What Triggers Change in Asylum Policy?

A comparative study of policy change

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Abstract

This thesis has the ambition to provide an answer to why governments' asylum policy changes. Previous research suggests that changes in policy lay within ideational and material sources of preference. Correspondingly, the reason for change in asylum policy specifically, is partly due to the number of asylum seekers, the public opinion and the party ideology. However, scholars are not in agreement with which of these factors actually drives a change in preference and policy. This research aims to bridge the disagreement of what exactly causes governments to change their asylum policy. Using a qualitative comparative design, this study will exemplify policy change by three EU member states, namely Austria, Germany and the UK. The main finding of this thesis is that all variables play a vital role in this specific study on policy change regarding asylum. However the number one factor that triggers change is the number of asylum seekers as it does not only directly affect policy change, but also the competing variables as such.

Key words: Asylum Policy, Policy Change, Asylum Seekers, Public Opinion, Party Ideology

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1   Introduction

"A refugee, according to the [Geneva] Convention, is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR 1951).

Seeking international protection and asylum is a fundamental right first introduced by the Geneva Convention in 1951. The European Union (EU) shares and acknowledges this right in order to protect refugees. Apart from the establishment of domestic asylum policies, the EU as a whole has been developing its own European asylum system since 1999. The purpose of this common policy was setting harmonized minimum standards for all EU member states. Because many of them differ in their attitude and perspective to what extent they should help and support asylum seekers, they domestically decide on further rules for their asylum policy, according to EU law. In late 2015 and early 2016 many EU governments changed their asylum policy to a more restrictive strategy. Governments will either prefer to maintain the status quo or change its policy according to the given circumstances. The study aims to research which of these circumstances is the main driving cause for the governments to change their asylum policy. This study holds the potential of bridging the disagreements on what forms governments' preference formation, and especially what causes policy change.

1.1   Problem Formulation and Aim of Study

The political problem under investigation is to examine the reason for change in governments' political preference and their policy as a whole. This research has the ambition to contribute to the broader field of policy change – whether ideational or material sources push for changes in policy. In order to impart to such a broad field of research, the study will

be narrowed down to a specific policy area, namely the asylum policy of various EU member states.

The motivation behind this research is the change of multiple EU governments' asylum policies in late 2015 and early 2016. Three examples of governments of EU member states, which have changed their asylum policy in this timeframe, are Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK) (see section 4.2). These cases are especially significant to investigate, due to the ground of their reform, from a liberal to a more restrictive asylum policy. In addition this makes for a very interesting case as these cases all have different attitudes towards the general issue. Additionally, the chosen timeframe is crucial in itself: Since September 2015 a large influx of refugees, especially Syrian individuals fleeing war, sought asylum in EU countries. According to EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, this was the world's worst 'refugee crisis' since World War II (UNHCR 2015a), and the largest amount of refugees entering the EU (over one million) since the Balkan Crisis in the 1990s (UNHCR 2015b).

The timeframe and specific circumstances of the 'refugee crisis' provide an additional factor to research drivers of policy change. The goal is to discover whether the change in policy is actually due to the number of asylum seekers admitted or if other factors are more relevant. Researching this highly current and salient issue will shed light on an already existing discussion about reasons for change in policy. Scholars have come to conclusions that both ideational factors (e.g. party ideology) and material sources (e.g. the number of asylum seekers and the public opinion) matter in policy change (see chapter 3). However, none are in agreement with which factor actually is the most significant to trigger change in asylum policy.

In order to produce an outcome that will give clear results on the main impact for policy change, two research questions have been created to guide this research:

Why did EU member states' asylum policy change? Which is the main driving factor for a policy change - the number of asylum seekers, public opinion, or party ideology?

The main research question, centers this study, while the sub-question will guide this research in more specific terms.

1.2 Disposition of the Study

This section will give a brief outline of the thesis to lubricate readability. The introduction chapter has aimed to enhance the motivation behind this highly vital study as well as dispensed the problem to be investigated in. This is followed by a background chapter, which will give concise information to simplify understanding of the legal framework of the CEAS as well as the domestic policy change that occurred in the exemplified EU member states. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework, mostly based on previous research on policy change, which will be tested in this thesis. The method chapter (chapter four) will discuss the methodological choices of the author, present the data collected and motivate the case selection. The fifth chapter is the analytical discussion of the empirical data, in which the material findings for each case will be discussed separately. Subsequently, the following chapter will analytically compare the outcomes and parallel discuss the results in terms of the theoretical ground provided in chapter three. Moreover the sixth chapter will provide an answer to the research questions. Lastly, the conclusion will sum up findings and highlight the main results of this research. In addition the conclusion will provide ideas for future research.

2   Background

In order to facilitate comprehension of the study, a short background of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is provided. This study will not analyze the actual policy change that occurred in the chosen member states, but rather aims to investigate what triggered change in governments' policy. Nonetheless, a short description of the policy change concerning their restrictions to their asylum policy will be provided in order to comprehend to what extent and how distinctly change occurred.

2.1   Common European Asylum System

The establishment of a common EU asylum policy commenced at the Tampere Summit in 1999, which highlighted the need to jointly regulate asylum and migration issues (European Commission 2015). The development of the CEAS has been long and difficult, mainly because many member states have a different understanding and preferences when it comes to regulating standards. Nonetheless, all member states came to an agreement to set minimum binding standards to facilitate cooperation.

The CEAS is made up of a legal framework, based on four different directives and regulations. The Reception Conditions Directive ensured equal reception conditions as well as safety to asylum seekers while waiting for their application to be processed (Council Directive 2003/9/EC). The Dublin II Regulation obliged the member state, in which the asylum seeker first arrived in, to take responsibility to examine their application (Council Regulation No 343/2003 EC). The Qualitative Directive builds on international law on human rights and deals with whether an asylum seeker qualifies to gain the asylum status (Council Directive 2004/83/EC). The latest Directive that was implemented by EU law was the Return Directive in 2008, establishing common minimum standards that deal with the return of illegal third country nationals (Council Directive 2008/115/EC). According to the European Commission, these regulations and directives are being revised (2015).

2.2 Change in Asylum Policy

2.2.1 Austria

On the 1st October 2015 a new regulation concerning asylum entered into force. This dealt with opening more accommodations for refugees as well as introducing a fair distribution of asylum seekers in Austria. Moreover the government decided to set a guideline for refugees, namely a 1.5% daily quota of the resident population. According to the Austrian Parliament, the limit of refugees that can stay in one district accounts for 450. This law is provisionally limited until 2018 (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2015).

"Asyl auf Zeit" (German for "temporary asylum") is a bill that was introduced to the Austrian Parliament in January 2016. It gives asylum seekers a temporary status, meaning that when Austrian officials confirm the asylum seeker's homeland to be safe, their asylum seeking status will be detracted from them. Furthermore, this bill also gives more restrictions on family reunification (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2016).

The restriction to Austria's asylum policy that has received most attention in European media is the idea of a cap on the number of refugees. Presented by the government, up until 2019 a maximum number of 127,500 refugees will be received in Austria (Standard 2016a). Additional military and police officials will be placed at the southern border of Austria, to control the large flow of refugees. In February 2016 the government claimed that with the introduction of an upper limit of refugees, they hope to receive 80 asylum applications per day instead of 200. The former federal minister of interior, Mikl-Leitner, claimed that these decisions have been made to guarantee safety to Austria and its citizens (Standard 2016b).

In April 2016 the Austrian Parliament decided to officially restrict the asylum law dramatically. This provision in asylum law declares Austria's right to legally call a 'state of emergency', which will allow the government to reduce the number of refugees drastically (ZDF heute 2016). In a case of threat to the public or to Austria's security, refugees would only in very special cases be able to seek asylum. This restrictive provision has been passed so a maximum number of 37,500 asylum seekers will not exceed. The government is additionally debating on the implementation of a 370m long chain-link fence at the border between Austria and Italy (Ibid.).

2.2.2   Germany

On the 23rd October, the first change in Germany's asylum policy was introduced, namely the Asylum Package I, which came with some restrictive consequences. According to the German government, the asylum package claims that 1) asylum seekers need to leave the country faster if the asylum status is disapproved (Bundesregierung 2015). Furthermore asylum seekers are required to stay in preliminary reception centers for up to six months, in which they are not allowed to leave the district. 2) A monthly asylum support shall now be provided mostly through material goods instead of payment through money (Ibid.). This applies for the time asylum seekers stay at preliminary reception centers. 3) Asylum seekers shall be integrated into German society and culture as quick as possible in order for them to be able to enter the job market. Additionally, 4) more housing possibilities will be made available, especially so that refugees will have shelter during the winter. Another essential legislation change is the more generous assistance towards refugees that are minors (Bundesregierung 2015). In addition, the Asylum Package I introduced new 'safe countries of origin' (Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro), which will make sure that individuals coming from these states will not receive an asylum status and will not be allowed to work in Germany (ibid).

According to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, these legislative asylum changes were not sufficient. Therefore, additional provisions were discussed shortly after the first restriction was implemented. Asylum Package II became effective in 17 March 2016. The second asylum package restricted Germany's asylum policy further: 1) the process of asylum application is accelerated for a certain group of asylum seekers. Applicants belonging to that group are asylum seekers from a secure homeland, as well as second time asylum seekers (Bundesregierung 2016). 2) To better cope with the refugee issue, family reunion is suspended for two years for applicants receiving subsidiarity protection (ibid.). 3) If a refugee has been granted asylum, they shall receive full coverage of the asylum support. However, asylum support will be cut by 10 euros per asylum seeker. 4) The state could not deport refugees due to medical reasons in the past. This has now changed, stating that only in case of life-threatening medical emergencies will they not be deported.

2.2.3   United Kingdom

According to Parliament.UK "small" changes have been made to the immigration policy concerning asylum. In August 2015 a new rate of asylum support was regulated, lowering the asylum support to all adults and children (2015a). The "bigger" changes being made to British immigration policy (have not been finalized) is the new Immigration Bill 2016 (Parliament.UK 2015b). Overall the bill deals with building on the previous Immigration Act 2014, to reduce illegal immigration to impede living and working in the UK (Gov.UK 2015a) Additionally the government states that new efforts will be made to help "combat the facilitation of vulnerable migrants" (ibid) as well as help to detain individuals (Parliament.UK 2015c). When it comes to the refugee crisis, a quick and simple response was necessary, namely to "resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees and further secure border control in Calais" (Gov.UK 2015a). Since May 2016, the Bill has been introduced as British law (Parliament.UK 2016a).

Other provisions deal e.g. with asylum support. This introduced changes to the financial arrangements. Refused asylum applicants will gain a different support, which would be available to "destitute refused asylum seekers" in order to facilitate the exit of the UK (Parliament UK 2015d). Furthermore, a new clause to extend asylum seekers rights to work has been agreed on (Gower & Pyper 2016:21). Furthermore, application forms will be made simpler and less time consuming (Parliament.UK 2016b).

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides the theoretical ground for policy change and aims to shed light on the causal factors that change governments' preference in general and in asylum specifically.

3.1 Policy Change

In political science, the phenomenon of policy change has been researched for many decades. Multiple theories and approaches are available, however not suitable and applicable for all policy areas. Nevertheless, factors causing policy change can be categorized in two groups of sources. For a long time there has been a tendency to view political preference formation and political change as a rational behavior focusing on actors' interests and goals (in terms of material interests) or as an ideational source focusing on beliefs, norms and ideology within the government or where actors/individuals find themselves (Berman 2012:230). Nowadays, literature can include everyone from constructivist to rationalist theorists when looking for causes for policy reform (Berman 2012:217). Scholars have claimed a difference in definition of 'policy change' and 'policy reform', namely that the former is an incremental process of change (Bennett and Howlett 1992) whereas the latter is a major transformation, which may or may not lead to a more permanent change (Fullan 2000). Incremental change can be identified over a longer timeframe, but because this study is focused on a short period, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

Peter Hall (1993) wrote one of the most influential articles (from the constructivist point of view) on the nature of policy change "Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State" analyzing what factors induce stability in a policy as well as what drives paradigmatic change. His main argument is that ideas are the most important factors for policy change. Hall claims that policies are not necessarily formed by rational decisions or material interests rather from ideational sources such as values, ideas and norms. The latter then could cause individuals to form their interests. His explanation of policy change coincides with multiple (constructivist) scholars (Bryan Jones & Baumgartner 1991, 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993) claiming that ideas drive change over rationality or material interests.

Hall claims that policy change is minimal most of the time, but that it sometimes (although rarely) can be dramatic. He divides the order of change into three types of policy change, which builds on the original idea by Thomas Kuhn. The first order of change is an adjustment to the policy. The second order is changes in policy instruments and the third order of change is a radical change "in the overarching terms of policy discourse associated with a 'paradigm shift'" (Hall 1993:279). These stages will only be passed (from the first to the second and then to the third) if the policy is not functioning well.

Policy change is unlikely if the existing policy is working properly and society as well as the state is content with it. Change is also unlikely, if there is no alternative option for the policy, hence, if there are any changes, they will be a minimal adjustment (Baumgartner 2012:242). Baumgartner claims that if a dramatic change occurs in a policy, expectations of society will change, due to the failure of the status quo (2012:245). John Padgett comes up with a similar outcome, namely that culture and norms form decision-making (1980, 1981). He mentions the importance of the status quo, formulating it as the significance of past decisions. Nevertheless, he claims, that new information may change the political attitude towards a policy. Padgett also argues that sometimes this new information is ignored if the decision-maker is very confident in his/her previous actions (1980). In terms of ideas and how new information is handled, scholars that studied policymaking in the 1990s focused primarily on political parties that made up the government in question, or/ and the relation of the society and the state in order to understand the "political struggles over policy decisions" (Béland & Cox 2013:194). Hall argues that parties pursue some political action over another due to their ideology. The ideational factor in decision-making drives a group towards a special preference over certain decisions" (ibid.).

From a different perspective, rational choice and public theorists agree that the driving force as well as the motivation for political behavior in terms of policy change is a material interest (Berman 2012; Béland & Cox 2010; Blyth 2003; Hay 2004; Katznelson & Weingast 2005). Especially in the policy area of economics, actors behave in a way to maximize their utility, namely their income, resources, wealth etc. The political sphere is therefore always competing with others seeking to do the same. As Berman puts it, it is necessary to firstly "recognize actors' (material) interests and then figuring out how they are likely to be maximized, given the constraints and opportunities they face" (2012:231; Friedman 1996; Green & Shapiro 1996). This perspective of preference formation, leading to policy change is mainly applicable in the economic sector of policymaking. However, political scientists have also claimed the importance of states' rational interests in terms of elections and the interest

of the political authority to maintain themselves in office (Shisheva 2013:40). A rationalist interest-based approach is in some policy areas very applicable (single market, trade, telecommunications) while in others it is not. Therefore others make use of a light version of the rationalist approach, where sociological factors are also considered (agriculture, security and defense, immigration) (Schmidt & Radaelli 2004:185). In terms of government, the 'soft' assumption of rational choice can be placed in political interactions such as party politics and elections (Schmidt & Radaelli 2004:188).

At this point, the interest-based approach using rational choice as well as the constructivist perspective can be combined. According to Berman, what both share is that "actors' motivations are the key or at least *a* key determinant of their behavior. Where ideational and public choice theories differ is in how they understand the content of those interests and goals." (2012:231). Summing up, Goldstein and Keohane (1993), rationalists, provide a great understanding of the importance of ideas in an interest-based environment, namely that uncertain ideas will act as a guide, which will filter your interests and lastly provide for new policy strategies. "Haas (1990) veers towards constructivism by arguing that under conditions of uncertainty interests themselves become uncertain and, therefore, open to redefinition or 'reconstruction' by new ideas framed by new knowledge" (Schmidt & Radaelli 2004:194).

