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**SECOND CYCLE DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON
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**MIGRATION IN EUROPE: MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION'S
PERCEPTION**

Dissertation in Political History of European Integration and Cooperation

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INTRODUCTION

Our world is constantly changing, and one of the biggest changes of our era has been the possibility for people to move from one place to another. The world is so interconnected and globalized that for some it just takes a few hours to go from one side of the globe to another. However, this has also come with some consequences; consequences that are slowly unraveling and that have affected our costumes, ways of living and ways of thinking. This is because globalization is allowing the free flow of, not only people, but also goods, services and information (Held, 1999 in Ivarsflaten, 2005) and in this scenario the role of media has become one of the most influential of our times.

Since the turn of the century, people in the European Union holding the citizenship of a member state have had the possibility to move freely from one country to another without particular formalities or border checks (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017). This meant that with the enlargement of the EU more and more people started moving within the region to find better opportunities. However, with the opening of the borders within, the outer border has slowly been securitized more and more.

A securitization process has especially been happening (Wohlfeld, 2014 p.72) in light of the international terrorist attacks and as a possible consequence of the 2015 migration crises, which pushed many people to start linking the flow of people coming in the EU to the terrorist threat, and not just that. What enhanced this link was the rhetoric of media and political parties that sank into a general anti-immigrant sentiment.

This research will focus on the region of Europe and how the perception of the movement of people within and to this region have been influenced by some events like the advent of international terrorist attacks, the sense of distrust in the EU, the chaos that came with the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU, coupled with the rise of populist parties.

Some quantitative data is presented throughout this research, such as surveys, graphs and charts to fully illustrate public opinion and statistical facts as well as qualitative data like news articles, to grasp a sense of these themes.

Chapter one will focus on current migration patterns in Europe in the last 20 years, focusing on real numbers, the different movements, like south-south, east-west and south-north migrations (Wohlfeld, 2014) but also on the actual number of foreign people living in the EU.

It will then pass on to analyzing the topic of Terrorist attacks, starting from the event that forever changed the era of modern terrorist attacks and the consequences of these attacks, such as Islamophobia and portrayal of migrants in a negative way.

The chapter will also focus on ‘unpacking’ the migration crisis of 2015, starting by addressing the Arab Spring, the ‘boat people’ question and how quickly the idea of the migrant became the common enemy to fight in order to regain back control.

People did not feel safe anymore, losing all sense of security and wanting to revert back to the national values (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017) and it is in this climate that another event shook the EU: Brexit. This research will focus on how the topic of migration was utilized by political campaigns to convince a large part of the UK’s citizens to vote the final exit from the EU (Ipsos, 2016).

This brings to chapter number two, which focuses on the emerging anti – immigrant sentiment and how the opinion of people changes based on historical events, but also how political campaigns and media influence (Franzke and Ruano de la Fuente, 2021).

As a matter of fact, the main focus of this dissertation will be to uncover how the perception of migration changed also through the lenses of media, specifically focusing on big news agencies from different countries. The news articles taken in consideration mainly date back to the 2010s and 2020s and they were selected to analyze what had been said throughout the years by journalist and politicians.

The last paragraph of the research focuses on the consequences of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, which started in 2022 and that provoked one of the biggest refugee crises since the end of the Second World War (Ibañez Sales, 2023). It will analyze why this crisis was seen differently compared to the previous one, how that impacted the EU but more importantly how the member states dealt with it and how the citizens responded to it, which was quite different compared to the previous.

Altogether, this research will provide the tools to understand how perceptions, but specifically the perception of the immigrant has shifted and is constantly shifting, but it will also provide the tools to understand the different narratives that have been portrayed throughout these last years.

CHAPTER 1: VIEWPOINTS ON MIGRATION PERCEPTIONS IN THE FRAME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1.1 MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE EU: EXPLORING DYNAMICS SINCE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

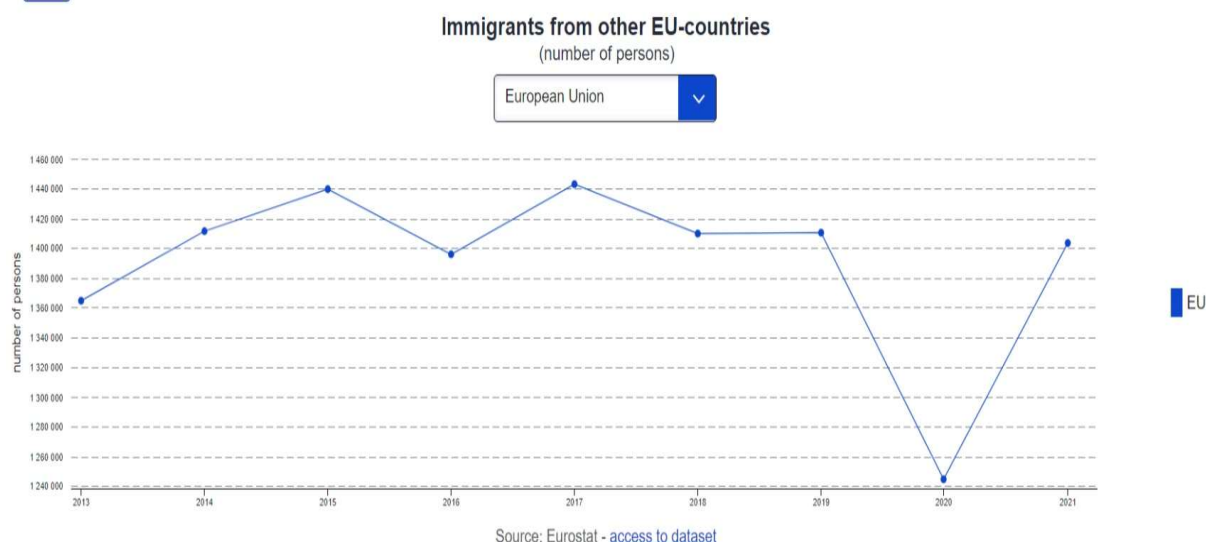
One of the first images that comes to mind when thinking about Europe nowadays is the massive influx of people moving from one country to another and the opportunity to do that without any restriction or specific requirement if not being a member of the EU. The European Union has made that possible with EU citizens enjoying their freedom to either work, live or travel within any member state of the EU and not having to go through special formalities or being checked at the borders (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017). This was possible because the beginning of the new millennium was characterized by the Treaty of Amsterdam (that came into force in 1999), which abolished frontier checks (except for UK and Ireland) and which created the feeling of a ‘people’s Europe’ (Gatrell, 2019). For this reason, over the past years there have been different waves of migration based on different circumstances, such as East-West, North-North and South-North movements (Wohlfeld, 2014). These intra-European patterns have depended on specific events, for example the enlargement of the EU, that saw an influx of people from new member states to old member states in search of new opportunities or better jobs, or simply between neighboring countries (Franzke and Ruano de la Fuente, 2021), maybe for cultural affinity or simple travel desires. As a matter of fact, between 2004 and 2007, more than 10 new countries joined the European Union, which meant that many new people wanted to seek better opportunities in Western Europe. This, however, took some time for countries to adjust to, but was made possible because the end goal of those years was to inspire a sense of Europe Filter and not of a Europe fortress (Gatrell, 2019).



Source: [Net migration- European Union] n.d. [image online] Available at: [Net migration - European Union | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/SH.MN.EU)

Another big mass movement has been the South-North movement, as the young generations in Italy, Spain, Greece, and France have had a hard time finding a job or have thought they would be better off if they moved to the north. Reunifications have also taken place because of many family members or friends moving to the north. However, a difference can be pointed out between the two movements: South-North and North-South, that the South-North migrants have been generally referred to as ‘economic migrants’ and have been perceived as countless whilst the North-South ones have been perceived as ‘expats’ and more limited in number, yet this is not the case because South - North movements represent only one-third of migration flows within the EU (Olivier Clochard and Migreurop Association, 2013).

It's important to see then, that already within the EU, some stereotypes have started to form around the idea of who is a migrant and around the idea that some migrants are considered ‘better’ and less problematic than others. Referencing to Franzke and Ruano de la Fuente (2021, p.3) “intra-European or highly skilled migrants may not even necessarily be perceived as migrants at all” (Franzke and Ruano de la Fuente, 2021).



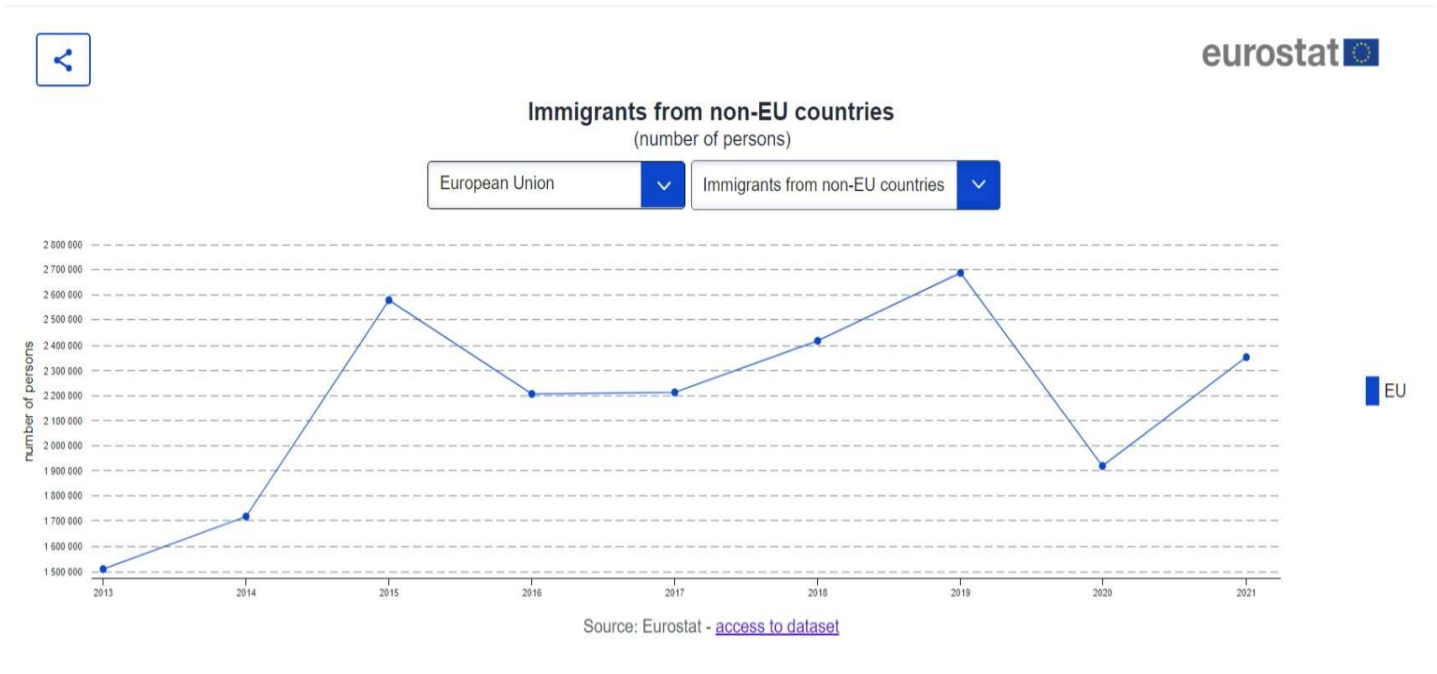
Source: [immigrants from other EU-Countries] n.d. [image online] Available at: Migration and asylum in Europe – 2023 edition - Eurostat (europa.eu)

Putting mass movements to the side, opportunities that young people have to study, travel and work in different countries of the EU without any restriction is just one of the many privileges that European citizens hold, and which should be recognized as such.

It is important, however, to recognize that there are also people who do not have the freedom to travel and move freely within the EU. For instance, many people from Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia who are coming to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic and Eastern Europe (InfoMigrants, 2021), and do not hold EU citizenship, do not have the same privileges. Most of these people are in danger or are looking for somewhere new to start a life, they tend to reach the northern shore of the Mediterranean passing by North Africa, however, in doing so they often have to rely, as Wohlfeld (2014, p.73) stated, on more “dangerous routes and to human smugglers and traffickers and pay exorbitant fees to board dangerously small and overcrowded vessels. It also limits their chances of reaching access to safe countries. Thousands of migrants have died in recent years trying to reach the shores of Italy, Malta, Spain and Greece” (Wohlfeld, 2014).

And even though looking at demographics, the majority of migrations have actually occurred within Europe (Olivier Clochard and Migreurop Association, 2013), the EU has been facing a record number of migrants from outside the borders (Estevens, 2018), so that initial desire of member states for a Europe Filter quickly transformed into the idea of a Europe fortress for outsiders.

Upon analyzing some of the latest statistics however, it can be noticed that the numbers of immigrants from non-EU countries is substantial, but when compared to the total population of Europe it remains relatively low.

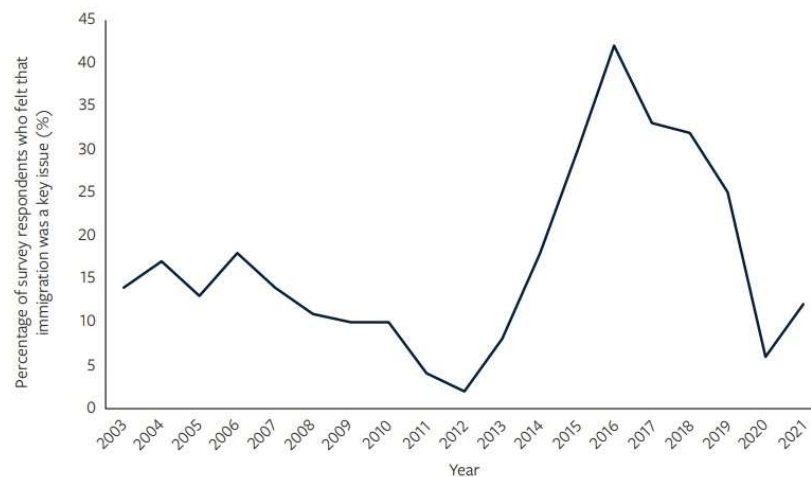


Source: [immigrants from non-EU Countries] n.d. [image online] Available at: [Migration and asylum in Europe – 2023 edition - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](#)

In 2022 for instance, only 8% of the population were non-nationals, looking at the singular member states, only 3% were citizens of other EU countries and only 5% were citizens of a non-EU country. (“Migration and Asylum in Europe – 2023 Edition - Eurostat,” n.d). So, as of 2022 the percentage of people living in the EU from a non-EU member state was around 5%, which is a very low percentage. This does not include people who enter illegally, or which are currently undocumented. About 1 million non-EU citizens were illegally present in the EU with the largest group of illegally present people been found in Hungary (around 20%), Germany (Around 18%) and Italy (around 10%) (“Migration and Asylum in Europe – 2023 Edition - Eurostat,” n.d). And even though these numbers are easily accessible, people seem to believe what is portrayed on media, which is basically that the EU is being invaded and that the EU’s identity is being stripped apart.

