (European Commission, 2016a). Summarized, it aimed to 1) aid member states facing the most migrants with relocation, 2) increase in the budget for relocation, 3) increase emergency funding, 4) better surveillance in the Mediterranean, 5) stop illegal smuggling over the Mediterranean, 6) establishing a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to stop human traffickers. These are all the key pillars of the Agenda. To achieve these goals it proposed changes in the Dublin Regulation, reinforce the EU's fingerprint database, EURODAC, and change the EASO to a European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) with increased mandate and influence, and a bigger budget (European Asylum Support Office, 2019). A bigger budget for the EASO would make it able to properly make sure every member state adheres to the new CEAS. This would eventually lead to a more coherent asylum policy, and a better approach to the crisis overall.

However, as figure 6 shows, of all the reforms and legislative proposals that were adopted by member states and the European Parliament from May to June 2016, the ones that would reform the CEAS were not. The reason for this is each member states' response and scepticism to it, which Chapter III explores more in-depth. Domestic opposition to the policy approaches done by

Brussels and Washington is something that has been an important obstacle in the process for a solution to the migration crisis. However, it is clear that if member states want to reach the most effective and efficient migrant policy, they should evaluate the changes the Agenda proposes to do with the CEAS. It is clear that at the moment, no better policy addresses the issues of the common asylum policy, including the migrant crisis.

27 May 2015	Triple the capacities and assets for the Frontex joint operations Triton and Poseidon in 2015 and 2016
	Additional €60 million in EU emergency funding for frontline Member States
	Additional €30 million for EU Regional Development and Protection Programmes (RDPPs) starting from North Africa and the Horn of Africa in 2015/2016
	Relocation Scheme to relocate 40,000 people from Italy and Greece
	Resettlement Scheme to resettle over 20,000 people from outside the EU
	Guidelines for the Member States on the implementation of EU rules on the obligation to take fingerprints
	Hotspot approach in Italy and Greece with deployment of Migration Management Support Teams
	EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling
	Establishment of pilot multi-purpose centre in Niger in cooperation with IOM and UNHCR
22 June 2015	EUNVAFOR Med Operation Sophia is launched to disrupt the business model of smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean
9 September 2015	Relocation Scheme to relocate 120,000 people from Italy, Greece and other Member States directly affected
	A European list of safe countries of origin
	An EU Action plan on return
	€1.8 billion from EU budget/EDF for Trust Fund for Africa, additional €82 million pledged from national donors
	€500 million from EU budget for Trust Fund for Syria

Figure 5: Reforms and legislative proposals in the European Agenda on Migration adopted and waiting for adoption by member states and the European Parliament from May 2015 – September 2015. (European Commission, 2017b).

4 May 2016	European Commission presents first package for reforming the Common European Asylum System (CEAS): Dublin, EURODAC, European Union Agency for Asylum
	Next steps towards lifting of temporary border controls: Commission recommendation to prolong proportionate controls at certain internal Schengen borders for a maximum period of 6 months
	Commission proposes to lift visa requirements for the citizens of Turkey as soon as the Turkish authorities will fulfil the outstanding benchmarks of its Visa Liberalisation Roadmap
7 June 2016	European Commission presents package on legal migration
	European Commission presents Action Plan on integration
	European Commission presents Migration Partnership Framework for third countries

Figure 6: Reforms and legislative proposals in the European Agenda on Migration adopted and waiting for adoption by member states and the European Parliament from May 2016 - June 2016. (European Commission, 2017b).

This chapter has analysed the development of the migrant crisis, and the results show that from 2013 to 2015 the massive increase in migration is mainly because of the Syrian Civil War, openings of new migration routes, and the policy approach from member states, led by Germany. Secondly, the disconnected asylum system within the EU at the beginning of the crisis, lead to frictions between member states on resettlement. Thirdly, from 2015 to 2017 the migration rates declined. The EU-Turkey deal, the closing of the Balkan route and seasonal reasons are all reasonable explanations to this. The European Agenda on Migration is also another reason for this decline. It is the first *common* asylum policy agenda adopted (Carrera, et.al., 2015, p. 3-4 & European Commission, 2015a, p. 12, 17). It has helped in creating a much more effective and efficient policy approach to the migrant crisis, although disagreements on what policies should be implemented and what should be changed still exist, with the CEAS being proof of this. Most importantly, the development of the European Agenda on Migration came with no help from the US. This is a vital point to remember before going into chapter II: the most important European response to the migrant crisis is not the result of transatlantic cooperation.

## Chapter II

### EU-US cooperation throughout the migrant crisis

#### *Meetings about the migrant crisis between Obama and EU leaders*

President of the European Council from 2009 to 2014, Herman Van Rompuy, met Obama during the 2014 EU-US Brussels summit. Various policy issues about the Syrian Civil War was discussed. Up until this point, the migrant crisis had been on the political agenda for the European Council, and they had several meetings to formulate new policies. The first major Council summit took place on 23 April 2015, after an accident in the Mediterranean caused the deaths of over 800 migrants (Carrera et. al., 2015, p. 3). The Council also met with the African Heads of State during the Valletta Summit on November 2015 to reach solutions on resettlement policies for nations in Africa with migration inflows into the EU (European Council, 2018). Clearly, the agenda-setting at this point in time for the Council was concerned with the development in the migration situation. The Valletta Summit also shows that they were open to cooperate with other parts of the world to develop effective policies. Presumably, the cooperation between Africa and the EU should mean that Brussels would push for heavy transatlantic cooperation concerning the migrant crisis.

However, the meeting between Van Rompuy and Obama do not discuss the crisis. This is because at the time the 2014 EU-US summit aimed to strengthen transatlantic relations in policy areas such as international foreign policy. The Annexation of Crimea by Russia and the destabilization of Ukraine was the key factor that the summit was held. Obama stated that Russia stands “alone” on the Crimea crisis and urged the EU to reduce its dependency on Russian energy, which would isolate Moscow (France24, 2014). He did not mention the migrant situation directly. Arguably, this is because the migrant crisis was yet to become as massive at the end of Van Rompuy’s presidency, thus not having a big enough part on the agenda-setting to the Council, nor to Obama and the American government. The analysis from Chapter I further supports this argument. At the time, focusing on an ongoing military situation within Europe was more vital for the political agenda, and policy approaches for how to resolve the situation. Nevertheless, during the summit, a few points surrounding the situation in Syria and migration were raised.

In a joint statement from the European Council and the American delegation it was declared that the impact the EU and the US can do is maximized through transatlantic cooperation, and ultimately leads to improvements in the lives of migrants (Council of the European Union, 2014, p. 9). However, this is the only point from the summit that is concerned about migration. The focus was on working against terrorism through transatlantic security policies; such as stopping fighters moving into Syria and similar unstable regions and deepen the cooperation through the UN, the Global Counterterrorism Forum and other relevant channels. EU-US cooperation in Africa was also voiced, ensuring partnership on issues in Libya and the Horn of Africa. Policy approaches on how to achieve increased stability in the Western Balkans, particularly Bosnia and Herzegovina, between Israel and Palestine, including the Iranian nuclear program (Council of the European Union, 2014, p. 5-6). Lastly, the EU and the US commended the neighboring nations of Syria that hosted then 2.5 million migrants, such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, and stated that the Brussels and Washington will continue to work through UN human right bodies to end the humanitarian crisis in Syria. This shows that migration was partly on the agenda-setting in the transatlantic relationship, and a willingness to create new policy solutions existed. However, how effective these meetings were in developing a proper policy response, is debatable. If the 2014 summit had migrant situation as a more important part of the agenda, then it is possible that the crisis could have developed differently. Arguably, the EU and the US did not expect a massive increase in migration from the Middle East and Africa. The common asylum system within the EU is further proof of Brussels not expecting the annual migration rates to reach new heights. It is also further evidence that the policy agenda was focused on military and security approaches on how to solve these issues. Not facing the migration crisis head-on, and creating a solution together to a problem that has been caused by transatlantic security and military cooperation, shows a lack of effectiveness and efficiency in regards to the policy-making from Washington and Brussels. Other alternatives should have been considered for a positive change.

