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Cover Page Footnote

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4

2015 Syrian Refugee Responses Based on the Strength of Securitization Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to answer the question: Why were policy responses to the 2015 Syrian refugee "crisis" so different in Germany and the UK? I argue that these policies were driven by public opinion about migrants and immigration. Germany adopted a more liberal migration policy because of higher approval for refugees entering the country. I argue that this is the result of the degree to which securitization discourse explains different public attitudes towards Syrian refugees in 2015. Specifically, I argue that the greater the strength of securitization discourse, the easier it is to implement restrictive immigration policy. This paper demonstrates how the securitization of migration discourse influenced public opinion about migrants, and, in turn, affected migration policy in the two countries. The paper contributes to debates about the securitization of migration policies, highlighting both the influence of public opinion on policy formation and the influence of state policies and political leadership on public opinion.

1. INTRODUCTION

2015 was a watershed year for migration into Europe, but not all countries were equally affected by it nor did they react the same to the unprecedented migrant arrivals. Germany processed approximately 30% (441,800) of the 1.2 million applications for asylum in the EU in 2015, and by contrast, the UK processed approximately 3% (38,000) of the 1.2 million asylum applications that same year (Eurostat, 2016). The two countries, both leaders of the European continent, enacted drastically different approaches towards the 2015 refugee crisis, and at the same time, both countries reacted differently towards immigration sentiment among the public. This paper seeks to answer the question: Why were policy responses to the 2015 refugee "crisis" so different between Germany and the UK?

My research considers the importance of public opinion in the securitization of migration in the EU. Securitization discourse is the process of framing political issues as potential risks to the public, creating a sense that state actors must respond urgently to prevent these issues from turning into harmful agents against the public (Eroukhmanoff, 2018, p. 1). Migration becomes more politically salient and threatening to the public through the securitization process, and political leaders create these fears among the public to push for certain policies (Balzacq et al., 2016, p. 495). In current scholarship, securitization theory remains largely top-down, but I argue that the public can use securitization discourse to influence state actions. Germany and the UK are two distinct cases in which public opinion was different and therefore led to different outcomes in policy. In the UK, anti-refugee perceptions and fears of cultural diversity reinforced a growing securitization discourse of migration in the country, and the government responded to public securitized discourse by implementing a more restrictive policy. In Germany, favorability towards refugees, in contrast to attitudes towards economic migrants, complicated a securitization discourse of migration and allowed for the state to enact a less restrictive policy than in the UK.

So far, there is no consensus in the literature as to how the strength of securitization discourse, via the measurement of public attitudes against various aspects of transnational migration, influences the state's creation of migration policy. I add to the debate by arguing that the stronger the securitization discourse, the easier it is to implement restrictive immigration policy (like in the UK). This paper seeks to explain why the public has a role in maintaining/creating securitization discourses of migration. I also hope to contribute more to current debates about the securitization of migration by arguing that public opinion has more of a dynamic role in state-construction of policy—meaning that public opinion both influences the securitization of migration policy and that the policies/state leadership influence public opinion.

This paper begins by reviewing current scholarship relating to securitization discourse of migration in both countries and how public opinion influences/is influenced by policy. The paper then investigates the historical context of securitization discourse in the EU, arguing that EU migration policies affected both the UK and German public opinion. In sections 4 and 5, the paper looks more closely at public opinion in the UK and Germany and argues that historical and contemporary migration levels in both countries reinforced a securitized discourse towards migration among the public. The paper then shifts to the British and German policy responses, arguing that the UK leveraged a strong securitization discourse and anti-migrant public opinion to enact a more restrictive 2015 refugee policy, while Germany enacted a more open policy that defied some public attitudes. This is then followed by a discussion of how the media and right-wing parties played a role in both gov-

ernments' decisions and in public opinion within both countries; however, ultimately the UK and Germany are two unique cases where public opinion was the strongest influence in policy creation. The paper concludes with an assessment of public agency in securitization discourse and considers how political leaders and advocacy groups can act on prevailing public attitudes towards migration.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars interpret the relationship between the public and the state differently in terms of securitization discourse of migration. In the context of the UK, some scholars argue that the state essentially conveys securitization messages to the public and therefore creates an anti-immigration sentiment among the public. Ford, Jennings & Somerville argue that the UK creates restrictive migration policies to make the public believe that the state is protecting them from outside threats (Ford et al., 2015, p. 1393). However, the authors also argue that the state creates more restrictive immigration policies in response to the growing anti-immigration sentiment and fears within the public. Therefore, the state and public opinion both drive migration policy.