3.2   Policy Change in Asylum Policy

The interest-based approach of both material and ideational perspectives are not only highlighted in previous literature on policy change, but also specifically in policy change regarding asylum. Scholars suggest that there are multiple variables that cause change in asylum policy. While some scholars argue that a large flow of refugees is the main cause for a change in asylum policy (Schmidt & Radaelli 2004:186), others have come up with different conclusions. Lahav claims that there are various factors that influence the policy area as well as the preference of the member states' governments (2004), which then allows for a change in the policy. She argues that a change in asylum policy comes from societal pressure rather than the number of refugees (2004:71). Hatton argues that the actual number of refugees is not as important as one would expect, because the general public is not familiar with the exact number entering a state. Nonetheless, the public will have "stronger impressions about the

trend in asylum applications" as well as form their opinion on the issue, because the information is "fed by the media and political debate" (Hatton 2011:61). In accordance with Lahav's research, Baldwin-Edwards and Schain claim that the issue of asylum policy is not always related to a large flow of refugees, but rather how the elite and general public react to them (1994:7). According to Lahav, the public opinion is not the only essential factor when it comes to attitudes towards immigration/asylum. Her previous research has shown that party ideology is also a source of political preference formation and policy change (2004:127; Downs 1957).

3.2.1 Material Source of Policy Change

The number of asylum seekers is vital for policy change, because a large flow of refugees could both have a "financial dimension and a political one, […] leading to greater visibility and hostility, increased salience on the issue and potential electoral losses" (Shisheva 2013:47). In some cases, a large number of migrants entering a member state can lead to a rupture of the policy and even the system due to an unpredictable flow and an unprepared government. According to Saggar (2003), this may then not only lead to governments' preference change, but also to a reform in policy. Saggar claims that this is also true in terms of the public; voters seek the competence of their political parties and their ability to control immigration (ibid.), because if there is a lack in reliability, it may lead to a blockage of the whole asylum system (Shisheva 2013:47). This results in the necessity of a well functioning asylum system. Schmidt and Radaelli agree that the number of asylum seekers is the first step that will trigger a change in policy, especially if the system, be it on the governmental or supranational level, does not have the competence to handle this unexpected troubling situation. They argue that "in immigration, the pressure for change [comes] from the increasing flow of immigrants and asylum-seekers looking for jobs and safe havens in member states with often quite different regimes as well as from EU attempts to work out a common immigration policy" (2004:186).

In asylum policy, governments enjoy autonomy from other actors (Guiraudon 2003; Statham & Geddes 2006), due to the distribution of costs and benefits to the member state and to please its general public (Freeman 1995, 2006). According to Freeman (2006), to give protection to refugees and asylum seekers accounts for a public good. However, citizens of the member states' society barely benefit from this and the costs for protecting the vulnerable

are either borne by the asylum seekers themselves or by the state and local governments e.g. municipalities. He claims, "the costs of asylum seeking overshadow its benefits" (Freeman 2006:239). An increased number of asylum seekers equal an increased cost for the reception, integration or removal of the recipient country.

The number of asylum seekers is not just a variable which can show the main cause for change of asylum policy, but also the success or failure of it. Sharing the 'burden' has been a problem in the CEAS, because not all member states agree to have a certain amount of asylum seekers. If countries assume that others are "free-riding [, this] may constitute a trigger for change" (Shisheva 2013:48).

As another materially oriented source for the case of asylum policy, public opinion is often referred to as a cause of preference formation, leading governments to change their asylum policy. The general debate among scholars on public opinion's relation towards the general immigration policy has been present for many years: that there is a gap between the negative attitude of the general public on immigration flows into member states and "governments efforts to control immigration" (Cornelius 1994:1), as well as a gap of an increased number of refugees entering states, protectionist public opinion and to some extent, liberal policies (Cornelius 1994, 2004). Other researchers on asylum policy claim, that this gap is overemphasized. Lahav (2004) has provided the evidence from her research, that both the political elite and the public opinion have changed (restricted) policies regarding question of immigration, leading to sufficient proof of the relationship between the public opinion and the ability to influence a change in policy.

Public opinion as a concept is difficult to define, but one can explain this matter in terms of opinion polls, which communicates 'what the people want'. Politicians pursue the result of the polls in order to satisfy the public, but with the hope to be reelected (Shisheva 2013:41). When an issue is salient, the opinion of the public can directly be adopted into a specific policy or "indirectly, by urging the government to adopt a certain stance due to fears of voting radicalization" (Ibid.). The former could be a potential vote winner for parties/politicians. In regards to immigration policy, Sides and Citrin claim that not only the public opinion as such push towards a certain preference of politicians, but "the mere presence of anti-immigrant parties can push mainstream parties towards a tougher line on immigration for fear of being outflanked" (2007:477).

As has been established, public opinion affects the preference of politicians, and possibly the content of the policy in the existing policy. However under which conditions does public policy affect a change in policy? Democratic theory describes the "responsiveness

of elected officials to voters' demands" (Shisheva 2013:42). Moreover, as many social scientists agree, public opinion determines public policy in democratic countries (Burstein 2003:29). Nevertheless, Burstein claims that there are "dedicated proponents of democratic theory that acknowledge that democratic governments sometimes ignore the public (e.g., Page and Shapiro 1983: 189)" (Ibid.). Furthermore, it is also agreed upon that the more salient an issue is to the public, "the stronger the relationship [between the public and their government] is likely to be" (Ibid.) and the more they are able to 'punish' or 'reward' political parties. The more salience the issue receives the more consistent the relationship between the public and policy (Monroe 1998; Page & Shapiro 1983).

3.2.2   Ideational Source of Policy Change

As aforementioned, ideational factors play an additional and essential role when studying policy change. This type of source, emphasized by the constructivists, is e.g. norms, identity, discourse, ideas and culture. As different actors shape policy-making it is important to include an institutional actor that has direct power to make changes, namely political parties. Political parties will portray their ideas on asylum issues as well as portray their political and ideological stance towards policies. Parties' ideological sphere has been divided dramatically, especially when it comes to questions on immigration. When studying ideology in terms of member states' asylum policy, one needs to consider that it is closely connected to immigration and integration and while one party can have opposing views on the two issues.

There are two views concerning public policy-making: one is concerned with ideology, that "parties are ideologically based and pursue their own policies, that they are internally factionalized and operating under high levels of uncertainty" (Budge, Ezrow & McDonald 2010:781). According to constructivists, parties attract like-minded people who feel identified with the party's norms and beliefs rather than focusing on maximizing their votes. However, Downs (1975), a rationalist, highlights that in order to change policy, one must win elections and choose to (re)position the party to minimize the distance towards the voter's preference, but closest to the median elector. Nevertheless, as claimed by Budge, Ezrow and Mcdonald, parties don't necessarily hope to win entire elections, but rather becoming part of a bigger coalition within the government (2010:791)

Ideational and material sources do not necessarily exclude, but rather complement each other. Adam bridges the two perspectives claiming that parties "adjust policy with votes

in mind […] but they do so under deep uncertainty about how voters will react. This leaves the way open to ideology, whose classic function is to provide explanations for otherwise unclear events, and to use these explanations as a basis for action" (Budge, Ezrow & McDonald 2010:790). This may lead to a factional conflict within parties. Examining ideology and vote seeking together will give most accurate results in explaining party policy behavior. "Ideology explains to leaders and activists why parties received the vote that they did – and it necessarily shapes policy, powering change through fractional alternation" (Budge, Ezrow & McDonald 2010:791). This underlines that not only ideology in terms of norms and beliefs shape policy-making but that electoral success plays an essential role.

In this respect it is important to incorporate the dimension of a left-right space when studying party ideology. Immigration policy has only recently been researched in connection to political parties and ideology, because the theories provided are usually connected to economic policies (Shisheva 2013:46). However, as Perlmutter has suggested already in the 90s, there is a need to "bring parties back" (1996). Studies on far right parties and immigration have been conducted often in the last decade. However, some claim that those extreme parties only influence policy-making indirectly forcing the mainstream parties to move and adjust to the left or right ideological sphere (Norris 2005; Schain 2006; Budge, Ezrow & McDonald 2010). A left-right party movement however, will never move to a too far extreme (Budge, Ezrow & McDonald 2010:803). Depending on the preference of the public, parties will move towards the position of their main competitor or distancing away from them.

As scholars of political science have established, both material and ideational sources are essential when it comes to policy change and do not necessarily exclude each other (Fearon & Wendt 2002; Checkel 2005). The government will consider both sources and if possible reconcile them. As exemplified by Shisheva, "a general preference for restrictive asylum policy seen as a response to a negative public opinion towards asylum-seekers could co-exist with a concession of taking a small quota of Iraqi Christian refugees consistent with a Christian-Democratic government's preference stemming from its ideological position" (2013:45).

4   Methodological Framework

4.1   Method and Material

The research design chosen for this study is a qualitative method of a comparative analysis. A qualitative comparative analysis "involves comparing the configurations of different case studies to identify the components that appear to be most responsible for producing specific outcomes." (Goodrick 2014:ii). To shortly motivate the nature of this research design, whether the qualitative or quantitative is the better choice, is to firstly define both. A qualitative research implies that the researcher focuses on a number of countries in order to "identify and understand attributes, characteristics, and traits of the object of inquiry" (Landman 2003:19). A quantitative analysis focuses on describing numeral facts and data rather than on the interpretation of it (ibid.). Although this analysis will consider two independent variables (public opinion and number of refugees), which will contribute a numeral expression, the goal of this research is to give a well-rounded analytical discussion and result rather than a quantitative outcome.

Complimentary to the qualitative comparative analysis is the empirical theory that established the causal variables, which will assist the inferences behind the change in government policy preferences (Landman 2003:15). According to Goodrick causality is defined as "the principle that one variable (X) produces change in another variable (Y)" (2014:i). In order to answer the question *why* there has been a change in government's asylum policy (dependent variable, Y) it is necessary to specify the independent variables (X). As discussed in the previous chapter, multiple elements (from ideational and material sources) influence a change in policy preference, namely public opinion, the number of asylum seekers, and party ideology. In addition, it needs to be noted that there is a great possibility that not only the independent variables impact policy change, but that an interplay between the competing independent variables (the public opinion, the number of asylum seekers and the party ideology) might occur as well. Since the focus of the study is to examine the

causality that produces the outcome of policy change, it is not significant that the independent variables of the selected cases are similar or different in absolute terms- hence, it is vital that a relative change has occurred within the variables of each country. Below, the variables will be discussed methodologically.

4.1.1 Number of Asylum Seekers

The number of asylum seekers will be chosen as a material source of policy change in asylum policy. September 2015 until today has been a period, in which a large influx of asylum seekers entered EU member states. Therefore, it is significant to study whether it was the actual number of asylum seekers that triggered change in governments' asylum policy or if other factors have been more relevant. The statistics on the number of asylum seekers entering Austria, Germany and the UK, are retrieved from the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat 2016c). Eurostat collects its data through national Ministries of Interior as well as domestic official agencies. Concerning asylum seekers, the numbers referred to always allude to first time applicants. According to Eurostat, first time applicants are ones that "submitted an application for international protection for the first time" (Eurostat 2016a).

In addition, since the public of the selected member states are not necessarily familiar with the difference in terminology of 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker', and as the public polls and governments' leaders sometimes refer to either one, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

4.1.2 Public Opinion

The public opinion of Austria, Germany and the UK will be analyzed as another material source. This variable will consider three types of public polls. Firstly, general polls on what member states' citizens think regarding the asylum issue are presented, which will reveal the changes in the public's attitude towards asylum seekers. The second poll concerns with issue salience of asylum/immigration. Eurobarometer creates a poll twice a year asking EU citizens about the most important issue their country is facing. Austria, Germany and the UK have polls available for 2014 and 2015. In order to see further developments for 2016, domestic institutions that have conducted very similar polls will be used if available. These results will divulge the importance of the issue to the public as well as highlight, if there is a relationship

between the public and the government (as suggested by Shisheva 2013; Monroe 1998; Page & Shapiro 1983). The third type of polls chosen concern voting intentions and satisfaction with government and parties. This will not only be vital for the variable public opinion, but also for the discussion concerning party ideology, and therefore belongs to both the material and ideational source. However, since it is a poll revealing what the public thinks about the government and parties it will be placed under 'public opinion'.

It needs to be noted that immigration and asylum are two very closely connected phenomenon, especially in British policy, because the political debate often does not differentiate between the two. This also applies for the public, how they interpret immigration and asylum. According to a poll by Migration Observatory, Britons were asked to identify an immigrant. Almost 70% pointed out an asylum seeker, meaning that the public connects the two issues greatly (BBC News 2016). For this reason the two issues will both be considered (if no concrete questions on asylum are available).

In order to evaluate the political stance and opinion of the general public regarding asylum/immigration issues, multiple sources will be considered. Measures that will be used in Germany are opinion polls that have been constructed around the issue of asylum, government and parties. Opinion polls are collected from *Ard-Deutschland aktuell*, which is a study created on a monthly basis by Infratest dimap. The opinion polls concern the political tendency and attitudes for long-term events.

The main source that will be used to research the public attitude of the Austrian citizens, is a study called *Atv Österreich-Trends* (conducted by Peter Hajek, public opinion strategist), which studies how the society feels about political and economic current topics, on a quarterly basis. Due to the limitations and unavailability of the polls by *Atv Österreich-Trends*, further polls found by *Statista* and *Marketagent.com* will be used in order construct a study, which is comparable over time. The polls are carefully selected so that the comparisons and outcome of the polls are reliable.

In order to study surveys published in the UK, *ipsos MORI* will be used to analyze the opinion of its general public when it comes to the questions of the government and party preference. Furthermore, studies constructed for BBC by *ComRes* will be included due to the fact that their studies have asked about asylum and immigration in the timeframe in question.

4.1.3   Party Ideology

Lastly, the third independent variable party ideology (the ideational source) will be analyzed

for each member state. This will concern the ideology of the ruling party, which will be obtained by the party manifestos, and the party leaders' stances towards the asylum policy. This will be analyzed and estimated through their discourse of speeches (or interviews if no speech is available). As mentioned above, the public opinion on voting intentions, parties, and government and leaders will also be used to identify the change in party ideology.

As the ambition of the research is to study why EU member states have changed its asylum policy in late 2015 or beginning of 2016, the independent variables need to be studied for each selected case separately, in order to eliminate the variables that were not crucial to trigger change in one specific country. Thereafter the outcome of each case will be compared and analytically discussed in order to differentiate and eliminate factors that trigger change on a broader scale. The timeframe studied will therefore be a year before considerable change occurred (2014) and ending with the timeframe when change took place, namely 2016.

4.2   Case Selection

In order to conclude this thesis with an explanation to what actually triggers nation states to change their asylum policy and also to contribute to the broader field of policy change, the cases need to be carefully selected. Selecting 'few countries' in a comparative analysis is usually more thorough and profound (Landman 2003:29). The cases that have been selected to exemplify change in asylum policy in late 2015 and early 2016 are Austria, Germany and the UK. As elaborated in chapter two, all of the cases have introduced new regulations to restrict their already existing asylum policy. Although theses cases differ in the extent to which the restriction has occurred, the important factor is highlighted in the change as such. What makes these countries highly interesting is not only their sudden change in policy, but that these member states have a very distinct perception of this issue.

