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Refugee Resettlement in Germany: An Analysis of Policy Learning and Support Networks

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An Analysis of Policy Learning and Support Networks

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Abstract

The resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany since reunification in 1990 has been challenged by two peaks in asylum seeker applications in 1992 and again in 2016. From the 1992 peak, which was fueled by asylum seekers fleeing the former Yugoslavia, extensive research has already been conducted over the past thirty years. These studies have demonstrated the actual outcomes of these primarily Yugoslavian asylum seekers and refugees with these findings indicating legal and economic uncertainty having a detrimental effect even years after resettlement. Using Germany as a case study, this analysis aims to survey the available information in the more recent example of asylum seekers arriving in Germany from 2014 onwards primarily from the Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Ultimately, successful resettlement equates to successful integration measures. The issues of policy legacy and learning as well as elements of the available support network for asylum seekers in housing, *Integrationskurse* (integration courses), and advice centers are examined to understand how each relates to successful integration and security for asylum seekers. The findings indicate that Germany has achieved successful resettlement and integration of asylum seekers through policy learning from the early 1990's onwards and a strong support network available for those seeking asylum, yet the exclusion of certain groups from integration measures unfairly leaves some behind. A continuous evaluation of these integration measures is necessary to ensure successful resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany in anticipated future peaks in asylum seeker applications.

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Contents

I. Introduction

At its founding, the United Nations prioritized the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, written in 1948, guarantees "the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."[1] Since the issuance of this declaration, the United Nations has issued further defining factors of who a refugee is in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, often referred to as the Geneva Convention, and the subsequent 1967 Protocol which updated the 1951 Convention by removing geographic and time constraints.[2] According to the definition established and agreed upon by the United Nations, a refugee is anyone who leaves their region or country based upon a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."[3] Such persons are entitled then to apply for asylum through the appropriate channels, and then, if determined to be eligible, granted refugee status. Further laws have been established on the level of individual countries in order to identify what each country considers a person deserving of refugee status. The German constitution is the *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany), also written in 1948, and it guarantees the right to seek asylum in Germany; Article 16a of the *Grundgesetz* asserts "persons persecuted on political grounds shall have the right of asylum."[4] The addition of this article to the basis of German law serves as a recognition of the 1948 democratic

[1] United Nations, 1948, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.
[2] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2010, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," accessed March 10, 2021, https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html.
[3] Ibid, 16.
[4] Parliamentary Council, 1948, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany," Bundesministerium Der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, accessed April 12, 2021, https://www.gesetze-iminternet.de/englisch_gg /englisch_gg.html.

government's commitment to recognize and redress its Nazi past of political persecution within Germany.

Conflict and political persecution today continue to create asylum seekers and refugees throughout the world. In 2020, an estimated eighty million people have been forcibly displaced with twenty-six million of these forcibly displaced persons additionally being classified as refugees.[5] Both of these figures represent a historic high in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) dataset which has gathered data from the year of its founding (1951) onwards. These statistics show the majority of refugees today originate from just five countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar.[6] Furthermore, 39% of the world's refugees are hosted in a mere five countries, with these top host countries being Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda, and Germany.[7] The four countries hosting the largest number of refugees directly border the conflicts which are producing the most refugees. Turkey, the country hosting the largest number of refugees as of 2020, directly borders Syria. Colombia borders Venezuela, while Pakistan borders Afghanistan. Uganda then borders South Sudan. While these four countries share borders with these major areas of conflict, the case of Germany as the fifth largest host of refugees exists as an outlier. Germany does not directly border a country with conflict, yet it still is host to more than one million refugees as of mid-2020.[8]

The 2015 European migration crisis brought about the entry of many of these one million refugees into Germany. This term has been heavily politicized with the word "crisis" evoking

[5] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Refugee Statistics," Unhcr.org, accessed March 10, 2021, https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

frightening images and a call for immediate action, yet calling this event a crisis is justified when considering the massive scale of the influx of asylum seekers to Germany after 2014. It was a crisis in a sense as it pushed the boundaries and abilities of the support networks in Germany as discussed throughout this analysis. Although those opposing refugee resettlement often use the word "crisis" to call for a decrease in asylum applications accepted, in some ways it was Germany's moral obligation to accept these massive flows of refugees and asylum seekers in 2015 as Germany is the wealthiest country in the European Union. Additionally, this seems even more of a moral obligation for Germany in considering the massive displacement from Europe's worst refugee crisis in the 1940's was spurred by Nazi Germany as a refugee creator and heavily affected ethnic Germans that were forced to flee or were expelled from Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia.[9]

Asylum seekers and refugees are a particularly vulnerable population when considering the limbo inherent to their political status. Unable to return to their country of origin, many asylum seekers and refugees are left in temporary housing situations in neighboring countries with uncertain political statuses. These temporary living arrangements tend to only breed more problems—like violence and contagious diseases—for a population which has already endured tremendous hardship, and a more permanent solution that entitles the individual with refugee status to build a life through permanent housing and work is most often best for both the individual refugee and the host community. Asylum seekers are guaranteed protection under international law through intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations, and individual governments have the opportunity to support asylum seekers by creating an environment in which the lives of asylum seekers are as stable and secure as possible during this

[9] Marina Koren, "A Brief History of Europe's Worst Refugee Crisis," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1, 2015, accessed March 15, 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2015/09/europe-refugee-crisis-war/403315/.

transitional period. In addition to the political limbo many asylum seekers find themselves in, other dangers present themselves in virtual misinformation and physical violence. Refugee resettlement and immigration in general serve as particularly salient topics and as such are the subject of misinformation and disinformation campaigns. During the German Federal election in 2017, disinformation about the blatantly false "no-go zones" in Sweden that were supposedly host to hostile refugee communities where law enforcement could not enter spread virtually through sources including *Sputnik Deutschland* and other fringe media.[10] Germany's commitment to honoring the right to asylum outlined under international law has also met significant backlash from right-wing parties like *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany) which have gained significant political traction in the immediate wake of the refugee crisis, with these parties now having the potential to create more restrictive asylum policy going forward with their newfound political power.[11]

Unfortunately, anti-migrant, virtual rhetoric has real-life consequences outside of policy. Attacks on refugee centers and even an attack on a pro-asylum mayoral candidate in Cologne have left asylum seekers, refugees, and their supporters injured or even dead.[12] The threat of such violence is very real, and rhetoric must be taken seriously. Right-wing extremist violence can potentially be motivated by anti-refugee sentiments, and in 2014 and 2015, Benček and Strasheim identified 1,645 events of right-wing violence and social unrest in Germany in their

[10] Jonathan Birdwell et al., "Smearing Sweden: International Influence Campaign in the 2018 Swedish Election," London: Institue for Strategic Dialogue, 2018, accessed August 8, 2020, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Smearing-Sweden.pdf.
[11] Paul Hockenos, "Nothing Can Take down Angela Merkel — except 800,000 Refugees," Foreign Policy, October 22, 2015, accessed March 15, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/22/nothing-can-take-down-angela-merkel-except-800000-refugees-germany-cdu-pegida/.
[12] Ibid.

dataset.[13] This violence is not unique, and when there are large numbers of asylum seekers in Germany, subsequent rises in violence and attacks occur

In considering refugee resettlement in Germany, the past thirty years reveal two peaks in asylum seeker applications. The first peak occurred in 1992 with the second occurring twenty-four years later in 2016.[14] While my research is concerned with evaluating the current situation of refugee resettlement from the 2016 peak onwards, it is essential to look to this first peak in asylum seeker applications in the early 1990's caused by conflict and war in the former Yugoslavia to understand the basis of policies and practices in place affecting the more recent refugee crisis. These two peaks are unique and outstanding in their character. Both conflicts became crises due to the overwhelming number of refugees fleeing from particular regional conflicts, in 1992 from the former Yugoslavia and in 2016 from the Syrian Arab Republic. Now, six years after the start of the most recent migration crisis, we are at a point where we are able to pause and examine the recent past of refugee resettlement in Germany.

Historical Background

The early 1990's was a fragile period for Germany politically and socially. The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall led to the reunification of a country divided for nearly forty-five years, and with that, flows of those wanting to emigrate from the five states (*Bundesländer*) of the former German Democratic Republic threatened the stability of social service support systems in the western *Bundesländer*.[15] The influx of refugees out of the former Yugoslavia and into the newly

[13] David Benček and Julia Strasheim, "Refugees Welcome? A Dataset on Anti-Refugee Violence in Germany," *Research & Politics* 3, no. 4 (2016): 1-11, accessed January 25, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168016679590.
[14] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, "Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2020 - Modul Asyl," Bamf.de, accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2020-asyl.html.
[15] Wolfgang Bosswick, "Development of Asylum Policy in Germany," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13, no. 1 (2000): 47, accessed February 15, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/13.1.43.

unified Germany began in 1991 a mere year after the official reunification of Germany. These refugees tested not only a united Germany but also a united Europe; the breakup of Yugoslavia and the ensuing violence in the region served as a major test to a Europe no longer divided between East and West.[16] Germany was drawn especially close to this conflict politically considering the long-standing historical connections Germany had with the Balkan region. German media in the early 1990's focused heavily on this crisis drawing particular attention to the refugee question, and for the most part, Germans supported Croatians and Bosnians and shared a common consensus in wanting to stop Serbian infringement.[17] Berlin called for the European Community (EC) to act, as these ethnic groups were asserting the same ideas of self-determination that the citizens of the German Democratic Republic had only a few years prior. Officially, and against the wishes of the EC, Germany recognized Croatia and Slovenia as independent states.[18]

Political recognition of these states, however, did not remedy the violence and displacement those in the region continued to face. During the first half of the 1990's, 700,000 migrants from the former Yugoslavia arrived in Germany.[19] These migrants were fleeing conflict, persecution, and political and economic instability, but few actually were considered asylum seekers or refugees. This was due to a number of factors, the first of which being the definition of a person with a right to asylum within the Federal Republic of Germany. The *Grundgesetz* specifically gives the right to asylum to those fleeing political persecution, but the

[16] Marten H. A. Van Heuven, "Testing the New Germany: The Case of Yugoslavia," *German Politics & Society*, no. 29 (1993): 53, accessed January 4, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23735271.
[17] Ibid, 60.
[18] Ibid, 62-63.
[19] Dany Bahar et al., "Migration and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Effects of Returning Refugees on Export Performance in the Former Yugoslavia," *Institute of Labor Economics* (2019), accessed February 5, 2021, https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/12412/migration-and-post-conflict-reconstruction-the-effect-of-returning-refugees-on-export-performance-in-the-former-yugoslavia.

broader definitions outlined by the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol are still recognized in Germany meaning those falling under this broad definition were legally given the right to stay within German borders while conflict and unrest persisted in the Balkans.[20] In order to accommodate such cases, the *Duldung* (tolerated) legal status was created.[21] Someone who has been granted *Duldung* in Germany merely has a tolerated stay permit and is at some point in the future legally required to leave the country, yet for the time being, the person with this status is granted a temporary reprieve from deportation. It is not equivalent to a residence permit and does not allow permanent residency. This status occupied and continues to occupy a peculiar situation in Germany, as those merely tolerated would, upon the decision of the German government of it being safe to resume deportation for the individual or to a particular country, be essentially forced to leave. Even yet, this status did have its benefits. Individuals with *Duldung* status were able to work and live in Germany wherever they pleased during this period, but if they were to file a formal case for asylum, they would be subject to mandatory residency requirements outlined under the *Königsteiner Schlüssel* (Königstein Quota).[22] This quota system relies on a formula that determines the distribution of asylum seekers in Germany to individual *Bundesländer.* This percentage is based one third on the *Bundesland's* population and two thirds on its tax revenue. Formal asylum seekers are directed to their assigned *Bundesland* for processing and must remain there under the mandatory residency requirement.