Summits like the 2014 EU-US meeting were held annually until 2010. The same year it was announced that they would only be held ‘when necessary’. Then director of American policy planning, Anne-Marie Slaughter, defended it by stating that the relationship with the EU was so strong, yearly meetings were not necessary. The response from the EU mirrors this statement. Then foreign policy chief of the EU, Catherine Ashton, stated that while these summits were vital to “strengthen relations” in policy agendas that are paramount, they would no longer take place

automatically (Pop, 2010). She affirmed that new summits will be held if they became necessary. Did Obama not care for EU policies enough to give more direct aid in the migrant crisis, thus forcing the EU to stand on its own when making solutions? The same year the annual meetings were shut down, he did not attend the EU-US summit in Madrid. This and the cancelation of annual summits could point in this direction. However, as the statement from Ashton shows: the EU did agree to it, and considered the transatlantic relationship to be in such a good position that they were not needed. After this, only two EU-US summits have been held, in 2011 and the one 2014.

The current presidents of the European Commission and the European Council, Jean-Claude Juncker, and Donald Tusk met Obama on July 8, 2016, during a NATO summit in Warsaw. It focused on creating stability to Eastern Europe, Afghanistan, and to work against ISIS (European Council, 2016a). During his presentation of his agenda for the future of the European Commission, President Juncker in October 2014 stated that migration was one of the key action areas they would focus on (Juncker, 2014). In his oration to the European Parliament (2015a), he stressed that it is essential to stop the irregular smuggling of migrants at sea, to stop the drownings, as well as having the migrant crisis as the main priority during his State of the Union speech (2015b). Hence, it would seem natural that during the NATO summit where Obama, Juncker, and Tusk were attending, the migrant crisis would be brought up, both for the security concerns it possesses towards the Middle East, but also the situation in the EU.

On the margins of the 2016 NATO summit, Juncker, Tusk, and Obama met for an EU-US leaders meeting. The statements made by the three Presidents after the meeting had few mentions of specific solutions to solve the migrant crisis. Similar to the 2014 EU-US Brussels summit, the focus of the political agenda was on security policy, not migrant policy. Hence, the migrant crisis remained generally in the background of the discussions. This mirrors previous meetings between Tusk and Obama, were stopping foreign fighters from getting into Syria and the EU were mentioned and how to deal with the growth of ISIS (The White House, 2015), but the migrant situation was not brought up. Tusk and Juncker also sent out a joint letter before the G20 meeting in Hangzhou, China on 4-5 September 2016. The first main point urged for scaling up in international efforts, tackle irregular migration, and resettlement of migrants (Tusk & Juncker, 2016). They further urged the G20 leaders to consider this in regard to the upcoming UN meeting on the migrant crisis, called the Leaders' Summit on Refugees, which took place on 20 September

2016. Tusk and Juncker wanted increased cooperation between the G20 nations, which includes the US and many EU member states.

Furthermore, in his statement after the July 2016 NATO summit, Juncker proclaimed that transatlantic cooperation is vital to create a stable Europe. He also emphasised that Brussels and Washington should work more closely together on issues concerning them both, showing a somewhat dissatisfied stance on transatlantic cooperation. Lastly, he went on to claim that the EU and the US are “central pillars of the global order” (The White House, 2016a). This shows how vital the transatlantic relationship is regarded. However, no specific mentions of the current situation in the migrant crisis are noted. It is uncertain if Juncker wanted more transatlantic cooperation regarding the migrant situation since he did not mention Syria either in his speech. This is interesting since a few months later, the September 2016 UN Leaders’ Summit on Refugees was hosted. More importantly, this meeting was put together on American initiative. However, this could also point out that the EU has gone its own way when dealing with policy approaches regarding migration, Syria and North Africa, such as the literature claims (Newsome, 2018; Smith, 2018a; Smith, 2018b; Cross, 2018). Finally, President Tusk did not explicitly mention the migrant crisis. Like Juncker, he focused more in general about the transatlantic relationship. Policy issues such as Brexit and the Ukrainian conflict was the focus in his speech. This points out the reason for why the migrant crisis remained unmentioned. The political agenda had changed. Brexit had just taken place before the NATO summit, thus shifting the political focus on how to deal with the UK leaving the EU, and if this would impact the transatlantic relationship negatively. Lastly, with the upcoming UN Leaders’ Summit on Refugees, it was likely that policy issues concerning the migrant crisis were held off until then.

Obama stated in his own speech at the NATO summit that the EU and the US was stepping up in cooperation to confront global challenges, while thanking member states within the EU that had helped migrants, and that he expected the EU to take a vital part in the upcoming UN Leaders’ Summit on Refugees (NATO, 2016). The migrant crisis in the EU remained unspoken, and few mentions of potential transatlantic solutions did occur. Security and military concerns seemed to be the focus during these meetings, like the 2014 EU-US summit, showing that the agenda-setting was still controlled by these policy areas. Migration policies were considered less important, and that resolutions in security policies would resolve the issues with migration. When analysing this

after the Five-E model, it is clear that meetings so far between American and European leaders as a policy approach itself is not an effective way to address the migrant crisis.

As the previous paragraphs point out: the 2016 NATO summit was not intended for the migrant crisis, but rather the transatlantic relationship in general, particularly on security policy. However, when analysing the global UN Leaders' Summit on Refugees in September 2016, few mentions of direct transatlantic cooperation between the US and the EU exists. On a first examination, it seems to mainly follow the patterns of the 2014 EU-US summit and the 2016 NATO summit. However, the UN summit has different mentions of policy approaches by both the US and EU member states. It was hosted from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September by Obama, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, as well as leaders from Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, Jordan, Mexico, and Sweden, in an effort to rally nations to step up in their responses to what they consider to be the biggest migrant crisis since the Second World War (The White House, 2016c). 52 countries and international organizations participated, and various commitments were announced, such as increased contributions to UN appeals and international humanitarian organizations, increase migrants' school enrolment, and to improve migrants' ability to work lawfully by adopting new policies that permit them to start their own businesses.

Tusk (2016), who spoke on behalf of the EU, stated that he appreciated President Obama's initiative for the meeting, as well as advocating for a stronger common response in the EU. He had three speeches during the five days the summit took place. His speeches to the assembly focused on the European response to the migrant crisis, global strategy towards terrorism, the EU's active efforts to bring peace in areas of war, such as Ukraine, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan, and the EU's commitment to fighting climate change (European Council, 2016b). However, since this was a global summit, about the global migrant crisis, not just the current situation in the EU, it is reasonable to assume that one cannot expect mentions of transatlantic cooperation between Washington and Brussels. It is more natural to assume it would include reports and plans for what each country claim they can do to better the migrant situation. Hence, no specific mentions on how to solve the migration issue together through transatlantic relations can be pointed out. The EU member states did not mention any specific transatlantic solution either. The most powerful countries, such as France, Germany, the UK, and Spain, pledged to donate various amounts to various organisations to stop the Syrian war and continue to aid in the resettlement of migrants



(United Nations, 2016). Generally, economic aid to various humanitarian policies was the approach for most EU member states, including promises to resettle various amounts of migrants.