Other scholars disagree with Ford et al. (2015) and instead view the public as having a stronger role in maintaining securitization discourse of migration and therefore influencing state action. Blinder (2015) focuses less on the cause of people's perceptions of migrants and gives more agency to the people in their thinking of immigration. He concludes that public opinion affects public policy towards migration, but media discourse could play a role in influencing overall attitudes. Additionally, scholars like von Hermanni & Neumann (2019) argue that, in the German case, a less securitized discourse towards refugees (and instead, heightened negative attitudes towards economic migrants) contributed to the state's ability to implement a less restrictive Syrian refugee policy in 2015. Both Blinder (2015) and von Hermanni & Neumann (2019) view the public as having a stronger role in influencing policy.

Finally, some authors see public opinion as far less important of a driver of migration policy. Ilgit & Klotz (2018) argue that Merkel defied growing securitization discourse of migration among the public and right-wing parties by creating a policy of open borders during the 2015 crisis. Merkel reinforced her open attitudes towards refugees and communicated a broader message that securitization discourse would not be tolerated at the state level even if more people supported stricter policies. In this case, Ilgit & Klotz (2018) argue that the state acted dependently of public opinion and securitization discourse among the public. However, both authors would agree with Blinder (2015) that the public retains some form of agency because anti-migration public sentiments remained even with an open borders policy.

Overall, the literature points to some possible explanations of why Germany and the UK differed so greatly in their responses to the 2015 refugee crisis and how securitization discourse affected the state policies and public opinion differently. To further understand how British and German attitudes developed in 2015, we will now turn to EU migration policies and consider how securitization discourse originated within the continent.

3.   HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SECURITIZATION DISCOURSE IN THE EU

An understanding of the historical development of EU migration policies adds more context to how securitization discourse developed in the UK and in Germany. Upon the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, European countries like

Germany and the UK participated in labor recruitment of low-skilled migrants (Koikka-lainen, 2011). Although migrants lived in the relevant countries, their stay was thought to be only temporary, so any threat stemming from ethnic or cultural differences was not considered to be permanent. After the 1973 OPEC oil crisis, the same European countries ended their labor recruitment of migrant workers, and instead prioritized the hiring of do-mestic citizens to ease the high unemployment levels (Huysmans, 2000, p. 754). Migration restrictions after 1973 positioned migrants as dispensable to the EEC states, but the restric-tions also indicated that the states had no desire to take in and integrate migrants into their respective societies.

Securitization discourse towards migration began to form as migrants entered Europe in higher numbers and from more culturally and racially different countries. Europe received a record 6.8 million asylum applications from 1980-1989, and through 1999 the 15 EEC/EU countries received the largest percentage of asylum applications (68%) out of all industri-alized nations (UNHCR, 2001, p. 10). The public associated asylum with illegal immigra-tion as more refugees entered the EEC from the Middle East and threatened the racial and cultural homogeneity of European nations (Huysmans, 2000, p. 755). The EEC signed the 1990 Convention (based on provisions of the 1985 Schengen Agreement) to increase the se-curity of member state borders to prevent the free movement of migrants and asylum seekers (Huysmans, 2000, p. 757). The securitization of EEC borders reinforced the perception that migrants are not welcome in Europe, and the increased policing of migration movements in Europe framed migrants as criminals.

The EEC/EU needed to prevent entry of non-European migrants to preserve the cultural and ethnic makeup of societies. Securitization discourse towards migration stemmed from the free movement policies of the EU, and eventually fears towards migrants spread throughout the Schengen Area countries. The securitization of migration during the early years of free movement in the EU contributed to the securitization discourse in the UK and Germany in 2015, when the European continent faced higher levels of refugee entry than ever before. The following sections will look into the development and extent of securitiza-tion discourse of migration among the British public and the German public.