The intention of the *Königsteiner Schlüssel* is to ensure fair and equitable distribution of asylum seekers throughout the country, although the system did in the early 1990's experience some backlash. Certainly, political backlash existed, but the starkest and most obvious are

[20] Bosswick, "Development of Asylum Policy in Germany," 46.
[21] Bahar et al., "Migration and Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 8.
[22] Ibid, 18.

outbreaks of primarily anti-immigrant violence within Germany. The eastern German towns of Hoyerswerda in 1991 and Rostock-Lichtenhagen in 1992 drew national attention when violent, anti-refugee riots broke out at the sites of refugee housing complexes.[23] Despite local hostilities, the *Königsteiner Schlüssel* had directed these asylum seekers to these areas to live and work. This violence was then used by the media to characterize east Germans as Neo-Nazis that had not had the opportunity to reckon with their Nazi past due to the anti-fascist doctrine of their Soviet occupiers.[24] Generally speaking, politicians and the media alike characterized this anti-refugee violence in these eastern cities as inherent to the people of the region while similar incidents that most certainly did occur in the *Bundesländer* long a part of the Federal Republic were portrayed as isolated incidents.[25] Still, politicians expressed sympathy for the rioters indicating that the tremendous job loss and economic uncertainty these cities faced sparked the discontent that led to the violence. This sympathy though was often lost with these comments being received by former citizens of the GDR as "patronizing commentary from West German politicians."[26]

These events helped to shape changes in German asylum policy that would prove to be lasting. In 1991, the Bundestag passed the Aliens Act which entered into full effect in April 1993 and helped to shorten the duration of asylum procedures to less than six weeks and mandated expulsion immediately upon a negative decision through the asylum procedure.[27] A significant factor in why these measures were sought was due to the previously mentioned violence, and in a way, those choosing to be violent had won. By late 1992, a decision was reached to amend the

[23] Esther Adaire, "'This Other Germany, the Dark One': Post-Wall Memory Politics Surrounding the Neo-Nazi Riots in Rostock and Hoyerswerda," *German Politics & Society* 37 (2019): 43, accessed January 15, 2021, doi:10.3167/gps.2019.370405.
[24] Ibid, 46.
[25] Ibid, 48.
[26] Ibid, 52.
[27] Bosswick, "Development of Asylum Policy in Germany," 48.

Grundgesetz to allow the expulsion of refugees back to their country of origin if it was deemed to be a safe third country.[28] Free movement within Europe by refugees was also considered a concern for members of the European Community, and these concerns were addressed with provisions made in the Schengen II Agreement and the Dublin Regulation in 1992.[29] As the 1990's continued on, the situation in the former Yugoslavia bettered, and in December 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords were signed.[30] This official peace reached in the region began to prompt the assisted return of those living in Germany under *Duldung* status, as those merely tolerated had no legal right to remain in Germany once their country of origin was deemed by the German government as safe for return. *Duldung* was the status the overwhelming majority of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina held; it was estimated that 80% of those that could be considered war refugees under international law were merely granted *Duldung* status in Germany.[31] By late 1998, an estimated 250,000 of the 350,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina returned home voluntarily with the assistance of the German government.[32]

Background of the 2015 European Refugee Crisis

In 2015, massive flows of migrants and asylum seekers began to seek refuge at Europe's external coastlines and the media became flooded with disheartening images of people squeezed together on boats and horror stories of those that did not survive the journey. This European refugee crisis as it became known was the largest flow of refugees in the region since the end of World War II when there is believed to have been approximately forty million displaced persons

[28] Ibid, 50.
[29] Ibid, 54.
[30] Bahar et al., "Migration and Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 7.
[31] Bosswick, "Development of Asylum Policy in Germany," 52.
[32] Ibid, 53.

and refugees within Europe.[33] It was logical that in this particular crisis Germany would become the front runner in terms of taking the largest number of asylum seekers in Europe; this was the case in the early 1990's with refugees from the former Yugoslavia. In 2014 at the very start of this "refugee crisis," 219,000 migrants and asylum seekers crossed the Mediterranean to Europe, and since then, millions more have continued to cross the Mediterranean and other routes into Europe.[34] The majority of these refugees came from Syria, which is still in 2020 the most common country of origin for refugees.[35]

The conflict in Syria began in 2011 when the Syrian government under Bashar al-Assad began to brutally crackdown on public demonstrations; this conflict soon escalated to a civil war.[36] Conflict in Syria has continued for a decade and displaced millions of Syrians internally and externally, with the number of those affected hardly decreasing since the beginning of this conflict. The vast majority of Syrian displaced persons and refugees live in countries bordering Syria, making those that sought asylum in Europe in a sense outliers.[37] By November 2015, the number of asylum seekers and migrants that sought refuge in Europe nearly quadrupled from the previous year; an estimated 800,000 migrants reached Europe's external borders in 2015, most of these migrants arriving in Italy and Greece.[38] The primary problem these asylum seekers faced on their journey to Europe was the lack of safe channels to travel through. Smugglers and unsafe conditions claimed the lives of thousands of asylum seekers as boats capsized and other conditions proved to be dangerous and deadly. At this time, it was also realized that the

[33]Koren, "A Brief History of Europe's Worst Refugee Crisis."
[34] Ibid.
[35] UNHCR, "Syria Refugee Crisis Explained," Unrefugees.org, February 5, 2021, accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Human Rights Watch, "Europe's Refugee Crisis: How Should the US, EU, and OSCE Respond?" November 16, 2015, accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/16/europes-refugee-crisis/agenda-action.

European Union's asylum policy was not unified to the necessary level to handle the expansiveness of the situation. The process established by the Dublin Regulation placed undue burden on the first country of origin for processing, which led to external border countries, namely Italy and Greece, being wholly overwhelmed.[39]

At the height of the crisis, Angela Merkel stated the famous, or perhaps infamous, sentence "wir schaffen das" which roughly translates to "we can handle this" with regard to the flows of asylum seekers into the European Union and specifically into Germany.[40] A few weeks later, Merkel welcomed into Germany thousands of asylum seekers that had been stranded in Budapest, and Germany became the first European country to temporarily suspend the Dublin Regulation which was interpreted as essentially opening the gates without restriction to asylum seekers primarily originating from the Middle East and North Africa, although this is not entirely the case. Asylum seeker cases were still processed in Germany and have been continuously since 2015, although the peculiar case of the *Duldung* status still exists in Germany for those whose asylum applications have been rejected but are not required to leave Germany. In 2019, approximately 200,000 individuals with *Duldung* status were living in Germany in a sort of political limbo.[41] Today, those with *Duldung* status are typically not allowed free movement, with only about 3 percent with this status able to move and work wherever they please within Germany. The specifics of the current situation of asylum seekers, those with *Duldung* status, as well as formally recognized refugees in Germany will be further analyzed in the remainder of this work.

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[39] Ibid.
[40] The Economist, "Five Years after Arrival, Germany's Refugees Are Integrating," *The Economist*, August 25, 2020, accessed 28 February 2021, https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/08/25/five-years-after-arrival-germanys-refugees-are-integrating.
[41] Ibid.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The questions I am aiming to answer through my research are the following: How has Germany been able and willing to respond to refugee crises since reunification? How has Germany achieved successful resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers since 2015?

Both of these questions seek to create a detailed description of what refugee resettlement is like in Germany in 2021, six years following the 2015 European refugee crisis. This six-year gap places us in a unique position to be able to analyze longer-term outcomes of refugee resettlement, and by also examining relevant literature about the long-term outcomes seen with refugees from the former Yugoslavia, some predictions may be explored.

I hypothesize that through effective aid networks, a pragmatic policy legacy and policy learning, Germany has been able to create a mostly effective system of resettlement for refugees and asylum seekers during the period of the last six years.

Relevance of Questions

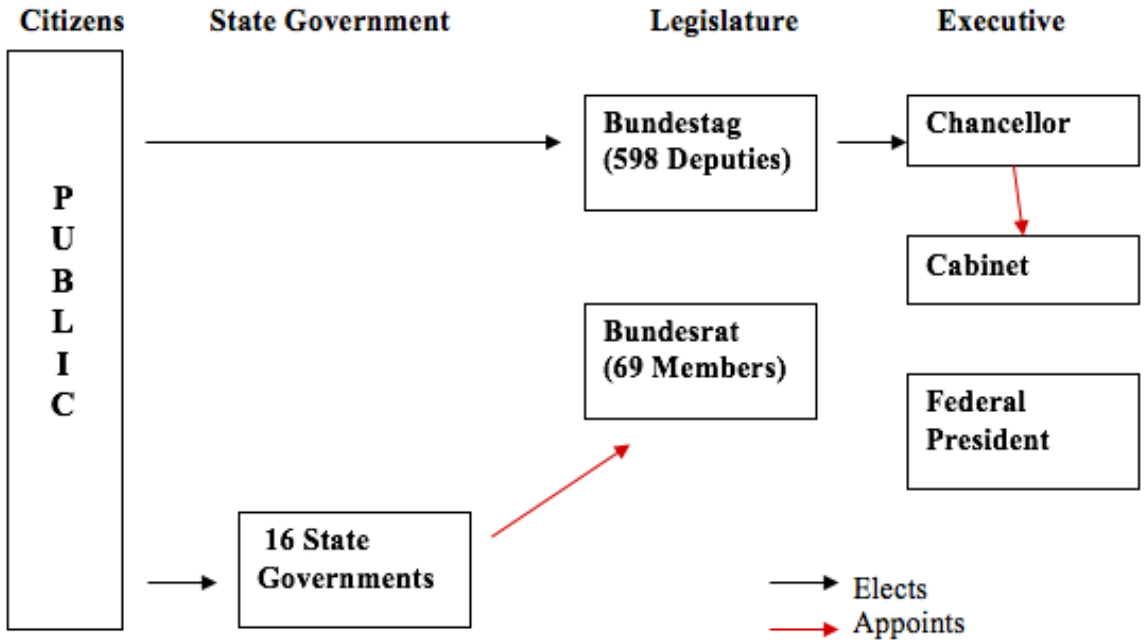
The world today has a record number of displaced persons and a continuously increasing number of refugees. It is important to have a comprehensive understanding of refugee resettlement in Germany today in order to see the best ways to help refugees in Germany and elsewhere. Germany has served as a major destination hub for asylum seekers, and as such, it can serve as a lab in which best practices can be analyzed and areas where progress may be made can be identified. These two extraordinary examples of 1992 and 2016 in post-reunification Germany serve as an excellent case study of what a resettlement state looks like under pressure. Both the example of the inflow of refugees from the former Yugoslavia and those primarily from Syria and other Middle Eastern and Northern African states were sudden and led to a high number of

asylum seeker applications in a short period of time. These two situations disrupted the standard flow of asylum seekers through the UN Refugee Agency and then to the respective German agencies on the *Bundesland* level, with this disruption leading to a crisis that necessitated immediate action. These programs drafted out of necessity may be evaluated for their effectiveness and success with their shortcomings being just as relevant when considering the future of refugee resettlement.

