
Germany's Response to Refugee Crisis in European Union: The Role of Angela Merkel's Refugee Policy

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Abstract

Refugee crises are significant issues in all over the world and contemporarily, the most of the neighbor countries of conflict areas have faced many challenges. As a region, European region has become a more prominent place where arrival of refugees has increased. Among them, Germany has more concerned on refugee crisis as a humanitarian aspect. Consequently, after 2015, with the open-door policy which was implemented by Angela Merkel, influx of number of refugees and migrants to Germany has increased. As the results of that, two level of tensions which are tension between European Union and Refugees in Germany and Tension between Refugee community and German citizens were created. Arrival of refugees to Germany has affected to many sectors in Germany such as political, economic, social, cultural and so on. When concerning on the background of the arrival of refugee to Germany, the majority refugees were coming from Syria as the results of Syrian conflict. Consequently, prejudice and tension between German citizens and refugee community which is Muslim refugee community was created as a main domestic issue. Therefore, as a leading country of European Union, Germany has significantly taken multiple decisions to address the refugee issues in Germany. Under this scenario, the researcher identify it is significant to study refugee crisis in Germany and how Angela Merkel was impactful in the refugee crisis when addressing the refugee issue. The main objectives of this study are examining the refugee policy of Germany and identify challenges and opportunities of refugee crisis in Germany. This study is mainly engaged with qualitative research approach by collecting both primary and secondary data including various important literature areas, policy implementations and other important surveys regarding this context. Methodologically, this is case study analysis and as a theoretical framework, Group Threat theory and constructivism have analyzed. Through the study, it could find Angela Merkel has tried to integrate refugees into German society while considering on national identity and social norms as a solution.

Keywords: *Refugee crisis, European Union, Germany, Angela Merkel*

Introduction

In the past decade, refugee crises around the world continue to be a major concern. As the results of conflicts, natural disasters, or any hazardous situations, people are trying to escape for seeking freedom, protection and safety, as well as hoping for a better livelihood. Since refugee crisis became a major concern in the international system, the need for collective approach for solutions for refugee crisis has emerged. As a country, the most of the countries have committed for protecting people who escape from motherlands. Not only as a country but also in the regional level and international level, refugee crisis has been concerned. Especially, The Refugee Convention has identified how states should have responsibilities to protect refugees and what the refugee status is. Under the article no 1, refugees are defined as follows.

... well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country... (Kendzior, 2018)

This convention has been accepted by the most of the countries, and by binding to this agreement, they are committing to safeguard refugees for sake of protecting humanity. However, with the complexity of refugee crisis, someone has argued this is not a humanitarian crisis but a political crisis since leaders have failed to respond to this issue (Toygür & Benvenuti, 2016). While this refugee crisis became a political crisis internally, countries have faced a lot of problems such as issues related to sovereignty, citizenship issues, identity-based conflicts and security concerns. With these concerns, countries tried to find solutions for refugee crisis in a collective framework by aligning with the regional

organization. EU is a regional organization which protects people fleeing prosecution or serious harm in their countries of region. EU countries are trying to address refugee issues with multilateral perspectives. The important feature which can be identified in the EU is, while countries are addressing refugee crisis as a separate country, EU has created a common agenda for focusing on refugee crisis. Especially, when a country accepts refugees, they are legally implementing some strategies for refugees to adopt their countries. As an example, they implement assimilation process; known as integration or incorporation, is the process by which the characteristics of members of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another (Brown & Bean, 2006). However, with the policy of assimilation over multiculturalism leads a tension between refugee people and citizens of host countries. Especially, as a separate distinct community, when refugees are standing in the host country, it can be stigmatized by host country's citizen. In the result of that refugees can be re-victimized with the stigmatization of host country.