4.   BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION

Public attitudes towards migration in the UK originated in the historical context of migration into the country. The degree to which British public embraced securitization discourse depended on the level of migration into the country as population diversification increased. Following the 1973 OPEC oil crisis, the UK continued to implement restric-tive asylum policies and migration levels dropped significantly. In the late 1970s, fewer than 5,000 people migrated each year (Lowe, 2020), and from 1980 to 1988, about 45,000 mi-grants applied for asylum in the UK (UNHCR, 2001). As migration levels into the country decreased, Britons worried less regarding potential threats to their economic opportunities or cultural heritage than they did twenty years prior. Securitization discourse seemed to recede at this time because the public talked less about migration and held fewer negative attitudes towards migration (Ford et al., 2015, p. 1396). During the late 1980s and 1990s, only about 10 percent of the British public had concerns about migration into the country (Page, 2009, p. 5). Although anti-asylum and racist attitudes still existed, the majority of the British public turned away from securitization discourse as lower levels of migration lessened the perceived security or cultural threat from foreign people. In the British case, visibility politics played a role in public attitudes towards migration because people's fears towards

migrants coincided with migration levels.

Public attitudes quickly changed in 2004, when 10 Eastern European countries joined the EU. Securitization discourse increased because the entry of people from less economically developed and culturally different countries frightened the British public. In fact, the percentage of British public expressing concern about migration jumped from 10% in the 1990s to a around 40% between 2004 to 2009 (Page, 2009, p. 5). The arrival of migrants from Eastern Europe signaled to the British public that the government would have to financially help them upon arrival in the country. People would now have to compete for jobs with immigrants who have never lived in the UK. Migration came to be framed as a threat that endangered the domestic society, and the securitization discourse of migration only worsened as migration from non-European countries increased in the 2000s.

As migration levels increased after the early 2000s and transitioned into the 2015 refugee "crisis," the British public shifted towards more negative views of migration that reflected both their fears of cultural others and internal beliefs about migrants. Upon the initial Syrian refugee movements into Europe in 2013/2014, migration became a top issue in British public debate, and about 34% of respondents in a 2016 IPSOS Mori survey selected "immigration" as the most important issue for the country (Blinder & Alan, 2016, p. 2). Seeing migration as an important issue coincided with more negative attitudes, as the 2013 British Social Survey revealed that 76% of respondents favored reducing overall migration (Blinder & Alan, 2016, p. 3). Securitization discourse affected the majority of the British public who were convinced that new arrivals of Syrian refugees represented an emergency that could threaten the safety of domestic citizens. Additionally, pre-existing beliefs towards migrants heightened the negative attitudes as Syrian refugee movements mirrored the prevailing migration stereotypes. In a 2011 IPSOS Mori survey, 62% of respondents believed that asylum was the most common cause for migration, even though less than 20% of migrants came to the UK to seek asylum (Blinder, 2015, p. 88), and those who responded with more accurate guesses for the number of asylum seekers in the country tended to view migration and refugees more favorably (Blinder, p. 91). Public attitudes created a resistance towards refugee assistance in the country, and these securitized attitudes towards migration limited the state's policy response to the crisis.

Securitization discourse dominated the British public debate towards migration largely because of pre-existing beliefs about migration, but there was also another imporant reason. Following the September 11th terrorist attacks in the US and the July 7th attacks in London, the British public developed more Islamophobic attitudes towards Muslim citizens and Muslim migrants. The 2015 movement of Syrian refugees into the country reinforced internal bias towards Muslim people and further expanded the securitization of migration in the UK. In a 2015 BBC public poll, 40% of respondents believed that the UK should accept fewer refugees from Syria, and 60% of respondents believed that Syrian refugees posed a threat to the security of the country (BBC, 2016). In the UK, Muslim migrants embodied the public's fears about migrants: most arrived in the UK to seek asylum, they were refugees who fled war-torn countries full of danger, and they came from predominately Muslim countries that produced global terrorists (Abbas, 2019, p. 2453). Parts of the public already distrusted Muslim people, and the presence of predominately (or, assumed) Muslim migrants pushed the British public to conflate the dangers of migrants with the dangers of Muslim people in their society. Additionally, the 2015 arrival of Syrian refugees coincided with the terrorist attacks in Paris, where ISIL terrorists killed 130 people (Ray, 2021). The

event pushed Islamophobic attitudes to a new level across Europe, and in the UK, 80% of British respondents in a public opinion poll favored increased border security, and 44% of respondents said that the UK should shut off its borders to refugees (Nardelli, 2015). Migration had become a securitized issue that reinforced perceptions of Syrian migrants as a threat to the domestic population. In response, the government needed to ensure that the public felt protected from growing threats of refugee migration. Therefore, this growing securitization of migration, specifically towards Muslim migrants, influenced the UK government to restrict refugee movements from Syria.