II. Literature Review

Federalism in Germany

Figure 1: German Governance Structure



Source: UCI School of Social Sciences[42]

Regional governance has a strong tradition in Germany, and today this regional governance is embodied in sixteen states, known in German as *Bundesländer.* These states make up the democratic, federal parliamentary republic that is modern Germany. The *Grundgesetz* gives significant power to the *Bundesländer*, however, in practice this power is not absolute. Most legislative power is assigned to the federal government (*Bund*) in the elected *Bundestag* and the state-appointed *Bundesrat.* The states are then given most administrative responsibility, with issues requiring national coordination like immigration and foreign trade plus national

[42] Russel J. Dalton, "Politics in Germany: Chapter 2," Uci.edu, 2010, http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~rdalton/germany/ch2/chap2.htm.

defense being legislated on the federal level and then implemented on the level of the *Bundesland*.[43] Laws concerning refugees are considered a concurrent power meaning both the federal level and the state level have authority, although the federal level is given precedence if a dispute arises. The *Königsteiner Schlüssel,* shown below in Table 1, is the quota system that determines the distribution of asylum seekers and respects this issue as a concurrent power by giving the *Bundesländer* the administrative responsibility of distributing aid to asylum seekers.

Table 1: Königstein Quota (2019)

Bundesland	*Quota Amount in Percentage*
Baden-Württemberg	13.01
Bavaria	15.56
Berlin	5.14
Brandenburg	3.02
Bremen	0.96
Hamburg	2.56
Hesse	7.44
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	1.98
Lower Saxony	9.41
North Rhine-Westphalia	21.09
Rhineland-Palatinate	4.82
Saarland	1.20
Saxony	4.99
Saxony-Anhalt	2.75
Schleswig-Holstein	3.41
Thuringia	2.65

Source: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge[44]

[43] Ibid.
[44] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, "Initial Distribution of Asylum Seekers (EASY)," November 28, 2018, accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/AsylFluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsylverfahrens

Federalism in Germany presents irregularities in the legal framework for asylum seekers, as on varying levels these asylum seekers face different legislation, and funding delays between the federal government and local communities have the possibility of creating problems for asylum seekers, refugees, and their supporters. Federal diversity, meaning differences between the implementation of asylum policy on the level of each individual *Bundesland,* accounts for a wide spectrum of realities in asylum policy ranging from "permissive" to "restrictive" realities in each *Bundesland.* This dichotomy comes from welfare state research which tends to focus on the generosity of specific programs and initiatives in evaluating their outcomes.[45] In Germany since 1992, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* or BAMF) has run 42 branch offices which are responsible for carrying out asylum procedures outlined in the 1993 Asylum Act (*Asylgesetz*).[46] The *Bundesländer* then are tasked with carrying out the 1993 Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*) which generally outlines the aid network that each *Bundesland* is responsible for providing with most federal states shifting this responsibility to the more local level of individual municipalities.[47]

Töller and Reiter analyzed these instances of federal diversity in asylum policy by determining the specifics of housing centralization, the availability of health insurance cards, and asylum seeker recognition rate for each *Bundesland* by creating tables showing the wide variety of outcomes that an asylum seeker may face depending on the state he or she is allocated to based upon the Königstein Quota system. Decentralized housing is utilized the highest in Schleswig-Holstein at 90.6 percent compared to the lowest utilization at 29.5 percent in

/Erstverteilung/erstverteilung-node.html.
[45] Annette Elisabeth Töller and Renate Reiter, 2019, "Federal Diversity of Asylum Policies in Germany What Can We Learn From 'Immigration Federalism'?" 7, accessed March 27, 2021, https://www.ippapublicpolicy.org/file/paper/5cfeb1a1779c8.pdf.
[46] Ibid, 5.
[47] Ibid, 5.

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.[48] An issue surprisingly left to the individual *Bundesländer* is the ability to decide whether or not a country is safe for deportations to occur to from Germany. This is illustrated in the example given of deportations to Afghanistan. Seven of the sixteen *Bundesländer* in 2017 did not carry out deportations to Afghanistan noting continued concerns for safety, while the other nine did carry out deportations to Afghanistan.[49] These differences between implementation of asylum policy on the level of the states is especially relevant considering the *Königsteiner Schlüssel* quota system does not allow asylum seekers to choose their *Bundesland* of residence, leaving the outcome of their housing and even repatriation decisions in the hands of a particular state government. These issues in diverse application of asylum policy are not believed to be merely based in partisan politics but instead indicative of regional realities; local issues like unemployment and occurrences of xenophobic attacks affect regional decisions as to how to implement policy.[50]

Refugees from the Former Yugoslavia – An Enduring Example

The example of refugees from the former Yugoslavia has many implications for research regarding refugees in Germany today. With these events now being nearly thirty years in the past, some modern research has looked back at the outcomes of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, both those that returned to their country of origin and those that remained in Germany or another resettlement country. Some studies from the 1990's look at the immediate realities and outcomes for Yugoslavian refugees, and this is what is most comparable to understanding what we see today as we are only a few years out from the onset of the most

[48] Ibid, 9.
[49] Ibid, 14.
[50] Ibid, 15.

recent large flow of refugees into Germany. Other studies specifically look at the long-term outcomes, and these are most telling as to what we may expect when eventually it becomes safe for those living with *Duldung* status to return to their countries of origin.

Policy Legacies and the Role of the Media in the 1990's

History plays a significant role in policy preferences and perceptions. While looking at policy legacy in the context of the 2015 refugee crisis, the most obvious predecessor is the influx of refugees from the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990's. This Yugoslavian refugee crisis too had its predecessor, but in a seemingly unlikely place. Starting in 1955 with an agreement between the German and Italian governments, Germany's booming economy began the import of additional workers, which were known as *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers).[51] These workers were intended at the onset of this program to be temporary and return within a relatively short period of time, typically two years. This, however, was not the case, and many *Gastarbeiter* did not return to their countries of origin and instead stayed in Germany which had previously not been considered a country of immigration. According to Ellerman, this reality of "guest workers" becoming long-time residents would influence political decisions in subsequent decades and cause conservative politicians to adopt a "no-immigration paradigm" with regard to worker recruitment in the 1980's and 1990's. Ellerman specifically focuses on policy learning in Germany with *Gastarbeiter* and the later manifestations of this program, stating that later political decisions were designed in preventing the settlement of such workers. Although

[51] Antje Ellermann, "Do Policy Legacies Matter? Past and Present Guest Worker Recruitment in Germany," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no. 8 (2015): 1241, accessed February 12, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.984667.

Ellerman's research does not discuss policy learning with asylum seekers, this framework can be used to look at the historical progression of asylum policy in Germany between 1991 and 2021.

In 1995, Brosius and Eps looked at media coverage of attacks on refugees in Germany. They draw their analysis around four highly violent attacks which had occurred against refugees and immigrants in Germany in the early 1990's, specifically studying print news sources including "a tabloid (*Bild-Zeitung*), a weekly news magazine (*Der Spiegel*), the major German news agency (*Deutsch Presse Agentur, dpa*) and two national newspapers (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*)."[52] These four major events included attacks specifically against asylum seekers in Hoyerswerda and Rostock-Lichtenhagen as well as attacks on non-asylum seeking Turkish families in Mölln and Solingen. Brosius and Eps found that after each of these major events, it was more likely for these news sources to cover events with similar attributes. This coverage is noted to be "simultaneously undistorted and distorted—undistorted in reporting the events in question in an unbiased manner, and distorted in that only certain events are covered."[53] These findings suggest that the media has a significant role in how individuals and politicians may perceive asylum seekers, as inherent biases and framing play a role in what is covered. However, this study was limited to only looking at the news sources themselves meaning the effects of this coverage on public opinion as well as policy cannot be determined from this study.

[52] Hans-Bernd Brosius and Peter Eps, "Prototyping through Key Events: News Selection in the Case of Violence against Aliens and Asylum Seekers in Germany," *European Journal of Communication* 10, no. 3 (September 1995): 393, accessed January 25, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323195010003005.
[53] Ibid, 407.

Psychological Scars in War Refugees from the Former Yugoslavia

When considering the barriers that refugees face, it is vital to consider the psychological ones. Many asylum seekers and refugees arrive after having experienced extreme trauma, and with that, there is a necessity to support treatment for those in need. Schwarz-Langer et al. discuss this with their case study involving thirteen civil war refugees from the former Yugoslavia which were in treatment at the Psychiatric Ambulatory Clinic of the University of Ulm.[54] These thirteen individuals ranged in age from 26 to 50, were both male and female, and also differed in their specific diagnoses and traumatic experiences. To best conduct treatment, it was important for the mental health professionals to utilize professional and experienced interpreters with the same ethnic background as the patient in order to best communicate, in the event a translator was necessary.[55] The most relevant finding from this study lies in the effect of the political limbo on the asylum seekers with uncertain statuses. Following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, asylum law in Germany changed to become more restrictive forcing some asylum seekers to return or face forcible deportation. During this period from 1996 to 1998, all thirteen patients in the study had worsening symptoms despite earlier process as they feared being forced to return to their countries of origin where they had experienced trauma just a few years prior.[56] In another study, Luebben worked alongside traumatized Bosnian survivors of civil war in the former Yugoslavia living in Frankfurt in order to both document testimony and understand the current situation these refugees were facing.[57] In this group as well, the political uncertainty faced by these individuals greatly hindered their recovery.