Austria promised to 1,900 resettlement places throughout 2017, and contribute \$174 million in humanitarian aid. Belgium offered admission to 14,253 migrants and to contribute \$193 million to humanitarian commitments. The Czech Republic pledged to contribute \$34 million and to resettle 2,691 migrants in relocation programs. Denmark would contribute \$399 million and reunification places to 14,000 family members to migrants from 2016 to 2017. France would contribute \$218 million, and relocate over 24,000 from Italy and Greece, and 10,375 from Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, and 2,500 visas from admission into French territory under other legal means of access. Germany pledged to provide accommodation to asylum seekers and migrants while they remain in Greece, and establish education plans that enable migrants to access public education in the 2016-2017 school year. The UK pledged to contribute €2 billion in humanitarian aid, and offer admission to 23,750 migrants by 2020 (United Nations, 2016). These are not every member state that made various pledges, but gives a good impression on the amount of resettled migrant and economic aid they would contribute with.

The US stated it would resettle 11,000 Syrian migrants in 2016, a continuation of the 10,000 promised personally by Obama in September 2015, after pressure from European allies (Momin, 2017, p. 73-74). Arguably, the US seemed content to take in a significant fewer percentage of migrants, compared to EU member states. During the UN summit, the US stated that they had contributed with over €7 billion in humanitarian aid in 2016, and pledged to give over €100 million to various humanitarian organisations in the upcoming years. In a fact sheet from the White House about the Leaders' Summit on Refugees (2016c), it is stated that the American government increased the number of migrants resettled annually from 70,000 in 2015 to 85,000 in 2016, and at the time, aimed for 110,000 in 2017. Most of these were migrants from Africa and Asia, with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Myanmar, Iraq, and Somalia being the top five countries of origin in 2016 (US Department of State, 2017). The US Department of the State (2015) reported similarly the year before, where Iraq, Myanmar, and Somalia also were three of the biggest contributors to the migrant inflow in the US. Interestingly, Syria did not make the top five in 2015, the height of the migrant influx into the EU. It is clear that Obama's promise to resettle more Syrians made a difference.

However, it is important to note that these numbers only states the number of migrants that the US resettled during the height of the migrant crisis, and do not account for other migrants. Moreover, when comparing the number of migrants resettled by certain EU member states that are much smaller in size and resources compared to the US, shows that they resettled a higher amount percentage-wise to their population and geographical area. This has particularly been controversial, with critics claiming the American government is not doing enough. This will be explored more in depth on page 37-40. Nevertheless, Obama's role in the UN meeting was called a 'powerful counterpoint to rise anti-refugee sentiment' (Goldberg, 2016), mainly because it was his last visit to the UN, but also because non-traditional global humanitarian players such as China also attended. This show that the US still played an important part in migration policies, and one should acknowledge the Obama Administration's willingness on taking initiative for the global UN summit, in a period of rising anti-migrant sentiment throughout the EU and the US. It is also important to remember that the UN summit took place when the EU had considerably halted the migrant inflow into member states and that each EU nation did not resettle as many as they did at the height of the crisis. The number of resettled migrants in member states are considerably lower.

Is the Leaders' Summit on Refugees an example of increased cooperation between Brussels and Washington, or an example of them doing things their own way? Moreover, is it an example of convergence within the transatlantic relationship in migrant and humanitarian policies? Both the policy approaches from the American government and EU member states have similarities: focus on resettlement of migrants, and to contribute more money to different humanitarian organizations and policies. However, despite summits and various talks and solutions with the Presidents of the EU and Obama, these solutions were reached alone, even if their policy approaches bear similarities. After the introduction of the European Agenda on Migration, irregular arrivals of migrants to the EU got reduced by more than 90 % (European Council, 2019), mostly through the work done by the Commission and the Council. This is shown in figure 7, where it is clear that all the routes that non-EU citizens take, has reduced drastically. Moreover, it also shows how effective the Turkey deal has been in stopping irregular migration and resettling migrants, even when considering other factors that made the migration through the eastern route halt. The western route has become almost as popular as the once massive eastern route.

The Turkey Deal clearly accomplishes its goal of resettlement and stopping irregular migration, it is time efficient. How ethical it is, is debatable. When considering that one of the main reasons for the implementation of the Turkey Deal, including the European Agenda on Migration, was to give the EU a chance to deal with them in a reasonable manner, makes it understandable that these policies were implemented. This would stop any negative impact of uncontrolled migration, particularly the deaths on the Mediterranean, and battling the unethical methods of human traffickers and smugglers. Moreover, European leaders never hid that the EU would crack down on irregular migration, with Tusk stating that would-be migrants and economic migrants should not undertake the dangerous journey to the EU if they were going to be smuggled in (Rankin, 2016). There are those with the opinion that the EU, including the US as well, can continue to resettle migrants in a much higher amount, however, the ethics of this issue is something that future research can explore more in depth. Lastly, it also proves that the European Agenda on Migration has become an efficient and effective policy approach to deal with the migrant crisis.

Most importantly, the most effective and efficient policies implemented by the EU did not come from transatlantic relations. This gives support to the argument made by the literature that a divergence has happened between the EU and the US in terms of humanitarian issues, including the general approach Washington and Brussels take in policy areas like this (Newsome, 2018: Momin, 2017: Ostrand, 2015), and that the effectiveness and efficiency in the policymaking process during the migrant crisis was not adequate. In terms of alternatives to this policy approach, it is clear that the European Agenda on Migration is currently the best option for the EU, and that the focus Brussels and Washington had on Syria itself at the beginning of the crisis were not effective or efficient. Resettlement reform has proved to be a much more efficient policy to combat irregular migration, rather than security concerns.

## Total yearly irregular arrivals

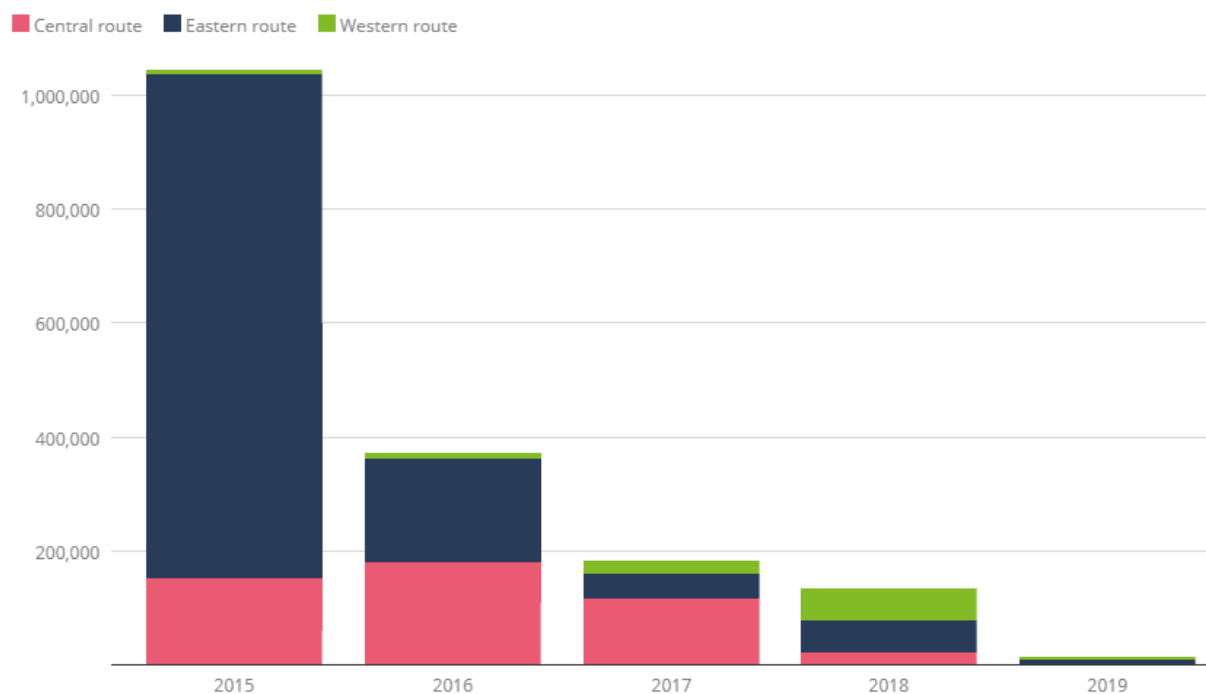


Figure 7: Annual irregular arrivals. 2019 figures are up to March (European Council, 2019).