The previous research and theoretical ground, provided in chapter three, has helped to select the cases, and to highlight why these three cases specifically are extremely interesting. Hall (1993) claims that policy change mostly occurs as a slight adjustment in policy or a minimal change in instruments used in the policy. Sometimes, but rarely, he argues, this change can in fact be dramatic. As we have learned from chapter two, in which the policy changes of the three chosen cases were described, was that even though countries have a very different attitude towards the issue of asylum they all changed reformed their policy in the

same direction: developing more restrictive provisions. Both Germany and the UK have not undergone tremendous change. The British government has implemented a provision that lowers support for asylum seekers. In addition UK's new Immigration Bill 2016 discusses great changes (restrictions) concerning overall immigration, yet not as many relating to asylum specifically. It is necessary to note that the UK is not part of the Schengen area, which means that it has the option to opt out of the CEAS if it wishes to do so. However, it has chosen, to some extent, to be part of the common policy. As seen in chapter two, the British government seems strict when it comes to immigration in general, regarding whom to let in and under what circumstances.

In the case of Germany, Asylum Package I and II have been introduced and implemented in late 2015 and early 2016. Just like provisions in UK's Immigration Bill, these changes resulted in 'smaller' restrictions that could be placed in the first and/or second order of change (see Hall's order of change discussed in chapter two). Moreover, as often mentioned by the media, Germany or rather its chancellor Merkel, is very liberal concerning the issue of asylum (Independent 2016). If policy changes occur towards more restrictions in their asylum policy, they are still more liberal in comparison with other EU states.

In the case of Austria, the restrictions in asylum policy have undergone substantial change throughout the time period that is being studied. The Austrian government had firstly taken similar steps in changes in asylum policy as the other cases. However, in April 2016 a new law was passed, allowing Austria to cut off the number of asylum seekers to how many as they wish whenever they announce an 'emergency' situation. This change is drastic and a lot more restrictive when comparing to the other two states in question.

To sum up, all three chosen states have exemplified a restriction in their asylum policy, although all three to a different extent. Secondly, as known through information given by the media, and the policy change as such, all three states have a different attitude towards this issue from very positive and welcoming to seeing asylum seekers as a burden for their country. This study could also be conducted with multiple or all EU member states, which have restricted their asylum policy in order to gain more exact results. The author is aware that more than three EU member states have in fact changed its policy. Albeit, due to the limited timeframe and scope of the paper, this study will narrowly look at three EU member states, which are chosen to exemplify asylum policy change. Another limitation to the choice of EU member states is the language barrier, which narrows down the range of cases to choose from.

5   Analytical Discussion

This chapter describes the material findings and discusses them analytically for each of the chosen cases. As can be recalled it is essential that change occurs in the independent variables (the number of asylum seekers, public opinion and party ideology) in order for them to trigger change in asylum policy.

5.1   Number of Asylum Seekers

This section will present the number of asylum seekers that were received by the member states in question. An overview of the total number of asylum seekers will be given in order to have a broad understanding of the amount that entered the EU: In 2014, the total number of first time applicants in the EU accounted for 562,680 while in 2015 this number increased by 123%, receiving 1,255,685 first time applications (Eurostat Database 2016b). In 2014 Germany received 31% and in 2015 welcomed 35% of first time applicants out of all EU28. Austria took in 4.5% applicants in 2014 and 6.8% in 2015. The UK accounted for 5.7% asylum seekers in 2014, which decreased to 3% in 2015 of the total EU28 (ibid).

Figure 1: Yearly reception of asylum seekers in Austria, Germany and UK

Total Number of Asylum Seekers
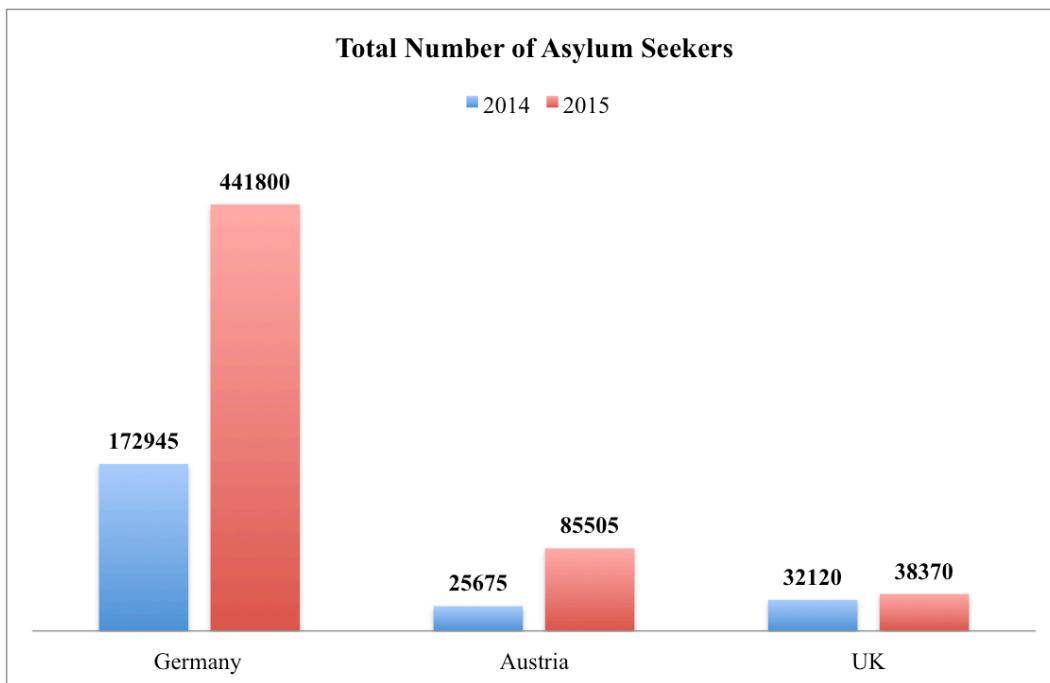
Source: Eurostat Database 2016b

Figure 1 illustrates the yearly entry rate of first time asylum seekers in 2014 and 2015 of Austria, Germany and the UK. It shows an increase in asylum seekers for all three states between 2014 and 2015.

In both years, Germany is the country that has received the highest amount of first time applicants. In 2014, Germany welcomed 172,945 asylum seekers and 441,800 first time applicants in 2015, which is an increase of 155%. Austria has received the second highest number of asylum seekers in 2015, followed by the United Kingdom. In 2014, Austria received 25,675 asylum seekers and gained 59,830 first time applicants in 2015, which is three times more than in 2014. The number of asylum seekers received in the UK in 2014 was slightly higher than in Austria, namely 32,120 asylum applicants. Hence unlike Austria, the UK gained very little first time applicants in 2015, namely 38,370.

5.1.1   Austria

As illustrated in figure 2 and 3 the number of first time asylum applicants has increased greatly throughout all months in all three regarded years. As was shown by Eurostat Database (2016c), the number of asylum seekers increased from month to month.

Figure 2: Monthly reception of asylum seekers 2014-2016, Austria

Monthly Asylum Seekers, Austria
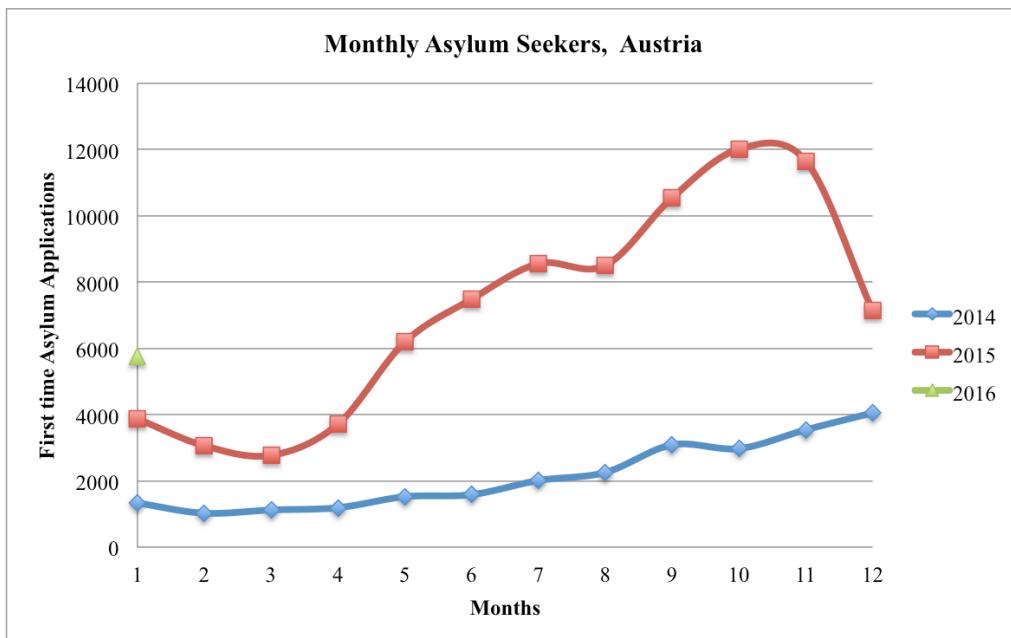
Source: Eurostat Database 2016c

The highest peak is in October 2015, when 12,015 asylum seekers applied for first time asylum; the lowest number was registered in March 2015 with 2,770 applicants. In October, when the number of asylum seekers was the highest, the Austrian government made its first restriction to its asylum policy. In 2014 the highest number of first time applicants was recorded with 4,050 and the lowest in February with 1025 applicants. When focusing on January 2016, (a month where a comparison of all three time periods can be made, due to availability of data) the highest number is recorded in 2016 and the lowest in 2014 (four times lower than in 2016). In 2015 the number of first time applicants increased by three times as much as in the former year, while the difference between the applicants in 2015 and 2016 is 48%. January 2016 is not only the month in which the highest amount of asylum seekers was received (compared to 2015 and 2014), but also the month in which Austria introduced its second restriction to its asylum policy, namely "temporary asylum".

Figure 3: Monthly reception of asylum seekers 2014-2016, Austria

Monthly Asylum Seekers, Austria

□2016 ■2015 ■2014

Month	2014	2015	2016
January	1325	3875	5750
February	1025	3060	
March	1120	2770	
April	1190	3715	
May	1520	6190	
June	1585	7485	
July	2010	8555	
August	2255	8500	
September	3085	10545	
October	2975	12015	
November	3540	11655	
December	4050	7135	
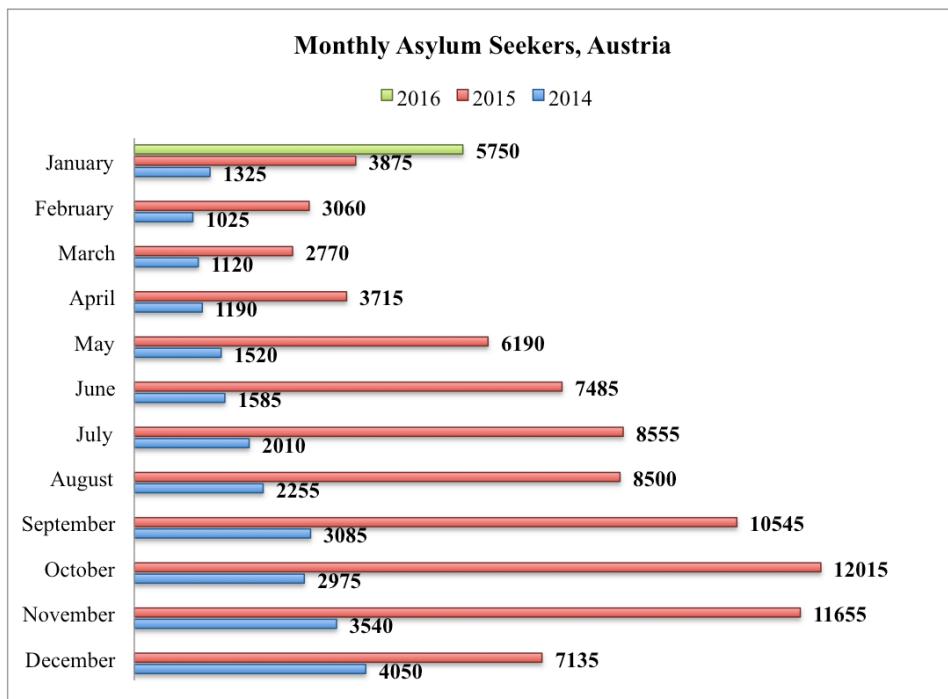
Source: Eurostat Database 2016c

5.1.2   Germany

Figure 4 and 5 display the number of first time applicants of asylum seekers in Germany for the years 2014 until 2016.

Figure 4: Monthly reception of asylum seekers 2014-2016, Germany

Monthly Asylum Seekers, Germany

Source: Eurostat Database 2016c

27
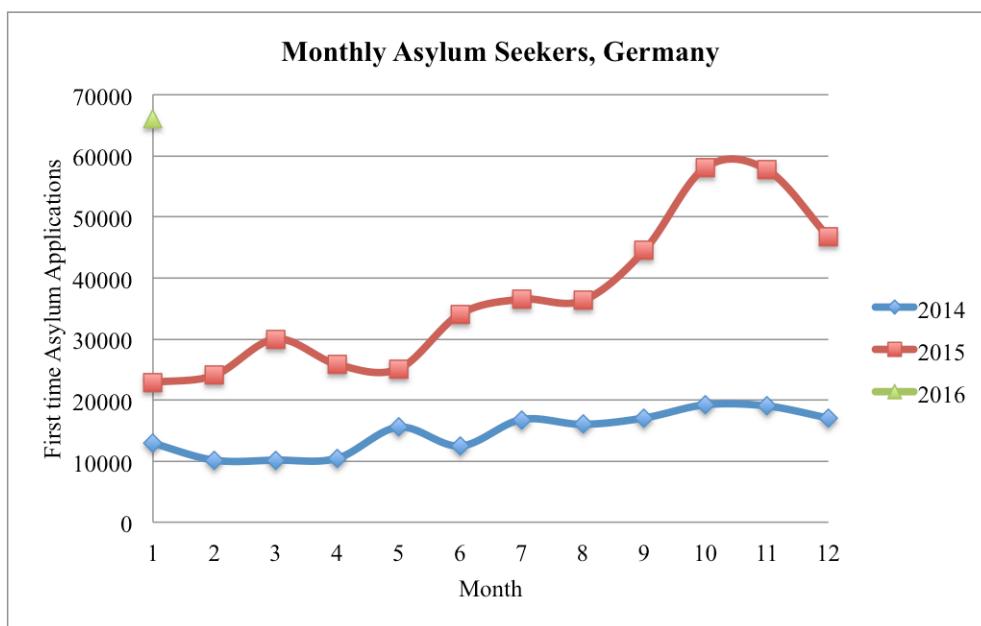
The lowest number in which Germany received first time applicants was recorded in February 2014 with 10,160 asylum seekers; the highest peak is in January 2016 in which Germany received 66,125 applications. In 2015 the highest number of asylum seekers was in October with 58,125 first time applicants, which is the month in which first changes to Germany's asylum policy were made.