Taking Italy as an example, each year it has grown to be a major destination and today migrants play an important role for the Italian economy, however immigration is still considered as a threat rather than a resource (Armillei, 2017). The Italian government is doing everything they can to portray migrants as one of the biggest problems Italy is facing. Considering the present graph, most respondents answered that immigration is one of the main issues.

Figure 6 Salience of immigration as a key issue in Italy



Note: This graphic shows the percentage of people answering 'immigration' to the question 'What do you think are the two most important issues facing Italy today?' Data is taken mainly from autumn surveys, though the Eurobarometer surveys were delayed due to Covid-19, with the autumn 2020 survey shifting to winter 2020-2021. Data shown here for 2021 is taken from the latest survey (spring 2021).
Source: Eurobarometer, n.d.

Source: [Salience of immigration as a key issue in Italy] 2021 [image online] Available at: [ODI working paper \(cdn.ngo\)](https://odi.org/en/publications/working-paper-cdnngo/) P.7

This view may also be supported by the question of residential segregation, as the number of immigrants on the whole may not be very high, but the perception can be different when taking in consideration a city and its composition. The feeling of 'invasion' may be felt more strongly in those cities in which the concentration of immigrants in certain neighborhoods is higher. An example of this can be the neighborhood in Brussels 'Molenbeek', which is in the northern part of the city and is one of the poorest areas of the city, and because the biggest communities in that area are Moroccan and Turkish the area has been 'stigmatized' quite a lot, especially because locals tend to avoid the area and because it has been more than once associated with the terrorist attacks occurring in Europe (Traynor, 2015).

Many events have occurred in these years, starting from the treaty of Lisbon, the advent of terrorist attacks, the enlargement of the European Union between 2004 and 2011, the financial crises in 2008, the Arab spring and the consequent migration crises and all of them have shaped the migration patterns within the EU as well as into the EU, and because the migration matter is such a complex affair that relates and connects to many different problems, it is also dealt by different institutions and at different administrative levels (Giorgi and Vitale, 2017). The role of the European Union has been vital, especially considering the Schengen agreement and in establishing policies that regulated third-country national migration, however at a national level, the singular nations still have overseen the regulation and settlement of migrants. The different measures put in place have somehow tried to establish some rules regarding who is considered illegal/unauthorized/undocumented and who is considered authorized, trying to keep the former ones out and trying to improve the legal position of the latter (Giorgi and Vitale, 2017).

1.2 RECOGNIZING ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE IMPACT ON MIGRATION IN THE SPECTER OF TERRORISM

When considering migration in Europe, it is nearly impossible not to consider the problem of terrorism, what it has entailed for people and how it has altered the perception on migration. People were quite optimistic about the new possibilities that came with the Schengen agreement to move from one country to another freely and, for the most part, migrants were not regarded as a major issue, however taking in consideration the beginning of the century, a major event happened that deeply impacted what people in the EU would think of immigrants.

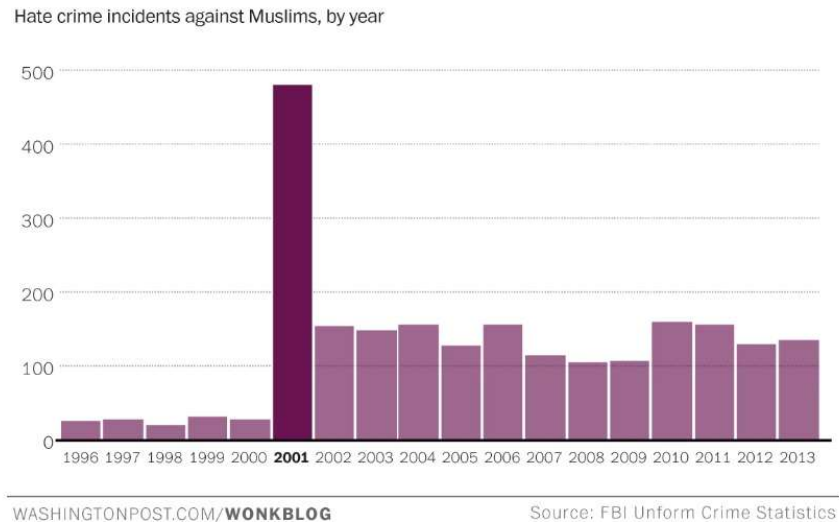
In fact, on the 11th of September 2001 hijackers seized four planes concomitantly on the eastern side of the USA and used them as guided missiles, crashing into iconic building, including the twin towers, specifically in two cities: Washington and New York. The name of the extremist network who planned these attacks was al-Qaeda, an Islamist network that planned these offensives in Afghanistan (Jackson, 2021). Even though these attacks happened in the USA, they had a global effect, because they were not just a mere attack, but an attack to the whole west (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017), since this event was only the start of a series of attacks.

Taking a broader view, when talking about terrorism, Enders, Gaibullov and Sandler (2011, 321, quoted in Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020, p. 979), defined terrorism as “the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups against noncombatants in order to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the

immediate victims” (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020). Specifically transnational terrorism involves more than one country, and it is relevant to the connection between migrants and terrorism, as a migrant is, like previously mentioned, a foreign national. The spike of death rose with the 2001 attacks, however after 2010 it became a common and threatening event and the groups involved in these attacks were mainly religious-Islamist terrorist groups, for example, in Afghanistan (the Taliban), Iraq and Syria (Islamic State), Somalia (al-Shabaab) and Algeria (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020). The analysis of transnational terrorism is relevant for this study because of the nexus between terrorism and migration. Transnational terrorism can be categorized in two: when it is carried out by immigrants in their arrival country and its usually directed to inhabitants or specific institutions of that country; and when it is carried out by natives against immigrants (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020).

The countries in which most terrorist groups are based have one thing in common: being that the majority of the population is Muslim (Pew Research Center, 2009). This created a domino effect in which the western world started to view and consider Muslim countries and therefore ‘muslim immigration’ as a security issue to western societies (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020). European leaders started to frame this situation in terms of a “war of identities”, if not a “war of civilizations”. As the public debate started to shift, increased surveillance was put in place in mosques and a general stigma on Islam occurred (Ghilès, 2016).

This entailed that many European politicians started to insist on adopting tougher approaches to newcomers, particularly those migrants of Muslim faith. For example, in the Netherlands in 2001 there was a rally with the slogan ‘backward Islam’ and that Muslims could never be an integral part of Dutch community. During these years things did not get easier for Muslims and, with the financial crises of 2008, for example, Muslims in Britain who owned a business and who, for the most part, did not even know about their religion or customs, were considered a threat. A depiction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ was portrayed (Gatrell, 2019). For example, as shown by these figures, after the 9/11 attack in the USA crimes against Muslims rose.



Source: [Hate crime incidents against Muslims, by year] 2015 [image online] Available at: [Anti-Muslim hate crimes are still five times more common today than before 9/11 - The Washington Post](#)

When Muslims started to be seen as the problem, people who came from Muslim countries were also seen as such, so the inflow of migrants made anti-immigrant terrorism sentiment more likely because there were more possibilities that if the pool of potential targets is larger than a migrant could potentially more likely be a terrorist (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020) and because terrorist attacks cause mortality and general fear, this can create, as cited by Nussio, Bove and Steele (2019, p. 3) “negative attitudes towards members of out-groups”, so it’s both the times in which this occurs but also the place, the closer an attack is felt, the more “migration attitudes become more negative” in that place (Nussio, Bove and Steele, 2019, p.3).

Like previously mentioned, the 9/11 in the USA attack was only one of the many attacks that occurred, in 2015 130 people died in Paris, France due to a series of attacks in different parts of the city, including a concert at Bataclan (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020) and a shooting at the offices of ‘Charlie Hebdo’ where 11 people were shot (Ray, 2019). The next year, in 2016 a similar thing occurred in Brussels, Belgium, in which 32 people lost their lives, also conducted by an Islamic state cell (Gatrell, 2019).

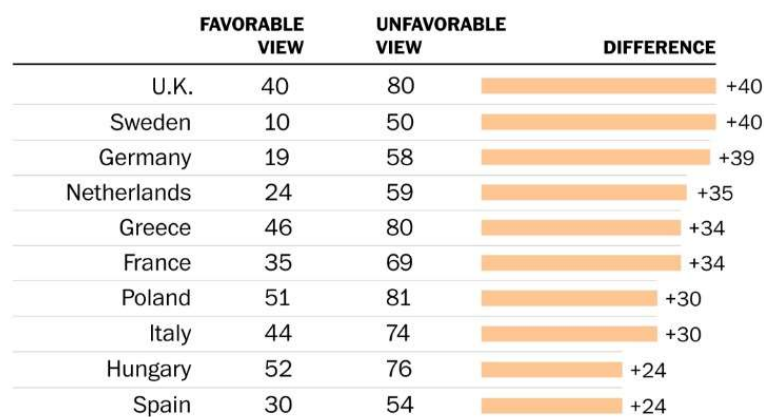
The already fragile position in which Muslim people were put in was completely turned over at this point, and discrimination was a daily occurrence, for example in France the ‘headscarf affair’ became a hot topic and was regarded as a failure of Muslims to assimilate and integrate into French society (Gatrell, 2019) or people made comments such as ‘I wonder what type of bomb they are

hiding under their scarf”, we could say that the body and type of clothing of a migrant could be seen as a site of anxiety (Gatrell, 2019) for people who became susceptible to the news.

In general, as Helbling and Meierrieks (2020, p. 986) found in their paper “attitudes towards immigrants become more negative in the context of terrorism. Actual or perceived threat is one of the most important explanatory factors for such attitudes or changes in attitudes”. Terrorism than was seen as a threat to not only national security, but also personal safety and it led people to be fearful of others, it “increased ethnocentrism, prejudice and xenophobia” Helbling and Meierrieks (2020, p. 986) as well as strong ties to one’s native identity and naturally, all these factors promoted negative views of migrants (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020). Countries in which most of the population is Muslim were than targeted as countries from which the people were automatically terrorists and a negative view of them was portrayed. As shown in the graph, the views regarding refugees who were coming from Iraq and Syria for example, were mostly unfavorable for most countries in Europe in 2016.

Perceived threat higher among those with negative view

Among those with a ___ view of Muslims in our country, percent saying a large number of refugees leaving countries like Iraq and Syria is a major threat.

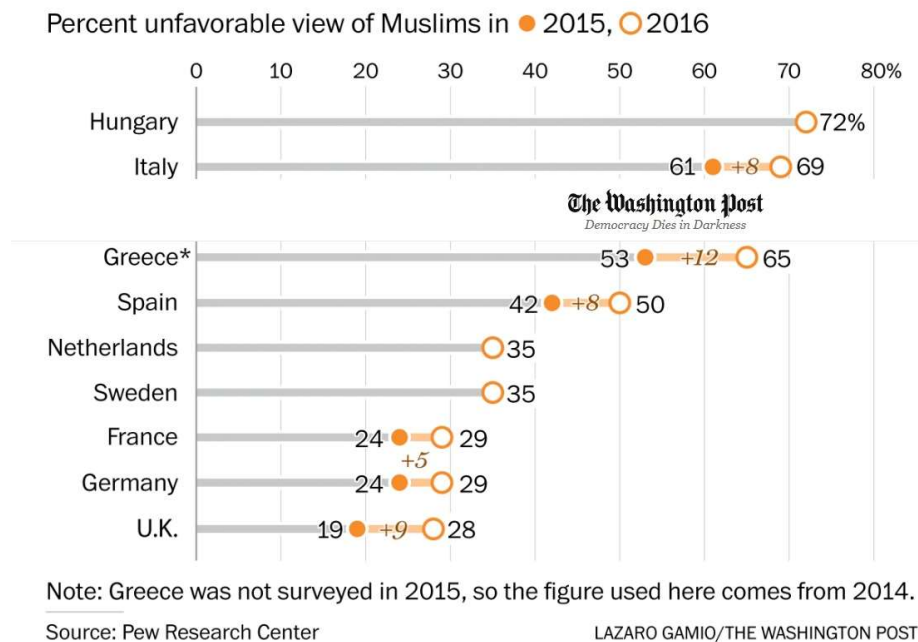


Source: Pew Research Center

LAZARO GAMIO/THE WASHINGTON POST

Source: [Perceived threat higher among those with negative views] 2016 [image online] Available at: [Anti-Muslim views rise across Europe - The Washington Post](#)

However, even though the thought could be that the consequences are the same everywhere, it is not the case, as the effects are not uniform everywhere and terrorist activities may affect immigration attitudes in different ways in different countries based on different factors, such as media and political views (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020).



Source: [Percent unfavorable view of Muslims in 2015-2016] 2016 [image online] Available at:
[Anti-Muslim views rise across Europe - The Washington Post](#)

The scenarios which emerged at this point were two: the first-class migrants and the second-class ones, the ones who had the freedom to move, the ones adhering to the Christian faith, white ones and the ones who did not, the ones who were a threat. 'On the one side, as previously mentioned, there was the opening of the borders through the treaty of Lisbon and on the other, there was the beginning of the fortress Europe. This is because migrants could be seen both as a physical threat (due to the terrorist attacks), but also as a symbolic threat (due to a country's culture and way of living for example). In analyzing this phenomenon, the connection that is being made between migration and terrorism in the after-effects of a terrorist attack can produce more negative effects in those areas in which people don't have a strong direct experience with migrants and maybe don't know much about them. On the opposite side, the nexus between the two is more positive in the areas in which locals are acquainted with sharing the same spaces with migrants on a daily base (Nussio, Bove and Steele, 2019).