So far, this chapter has argued that the 2014 EU-US summit, July 2016 NATO summit, and September 2016 UN summit focused on security issues. Few specific mentions on the migrant crisis are noted, which points to the fact that migration policies were not considered to be a solution. However, there is a focus on the Syria conflict, thus creating a link between the meetings and the migrant crisis. Tusk once stated that the crisis is resolved by ending the conflicts underpinning it (McGreal, 2015). This is a reasonable stance. From the analysis of the meetings, this seems to be the policy approach Brussels and Washington implemented. However, the policy the EU and the US has followed in regards to countries that were a source for the influx, has been ineffective and inefficient. Arguably, in accordance with the Five-E model, the EU did not evaluate alternatives to the asylum system before 2015, rather focusing on solving the situation in Syria is one of the reasons for a divergence in the transatlantic relationship, both when it comes to Brussels and Washington going their own way. This has also impacted other parts of the transatlantic relationship, mainly the relationship between Europeans and Americans in general, particularly how Europeans regard the US.

### *Criticisms on the US' role in the migrant crisis*

The US' policy approaches to the crisis would prove to be controversial, which has created scepticism and gradually bigger rifts within the EU, leading to increased anti-Americanism. The fact that Obama promised 'only' 10,000 and 11,000 migrants in 2015 and 2016 during the height of the migrant influx, has been controversial to some, who considered it too small, and an insignificant amount compared to what European nations had been resettling. The total amount of 70,000 migrants in 2015 and 85,000 in 2016, is low compared to certain EU member states considering the US' geographical size and role in the conflicts who the migrants come from. This hesitation is critiqued, with some claiming the Obama Administration could resettle 100,000 migrants from Syria easily (Ford & Miliband, 2016), while others say that considering Germany welcomed more than 10,000 migrants in one week, the EU should compel the US to resettle more (Jing, 2015). Some commentators have recommended The White House to build a coalition for high volume voluntary resettlement, by screening 65,000 migrants from Turkey throughout 2016 and 2017 (Ignatieff, et. al., 2016). This would be an effective policy to help the EU. This gives not only further credence to the thesis' claims that the American government and the EU failed to cooperate properly, with an EU who created their own solutions. This has led to political commentators, politicians, and officials critiquing the policy approach Obama took during the Syrian civil war and the migrant crisis, pointing out multiple setbacks and flaws in the transatlantic relationship.

A former official in the Obama Administration, Fred Hof, stated that "the dead children washing up on Turkey's shores are a direct result of the Obama Administration's failure to stop Bashar al-Assad's killing machine" (Williams, 2016, p. 100-101). As the statement show, Obama's policy towards Syria has been critiqued, both within the US and the EU. The American government did not want to directly invade Syria, fearing it would create a new Iraq. However, this approach has been a reason for setbacks within the transatlantic relationship, according to certain commentators. Former Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford retired in February 2015 because of his frustrations with how ineffective Obama's approach in the country was. Moreover, he has been direct about his opinion on the failure of the Obama policy to aid the country. Claiming there is nothing that can be pointed out to be successful in the US' policy approach except for the removal of about 93 % of Assad's chemical materials (Williams, 2016, p. 100). However, Ford pointed out that Assad is

now using chlorine gas against his opponents, and urged for the American government to not ignore the crisis, both on moral and national security grounds, stating that both the US and its friends and allies are facing an extremist threat with the worsening of the Syrian Civil War. Similarly, former Deputy National Security Advisor, Avril D. Haines, who served during Obama's second presidency, claimed in a speech on World Refugee Day in 2016 that the migrant crisis threatens to destabilize regions and collapse fragile states, stating that the pressure the EU is facing is part of a much bigger problem. She further pointed out the massive pressure that Middle Eastern and African countries close to regions plagued by war and conflict are experiencing, and noted that the US needs to act now to stop the development in these regions (Haines, 2016). Ultimately, it seems like the American government considered the solution to the migrant crisis to be aiding unstable countries, as well as helping non-Western states that hosted the biggest amount of migrants. However, as the next paragraphs will show, criticism has been voiced from Europeans who critique the Obama Administration's lack of direct intervention in Syria and the Middle East, as well as critiques for the interventions that have already happened under American leadership.

American author and investigative historian, Eric Zuesse, stated that the migrant crisis was created by American intervention in Libya and Syria (Zuesse, 2018), and claimed that the US is 'destroying Europe' in their quests for regime change in Arab nations (Zuesse, 2015). This statement was based in the argument that Obama has followed a policy of destabilization that has driven millions of migrants into Europe, thereby adding fuel to the far-right fires of anti-migrant rejectionism, thus resulting in political destabilization throughout the EU, even as far in northern Europe. Zuesse further argues that Obama's top goal in international relations is to defeat Russia, by removing Russian allies throughout the world, such as Gaddafi and Assad. However, the EU has been dealing with the negative blowback of this policy, and Obama has little to no concern about the "devastation" that Europeans are left with. Although this thesis agrees that the EU has been left to deal with the migration flows from regions that the US has intervened in, it does not argue that Obama had no concern or will to help Europeans and the EU during the migrant crisis. As analysed in chapter I: the efficiency of the policy approaches in the meetings between the EU and the US are questioned, but it is clear that there was a willingness to solve the crisis. Nevertheless, Zuesse's criticisms claim that the migrant inflow into the EU has left a massive negative impact. Has this impacted the transatlantic relationship? Although Zuesse does not mention any impact on Brussels-Washington relations, if he is correct in the US 'destroying'

Europe, or destabilizing the EU, then this will have a negative impact on the transatlantic relationship, like the literature pointed out (Oliver & Williams, 2016). As mentioned previously, a destabilized EU will create setbacks in transatlantic relations. Increased support and influence for far-right groups and alternative political forces, as Zuesse claims the US' invasions have caused, could lead to more nationalism and anti-globalist, thus anti-American sentiments.

How radical these anti-American sentiments can be is unsure. Scepticism towards the US is not fruitful for the transatlantic relationship. The German Marshall Fund of the US, an organisation focusing on strengthening the transatlantic relationship on global challenges, states that many in Brussels regard the migrant crisis as a direct result of failed approaches in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East in general, with the US being implicated in the current migrant crisis (Lesser, et. al., 2015). The brief also claims that Obama's promise to resettle 10,000 migrants is a good start but may not impress European leaders. Furthermore, the brief stresses that high rates of migration raise issues concerning European identity, which leads to the growth of alternative political forces, many of these being anti-American in their policies. Clearly, the impact of the migrant crisis has led to increased scepticism from Brussels. As the previous research points out, the EU remains unsure, and generally divided on how to engage with the US on policy issues such as the migrant crisis (Newsome, 2018, p. 587-604). The scepticism within Brussel is another proof of this. Hence, Zuesse's criticism can be linked to setbacks in the transatlantic relationship.

