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**EUROPEAN UNION'S STANCE ON THE BELARUS–EUROPEAN UNION
BORDER MIGRANT CRISIS COMPARED TO THE 2015-16 MIGRANT CRISIS.**

Bachelor's thesis

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ABSTRACT

European Union has recently faced two migrant crises, 2015-16 migrant crisis in which estimated 1,4 million migrants made their way into Europe and the European Union-Belarus border crisis in which at least 40 000 migrants had tried crossing into EU by the late November of 2021.

The objective of this thesis is to analyse both migrant crises in a comparative manner to find out if European Union has been able to learn from its past mistakes and used its know-how in dealing with the European Union-Belarus crisis. Author compares his finding with three theories: Normative Power Europe, Europeanization and Institutional Learning, to better understand European Union's actions.

The findings of this research were supported by statements and press releases from European Commissions and Councils websites in which different officials talked about both crises. The analysis concluded that European Union has been able to learn from its past mistakes, as the Union was quicker to act and more unified when dealing with the European Union-Belarus crisis. Author also concluded that the general plan of action for European Union when dealing with crisis is "out of sight, out of mind."

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1. INTRODUCTION

European Union (EU) has been a hotspot for migration for decades, but the biggest migration by volume into EU to date has been the 2015-16 migrant crisis. The second migration wave that's been called a crisis is the European Union-Belarusian border crisis.

As of 2021 EU has faced a new migrant wave from its eastern border. Mainly Iraqi and other Middle Eastern refugees were trying to cross the border from Belarus to Poland and Lithuania, to enter the EU. This event has come to be called European Union-Belarus border crisis. The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to compare the 2015-16 border crisis with the one going on now from the European point of view and to find out if EU's actions and narrative have changed in the meantime.

The 2015-16 border crisis was kicked off by the Arabic Spring and the civil wars that followed. Many war refugees from Arabic countries i.e. Syria fled their homes in hopes to reach Europe and to find refuge there. It is estimated that a total of 1,4 million refugees reached Europe (Global Shelter Cluster). The Belarus-European border crisis started because of rising tensions between the EU and Belarus. Belarus's regime used immigrants as a weapon against the EU to strengthen its position in international stage. European Union-Belarus migrant crisis is still an ongoing event and full conclusion are therefore impossible to give on EU's stance as they can change in time. However, the author will take into consideration the narrative and official statements that have been published during the production of this thesis and will give his best conclusions.

The timeframe that will be researched is 2015-16 and 2021-22. Such timeframe has been chosen so that the author does not get involved with too much information and because the crises took place in those years then these dates are the most relevant to research.

The topic is relevant because of the general change happening in the EU and the rising tensions between the west and the east. It is important to research how the EU is seeing migrants now as we can expect more migrant inflows from the EU's eastern border because of tensions between EU and Russia and Belarus.

The goal of this thesis is to look at the 2015-16 migrant crisis and Belarusian-EU migrant crisis and to understand the differences of narrative and the way that the crises have been handled by the EU. The second goal of this thesis is to see if the theory of Normative Power Europe and its values (core norms) held up in the handling of the crises. The third goal is to see if EU learnt anything from the previous crisis through the framework set by the Europeanization theory and Institutional Learning and to see if EU has used any of its new knowledge.

The first section of this thesis introduces three theories that make up the theoretical framework for the research. Theories chosen are Normative Power Europe, Europeanization and Institutional Learning. These theories have been chosen as they offer a way to explain EU's decision making and actions, in addition these theories back up the goal of finding out if EU has been able to learn from its mistakes. After theoretical framework will come the methodology section, in which author will further explain on how the analysis of EU's statements and actions was conducted. After that is the empirical part, in which author conceptualises migration and explains both crises in more detail. After that is the analytical part in which author analysis EU's statements and actions from both crises in comparative narrative analysis. After that author will give conclusions on if the EU's actions and narrative about the crises have changed.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. NORMATIVE POWER OF EUROPE

The theoretical framework of this thesis is conducted around the theory of Normative Power Europe (NPE). The simplest way to explain the normative power of Europe is that it is a normative justification rather than the use of physical force or material incentives (Gerrits. 2019. 14). This means that Europe in a sense is a civil power with no military power nor material means of pushing through its initiatives. But it uses the collective power of its civilians to influence policy making and third nations.