Among EU countries, Germany is the second largest country for hosting refugees. Especially, with a total of more than two billion euros, Germany is the third largest bilateral donor of humanitarian and structural assistance in Syria and its neighboring countries in the means of hosting refugees (Federal Foreign Office, 2022). In 2015 alone, with the open-door policy, Angela Merkel administration has accepted around 890,000 refugees to their country (Solo, 2018). Since Angela Merkel's refugee policy is significant when it is analyzed of EU refugee policy, this study has selected how Merkel's refugee policy welcomed refugees to their country and then how this has created a crisis in Germany. The significant feature of Germany's refugee policy is the government ratified a permissive asylum policy, while Merkel encouraged a welcoming culture which further increase of influx to Germany (Solo, 2018).

Further, to prevent refugee crisis in Germany, some suggested Germany should stop of hosting refugees due to a feared clash of cultures (Schmid, 2016). In 2016, this tension was increased, and thousands of people protested in towns and cities in Germany to against to asylum seekers and against the concept of "Islamisation of the West" what German citizens feel. (BBC, 2016).

While analyzing the refugee crisis in Germany, the ideas of other external countries are important since it reflects how issue was complicated with Germany and other EU and Non- EU countries. Especially, The Czech Prime Minister, Bohuslav Sobotka, criticized Germany for increasing illegal immigration to Europe with its humanitarian aid to the crisis and for prioritizing their own humanitarian agenda over European security issues (Schmid, 2016). It is clearly identified that Refugee crisis in Germany has evolved with the above reasons and Merkel's policy has tried to address these issues.

Research Problem

This study examines the challenges and opportunities relates to refugee crisis in Germany. The complexity of refugee crisis between citizens of Germany and refugees especially with refugees who belong to Muslim community can be identified. In the result of that refugees of Germany are re-victimized with the stigmatization of host country; Germany. This leads two level of tensions; tension between citizens of Germany and refugees as well EU and refugees. Further Angela Merkel's policy on refugee will be analyzed to show how Merkel's implementations were addressed refugee issues in Germany.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the refugee policy of Germany during Angela Merkel's administration
2. To identify challenges and opportunities for the host country; Germany

Research Questions

1. How refugees were integrated in Germany during Angela Merkel's administration?
2. Why refugees became a crisis in Germany?

Significance and Scope of the Study

The significance of this study can be shown through two major ideas. The first one is the contribution of this study to field of conflict studies. Since refugee problem can be categorized as a humanitarian crisis, this study shows how this became an intergroup conflict within Muslim refugee community and German citizens. This is not only about humanitarian crisis but also an ideological conflict among communities. It is significantly identify how refugee crisis became a conflict from intrapersonal prejudice to intergroup conflict. Theoretical application of this study also will be significant, since application of Group Threat Theory to refugee crisis is a less concern in the research field. The next point is the importance of Merkel's policy to address refugee crisis in Germany. As a woman leader, how Merkel has tackled this problem through her policies is a significant in EU. The scope of this research is demarcated with study of refugee crisis in Germany and the ideas of refugee, integration process, ideological prejudices, cross-cultural tension and effective policies related ideas to refugee crisis will be discussed.

Theoretical Framework

This study mainly uses two theories of Group Threat Theory and Constructivist theory with two different perspectives. Constructivism is analyzed in an International Relations perspective since it reflects

how cultural and societal norms influence internal and foreign policies within countries and it can be analyzed how cross-cultural tension has been emerged due to societal and cultural norms in Germany because of refugees. And also, when analyzing Merkel's refugee policy, it can be seen that she has more focused on German culture and identity. While protecting German culture and identity, she wanted to integrate refugees in Germany and that decision making can be analyzed with constructivist ideas. This will be further discussed on next chapters.

Group threat theory will be analyzed to show how refugees have become a real or imagine threat to German citizens and due to that how the tension between refugee people and German citizens was emerged. Under Group threat theory, it assumes that creation of prejudices among communities affect to emerge conflict within countries. Especially, according to Group threat theory, the major reason for creating prejudices among communities is the division of in-group and out-group sense. The ideological difference between German citizens and Muslim Refugee communities can be analyzed with the idea of in-group and out-group sense.