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[54] Gertrud Schwarz-Langer et al., "Psychiatric Treatment for Extremely Traumatized Civil War Refugees from former Yugoslavia," *Torture* 16, no. 2 (2006): 71, accessed February 15, 2021, https://irct.org/assets/uploads/Psychiatric%20treatment%20for.pdf.
[55] Ibid, 77.
[56] Ibid, 73.
[57] Sabine Luebben, "Testimony Work with Bosnian Refugees: Living in Legal Limbo," *British*

This political limbo hindered the road to recovery for many traumatized patients. The mental health professionals involved in these studies recommended additional political protection and security, specifically for those extremely traumatized war refugees, as a combination of security in the country of exile and pharmaceutical and psychotherapeutic treatments proved to have the best outcomes in recovery. These findings have further implications, as those traumatized need both access to mental health support through their support networks and policy that favors protection. These findings are certainly applicable when considering refugees today as well, especially considering there is typically no certainty in a timeframe of a safe return to a refugee's country of origin.

Successful Support from the Perspective of Refugees

Many studies broadly look at refugees, but few specifically focus on the opinion of refugees about their own experiences in their host countries. Zepinic addressed the issue of varying types of support that states provide by directly interviewing refugees in Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy.[58] The interviewees were required to be refugees and born in Yugoslavia, and interviews were conducted with each interviewee to determine the use of specific types of support services in various areas including primary health, mental health, accommodations, employment, social, financial/material, and legal. Nearly all refugees had received some type of support, with all in Germany having had access to support in at least one of the given areas. Access to mental health support was available to 64.6 percent of refugees in

Journal of Guidance & Counselling 31, no. 4 (2003): 394, accessed February 25, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/03069880310001609277.

[58] Bogic Zepinic, "Refugees' Views of the Effectiveness of Support Provided by Their Host Countries," *European journal of psychotraumatology* 3, no. 1 (2012): 2, accessed January 15, 2021, https://doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v3i0.8447.

Germany, but those in the United Kingdom and Italy did not have nearly as much access. Of refugees in the UK, 36.7 percent had access to mental health support and only 12.8 percent of those in Italy had access to this type of support. This wide variation in access between resettlement countries shows a clear problem, as it is unlikely that those refugees in the UK or Italy are any less traumatized or in less need of mental healthcare than those in Germany.

Furthermore, this study explored the helpfulness of the support services utilized by refugees as well as areas in which more assistance on the part of the government would be appreciated. In Germany, the accommodations support proved to be detrimental to the mental health and wellbeing of refugees according to the response of 29.9 percent that received this particular resource compared to 2 percent of those in the UK and 1.3 percent in Italy. As this study was conducted with interviews, the interviewer was able to gather additional information as to why such a high percentage of refugees in Germany found this support to be detrimental. The issue laid at the very onset of their move to Germany at the initial reception centers, commonly referred to by interviewees as "the camp."[59] Some interviewees even went as far as to stay that conditions in the initial reception centers in Germany were worse than their life in concentration camps in the former Yugoslavia. This study also found that refugees currently residing in Germany wanted additional access to education and training as well as more assistance in finding employment. This study seeks to gain insights from an often-ignored community, the refugees themselves. While the past cannot be changed, future policy and implementation can take into consideration the concerns and input provided from refugees about their own experiences.

[59] Ibid, 5.

Defining Successful Refugee Resettlement Internationally

The 2015 refugee crisis in Europe brought attention to refugee resettlement on a global scale. The ultimate goal of organizations like the United Nations and the international community is for the conflicts that create refugees to no longer exist. This would allow for the voluntary repatriation of asylum seekers and refugees from their countries of resettlement to their home countries. In our world today where total peace is not possible, it is important to look to what else may be considered "success" in these varying contexts. It must be noted refugee resettlement is in itself a particular process, with the resettlement aspect being a conscious effort on the part of the safe third country and partnering organizations. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) states refugee resettlement has three primary functions, with this process serving as a "protection tool" to meet the needs of refugees that cannot be otherwise met, a "long term solution," as well as a "responsibility sharing mechanism."[60] In an ideal situation, it is the responsibility of UNHCR to identify the global needs of displaced persons, establish protection criteria delineating refugees which will most benefit from resettlement, and conducting an assessment through their offices before then referring the case to a resettlement state for further processing. Each year, the United Nations hosts the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) which is used to create "collaborative efforts between UNHCR, governments, NGOs, refugees and other stakeholders" where current efforts are evaluated and suggestions for improvements are discussed.[61] Due to the urgency of the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe, this process needed to be expedited and at times overlooked as asylum seekers arrived at Europe's coastlines, which makes this case in particular extraordinary. Regardless of the

[60] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "UNHCR - What Is Resettlement?" October 2020, 1, accessed March 28, 2021, https://www.unhcr.org/5fe06e8b4.
[61] Ibid, 3.

particular channel in which refugees and asylum seekers arrive in their communities, integration is still the ultimate goal.

The individual states are responsible for providing reception and integration support for incoming refugees, but how this looks in terms of organizations involved and what exactly integration means ultimately differs depending on the state of reception. Typically, this process involves the interconnected duties and responsibilities of the resettlement state, NGOs, communities, volunteers, and the refugees themselves. Integration can take many forms, but the main categories for integration support are legal, economic, and social-cultural.[62] Integration should not, according to UNHCR, be only assimilation, as this does not address the needs of those being resettled. Current outcomes frameworks used by resettlement states and service providers are vital in understanding what these providers consider to be the definition of "success," with this definition potentially being different depending on if service providers, experts, or refugees are being consulted.[63] In order to better understand these outcome frameworks, Deloitte New Zealand consulted ten service providers throughout Australia, North America, and Europe to specifically look at what their measured outcomes were; from this, eight distinct outcomes frameworks were distinguished.[64] Of the outcomes measured by the framework, only underemployment and security were adequately measured and without gaps. All others were found to be lacking in terms of actual measurement capabilities, with severe measurement gaps identified in frequently used measures like social capital, capturing refugee voice in measurement, identity, and refugee independence. Even in infrequently used

[62]Ibid, 10.
[63]Deloitte New Zealand, "Refugee Resettlement: Global Landscape Review," The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, January 2016, 7, accessed March 27, 2021, https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/06/Refugee-Resettlement-Industry-Review-White-Paper_FINAL.pdf.
[64] Ibid, 12-15.

measurements, severe measurement gaps were identified in refugee voices in outcomes framework, power and control, ability to give back, and in happiness and fulfillment.

Certainly, a major reason behind these measurement gaps is the "intangibility" of many outcomes, yet these "intangible" outcomes are nonetheless still vital in assessing integration efforts. Outcomes can often be abstract, and funding and time constraints severely limit the ability of service providers to even begin to attempt to measure such outcomes. This hindrance prevents successful measurement of integration, and furthermore risks the repetition of past mistakes and a lack of meeting the needs of individual asylum seekers and refugees. These "intangible" outcomes also often go unmeasured due to the lack of a solid and agreed upon international definition of integration. What exactly constitutes integration is a highly debated and contentious topic in itself. Individual resettlement states, and even sometimes individual service providers, largely have the option of deciding upon their own definition of integration and furthermore their own desired outcomes.[65] We can see these differing definitions on the level of individual states. Sweden and the Netherlands, for example, define integration as assimilation with a best-case scenario being for a refugee to be remarkably similar in attitudes and values to a Swede or a Dutchman, while the United Kingdom tends to view successful integration as the refugee functioning well in their new country. These perceptions of what integration should look like thus determines policy and desired outcomes.

Unfortunately, what integration "should" be like is often heavily influenced by political opinions as opposed to the realities experienced by asylum seekers and refugees. Policies regarding resettlement often "favour the current government's agenda and the needs of its voters, rather than those of the refugees."[66] This distanced approach oftentimes ignores the reality of the

[65] Ibid, 8.
[66] Ibid, 9.

experiences of service providers and refugees, which are valuable perspectives that ensure a holistic understanding of the issues refugee communities face. Furthermore, the reality of many resettlement programs in existence today is the fact these programs were drafted hastily in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis. Out of necessity to quickly create support networks and programs for refugees and asylum seekers, the programs often only record "outcomes and needs that are visible and tangible, such as housing and employment."[67] This current structure ignores the necessity for broader holistic approaches that serve to understand the issues asylum seekers face outside of easily measurable outcomes.

German Definition of Successful Refugee Resettlement

German and European integration often uses the principle of *Leitkultur* (leading or guiding culture) as the basis for integration policies.[68] This term originated in academic circles in the late 1990's and at first was not a highly politicized term or even expected to be considered uniquely German. The concept underlying *Leitkultur* is the idea of what is essentially a supremacy of European, liberal, and often secular values being the guiding culture behind policies on integration of migrants into Germany and Europe as a whole. Migrants are expected to embrace German political ideals, language, and culture. This represented a shift away from the previous ideology emphasizing a multicultural and separate approach towards a focus on integration at the turn of the new millennium. Of course, *Leitkultur* is not spared from the politicization issues regarding migrants attract. More recently the populist *Alternative für Deutschland* party has made *Leitkultur* and its interpretations divisive, thus causing the needs of

[67] Ibid, 10.
[68] Kay-Alexander Scholz, "What Is German 'Leitkultur'?" *Deutsche Welle*, March 5, 2017, accessed April 15, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/what-is-german-leitkultur/a-38684973.

asylum seekers and refugees at times to be ignored for political gains.[69] Still, *Leitkultur* in Germany prevails as the dominant model used in creating assistance for asylum seekers and refugees with integration being the key takeaway from this model.

Integration in Germany is a federally managed and formal process that primarily focuses on *Integrationskurse* (integration courses) administered by local BAMF offices and community organizations. On the landing page of the BAMF website on integration courses, it explicitly states, "if you would like to live in Germany, you should learn German."[70] Clearly, learning the German language is considered a vital part of integration in Germany, and this language learning is facilitated through these courses which will be further explored later on in the analysis of support networks, as these integration courses are a part of the support network available in Germany to asylum seekers and refugees. German language learning is strongly emphasized in Germany, as knowledge of the German language "is important if you are looking for work, if you need to complete application forms, if you would like to support your children in school or if you would like to meet new people."[71] Here language is shown to be considered important to facilitate better employment opportunities, potentially better outcomes in housing or legal issues, education for family members, and social interactions. Although brief and a mere introduction to the integration courses, BAMF quickly highlights its main point—learning German is essential to integration and successful resettlement. Language instruction combined with additional orientation instruction is vital to the integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany.

[69]Ibid.
[70] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, "Integration Courses," Bamf.de, accessed March 26, 2021, https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/Integration/ZugewanderteTeilnehmende/Integrationskurse/integrationskurse-node.html.
[71] Ibid.