The theory of Normative Power Europe is mainly originated from Ian Manners. According to Manners, NPE is a sort of power that has the ability to shape what is thought normal in a post-Westphalian society (Manners. 2002. 239). Reasons for why Europe has evolved into a normative power as argued by Manners that it is for Europe's long history of democracy, rule of law, social justice and respect for human rights (2002. 241). Manners has also said that the reason why EU is a normative power is not for what it does or says, but what it is (2002. 252). That means that the EU has been before visioned and then built as a normative power. Manners also stated that the EU can be conceptualized as the changer of international norms and that the EU should and acts to change the international norms (2002. 241). Manners stated that what makes EU a normative power and different from other existing states is the pooling of sovereignty, a transnational parliament, pursuit of human rights, such as the abolition of the death penalty and conditioned democracy (2002. 253).

Author would like to include that the respect for human rights and democracy are the main factors behind it. That's because Europe has had the longest running democracies in the world and most of its nations have respected its citizens individual rights for a long time, even authoritarian regimes to some extent.

2.1.1. BASIS OF NORMATIVE POWER EUROPE

Thomas Diez has said that normative power is a sort of power that can shape the conceptions of normal (Diez. 2013. 195.). In practice this would mean that in case that EU is a normative

power then it would have the ability to change the concepts of normal in all sorts of fields to its understanding in the surrounding region or all over the world. As argued by Manners, the five core norms of EU that make up the normative power are (2002. 242):

- Peace
- Liberty
- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Respect for human rights

Four minor other norms can be suggested as well:

- Social solidarity
- Anti-discrimination
- Sustainable development
- Good governance

Manners has argued in his 2009 article that EU has proven that it is a normative power by its influence to the global politics with European Convention of Human Rights and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2009. 171). From the list of nine cores of what makes up EU's normative basis this suggests to the respect of human rights. As for examples of other core norms, like peace then the former European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was formed as a project that would foster peace through trade in Europe. As we all know then the ECSC later became European Community from which outgrew the EU.

In principle normative power means that a body of influence has a sort of power to turn its ideas and ideals into normality which can be argued that EU has been able to do in the region. For example, even the EU's expansion can be seen as a sign of its normative power. That's because in accordance with EU's rules the would-be member states must pass certain standards which can range from economical to human rights. If candidate states cannot achieve these standards, then they cannot become a member state of the Union. What's also important to note, is that the core norms of normative power have been written as official EU's values.

It has been argued that the EU does not have set of fixed values that represent the European values (Biedenkopf et al. 2004. 12). That is a valid point because EU has 27 member states which all have different cultures and sets of values. But from authors stand of view they all

share a common ground of values which were stated by Manners as the core norms of Normative Power Europe.

2.1.2. THOMAS DIEZ'S CRITICISM

Thomas Diez has expanded the definition of NPE. According to him the definition put out by Manners lacks comparison with other ways of power so it is difficult to grasp the idea behind the NPE. Diez has compared it against military power and civilian power. From military power point of view Diez has argued that although EU has developed the Common Defence Policy and deployed military missions it still does not build its power upon military might, which clearly differentiates EU from a military power (Diez. 2013. 196-197).

Other point of comparison that Diez makes is civilian power. The theory of Europe as a civilian power was put out by Francois Duchene in 1971 which states that a country would pursue its interests with non-military tools to civilise international politics and in a sense make war obsolete (Diez. 2013. 197).