Methodology

This study uses case study analysis which is the German context relates to refugee crisis. Further, the study analyzes Angela Merkel's refugee policy and practical implications of those policies in a qualitative framework and some statistical data such as the number of refugees in Germany, the amount of humanitarian aid and funds as economic data are analyzed. But those data and survey are not for the purpose of quantitative analysis. The research data is gathered through primary data; Angela Merkel's refugee policies, personal statements, press statements and other important policies and secondary data; related literature sources.

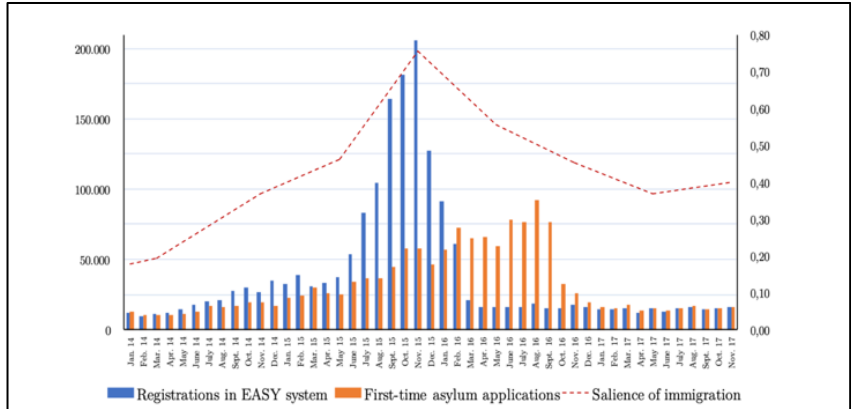
Case Study Analysis: *Refugee Crisis in Germany Introduction*

As a European region country, it is evident that Germany is more responsible for the refugee crisis. Especially, refugee who were coming to European region as the results of Syrian war, were welcomed by Germany while other countries rejected them. According to the speech of Angela Merkel at the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration on 10 December 2018, she mentioned

Germany is committed to this task. We have held intensive discussions in our parliament... Germany will continue to play an active role in its further implementation for the benefit...

According to this, it is clearly understood politically how Germany has committed for the refugee crisis in the world. However, with increasing of flowing refugees to Germany in the mid of 2015, that has affected to create an internal crisis within Germany. As mentioned in the previous chapter, refugee crisis has started with Merkel's refugee policy after the speech of "Wir schaffen das"/"We can do it" and according to the article 17 of the Dublin III Regulation, Germany decided to examine asylum claims of Syrian citizens, without sending them back to the country entry (Sola, 2018). And also, as the background of the refugee crisis in Germany, it could find about quantitative data how refugees have expanded within Germany. The below chart shows how application for asylum seekers in Germany has widened in 2015.

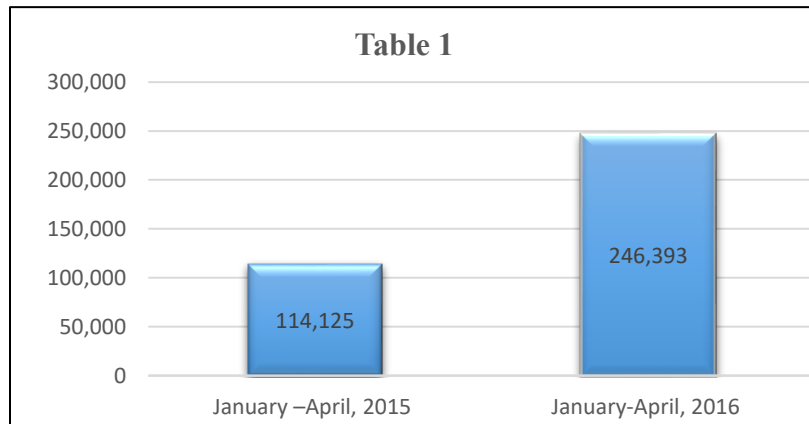
Figure 5: Arrivals of asylum seekers and salience of immigration in Germany



Source: Sola, 2018.