Figure 5 Monthly reception of asylum seekers 2014-2016, Germany
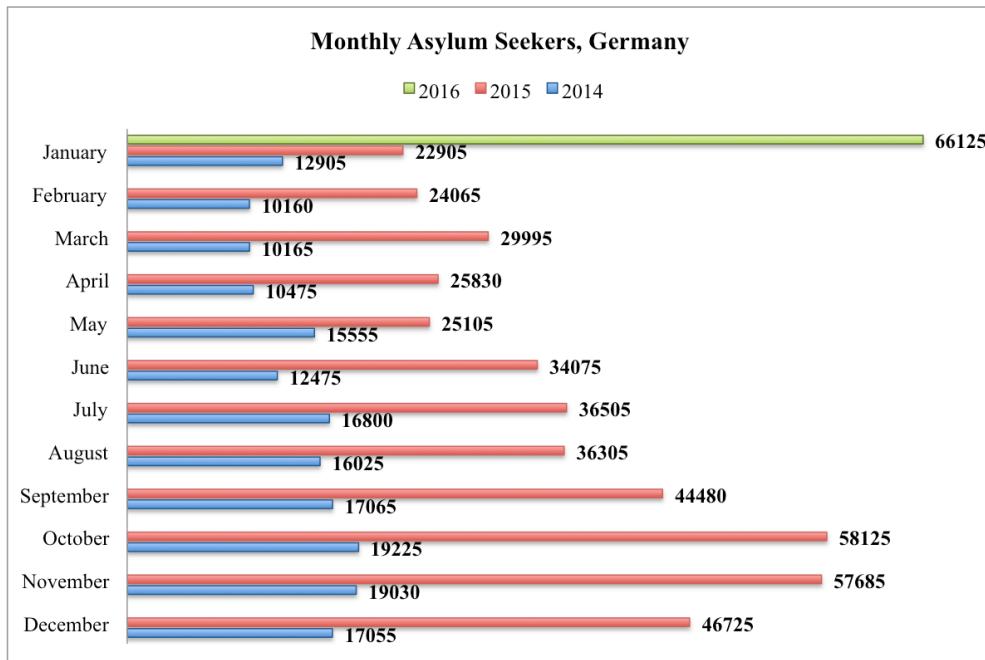
Source: Eurostat Database 2016c

5.1.3 United Kingdom

Similar to Austria and Germany, figure 6 and 7 show the monthly development of the number of asylum seekers received in Britain between 2014 and 2016.

Figure 6: Monthly reception of asylum seekers 2014-2016, UK
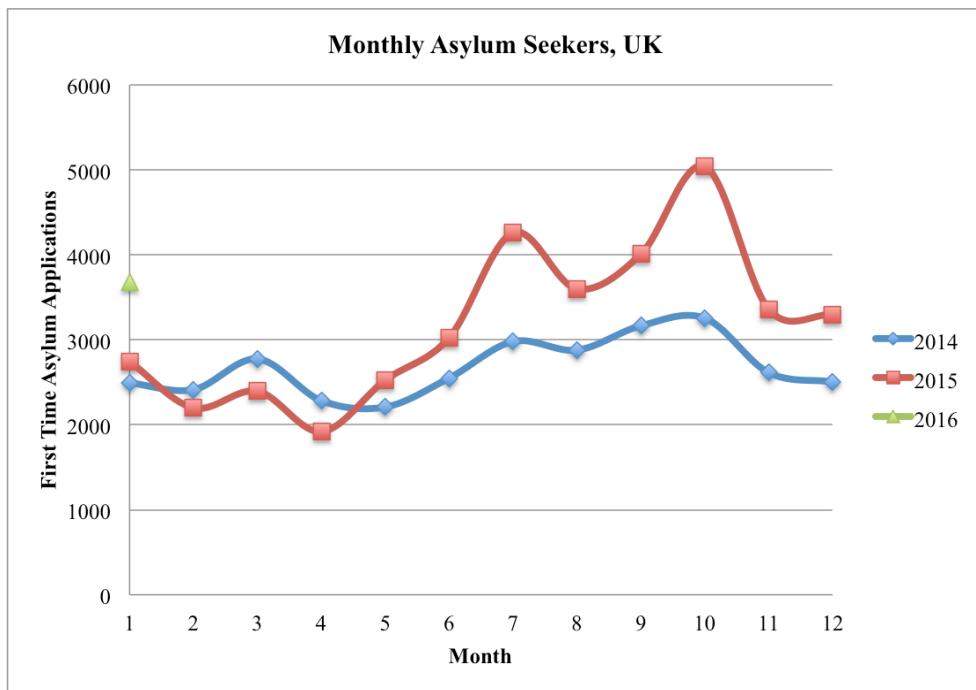
Source: Eurostat Database 2016c

The monthly asylum rate grew in most months, although the first months of 2015 the UK received less first applicants than in 2014. Starting May 2015, the numbers increase, although not as stable as Austria and Germany. Comparable to Austria, the UK had the highest number of recipients in October 2015 with 5,040 applicants and the lowest in April of the same year with 1,920 first time applications. In August 2015, which was the month before the number of asylum seekers started to greatly increase, the British government introduced its first policy change. Comparing January of 2014 until 2016, the number increased for each month of every year.

Figure 7: Monthly reception of asylum seekers 2014-2016, UK

Monthly Asylum Seekers, UK

□2016 ■2015 ■2014

Month	2016	2015	2014
January	3675	2740	2490
February		2200	2415
March		2395	2775
April		1920	2285
May		2525	2210
June		3025	2550
July		4260	2980
August		3600	2880
September		4010	3165
October		5040	3255
November		3360	2615
December		3295	2505
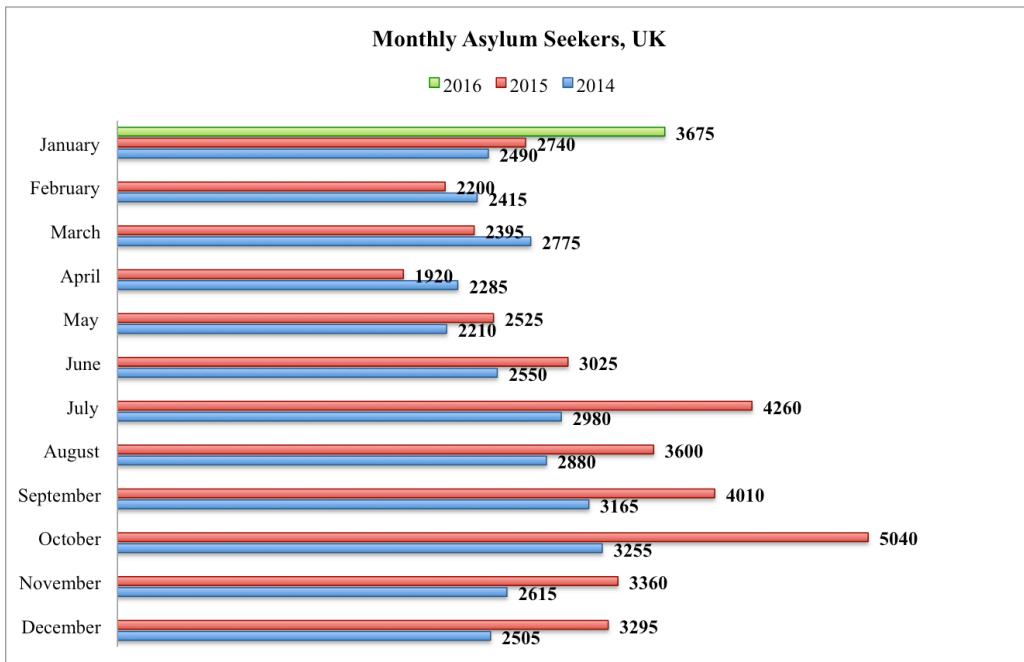
Source: Eurostat Database 2016c

5.2   Public Opinion

5.2.1   Public Opinion on Asylum/Immigration

5.2.1.1.   Austria

Figure 8 shows the result of two distinct polls regarding the opinion of Austrian citizens about introducing a cap for refugees.

Figure 8: Attitude towards a cap for refugees, Austria

Attitude towards a Cap for Refugees

■ Sep-15 ■ Feb-16

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Sep-15	69	28	3
Feb-16	66	29	5
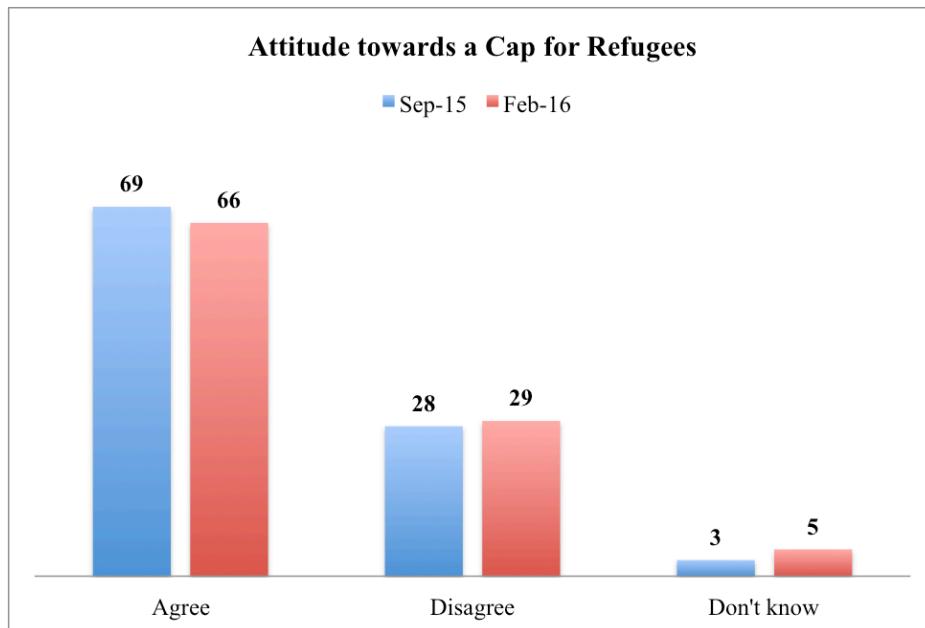
Question for September 2015: Austria is expecting 80000 asylum seekers, which accounts for 1% of the Austrian population. In your opinion, where should be the yearly limit/cap for the reception of refugees?[1] Source: Statista 2016a; Question for February 2016: The government has now fixed an annual limit for refugees, beyond which no refugees should be granted asylum in Austria. Are you very much in favor, fairly in favor, fairly opposed or strongly opposed?[2] Source: Peter Hajek Public Opinion Strategies on behalf of ATV-ÖsterreichTrend 2016a.

Both polls show similar results in both timeframes, September 2015 and February 2016, namely that a strong majority is in favor of a cap (69% in 2015 and 66% in 2016) while 28% in 2015 and 29% in 2016 disagree with introducing an upper limit of refugees in Austria. In between these polls, in October 2015 and January 2016, two out of three restrictions to Austria's asylum policy were introduced. However, since the majority of people did not change their mind about having a cap for refugees, the restrictions were clearly not sufficient.

Moreover, September 2015 was a month where a lot of refugees applied for asylum in Austria, namely 10,545 first time applications. The numbers decreased slowly until January 2016 (the data for February was not available in the time of writing the thesis), in which the number of first time applications was 5,750. This observation shows the evident: Despite the difference of asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, the opinion of the Austrian citizens did not

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[1] Note: The results of the original poll show the exact limit of refugees one would set for the yearly reception of refugees (there were possible answers). If added together, this would give the result of the people claiming that there should be a cap (as done here). One of the possible answers stated that there should not be a cap because refugees have a right to seek asylum, which equals to the number of Austrians disagreeing with a cap for refugees. This has been done in order to compare the statistics with another poll at a later timeframe (February 2016).

[2] The author has combined very much in favor and fairly in favor as "agree to have a cap" and fairly opposed and strongly opposed as "disagree with cap".

change remarkably. Both years show very similar results, namely that the majority of citizens favored a cap for refugees. This means that the number of asylum seekers was not significant to the public, nor were the two restrictions in Austria's asylum policy (in October 2015 and January 2016) to matter.

A poll conducted in October 2014 and 2015 asked the Austrian population whether they think Austria should receive more or less refugees.

Figure 9: More refugees?, Austria
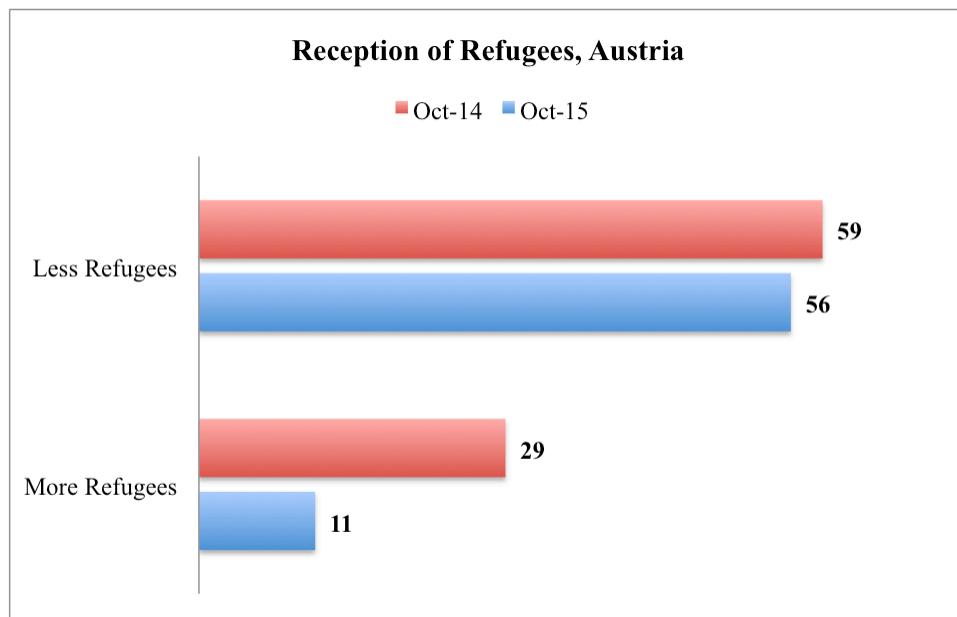
Question October 2014: Do you think that Austria should receive more refugees fleeing war or would you disagree with that?[3] Source: Statista 2016b; Question October 2015: In your opinion, should Austria receive less or the same amount of refugees as currently?[4] Source: MarketAgent.com, Thomas Schwabl 08. Oktober 2015.

The majority preferred to receive fewer refugees than they already were accepting at that period in time. In 2014 the percentage point accounted for 56%, changing with a minimal difference of 3 percentage points the following year. The second possible answer shows a different outcome when comparing the two years: In 2014, 29% claimed that Austria should receive more refugees while in 2015 that number decreased to 11%. In spite of the fact that the majority of the people did not change their mind about receiving fewer refugees, the minority did. With an increase of asylum application, more people disagreed with welcoming more refugees. Here, a great change in opinion can be observed, namely the number of

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[3] The author has changed the word disagree to less.

[4] The options were less, more, the same amount.

asylum seekers has changed the opinion of the minority accordingly. However the majority of the people still disagree with the reception of more refugees. Correspondingly to the results of the second poll, is the government's first restriction in its asylum policy.

5.2.1.2. Germany

Infratest dimap asked the general public how many refugees Germany is able to and should receive.

Figure 10: Reception of refugees, Germany
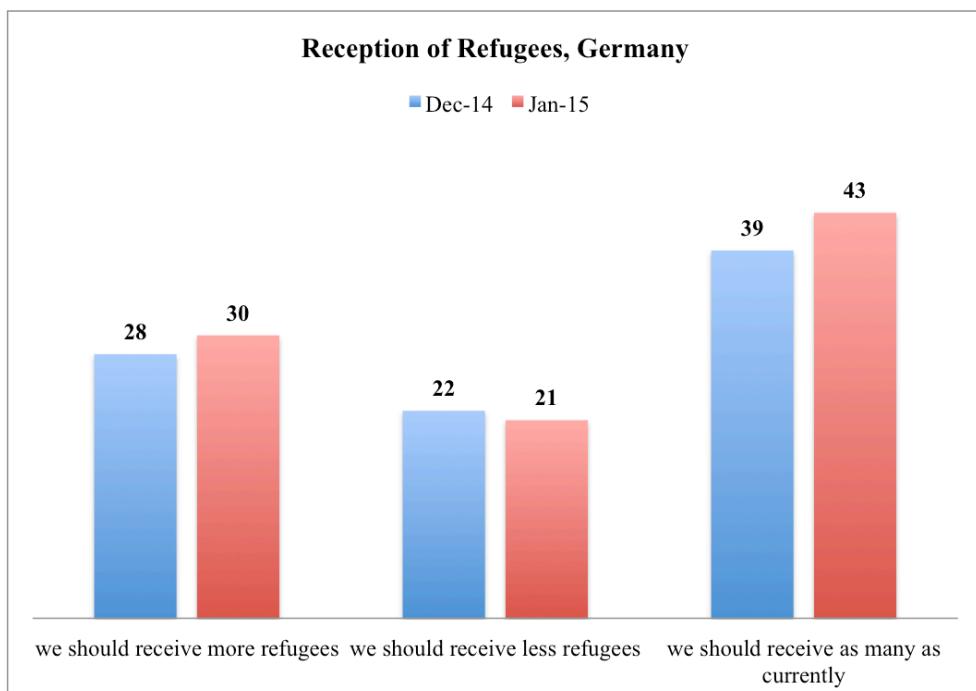
Question: Should Germany receive more refugees or should Germany receive less refugees or the same amount as currently? Source: Infratest dimap, ARD-DeutschlandTrend, January 2015; Tagesschau, ARD-DeutschlandTrend im Morgenmagazin, December 2014.