Diez has brought out four problems with the theory of NEP. First problem that Diez mentions is the interest and norms problem, which means that although as a normative power the EU should act in accordance with the norms/values that it has stated, it sometimes chooses its interests over the norms in different regions of the world (Diez. 2013. 197). The best example of it would be EU supporting authoritarian regimes in the Arab world to keep back the migration (Diez. 2013. 197).

The second question that Diez raises is if EU is truly effective as a NP, is it able to normalize its view of things to the outside and to its member states. Diez says that it is difficult for analysts to have a definitive answer for this question because EU is often among the many factors that can explain change but not the only one (Diez. 2013. 198).

The third problem put out by Diez states that EU might be doing good in the world but its member states can have the opposite influence. One of the examples from Diez is that although EU might condone weapon exports to some regions but the member states or even private actors in said member states might be doing it (Diez. 2013. 198).

The last problem with NEP according to Diez is the academic standing of NEP theory. He explains that when Manners came out with the theory, he made a strong claim that EU is, has and always will be a normative power. This poses a problem because consequential works are centred around the theory which restricts them from analysing EU's global role (Diez. 2013. 199).

Because of the problems with the theory of NPE and from other authors opinions i.e Haukkala, Diez has put out another theory of how to define EU. Diez argues that theory of NEP should be dissolved or combined with hegemony. Some of the advantages of thinking of EU as a hegemony rather than NP would be: the combination of norms and interests that have been the main source of debates whether EU is a NP or not, because it a hegemony combines them; hegemony does not start with fixed set of norms and meanings, but it rather puts the struggles about the norms in a central stage; hegemony makes it possible to look at other actors as well like member states and private actors; hegemony would in a sense restart the debate that the NEP theory was meant to start at the beginning (Diez. 2013. 205-206).

2.2. EUROPEANIZATION

This section of theoretical framework introduces the theory of Europeanization from various authors, such as Ladrech and Radaelli. In its broadest definition, Europeanization is the influence between EU and its member states (Dosenrode. 2020). This influence can affect EU's member states policies and politics, it also raises questions about legitimacy, should the responsible entity be EU or its member states (Dosenrode. 2020). This is important for the research as it theorizes and broadens the sense of influence that EU has on its member states. It also raises important questions about legitimacy of EU's actions. Research on Europeanization began in 1950 with researchers looking into regional integration, this research analysed what was to become the nowadays EU (Dosenrode. 2020). The term "Europeanization" wasn't used until 1994, when Robert Ladrech coined the term "Europeanization" to analyse the effects former European Community had on its member states (Dosenrode. 2020). It is important to note that Europeanization is not European integration, that means that it is not when and why countries join into supranational institutions, but it is about what happens after EU institutions are already established and are producing their effects (Saurugger & Radaelli.

2008. 33). Europeanization can be separated into five different stages with different key-mechanisms: (Dosenrode. 2020)

- Meta-Europeanization – countries that created the EU setting an overall frame for EU;
- Downloading – pressure on EU member states to adapt EU standards;
- Uploading – Further development of the EU by member states suggestions for EU policy making;
- Cross-loading – Frames created by the EU for member states to exchange practises and experiences, institutions don't involve themselves in it;
- Export Europeanization – EU making potential future member states comply with EU.