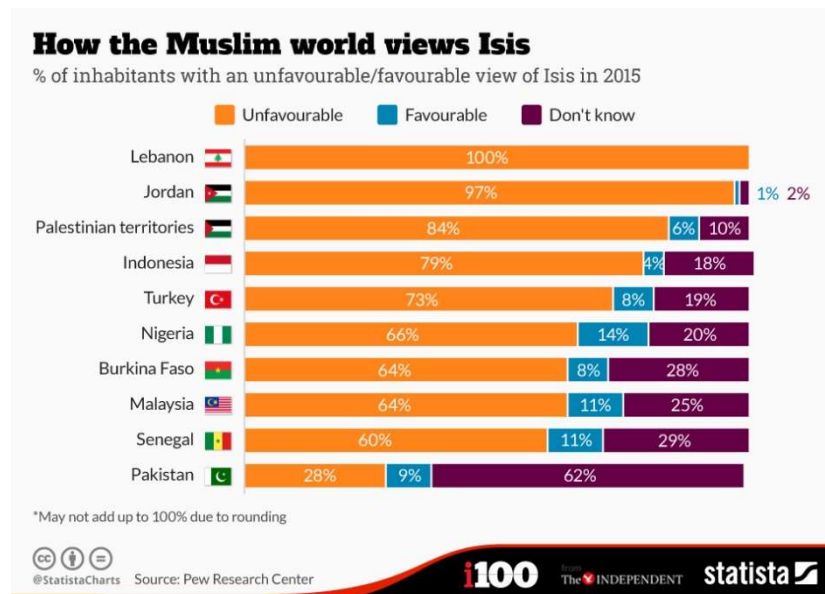
However, this is not the only factor that influenced the perception of migrants, as images on social media and television showed the world the horrors of the wars in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq in the setting of Islam. Islam, one of the most widespread religions in the world, was therefore converted into a cliché. Basically, for the western world, those who adhered to Islam failed to adapt to the modern world and therefore to democracy (Ghilès, 2016).

Countries in the EU, following the terrorist attack in the USA, adopted some changes regarding security concerns in policies regarding migration. Specifically, Germany adopted some security measures, they abolished religious privilege that governed the legislation of associations, so basically if an organization articulated itself against the German law they could be prohibited, and this came with the prohibition of extremist-Islamic communities in Germany. A lot of the offences were also linked to the possibility for deportation for many, as a matter of fact, in 2005 a new immigration act was established which contained the possibility to expel a person if the person in question was suspected of being a risk to national security. In the UK emergency measures were put in place, for example the terrorist act, which allowed deportation procedures for suspected international terrorists or the 'indefinite detention' measure, which meant that a person, even being a suspected terrorist had to stay in detention, however this went against the European chart of human rights and in 2004 the highest court of the UK ruled that it was indeed against human rights law to detain without a fair trial a foreign terrorist suspect. Whilst in the UK and Germany measures that have been taken were quite direct and immediate, Spain did not proceed immediately, however strong measures were taken there too. In 2003 the immigration legislation was reformed, and it entailed that the police or other authorities could access municipal registration in case a foreigner was suspected as threatening, however many irregular migrants would register at the municipalities for basic needs such as health care and education, so for various actors this new reform was going against data protection and executing guaranteed rights for immigrants. The list of policies could probably go on, as many European countries started to change their outlook and their approach to national security, but throughout these new policies or reformed policies it can be noted how immigration was more and more associated to domestic and international security and the lack of saying by the European institutions on human rights principals and the rights of immigrants made their situation more precarious than ever (Fauser, 2006).

Therefore, a migrant can be 'blamed' when they are suspected of being linked to terrorist threats that attain their host country, maybe because they are religiously or ethnically affiliated (Polo and Wucherpfennig 2019 in Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020, p. 984). So, with the increase of immigrants, terrorism against non-natives can become more common, especially in the wake of right-wing terrorism.

There is no way of denying that terrorist organizations might exploit existing networks abroad for recruiting people or for radical purposes and diasporas, which often times provide social connections and reinforce common identities, therefore, because with the growth of migration there is also a growth of diasporas consequently there is also a growth of concern among people (fueled

by discrimination) that certain type of migrants are to be contained (Sageman 2004, 2011; Sheffer 2006 in Helbling and Meierrieks, 2020). Nevertheless, the Muslim world, for the most part does not even have a favourable view of terrorist groups and think that they represent a false reality of the Muslim community. Looking at statistics from 2015 it can be demonstrated that the percentage of people asked if they are in favor of ISIS responded no and were not in favour of their actions (Statista Daily Data, 2015).



Source: [How the Muslim world views Isis] 2015 [image online] Available at: [Chart: How the Muslim world views Isis | Statista](#)

What is evident then is that issues like ISIS and new terrorist threats, paired with the flow of migrants coming in from Muslim countries, among different challenges, are still difficult to address (Léonard & Kaunert, 2016, pp. 143–144 in Estevens, 2018) and that’s because migration has been associated with terrorist attacks, xenophobia episodes and false narratives have become common events revealing an incapacity of EU member states “to create the space of tolerance and cultural diversity” (Fulbrook and Cesarini, 1996, p. 217 in Estevens, 2018).

1.3 UNPACKING THE MIGRATION CRISES AND THE INTERSECTING BREXIT DILEMMA

In January 2011, an event that started a spillover effect known as ‘Arab spring’, started in Tunisia when a man, after being humiliated by the police, set himself on fire in sign of protest for the harsh

political situation in the country at that time (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017), the protests started in Tunisia, but rapidly spread causing many mediterranean countries to enter into civil wars, for example Lybia and Syria, causing these countries and the EU to respond to a migration crisis (Armillei, 2017). This type of migration crises had not hit the EU for a long time, and it came at a time in which the already fragile position of migrants was put into question. As it was mentioned in the previous paragraph, many terrorist groups at this point were taking military control over these countries.

Syrian people were probably one of the biggest groups of people to move and to try and come to the EU, and this is for a series of reasons: they had lost hope, they had difficulty keeping up with the cost of living, they had limited opportunities, they had experienced limited aid help, and because most of them had moved to neighboring countries like Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon or Egypt, they had trouble in renewing their residency and they generally felt unsafe (UNHCR, n.d.).

Between 2011 and 2016 around more than a million Syrian refugees applied to stay in the EU, however what was considered as an ‘invasion’, only represented 0.2% of the total population of the EU, which was around 500 million people. This escalated in a series of measures to prevent too many people from coming in and trying to protect the Schengen area, which at this point was seriously comprised. In fact, the system failed and the Dublin system, which focused responsibility of the first countries of entry to process asylum requests, lead to conflicts regarding redistribution among the member states of the EU. Italy and Greece, for example, were the top two countries to ‘receive’ all these people and their systems collapsed (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017).

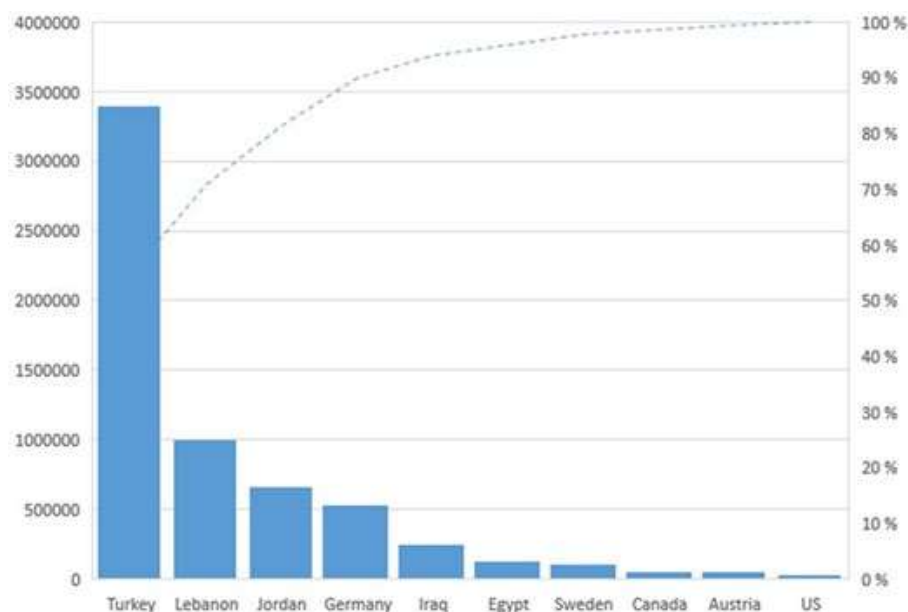
With the development of Schengen and the possibility for people to move freely within the EU, the unification of European asylum policies occurred. This meant that under the Charter of Fundamental rights of the EU the right to asylum was defined and it illustrated human security approaches and securitization approaches. With the advent of the 9/11 terrorist attack, these approaches “shifted towards securitization” (Buonfino, 2006; Karamanidou, 2015 in Hirschler, 2021, p. 106) and “the partial collapse of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and re-nationalisation of asylum policy suggest an intensification of this process” (Hirschler, 2021, p. 106-107). The CEAS was established in 1999, which goal was to make procedures more efficient, solidarity among member states of EU stronger and partnerships with other countries more structured (European Commission, 2020), however the CEAS was also framed in a manner to protect EU’s internal security and a big emphasis was put on the first country of arrival of the asylum seeker, under the Dublin scheme. This meant, in the eyes of many European countries, that

Southern countries had to take responsibility for the people they were letting in. Nonetheless, this escalated into redistributive conflicts and contaminated co-operation efforts (Lavenex, 2018).

For example: in the article by Eder and Golod (2018) we can find a citation by Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz that had said “The Dublin rules require people who have been registered to be returned to the country in which they were first registered — and certainly not to just any other European country” (Eder and Golod 2018, p.1) or, for instance, some countries, like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic refused to accommodate any of the refugees that had been ‘assigned’ to them (Kabata and Jacobs, 2022).

At this time, the emphasis on the numbers was exaggerated, as political statements and media images lead many to think that what was happening at a local level, for example in Italy or in Greece, represented a situation at a national level or a European level and a particular emphasis in general was put on the idea of a ‘crisis’, to portray that particular moment as exceptional and to use those figures as absolute. However, as previously mentioned, yes, the numbers, especially for 2015 and 2016, were quite high, but many times the statistics were incomplete and stripped of context (Nussio, Bove and Steele, 2019).

Furthermore, only part of the story was told as the emphasis of the majority of Syrian migrations was focused on their move to Europe, but if the true face of the geographical map was shown, it would be obviously clear that most Syrians actually moved to countries in the Middle East, accounting for 86% of the refugees, which went by order of percentage to Turkey (around 50%), to Lebanon (around 20%) and to Jordan (around 10%) (Olivier Clochard and Migreurop Association, 2013).



Source: [Syrian Refugee Migration, Transitions in Migrant Statuses and Future Scenarios of Syrian Mobility] 2020 [image online] Available at: [Syrian Refugee Migration, Transitions in Migrant Statuses and Future Scenarios of Syrian Mobility | Refugee Survey Quarterly | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#) P.158

Broadly speaking, on the one side there were people fleeing war and poverty through the mediterranean, on the other there were people in the EU influenced by media and political parties who portrayed these people as problems, instead of human beings in need of help. At this point the notion of ‘boat people’ became a common use. Italy for example, which is at the heart of the mediterranean, was one of the countries who saw most of the arrivals, this phenomenon did not start with the civil wars but was an ongoing matter, as a matter of fact, between 1999 and 2014 already nearly half a million people had been smuggled to Italy, on top of the many asylum requests, in 2008 Italy was the 5th largest receiver of asylum seekers. The question of illegal immigrants during this time started then taking the stand, as many racist and xenophobic comments and discourses in politics and media increased, people started to experience a ‘moral panic’ among Italians, that feared for an invasion (Armillei, 2017).

Particularly strong the case of the island of Lampedusa, a small island between Africa and Sicily in the mediterranean sea, which became one the biggest arrival points and a symbol of this ‘invasion’. As a matter of fact, as Armillei (2017, p. 143) stated “in the wake of the “Arab Spring” the arrival of around 50,000 people in 2011 brought to the hasty declaration of a “state of emergency”” (Armillei, 2017).

Terms like ‘extracomunitari’ and ‘clandestini’, which basically meant ‘outside the community’ became commonly used. One of the core problems at this point was the matter that people traffickers exploited migrants and migrants exploited the weaknesses in the system to gain ground in Europe and the Italian view on this was that the rescue missions of boats encouraged the people traffickers to continue smuggling people in, and this view was not only shared by the Italian government but also by the UK and others. Many NGOs took on the responsibility of saving people by tracking these boats and refused to send people back. During this time, countries like Denmark and Norway suspended Schengen agreements for 3 months and many other European ministers wanted to suspend it too, however that would have entailed that countries like Greece and Italy would be left completely alone in the affair and the Greek minister called this a ‘hysterical’

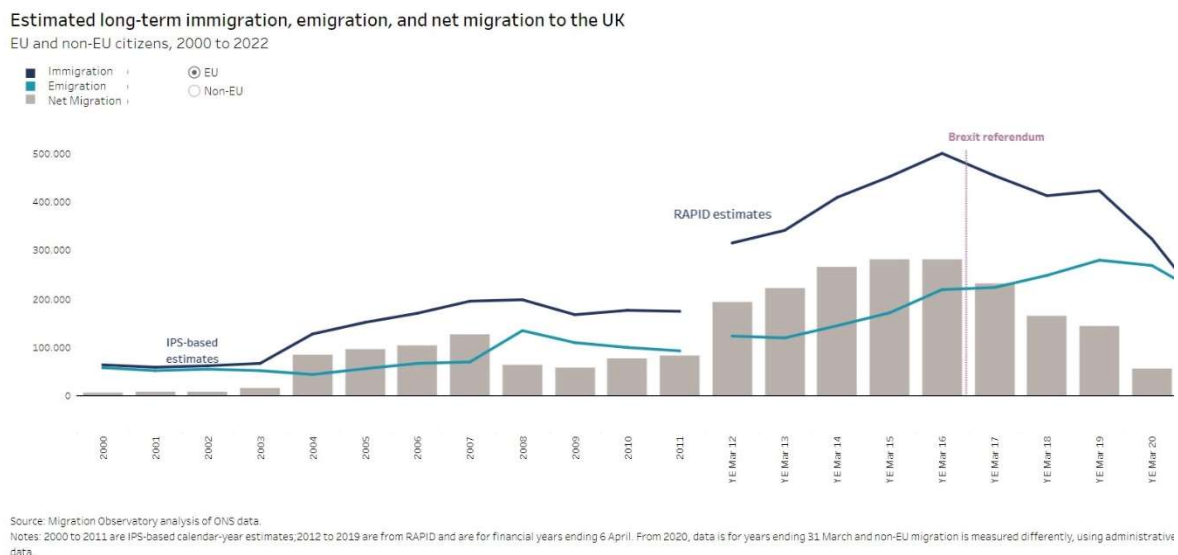
proposal. The unified idea on which the European Union was built on (so an integrated area) was going to look more like a fragmented Union (Gatrell, 2019).