5.   GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION

German public opinion towards migration is more complex than in the UK because Germany, historically, has accepted larger numbers of asylum seekers; therefore the public has more associations with migrants. Between 1980 and 1999, Germany received 2.8 million applications for asylum, which accounted for 45% of the EU's total applications received (UNHCR, 2001). In comparison, the UK received approximately 420,000 applications in that same time period (UNHCR, 2001). The larger immigrant population in Germany did not necessarily make all Germans pro-immigration. Germans were used to the presence of guest workers in the country, and their purpose was to help the economy and not integrate into the society.

Germany's complex relationship to securitization discourse of migration can be seen in the seemingly conflicting attitudes of its citizenry: while a majority of the public views migrants as a threat, they nevertheless support admitting them. Although 51% of participants in a 2016 German public opinion poll said that Syrian refugees posed a threat to the country, about 80% of respondents supported the admission of refugees fleeing persecution (Gerhards et al., 2016, p. 243). Many people see refugees through racial and ethnic stereotypes, but at the same time, most Germans support refugees because they believe that they are housing them for temporary protection and eventually refugees will be able to move somewhere else. The German government would have a less difficult time implementing a more liberal refugee policy since the majority of the public supports the entry of refugees. In the same public opinion poll, 51% of respondents believed that refugees undermine the values of the society, but 71% of respondents supported refugees coming into the country after escaping civil war (Gerhards et al., 2016, p. 247). It can be concluded that securitization discourse towards migration is less prominent in Germany because people set aside their fears of cultural others to accept refugees in the country. In should be pointed out, however, that while the German and British public have different attitudes towards asylum seekers, Germans do express Islamophobic attitudes towards Muslim refugees just like their British counterparts.

German public opinion suggests that Germans see Muslim migrants as a threat to the cultural integrity and security of the country, but Muslim migrants do not seem to generate the same fears as they do in the UK. This is despite the fact that similar discourses of Muslim migrants related to terrorism and violence do infiltrate German public opinion. In a 2016 Pew research poll, 61% of respondents expressed a belief that terrorist activity in the country would increase with the arrival of Syrian refugees (Poushter, 2016), and in a 2016 public opinion poll, 70% of respondents favored the entry of Christian refugees over Muslim refugees (Jürgen et al., 2016, p. 244). Unfavorable attitudes towards Muslim migrants are clearly popular across Europe. In Germany, a majority of the public securitizes Muslim arrivals for their religious identity rather than their migration status. The increased presence of Syrian migrants in the country in 2015 should have made Germans more skeptical of

refugee acceptance because the heightened visibility of migrants coincided with the public's fear towards Muslim people. And yet, while securitization discourse towards Muslim people prevailed in Germany, the public still expressed fewer negative attitudes towards refugees. In a Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW) national barometer report, 33% of German respondents said that they either donate money to refugee organizations or volunteer at shelters (Jacobsen et al., 2017, p. 165). While immigration concerns increased by 10% points between 2015 and 2016, 51% of respondents were concerned about the increased xenophobia towards migrants and refugees (Jacobsen et al., 2017, p. 166). The complex dynamic between Germans' acceptance of refugees and rejection of Muslim people in the country challenges securitization discourse, in that the public does not fully securitize migration to either support or reject migration in general.