III. Methodology

In order to examine and explain the current nature of refugee resettlement in Germany, I gathered and analyzed a variety of secondary sources dating primarily from 2014 to the present. These sources include journal articles, news articles, as well as official government reports. The majority of the resources used are in English with a few documents and articles utilized being written in German. I am specifically focusing on Germany as a whole for this case study, as the specifics of individual *Bundesländer* are not universal and would need to be studied on a city-by-city or community-by-community level in order to create a quality comparative study. From these sources, I will be drawing inferences with regard to the current state of refugee resettlement in Germany. This study is qualitative in nature, and as such, data will not be utilized aside from mentioning relevant statistics briefly.

I will specifically be exploring the points of support networks and policy legacy in regards to refugee resettlement today. Support networks include support from the federal, state, and local level and range from financial to psychological support, and for these support networks, I will specifically look at housing, integration courses, and advice centers. Using the framework of policy learning and legacy, I will look broadly at changes in asylum policy between the first peak in asylum seeker applications in 1992 to the second peak in 2016 as well as changes up until the present in response to this extreme stress placed upon these policies and systems. More specifically I will look at the city of Soest in North Rhine-Westphalia. This city has published an evaluation of its own integration efforts, and this document serves as a basis of understanding an individual small city's perception of itself and its own positioning in the grander scheme of asylum policy in Germany.

Limitations

It is important to note that while this study attempts to explore as in depth as possible the historical policy legacy of refugee resettlement as well as the current reality of aid and support networks in Germany, limitations still naturally exist. Both of these topics are extremely vast and could be approached in very different ways. To narrow this down, I sought to answer my primary research question, "How has Germany achieved successful resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers since 2015?" Given the massive scale of the number of asylum seeker applications Germany reviewed and the fact many asylum seekers are living decent lives in Germany today, Germany was for the most part successful especially given the extreme circumstances and need for immediate action in the 2015 refugee crisis. The focus of this study is not to examine everything Germany has done wrong in the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers since 2015, as this study instead focuses on what measures Germany has used to achieve successful resettlement.

This question, with a particular emphasis on "how," has led me to approach the study as a general overview of the materials at hand. The resources I had available were limited due to the nature of this study. While many resources exist in English and I have advanced proficiency of the German language, the amount of published materials and previously conducted research available exclusively in German was immense. If I had access to a German library and/or database, I would have likely been able to find even more resources. When possible, I did utilize the available German language sources, and I tried to ensure the gaps in the research I will later identify have not been previously filled by research in German.

The largest limitation of this study was the interruption of my originally planned research. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to study abroad at the University of

Trier in Germany in Spring 2020 where I had planned to more specifically focus on the available support and aid networks that asylum seekers and refugees have access to in a small town where there is not a significant population of those with a migrant background. Since I did not have the same access to this information, I changed my focus by surveying a wider source of resources and focusing on Germany as a whole as opposed to only one city or region which allowed me to gain deeper insights into the various changes in asylum seeker and refugee policies in Germany over the last thirty years. This research has the potential for me to further build upon if later I am able to go to Germany, and in having a better understanding of these policies, I am better prepared to conduct field research in the future.

IV. Findings and Discussion

Historical Policy Legacy and Recent Policy Change

The development of German asylum policy dates back to the 1948 *Grundgesetz*, which guarantees the right to seek asylum in Germany, with Article 16a of the *Grundgesetz* asserting "persons persecuted on political grounds shall have the right of asylum."[72] Later policies regarding the *Gastarbeiter* program in 1950's Germany would prove to have lasting effects on German migration policy. Generally migrants in Germany became to be known as "temporary guests" which would at a given time in the future return to their home country.[73] In 1973, the *Gastarbeiter* program was halted in the face of global economic crisis, with this also signaling in Germany a period of restrictive immigration policy.[74] Policy and implementation during the 1970's and 1980's focused on "asylum deterrence," with the goal of making permanence unattractive for potential migrants and preventing integration.[75] While these restrictive policies specifically dealt with migration for economic reasons, restrictions on foreign laborers meant policy spillover into asylum policy.

In 1992, Germany received a record number of asylum seeker applications from people fleeing civil war in the former Yugoslavia.[76] At the same time, conservative rhetoric characterized many asylum seekers as "abusing the system."[77] This shock to the German political system caused by the massive increase in asylum applications served to cause Germany to

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[72] Parliamentary Council, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany."
[73] Ellermann, "Do policy legacies matter?" 1241.
[74] Barbara Laubenthal, "Refugees Welcome? Reforms of German Asylum Policies between 2013 and 2017 and Germany's Transformation into an Immigration Country," *German Politics* 28, no. 3 (2019): 415, accessed March 20, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2018.1561872.
[75] Ibid, 414.
[76] Victoria Rietig and Andreas Müller, "The New Reality: Germany Adapts to Its Role as a Major Migrant Magnet," Migrationpolicy.org, August 31, 2016, accessed March 21, 2021, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/new-reality-germany-adapts-its-role-major-migrant-magnet.
[77] Laubenthal, "Refugees Welcome?" 414.

further establish itself as a "self-declared non-immigrant country" that granted only temporary assistance to those hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavian refugees that flooded into Germany during the first half of the 1990's.[78] At the same time, the need to further codify German policies on asylum seeking arose. In 1993, both the Asylum Act (*Asylgesetz*) and the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*) were introduced into German law.[79] These acts were supplemental to what was already outlined in regard to asylum law in the German Constitution that guaranteed asylum to those facing political persecution. The Asylum Act is still highly relevant today when looking at policies on asylum seekers, as this is the law which "codifies the process and consequences of granting and denying asylum."[80] This same time period saw the founding of some forty-two regional branch offices of the earlier established Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) which is charged with the responsibility of conducting asylum procedures and processing applications in accordance with the Asylum Act; this BAMF branch office system is still used today to process asylum seeker applications.[81] BAMF offices and the Asylum Act are unique in that they are not assigned to the individual *Bundesländer* for implementation and are instead simply extensions of the federal government. The Asylum Seekers Benefits Act is more decentralized. This act places the responsibility of the distribution of benefits to asylum seekers for their first fifteen months of their stay in Germany on the level of the individual *Bundesland* which typically then further delegates this responsibility to local municipalities.[82]

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[78] Ibid, 412.
[79] Töller and Reiter, "Federal Diversity of Asylum Policies in Germany," 4.
[80] Library of Congress, "Refugee Law and Policy: Germany," Loc.gov, accessed April 1, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/germany.php.
[81] Töller and Reiter, "Federal Diversity of Asylum Policies in Germany," 5.
[82] Ibid, 5.

Starting in the early 2000's, these policies began to adapt and change as Germany starts to stray away from its previous conception as a "non-immigrant country." This change was spurred by the 1998 formation of the Social-Democratic/Green coalition and the election of Gerhard Schröder as Chancellor. Schröder emphasized the need for labor migration to fill the expected lack of necessary laborers to keep the German economy fully functioning as Germany began to reckon with its aging workforce.[83] Still, despite the start of more liberal policies and beliefs on migration, there is a major drop in asylum applications in Germany following 1992, making these more lenient policies put into place during a time when a migration crisis was not imminent. These policy shifts started in general migration policy, with laws making it possible for children born in Germany to migrant parents to gain citizenship.[84] Gradually, the restrictive policies and practices established around 1992 were lifted through a series of changes to the existing laws applying to asylum seekers, refugees, and more broadly migrants in general. In 2005, the same year Chancellor Angela Merkel began her first term, the Residence Act (*Aufenthaltsgesetz*) went into effect, fundamentally simplifying the bureaucracy of conditions for residence for all foreigners in Germany.[85] This 2005 act "provides rules concerning the entry, stay, exit, and employment of foreigners in general."[86] Ultimately the Residence Act served to simplify administrative complexity by changing residence permits to either be temporary or for permanent residence.[87] Notably, Chancellor Merkel and the more conservative Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) party's election win did not signal a reversion to previously restrictive

[83] Laubenthal, "Refugees Welcome?" 415.
[84] Rietig and Müller, "The New Reality: Germany Adapts to Its Role as a Major Migrant Magnet."
[85] Laubenthal, "Refugees Welcome?" 416.
[86] Library of Congress, "Refugee Law and Policy: Germany."
[87] Rietig and Müller, "The New Reality: Germany Adapts to Its Role as a Major Migrant Magnet."

policies. On the contrary, under Merkel and the CDU leadership migration and asylum policy continued to advance as Germany became a more liberal immigration country.

This was not an entirely German and unprompted revision of laws as the European Union began to issue directives aimed at liberalizing and easing restrictions on migrants and asylum seekers. The 2004 EU Qualifications Directive and later the 2011 EU Asylum Procedures Directive directly impacted changes in German immigration law. The most notable feature of these EU Directives was the requirement for those given refugee status under the Geneva Convention to be entitled to the "same rights as those with asylum under national law."[88] It should be noted this provision does not require the same legal status for those granted asylum by the German national government and those considered refugees by the United Nations only that these two groups have the same legal rights and freedoms in the host country.

The paradigm of Germany as a "non-immigrant country" began to shift to allow the consideration of migrants as an important part of Germany from the implementation of the 2005 Residence Act onwards. Integration efforts for migrants began officially with the introduction of integration courses, and multiculturalism as a doctrine for separation of migrants from Germans began to disappear as BAMF began to emphasize integration as a long-term process in which migrants should learn the German language and accept the basic values of the country.[89] Again, in 2009, the Report on Integration Indicators (*Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge, und Integration*) began to systematically monitor certain statistics about newcomers in Germany; this was a part of the larger plan and policies that served to identify best practices

[88] Ibid.
[89] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Europe," September 2013, 14, accessed March 25, 2021, https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/operations/52403d389/new-beginning-refugee-integration-europe.html.

and plans for understanding and integrating migrants.[90] At this time, individual municipalities and states began to create municipal action plans regarding how to handle integration and support efforts of migrants broadly. These efforts were not specifically focused on asylum seekers and refugees. Trends during this time of asylum seeker applications were fairly consistent making asylum policy not an area of particular concern. This would change radically as 2014 saw the start of a rise in the number of asylum applications.

The first change made in terms of policy as the increase in asylum applications was noticed was the reduction of a wait time for a work permit; this wait time was decreased from twelve months to three months for most eligible individuals.[91] This allowed for the possibility of asylum seekers to get to work quicker and begin progress towards independence. In order to attempt to decrease the number of asylum seekers being physically within the country, so-called "safe countries of origin" were established. In 2014, Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina were added to this list, and in 2015, the list was further expanded to include Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro.[92] With a growing number of asylums seeker applications and reception facilities being overwhelmed, this policy served to encourage those from the "safe countries of origin" to remain in their home country while their application was being processed, as if they were to physically move to Germany they would be ineligible for a work permit and would be required to stay in the reception center until their application had been fully processed. This system served to act as a deterrent to those not believed to be in immediate need. Much of

[90] Ibid, 30.
[91] Herbert Brücker et al., "Integrating Refugees and Asylum Seekers into the German Economy and Society: Empirical Evidence and Policy Objectives," Migration Policy Institute, December 2019, 21, accessed February 9, 2021, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/TCM_2019_Germany-FINAL.pdf.
[92] Laubenthal, "Refugees Welcome?" 420.

asylum policy during the crisis existed to lessen the burden on support systems and decrease the processing time for applications.