Furthermore, other criticisms have been raised, some just as harsh as Zuesse's, while others are milder in their statements. The Obama Administration's policy towards Syria has been called a failure, even being compared it to how the Clinton Administration failed to stop the genocide in Rwanda (Cornwell, 2016). Political commentators (Delamaide, 2015) note Obama's focus on the success of the Iranian nuclear treaty, instead of taking leadership in the Syria conflict, is a source for critique. Clearly, these political commentators and politicians claim that the Obama Administration's policies towards the Middle East have been a leading contributor to the migrant crisis. Comparisons between Obama and Merkel's policy towards the crisis has also been made, questioning Obama's perceived high tolerance for mass atrocities in Syria, while not wanting to offend Iran, in the wake of the Iranian deal, since the Assad regime is Iran's proxy (Gerson, 2015). Ultimately, they argue that a more active part from the US would have been a far more effective policy approach to ending the Syrian crisis, as well as the hypocrisy from the Obama

Administration when dealing with other security policies. Furthermore, scholars have also been critical towards how the US has interfered in the war, particularly how they have chosen their allies and battles carefully but refused to take responsibility for any negative outcomes. The next two paragraphs list a few of the criticisms that have been raised by scholars.

American occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan, together with the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, has been cited as a cause for the migrant crisis (Lucassen, 2018, p. 387). As analysed in chapter I, the intervention by the White House in these regions is one of many. Domestic explanations within the EU also exists. American support to the rebel groups through the CIA, including Pentagon training and airstrikes against targets to the regime of Assad, has also been cited as a contribution to the crisis (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p. 16). This is plausible as being one example of the many contributing factors. The American funding of the Syrian Train and Equip Program that trained rebels to fight the military forces of President Bashar Assad, directly affecting the war, are another source for critique (Momin, 2017, p. 74). As mentioned in the literature review, the ‘Strategic Absence’ is a source for critique (Williams, 2016, p. 101). It is particularly this policy approach that was critiqued by American officials such as Ford and Haines. Summarized, this shifts the responsibility towards international partners, such as the EU, and regional partners, in how to solve the conflicts, ultimately not intervening where the conflict is the worst. It is proposed that to reverse this trend and bring peace to the Middle East, the then Obama Administration and its successor need to take on a more active role in managing the problems they have indirectly and directly.

Ultimately, Obama promise to ‘only’ resettle 10,000 Syrian migrants, after the US’ role in the Syrian Civil War, seemed as a slap in the face for some Europeans, as noted by the literature (Wickett, 2018, p. 30-45), however, after the US’ role in the conflicts the migrants were fleeing. The various meetings that the US and the EU had between each other, seems to have been futile, when the policy focus and agenda was on Syria, while not approaching it in the right direction. It is important to note that this thesis does not make the claim that the transatlantic relationship would not diverge if the US had taken a more active role in Syria. However, the ineffectiveness in finding a solution to Syria, allowed the migrant crisis to increase in severity, showing that the US and the EU are not as united in solving these issues as one would like to believe and that by allowing the crisis to go on, other negative consequences would begin to develop.



This chapter has analysed three important meetings between Brussels and Washington that took place during the migrant crisis. It also examines criticism from political commentators and scholars on the policy approaches towards the migrant crisis by the US and explores if these critiques point out factors that have impacted the transatlantic relationship. The two main points of this chapter are the focus on security policies on how to solve the migrant crisis was the wrong approach and this caused Europeans to become more sceptical towards the US. If the migrant crisis had been approached as a transatlantic problem, with a more evenly distribution of solutions, then it would most likely have been tackled better. Secondly, the problems from these meetings, as the critics point out, show a lack of transatlantic cooperation. The US' policy approaches in the Middle East has ultimately led the EU to deal with the migrant crisis on its own. Even though the speeches from Tusk, Juncker, and Obama points out the need for a solution in Syria, transatlantic policy solutions remained scattered and ineffective. Obama's promise to take in 10,000 Syrian migrants was met with criticism, seen as the best example of how the EU is left to deal with problems the US has a major part in. Critics fear that this has led to an increase in anti-Americanism. As Robert Kagan puts it: the US the one "making the dinner" in conflicts such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo, while Europe has been the one "doing the dishes" (Kagan, 2003, p. 23). Pointing out how Europeans have largely filled out a peacekeeping role after the US has, largely on its own, carried out military operations. This patterns can also be observed in the migrant crisis, leaving it up to member states to deal with most of the resettlement. Most importantly, this has led to many Europeans feel that the American government did not do enough, thus increasing skepticism and anti-American sentiments throughout the EU in the time following the peak of migrants in 2015, as seen by the criticisms from political commentators, politicians, and scholars.

## Chapter III

### The impact of the migrant crisis on transatlantic relations

#### *The impact of the migrant crisis on European sentiment towards the US*

The migrant inflow accounted for 0.59 percent of the population in Germany and 1.8 percent in Hungary, while only being 0.2 percent for Europe in general (Wickett, 2018, p. 37-38). Even though these seem to be insignificant percentages, they have been the cause of concern for many Europeans. To exemplify this: Germany had no direction for what would happen to the big wave of migrants after they arrived during the fall of 2015: no language courses were offered, and integration became difficult (Momin, 2017, p. 66-67). Many doubted that Germany and the EU could continue to accept migrants at the rate they did. Furthermore, in recent years the US has come to recognize Germany as the key decision-maker in the EU (Barichella, 2016), and Obama turned increasingly more towards Merkel during his second term to discuss transatlantic issues such as the migrant crisis. This was a shift compared to earlier periods where France and the UK took more privileged roles as transatlantic partners.

Most importantly, the shift in transatlantic relations towards a closer Germany-US partnership could be a reason for increased scepticism towards the US. Alternative political parties such as Alternative for Germany and Front Nationale, as well as Euro-sceptical forces in Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia, are on the rise and they usually blame the German and American governments for the migrant crisis (Lagodinsky, 2016). This points towards destabilization within the EU. The shift in attitudes towards migrants, as the literature pointed out (Oliver & Williams, 2016; Postelnicescu, 2016), has indeed led to an increase in European nationalism. Based on this, the US is at risk of damaging their relations with powerful EU member states, such as France and Germany, if anti-American parties continue to grow. An EU unable to cooperate, characterized by powerful member states sceptical towards the American government, is naturally not in the interest for the US. Is the criticism raised by political commentators, scholars, and officials in Chapter II towards the American government a reflection of what the majority of EU citizens means?

Like certain commentators fear (Zuesse, 2018), including scholars (Oliver & Williams, 2016; Wickett, 2018); if Europeans become increasingly sceptical towards the US, then anti-American parties will grow and increase their influence, weakening the transatlantic relationship. It is therefore important to examine statistics on how trusting Europeans are towards the US and Americans. The transatlantic relationship consists of many different factors, and how the peoples of the EU perceive the American president, government and people in general is vital for a completely beneficial relationship. Scepticism towards the US has always persisted in the EU. Reports from the last decade highlights that citizens from Western Europe are suspicious towards the US' unrivalled power, as well as different cultural values has created estrangements between the two transatlantic partners (Pew Research Center, 2003). Recent studies show that Obama is more liked than his predecessor, but the economic stagnation and financial crisis is unlikely to increase foreign support, and positive sentiment towards him varied from year to year and member state to member state (Lawson & Hudson, 2015). Ultimately, Europeans' attitude towards the US has gradually grown more negative. As shown in Figure 8, even during Obama's two terms, the percentage who responded negatively was considerable, although not the majority in most member states.