6. BRITISH POLICY RESPONSE

In 2015, both the UK and German governments had to implement migration policies to respond to the influx of Syrian refugee arrivals, and both governments created their policies based on the level of securitization discourse in the respective countries. The British government had a more direct path to implement a restrictive immigration policy because of the prevailing anti-migrant attitudes within the public. David Cameron's response to Syrian refugee movements appeased the heightened securitization concerns among the public because he sought to keep out those who threatened the native British population. Cameron did not have a concrete refugee migration policy leading up to summer 2015. The government only took in specific refugees who they believed to be most vulnerable (Ostrand, 2015, 269), and in 2014, the UK only approved 3,700 Syrian asylum applications (Ostrand, 2015, p. 273). The lack of response to take in more Syrian refugees mirrored the public's negative attitudes towards asylum seekers, specifically Muslim asylum seekers. The government prioritized the perceived safety and security of the public over the safety of refugees fleeing war. In a country with highly negative public atttitudes towards immigration, Cameron had an easier time not responding to the refugee flows into Europe. The public largely favored stricter immigration policies, and any action to welcome refugees into the country would have defied public opinion and made people more distrusting towards the government. Although Cameron obeyed the majority of Britons that opposed refugee migration, he had to make compromises to assist Syrian refugees in 2015.

Cameron ultimately constructed a refugee policy that allowed for the UK to take humanitarian action to support Syrian refugees but also limit their entry into the country. As 2015 progressed and hundreds of thousands of refugees entered Europe, Cameron announced a plan to take in 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 (BBC, 2016). Although this plan seemingly defied public securitization discourse, Cameron reformed the country's development policy to prioritize keeping-out refugees and protecting the internal security of the UK. Through the UK Department for International Development (DfID), Cameron shifted development policy to help poverty alleviation in countries of the Global South (McConnon, 2020, p. 4). However, the new development policy signaled that those countries of the Global South were dangerous, and by providing aid to combat conflict and economic insecurity in those countries, the UK ensured that "dangerous" people would not migrate into the country and threaten the domestic population (McConnon, 2020, p. 10). The UK took the approach of protecting the borders via development policies abroad, and at the same time the government appeased public opinion by taking a stance against refugee entry into the country. The new policy allowed for Cameron to further separate the UK from Syria

and other countries sending refugees, as those countries became dangerous and presented potential security issues for the country.

Cameron created a new development policy to both appease the securitization discourse of migration in the country while ensuring that his government acted responsibly. Cameron positioned the development policy as both an agent of external help and internal protection. Cameron visited the largest Syrian refugee camp, Za'atri, in Jordan, upon his announcement of the new policy, and he claimed that the EU's lack of aid to assist Syria and its neighboring countries was the main source of the "crisis" (BBC, 2015). Additionally, he claimed that the EU should provide more aid to those countries to ensure that the refugees live in better conditions and have access to more resources (BBC, 2015). By positioning the refugee crisis as a humanitarian issue abroad, Cameron ensured that the government would take responsibility to help refugees. Although people opposed the entry of refugees into the country, about 50% of respondents in a 2015 voters' poll said that they had sympathy for Syrian refugees (Nardelli, 2015). In the same voters' poll, which was taken immediately after the November Paris attacks, about 66% of British respondents favored increasing development aid to Syrian/Jordan refugee camps (Nardelli, 2015). Cameron played both to the country's desire to have protection from the threats of refugee flows into Europe, and to the public's worries for the safety of Syrian refugees abroad were addressed.

7.   GERMAN POLICY RESPONSE

The British government created a more restrictive policy to prevent the entry of refugees and appease the securitization fears among the public; meanwhile, the German government created a liberal refugee policy based largely on, but defying some aspects of, public sentiment towards migration. By the end of 2015, Germany had accepted over one million refugees because of Angela Merkel's open borders policy. Merkel's policy emerged at a time when many EU countries closed their borders to refugees, and therefore Germany became the European leader of accepting refugees in 2015. In August, Merkel suspended the Dublin Regulation when she sent trains to rescue Syrian refugees stranded at the Hungarian border (Ilgit & Klotz. 2018, p. 614). This action in combination with the open-arms welcome to refugees made Merkel a champion of humanitarian rights compared to other EU leaders. Merkel enacted an open borders policy because, although the public saw Muslim refugee arrivals as a threat to the country, Germans still largely supported the admission of refugees who fled persecution. However, Merkel quickly faced opposition and difficulty, especially from other political parties, in gathering support for her policy.