The public shows controversy towards this issue in both December 2014 and January 2015. In 2015, 43% of the German people had the opinion that Germany should receive the same amount as they admitted at that time period. For every tenth citizen, three wish for a larger reception of refugees. 21% claim that Germany should welcome fewer refugees. A similar picture comes from the poll in December 2014. 28% of the Germans claim that more refugees should be received in Germany and the ones claimed there should be less asylum seekers accounts for 22%.

In both December 2014 and January 2015, the majority claimed that the number of asylum seekers that should be received in Germany should remain the same number as in that current time period. Although the number of asylum seekers in December 2014 accounted for 17,055 and in January 2015 22,905 the difference between the ones claiming that the number should stay the same only accounts for 4 percentage points – i.e. the number of people that claim that the number of asylum seekers should maintain the same is higher when more refugees entered Germany. Accordingly, in 2015 when more refugees were received, the number of people claiming that more refugees should be welcomed was 2 percentage points higher than in 2014. What is also evident from these polls is that it shows controversy in the German public, not showing a significant difference whether more or less refugees should be received. The controversy could be explained by various factors namely that the public was not too familiar with the issue, because it was not yet talked about intensively by the media nor by their government leader. These results show that the number of asylum seekers were not relevant to the public.

The following question polled by infratest dimap is of importance in connection to policy change in asylum, preference of the government/parties and the public opinion. No comparison can be made to a different time period in order to see a change of how people feel on the matter.

Figure 11: Evaluation of measures taken in asylum policy, Germany
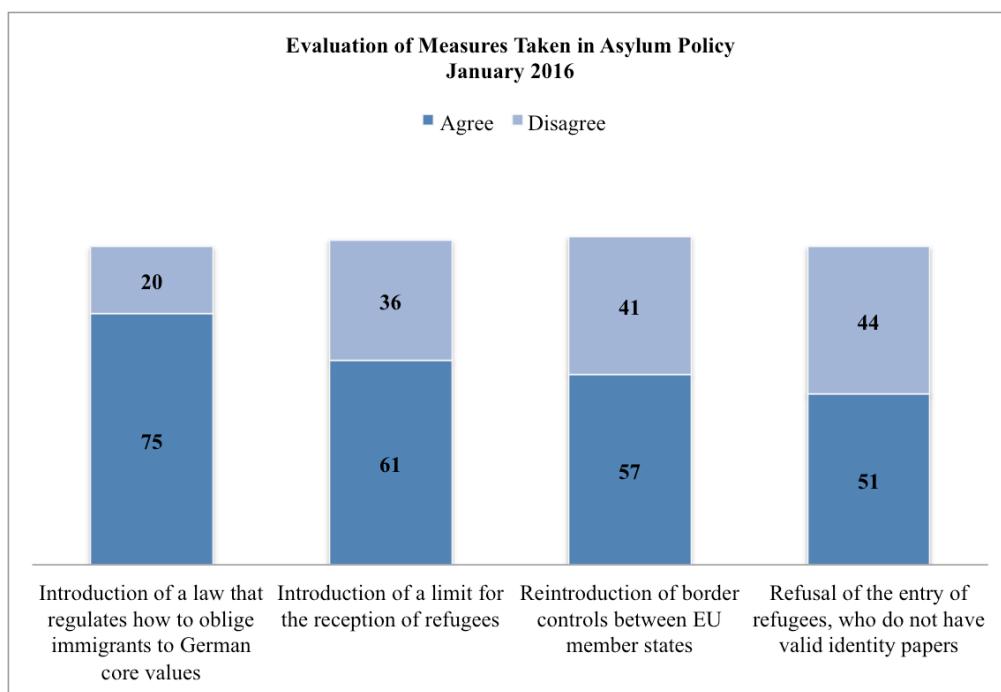
The poll broadly reveals the citizens' opinion of how the asylum policy should look like. The survey prepared some measures how to deal with the refugee crisis and asked the German public to agree or disagree with the statements. Figure 12 illustrates that 75% of the public agrees with introducing a law that obliges immigrants to German core values. This would mean that the majority of the public wants immigrants (in general) to integrate with German society. Additionally this could mean that Germans only accept refugees if they are willing to incorporate in German society. 61% of the public feels the need for a cap or upper limit when it comes to the number of asylum seekers being received in Germany. The question of whether border controls should be reintroduced between all member states was agreed upon with 57% of the public. Moreover, more than half (51%) claim that an entry should be refused to refugees who do not carry valid papers with them. 44% disagree with this statement. In sum, one can conclude that the majority of the German public agrees with Merkel's perception to restrict their asylum policy further, even when the last restriction occurred only a few months back (in October 2015).

Figure 12 presents the change in attitude of the German public towards the asylum issue and illustrates a very clear reaction of the German public towards the number of asylum seekers received. The poll was conducted every month starting July 2015 until January 2016.

Figure 12: Germany's changing attitude towards immigration
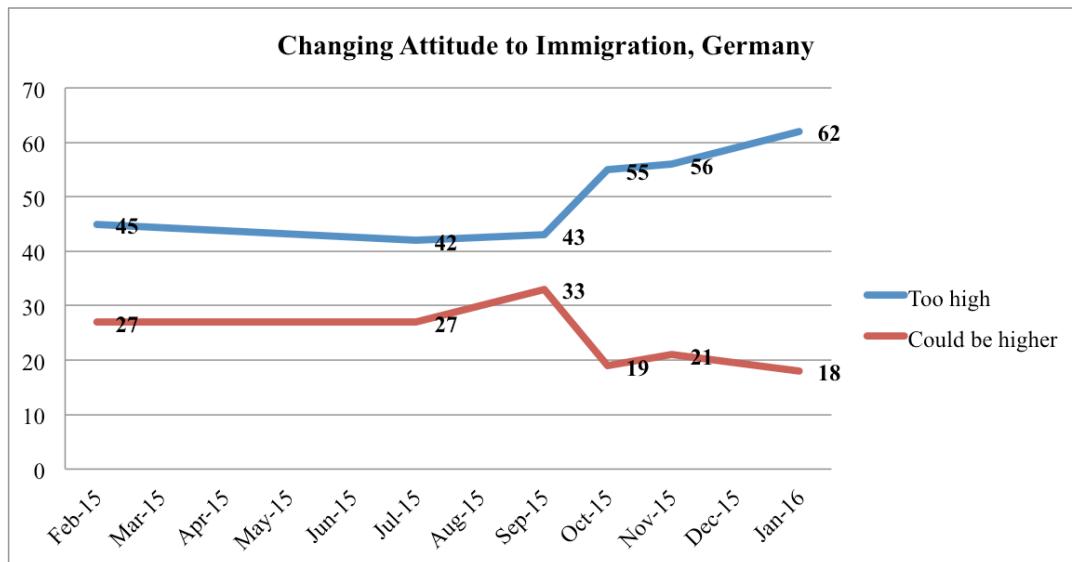
The change in opinion is explicit starting September 2015. The number of people agreeing that the number of asylum seekers is too high increased greatly until January 2016. According to figure 12, a slim majority (53%) had the opinion that the number of asylum seekers was already too high in November 2015, while 42% claimed that the current number received in Germany is acceptable. 21% polled that Germany could allow more. The number of Germans who claim that there are too many asylum seekers in Germany grew from 53% to 62%, while 16% claim that current numbers are acceptable or could be higher (18%).

Results show that the more asylum seekers were received in Germany, the more people thought that the number was too high and the less people thought that it could be higher. This was especially evident starting September 2015 where the number of people who claimed that the number of asylum seekers was too high increased drastically. This played along accordingly with the number of asylum seekers that were received in Germany at that time. The number of people that claimed, that the number of asylum seekers is too high, started to stabilize after October. This could be due to the first restriction of Germany's asylum policy, (Asylum Package I, introduced in October 2015), and also due to the stabilization of the number of asylum seekers received in Germany. In January 2016, where the majority of Germans agreed that the number of refugees is too high, the second policy change by the German government was introduced (Asylum Package II). To sum up a relationship between the number of asylum seekers and the changing attitude of the public can be concluded, namely that the number of asylum seekers mattered to the public. Additionally, the policy changes occurred when the number of asylum seekers was the highest, and at the time where the majority of the public claimed that the number of refugees are too high.

5.2.1.3.   United Kingdom

A poll on immigration was made, on "Race Relations and Immigration" (Ipsos MORI2015a/b). The fieldwork took place in March and December 2014, as well as February 2015. As figure 13 illustrates, the results of the polling indicate that two in five people (37%) share the opinion that immigration has been discussed too much in the last years. The same amount (38%) claim that it has been discussed too little and 23% think that the discussion is just right.

Figure 13: Discussion on immigration, UK

Immigration Discussed Too Much!

Mar-14   Dec-14   Feb-15

	Too much	About the right amount	Too little	Don't know
Feb-15	27	28	37	8
Dec-14	37	23	38	2
Mar-14	26	28	43	3
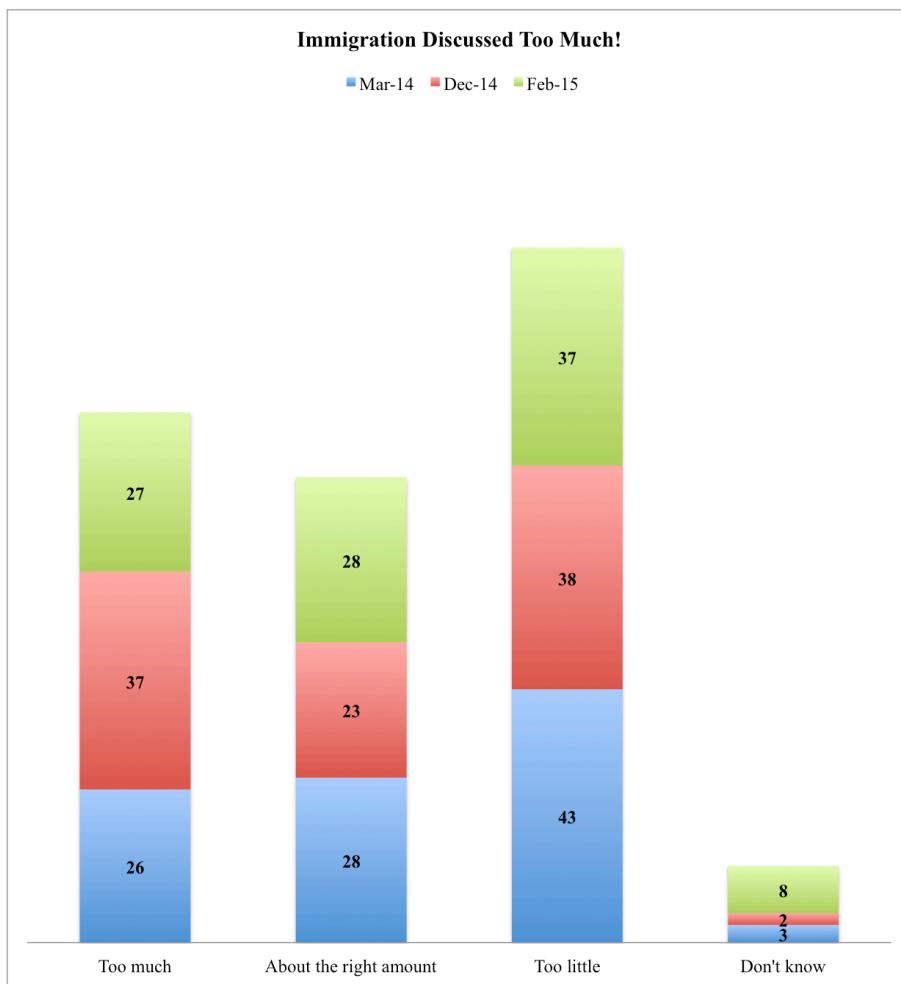
Question: Generally speaking, do you think that the issue of immigration has been discussed in Britain too much, too little, or about the right amount over the last few years/months? Source Ipsios MORI 2015a; Ipsios MORI 2015b

In all three timeframes polled (March, December 2014 and February 2015) the majority claims that immigration has been discussed too little. In March 2014 the number of people claiming that immigration has been discussed too little was the highest and in February 2015 the lowest in the number of people who agreed with this statement. In March 2014 the number of asylum seekers was 2,775 while 43% of the public thought that immigration was discussed too little. In December of that year, the UK welcomed 2,505 asylum seekers and 38% claimed immigration was discussed too little and in February 2015 the number of asylum seekers dropped to 2,200 and 37% thought it was discussed too little. Shortly, as the number of asylum seekers dropped, so did the opinion of the public that it was discussed too little resulting in a relevance of the number of asylum seekers to the public.

In the meanwhile this is not the case when it comes to Britons claiming that immigration is talked about too much. When most asylum seekers were received in Britain

(March 2014) 26% thought immigration was discussed too much. In December of that year, less asylum applications were processed, but the number of people who thought that it was talked about too much increased to 37%. In the third timeframe polled, the number of asylum seekers decreased once more and the number of people who thought it was talked about too much did as well to 27%. The minority of the people who claim that immigration has been discussed too much do not make up their opinion in regards to the number of asylum seekers in Britain.

ComRes conducted a poll for BBC Newsnight in September 2015 asking the British public whether they think Britain should accept more refugees coming e.g. from Syria or Libya.

Figure 14: Acceptance of refugees, UK
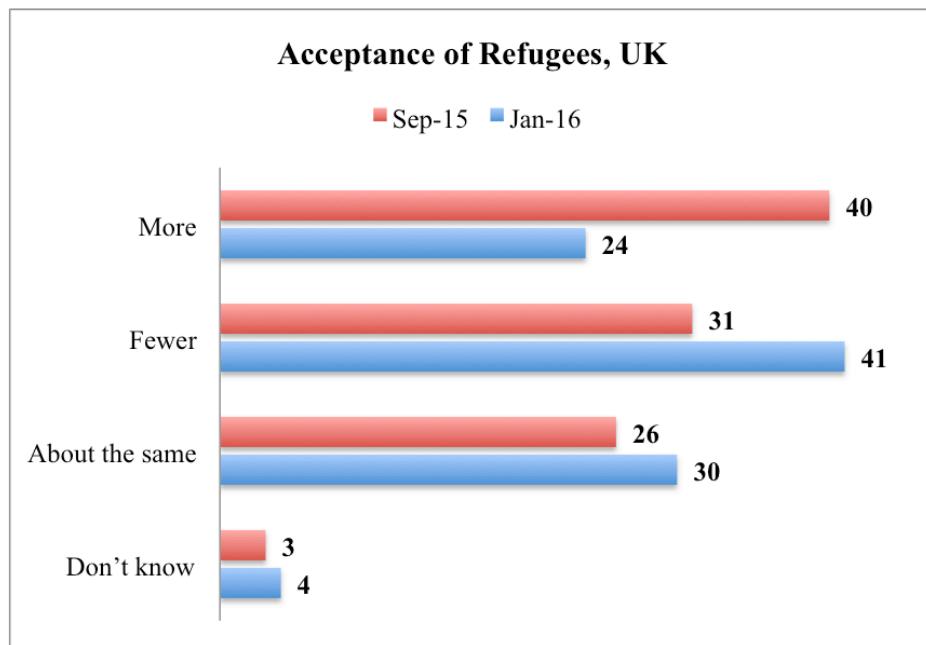
Question: Do you think that Britain should allow more or fewer refugees from countries such as Syria and Libya to come and live in this country? Or do you think Britain should take the same amount of refugees as it does now? Source: ComRes (2015); BBC (2016).