According to the above chart, blue bars represent the number of arrivals of people who intent to apply for asylum in Germany, registered through the EASY system. Orange bars represent first-time asylum applications lodged in Germany. The dashed red line reports the salience of immigration as a policy issue for the German people. Therefore, according to this chart, it is clearly seen in the end of 2015 year, a considerable rise in relations to flowing refugees to Germany can be seen. As below chart shows, the progress of flowing of refugees to Germany within 2015 and 2016 years can be contrasted.

Table 1: asylum applications to Germany



Source: Drafted by author gathering data from (Pearce, n.d)

However, due to this high number of flowing refugees to Germany, Germany had to face several issues such as social, political, economic and other cultural issues. However, while Germany was experiencing refugee crisis as a challenge in 2015 to 2016, some advantages also can be seen. Before focusing on German's response, the challenges which German has met are examined. For more analytical approach, the SWOT Analysis is used and among four components, only Opportunities and challenges (Threats) are taken to analyze.

Challenges of refugee crisis in Germany

Refugee crisis in Germany can be categorized with many areas and among them, according my opinion, Economic, Social and Political challenges are the main priorities when concerning on the challenges of refugee crisis in Germany.

Economic Challenges

When focusing on the economic challenges, inability of refugees to access for job market is the main problem which Germany was facing as economic challenges. Especially, it can be seen that there are difficulties in integrating refugees into the German labor markets. And also, according to the Federal Labor Office on a quarterly basis from 1/2005 to 1/2016, unemployment rates for non-Germans are noticeably higher than for the "native" population (Gehrsitz & Ungerer, 2016). Due to this high rate of unemployability of refugee communities, crimes have increased within Germany; especially, handbag-snatching, damages to motor vehicles, theft from kiosks and show windows, bike-nicking, breaking of vending machines, and (attempted) robberies of money vans and such crimes have increased in Germany (Gehrsitz & Ungerer, 2016). With this situation, it can be

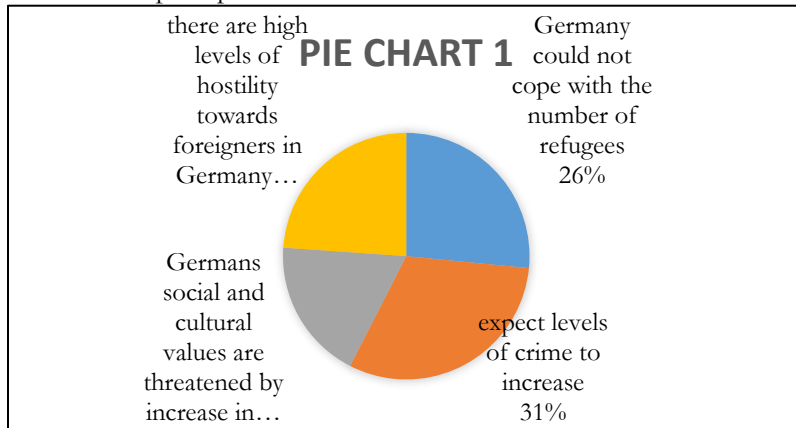
seen that how economic issues have expanded to social insecurities within the German society. As the results of this complexity of challenges, German citizens were also violent against to refugees. Therefore, it can be understood that, in the year of 2015, though Angela Merkel had positive idea of inviting refugees to Germany with the intention of getting more advantages for the job market in Germany, she had to face many challenges.

Social Challenges of refugee crisis

In every country, while refugees are being welcomed to the particular host country, they follow the integration process for refugees to adopt to context of host countries. While integrating process is functioning, some issues related to social factors will be emerged. Especially, In Germany, in related to group relations and social identity, crisis among communities and within society has started. Initially, though citizens welcomed refugees to their country, with the high flowing of refugees into Germany, citizens were against with refugees. Especially, citizens in Germany were against to Muslim refugee community, since Muslim culture was thought as a threat to German culture. Even in a job market, German citizens disagreed for Muslim women to wear a Hijab, since it is threatening to German culture. It can be understood how symbolic threat was functioning in Germany in relations to refugee crisis.