Merkel slightly conceded to securitization discourse in the country by ultimately limiting her open borders policy, but she made efforts to de-securitize migration by making refugees a part of German society. Merkel had to compromise with others in the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) along with the Christian Social Union (CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) to continue her liberal migration policy while preventing further damage to herself and her own party. The CSU favored a cap on refugee admissions while the SDP disapproved of the potential cap (Ilglit & Klotz, 2018, p. 620), and eventually Merkel agreed to set a goal of roughly 200,000 refugees to enter the country per year (Ilglit & Klotz, 2018, p. 618). The quick policy change from open borders to a cap signaled that securitization discourse overcame the de-securitization goals of Merkel, because the cap represented a need to "protect" the country from more refugees. Additionally, Merkel ensured that fewer refugees would enter and remain in Germany by supporting the Turkey-EU deal in 2016—a deal that allowed the EU to send Syrian refugees to Turkey in exchange for

payment. Merkel conceded to the growing anti-migrant discourse as Germany experienced higher levels of refugee attacks on citizens (Ilglit & Klotz, 2018, p. 623).

Merkel tried to de-securitize migration discourse, but her actions to then limit refugee flows into the country in 2016 indicated that refugees posed a perceived threat to the country. The compromise, wittingly or unwittingly, appeased the majority of Germans, who did not want Muslim migrants to enter the country. However, the government also defied the public and party securitization discourse by constructing migrants as beneficial to the country. In 2017, Merkel signed the First Refugee Integration Law which gave asylum seekers the opportunity to work in the country (Ilgit & Klotz, 2018, p. 620). Merkel de-securitized the discourse of migrants by prioritizing the livelihoods of refugees settled in the country and signaling to the public that the refugees would integrate into the society. According to Ilgit & Klotz (2018), "Merkel assured the public and the world that Germany 'can do it' and that the image of Germany as a 'country of hope and opportunity' and the 'humanitarian principles' in the German constitution was something to be 'proud of'" (p. 622). Merkel relied on the German public's pre-existing attitudes towards asylum seekers to modify her policies to ensure the integration of refugees in society, but her policy would also demonstrate that the arrival of more refugees in the future would not threaten Germany.

8.   RIGHT-WING DISCOURSE AND MEDIA INFLUENCE

Public opinion has a fundamental role in the construction of state policy, but it is not the sole influence on policy. In the British and German case, right-wing parties and media discourse further influenced the decision-making process and public response to the migration policies. This section will consider the influence of both prominent right-wing parties in the UK and in Germany, as well as media narratives in the UK, on the securitization discourse of migration among the public and at the state level.

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) reinforced stereotypical narratives of migrants to promote fear among the public, and Cameron faced increased pressure to accommodate the growing anti-immigration attitudes created by UKIP through a restrictive policy. UKIP became the most vocal anti-immigration party in the 2000s by matching the fearful attitudes of the public towards the accession of 10 Eastern European countries into the EU in 2004 (Evans & Mellon, 2019, p. 77-79). By the 2010s, it was the third most popular national party (Evans & Mellon, 2019, p. 76). UKIP became the party for Britons who were concerned by migration movements into Europe and potentially into their country. The party embraced a securitized discourse of migration to signal the threats that Syrian refugees imposed on the British public. Even though Cameron enacted a more restrictive immigration policy in 2015, he still allowed refugees to enter the country and defied the desires of those Britons who favored closed borders. UKIP, on the other hand, fought for Britons who feared the entry of Syrian refugees by criticizing the actions of the Conservative government. Cameron faced increased pressure from UKIP and the growing anti-immigrant sentiment of the public, but he continued his migration policies because UKIP represented only a minority of the population.

Right-wing parties further securitized migration discourse in the UK, but the media also contributed to securitization discourse by highlighting the threatening nature of Syrian refugee arrivals. Right-wing media were not the only media to report on Syrian refugees in a fearful way; therefore securitized discourse was reinforced among most of the public and not just those who read *The Telegraph* (a conservative-leaning newspaper). In 2015, 63% of images produced by UK media groups depicted Syrian refugees in larger groups, with *The*

Guardian, *The Telegraph*, and *The Independent* sharing similar percentages (about 83–89%) (Wilmott, 2017, p. 73-74). By depicting refugees in groups, UK media reinforced a sense of crisis among the public because it focused on arrivals in seemingly high numbers. Additionally, 66% of images of refugees in groups are of men, which falsely creates the idea that men dominate refugee movements into Europe and can create fear among the public (Wilmott, 2017, p. 76-77). The false depictions of Syrian refugees and their movements into the country reinforced the beliefs that the UK public had towards migrants in general. The media further securitized migration discourse by playing into the fears of the public and suggesting that their fears were turning into a reality. The media helped Cameron's 2015 policy because of how they portrayed the refugee crisis, as it seemed only natural that he needed to enforce border security to stop the mass groups of refugees from entering the country.