In January, when the first poll was conducted, the number of asylum seekers in Britain accounted for 3,675 asylum seekers. In September 2015 the number of asylum seekers received was 4,010. When connecting these results with the outcome of figure 14 it clarifies that the more refugees received in the UK the more people did not want Britain to receive more refugees while fewer asylum seekers were welcomed. In September 2015, 40% were open to receive more refugees, 57% were not. In January 2016 the number of people who

were open to receive more refugees decreased dramatically to almost half. Britons who did not wish to receive more increased to 71%.

The difference between the numbers of people who want fewer refugees does not differ greatly in the two timeframes polled. 31% wanted fewer refugees in September 2015 and in January 2016 it increased to 41 %. These results display that in proportion to the number of asylum seekers received in the UK, the attitude of Britons changes accordingly - i.e. the more refugees received, the less asylum seekers the public want to receive in the UK.

5.2.2   Issue Salience

5.2.2.1. Austria

According to Austria's citizens, the most important issues facing Austria in May 2014 were unemployment (32%) and government debt (23%). A year later, 33% of Austrians claimed that unemployment is (still) the most important issue facing their country, but this time 31% voted for immigration as the second most important issue. In 2014 immigration had received 15%, meaning that it doubled in significance within one year. In addition, table 1 reveals that with an increase of asylum seekers in Austria (during 2014 until 2015) the issue index changed accordingly. In 2014 the issue of immigration received 14% of importance while in 2015 it became Austria's second most important issue with 31% votes. In short, the more asylum seekers received in Austria, the more important the issue of immigration to its public.

Table 1: Most important issue facing Austria, May 2014/2015

Issues	May 2014	May 2015
Crime	12	08
Economic Situation	19	20
Government debt	23	22
Health & social security	09	14
Housing	04	06
Immigration	15	31
Pensions	11	11
Rising prices/inflation	20	17
Taxation	19	06
Terrorism	01	02
The education system	21	15
The environment & energy issues	07	09
Unemployment	32	33

Question: What do you think are the two most important issues facing [Austria] at the moment? Source: Eurobarometer Standard 81, Factsheet Austria, May 2014a; Eurobarometer Standard 8, Factsheet Austria, May 2015a

5.2.2.2. Germany

In May 2014/15 Eurobarometer asked German citizens opinion on the two most important issues facing their country. In 2014 the number one issue that gained most votes was government debt (24%), followed by the issue of immigration and the education system with 22%. In 2015 immigration went from being the second most important to the most important issue facing Germany gaining 24 percentage points in one year.

Table 2: Most important issue facing Germany, May 2014/2015

Issues	May 2014	May 2015
Crime	15	14
Economic Situation	11	07
Government debt	24	10
Health & social security	12	15
Housing	06	07
Immigration	22	46
Pensions	21	15
Rising prices/inflation	18	07
Taxation	09	04
Terrorism	02	12
The education system	22	21
The environment & energy issues	12	12
Unemployment	16	13

Question: What do you think are the two most important issues facing [Germany] at the moment? Source: Eurobarometer Standard 81, Factsheet Germany, May 2014b; Eurobarometer Standard 83, Factsheet Germany, May 2015b

Table 3: Most important issue facing Germany, January 2016

Issues	January 2016
Climate/Environmnet	04
Economy	08
Employment	10
EU/Europe/Euro-Crisis/Greece	06
Internal Security/Risk for Terror	04
Peace, in Syria etc.	06
Refugees/Asylum Seekers/Immigration/Integration	71
Retirement Pension/Pensioner/Elder	04

Question: In your opinion, which is the most important political issue that the government should take care of this year? And, which is the second most important issue? Source: Infratest dimap on behlaf of ARD-DeutschlandTrend January 2016

Because Eurobarometer has not polled the same question in January 2016, a poll made by infratest dimap will be used.[5] When infratest dimap asked the general public their opinion on the most important current issue, the results showed that refugees/asylum/immigration/integration gained the highest percentage points so far with 71%. The next two matters that the government should focus on were employment with 10

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[5] Note: The two polls are comparable in question and in quantity of people that were polled.

and economy with 8%. This clearly states how important the asylum question is for the public, especially since the gap between the most and second most important issue is extremely large.

Correspondingly to the issue salience of the German public and the number of asylum seekers, they are consistent with each other. The more first time applications were filled out the more important the issue became for the German public.

5.2.2.3. United Kingdom

The most important issue to the public is demonstrated in table 4 and 5. In May 2014 the number one issue according to Britons was immigration with 41%. In May 2015 that number decreased to 35% however still remaining the number one issue in the UK. In January 2016 this number increased to 46% continuing to be the most important issue. This illustrates an 11 percentage point difference towards the former year and a 5 percentage point difference from 2014. These findings demonstrate that no matter how high the number of asylum seekers (which decreased from May 2014 until May 2015 and increased again in January 2016) the number one issue in Britain is immigration.

Table 4: Most important issue facing Britain, May 2014/2015

Issues	May 2014	May 2015
Crime	12	07
Economic Situation	19	14
Government debt	07	13
Health & social security	17	28
Housing	17	16
Immigration	41	35
Pensions	08	06
Rising prices/inflation	15	16
Taxation	06	06
Terrorism	03	10
The education system	11	11
The environment & energy issues	05	05
Unemployment	29	22

Question: What do you think are the two most important issues facing [Britain] at the moment? Source: Eurobarometer Standard 81, Factsheet UK, May 2014c; Eurobarometer Standard 83, Factsheet UK, May 2015c

Table 5: Most important issue facing Britain, January 2016

Issues	January 2016
Defence/Foreign Affairs/Terrorism	23
Economy	26
Education/schools	17
Housing	17
Immigration/Immigrants	46
Low Pay/minimum wage/fair pay	12
NHS	38
Poverty/inequality	17
Unemployment	15

Question: What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today? Source: Ipsos MORI 2016a

5.2.3   Public Opinion on Government and Parties

5.2.3.1.   Austria

The public opinion strategy institution, Peter Hajek, conducted a poll in March 2014 and February 2016 asking what people would vote for if Sunday were national elections. This survey simultaneously gives the information, which party is doing a good job, according to the Austrian public, and which party is unpopular. In 2014 and 2016, most votes were given to FPÖ, Austria's radical right party. In March 2015 the FPÖ would have been 1 percentage point away to win that election as well, however ÖVP (center-right) took the lead with 21%, followed by SPÖ (center-left). In 2014, Austrian's gave SPÖ 17% of their vote while ÖVP received 13%. February 2016, ÖVP came in second with 16% and SPÖ third receiving 14% of the votes.

Table 6: Sunday question on National Council, Austria

	Mar-2014	Feb-2016
SPÖ	17	14
ÖVP	13	16
FPÖ	18	20
Grüne	10	10
Team Stronach	1	1
NEOS	11	5
Other	1	1

Question: Assuming that next Sunday are national elections, which party would you give your vote? Source: Peter Hajek Public Opinion Strategies on behalf of ATV ÖsterreichTrend März 2014, February 2016b

When it comes to the satisfaction with government handling of the refugee issue in October 2015, figure 15 reveals a clear picture. A majority of 61% is dissatisfied with the Austrian government concerning the refugee matter while 11% of the public is satisfied.

Figure 15: Satisfaction with government handling the refugee issue, Austria
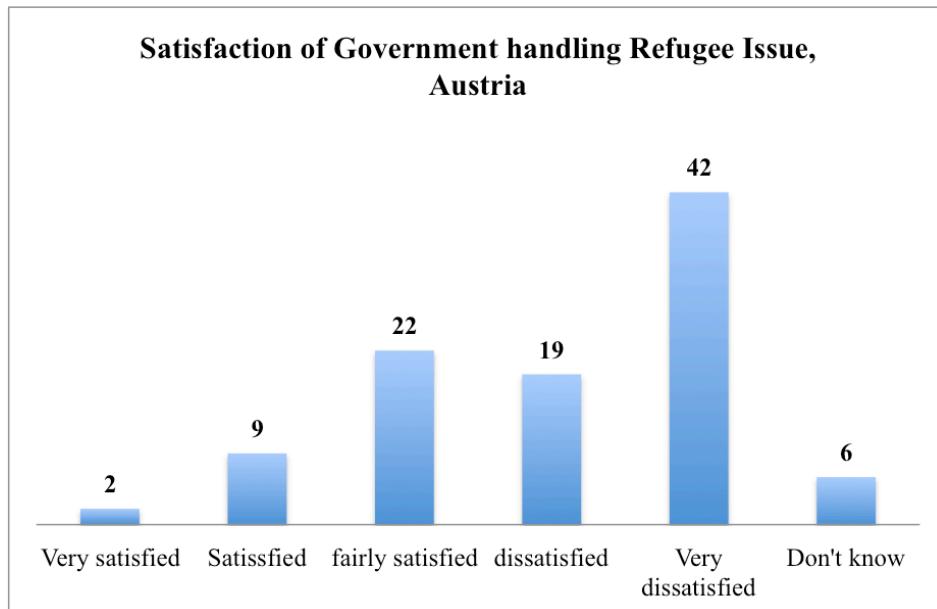
Question: To what extent are you currently satisfied with the work of the Austrian government concerning the refugee issue? Source: MarketAgent.com, Thomas Schwabl 08. October 2015

Both findings of table 6 and figure 15 conclude that it is not important how many asylum seekers Austria is receiving; the radical right party is still gaining most of the votes. The reason for this could be that the public is very dissatisfied with how the government is handling the 'refugee crisis' (which started in September 2015). These results are also conforming to the outcome of what the public thinks concerning asylum seekers. Both calculations only change minor even if the number of asylum seekers changes greatly.

5.2.3.2. Germany

Infratest dimap conducts a monthly poll on behalf of ARD-DeutschlandTrend to show a tendency of what the public would currently vote for. This is done in order to illustrate how the public attitude has changed towards parties on a monthly basis and possible tendencies for upcoming elections.

Figure 16: If next Sunday were Election Day, Germany

January 2014, Germany

January 2016, Germany
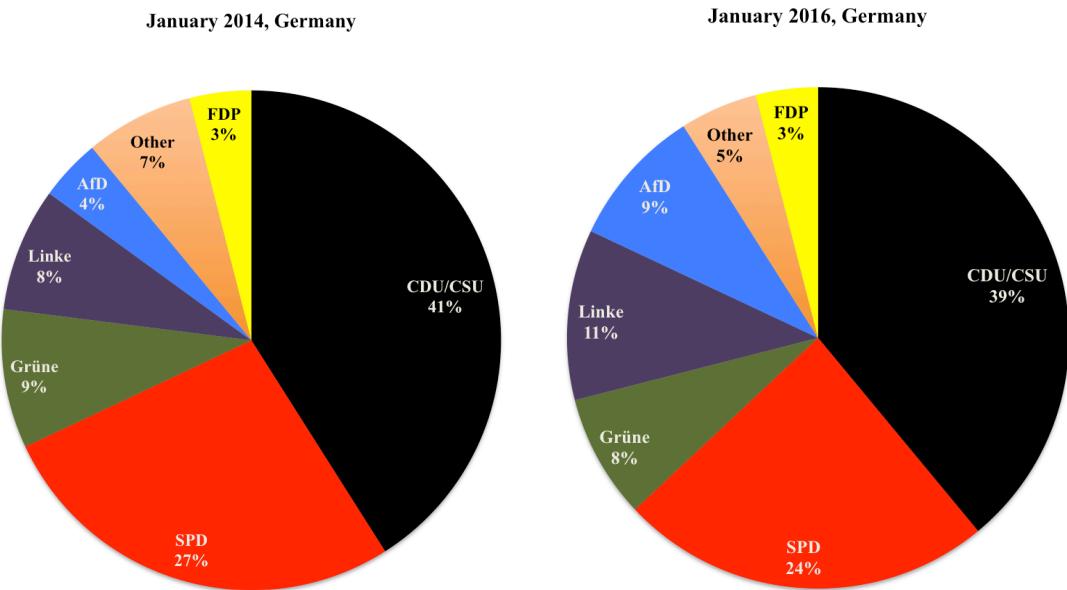
Question: "What would you vote for if next Sunday were Election Day?" Source: infratest dimap on behalf of ARD-DeutschlandTrend January 2014 and January 2016

As figure 16 demonstrates, the results for January 2014 show that CDU/CSU (center-right) would receive the most votes with 41%, followed by SPD (center-left) with 27%. The Greens (Grüne) would have received 9 and the Lefts (Linke) 8%. AfD (far right) would have collected 4% and FDP (liberals) 3%. Two years later, most of these numbers have changed for the better or worse. It is very noticeable that the far right party, AfD, has gained many possible votes, receiving 5% more than they would in 2014. The ruling party CDU/CSU lost 2% and SPD 3% of the votes.

In a timeframe of 2 years (2014-2016) the ruling coalition lost votes while the radical left and right gained a significant amount (AfD +5 percentage points in 2016). In sum one can say that the more asylum seekers received in Germany the more people are more likely to vote for the radical right party. However table 7 reveals that the majority of people think that no party is able to handle the refugee crisis. The party that was most trusted to control the situation was CDU with 28%.

A poll concerning the parties' competence regarding the refugee crisis was surveyed (see table 7). The results to the question "which party do you think is most likely to get the refugee situation in Germany under control?" gave a lucid outcome. The majority (38%) claimed that no party (or they did not know) had the competence to solve the refugee situation. Of those 38%, 43% were Linke-supporters and 30% AfD-followers. 28% of the total votes were received by the CDU and behind SPD with 13%.

Table 7: Party competence in asylum policy, Germany

	Total	Union -supporter[6]	SPD -supporter	Grüne -supporter	Linke -supporter	AfD -supporter
CDU	28	60	20	27	8	3
CSU	10	12	4		9	29
SPD	13	6	41	16	7	
Die Grünen	2		1	20	4	1
Die Linken	2				22	2
AfD	3	2		5		31
No party/ don't know	38	19	31	28	43	30

Question: Which party do you think is most likely to get the refugee situation under control? Source: ARD-DeutschlandTrend January 2016, Infratest dimap.

5.2.3.3. United Kingdom

Figure 17 shows a poll conducted in the beginning of February 2014 and 2015 of Briton's opinion on asylum and immigration.