Further, according to the survey done with the perceptions related to social issues which emerged due to refugees, it can be identified that social issues are the most complexed issues in Germany.

Pie Chart 1: perceptions related to social issues

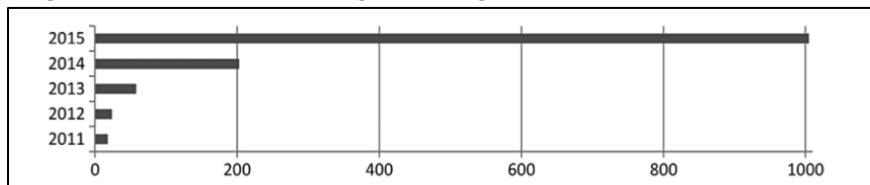


Source: Drafted by Author, data gathered from (Pearce, n.d).

According to this survey, it is clearly seen how citizens have interpreted and seen this refugee issues. Majority think that due to refugee crisis in Germany, crimes to increase will be high. And also, there are high level of hostility towards foreigners in Germany, and due to high increment in number of refugees, Germany's social and cultural are threatened. When applying Group threat theory into this scenario, it is clearly identified that perceived threat can be happened among different ethnic communities. When it applies to the German context, it is evidently known that when Muslim refugees came from Syria, the feeling of islamophobia was created within Germany and due to that German citizens are always against to Muslim refugees as mentioned above. Further, group threat theory explains, feeling of "othering" between minority and majority groups creates racial prejudices and the roots of racial prejudice beyond the "realm of individual feeling" and more centrally in the sense of group position created by the dominant as opposed to the subordinate group (Blumer, 1958) and these kind of ideas can be directly interconnected with German context since there were racial prejudices between German citizens and Muslim refugee community can be seen. That negative connection has led to create many social problems in Germany. According to these arguments, refugee crisis related to group identity has been increased with the

negative perceptions towards to Muslim refugee community. With this scenario, violence against refugees was started in Germany and that violence against refugees can be seen as a particularly strong expression of xenophobia (Jäckle & König, 2016).

Figure 6: Criminal offences against refugee accommodation



Source: Jäckle & König, 2016

This figure shows how criminal offenses; property damage, propaganda and agitation, arson attacks, sedition which were done by German citizens for refugees have expanded in 2015 with the high level of flowing refugees to Germany. Another important factor which should be understood is anti-immigration sentiments in Germany have increased with negative contact among people of different backgrounds and negative stereotypes (Allport, 1954).

Germany's Response to Refugee Crisis

Implementation of Humanitarian Admission

Firstly, Germany wanted to resettle refugees into the country as a component of integration process. Therefore, they have implemented Humanitarian Admission and resettlement program and under that, they have offered resettlement, relocation, and humanitarian admissions to refugees.

And also, there are three forms of protection provided by the German government as follows.

- Refugee protection

- Entitlement to asylum
- Subsidiary protection

Refugee protection is governed by Article Three of the Asylum Act, which expands the definition of the 1951 Geneva Convention by considering persecution on the basis of sexual orientation (Ayoub, 2019).

New Integration Act

Integration process is very useful for a country to integrate refugees with their citizens. Angela Merkel has introduced New Integration Act and some scholars have shown that this New Integration Act violates the refugee convention since under this integration act, refugee rights were limited. Especially, under the Integration Act,

- Facilitate vocational training
- Employment and training opportunities
- Assignments of a place of residence to avoid focuses in select areas
- Permanent settlement authorizes for refugees who show that they are willing to cooperate and take integration classes (Kendzior, 2018).

Under this integration process, refugees granted asylum in Germany have to do a compulsory integration courses; 600 hours language and 100 hours on German law, history, culture and society (Pearce, n.d). When considering on these facts, it can be concluded that Germany wanted refugees to adopt German culture and it is doubt whether Germany has facilitated for refugees to enjoy their freedom of religion, cultural practices as Article 4 of the Refugee Convention protects the religious freedom of refugees.