During this time, people started to feel a sense of hopelessness in front of this situation and started feeling as if it was the European Union that had failed. So, what the EU had built over the last decades slowly started to crumble as the Member states started to feel a security deficit and started facing a series of challenges regarding the public security. This process slowly led to a harsh securitization and increased politicization (Huysmans, 2006; Guild, 2009; Bourbeau, 2011; Vietti & Scribner, 2013 in Estevens, 2018).

What had previously been accomplished, which was that governments in Europe transferred most of their decision-making powers at the international level rather than keeping it at a national level (Ivarsflaten, 2005), started to be put into question. This is specifically regarding the management of people coming in and out of one's country, as taking matters into their own hands seemed the only way for some member states to feel 'safe' and to feel they still 'had control'. In the face of globalization, exerting control over this seemed one of the few areas in which nation states could display their power (Giorgi and Vitale, 2017).

This discourse cannot be generalized, because each EU member state reacted in a different way to the 2015 migration crises, but what can be affirmed is that tensions arose regarding how to deal with migration. The joint scheme of asylum regimes, for example, was put into question under European governance as it was nationalized (Hirschler, 2021). Some of the reactions of member states were measures that aimed to make the situation at the ports of arrival easier, to allow a good relocation scheme and to establish hotspots. However, in many cases, rather than strengthening the protection aspect of the Common European Asylum System and of the Dublin system, a protectionist position was reinforced. It became more of a refugee containment matter rather than promoting basic human rights through a promotion of basic asylum standards (Lavenex, 2018). The situation demonstrated a lack of solidarity between the member states and caused a reversion to nationalism. People were unhappy of how the Union was dealing with this and this discontent led to a movement against Brussels' regionalism. At the base of this idea was that the interests of the singular European countries conflicted with the EU's interests (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017).

The United Kingdom can be considered a prime example of sense of detachment from the EU's way of handling things. The UK went through a big change with the enlargement of the EU between 2004 and 2011, as many migrants from those new countries started to arrive, specifically the countries known as A8, such as Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia. Many of the people arriving started to work under the 'Worker registration scheme' and started to be actively present in the country (Stansfield and Stone, 2018). Interestingly, by 2014, the arrival of EU citizens had overtaken non-EU net migration and the number of people entering Britain was around 350,000 per year by 2015 (Dennison and Geddes, 2018). At the same time, non-EU net migration was quite high and already since 2002 the UK's public concern over immigration increased and over 40 per cent of the population listed it as an important issue (Dennison and Geddes, 2018).



Source: [Estimated long-term immigration, emigration, and net migration to the UK] 2023 [image online] Available at: [EU Migration to and from the UK - Migration Observatory - The Migration Observatory \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/eu-migration-to-and-from-the-uk)

The UK passed from being a “white country” into one whose ethnic minority population rose to 20 per cent (Bale, 2021) and in the eyes of the most conservative this became a problem (Dennison and Geddes, 2018).

The migration crisis certainly did not help, as images of boats swept on the coasts and terms like ‘invasion’ were of a daily matter. And whilst migrants from the EU were seen as a threat to job security or criminality (Stansfield and Stone, 2018), the new waves of people coming from Africa

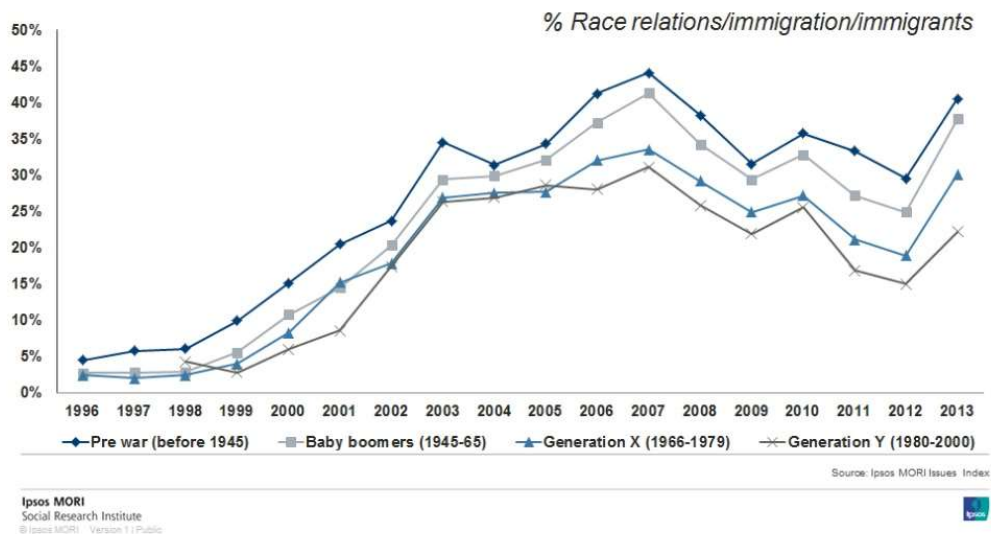
and the Middle East were directly associated with terrorism and different ways of living. It goes to show how different migrants were directly associated with different threats and in the British context, it was clear that individuals were not evaluated as a monolithic threat; rather they were evaluated and associated to different ones (Hix et al. 2017; Kaufmann 2017 in Stansfield and Stone, 2018, p.6).

The British Conservatives had been politicizing immigration for some time at that point and, being one of the most successful parties (Bale, 2021), quickly gained ground on what was considered as a major issue: stopping the flow of people and gaining back control.

Looking at the series of events that occurred, starting with the EU enlargement and then the event of terrorist attacks and the civil wars in the Middle East, with a consequent flow of migrants in the EU, the British conservatives used everything at their disposal to convince people that the best thing to do at this point was to leave the EU. So, even though migration was not the only reason to trigger off a general willingness to come out of the EU, it would also be false to say that it did not have a great impact on the final vote people made (Bale, 2021). Two important pro leave campaigns (Leave.EU and Vote Leave) are two primary examples of how the conservative parties did their best to convince people that they would gain back control of the borders and things would get better (Bale, 2021).

People at this time were witnessing media reports that showed millions of people presumably wanting to make their way to the UK for a better life, possibly making it even harder for those British who were already struggling themselves, and the consequent media news about bomb attacks in France and Belgium by Islamist terrorists only heated the general opinion that all this insecurity could be avoided as it was the EU who was aiding and abetting mass immigration (Bale, 2021).

What would you say is the most important issue/other important issues facing Britain today?



Source: [What would you say is the most important issue/other important issues facing Britain today?] 2014 [image online] Available at: [Perceptions and reality: Ten things we should know about attitudes to immigration in the UK | British Politics and Policy at LSE](#)

It is evident how the media portrayals and political discourses on migrants have heightened emotional responses of British citizens on the topic, and the fact is that those threat narratives were built upon false perceptions, for example the criminal threats they pose, the resistance to assimilation and the actual numbers of migrants (Stansfield and Stone, 2018). Furthermore, if people are not in an environment that allows them to get to know migrants, it is more likely that they will believe media and political campaigns. Illustrating the ‘London case’ for example, because around 31 per cent of the population is foreign born and the contact with migrants is more likely compared to other places in Britain, the perceived menace is less felt (Stansfield and Stone, 2018).

One of the harshest political campaigns in favor of leaving the EU, Leave.eu, during that time underlined the EU proposals regarding Turkish citizens and the proposals to allow them to travel to the EU without a visa, and because Turkey was one of the countries who accommodated most of the refugees from Syria, the campaign warned people that there would be a storm of people coming into the UK (Dennison and Geddes, 2018) and this would have a series of consequences and strains on the population. The outcome of the referendum was the United Kingdom’s exit from the EU and looking at numbers it can be said that around 33 per cent of people who voted to exit believed

immigration was one of the major problems and voted to come out of the EU in hope of a better ‘containment procedure’ (Ipsos, 2016).

It is no surprise then, that political campaigns willing to exit the EU had pushed on the widespread hostility towards immigration and the desire of people to see it controlled, as these components would probably be the key to success (Bale, 2021). The phenomenon of ‘Brexit’ created a sense of hopefulness for all the political movements in EU member states who were seeking to leave (Stansfield and Stone, 2018). Today’s globalized and interconnected world started to increase the security threat, and more and more people are reverting back to their national values and traditions “as a secure harbor of continuity and duration many feel left behind, suspended, and others directed by anonymous institutions not acting transparently, but empowered to make decisions for 28 member states simultaneously across national differences and cultures” (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017, p.24). As a result of this increased nationalism, nations are turning back to a sense of security, thus to nationalization (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017).

CHAPTER 2: THE PHENOMENON OF POLITICAL AND MEDIA INFLUENCES IN THE PUBLIC OPINION OF MIGRATION

2.1 THE RISE OF POPULIST PARTIES AND SECURITIZATION MEASURES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AMIDST THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENT

The Arab Spring and the consequent migration crises that proceeded from it occurred at a time in which the EU was hit by a series of international terrorist attacks; these two events, therefore, were seen as two interconnected events. People started fearing for their lives and started seeing immigrants as the issue to all societal problems. As a consequence, political campaigns were firing up about it and, as it was previously seen, with the UK and the final vote to come out of the EU and the promise of political parties to gain back control of the borders, a whole anti-immigrant ‘movement’ coupled with Eurosceptic positions started to arise.

But, analyzing the threat matter, it can be said that different threats were at the core of this hostile sentiment. For instance, an increased threat perception of the job market competition was more generally referred to the term ‘migrant’, whilst a refugee or asylum seeker was seen, most of the time, as a financial strain on the welfare system. Others, for example North Africans, were mostly portrayed in the cultural threat and security threat frame (van der Linden and Jacobs, 2016 in Eberl et al., 2018).

Generally, it can be said that a migrant in itself was not seen as problem, but more so a migrant was seen as a problem when the person held a specific status compared to another (Wohlfeld, 2014). The phenomenon that occurred in the EU was one of a public debate focused on the nexus between migration and security in the frame, first of personal security and well-being of nationals, and then of national security and promotion of the legal people residing in the state and the territory. Because of terrorism, the links to it, which may be real or imagined, are the main reason as to why irregular migration may be viewed as a security threat, and consequently may also affect the threat perception about the social and economic aspects of the country of arrival. So, the idea of the ‘other’ as a security issue was and still is evermore present and, as Wohlfeld (2014, p.72) said, a “securitization process of migrants and migration, especially irregular migration, takes place, increasing the perception of migration as a threat to national security” (Wohlfeld, 2014 p.72).

Accordingly, when an issue is labelled as a security threat, this has implications on the laws, policies and procedures. In this hostile context it has been employed to justify the implementation of harsh policies putting the position of asylum seekers in an even more delicate and fragile position

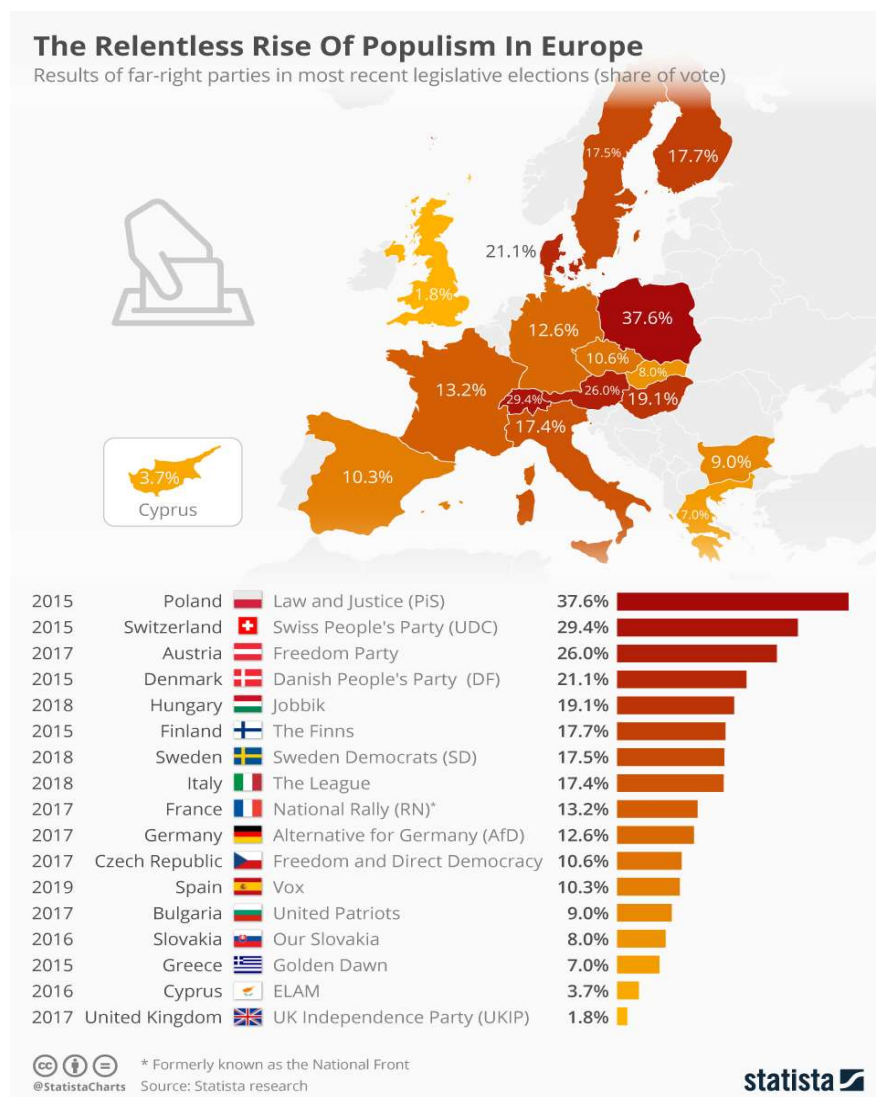
and thus, preventing them to access the countries they want to get to in a safe and welcoming way, in consequence growing the presence of people smugglers and human traffickers (Wohlfeld, 2014).