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[6] Note: Union Supporters are followers of both CDU and CSU, which are merged as 'one party' in the Bundestag. Although the CDU/CSU is merged as one party in the Bundestag, they are seperated as two parties in this table since both have fragmented greatly in the last year, i.e. they have developed different attitudes towards the immigration issue

Figure 17: Satisfaction with immigration and asylum, UK

Satisfaction with Immigration and Asylum, UK

Feb-14 ■ Feb-15
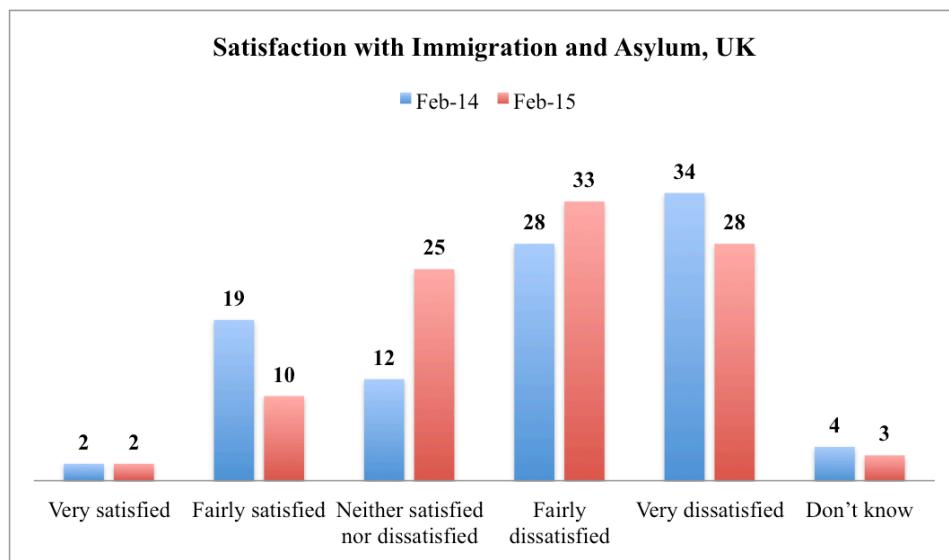
Question: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way the government is dealing with immigration and asylum? Source: Ipsos MORI February 2014, February 2015b. Note: February 2015 asked only about immigration, not asylum.

The study reveals that in 2014, 62% (of which 34% are very dissatisfied) are dissatisfied with the way that government is handling the issue of immigration and asylum. Meanwhile, 21% of Britons are satisfied. The number of dissatisfaction is very similar in 2015 namely, 61%, while 12% are satisfied (-9 percentage points than 2014). In February 2014 the number of asylum seekers in the UK was 2,415 while in February 2015 it was 2,200. Regardless of the number of asylum seekers the public seems to be dissatisfied with how the government is handling asylum. However, when the number of asylum seekers decreased (in 2015) the less people were satisfied with the government.

Table 8 illustrates the voting intentions if general elections were the following day. The table below shows the polls from two different time periods, January 2014 and 2016.

Table 8: Voting Intentions, UK

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP/Plaid Cymru	Greens	UKIP	Other
January 2014	30	39	13	5	3	11	
January 2016	40	31	7	5	4	11	1

Questions: How would you vote if there were General Elections tomorrow? Which party are you most inclined to support? Source: Ipsos MORI 2016b

One can observe that the satisfaction with the governing party (the Conservatives (Con)) has increased by 10 percentage points throughout the two years in question. In the meanwhile, the number of asylum seekers increased during that time, signifying that the more asylum seekers

were received, the more votes the Conservative Party gained. This could be due to the high number of votes gained by the radical right party (UKIP) in 2014, and the first legislative provision in 2015. This might have pleased Britons, that Cameron, the party leader, has restricted the asylum policy accordingly.

5.2.4   Party Ideology

5.2.4.1. Austria

The 'Party Manifesto 2013-2018' for the government coalition between the social democrat party SPÖ and the conservative party ÖVP present an open attitude towards matters regarding migration and asylum. Immigration is an issue that is greatly focused on, while asylum is only touched on. The government's goal is to receive qualified migrants and further a culture that welcomes migrants and integrates them. The challenge for them will be to improve the transition between the primary care and the legal (seasonal) employment for asylum seekers (SPÖ 2013:12). Furthermore the SPÖ and ÖVP wish to intensify cooperation with the EU concerning matters of migration and asylum. In addition they want to develop a return-on-free-will strategy for refugees (SPÖ 2013:81). Another point picked up in the party manifesto is that asylum procedures are to be continued quickly and with good quality (ibid).

The chancellor of Austria, Werner Faymann, has had a developing attitude towards the issue of asylum/refugees. The author has not found any speeches in the year 2014 nor in the first half of 2015 concerning asylum seekers/refugees. Two interviews with journalists have been found from April and June where Faymann shortly describes his stance towards the refugee issue. One problem he addresses in April 2015 is the lack of cooperation within the EU member states, claiming that there are few countries wanting to welcome refugees. He highlights the necessity of a quota on the distribution of refugees for the EU. Many parties have agreed with this handling of the large influx of refugees however, this agreement needs to come from all member states. In addition, he says that the EU cannot force its states to a certain quota of refugees to receive in their country; therefore this must happen on free will (Bundeskanzleramt 2015a).

In Faymann's interview with another newspaper in June 2015 he proceeded to talk about a fair distribution of refugees in the EU, however claims that there is a lack of control at

EU's borders. He argues that those controls are not functioning and it is not known who is entering EU territory, but that introducing fingerprints from everyone entering the EU could solve this. In addition he argues that Austria and Germany are receiving such a large number of asylum seekers, because their labor market are two of the best in the EU. Furthermore he states that border controls are not his intention. The solution of a large influx of refugees is to appoint more officials to control crossings in a more efficient manner (Bundeskanzleramt 2015b).

In a press conference after a meeting with the council of ministers on October 2015, the Austrian government has come to further ascertainment on how to act on the refugee issue. The chancellor underlined the significance of a well functioning border control by increasing the number of officials. Furthermore, it is essential for Austria to come to terms with Germany's idea on how to resolve the refugee issue claiming "we [the EU] don't need a shortsighted policy", instead he argues that solutions will come when member states start cooperating and reconcile with each other. Only in these terms will border controls be guaranteed and an influx of refugees will then be prevented. Lastly, a fence will not be built around Austria's borders. Faymann declared to the press "for us [Austrian government] it is about order and control. A fence surrounding Austria will not exist." (Bundeskanzleramt 2015c).

In February 2016 Faymann complained about the inability of the EU to find a common solution on the refugee crisis that would protect EU borders and provide security for the states. Due to the failure of a EU solution, a logic reaction on behalf of Austria was necessary, namely to build fences around its borders. Again, he argued for a fair distribution of refugees for all member states, because without it, Austria would not be able to handle the amount of refugees that would proceed to enter the country. In the next four years the Austrian government has bound municipalities to receive 1.5% refugees per population, accounting for more than 200,000 asylum seekers. All in all, Faymann is in favor of a European solution; however he claims that Austria is not able to handle this problem on its own (receiving whatever number of asylum seekers) and therefore the fence was an emergency solution (Bundeskanzleramt 2016).

One can say that they have undergone a dramatic change throughout the three years in question. 2014, no speeches were available that concerned the matter of asylum. In 2015 two interviews with newspapers showed no noticeable change. Hence, Faymann claimed in April that it was an EU problem, more specifically a lack of cooperation from the member states to solve the issue. In June he adds that the problem was the absence of EU border controls,

continuing to talk about the asylum issue at the supranational level. In the interview on October 2015, he stresses that a fence around Austria is out of question. Although he highlights this, the policy change shows the opposite, namely that the government is thinking about putting up a fence at Austrian borders (depending on the cooperation with other member states), introducing a cap of refugees, and the possibility to cut of the inflow of refugees in case of emergency. This development shows that the originated "welcoming culture" that the Austrian government claimed in their party manifesto, is in the past since now their aim is to restrict refugees the entry. In connection to the number of asylum seekers it is very evident that the higher the number of first time applicants, the more the government develops restrictions in their asylum policy, changing from a welcoming ideology towards a rejective attitude.

5.2.4.2. Germany

The CDU/CSU (the Union) has mentioned specifically the migrant group asylum seekers in their party manifesto (2013-2017). Firstly they underline their "welcoming culture" towards asylum seekers (CDU/CSU 2013-2017:40), but in terms of migration in general they specifically favor qualified migrants. Otherwise, they want to integrate anyone who has come to Germany whether that is in terms of seeking protection or immigrating. In order to blend with German society, migrants will be provided with and advised to take German language classes that will also teach them about German culture (CDU/CSU 2013-2017:41). Additionally the government wishes to give protection to any political refugee. Germany is working to improve the asylum process. If the asylum policy is taken for granted and being abused, the individual will need to leave the country (CDU/CSU 2013-2017:42).

In order to follow Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel's position and attitude towards asylum and migration two speeches have been selected form 2015 and 2016. In September 2014, Thomas de Maizière (Minister of Interior) touched on the asylum issue in a speech on the 'Budget Act 2015', however no speech by the chancellor was found in 2014 concerning this matter. In October 2015, Merkel held a government declaration to the German Bundestag. In this speech she addresses problematic issues that have been introduced in the recent 'bill package' (Asylpaket I). One of the measures that she delivers is the issue of asylum specifically. Merkel addresses what is important for Germany specifically and how

Germany needs to handle the issue of asylum domestically, and there after addresses the matter at the supranational level.

Firstly on the domestic level, Germany will act to integrate asylum seekers faster and better. This will occur through access to qualitative language courses, which will facilitate access to the job market. In addition, refugees will learn German core values and gain understanding of their rights. Furthermore Germany will expand their social funds and social encouragements in order to supply refugees with housing and language schools. Minors will gain general supervision. Secondly, it is important that the procedure speed of asylum applications will be exercised faster while the process needs to become of better quality. Thirdly incentives to why migrants and refugees flee to Germany due to financial distress need to become unattractive in order to exclusively focus on those fleeing war and terror. As Merkel said "those that come to us [Germany] out of economic necessity and therefore unjustly rely on our [the German] fundamental rights to asylum" need to leave Germany more rapidly than before (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 2016a).

"The most important cause for the current movement of refugees to Europe remains the war in Syria", claimed Angela Merkel (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 2016a). Therefore not only Germany needs to focus on stabilizing the country, but all EU member states need to focus on solving the conflict in Syria so that people will stop putting themselves on the dangerous route to Europe in order to seek safety. The EU needs to engage and support the countries that are affected the most by the large influx of refugees namely Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, she claims. EU needs to additionally focus on more cooperation with those states, especially with Turkey. Lastly Germany's chancellor mentions the significance of Frontex and the necessity to strengthen it. This signifies that member states need to provide personnel to EU's borders.

In the government declaration addressed a year later, March 2016, Merkel highlights that "for Germany and for the European Union as a whole, the biggest challenge since decades has been the refugee issue" (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 2016b). Merkel remarks multiple times during the speech that Germany's well being depends on EU's well being. There is a need for all member states to fight the cause of the refugee crisis together, because it is the only right way to reduce the number of refugees. According to Merkel, Germany would profit from a reduction of refugees. However the approach of some member states, such as Austria or western Balkan countries, to accomplish a reduction of refugees, is far from reasonable, she claims. Their way (referring to building fences at borders) will only cause for the asylum seekers to enter the EU through a new route. The

chancellor agrees that the number needs to be reduced; the question is how this can be solved together? Until then, there are more specific issues Germany will look at: Merkel argues that there are social needs such as education, health, nourishment and employment for refugees.

Moreover, Merkel said that the EU is required to reform the Dublin System. The refugee crisis has underlined the failure and malfunction of it and that an adjustment for future events is significant. She claims, "only with a reform of Dublin will we [the EU] be able to maintain a long-term Schengen" (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 2016b).

Summing up, Merkel's discourse has continued to perceive a very welcoming attitude towards immigrants and asylum seekers. Since no speech on that specific group of immigrants was available in 2014, it was probably not perceived as a highly vital issue to Merkel, even though the public voted immigration as the second most important issue. In both speeches of 2015 and 2016, she focuses on the EU rather than interpreting the refugee situation as a domestic issue. Nonetheless, she does mention positive improvements in the asylum process and on helping refugees in the integration process. In 2016 she mentions more dramatic issues, such as Germany's dependency on EU, the failure of the Dublin system, which needs to be reformed and the need for a reduction of the number of asylum seekers. Regarding the number of asylum seekers, the number has increased greatly throughout the months and years, becoming the number one country (out of the three) to receive the most asylum seekers, especially towards the last months of 2015 and beginning of 2016.

As far as her discourse tells us, it can be concluded that even though the number of first time applicants rises, Merkel's attitude has barely changed, remaining very positive and welcoming towards refugees and immigrants. However, in 2016 she realizes that something needs to change in order for the situation to improve, even if more so at the supranational (EU) level. This results in a change in ideology (in terms of the leader's attitude) becoming more restrictive towards asylum seekers.

5.2.4.3. United Kingdom

The party manifesto 2010 of the Conservative Party, with David Cameron as party leader mentions immigration as a burden claiming "immigration is too high and needs to be reduced" (Conservatives 2010:21). In addition, especially the number of economic migrants needs to be reduced. Cameron claims that Britain should be more attractive for well-educated

workers and students (ibid.). The Conservative's party manifesto 2015 claims that it is vital to "protect British values" (Conservatives 2015:31). Moreover it is important for immigrants to integrate, meaning that knowledge of Basic English is necessary and will be tested. Furthermore the Conservatives believe in "strengthen[ing] enforcement of immigration rules", to control and cut migration in general, but also control EU migrants. Although the asylum issue was not mentioned specifically, their broad view on the immigration issue becomes clear through their manifesto and reveals their tendency to be positive or negative of the idea of immigrants.

Prime Minister David Cameron held a speech on immigration on May 2015. This speech deals with immigration in general directing his attitude towards multiple immigrant groups, however not directly towards asylum seekers. Nonetheless, Cameron's main message can be applied to the general policy, namely to stop uncontrolled immigration. He states that "if you have uncontrolled immigration, you have uncontrolled pressure on public policy services. And that raises basic issues of fairness", because it can damage social benefits such as lower wages, and "damage our [Britain's] labour market" (Gov.UK 2015b). In addition Cameron also claims that if immigration will continue to be uncontrolled, too many people will enter Britain, especially illegal immigrants.

In 2016, Cameron held a speech, in which immigration was one of the main issues spoken about. This time, asylum seekers were dealt with specifically (especially Syrian refugees). Cameron highlights multiple times that Britain is not part of Schengen, and therefore has no obligations to receive more refugees that are e.g. being resettled into the EU (Gov.UK 2016). He claims that Britain has their own program and has promised before to receive 20.000 Syrian refugees. Additionally he states that Britain will protect its own borders without any consent of the EU, because again, they are not part of Schengen.

The Prime Minister has pointed out the main cause of the crisis, namely the war in Syria, which needs to stop. In order to improve the situation, Britain will help refugees in that region and secure EU borders. Cameron has claimed that Britain is helping the refugees by giving a lot of money to the refugees fleeing Syria and to those that are hosting them. According to Cameron, that amount has been greater than any EU member has provided, claiming that Britain is "fulfilling our [its] moral responsibility" (Gov.UK 2016). Lastly, he also underlined that it is Britain's interest to help its EU partners to deal with this dramatic situation.

In sum, the party ideology has continued to be strict during the three years, even if (in average) the number of asylum seekers was increasing. The party manifesto did not mention asylum seekers as such, only the general group of immigrants. This group of immigrants was

not specifically mentioned in the 2015 immigration speech either, only in 2016 when the number of asylum seekers increased greatly in the UK and EU. Cameron addresses, that uncontrolled migration needs to be taken care of, because the lack of control will damage Britain. In 2016 he underlines the fact that UK is not part of Schengen and therefore does not share equal responsibility when it comes to welcoming refugees. He claims that their moral obligation is to provide financial aid for other EU member states receiving refugees and to help control the situation in Syria.

Cameron's attitude has not changed towards immigration and continues to be 'strict' and not welcoming towards immigration in general and asylum seekers specifically. Through this specification, his idea of asylum is developing more negatively, from not desiring immigrants who e.g. abuse the system to unwelcoming individuals seeking protection.