Similar decisions to achieve better efficiency in the face of extreme strain on the asylum application processing system included the perhaps infamous decision made by Chancellor Merkel in 2015 to halt the Dublin Regulation. In reality, this halt was selective and short-lived; in Germany, the Dublin Regulation, which dictates that asylum seeker applications should be processed in the country the individual seeking asylum first arrived, was only halted from August to October 2015 and only for Syrian applicants.[93] Also for efficiency, the Cluster Procedure system was established between 2015 and 2017 to handle this large surge in asylum seeker applications, with four separate clusters being established and countries of origin being assigned to each individual cluster. Cluster A was for individuals that due to their country of origin had a high change of receiving protection, while Cluster B was for those that were less likely to receive protection; Cluster C was then filled with complex cases and D with cases that fall under the Dublin Regulation.[94] This Cluster System, which offered advantages mostly only for those in Cluster A, also determined whether or not early access to *Integrationskurse* through BAMF was allowed, with this privilege being offered to most in the first cluster. Others from countries like Afghanistan (Cluster B) faced lengthy waiting times for application processing and were simultaneously denied access to certain resources like these integration courses, thus making social and economic integration a more difficult and lengthy process for such individuals.

The 2016 Integration Act (*Integrationsgeset*z) was passed federally to provide further guidance and support on integration measures, serving as an important step in showing Germany

[93] Rietig and Müller, "The New Reality: Germany Adapts to Its Role as a Major Migrant Magnet."
[94] Brücker et al., "Integrating Refugees and Asylum Seekers into the German Economy and Society," 20.

as a country willing and able to assist in refugee resettlement. This act serves as a long-term commitment for asylum seekers and refugees to have the opportunity to stay in Germany by being provided tools to assist in successful resettlement. It also solidified the restrictions placed on those from countries deemed to be safe countries of origin; no longer could someone from one of these countries receive labor market access until their case has been processed and approved.[95] The Integration Act served to update efforts through the conception of "support and challenge."[96] In terms of support, more opportunities in the form of integration courses are to be provided to those that are likely to receive protected status or those which have already been granted this status. Changes were also made to ensure legal certainty for those with tolerated status, provided they are enrolled in vocational training. Residence rules were additionally strengthened to prevent overcrowding in cities, thus reinforcing the Königstein Quota system. The Integration Act was not simply to increase benefits for asylum seekers and those with tolerated status; on the contrary, the act serves to "challenge" these individuals with certain responsibilities.[97] If an asylum seeker chooses not to enroll in required integration courses, he or she may have their benefits curtailed, and participation in these courses and the labor market is required to prove integration and receive permission for permanent residency and settlement.

German migration and asylum policy has faced challenges and changes over the years, and in recent years' asylum policy has proven to be very adaptable to the situation at hand although at times hindered by administrative and political lag. The German government was able to solve its own problem of an aging workforce and a need for more laborers by solving the

[95] Ibid, 22.
[96] Bundesregierung, "Integration Act to Support and Challenge," Bundesregierung.de, July 8, 2016, accessed March 20, 2021, https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/integration-act-to-support-and-challenge-411626.
[97] Ibid.

"refugee problem" with millions unable to return home due to conflict in their home countries finding a new home in Germany. Still, it should be noted that these policies by no means made Germany a country with fully open borders that accepted all who applied for asylum. The complex, legal quagmire still continues for many, although the 2016 Integration Act has lessened the burden on individuals willing to attend vocational training by providing them a more solid legal pathway. This adaptability and flexibility has allowed Germany to handle the massive surge of asylum seekers from 2015 onwards with remarkable success, although anecdotal evidence from individuals still shows that this success is not absolute. In order to see what these policies look like in practice, especially with regard to integration, it is essential to understand the networks of support created from these policies.

Aid and Support Networks

Aid and support networks exist in Germany both formally and informally and on the federal, state, and municipal levels. Prior to the 2005 Residence Act, integration was viewed as being largely something left to welfare and civil society organizations as opposed to being a political issue.[98] The federal government's role pre-2005 was simply to finance the lives of asylum seekers but not facilitate any unified approach to integration. Between 1992 and 1993, the federal government reached a so-called "asylum compromise" in the wake of the influx of asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia, with this producing the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act which dictates the available aid for asylum seekers.[99] The act created a separate social

[98] Laubenthal, "Refugees Welcome?" 415.
[99] Jan Schneider and Marcus Engler, "Asylum Law, Refugee Policy and Humanitarian Migration in the Federal Republic of Germany," Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, June 2, 2015, accessed March 30, 2021, https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/kurzdossiers/207671/asylum-law-refugee-policy-humanitarian-migration.

security system for asylum seekers and certain foreign nationals with lower benefits in comparison to the similar safety nets available for German citizens. In 2012, this act was revisited to determine the constitutionality of cash versus in-kind benefits under the act; this ruling determined the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act was not constitutional as it did not provide an acceptable minimum level of financial support needed for those eligible for benefits.[100] In-kind benefits and cash benefits were ruled to both be still allowed, and the subsequent 2015 Act on the Acceleration of Asylum Procedures would further affect the federal benefits available to asylum seekers. This act sped up the asylum process in addition to changing the system of financial support for asylum seekers. Federally, in more cases in-kind benefits replaced cash benefits, and Asylum Package II passed shortly after decreased asylum seekers' monthly cash benefits.[101] Asylum Package II distinguished between asylum seekers living in reception centers and those not. Prior to this passage, a single adult living in a reception center could have expected to receive €140 per month. After this passage, this same adult would receive no monthly cash benefits and instead receive only in-kind benefits. Those living outside of reception centers still received a monthly cash benefit, although the amount was decreased and was to be supplemented by in-kind benefits.[102]

The Asylum Seekers Benefits Act grants the task of reception, accommodations, and the granting of social benefits to the state and then the municipality (*Kommunen*), with the asylum seeker receiving basic services (*Grundleistungen*) for the first fifteen months and then after this

[100] Bundesverfassungsgericht, "Bundesverfassungsgericht - Press - Provisions Governing Basic Cash Benefits Provided for in the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act Held Unconstitutional," Bundesverfassungsgericht.de, July 18, 2012, accessed April 2, 2021, https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/EN/2012/bvg12-056.html.
[101] Library of Congress, "Refugee Law and Policy: Germany."
[102] Ibid.

time period analog services (*Analogleistungen*).[103] This leaves individual municipalities as opposed to states as ultimately responsible for handling the specifics of their aid and support networks on a more local level. One particular example is the small city of Soest in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. Soest is a relatively small city with just under 50,000 inhabitants as of 2019, and an estimated non-German population of approximately 10%.[104] In 2019, the city published a "Municipal Action Plan for the Integration of Refugees in Soest" outlining the historical overview of the situation with asylum seekers in Germany as well as how the city in particular was able to respond to the 2015 refugee crisis. The city outlines six building blocks necessary for the continuation of the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, including German language instruction, day care and school, vocational colleges, profession and qualifications, private apartments, as well as religion and free time.[105] The interest in and planning of this document seems to be unique and a project only undertaken by the cities with the most serious commitment to successfully resettling refugees, making Soest likely an outstanding example in its commitment to learn and improve from past mistakes in regard to asylum seekers and refugees. The city even goes as far to state that the process of integration is a joint effort between migrants and the host society. Using this framework of successful integration outlined by the city of Soest, the particular topics of housing support and German language instruction will be explored. These other aspects, however, will be left aside here due to the methodological problem in measuring outcomes in these areas outlined above. Housing and

[103] Stadt Soest - Fachbereich Jugend und Soziales, "Kommunales Handlungskonzept zur Integration von Flüchtlingen in Soest," 2019, 16, accessed March 25, 2021, https://www.soest.de/03leben_wohnen/integration/Handlungskonzept_zur_Integration_von_Fluechtlingen_GESAMT.pdf
[104] Information und Technik Nordrhein-Westfalen, "Kommunalprofil Soest, Stadt," October 29, 2020, accessed April 12, 2021, https://www.it.nrw/sites/default/files/kommunalprofile/l05974040.pdf.
[105] Ibid, 25-54.

language instruction serve as a start at understanding the interconnectedness of the federal, state, and municipal levels of support for asylum seekers in Germany.

Housing Support

Assistance for asylum seekers starts with accommodations.[106] A newly arrived asylum seeker is in immediate need of shelter, with this basic necessity being one of the first priorities of the *Bundesland* and its various organizations to secure. At first, housing is primarily federally funded and under normal circumstances will take place at a reception center. Each *Bundesland* has at least one reception center with some *Bundesländer* having a special "anchor center" where the reception center and other processes for asylum seekers all are to take place at one central location. Length of stay for an asylum seeker at a reception center can vary widely depending on a number of factors, with this stay lasting up to eighteen months, especially if the asylum seeker originates from a country deemed a safe country of origin. At the start of the 2015 crisis, these initial reception centers found themselves pushed to capacity and unable to handle the inflow of asylum seekers needing accommodations, thus creating a need for several emergency shelters to be set up in various locations throughout the country between 2015 and 2016. In Soest, temporary accommodations were established at a school, the Conrad-von-Soest Gymnasium and then later moved to the Kanaal-van-Wessem barracks in order to create a higher capacity.[107] The Soest report does not evaluate the success of these measures directly, so it is not known what the conditions were like in these temporary, emergency accommodation centers, but in many cases the conditions in temporary accommodations was reported to be dismal. In Berlin, the former

[106] Asylum in Europe, "Types of Accommodation," Asylumineurope.org, November 30, 2020, accessed March 30, 2021, https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany/reception-conditions/housing/types-accommodation/.
[107] Stadt Soest - Fachbereich Jugend und Soziales, "Kommunales Handlungskonzept zur Integration," 22.