Further analysis of figure 8 shows that most member states had little confidence in the US during the George W. Bush presidency, while opinions became drastically more positive after his terms. The first year of Obama's Administration saw the confidence reach new heights among Europeans, with only 8 % having no confidence in France, 5 % in Germany, and 10 % in the UK. Scepticism towards Obama was higher in Southern and Central Europe, with 22 % in Spain and 21 % in Poland. Then confidence in him slowly decreased, with 27 % of Germans, 17 % of French, 41 % of Spaniards, 22 % of Brits, and 27 % of Poles, having no confidence in 2015, the peak of the migrant crisis. Interestingly, in 2016 member states such as Germany, France, and Spain experienced a decrease in scepticism, correlating with the introduction of the European Agenda on Migration, and the beginning of better solutions within the EU, particularly with the new resettlement programs. This could be one explanation for why these countries saw a reduction in negative sentiments. However, it is also important to note that other factors contribute to this and that this figure does not go into explanation or analysis for what the reason for this scepticism can be. Nevertheless, it is impossible to argue that there are not some correlation in these numbers and the development of the migrant crisis. Other factors such as the economic stagnation, financial

crisis, and recession, are all contributing to this, however, the criticisms from scholars and commentators previously analysed, gives further support that the migrant crisis' development is correlated with Europeans' gradual decline in confidence in the American president. It was one of many factors, hence the importance of migration policy and its influence over the agenda-setting and other policy areas cannot be overlooked.

COUNTRY	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Czech Republic</b>	-	-	-	63	-	-	-	-	20	20	-	-	-	-
<b>France</b>	79	75	85	85	87	8	14	15	14	17	17	17	14	86
<b>Germany</b>	66	69	72	80	85	5	9	12	12	11	28	27	13	87
<b>Greece</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	68	62	71	-	58	76
<b>Hungary</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	57
<b>Lithuania</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Netherlands</b>	-	59	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	81
<b>Poland</b>	-	40	-	55	50	21	27	32	39	35	36	27	25	57
<b>Slovakia</b>	-	-	-	76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Spain</b>	71	80	90	88	88	22	29	32	37	44	40	41	23	92
<b>Sweden</b>	-	-	-	74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	90
<b>United Kingdom</b>	47	60	68	70	81	10	13	22	18	24	24	22	20	75

Figure 8: Percent responded *no confidence* in the American president from 2003-2017. Full question wording: Now I'm going to read a list of political leaders. For each, tell me how much confidence you have in each leader to do the right thing regarding world affairs - a lot of confidence, some confidence, not too much confidence, or no confidence at all. U.S. President George W. Bush (2002-2008), Barack Obama (2009-2016), Donald Trump (2017). (Pew Research Center, 2017a).

Similar patterns can be observed in figure 9. It is clear that the majority of Europeans have a negative view of the US in 2017 compared to 2013. Unfavourable opinions remained high throughout Bush's presidency, compared to Obama. However, a sizeable portion of EU citizens remained sceptical. Over around a quarter of Brits answered unfavourable from 2013 to 2017, every fifth respondent from France and Spain, and almost half of Germans. Both figure 8 and figure 9 show a massive increase in no confidence in the American president and unfavourable views towards Americans in 2017. Political commentators have noted that transatlantic cooperation on migration policy has changed after the shift to a new American administration after 2017 (Sheehan, 2017), which could explain this sudden drop in confidence among Europeans. Interestingly, the member states that have a record of stricter border controls, Hungary and Poland, both had a high percentage responding that they have no confidence in the American President.

COUNTRY	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Czech Republic</b>	27	-	-	-	-	50	-	-	-	-	37	33	-	-	-	-
<b>France</b>	34	57	62	57	60	60	57	25	26	26	31	36	25	27	31	52
<b>Germany</b>	35	54	59	54	60	66	66	33	35	35	44	40	47	45	38	62
<b>Greece</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61	57	63	-	58	53
<b>Hungary</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	27
<b>Lithuania</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Netherlands</b>	-	-	-	54	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29	59
<b>Poland</b>	11	-	-	23	-	31	24	24	19	19	26	24	19	17	16	15
<b>Slovakia</b>	39	-	-	-	-	54	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Spain</b>	-	55	-	50	73	60	55	28	28	29	32	29	34	27	26	60
<b>Sweden</b>	-	-	-	-	-	49	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28	51
<b>United Kingdom</b>	16	26	34	38	33	42	37	20	24	28	31	30	27	24	26	40

Figure 9: Percentage responded *unfavourable* when asked if they have a favourable or unfavourable view on the US, measured from 2002-2017. Full question wording: Please tell me if you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable opinion of the United States. (Pew Research Center, 2017b).

Donald Tusk stated during the July 2016 NATO summit that “It would be good if we clearly stated today that whoever turns against America harms Europe. Whoever attacks the European Union harms America” concerning the rise of Euroscepticism and isolationism throughout the EU and the US (The White House, 2016b). The fact that the President of the European Council acknowledges that scepticism between the US and the EU are a threat to transatlantic relations, gives further support to the assertion that the transatlantic relationship has taken a downturn in recent years. Whether the critics of Obama’s policies towards the Middle East and Africa are right or wrong it is clear that the demographic and cultural part of the transatlantic relationship has suffered negative consequences, because of the crisis. A sizeable part of Europeans in member states are sceptical towards the US’ government and the country in general. How widespread anti-American sentiment throughout the EU is, or will grow to be, is uncertain. However, as the literature points out, (Momin, 2017; Postelnicescu, 2016; Lagodinsky 2016) the EU is experiencing an increase in nationalism as a result of the migrant crisis. Simultaneously, an increase in anti-Americanism is also growing, which is also a reflection of the criticism raised by commentators and the European peoples in general. As anti-migrant, anti-American political parties increase their influence in Europe, with Europeans blaming the Obama Administration for the migrant crisis, the transatlantic relationship gets undermined. This supports this thesis’ argument that the transatlantic relationship has suffered negative consequences because of the

migrant crisis. However, it is important to again note that events such as the Iran deal and the success of the Paris deal on Climate Change, remains has huge successes in transatlantic cooperation. The setbacks in the transatlantic relations seem to have occurred within migrant policies, with the EU and the US going their own ways, then spilling over into other parts of the transatlantic relationship, such as public opinion on the US from Europeans. Lastly, as previous research notes, the recent migration flows into the EU will lead to a divergence in transatlantic interests (Wickett, 2018, p. v). As the US experience an increase in Latin American and Asian groups, while the EU in Middle Eastern populations, they will continue to diverge in regional attention. Indeed, the salience within transatlantic cooperation is weakening, and Brussels and Washington's perspective are diverging (Riddervold & Newsome, 2018, p. 511-517). The ageing of both populations could deepen this divergence further. Conclusively, the migration crisis has led to the transatlantic relationship becoming increasingly weakened, both on the political and demographical arena.

### ***Domestic opposition towards the resettlement of migrants***

It is important to point that Obama continued to express the US need to aid the EU in resettling migrants. Although few specific mentions of the migrant crisis occurred during the meetings with the EU, the fact that the UN Leaders' Summit on Refugees happened on Obama's initiative, shows that he had the willingness to help the EU. He stated that Angela Merkel was on the 'right side of history' after a wave of attention and critique faced her after the number of migrants Germany had been resettled throughout 2015 (CNN, 2016a, 0:06 & Schwarz, 2016). The same year, he also commented on how the migrant crisis is not just a European problem, and that the US needs to do its part in finding solutions (CNN, 2016b, 0:02). The criticisms from chapter II which points out that Obama did not care about the negative consequences that the EU were facing, seem to be wrong based on these statements. However, it is still clear that more efficient and effective policy approaches could have been taken. The migrant crisis was on his agenda setting. As the literature has noted: in an increasingly globalized world, the impacts of political events are felt everywhere (Bell, 2009, p. 89). Then why did the US not do more to aid the EU? Why does it seem like the policy approaches towards the migrant crisis never developed further from the second and third step, policy formulation and decision making, in the policy-making process?