6   Results

This chapter analytically discusses and compares the results of each independent variable studied (number of asylum seekers, public opinion, party ideology) for each of the chosen member states. Furthermore it has the ambition to provide an answer to the research question. This chapter will additionally highlight which variable can be announced as the main driver for change in asylum policy and eliminate and verify whether ideational or material sources drive policy change.

6.1   Material Source of Policy Change

6.1.1   Number of Asylum Seekers

Multiple scholars on public policy have underlined that the number of refugees/ asylum seekers is the main cause for policy change (Shisheva 2013; Schmidt & Radaelli 2004). Academics describe policy change as a reaction to the number of asylum seekers that have been received (Shisheva 2013; Saggar 2003; Schmidt & Radaelli 2004). Chapter 5 has revealed that as the number of asylum seekers increases so does the development towards a more restrictive policy. As a reminder: Policy change in Austria occurred in October 2015, in January and in April 2016. In Germany the restrictions were introduced in October 2015 and March 2016. In the UK the policy change occurred in August 2015 and May 2016. Even though at the time of the writing the number of first time asylum applications were only available for January 2016, the findings still disclose a direct link between the growing number of asylum seekers and a change in governments' policy. This is because the number of asylum seekers increased and so did the need for governments to change its preference to restrict their asylum policy.

As highlighted by Shisheva, burden-sharing has been a troubling matter in the EU. Knowing that countries refuse to welcome asylum seekers might encourage governments to

change their attitude on this issue (2013:48). As figure 1 illustrates, the total number of asylum seekers varies greatly in the recipient countries. Some member states welcome a great amount of refugees, while others are not willing to share responsibility. This unfair distribution of refugees was supposed to be avoided with the binding Reception Conditions Directive, however, it is clear that it has failed and needs to be revised.

According to its size and population, Austria has been one of the generous countries to receive a large influx of refugees, receiving 6.8% in 2015 out of the total number of asylum seekers that were received in the EU. This number received in 2015 accounts for 35% in Germany and 3% in the UK. What was observed in the previous chapter was the relation of the number of asylum seekers received in the EU and the relation the leaders' attitude towards the issue: the more asylum seekers crossed borders to EU territory, the more states started to act negatively towards the situation, and sometimes even refused to welcome asylum seekers in their state. An example for this is Austria's chancellor, Faymann, who has argued in an interview in 2015, that there is a lack or unwillingness of cooperation of EU member states regarding the reception of asylum seekers. Therefore, he claims, there is a necessity of a quota on the distribution of refugees for the whole EU. No statements made in the speeches by the German chancellor Angela Merkel, or by Prime Minister David Cameron support the arguments by Faymann clearly.

6.1.2   Public Opinion

Lahav (2004) argues in her research that the public impacts leaders' change in attitude and therefore an adjustment to its policy will be performed. She claims that the amount of immigrants / asylum seekers / refugees that are received in one country is not essential, as long as the public is in favor and/or satisfied with the decisions made by the government.

Looking at the results of the polls conducted in Austria, it is apparent that the polls did not change remarkably throughout time. Both years show very similar results, namely that the majority of citizens favored a cap for refugees. Additionally this result can be observed by other polls carried out in Austria, which concludes no relation to the governments' policy change. The other two cases, Germany and the UK, resulted in opposite findings. The attitude of the public opinion changes according to the policy change made by its governments. The public's preference has changed in the majority of cases throughout the times investigated meaning that they have a great influence on policy change. It is also worth mentioning that

most changes in opinion have changed according to the number of asylum seekers received in the country in question.

6.1.2.1. Issue Salience

Various scholars have argued that the greater the issue salience, the stronger the relationship of the public and the government (Shisheva 2013; Monroe 1998; Page & Shapiro 1983). As the previous chapter showed, this argument is related and applicable for two out of the three chosen cases. In both Germany and Austria, the issue salience grew throughout the relevant time investigated for each state, meaning that there is a direct link to its policy change. As time passed, the 'immigration' issue became a lot more significant to the public, and as time progresses towards the change of asylum policy, the immigration issue became most important to the public. For the UK this was different, namely that issue salience in the case of the UK was always perceived as the most important, therefore it had no relevance to its policy change.

A link to the number of asylum seekers can be made namely that the number of asylum seekers was relevant when it comes to the majority of the states. As time passed, so did the importance of the immigration/asylum issue in Germany and Austria (see table 1-3). Even though the issue salience of immigration was always high in the UK, the number of asylum seekers decreased from May 2014 until May 2015 and increased again in January 2016, which shows the relevance and correlation of the number of asylum seekers and how important the public calculates the issue. However, these results do not necessarily demonstrate changes in government's preferences according to the issue salience, because the issue was always one of the most important to Britons.

The surveys conducted in Germany and Austria illustrate that the number of asylum seekers influenced the public in how important they perceived the immigration issue. The issues were not voted as most important when the number of asylum seekers was low, but changed incrementally according to the influx of refugees. In 2015 immigration became most important, while an increasing amount of asylum seekers were received. In sum, the relationship between the public and the government's actions act correspondingly in most of the cases, however what is vital is that in all cases, the issue salience is firstly modified by the amount of asylum seekers.

6.1.2.2. Public Opinion on Government and Parties

As can be recalled, Baumgarten (2012) argues that a policy change only occurs if the existing policy is not working properly and if the country's citizens are dissatisfied with it. As was shown in the figures on government and party satisfaction, one can observe that the general public, of all exemplified states, is not pleased with how the government is handling the asylum situation or, in the case of Germany, do not believe that any party is able to control the issue. In Austria, 61% of its citizens are dissatisfied with how the government is handling the asylum issue. In the meanwhile, the majority of the German public 38%, as is shown in table 7, agrees that no party will be able to control the refugee situation. This signifies that predominantly, the cases show a relevance of the satisfaction rate of the public of their governments to the governments' preference to change its policy. The Austrian and German public was polled in times where the number of asylum seekers was increasing dramatically.

The polls conducted in the UK dealing with satisfaction with the government on asylum issues specifically, do not show a significant difference between the years polled: at all time, Britons are dissatisfied with how its government is handling immigration. To sum up, in all three countries, the public has a negative opinion concerning how the asylum situation is handled, and are certainly not satisfied with the work of its government, therefore there is a direct link of the independent and the dependent variable.

The rational choice theorists argue that policy change comes from the material choice to maximize their profit. In the case of asylum policy, this means that governments have the interest to maintain themselves in office or in the grand coalition (Downs 1957; Shisheva 2013)). In addition, anti-immigrant parties (here UKIP, AfD and FPÖ) stimulate mainstream parties to move directly towards more restrictive provisions in immigration issues (Sides & Citrin 2007:477).

Applying these theories to the actual findings of the exemplified cases, the number of votes that the governing parties have received in Austria, has in average decreased slightly while the number of votes gained by the radical right party has increased to the extent that they would gain more votes than any other party. Summing up, one can observe an interplay between the governments' wish to change its policy due to the lack of votes throughout time and the increase of votes received by the radical right party. In Germany, the percentage points that are given to AfD is greater in 2016 than in 2014, while the number of votes handed to the mainstream parties is decreasing accordingly. This seems to be in compliance with the policy change, namely the less votes are given to the ruling party and the more to AfD, the

more the government has the need to change its asylum policy to a more restrictive one. The UK polls have revealed that the higher the number of asylum seekers the more votes are given to the Conservative Party, which highlights a general increase of satisfaction with the governing party. What is also noticeable is that in both years UKIP, received a high, yet the same number of votes. For both Germany and Austria, there is a connection to 1) the policy change, which becomes more restrictive as the number of votes increase for radical right parties. 2) There is a link to the number of asylum seekers, which drastically increased in the two time periods, implicating that the increase of first time applicants, increased the votes of the radical right party and decreased the mainstream party, meaning that the government would want to change its policy accordingly.

The outcome concerning what people would vote for if it were Election Day illustrate that in Germany and Austria, the public is not satisfied with the government/ruling parties. In the UK the results show a different conclusion that the governing party became more favorable to the public throughout time, however this may be because of the first change in asylum policy in 2015, where Cameron introduced a more restricted provision to the existing law. This also underlines that the radical right parties play an essential role in all cases. The mainstream governing parties have adjusted to the radical right parties by restricting their laws in asylum policy. These results verify what has been argued by Sides & Citrin, namely that the mainstream party will adjust to the left or right sphere according to the votes and satisfaction rate of the public.

Summing up the material sources of policy change, both variable 'number of asylum seekers' and 'public opinion' have a direct relation to the change of governments' policy. However, as the results of this study already has revealed, that most polls suggest that the number of asylum seekers is the main factor why people's opinion on asylum have changed (except in Austria).

In both Germany and the UK, as the number of asylum seekers changed, so did the public opinion. The more asylum seekers, the more people thought that the numbers were too high and fewer refugees should be accepted. In these cases, there is an absolute correlation of the two independent variables. Additionally, as discussed above, according to the public the issue salience grew in Germany and in the UK with an increase of asylum seekers, however in the UK in all three-time periods, the issue salience remained as most important. In Austria the number of asylum seekers did not matter to the public, because their opinion did not change accordingly, but maintained to be in favor of fewer refugees. However the number of asylum seekers did matter to the public of how significant the issue became to them. In addition, this

does not mean that the number of asylum seekers did not matter to the government, namely the party changed their ideology accordingly (this will be discussed below).

6.1.3   Ideational Source of Policy Change

6.1.3.1.   Party Ideology

The constructivists say that political ideas come from their ideological stance and make their decisions accordingly. It is argued that parties act under uncertainty (Budge, Ezrow & McDonald 2010:781). People vote for these parties according to their similar ideas towards policies. The rationalists view on ideology is that parties will change their position and ideas even if it is not according to its ideological stance, because the votes are more important than staying true to their beliefs (this was studied above in section 6.1.2.2). In order to study party ideology, both the ideological sphere and the attitude of the countries' leader, concerning the issue of asylum (or if necessary immigration), have been considered.

In the case of Germany and the UK, both member states stayed true to their ideological beliefs, while Austria underwent a dramatic development. When reflecting on the party manifesto as well as the leader's speeches, it becomes explicit, that Merkel stays true to her ideological beliefs and ideas. The CDU/CSU's party manifesto has underlined the importance of a 'welcoming culture'. According to Merkel's discourse, this belief is still dear to her, keeping a relative positive attitude throughout her speeches. Nonetheless, in her last speech in 2016, she expresses her concern for the failure of the Dublin Regulation, the need to slightly reduce the number of refugees by stabilizing Syria, which accentuates that she is aware that there is a problem to be solved. Similar to Germany, the UK has not altered its ideological stance towards the issue of immigration/asylum over time. However Cameron's attitude has become stricter in his choice of words towards the asylum issue specifically. His idea of immigration has, since the beginning, been more restrictive than others, as exposed in the Conservative party manifesto. Throughout his speeches, he communicated strict and unwelcoming vibes, especially in the last speech in 2016. He highlights Britain's moral responsibility to act on the asylum situation, which seems contradicting to other arguments provided. On the one hand, Cameron underlines the fact that the UK is not part of Schengen and therefore does not have the same responsibility to receive refugees. On the other hand, he

accentuates his generosity when it comes his financial support for other states to handle the issue.

The Austrian ruling parties (SPÖ and ÖVP) have taken a great turn in their ideology. In their party manifesto, they communicate very openly and welcoming towards the issue of immigration/asylum. However Faymann's interviews quickly revealed that Austria receives the asylum seekers due its obligation to act according to EU law. The chancellor compares Austria's actions, on how the asylum situation is handled, to other EU member states and elaborates the lack of fair distribution. In addition, he argues for more border controls, more cooperation between EU states and reduction of the number of asylum seekers. If looking at the policy change of Austria concerning asylum, it is noticeable that their changes in policy have recently become drastic. Austria turned from being a 'welcoming country' to asylum seekers, towards one that wishes to close its borders whenever the government decides that it is necessary. As the rationalists view ideology, it is argued that a change only happens if the party wants to please its voters. In the case of Austria, this could be verified due to the radical decisions made to have a cap for refugees and eventually put a fence around its border. In addition, Austria's radical right party has maintained its many votes, in which the leading parties possibly felt pressure for a long time and might have taken this time period as a good opportunity to make changes and move their ideology and attitude slightly towards the right sphere.

As for all other causal variables, it is apparent that the party ideology or rather the attitude of the leaders changes according to the policy change. However like the change in public opinion suggests, there is not only a direct connection with policy change but also with the variable 'number of asylum seekers'. As the number of first time asylum applicants increase, the attitude of the government's leaders changes, even if their general ideology stays the same. Their ideological sphere has not changed in the time period investigated, however the leaders' attitude changed accordingly, becoming more concerned or stricter with the issue.

Concluding these findings, it is evident that all of the independent variables studied are very relevant to the cause of policy change. The exemplified cases, Austria, Germany and the UK, have proven that their public opinion, the number of asylum seekers received and their party ideology change over the time investigated, resulting in a relationship with its government and therefore a change in their policy. Nevertheless, it is apparent that one of these three variables has in fact triggered the most change, namely, the number of asylum seekers received in the countries. Not only does the number of first time asylum applicants trigger change in asylum policy, but also it is the first to trigger change in the competing

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variables. The public's opinion is affected by the increase of asylum seekers, as is the governments' attitude towards the issue. However the governments' ideology is also affected by the change of public opinion over time. This study shows that there has been a chain reaction in the investigated variables, leading one or multiple variables to change the other and additionally changing policy change. Nevertheless, the number of asylum seekers has triggered the change for all variables, as suggested by Saggar (2003), Shisheva (2013) and Schmidt and Radaelli (2004). Applying the results of the study to the broader field of research, one can say that the material factor causes a greater contribution to policy change rather than the ideational source.

7 Conclusion

This thesis investigated the reason for change in asylum policy guided by the research question *why did EU member states' asylum policy change? Which is the main driving factor - the number of asylum seekers, public opinion, or party ideology - for a policy change?* To conduct this research, three examples of EU member states (Austria, Germany and UK) have been chosen, to exemplify sudden restrictions in governments' asylum policy. These cases were highly interesting to analyze in terms of policy change, specifically due to their dissimilar attitude towards the issue.

The thesis began with looking into the yearly and monthly number of asylum seekers, the development of the public opinion of each country towards the immigration/asylum issue, the issue salience as well as their attitude on its current government and political parties. Lastly, changes in party ideology throughout the years in question were studied for each case separately. This was done in order to validate, which variable could be eliminated and/or which factor would prove to be the main trigger for the change in asylum policy. Additionally, this study had the ambition to contribute to the broad research on policy change, namely whether material or ideational factors cause change in policy.

As indicated by the theoretical ground, all of the variables investigated in, are highly important for a change in asylum policy. All studied variables have changed according to time and corresponding to the change in policy, proving a relationship between the two variables. Despite agreeing with the previous literature that all variables are highly important for governments to change its preference towards more restrictions in its asylum policy, the findings have proven that, in this case, it was in fact the number of asylum seekers that triggered change in EU member states' asylum policy. Additionally, this is not only because it directly caused a change in policy, but it also drove change in its competing variables. This research has contributed an input to the broader field of policy change, namely that material sources are most vital when it comes to the cause of policy change.

This study provides opportunity for future research. In order to gain more exact results, this research could be exemplified by all member states that have changed their asylum policy towards more restrictive provisions. Additionally, one could step back and include the media as one of the impacting variables to the independent variables, as it possibly

influences the public opinion and the ideology of the government. Moreover, one could look at the same cases yet at a different timeframe in order to compare if the same trigger for change could be validated.

8   Bibliography

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