Tempelhof airport was converted into emergency housing at the height of the 2015 crisis.[108] Conditions at Tempelhof were not satisfactory, with some watchdog organizations even going as far as to call the conditions there inhumane.[109]

In considering the desired housing situation for asylum seekers, the ultimate goal is typically defined as decentralization and independence. The city of Soest defines a three-phase model of housing as one of their building blocks to successful integration with the last phase of this plan being independent living accommodations.[110] The first phase is the necessary initial reception center which all asylum seekers pass through to have their immediate need for shelter met. Then, the second phase is defined as a move away from this ultra-centralized housing in accommodation centers towards residential units where asylum seekers still live in close proximity to one another but have a greater amount of autonomy and independence. In some *Bundesländer,* this move to phase two is not as authentic as may be desired in moving through this framework; these phase two "collective accommodations" are sometimes in the same building as the initial reception center, especially in areas like Bavaria which favor the use of "anchor centers" as a one-stop for all matters dealing with asylum cases.[111] Regardless of these intermediary housing stage, the third phase of housing for asylum seekers is private accommodations.[112] These private accommodations are considered to be independent and decentralized and provide a great deal of autonomy for asylum seekers, and with Asylum Package II, moving to decentralized accommodations means the start of receiving a monthly

[108] Asylum in Europe, "Types of Accommodation."
[109] Ibid.
[110] Stadt Soest - Fachbereich Jugend und Soziales, "Kommunales Handlungskonzept zur Integration," 48.
[111] European Resettlement Network, "Germany," *Resettlement.eu*, accessed April 1, 2021, https://www.resettlement.eu/country/germany.
[112] Stadt Soest - Fachbereich Jugend und Soziales, "Kommunales Handlungskonzept zur Integration," 48.

stipend. However, private housing is not universally the norm for asylum seekers in differing *Bundesländer,* as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Differences in the Application of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (2017)

Bundesland	*Ratio of Decentralized Housing in Percentage (2017)*
Baden-Württemberg	33.9
Bavaria	53.3
Berlin	60.6
Brandenburg	34.4
Bremen	62.1
Hamburg	88.2
Hessen	34.7
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	29.5
Lower Saxony	77.6
North Rhine-Westphalia	39.4
Rhineland-Palatinate	84.7
Saarland	45.6
Saxony	33.7
Saxony-Anhalt	57.4
Schleswig-Holstein	90.6
Thuringia	52.3

Source: "Federal Diversity in Asylum Policies in Germany: What Can We Learn From 'Immigration Federalism?'"[113]

This table presents the rate of decentralized housing in percentage by *Bundesland.* These rates vary from as low as 29.5 percent in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania to as high as 90.6 percent in Schleswig-Holstein. North Rhine-Westphalia, the *Bundesland* where Soest lies, is

[113] Töller and Reiter, "Federal Diversity of Asylum Policies in Germany" 9.

relatively low in terms of achieving decentralized housing at only 39.4 percent. The point at which an asylum seeker is in the application process can affect whether or not decentralized housing is yet an option. Additionally, those from safe countries of origin do not have a choice in moving away from the initial reception center until their case is fully processed and a decision is reached, thus forcing them to remain in centralized housing. There is also the somewhat well-founded fear that decentralization may lead to ghettoization as certain nationalities of asylum seekers and refugees move to the same area. Still, for most asylum seekers and refugees, settlement in Germany is the only option for the time being with the prospects of returning home safely still years away. Settlement and a sense of belonging is something which can be facilitated by having independent, decentralized housing.

Integration Courses and Advice Centers

Integration courses (*Integrationskurse*) are essentially required for all refugees and eligible asylum seekers, and a reduction of benefits is possible if an eligible person refuses to attend the course if deemed necessary by the BAMF office. BAMF typically organizes these courses, although occasionally private organizations like churches may host German language courses. There is an "obligation to attend if you cannot make yourself understood in German at a simple, adequate level." [114] Successful completion of the integration course can increase chances of naturalization and obtaining a permanent settlement permit at a later date. These integration courses consist of two parts—language and orientation. The goal of both of these elements is to best orient the asylum seeker in their life in Germany, with multiple versions of the course being offered based on an individual's unique situation and interests. The language instruction part of

[114] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, "Integration Courses."

the integration course is designed to be practical and applicable in real life scenarios, with language instruction accounting for approximately 90 percent of the course lessons. According to BAMF, the course "will cover aspects of everyday life such as work and career, basic and further training, bringing up and raising children, shopping/trade/consumption, leisure time and social interaction, health and hygiene/human body, media and media use, and housing."[115] The orientation portion of the integration course takes up the remaining 10 percent or so of lesson units, with this portion focusing on "the German legal system, history and culture, rights and obligations in Germany, forms of community life, and values that are important in Germany, such as freedom of religion, tolerance and gender equality."[116]

Specialized courses are available for those with limited literacy with such courses putting an emphasis on teaching the participants how to read and write while other specialize in teaching students learning German from a non-Roman alphabet language. Other courses include those specifically for women taught by women, for parents, and for young adult under the age of 26. Courses are also offered for those with some knowledge of German in the form of "catch-up" courses, and for those working or studying full time, an intensive course may be a better option. The ESF-BAMF Program transitioned from a temporary, pilot program into a program available nationwide for those interested in learning job specific German training in combination with vocational school education in lieu of the typical integration course.[117] Overall, these programs are aimed at assisting asylum seekers and refugees in becoming involved in the German labor market as well as in civil society. Two tests exist to prove the students' knowledge from the

[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Bundesregierung, "German for Professional Purposes - ESF-BAMF Programme," Esf.de, accessed April 1, 2021, https://www.esf.de/portal/EN/Funding-period-2014-2020/ESF-Programmes/bmas/ESF-bamf-programme.html.

integration course. The "German language test for immigrants" (DTZ) tests proficiency in German, and a separate exam titled "Life in Germany" tests for understanding of the material in the orientation portion of the course. By passing these two exams, a participant is then eligible for a certificate verifying their completion of the program.[118]

These courses range in length from 430 lesson units for a fast-track, intensive program to 700 lesson units for the average program and as many as 1,000 lesson units for the specialty programs.[119] Currently, most enrolled in these courses are required to pay €2.20 per lesson unit, meaning an average, 700 lesson unit course will cost €1,540. Naturally, these courses necessitate an enormous commitment of time and energy as well as a financial barrier, and many are excluded from participation if deemed not likely to receive asylum. For the most part, integration courses are only offered to those asylum seekers with good prospects to stay, ethnic German repatriates, and those which have already been granted asylum. Those with tolerated (*Duldung*) status and individuals with poor prospects of being granted asylum due to their country of origin as well as those from a country of origin deemed to be safe are typically not able to take the integration courses offered through BAMF and instead must rely on private, non-federally funded resources to gain access to language courses.[120] It is necessary for most anyone wishing to enter the workforce in Germany to have a minimum of a basic working knowledge of the German language, and this has proven to be particular difficult for those excluded from the BAMF courses but legally permitted to live and work in Germany until they may safely be returned to their country of origin. Other obstacles affect particularly marginalized groups of asylum seekers and refugees, for example women with children. The city of Soest notes that

[118] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, "Integration Courses."
[119] Ibid.
[120] Stadt Soest - Fachbereich Jugend und Soziales, "Kommunales Handlungskonzept zur Integration, " 25.

women with children were significantly less likely to complete an integration course due to more traditional household roles many held such as needing to stay home and take care of children; for this reason, Soest recommends in the medium-term for childcare facilities to be set up specifically for children with a parent attending one of the integration courses.[121]

Where one is in the asylum process and their status also may have an effect on their willingness and ability to complete an integration course. A 2017 survey found that 60 percent of recognized refugees, 34 percent with tolerated status, and 31 percent still going through the asylum process had completed or participated in an integration course.[122] A shorter length of stay for those still in the asylum process may account for these low percentages of participation, but it is still significant to consider barriers like those barring certain individuals from "safe countries of origin" to accessing language courses have the potential to negatively impact those which will eventually receive refugee status and be entitled to long-term residency in Germany. BAMF has made efforts to make integration courses more accessible by making information about integration courses and the broader support network available online through the BAMF NAvI webpage. This webpage is offered in both German and English and allows for asylum seekers and refugees to find further information on integration courses, course locations, advice centers, and authorities.[123] This website offers up-to-date information with relevant locations, contact information, and specific information on the courses currently being offered in the region. Using Soest as an example, it is possible to locate both integration courses available and local advice centers. Table 3 below shows the current offerings for integration courses within 5 km of Soest

[121] Ibid, 28.
[122] Benjamin Bathke, "Integration Courses in Germany: What Are They, and Who Can Take Part?" Infomigrants, May 10, 2019, accessed April 1, 2021, https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/16814/integration-courses-in-germany-what-are-they-and-who-can-take-part.
[123] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge "BAMF-NAvI - Welcome Page," Bamf.de, accessed April 1, 2021, https://bamf-navi.bamf.de/en/.

city center as of April 1, 2021 as shown on the NAvI website. The basic information given about each course is provided in the table.

Table 3: Current Offerings for Integration Courses within 5 km of Soest (April 1, 2021)

Course Type	*Time*	*Hours per Week*	*Current Module*	*Places Available/Total*
General Integration	Morning	20	Orientation	4/25
General Integration	Morning	20	Advanced Course Module 2	6/20
Integration with Literacy	Morning	20	Advanced Course Module 3	4/15
Repeater with Literacy	Morning/ Afternoon	16	Repeaters' Module	3/15
Second Script	Morning/Afternoon	12	Advanced Course Module 3	7/16
Repeater General	Morning	20	Repeaters' Module	12/25
General Integration	Morning/Afternoon	20	Basic Module 3	11/25
General Integration	Morning/Afternoon	16	Basic Module 2	9/25
General Integration	Morning	25		5/18
General Integration	Morning	20	Advance Course Module 2	2/20
Repeater with Literacy	Morning	16	Repeaters' Module	4/16

Source: BAMF NAvI Database[124]

This table shows what is publicly available and accessible to refugees and eligible asylum seekers that may be interested in enrolling in such a course. According to this data, in the Soest district there are 67 places out of 220 available in a variety of integration courses catering to

[124] Ibid.

differing interests and needs. This means 153 of these spots are filled with students currently going through these integration courses. To put this into perspective, the population of the city of Soest as of 2019 was just under 50,000.[125] Considering the city's small size, these continued offering of integration courses in spite of the pandemic is rather impressive. The majority of these courses being offered in Soest are simply the general integration course, yet all are in different modules. Some specialized courses are also offered, including those learning a second script (from a non-Roman alphabet background) and courses with a literacy focus in addition to three repeater courses. It should be noted that the time commitment for all of these courses is essentially the equivalent of a part-time job, ranging from twelve hours to twenty-five hours per week. All of these courses are offered partially in the morning with only four being offered as morning/afternoon courses. The given data does now allow the determination of whether this lack of evening courses signals a lack of need in Soest, or whether it could mean the need for evening courses for individuals working during the day is not met in this area.