This scenario is further analyzed with constructivist theory since it has focused on how countries are implementing policies by considering on their constructive cultural and social norms as the above chapter explains. Here, it can be understood to protect German culture and

social norms, New Integration Act was formed.

As constructivist said human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces (Schmid, 2016), Germany had to focus on how refugees should integrate with German citizens. That is the reason for behind Angela Merkel has implemented New Integration Act to create interconnection between German citizens and refugees through promoting multiculturalism.

Financial, Socio-Political and Security Development

Under the administration of Merkel, economic status of refugee community was also focused. the government planned on providing several thousand one-euro jobs in order to slowly introduce newcomers to the German labour market (Schmid, 2016). And also, With regards to wage-earning employment, Article 17 of the Refugee Convention mandates refugees receive “the most favorable treatment accorded to nationals of a foreign country in the same circumstances” (Kendzior, 2018). Therefore, with parallel to international policies, Germany imposed a period of sponsored vocational training upon refugees to access for market economy in Germany. However, it can be seen politically, the refugee crisis and refugee policy have been critical political topics in Germany for several months with about half the population voicing frustration and discontent with the situation and how it is being handled (Schmid, 2016).

Further, in the security aspect, counter-terrorism measures have been taken as a response to the Brussels attacks in 2016. Since, more Muslim refugees came to Germany, as the results of Syrian conflict, with the assumption of terrorist attack which may be happened to Germany, the government planned to strengthen security authorities and provide more assistance form private companies in order to combat terrorism (Schmid, 2016). This context reflects that refugees of Germany are re-

victimized with the stigmatization of Germany and Islamophobia leads two level of tensions; tension between citizens of Germany and refugees as well European Union and refugees.

Media role under Angela Merkel's Administration

Media role is a significant factor in Germany to spread Germany's ideas and overviews about refugees. Especially, it is known that Media is like a sword with two edges which can manipulate people in both positive and negative ways. Creating positive image in a society which includes racial prejudices and different stereotypes is more important to solve problems. Especially, in Germany, most of the press sources as well as other media coverages have tried to more focus on refugee context. As an example, German News Papers of Bild, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Welt have more focused on the issues related to refugees in Germany and that information is really needful for not only government but also for citizens to get knowledge about the context of refugee crisis in Germany. As an overall, the areas which focused by the media is as follows.

- Post arrival integration of refugees
- Humanitarian action
- Threat to communities by refugee community
- Human rights
- Health risk in the country
- Mafia and traffic activities
- Welfare and social benefits of refugees (Schmid, 2016)

That was important for government to make implementations or find solutions for refugee crisis. The following table reflects the areas what media has more focused on in quantitative way.

Table 2: Themes by German Newspapers

	<i>Bild</i>	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	<i>Die Welt</i>	German Average
Immigration Figures / Levels	58.1%	52.7%	82.4%	64.4%
Search and Rescue / Aid Supplies	32.6%	51.5%	35.1%	39.7%
Political Response / Policy	23.3%	27.3%	55.4%	35.3%
Humanitarian (Elements)	20.9%	33.3%	23.0%	25.7%
Mortality Figures	18.6%	7.9%	24.3%	16.9%
Post-arrival Integration	4.7%	33.9%	5.4%	14.7%
Mafia / Traffic	7.0%	9.1%	25.7%	13.9%
Welfare / Benefits / Resources	11.6%	6.1%	13.5%	10.4%
Humanitarian (Key Theme)	2.3%	13.3%	6.8%	7.5%
Receiving / Rejecting	2.3%	14.5%	4.1%	7.0%
Threat to Communities / Cultural Threat	9.3%	3.0%	8.1%	6.8%
Threat to National Security	7.0%	1.2%	10.8%	6.3%
Human Rights	4.7%	4.2%	9.5%	6.1%
Journey	9.3%	3.6%	4.1%	5.7%
Health Risk for Country of Destination	4.7%	3.6%	2.7%	3.7%
Migrant/Refugees/Asylum Seekers Success Stories	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Total N	95	474	246	815

Source: Berry et al, 2016.