And even though, as previously said, the opinion of people on the migration matter changes based, for the majority of the time, on the perception of immigration, we can say that the latter changes, based on the current ‘trends’, which for the most part are related to how political topics or public speeches on migration are outlined (Franzke and Ruano de la Fuente, 2021). The political situation thus, in multiple EU member countries, during the years has seen a shift towards right wing parties and consequently has seen an impactful change on the approaches undertaken towards irregular migration (Fauser, 2006).

It’s probably the case that, the rise of these parties is more strongly related to those who have the pre – existing dispositions against immigrants based on different value orientations, for example the values related to immigration that seem to threaten more conservative views such as Christian traditions and norms (Dennison and Geddes, 2019).

Some of the political parties that have taken the stance in Western Europe are often labelled as ‘radical’, ‘far’ or ‘populist’ and usually share the ideal of opposition to immigration. Some of the major ones been voted between 2005 and 2018 were the “ Freedom party of Austria (Austria); Flemish Interest (Belgium); the Danish People’s party (Denmark); the Finns party (Finland); the National Rally (France); Alternative for Germany (Germany); the Northern League (Italy); Alternative Democratic Reform party (Luxembourg); the party for Freedom (Netherlands); the Rise Up (Portugal); Sweden Democrats (Sweden); Vox (Spain) the Swiss People’s party (Switzerland) and the UK Independence party (UK)” (Dennison and Geddes, 2019).

Altogether it can be said that the biggest countries of western Europe have experienced a growth in support for anti-immigration parties and this has shaken the policies of the existing parties, it has shifted election outcomes and transformed coalitions (Dennison and Geddes, 2019).



Source: [The Relentless Rise Of Populism In Europe] 2019 [image online] Available at: [Chart: The Relentless Rise Of Populism In Europe | Statista](#)

These right-wing coalitions oppose newcomers in every form, and even if many immigrants arrive to the EU because of war or poverty there seems to be no mercy as an ethnocentric viewpoint takes the floor. A view that is focused on the nation as a place reserved for only the 'true' citizens, the ones who share the same background, norms, history and religious traditions. And blaming foreigners for all societal problems has proven to be efficient in terms of electoral results for them, as the vote shares for the radical right as a whole have nearly doubled from the 1990s to the 2010s. It is evident then, that immigration has been stigmatized and that a big emphasis has been put on national sovereignty and populism and that these two factors have been a success in addressing peoples fear and anxiety, whether these are cultivated ideas based on real data or based on

perceptions (Stockemer, 2016). Stockemer, for example, engaged in research to understand which one of these was the case, so if it was just based on perception or if it was based on facts, and the results of his research were that the opinion of immigrants may not be related at all to the actual count of immigrants in the territory, whereas it may be influenced on how the right party speeches place their messages or also on how the media talks about it (e.g. Kitschelt, 2007 in Stockemer, 2016).

It could be said then that people vote for whatever party they consider to be most akin to their needs in terms of effectiveness, competency or simply when an issue they consider important is being dealt with (Dennison and Geddes, 2019). So, if a foreigner is thought of as harmful for the country and not as an enrichment culturally, economically or socially speaking, then they will be more prone to vote for one party compared to another, especially if the propaganda from the right might link migration to realities such as criminality or unemployment (Stockemer, 2016). Citing Ivarsflaten (2005, p.22) “these actors may not only mobilize voters in support of restrictive immigration and asylum policies, but they may also persuade voters that such policies form an appropriate solution to a much broader range of problems than would otherwise be the case” (Ivarsflaten, 2005).

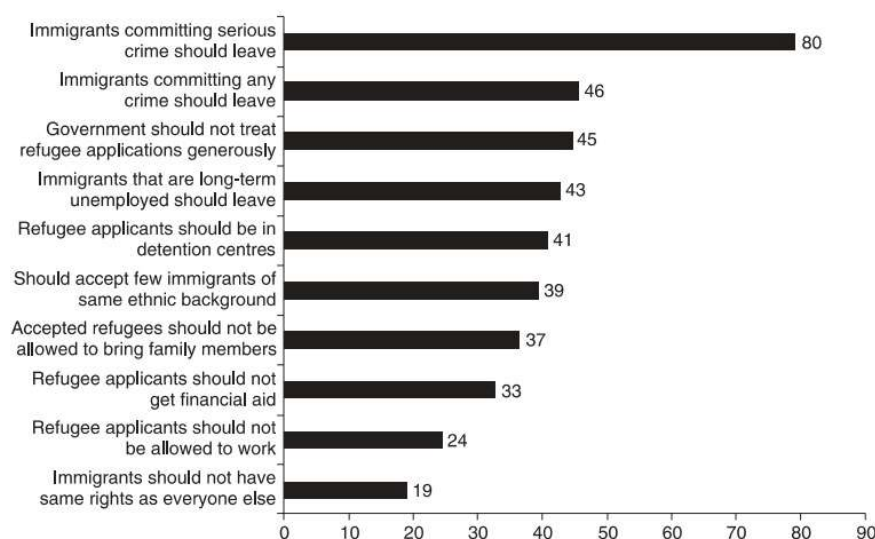


Figure 1. Percentage of western Europeans supporting restrictive immigration asylum policies.

*The data presented in the figures and tables are weighted in accordance with the survey collectors' recommendations. The European Social Survey (ESS) is the source of the data presented in all tables and figures.

Source: [Threatened by diversity: Why restrictive asylum and immigration policies appeal to western Europeans] 2005 [image online] Available at: [Threatened by diversity: Why restrictive asylum and immigration policies appeal to western Europeans \(unibo.it\)](http://www.unibo.it/~geopol/Threatened%20by%20diversity%20-%20Why%20restrictive%20asylum%20and%20immigration%20policies%20appeal%20to%20western%20Europeans.pdf)

Radical right populism is characterized as a subtype of populism, therefore shares two elements that are at base of all kinds of populism, which are the idea of them speaking ‘for the people’ (Muller, 2016, p. 44 in Hirschler, 2021) and thus also trying to define the ‘true population’ (Muller, 2016, p. 46 in Hirschler, 2021). By doing so they acknowledge themselves as the only ‘true people’, thus other political opponents are discredited (Muller, 2016, p. 26 in Hirschler, 2021). They can influence policy making processes by participating in the coalition of the government or by influencing the public discourses (Hirschler, 2021). Accordingly, if there are some links made between terrorism, crime or other negative aspects such as the social and economic landscapes then irregular migration will be considered as a security threat (Wohlfeld, 2014).

Therefore, some of the main reasons for which people started voting these parties can lead back to different thesis, because people actually fear that migrants are taking their jobs away, basically damaging their future prospects, consequently damaging their possibility of access to public benefits and this was particularly felt since the 2008 financial crash as the complaints were relegated onto migrants (Gatrell, 2019). So, the first one is the economic insecurity linked to real or perceived economic complaints against outer groups (Dennison and Geddes, 2019), second, the fact that culturally speaking immigrants are corrupting their host countries (Anderson, 2008 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017) and third, criminal acts became an important construction attributed to immigrants (Pickett, 2016 in Stansfield and Stone, 2018).

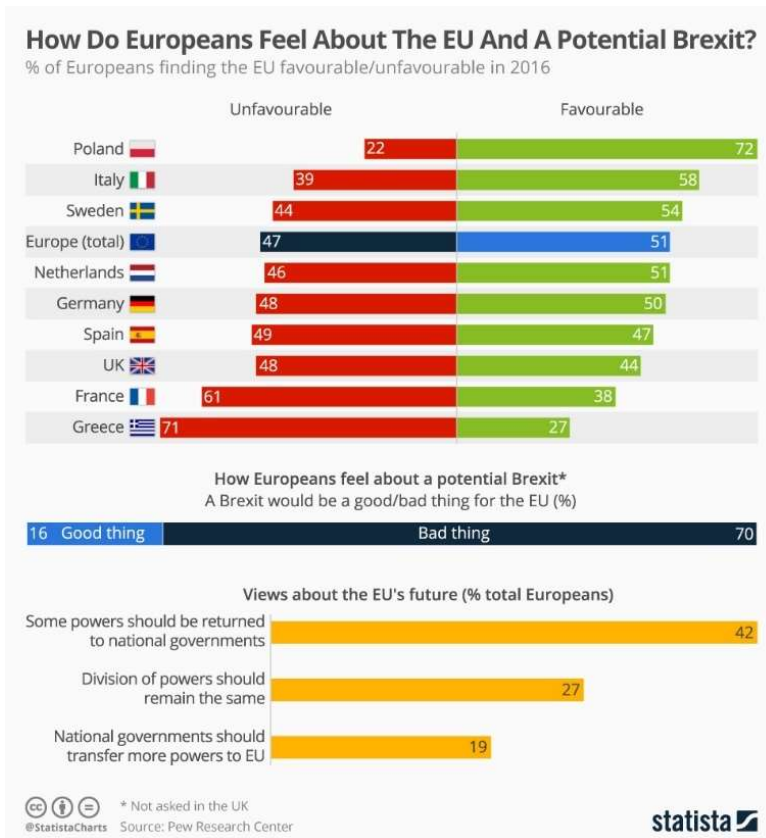
It is important though, to underline the fact that most of the people arriving into the EU take on those jobs that are deem to be less attractive by the local population, and actually, the new workforce coming in is needed in order to leverage the shortage of workers in the hosting countries (CORDIS, European Commission, n.d.). Also, the statistics regarding criminal acts have been misrepresented to forward stereotypes that entail that they commit way more many crimes than EU citizens, whilst, compared to 2009, in 2015, during the peak of the migration crises, the number of EU nationals in detention centers was five times higher (Forester, 2017 in Stansfield and Stone, 2018). In addition, it can be said that when an immigrant is involved in a crime, it is usually because of the discrimination that they suffered, which consequently fostered social inequality, which in turn encouraged the making of the crime (CORDIS, European Commission, n.d.). This is not a justification, but an explanation of facts, which are often overlooked.

Looking at the bigger picture, however, it makes sense to see that some issues became of vital importance to the population, as globalization took the stance and the sense of security that people had was shaken, new threats to peace and security took place. Globalization started to be seen as a generator of sense that the national countries were been threatened and globalization was

understood as two processes, the first one being that European countries slowly transferred their national level political decision making capacities to an international level, specifically to the European Union and the second one being that because of this, and this aspect has already been mentioned throughout this dissertation, is that people, but also goods, services, information and many other things started to flow freely across the borders and this was a life changing moment for many and it was a changing moment in history (Held, 1999 in Ivarsflaten, 2005). This transfer of power from the national level to the international level made many people urge the government to demand its power to claim strict border controls and to make it harder for strangers to attain citizenship. Many people started to request the hindering of European Union integration and any other form of international cooperation. Thus, elites played a role in linking the limitation put on national authority and the nation's decline of unity and distinctiveness to the need for restrictive policies regarding immigration (Ivarsflaten, 2005). This is mainly due to the reasons mentioned above for which the more conservative aspects of the society wanted to be 'preserved'.

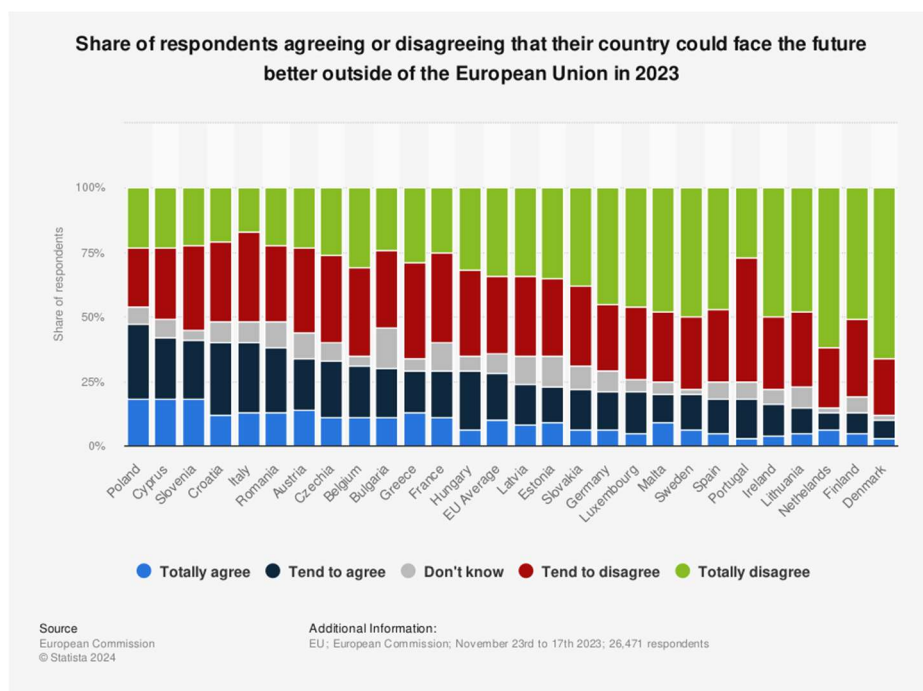
A consequence of this rising Euroscepticism sentiment, as it was previously analyzed through the Brexit matter, is that among European Union member states tensions started to arise, especially in 2015 with the migration crises, what had been previously established as a joint governance of European asylum regime slowly started to be re-nationalized through tightening of border controls, construction of fences, reception centers being decentralized and caps being put on asylum (Hirschler, 2021).

By way of illustration, analyzing the idea of Brexit and looking at the survey, it can be said that before the elections to decide the future of the United Kingdom, around 40% of respondents said they thought it was better for some powers to be returned back to the single governments instead of leaving the powers in the hands of the EU, on top of that, nearly 50% of voters in many member states were favorable to a potential Brexit (Statista Daily Data, 2016).



Source: [How Do Europeans Feel About The EU And A Potential Brexit?] 2016 [image online]

Available at: [Chart: How Do Europeans Feel About The EU And A Potential Brexit? | Statista](#)



Source: [Share of respondents agreeing or disagreeing that their country could face the future better outside of the European Union in 2023] 2024 [image online] Available at: [Desire to leave the EU by country 2023 | Statista](#)

Looking at today's numbers it is clear that the share of people who think their country would be better off if they left the EU is quite high, with the tendency to agree to this statement as high as nearly 50% in some countries (Statista, 2024).