In addition to these courses, the BAMF NAvI database also shows local advice centers in a given geographic area. Advice centers vary in the types of organizations they are as well as what types of advice they offer, but many of these centers are religious organizations. Soest has two advice centers listed in this database—Workers' Welfare Organization (*Arbeitwohlfahrt/AWO*) and Deaconship Germany (*Diakonie Deutschland*).[126] Both of these organizations have multiple branches throughout Germany with a branch office in Soest. AWO is "a professional association for development of cooperation and humanitarian action within the framework of the German welfare organization" and "is committed to supporting marginalized

[125] Stadt Soest, "Stadt Soest - Demografiebericht 2020," accessed April 1, 2021. https://www.soest.de/bilder/planen/Demografiebericht_2020.pdf.
[126] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, "BAMF-NAvI - Welcome Page."

and disadvantaged groups."[127] As noted in this description, AWO does not specifically deal with asylum seekers, with asylum seekers being only one of the many marginalized and disadvantaged groups they work with. AWO Subdistrict Hochsauerland/Soest has multiple projects outside of providing legal advice for adult asylum seekers, including youth programming and project "Meet" which facilitates interactions between migrants and locals in order to develop a richer understanding of one another.[128] Deaconship Germany Subdistrict Ruhr-Hellweg is a Protestant Christian group which also helps a variety of vulnerable populations, although they have extensive offerings available for asylum seekers.[129] This particular organization offers both legal advice as well as psychological counseling for asylum seekers in need.

Integration courses, advice centers, and even housing all serve to assist asylum seekers and refugees in settling into their new lives in Germany successfully. All three of these elements have some federal component, with integration courses having the strongest connection to BAMF in particular as BAMF offices are typically the most responsible for organizing and funding these courses through the federal government. Initial housing is typically federally funded, but it is often run on the *Bundesland* level or lower. Advice centers represent the non-public resources available to asylum seekers and the volunteers that help make the functioning of such organizations possible serve to welcome asylum seekers into German society. All of these initiatives have the goal of achieving successful resettlement of refugees in Germany by promoting integration, although integration here does not equate to assimilation. Integration

[127] Arbeitwohlfahrt International, "About Us," Awointernational.de, December 1, 2020, accessed April 1, 2021, https://www.awointernational.de/en/about-us/.
[128] Arbeitwohlfahrt: Unterbezirk Hochsauerland/Soest, "Wilkommen bei der AWO Hochsauerland/Soest," accessed April 1, 2021, https://die-awo.de/.
[129] Diakonie: Ruhr-Hellweg, "Wir gehen mit," accessed April 1, 2021, https://www.diakonie-ruhr-hellweg.de/ueber-uns/selbstdarstellung/.

simply means the ability to function within the host society, which necessitates an understanding of the German language as well as the culture. This understanding is taught through integration courses, and the advice centers and stable housing policies help to ensure legal and physical security for asylum seekers. This abstract concept of security is just as important to integration efforts as language and cultural understanding; having a sense of security helps to ensure asylum seekers are successful and have a long-term commitment to integration in Germany.

V. Recommendations

German asylum policy continues to adapt to the changing reality of asylum seekers in Germany, with today's policy strongly reflecting the acknowledgement that just as asylum seekers greatly benefit from having the prospects of settling in Germany, the aging German workforce has the possibility to greatly benefit from young adults willing to learn and work. There exists today in Germany in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis the seemingly paradoxical nature of "demand and support" and "support and deter." "Demand and support" is the more positive version of this paradox, as it highlights the privileges which asylum seekers are entitled to (support) in exchange for certain obligations like attending integration courses to continue to receive full benefits (demand). "Support and deter" seems to be the current state of asylum policy in Germany, with this mentality being to support those asylum seekers and refugees already in Germany but to deter those that have yet to arrive. This deter element is especially prevalent in considering the creation of safe countries of origin, with their citizens effectively now being unable to receive asylum in Germany. In years to come, policy makers and voters must decide whether or not continued deterrence of new asylum seekers and support of those already within Germany is feasible.

This decision will need to be reached potentially in the near future, according to the Federal Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer.[130] The 2016 EU-Turkey deal was able to prevent many asylum seekers from entering Europe by instead providing additional financial incentives to the Turkish government to keep asylum seekers within their borders. This deal has been neglected despite the continued global unrest which creates more displaced persons and refugees

[130] Deutsche Welle, "Germany's Horst Seehofer Warns of 'refugee Wave' Bigger than in 2015," *Deutsche Welle*, June 10, 2019, accessed April 1, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-horst-seehofer-warns-of-refugee-wave-bigger-than-in-2015/a-50713279.

each and every year. Seehofer fears the potential failure of the 2016 EU-Turkey deal, which may result from EU neglect, may cause another wave of asylum seekers and refugees to arrive at the European Union's external borders and eventually Germany. If this does occur, which is quite possible, this potential influx of migrants must be planned and accounted for in advance. Existing policy must be able and ready to handle such a large wave again, especially in securing better and more humane solutions to emergency housing than what was seen in 2015 and 2016. The ability to rapidly expand the amount of integration courses in the event of another wave of asylum seekers is also necessary.

In the event of another large wave of asylum seekers, decentralization may not be ideal. The 2015 "refugee crisis" saw significant lags in federal action and funding which forced local groups to act and guess at what would be best to accommodate asylum seekers in the short-term. Decentralization and power given to the *Bundesländer* often lead to unequal implementation of policy, which is especially important to remember when considering the fact asylum seekers and refugees by definition of their status do not have a say in where they are directed to live and have their asylum application processed for the next several years. This location is determined by the Königsteiner Quota system and completely out of the control of the asylum seekers who must merely go where he or she is assigned. More centralization and better and more rigorous training and bias screening of BAMF workers would likely lead to more equal application of asylum policy, especially when considering decisions on whether or not to grant an individual asylum. Local biases certainly seep into local BAMF offices, as this federal office mostly consists of local employees each with their own biases and opinions. A move away from decentralized policy on asylum, especially with the Asylum Seekers Benefits' Act, would see more equitable outcomes for asylum seekers and a better process overall. Currently, six years after the 2015

migration crisis, we are able to step back and look at the policies and practices of these offices to determine if implementation truly is fair and equitable, and necessary changes and reforms are able to be made during this lull in asylum seeker applications to create a better functioning system for when/if crisis strikes again.

Gaps in current research on support networks in Germany and internationally primarily lie in the lack of asylum seeker and refugee voices accounted for. These individuals are the most affected by policy decisions and the functionality of support networks, yet they are often left out of the conversation. More studies need to be created in order to interview current asylum seekers and refugees to fully and properly evaluate the effectiveness of the support network and its outcomes. Such a study could mimic Zepinic's 2012 study comparing refugees' perceptions of specific types of support from their host country (UK, Italy, and Germany), but for the German example, this study could use host *Bundesländer* instead of host countries. This would allow insights into what the differences in application of federal law through the BAMF office as well as difference in the application of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act, but it would more specifically allow us to see how these differences are perceived by asylum seekers. Since the ultimate goal of integration policies is to benefit asylum seekers, it is essential to learn how asylum seekers view the implementation of certain policies as beneficial or even detrimental instead of simply making assumptions based on what is "best for asylum seekers" from an outsider's perspective.

Another promising avenue of research in understanding application of asylum policy in Germany is looking at municipalities as a unit of analysis as opposed to the entire *Bundesland.* Municipalities within the same *Bundesland* may have drastically different outcomes in terms of successful resettlement and integration due to local personalities like politicians and non-

federally funded support networks, yet data in this area is virtually non-existent. Individual municipalities have their own governments, but perhaps even more importantly the existence of particular non-governmental support organizations may play a huge role. These non-governmental support organizations may be religious in nature or just generally concerned with welfare, with some being very specifically targeted to helping asylum seekers and others broadly helping disadvantaged communities. Even soccer has proven to be an informal support network for asylum seekers in Germany, so much so that in the report from the city of Soest "free time and religion" is considered one of the essential building blocks to successful integration of asylum seekers in Germany. Such clubs and associations have particular cultural significance in German civic society, and the participation of asylum seekers and refugees in these uniquely German spaces brings integration under the German *Leitkultur* model all the more promising. These informal networks are just as important as formal networks although often harder to measure. An attempt to analyze the peculiarities of formal, informal, federal, state, and local support networks on the level of several different municipalities would allow important insights into asylum policy. This research can help to prepare Germany and the international community for the potential for additional waves of asylum seekers and refugees in years to come.

VI. Conclusions

Two peaks in asylum seeker applications stand out as outliers in Germany—the flow of asylum seekers fleeing from the former Yugoslavia in 1992 and then those fleeing conflict in Syria and other areas in the Middle East and Northern Africa in 2016. Although these two instances are drastically different in terms of the specific characteristics of the conflict, they serve as examples of asylum policies which work and those which do not work. Asylum policy unfortunately does not exist solely for the betterment of the lives of asylum seekers, as Germany is a democracy with voters and politicians that all have their own priorities which may not always include the best possible outcomes for asylum seekers. This was evident in the period preceding the 1992 peak in asylum seeker applications in Germany as politically Germany was considered to be a "non-immigrant country." The 1992 surge in asylum seeker applications tested this idea, and for the next several years, conservative politicians were able to keep Germany as a "non-immigrant country" through policies that provided minimal levels of subsistence for asylum seekers and offering only tolerated (*Duldung*) status to the majority of those entitled to asylum under international law.

In 2005, the Residence Act served as a turning point marking Germany's shift away from being a "non-immigrant country" and made integration a goal and responsibility of the federal government. In viewing integration as a marker of success, Germany began to note value in migrants and furthermore asylum seekers present and a part of society. The 2015 refugee crisis in Europe tested the systems already put into place in the early 1990's and the untested liberalization in migration and asylum policy of the 2000's, and for the most part, Germany did quite well. An important recent development is the understanding of the importance of providing some sort of legal certainty for those with *Duldung* status by allowing continued residency if

they are actively participating in vocational training and have the intention to enter the German workforce. This allows the certainty that early asylum seekers in Germany with this same status did not have, and this earlier uncertainty was correlated with further psychological distress of those already traumatized. By providing more certainty for asylum seekers in Germany today, there is the acknowledgement that successful resettlement and integration of asylum seekers and refugees into the German economy and society are beneficial for those asylum seekers in need of security and for Germany as a whole. This shift is promising, yet recent policies seem to alter paradoxically between supporting and deterring asylum seekers and refugees.

Support is a much more promising goal for these policies, and it is absolutely vital that those asylum seekers and refugees currently in Germany have access to as many resources as possible to secure themselves economically and socially including but not limited to suitable housing and robust integration courses. The element of deterrence is a bit perplexing and is illustrated in restrictions on who can and cannot attend BAMF integration courses and the shift from cash benefits to in-kind benefits. There is no evidence that integration courses and cash benefits pull asylum seekers to Germany in particular, but there is the political fear of "fake" asylum seekers taking advantage of the system. Exclusion from certain integration measures of those deemed unlikely to receive asylum has the potential to leave many behind, thus making the process of integration lengthier. Further research is needed to develop a holistic understanding of asylum policy and implementation in Germany in order to best prepare for the inevitable future influxes of asylum seekers into the European Union and Germany. Further research can help prepare for another wave of asylum seekers and the avoidance of another migration crisis.

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