Radaelli has researched Europeanization and its effects on public policy. Public policy is especially important in this thesis as public moods are what drive EU's decision making. EU's decision making is impacted by it in many ways, for example EU commission is directly elected by the citizens of EU, or EU's officials can lose their credibility in case of public outcry. So, it is important to understand how can EU through Europeanization impact public moods on the subject of migrant crisis. Essentially, the author is trying to answer the question, does EU official narrative match the actual policy-making? In Radaelli's and Saurugger article he has a quote from Ladrech which states that Europeanization in a way is guiding the policy making in a way that EC-s political and economic standards become member states standards (Ladrech. 1994. 69). This suggests that Europeanization in essence is the EU constantly creating standards that EU member states incorporate into their policies. It is arguable that EU has been able to learn from its past mistakes and use Europeanization to deal with similar problems arising later more effectively. Radaelli and Saurugger also state that studies about policy making reveal huge impact of Europe (2008. 37). Some of the examples of these studies that he brought out are Radaelli's 2003 research on monetary and tax policy, and Majone's 1996 research of profound impact of EU regulation on national competition policy and regulatory approaches (Saurugger & Radaelli. 2008. 37). This is from the standpoint of Europeanization, which means that EU has impact on its member states and potential candidate state's policy making. It is not too far-fetched to suggest, that EU can have such kind of impact on migration policy of states too.

2.3. INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

With the aim of this research to see if EU has been able to learn anything from previous crises and if it has implemented any of the new know-hows it is important to understand the concept of institutional learning. Radaelli, the same author that has been active in the theory of Europeanization and how the EU looks at the outside world, has been researching if EU and its institutions have been learning from its past mistakes and has it used its experience in dealing with similar problems in its future. Radaelli has concluded, that EU has been learning in two aspects, first being the learning at the top, which basically means that EU has been able to learn from its mistakes on the EU-level (Radaelli. 2008. 241). Secondly, he also concludes, that EU has been learning hierarchically too, this means that if the EU's higher ranked officials or institutions have learned something from its past mistakes, these experiences and knowledge that comes with it is likely to spill-over to lower levels and institutions (Radaelli. 2008. 241). Although, Radaelli mentions that his research only focuses on a small portion of the theory of Europeanization and for that reason cannot be thought as a definite truth (Radaelli. 2008. 241) it still is enough of a proof for this research to continue.

Reason for why this thesis is built around the theories of Normative Power Europe and Europeanization is that they influence each other in almost all aspects. NPE being the theory about EU being able to normalise its standards in the world through normative means and Europeanization about EU influencing its member states and candidate states policy making. These two theories are the underlying feature of this thesis and the analysis of EU decision making and actions will be built upon these theories. Furthermore, theory of Institutional Learning has been added as a basis for researching if EU as an institution has been able to learn anything from its mistakes.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology section will explain the process and logic on how the author will conduct his research. Sections covered in this section of the research will touch upon the data selection, timeline set and how the author plans to do research on the topic.

Author has chosen to build his analysis on the topic on three theories, which will make up the theoretical framework of this thesis. The first theory is Normative Power Europe, the second theory is Europeanization and the third is Institutional Learning. These theories have been chosen by the author on the purpose for describing the power that EU has and to imply that EU has learned from the previous 2015-16 migrant crisis and has used its knowledge on handling the Belarusian-EU crisis.

For this the author derives narratives from official EU documents, such as statements and press released from EU Commissions or European Councils websites. With the narratives derived, the author decides if the narrative is coherent or not and if there have been agreements/disagreements between in the EU Commission or between member states. Secondly, author will conduct a comparative analysis of narratives and actions separately for both crises. Thirdly, author will contrast both crises and changes in narrative and actions and will give his assessment, if EU had learned anything from the previous crisis and implemented it in the crisis going on now.

These statements will be from EU commissioners, EU Council press documents and quality news outlets, like Politico and BBC. These data sources have been chosen by the author for their reliability since EU press documents come straight from the source and selected news outlets are known for their neutrality. Through these documents author will form a narrative analysis on the topic. The narrative analysis will be built upon two things – EU statements and actions. EU statements have been chosen to look for differences in narrative from EU during both crises, to see if the EU has changed during the years between both crises. Actions have been chosen to control if the statements from EU and the narrative they've spoken is true for their words. Author will look for data about the actions from same sources that he looks for data for statements.