Like the UK, Germany experienced growing support for the right-wing party Alternative for Deutschland (AfD), with the party winning two seats in the regional parliament in 2014 (BBC, 2014). The party reinforced fear of Syrian refugee arrivals and drew support away for Merkel's party. During Merkel's open border policy, AfD countered the government's rhetoric by highlighting the violent and threatening nature of all Muslim migrants and tried to push more Islamophobic attitudes onto the public (Ilgit & Klotz, 2018, p. 623). AfD faced complicated securitization views among the public because a majority of Germans supported refugee arrivals. However, like UKIP, AfD relied on the issue of Muslim migration to further securitize migration discourse to make the public fear Syrian refugee arrivals and prevent them from entering the country. Support for AfD increased after 2015, especially among people who were not members of CDU (Mader & Schoen, 2019, 82). The party attempted to persuade the public of the ineffectiveness of Merkel's party. However, AfD was not as successful in transforming the public's views on migration and migrants themselves, and only 13% of respondents in a 2016 voters' poll indicated that their attitudes towards the migration policies had changed (Mader & Schoen, 2019, p. 75). German's prevailing attitudes overcame most of the securitized narratives of AfD, and Merkel had the opportunity to continue her liberal migration policy.

9.   CONCLUSION

This paper considers the effect of public opinion on national policy creation and how public opinion can help or hinder leaders in policy implementation. Cameron and Merkel based their 2015 immigration and asylum policies on a securitized discourse of migration among the public. Merkel faced a more complicated public relationship with securitization discourse—Germans largely favored refugees entering the country to flee persecution, yet they disapproved of *Muslim* refugees and migrants entering the country. Securitization of migration affected Merkel's policy response to the extent that she created a policy that both appeased and rejected public desires. Cameron, on the other hand, had a more clear mandate from the public. British discourse on migration rejected the entry of refugees and asylum seekers and reinforced Islamophobic beliefs. Britons further feared entry of Muslim migrants into the country, so Cameron had more leverage to enact a more restrictive immigration policy. In both cases, the governments succeeded in implementing their migration policies because they based their policies on pre-existing beliefs and overall public attitudes towards migration.

The limitation of this argument relates to the issue of agency in the public option on migration. Although most Britons do not support immigration into the country, there are still people who are pro-immigrant and advocate for Syrian refugee rights. In September

2015, a series of pro–refugee marches took place in the UK, with tens of thousands of Britons protesting the restrictive policies of Cameron's government (Devis & Graham-Harrison, 2015). Some people did not support Cameron's policy because of their own pro-migrant beliefs, and his development aid-oriented decisions did not persuade those people to support a restrictive immigration policy. In the German context, some people opposed Merkel's refugee policy despite the mostly refugee-positive attitudes in the country. In November 2015, 5,000 supporters of AfD staged a protest in Berlin against Merkel's open border policy (Deutsche Welle, 2015). Diversity in public opinion exists regarding immigration, and ultimately some people defy the rhetoric from government leadership because of external influences like political parties, non–governmental organizations, and/or media. It is important to note that the public retains agency in their political beliefs regardless of state action.

Future leaders can look to the cases of UK and Germany to see how securitization discourse promotes or hinders their immigration policies. Leaders should pay special attention to the German case, where securitization discourse is not as strong in all areas. They could learn how to craft policy that reflects the different desires of the public. Additionally, refugee advocacy groups can learn from public opinion to craft effective educational resources that promote tolerance and eventual acceptance among refugee-skeptic people. Lastly, it is important to note that refugee policies have become more restrictive not just in the UK, but also in countries like the U.S., France, and Italy, where migrants make up a larger portion of the national population than in the past. Advocacy groups and NGOs must work to challenge the increasing securitized discourse of migration in Western democracies because refugees' livelihoods are at stake, and developed, economically powerful countries have the obligation to protect refugees as they have the resources and political stability to do so.

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