It is significantly understood that, these themes appeared in articles which were generally sympathetic to refugees and which provided spaces where refugees could discuss their hopes and ambitions for their new life in Germany.

Angela Merkel's Foreign Policy Implementation

Not only internal policies, but also for foreign policies, Angela Merkel included about refugees.

The main purpose of this is to enhance the protection of refugees: People who need protection must receive it (Merkel, 2018). Merkel has explained that as a developed country, refugees should be welcomed to their countries and that is the main responsibility of neighbor countries.

This reflects Angela Merkel always tried to make decision as a leading party in the European Union. Therefore, she has implemented such policies not only for Germany, but also for European Union.

Adaptation of International Policies and Measurements

As an international regulation, two major policies can be understood which German has adopted in to their internal policies on refugee crisis. The Dublin Regulation and the Schengen

Agreement can be taken as examples. Main responsibility of Dublin regulation is the examination of the asylum application (European Commission, 2022). When comparing to German context, the German government continued that it had in fact not excluded the Dublin System at any moment in time and that all related laws and regulations were still in force (Schmid, 2016). And also under the Schengen Agreement, In September 2015, Germany reintroduced internal border controls and passport inspections, with special focus on the German-Austrian border. This measure was taken for security reasons and with the intention to limit the number of refugees arriving in the country as well as to re-establish a more organized process internally (Schmid, 2016).

According to the above facts, it can be concluded that since Germany has faced many challenges in relations to Refugee crisis after 2016, Angela Merkel has implemented many strategies to address those issues. However, Merkel has more focused on internal or structural factors while addressing these issues.

Opportunities

While refugees are categorized as a crisis in international arena, some advantages in relations to refugees can be seen. In the context of Germany, it can assume Merkel has welcomed more refugees to get more advantages also. As follows, Germany could get more advantages from refugees.

Some scholars have shown that by making refugees one of the priorities in policy and law making, Germany could see huge improvements in different sectors such as the education system, public transport, law making in regards to equality and sexual harassment as well as the health system (Schmid, 2016).

- Dealing with refugees would lead to innovation and progress for Germany.
- Effective and fair recruitment for the job market which integrate with German culture have expanded the market economy in Germany.
- Through the cultural mobilization, the growing diversity of human could be shown through the context of Germany.

Conclusion

Due to high influx of refugees to Germany, it was understood that Germany has faced many challenges and it was significantly seen that situation was complicated after introducing “Open Door Policy” by Angela Merkel in 2015. In the humanitarian perspective, Merkel wanted to initiate great step for protecting refugees and as a European country, Germany’s involvement in refugee crisis was stand out. However, with the cultural and constructive social norms, there could be seen the disparities between perception and attitudes of German citizens and refugee communities. When this applies to the global scenario, since the Syrian conflicts are more centralized with terrorist involvement, refugees who came from Syria to Germany could be a real threat to Germany. But the point is how people who felt from their motherlands categorized as terrorists. Therefore, sometimes German citizens have

seen Muslim refugees as perceived threats. That is the reason behind of increasing racial prejudices between German Catholic citizens and Muslim refugees. This is not only effect for Germany also. Since Germany is a European country, this affected to European Union. That is the reason, the first chapter mentioned refugee crisis in Germany created two level tensions. Because of the nature of spillover effect of refugee crisis, every country in European Union had to focus on refugee crisis.

However, in the aspect of taking measurement for addressing the issue of refugee crisis in Germany, it was understood Germany has worked hard to alleviate the causes of forced migration and to protect refugees. However, it was no ended since even today Germany is facing refugee crisis. Even under current administration,

- I. Germany have fully focused on mitigating this crisis by introducing crisis prevention projects
- II. Providing humanitarian assistance on the ground
- III. Co-shaping a European response through a joint solution. As an example, Germany in 2022 has provided up to 6000 places for resettlement for refugees (Federal Foreign Office, 2022)
- IV. Promoting return and reintegration process

However, it should be focused as a country, what Germany can do more for refugees through European Union and how European Union as a regional organization can react for the refugee crisis.

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