Timeline that the author uses for data collection is set from 2015-16 during the first crisis and 2021-until 24. February 2022. The first data timeline is chosen as it is for it is when the crisis took place and it is an excellent way of researching what the narrative of EU was during the crisis. The data for Belarusian-EU crisis is chosen that way is for quite the same reasons as the beforementioned crisis. Reason why data is collected until 24th February is the start of war in Ukraine. Author fears that if he uses data after that date, the narrative might be changed in an instant and because there might be too much data, which might mean that conducting the research might become too large-scale and lose its focus.

4. MIGRATION CRISIS IN EU

The task of this chapter is to investigate both 2015-16 and Belarusian-EU migrant crises to have an understanding of them. This includes how and why they started, how did they further develop and how did they end. In order to understand the concept of migrants and these migrants better it is important for us to conceptualise migration, which will be done in the next segment.

4.1. CONCEPTUALISING AND PROBLEMATISING MIGRATION

Migration itself is understood by many in a uniformed manner. For most of us migration means the moving of people from one country to another, for various reasons such as economic, security, climate change and so forth. Migration can also be temporary or permanent. It is important to conceptualise migration in this research, so that the readers are aware what is meant by migration by the author. In order to conceptualise migration, author will use works of various authors, and explain what is meant by migration in this research paper.

An important aspect for this research paper is to understand the concept of forced migration. Because most of the migrants of both crises have been in some way been in a forced status to leave their countries. In the case of 2015-16 crisis, most of the migrants entering EU were forced because of the bad socio-economic conditions and ongoing warfare in their countries and in the case of Belarus-EU migrant crisis the migrants mainly from Iraq were forced to cross the border from Belarus to EU.

Forced migration has several specific factors that distinguish it from voluntary migration. Some of these distinguishing factors are: the amount of migrants, the effect they have on our own conscience and the distinctive experiences and needs these migrants have (Turton. 2003. 7-8). The number of migrants is conceptualised by the sheer volume of migrants that start their migratory journeys at once or during a small timeframe. According to Castles the number of migrants who have had to leave their homes by force is estimated to be around 100-200 million worldwide back in 2003 (Castle. 2003. 15) and it can be theorised that this number has increased by now. This number of migrants is the product of widening divide between the

North and South, social security, lack of social justice and human rights in their region and the trafficking and smuggling of people (Turton. 2003. 7).

The effect they have on our conscience is perhaps the hardest to understand of the factors that distinguish forced migration from voluntary migration. It relates to our ethical conscience and the way we create frames and procedures for migrants. From our ethical standpoint it requires us to seek what are our moral standpoints and if we would and could help people that have fled their homes and come knocking on our doors asking for us for our help (Turton. 2003. 8). The other aspect about the procedures is that in these situations we must start discussing the procedures and requirements of things such as membership, citizenship and democratic liberalism (Turton. 2003. 8).

What also separates forced migrants are the distinctive experiences and needs that these migrants have. Turton argues, that there is no such thing as united migrant experience or needs, but they all have separate and individual experiences and needs that have put them into the situation that they are in now (Turton. 2003. 7). Basically, migrants needs and experiences cannot be labelled as one, they can be grouped under similarities such as fleeing a country that's at a war, but all of these migrants there have differences in their needs and experiences of why they fled.

It is also concluded, that forced migration victims seem to have better long-term impacts such as increased future mobility for those who were displaced, more effective resettlement policies, and faster transition to other sectors for agricultural workers (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva. 2013. 782-783). On the other hand, short and medium-term impacts for such migrants is worse, these impacts range from worse outcomes on the labour market and smaller incomes and increased child morbidity rates (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva. 2013. 782-783). This suggests that EU, if deciding to smooth the transition of migrants into its social-circles might come across short- and medium-term problems, but in the long term might win from the economic and social outputs of these migrants, when fully incorporated into its sphere.