There are shared understandings around the idea of security, which are built around the discourses, narratives and historical practices and thus, becomes politically and socially constructed (Wæver, 1995 in Estevens, 2018). At the same time, the 'elites' in charge at that moment define the risks and threats in that given time, they then prove their validity by activating the means to neutralize those risks. Globalization has shifted the states responsibilities functions, it has added some new ones to the already present ones, which are to defend the territory and the political independence, such as making sure to maintain economic independence, a cultural unity and social constancy (Estevens, 2018).

Alongside this, new risks and threats started to arise, such as intra state wars and conflicts, the environment decaying and polluting and pandemics and epidemics spreading, this has therefore created a push towards the recognition of new developments on security, which shifted from the traditional political-military concept focused on the state and its sovereignty, to a bigger view of international stability focused on the protection of all people (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 187 in Estevens, 2018). Therefore, the movement of people and population dynamics have become more important with the rise of the concept of human security as it constitutes a big source of pressure for individuals' security and, hence, for national security (Tragaki, 2007; Vietti & Scribner, 2013 in Estevens, 2018).

So, a common agreement occurred, for which European leaders, took common responsibility to control the outer borders of the European Union, focusing on 'illegal' migrants, with the excuse that they were the victims of human traffickers. But the reality of things is that a lot of the illegal migrants had actually arrived legally but overstayed their visas, so the securitization process that occurred did not make the life of migrants that easy and actually made them live in fear. Looking at the 2010s, European Union states started to enlist specialists in programs in order to check their borders (Gatrell, 2019).

Nevertheless, how the EU responded to the fragile situation of the mediterranean points to a conflict between the two approaches of human security and of national security because the question of human rights is at stake. As on the one side there is the rethoric that focuses on saving lives and doing everything that is possible to understand the causes of increased migration and consequently

trying to help the people, on the other side there is a harsh response in border management (Wohlfeld, 2014).

With the establishment of the Schengen agreement, arose the need to ‘protect’ the external borders through surveillance and adequate checks of the land as well as the sea borders, so in 2004 the European agency called Frontex was established, which is the acronym for European border and Coast guard agency. This agency basically had the task of supporting member states in migrant return operations. Some of the biggest operations under the umbrella of Frontex were the Indalo and ‘Joint Operation EPN Indalo’, respectively in 2011 and 2015, which were both carried out with the aim of controlling irregular migration on the mediterranean region of those who wished to enter the European Union. A big operation was carried out by the Italian government called ‘Mare Nostrum’, which basically meant ‘our sea’, and it was carried out as a response to the tragedies that were happening in sea of the Mediterranean in 2013. The budget was very high, around 9 million euros per month (Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017). Even though, the number of people coming into the EU through the mediterranean were really high, this did not mean that the majority of people was using this route, actually many of them were going through land or plane, maybe even entering legally and then overstaying (Del Boca and Venturini, 2014, p. 5 in Armillei, 2017), and actually looking at numbers, only 12% of the undocumented migrants were arriving to Italy by boat (Blangiardo & Cesareo, 2013, p. 13 in Armillei, 2017). So, during the period in which the Mare Nostrum operation was launched, the push – back policy that was put into place did not really prevent the rise of ‘illegal migration’ (Hassan and Minale 2010 in Armillei, 2017). In addition, the way Italy approached the issue was questioned as it was regarded as non-conform with human rights or refuge law (Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, 2013, p. 5 in Armillei, 2017).

Taking a wider look at the routes that migrants were using, yes, the people were passing through Italy a lot, but the paths of the ‘boat people’ at this point were also shifting, with many of them passing through Greece (Bethke and Bender, 2011 in Armillei, 2017).

Because member states of the EU refused to share the costs of the operation (Lavenex, 2018), Mare Nostrum was substituted by the operation Triton, an agreement signed in 2014 between the member states, developed by Frontex that had as an objective for the European Union to take back control or to ‘step up operations’ as it was said, instead of the singular countries dealing with the problem on their own, for example Italy. However, this did not mean that there were no expectations from the Italian government to not have to continue in its work of checking the external borders of Schengen. The measures set in place here were focused on processing claims through the approach called

‘externalisation’, which basically meant dealing with asylum seekers outside the borders of the European Union. Frontex also agreed with some non-EU countries for them to receive funds in order to establish detention centres, basically so that the member states did not have to deal with the migrants.

Another country in the mediterranean, Greece, which we mentioned also saw a big influx of people coming in, sought to introduce extra measures, for example fences, putting more border guards, deploying more frontex personnel, pushing refugees to other countries, like Turkey, and establishing what were considered ‘innocuous centres’, which were actually unsafe for women (Gatrell, 2019).

Regarding the Operation Triton, some problematic issues can be analyzed, firstly compare to Mare Nostrum, the budget had been reduced to a third, so the conditions that were in place before with Mare Nostrum were not effectively replaced and secondly, whilst Mare Nostrum was focused on patrolling the waters of Libya near the island of Lampedusa too, Triton only focused on the Italian coast. So, compare to Mare Nostrum, Triton was even more focused on surveillance (Pro Asyl, 2014 in Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017) and as a matter-of-fact Human Rights Watch for example amply criticized Frontex and all the operations, stating that in reality it does not help the crisis but actually supports the human trafficking industry further. In Greece for example Frontex personnel were supporting harsh methods that were against EU law (Richter, 2015: 95 in Dankert and Tectum Verlag, 2017).

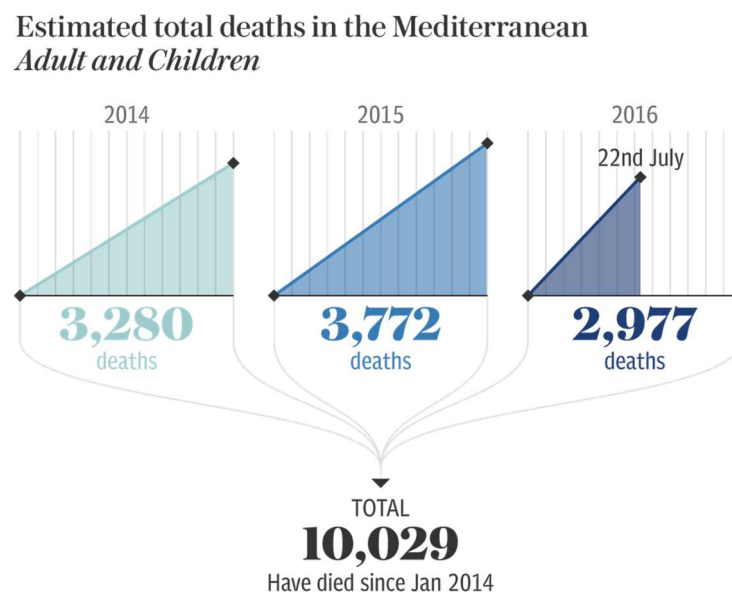
Also, with the beginning of Operation Triton, many human rights groups were concerned about the interruption of the search and rescue operations (Armillei, 2017) as Triton did not focus on a rescue assignment nor does it have the resources to do what the previous Mare Nostrum operations were carrying out (Amnesty International, 2014a, para. 4 in Armillei, 2017).

Frontex is still a very strong agency under the European Union and is carrying out surveillance operations in various areas of the EU and on top of that since 2013, a Border Surveillance System was put in place, named Eurosur, which was designed in the framework of information-exchange on the borders. On top of that, the European Data Archive Convention (Eurodac), was entrusted with the identification procedures. Therefore, it is obvious to see how the surveillance systems were pushed and enlarged through biometric technologies, facial recognitions and fingerprinting young children (Gatrell, 2019).

We see here that, what has slowly come to be present is the securitization of migrants, with a special focus on illegal migration, furthering the perception that migration is a threat to the security of the nations (Wohlfeld, 2014) and as Margit Fauser (2006, p. 5) says “What seems to be undergoing in

the process of securitization, is the opening up of the space for action in favour of control and security interests at the detriment of rights. In the case of migration policies, i.e. policies dealing with 'the others', immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, revaluation of national security aspects easily leads to the curtailing of rights of those others" (Fauser, 2006).

So, looking at the bigger picture, there is a negative view of migration with populist parties that fuel the idea of migration as the main issue, also on top of this countries are slowly wanting to gain back control of the borders, a securitization process had been put in place, which makes it and made it more difficult for people to safely reach the shores of the European Union or even to be accepted in a welcoming way. A lot of the people trying to reach the shores of the EU actually die trying, for example looking at the graph, only in 3 years between 2014 and 2016, during which we already discussed a wide number of people were fleeing Syria and other neighboring countries, it is estimated that around 10.000 people died without even having reached their destination (Sanchez, 2016).



Source: [No one knows how many children are dying in the Mediterranean - 'I remember thinking; "Just hours ago this child was alive" '] 2016 [image online] Available at: No one knows how many children are dying in the Mediterranean - 'I remember thinking; "Just hours ago this child was alive" ' (telegraph.co.uk)

But actually, since 2014 an estimated 29.000 were recorded as missing in the Mediterranean. Central Mediterranean for example, which is one of the deadliest migration routes in the world, is

very dangerous and the capacity of the search and rescue parties, along with the work of life saving NGOs has been compromised (International Organization for Migration, 2019).

It is then vital, to enhance the security of the immigrants and not only the security of the borders, because not only is the trip difficult to get to the desired host country, but also, if they manage to get there, there are difficulties in the aftermath of their arrival such as working illegally, being exploited, getting involved in prostitution or in bad case scenarios, human organ networks (Burgess, 2011, p.15 in Esteve, 2018). These conditions often generate a marginalization, which is justified by using nationalistic values (Geddes, 2003, p. 22 in Esteve, 2018).

2.2 THE ROLE OF MEDIA: WHAT ASPECTS IDENTIFY THE 2015 MIGRATION CRISES AND HOW DID THIS IMPACT THE IDEA OF IMMIGRATION

If the current society is taken in consideration, it would be foolish to deny that social media and media in general has become a fundamental part of our daily lives. With nearly 60% of people in the European Union using these platforms (ec.europa.eu, 2024) they have become a window to everyday life. Through social media and online newspapers and information it is possible, with just a few clicks, to get the latest news, to talk with whoever you want at whatever time, to read about events happening in your neighborhood, as well as on the other side of the world. So, if we think about migration, it is obvious that news about it travels fast, just as it is easy to know about work opportunities in another country it is easy to view the news about migrants coming into the country or about a certain crime committed by a foreigner in your city. However, media can be a tricky place, because many times the reality of things is portrayed in a certain way, so it is ever more difficult to distinguish between news that are trustworthy and those that are fake or overly exaggerated in many ways, and on top of that, the news tends to focus on a topic overtime (taking in example all the news regarding COVID-19) sometimes making it nearly impossible to not get an opinion about it, whether that opinion may be positive or negative. Media reports on a specific event or actor are always framed in a specific manner, as the media outlets select, emphasize or give precedence to a certain attribute compared to another and this suggests that the news is influenced by an ideological thought (Fahmy, 2010; Gamson et al., 1992; Tuchman, 2002 in Amores, Calderón and Stanek, 2019). What this means is that media agencies set up the frame of reference that a possible consumer will use to analyze and interpret a public affair (Tuchman, 2002; Weaver, 2007 in Amores, Calderón and Stanek, 2019). For example, taking photographs in consideration, the audience tends not to notice that a photograph in question may also be artificially constructed and

that it may emphasize a certain element compared to another, for instance by framing it in a certain way, or by cropping or retouching it in another. Thus, a photograph most of the time will have a specific symbol, ideology or meaning behind it (Bock, 2017; Rodríguez & Dimitrova, 2011 in Amores, Calderón and Stanek, 2019).

The fact that a photo is so easily ‘understandable’, it makes it easier for people to view it and memorize it, same goes with videos, as it is so easy to scroll and watch a small video, this is because visual frames are ‘easier to remember’ than text (Rodríguez and Dimitrova, 2011 in Amores, Calderón and Stanek, 2019).

It is by no surprise than that, when migration movements occur, the media coverage will portray migration in a specific way based on the historical period and on the geographical location of the movements. As previously noted, in the last years, with the ‘boats’, especially arriving on the Greek and Italian coasts and all the terrorist attacks going during those same years, the matter of migration has taken on a new central position in the European media agendas and this, once again, has raised the question of representation (Brancato and Stolfi, 2019). And because the media outlets are called to play a role in the explanation of a phenomenon, society will then turn and respond to that representation (Altheide, 2002; Silverstone, 2009 in Brancato and Stolfi, 2019). Therefore, it is quite evident that it’s the type of narration that is portrayed that will influence certain beliefs and stereotypes, which in turn will also influence the attitudes of people towards the migrant for example (Binotto e Martino, 2004; Bruno, 2014 in Brancato and Stolfi, 2019).

Basically, this modality can be defined as media framing, which is the process by which events are reported in and it’s just as if the media is a gatekeeper on how a specific ‘story’ is presented (Scheufele, 1999; Pérez, 2017 in Ibañez Sales, 2023). Furthermore, how the story is initially presented can be of key importance, because it is how the audience perceives it in the long run; for instance, if it’s considered a crisis or not and maybe based on that, what possible solutions may be taken into account. The common audience is not the only one that is influenced, as they also influence policy makers which in turn will make decisions or act according to that media coverage and to the consequent public opinion (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017; Heidenreich et al., 2019 in Ibañez Sales, 2023).

The subject of minorities represented in media is a complex one for example, if we consider Italy and the minority groups that are there, it will become quite clear that there is a negative talk of the ‘other’ communities, which is strengthened by headlines which are particularly negative and which most of the time portray them as villains (Armillei, 2017).

A series of online newspapers have been analyzed to showcase some examples of, first of all, the quantity of headlines about migration and second of all to showcase the words and phrases that have been used to describe specific occurrences or major events regarding immigrants. Some of the media outlets and tabloids mentioned are ‘Telegraph’, ‘La Stampa’, ‘The Daily Mail’, ‘Il Giornale’, ‘El Mundo’, ‘NBC News’, ‘Eureporter’, ‘Hungary today’, ‘Magyar Nemzet’, ‘Il Giorno’, ‘Al Jazeera’, ‘BBC News’ and the selection of these newspapers was not casual as most of these are influential media agencies in Europe. The choice was also made to take some examples from media agencies situated in different countries to have a bigger picture.

The first one we are going to analyze is from the paper ‘IlGiornale.it’ which talked about criminal acts, underlined several times the nationality of the criminal, for example in January 2020 a headline with “Aquila, the drunk Moroccan who killed Sara was arrested” (Sablone, 2020) or another in April 2024 with the headline “Sexual assault on minor, Moroccan convicted was arrested in Milan” (Garau, 2024). Another online paper ‘Il Giorno’ in May 2024 also put out the headline “Blood at the station. Policeman stabbed by an irregular migrant. It's serious: fighting for life” (Bonezzi, 2024).