Previous literature points out that Obama showed little interest in Europe and the EU, and pivoted towards Asia instead. This is something that characterized his presidency (Nielsen, 2013, p. 90-91, 103). This could explain why he did not push for more transatlantic cooperation at the peak of the migrant crisis. There is still various evidence that points to the fact that the White House wanted to help. In a report to the US Congress in September 2014, the White House announced plans for resettlement of more migrants in 2015, compared to previous fiscal years. This especially involved Syrian migrants (US PRM, 2014). Most notably, it also mentioned that the US aims to ensure at least 50 percent of all refugees referred by the UNHCR worldwide would be considered for resettlement within the US. Nevertheless, the House of Representatives stalled this plan by putting a ban on Obama's plan of resettlement (Carlier, 2016, p. 56). As a result, this policy was not able to be implemented after the policy formulation was completed. Republicans had controlled the Senate from the 2014 elections, giving the Obama Administration less power and influence. Moreover, the Republican Party had the majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives during the 114<sup>th</sup> US Congress from January 3, 2015, to January 3, 2017, having the ability to stall policies proposed by Obama. Republican senators and governors of Arkansas, Alabama, Michigan, Texas, Louisiana, Indiana, and Massachusetts stated publicly that they did not agree to this, that 10,000 was too much, and urged Obama to halt his plans. Their main fear was suspected ISIS members would be among the Syrian migrants claiming to be refugees (Graham, 2015). Generally, the Republican Party has been negative towards migration from the Middle East. Furthermore, there are other reasons that can explain the obstacles Obama met for his proposal, such as the perceived negative sentiment among most Americans towards foreign migrants.

Americans have become more sceptical towards migrants in recent years (Jones, 2015), compared to Europeans (Diamant & Starr, 2018), with 49 percent of Americans think that migration should be decreased (Carlier, 2016, p. 62), which serves as an explanation to the US' reluctance to resettle a higher amount. This is arguably a result of the migrant crisis. The discourse in the EU impacted public debates within the US. Some Americans feared that the initial problems Europeans were facing in handling the migrant crisis, would spread to their own borders as a result of migration from Latin America (Nawyn, 2019, p. 5-6). The sceptics in the US was greatly influenced by their European counterparts. Hence, the anti-migrant side within the EU has allowed the anti-migrant side in the US to grow. However, polls and reports from Gallup, the Eurobarometer, European

Social Survey, and Pew Research Center in recent years claim that Europeans have become increasingly sceptical towards migrants (Migration Data Portal, 2017). Comparing the different surveys show two key trends: over half of the participants in the EU want less migration (IOM, 2015), while 52 % of Americans were supportive of current migration rates. It seems that the literature and surveys surrounding attitudes towards migration are conflicting. However, Americans becoming more accepting of migration can explain this, while Europeans becoming less. The roles are reversed. Yet another impact of the migrant crisis on transatlantic relations.

Nevertheless, the Obama Administration accepted 12,000 migrants between the autumn of 2015 to the autumn of 2016, and 15,479 in 2016, although this number shrank to 3,024 in 2017, with the much stricter policies brought in by the Donald Trump Administration (Newsome, 2018, p. 595). This policy approach was able to be implemented, thus alleviating some of the pressure felt by EU member states. Nevertheless, one can argue that 15,479 migrants are still a small amount and that the Obama Administration could have done more to aid their European allies. However, the strong reaction from many American senators and states to 10,000 migrants makes it harder to believe that the US would have ever taken in the number of migrants from Africa and the Middle East that the EU did from 2013 to 2017. Even though Obama was able to get his policies towards resettlement implemented, they are arguably not effective enough to be a proper response to the massive influx the EU was experiencing at the time. When considering step five of the Five-E model in policy analysis, the first thing to ask is: would the resettling of a higher amount of migrants within the US not create irritation among Europeans? Considering this question after the criticism mentioned by political commentators and scholars, it becomes clear that many claims that Washington's best way of correcting their role in the Middle East is to have welcomed more. However, when examining figure 8 and 9 it is evident that dissatisfaction among Europeans towards the US has always existed. If Obama resettled a much higher amount of migrants, it is uncertain if this would have won more Europeans over. Clearly, this reaction has caused a negative impact within Brussels, as previously analysed. The domestic opposition towards the resettlement of migrants during the migrant crisis has led to irritation within the EU, arguably a setback in the transatlantic relationship. However, similar scepticism can also be found in member states in the EU during the same period.



The EU has also faced domestic pressure and scepticism from various member states on how to deal with the migrant crisis. The lack of harmonization and coherence of asylum policy within the EU in the wake of the crisis contributed to tensions in the transatlantic relationship, especially in promoting different migratory pressures around various member states (Niemann & Zaun, 2018, p. 12-13; Carrera, et. al., 2015, p. 14). As Chapter II showed, the European Agenda on Migration has been able to create more cooperation between member states and the EU, but reforms, when it came to the CEAS, are still not adopted. There are many reasons for this, mainly in certain member states being opposed to it. The focus of the European Agenda on Migration was an asylum policy that would aid in the relocation of migrants to member states not experiencing a high influx, and remove the pressure felt by southern EU countries. However, this did not mean that it has been without controversy. Opposition towards migrants was high in countries like Poland and Hungary, who has faced criticism from the EU, other member states, and the US alike in their lack of willingness to relocate migrants. Furthermore, while the European Parliament and the European Commission both supported that the EASO should be developed further with expanded powers to become more efficient, not every member state supported this. They considered the EUAA's expanded influence would make them give up sovereignty on migration policies. The migrant crisis is on their agenda, but scepticism does not allow it to move further in the policy-making process and towards implementation. This means that vital policies that could better the migrant crisis remain in step three, decision making. By not implementing the new framework for the CEAS and the EASO could lead to the same issues that the EU experiencing at the beginning of the crisis. This could lead to more scepticism towards migrants and Washington and Brussels' handling of the situation. As a result, sentiments that lead to a weakened transatlantic relationship can increase.

A rapport from the European Parliament from 2016 shows that only half of the member states had commented on the proposal. Belgium Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, and Austria took a positive position towards it. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Denmark, and the UK had a negative position to the proposal (European Parliament, 2016, p. 15). Scholars noted that EU member states are obligated under international law to protect the human rights of migrants but noted tensions between member nations make it problematic (Brannan, et. al., 2016, p. 269-270). Different member states interpret the system of the EU differently, with members such as Germany abandoning border controls and embracing open migration policy,

while others, such as Hungary, closing their borders (Peters & Besley, 2015, p. 1371). The main divide is between Western and Eastern Europe, with the newer member states from Eastern Europe being more sceptical towards a common policy (Newsome, 2018, p. 599). This shows that the member states are divided in how to deal with the migrant crisis, giving support to the argument that the migrant crisis continues to be an issue that causes rifts within the EU. However, as previous research emphasizes, the EU's response was poor, but it continues to be more than capable, particularly compared to the UN, with the relocation mechanism of the European Agenda on Migration being proof of this (Niemann & Zaun, 2018). Cooperation within the EU on policy issues like the migrant crisis will always be controversial, but as for now, it remains generally coherent compared to the beginning of the crisis. The improvements that the European Commission and the European Parliament have tried to give the asylum system through the Agenda on Migration is a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, when regarding the rise of anti-American forces within the EU in recent years, it seems like the damage is already done. It came too late on the political agenda, hence not being implemented fast enough.