It is clear than, that in most of these headlines there is a focus on the nationality of the attacker and the emphasis on this aspect can trigger in the reader a sense of anger towards the ‘foreigner’. So, not only are newspapers or the ones sharing the information able to portray something in a certain way, but they are also able to influence what the audience will think on a specific matter by either producing a discourse of their own or reshaping it (Franzke and Ruano de la Fuente, 2021).

Another argument discussed in the public media was the one of the migrant ‘job stealer’ or the one of ‘good working migrant’, putting these two categories of migrant against one another there is a representation of ‘good’ vs ‘bad’ (Ambrosini 2016 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017), especially good when the migrant takes on those jobs that no one wants, the ‘dirty’, ‘dangerous’ or ‘demanding’ ones (Kosic and Triandafyllidou, 2005 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017). It is not by coincidence that if one were to hear the phrase ‘they are stealing our jobs’, one of the first images that comes to mind is the image of an immigrant. This is because it has been repeated so many times and it has been utilized so much that people associate the two things nearly immediately, we can report as an example a headline of 2016 from ‘Il Giornale’ which said “‘They take jobs away from Italians’ Here is the evidence on immigrants” (Cartaldo, 2016) which tried to justify this statement by saying that it was not only something that ‘racist’ or ‘populist’ parties were saying but also what statistics were saying. Again, the power of news agents is quite strong in a matter of this topic as people who do not know much about it and read this will sometimes not even question if this information is

correct or where those statistics have been taken from, they will automatically trust and make this news theirs.

Clearly, we are in front of a situation in which the theme of migration is being discussed in newspapers and anchor news, it is definitely being ‘metabolized’, but what happened during the 2013-2016 years on the media completely shifted the narration about the phenomenon in a political way like never before (Brancato and Stolfi, 2019).

As previously mentioned, the Arab Spring caused an influx of people coming into the EU and this was obviously portrayed all other media outlets. For example one of the most famous and read newspapers in Spain ‘El Mundo’, published ‘More than one million refugees have arrived in Europe by sea in 2015’ with a picture of an inflatable boat and many people cramped on top (ELMUNDO, 2015), or again the British tabloid ‘The Daily Mail’ came out with a series of articles, for example in 2015 with the headline “Alarm over migration is at highest level ever: Half of Britons say it's one of most important issues facing the country” and in the article Slack James said that “The previous highest level of concern about migration was in December 2007 – when, following the expansion of the EU, Poles and other Eastern Europeans were arriving in unprecedented numbers” (Slack, 2015, p. 1) underlying the fact that once again, Britain was suffering an enormous intake of people. Another one from the Daily Mail was “We can't cope with this tide! Europe's despairing leaders bring back border controls with free-movement zone on brink of collapse” (Stevens, 2015) this headline underlines the fact that the amount of people coming in was way too high for any European country, not mentioning for a minute that the majority of people were actually moving to neighboring countries and not only to Europe. Another online newsagent ‘Eureporter’ with the headline “Countering irregular migration: Better EU border management” reported that “The influx of migrants and the security of external borders is a challenge for Europe” and that “The lack of internal border controls in the Schengen area must go hand in hand with compensatory measures to strengthen the external borders” (Eureporter, 2023).

These are just some of the headlines that came out during the 2015 migration crisis onwards, and that are still currently present nowadays. A lot of the headlines regarding the migration crises were starting to be published together with the topic of terrorism, and this is because they started linking these two events on all social platforms, also by quoting politicians or experts. For example in 2016 the title of a banner was ‘Hungary’s Leader Calls Migration ‘Trojan Horse’ of Terrorism’ (VOA, 2017) which was not a random statement on migration by some newspaper but it was a statement of a politician, the Minister Orban Viktor, again in 2021 and 2023, the Hungarian newspaper ‘Magyar Nemzet’ wrote as one of their headlines “European terrorism is linked to migration”

(Szócs, 2021), whilst 'Hungary today' quoted what a Foreign minister said in their headline 'Terrorism and Illegal Immigration form a 'Vicious circle', according to Foreign minister (Hungary Today, 2023). One of the most known newspapers in Italy called 'La Stampa', In 2016 also talked about the "Increasingly intense link between migrants and terrorism" (Zatterin, 2016).

Throughout all these examples, it is obvious that different frames have been utilized and three frames in particular have emerged, the first one we have mentioned is the 'security' frame which collects topics such as the criminal acts occurring, the economic hardships through which people are going through and the need for a defense of the identity of individuals, all by attributing these difficulties to a foreigner, the second one we have mentioned is the 'terrorist frame' and potentiation risk of immigration being linked to the possible risk of Islamic terrorism taking root in the territory (Associazione Carta di Roma, 2015 in Brancato and Stolfi, 2019) and the third one is the 'reception frame' which basically concerns the moment of arrival of the immigrants and the subsequent difficulties encountered, maybe focusing on the reception centers and framing the stories of the migrants as the 'victim' migrants (Brancato and Stolfi, 2019).

Regarding the 'reception frame' the Island of Lampedusa has been a hot topic over the last years, with many people crossing the Mediterranean Sea they find the Island to be the closest place where to get to. Many are the arrivals and of course many are the difficulties that the reception centers are facing, so this is also portrayed on the news, maybe with a softer tone and often times emphasizing the number of people that died at sea or showing images of enormous quantities of people on small boats. By way of illustration, 'BBC news', a British news organization present on most channels, such as Television, Radio and Social Media, talks about the migration problem a lot, an example of a headline from 2020 was "Hundreds of migrants still dying in Med five years since 2015" (BBC News, 2020) whilst the news organization 'Al Jazeera' for instance, even recently talked about how overwhelmed the Centre of Lampedusa and quoted the prime minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, as she criticized the quantity of people arriving in their news headline 'Italy relocates refugees after Lampedusa centre overwhelmed' (Al Jazeera, 2022).

Up to this point, in the dissertation, there has been a generalization of different types of media. However, not all media is the same, for example television outlets portray immigration in a more negative way compared to print news (e.g. Igartua et al., 2007; Ruhrmann et al., 2006 in Eberl et al., 2018) and liberal newspapers tend to be more positive when speaking of immigrants compare to the conservative ones. Also, not all media in all European countries is the same, as a specific news or framing of an 'issue' and the impact it has on a country differs in systematic ways. The different

tones or the different shortcuts that the news reports offer to the audience a specific understanding of the political landscape and consequently promote varied voting patterns (Eberl et al., 2018).

In fact, it is vital to consider that the transformation that happened in the political realm has to be considered when thinking of the political opinion of migrants in Europe, as the actors and the decision-making approach have changed. If before our world was focused on a 'party-democracy' order and political parties were the main intermediators between the citizen and the decisions of the national government, now, they have to compete with mass media, which role has been increasing more and more in the last years (Kriesi, 2008 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017). To put a name to this phenomenon it can be said it is called "mediatization process" (Bennett and Entman 2001; Mazzoleni and Schultz 1999; Swanson and Mancini 1996 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017, P. 6). What is happening in this process is that the voters and the politicians have a new way of 'contact' and thus, their 'relationship' has changed (Mair, 1997 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017). And because migrations speeches are being shaped by media, political parties 'have taken advantage' of this (Giorgi and Vitale, 2017, p.6).

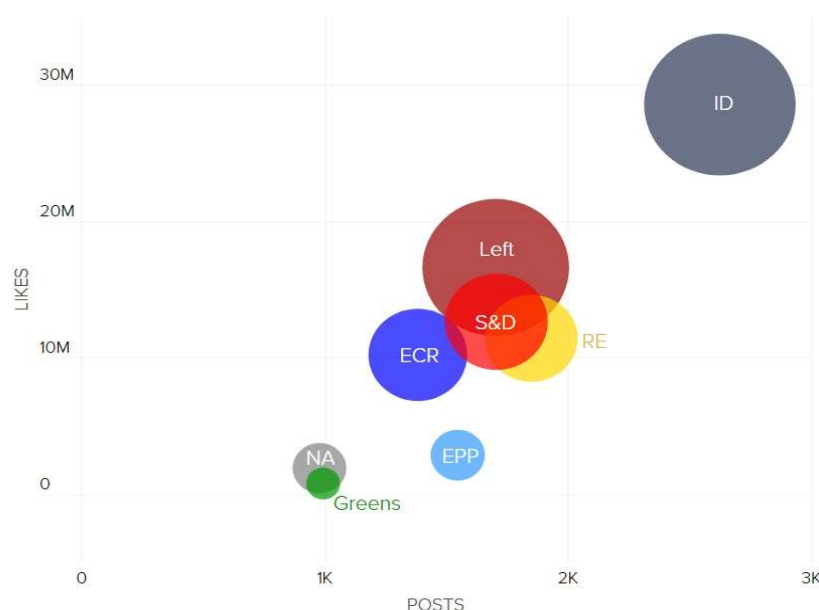
Even though the liberal left-wing press is not totally exempt from the discourses of superiority and from the presence of racist discourses over the years (Re, 2010 in Armillei, 2017), right – wing parties have demonstrated a keen propensity to manifest racism and xenophobia. An example of this, in Italy, was that Mediaset, a large television company was owned by Berlusconi Silvio, Prime Minister of a right-wing cabinet (Fekete 2008, p. 2 in Armillei, 2017). He exercised an important influence over RAI, which were three highly viewed channels of television (HRW, 2011, p. 10 in Armillei, 2017). This created a lot of concern regarding the ideas of racial superiority and consequent racial hatred that the Italian media was portraying (CERD, 2012, p. 5 in Armillei, 2017).

Another interesting more current example of how the relationship between the voter and political party has changed can be viewed on social media. As per the last years a new Chinese app called Tik Tok has become very popular among the new generations and politicians have utilized this platform, just like Instagram or Facebook, to 'show themselves' and get closer to the younger generations. This has actually been effective for many Members of the European Parliament (Goujard, C., Braun, E. and Scott, M., 2024).

EU GROUPS' TIKTOK PRESENCE

When looking at reach, likes and activity, the far-right ID group stands out.

Groups' collective number of videos posted, plotted against the likes they've collected. Bubble sizes indicate the groups' follower numbers.



SOURCE: POLITICO research

Hanne Cokelaer



POLITICO

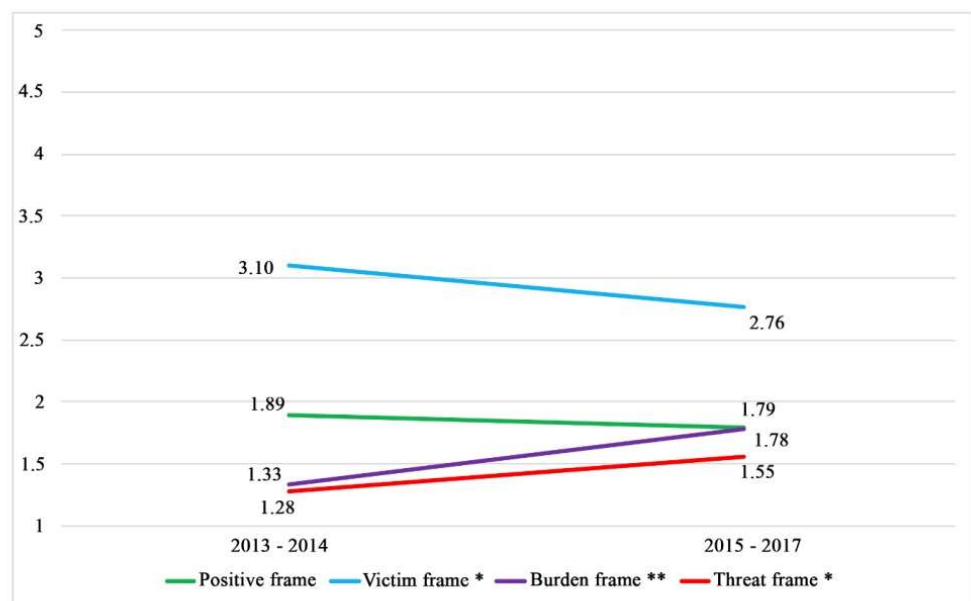
Source: [Europe's far right uses TikTok to win youth vote] 2024 [image online] Available at:
[Europe's far right uses TikTok to win youth vote – POLITICO](#)

In 3 years for instance, the far right French politician Bardella Jordan, has managed to gain the massive amount of more than one million followers on the platform and the fact is that, he does not even speak openly about politics, he just does random videos, however with a massive amount of voters in the upcoming elections, even of younger voters, he is capitalizing on those views and trying to gain support (Goujard, C., Braun, E. and Scott, M., 2024).

Other politicians, however, are much more vocal on Tik Tok about their thoughts on migration and of the fear of an 'Islamisation' of Europe occurring, for example Silvia Sardone, an Italian politician, member of the right-wing populist party 'Lega', has been posting about how they are here to destroy our way of living and how they hate are traditions, values and our 'civilization'. And

again, rising up the question of the veil and how degrading it is for young women to wear it (Goujard, C., Braun, E. and Scott, M., 2024). So, the question of the veil and the body of the migrant as a site of ‘anxiety’ (Gatrell, 2019) is still very much present.

It is evident then, that the media has forever changed the face of politics and that since the migration crises of 2015, as seen in the graph, the ‘Burden frame’ and the ‘Threat frame’ in regards of migrants and refugees have substantially escalated, whilst before that there was a slightly more positive view (Amores, Calderón and Stanek, 2019).



* Small difference in averages ** Medium-sized difference in averages *** Large difference in averages

Figure 2. Connotative visual frames of migrants and refugees compared between periods
Source: *own data*

Source: [Visual frames of migrants and refugees in the main Western European media] 2019 [image online] Available at: [\(1\) \(PDF\) Visual frames of migrants and refugees in the main Western European media \(researchgate.net\)](#)

So looking at the ‘trends’, there are 4 main ones that stand out, the first one is the one that represents the migrants by labelling them based on their designated group, which might be ‘Arab’ or simply ‘Immigrant’, the second one is the one that represents them as victims, that need to be helped and that went through horrible things, or as a threat, in terms of job security or cultural traditions (Anderson, 2008 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017), the third one is the one that sees a big absence of the migrant voices in first person in the news press and the last one regards the focus of narrative on a specific context (for example Lampedusa) and not looking at the broader picture of a

European perspective (Bennett et al. 2013, pp. 249-250 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017), even though since the migration crises of 2015, this last trend has changed (Giorgi and Vitale, 2017).

The compelling trend of absence of migrant voices in the press is one to take in consideration. When looking at the news, in fact, it is extremely rare or nearly impossible to hear stories and perspectives from the people called in question themselves. A series of considerations can be made on this as the study on victimhood focuses on two common representations, the first one being the 'passivization', which shows the refugee as a person in pain that lacks basic resources and the second one being the 'collectivization' representing the refugee as a percentage, as part of a mass of unfortunate people and as a mere number. These two strategies transform in a way the refugee as 'voiceless', but not only in the sense that he is not able to speak, also in the sense that he is placed outside of history, thus outside the 'order of humanity' (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017, p. 6). In a research by Lilie Chouliaraki and Rafal Zaborowski (2017) in which 1200 news articles of eight European countries were analyzed on the question of the 2015 refugee 'crisis' it was found that direct "quotes from migrants or refugees were present in only 16.6% of the sample, as compared to 66% of politician quotes (national or EU)" (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017, p .8). And during what was previously mentioned as the 'securitization' process that occurred, the voices of these few migrants were nearly completely silenced, as they were not the victims anymore, but the terrorists. But voices are extremely important in "endowing the refugee with personhood and historicity – and hence with the potential for recognition" (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017, p 16), and this is because giving them a voice will define their voice as valuable and important (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017).

Another matter to take in consideration, on top of the misrepresentation of migrants and the hierarchy of voices in the press, is the use of statistical data. Not only are the voices of migrants missing from the press, but also real, trustworthy statistics are. It goes to say that statistics can be a tricky affair when it comes to irregular migration for example, as it is difficult to know exactly the number of people coming into the European Union and also it could be an issue because the figures could be used as a two-sided coin, as Olivier Clochard and Migreurop Association (2013, p.16) said the figures could be "mobilised to set immigration up as a threat as much as they can be used to condemn inefficient public action" (Olivier Clochard and Migreurop Association, 2013, p.16). Furthermore, hiding the figures of statistics or showing them in a confused way, brings a sense of overwhelm regarding these problems, because people base the opinion not on facts but on the scattered information that stems from it, thus this makes it justifiable to pursue specific decisions in policy making. This is because "statistical data are instruments for communication that have very

strong legitimating and institutionalising effects” (Olivier Clochard and Migreurop Association, 2013, p. 16) and because misleading statistics are constantly published in the media it is easy to see how people can be easily misled. Taking in example the statistics of the last years, most of the time the figures are referred to as absolute instead of relative, most of the time incomplete and misinterpreted (Olivier Clochard and Migreurop Association, 2013).

2.3 WHAT ASPECTS IDENTIFY THE UKRAINIAN MIGRATION CRISES

When we consider Migration movements to the European Union since the turn of the century, the 2015 one, which was amply spoken about throughout this dissertation, is one of the most talked about until this day, maybe because it shifted a whole discourse of migration.

However, on the 24th of February 2022 as it is explained in the article by Reuters “Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine” (Reuters, 2022) which was the result of an ongoing tense relationship between the two countries since Ukraine gained independence in 1991 (Reuters, 2022). This event caused a spillover effect of millions of people being left without a home and having to find a new one. As of February 2024, the number of internally displaced people in Ukraine is about 3.7 million and around 6.5 million have been recorded as refugees globally (UNHCR, 2024). Thus, this invasion has been one of the biggest refugee crises that Europe experienced since the second world war, as many of these people decided to look for help in EU member states (Ibañez Sales, 2023). Especially at the beginning of the invasion the amount of people coming into the EU was outstanding, this is because they were nearly immediately granted a temporary protection directive activated on the 4th of March 2022, which is an emergency mechanism to provide protection and to reduce pressure on the national asylum systems of the member states. Around 4 million Ukrainians have registered for this temporary protection or for a similar scheme (www.consilium.europa.eu, n.d.) and not only did they register for this, but they also managed to receive many other different types of aid, both from the people and from the singular states.

It is in this frame that a series of differences can be noticed in how this migration crises, compare to the migration crises of 2015, was managed and it is clear throughout the media, the public opinion and political choices made to deal with the crises.

Delving into some of the possible explanations to this different approach means looking back at the situation before the military aggression. The number of Ukrainians who had received a residence permit for a country of the EU between 2014 and 2019 was around 3.5 million people, with most of these residence permits having been released for employment purposes (Dubenko, L. and Kravchuk, P., 2021). This occurred especially after 2014 as the crippling relations with Russia started.

Looking at the graph it can be noted that by the end of 2021 around 1.5 million Ukrainians had a residence permit for the EU (ec.europa.eu., 2022). So, it is reasonable to think that once the conflict started most people found it easier to move to EU countries because they had family there or because they already had connections of some sort and on top of that the geographical vicinity of most of those the countries helped.



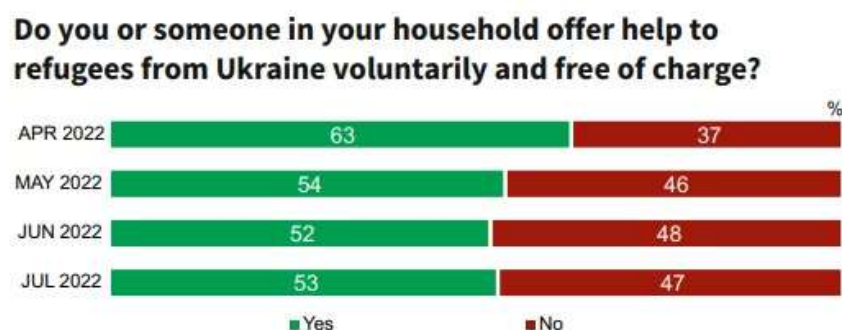
Number of Ukrainians holding a valid residence permit at the end of 2021

Source: Eurostat (migr_resvalid), (migr_pop1ctz) and (demo_pjan)

Source: [Ukrainian citizens in the EU] 2022, [image online] Available at: Ukrainian citizens in the EU - Statistics Explained (europa.eu).

Also, not to mention that since 2017 Ukrainians already had the ‘privilege’ of ninety days of visa free travel possibilities within the European Union, so citing Garcés Mascareñas (2022, p.2) for Ukrainians “migration policies pose no obstacle to the crossing of borders – a necessary condition for accessing international protection. In other words, they do not have to risk their lives to arrive. Second, as Ukrainians have been moving around the EU for years, they are used to coming and going and already have relatives, friends and acquaintances living in EU countries” (Mascareñas, 2022).

The countries that welcomed the highest number of refugees, especially during the first period of the invasion were Poland, Germany and Czechia, with people often times going out of their way to help the refugees, maybe even hosting them in their homes. For example, looking at this statistic, around 50 percent of Poles personally helped refugees from Ukraine or knew someone from their household that did (CBOS, 2022).



Source: [Polish Public Opinion] 2022, [image online] Available at: [07_08_2022.cdr \(cbos.pl\)](https://07_08_2022.cdr.cbos.pl)

However, the differences on how this migration crises were dealt within the European community compared to other migration waves are outstanding.

The reasons to these differences already previously outlined, for which many Ukrainians already had a ‘community’ within the European countries, is that maybe people did not even think of them

as refugees in the first place, maybe for their vicinity in terms of ‘values’ and cultural norms or looks as most Ukrainians are Christians and middle class (Mascareñas, 2022).

This portrayal of ‘whiteness’ and of sense of closeness was amply spoken about on the media, and because media, as previously mentioned, is such a strong tool and has the power to influence public opinion. Throughout the conflict, a positive frame was outlined which slowly pushed towards the idea of welcoming these refugees that are so similar to Europeans. The focus was to give a voice to the people escaping the horrors of war (Ibañez Sales, 2023).

For example, NBC news reported images of people at the borders saying that they needed support, that most of them were women and children and arriving with nothing, so acknowledging their situation but also framing it in way that identified them as harmless (NBC News, 2022).

On the other hand, the same thing did not occur during the previous years nor is it happening now with the immigrants coming into the EU from Africa or the Middle East. The images on television or on social media showing Ukrainian citizens with all the necessary help they could get fostered double standards regarding the way people from different origins should be treated. This was not only shown through the images but also through the phrases of journalists and public figures, which compare to the narratives of Syrians were less xenophobic and more realistic and informed narratives.

One of the aspects underlined in this is that a lot of journalists have referred to the need to help these people because the war was happening relatively close to the ‘Western world’, which automatically meant it was more shocking. The idea behind this concept is that this conflict in a way was worse compared to other conflict happening at a global scale and more natural for Europeans to accept Ukrainians because it was happening at Europe’s doorstep (Ibañez Sales, 2023). This concept once again, would underline that there are refugees who are ‘worthy’ of the help and that there are some who are not European enough.

En example of this could also be taken by analyzing the difference in treatment within the Ukrainian community itself. When the conflict escalated and people were trying to flee, details unfolded of people from Nigeria, India and Lebanon, as well as many others, who were studying or working in Ukraine at the time, who were denied help or were treated differently compared to fellow Ukrainian citizens. These accusations were denied for the most part, but still videos were shared on social platforms with the hashtag #AfricansinUkraine, underlining the fact that everyone deserved to receive aid and to cross the borders to escape a war (The Associated Press, 2022).

The double standards were also happening in the political sphere, as Hungary, Poland and the United Kingdom for example, which had been against the entrance of refugees for the most part, which had openly been wanting to gain back control of their borders were now shifting their hospitality. Hungary, for example, had even erected a fence in 2015 and had legalized the practice of pushback of asylum seekers, whilst, in 2022 Viktor Orban, prime minister of Hungary, as soon as the conflict in Ukraine started was very open in welcoming Ukrainians, defining them as ‘Hungary’s friends’ (Coakley, 2022). The UK, which was very adverse to immigration during the campaigns for Brexit, was also very hospitable. Refugees from Ukraine were allowed to stay, to have free healthcare and education and access the job market (Reuters, 2024).

It is evident then, throughout these examples, how, once again, the power of media and politics have a defining impact on people’s perception of the migrant.

CONCLUSIONS

The matter of Migration is a complex one. One that would need several pages of explanation and information, however, that is merely impossible. This small research tried to uncover a tiny section of this multifaceted topic, one that involves many actors and regions but also one that involves rights and duties. It tried to give a small space to a topic that has been and still is at the center of public debate.

Of course, it must be mentioned that migration has always been part of history and always will be and it is a phenomenon that involves every region of the world; however, in this dissertation, the focus was on the last twenty-five years and on the region of Europe, specifically looking into the European Union matter. The choice for this was to understand the most used ‘Western’ centered narratives of who a migrant is and take a look at some of the consequences of those narratives for people, but also realise that the idea of the immigrant in the EU is related very much to the history of Europe itself and to the ideas and ‘values’ that have been used as an ‘excuse’ and which many, fearful of loosing them, still defend.

Unfortunately, the beginning of the century and the terrorist attack of the twin towers, was not the best start to a sense of community that was meant to grow the opening of the internal borders of the EU. What had been the workings of a few became the representation of the whole, as Muslims and the Arab world in general have been ‘under attack’ ever since. The consequences of the religious or ethnic affiliation was then reflected on the migrant, alongside racist and xenophobic attitudes that have allowed the figure of the migrant to become the perfect ‘other’, the perfect ‘enemy’ of Western civilization, the one that brought terrorism, alongside financial strains and criminality.

This sense of ‘chaos’ throughout Western society has been difficult to understand and maybe explain. However, the truth is that the world as people know it has not only changed because of immigration, but because of events such as technological innovation, freedom to travel, the start of a global economy, the rise of social media, the financial strains, the coming of pandemics, specifically COVID-19 and many other aspects of demographics as well as other cultural changes.

Nevertheless, from the small European perspective, advents, like the ones previously mentioned, are somehow seen as a problem that can be relegated to the ‘other’. This is why people have been

leaning to more nationalistic views, especially with populist parties becoming the main protagonists in the political realm.

This research explored today's new media and how politicians are using platforms like 'Tik Tok' to reach wider audiences and to gain support. It was interesting then to analyze the phenomenon of "mediatization process" (Bennett and Entman 2001; Mazzoleni and Schultz 1999; Swanson and Mancini 1996 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017, P. 6) through which voters and politicians have a new way of 'contact' and thus, their 'relationship' has changed (Mair, 1997 in Giorgi and Vitale, 2017).

Because of the political parties, as well as tabloids and media influence for example, the United Kingdom was the first ever member state to exit the European Union. The exit of the UK was a symbol to the fact that people feel the need to be in control of what seems to be an uncontrollable world, and by doing this, the need to feel in control of the territory and to limit the possible risks is of utmost importance. This is where the migrant comes into place, where the migrant is 'placed', which is outside, which is confined, which is not of 'trouble' to the civilized world. Exemplified by the need to securitize the external borders of the European Union with the European border and Coast guard agency (Frontex), the Border Surveillance System (Eurosir) and the European Data Archive Convention (Eurodac) (Gatrell, 2019) creating a sense of 'Europe fortress'.

Moreover, this constant shift in perception of who the migrant is, through the different representations or 'frames' did not and still does not allow the migrant himself to take the stance. The body of the migrant is seen in a different way every time it is 'convenient' for it to be represented as such: in the frame of terrorist, in the frame of criminal, in the frame of burden, in the frame of victim, in the frame of survivor. It is difficult, thus, to imagine and think of the migrant simply as a person with his own story to tell and instead categorize the person as 'bad' or 'good'.

In reflecting on this dichotomy, it becomes evident that a different treatment is reserved to migrants, which regards intra-European movements, but also extra - European movements with the different approach taken for the Syrian refugees during the 2015 migration crises and the Ukrainian refugees during the 2022 migration crises. As Ukrainians, more similar to Europeans in terms of traditions, culture and history have been welcomed open heartedly by the people but also by the governments of member states that previously did everything in their power to keep people out.

With the media having such a strong power, it is vital then that a space of listening and tolerance is shared among people, but also among politicians. Starting to see migrants as people first of all, but also as a resource for one's own country and for the European Union as a whole too. This can be the first step in moving away from those narratives continuously portrayed by the media.

Amid news and public opinion, it is easy to forget the fragility and uniqueness of humanity and how every person is deserving of safety, hope and a future.

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