Ultimately, both the US and the EU experience domestic opposition towards solutions in the migrant crisis. This opposition is a result of the migrant crisis impacting the sentiment politicians and people have towards migration. This has again caused tensions within the transatlantic relationship. Obama not having the Senate and House of Representatives created problems for his plan to accept 10,000 Syrian migrants. Nevertheless, he was able to resettle an even higher amount than what was promised to his European allies. The opposition towards this amount makes it clear that the demands to resettle more migrants would most likely never happen. In regards to the policy-making process, the migrant crisis remained on his political agenda, although more effective policies should have been implemented. The outcome has been an increase in scepticism towards migration and Brussels and Washington's handling of the crisis within the EU. However, the entire blame cannot be put on American policy approaches, as the EU has struggled with its own internal problems as well.

President Schulz wrote in 2015 that the EU is not to blame for the migrant crisis. He points out that the within the US, when someone tries to determine who has the responsibility for an issue, then that person would try to dissect who stands for what. Is it the president or Congress' failure? Is it the Democrats or the Republicans responsibility? Schulz states that the same approach should

be applied in the EU (Schulz, 2015). This is interesting and raises the question if people sceptical towards the US and the EU's policy approaches to the migrant crisis have used this method. If the critics of the handling of Syria and the migrant inflow had thought this way, then the EU would not experience the perceived increase in anti-Americanism. Furthermore, Schulz claims that the supranational institutions within the EU have shown their readiness to act, and he critiques how member states preach solidarity when it suits them and then resists when it does not. Nevertheless, he states that most European shows solidarity, and claims that it seems to be European governments that show the most resistance to resettle migrants.

Schulz comments are important in how to analyse how the EU itself is responsible for the increase in anti-migrant, anti-American forces in Europe. European governments' scepticism seems to have been a catalyst for increased anti-Americanism in the EU. If this will continue to grow in the coming future is uncertain. To not let Euroscepticism and similar forces that weaken the transatlantic relationship continue to grow, then more member states must implement the Agenda on Migration. Similarly, the implementation of policies that can allow for a more even resettling of migrants should also be encouraged. This is apparent with High Representative Mogherini claims that the transatlantic relationship is more important than ever in issues concerning migration. However, when asked if Europeans will pick up the slack if they consider the leadership role of the US on migration to be fading, she answered that the EU "is ready" (Sheehan, 2017). It is clear that the impact of the migrant crisis has taken its toll on the transatlantic relationship, and the agenda-setting for the EU and the US would most likely be different in the coming future, as seen by the Trump Administration. Political commentators have claimed that the Obama Presidency will be an era that will be remembered as the time when Europeans got more freedom of action and could no longer outsource their foreign responsibilities to the American government (Chivvis & Puglierin, 2016). This points out that Washington expected Brussels to deal with the migrant crisis, or not consider it their responsibility. This is why Schulz's comments on member states implementing the European Agenda on Migration is important. The EU is going their own way on migrant policy, and as Mogherini stated: they are ready for it.

## Conclusions

The transatlantic relationship has suffered a *negative impact* as a result of the migrant crisis from 2013 to 2017. Although the Obama Administration was willing to cooperate by resettling thousands of Syrian migrants, including donating billions to humanitarian aid, these policies have lacked in effectiveness and efficiency, hence not being able to stop an increase in scepticism towards the US from member states. Moreover, the White House's policy approaches to the migrant crisis have led to criticisms from political commentators and scholars, pointing out how Brussels' annoyance on American reluctance on resettling more migrants. A significant percentage of Europeans had no confidence in the US during the migrant crisis, with multiple member states becoming increasingly more sceptical from 2013 to 2017. The EU was mainly left on its own to deal with the migrant influx, setting the political agenda themselves, and formulating policies like the European Agenda on Migration and the Turkey Deal, to create an effective response. Furthermore, this thesis argues that domestic opposition towards the resettlement of migrants in both the EU and the US, with few transatlantic meetings and discussions about the migrant crisis, proves that the EU stands increasingly alone in facing crises like this. Even though American and European leaders want the transatlantic relationship to flourish, the reality is that migration policy approaches are diverging, and anti-migration along with anti-American political forces are in the rise in the EU, who puts the blame on the US for creating the crisis. The pattern from the Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan conflicts continue to show up in policy areas that are affected by the actions of military interventions from the American government. The EU is the one doing still the dishes. Nevertheless, the EU is also responsible for not handling the migrant crisis in a more effective way when it began. This is the result of an ineffective common asylum policy within the EU, which did not function properly when the crisis began. When the policy-making process in Brussels usually takes a long time from agenda setting to implementation, it is clear that by 2015 a quick common response was not possible. The migrant crisis happened too fast. As a result, many member states were not able to properly handle the massive influx of migrants, creating scepticism throughout the EU if Europe is able to handle the crisis. Nevertheless, the European Agenda on Migration and Turkey Deal has proved to be much more effective policy approaches on how to handle uncontrolled irregular migration and lessen the deaths on the Mediterranean. Domestic opposition within the EU continues towards certain vital parts of the new migrant policy that Brussels wants

to implement. This could be a point of concern for the future if scepticism and blame towards the US increase as an impact of the migrant crisis.

This study is important and relevant to understand a big event that developed, and are still occurring in our own part of the world. It points out flaws in the transatlantic relationship that occurred and slowly developed during a time when the American President generally had a good relationship with the EU. Arguably, the transatlantic relationship has seen a setback with the Trump Administration, and political ideals such as isolationism within both the US and the EU have grown after 2017. Therefore, various policy approaches during the Obama Administration led to negative consequences in transatlantic relations. The research question and theme of this thesis will continue to be relevant, as the global migrant crisis is still ongoing, even though the European Agenda on Migration has drastically reduced the number of non-EU citizens migrating into the EU. However, this thesis has a few weaknesses. As examined in the methodology, it is difficult to measure efficiency and effectiveness in a policy approach and implement policies, and it comes down to the researcher's own subjective interpretation. Furthermore, not every policy paper are available to the public. The results and conclusions reached in this thesis will only be based on what the EU and the US choose to make public. A researcher is also not able to attend, or watch the various meetings between American and European politicians and officials, hence not being able to get insight into the tone of them, and how well the cooperation is going. However, other methods can make up for this, such as discourse analysis about videos and speeches made from these meetings. Other research methods could also be utilized, to overcome these weaknesses.

Future research on this topic has multiple approaches. Firstly, this thesis used a mixed methods approach to answer the research question. Previous studies as mentioned in the literature review has utilized case studies to compare the responses to the EU and the US to the Syria conflict with other wars and migrant crises. For the academic literature about this subject to continue to grow, different studies who use various methods should be made. Policy analysis has now been used. Other methodology could be to use document analysis, to analyse all possible official papers and documents from the EU and the US, and examine if any change in how transatlantic cooperation has occurred during the period. Most importantly, future research will always have to focus on the time that has passed since this thesis. How the transatlantic relationship within migration policy

will be in 3 or 5 years could be vastly different from now. A comparative case study between Obama's second term and Trump's term could provide interesting results on how cooperation on migration policy has changed, what the main differences are, and how important migration was on the political agenda for both the EU and the US during both presidencies.

Moreover, when analysing the statistics from Pew Research Center about scepticism among member states towards the US, it is difficult to point out the exact reasons for this. This thesis has never claimed that the percentage who answered negatively on how they felt towards the US, is only because of the negative consequences of the migrant crisis. However, the sizable amount that responded with scepticism is seen as a correlation between the development of the migrant crisis and how it influenced parts of the transatlantic relationship. Future research should do a study that examines the reasons why this group of Europeans is sceptical towards the US, and if issues such as the migrant crisis is a reason for it. This thesis has used a qualitative approach. By using a quantitative study, such as surveys on how Europeans from different member states regard the correlation between the migrant crisis and American foreign security policy and military interventions, if they think the EU and the US are to blame for it, and if they think that the transatlantic relationship has suffered a setback as a result of the development of the migrant situation, could also provide alternative results and conclusion to this subject.

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