4.2. 2015-16 MIGRATION CRISIS

During the 2015-16 migration crisis, EU saw the biggest inflow of migrants that it had ever had to deal with. During the year 2015 over 900 000 migrants arrived at Europe (Spindler. 2015). The sudden rise in migration into Europe was caused by the wars in the Middle East and Northern Africa. These wars were caused by the series of public uprisings in the region against totalitarian governments, more commonly known as the Arab Spring. The revolutions of Arab Spring started back in 2011 in Egypt and Tunisia (Britannica. 2022). The success of revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia inspired citizens of other Arabic countries to take to the streets with the same goal in mind, to topple the authoritarian governments of their country (Britannica. 2022). Unfortunately, most of these protests didn't reach their end goal, and violent civil wars started in many countries which are still ongoing today. The most notable civil wars might be the Syrian and Libyan civil wars. After the start of civil wars, a lot of civilians had no choice but to flee the countries to escape war and the atrocities brought with it. The mass influx of migrants into EU became the biggest problem of the time. Some member states were more influenced by the migrants like Italy, Spain and Greece, while others were influenced relatively few. The migrant flows sparked many arguments between member states and it was a time when EU was in one of its most shattered phases. The migrant crisis was finally solved by a deal between EU and Turkey in which Turkey agreed to keep its borders closed to not let any migrants get into EU through Turkey for monetary aid and to restarts the talks of Turkey joining the EU (Terry. 2021).

4.3. BELARUSIAN-EUROPEAN UNION MIGRANT CRISIS

The Belarusian-EU migrant crisis is very different from the 2015-16 crisis. The most notable difference comes from how the migrants got to EU and its border. The leadup to the crisis started in 2020, when massive public uprisings started in Belarus after President Lukashenko allegedly committed fraudulent elections to win his main opponent, prominent opposition leader Tsikhanouskaya (Gunkel. 2020). The West also concluded that Lukashenko had committed electoral fraud and used violence and repression to end public uprising, for which EU heavily sanctioned Belarus (European Council. 2022). After imposing sanctions on Belarus, the relations between EU and Belarus worsened significantly, which concluded with the forceful landing of Ryanair Flight 4978 in Belarus (William, et al. 2021). Because of the

sanctions set on Belarus, Belarus decided to use migrants as a form of hybrid-warfare against EU to weaken its will and its unity between member states. In the end of November 2021 estimated 33 000 attempts of crossing the border with EU had been made (BBC News. 2021), with the 17 000 of those occurring in October alone (Nielsen. 2021). EU member states responded with force, at the peak of the crisis in October-November 2021, EU had around 15 000 soldiers at the Polish-Belarus border ready to turn back the migrants and in case the situation escalated (Al Jazeera. 2021).

5. ANALYSIS

The analysis will be done in two parts. The first part of the analysis is going to analyse the narrative and actions done by EU during the 2015-16 migration crisis, second part of the analysis will be doing the same for the Belarus-EU migrant crisis. I'll also be explaining my findings in the analysis part of the thesis. Conclusions will not be given here, but in the concluding part of the thesis.

The comparative narrative analysis will be conducted so that it links with the theory of NPE, Europeanization and Institutional Learning. So the narratives shall be looked to fit the core norms of NPE that have been explained in the framework section of this thesis and the process of Europeanization to the countries outside of the EU.

5.1. 2015-16 CRISIS

The 2015-16 migrant crisis caught EU off-guard. Steady migrant inflow had been normal in EU and it didn't usually spark many discussions nor problems. 2015 was different because of how quickly the volume of migration increased. In the beginning part of 2015 EU wasn't aware of the volume of migration that might hit EU soon. Because of the unawareness, EU wasn't prepared. What the EU did was trying to calm the situation in Iraq and Syria and by that decrease the migrant inflows.

STATEMENTS

The beginning of 2015 didn't see much higher levels of migrant inflows than the months or years prior had. But there were signs of higher migrant inflow and more illegal ways of entering Europe. The first place that got hit by migrant inflow was Italy. On February of 2015 EU commission announced that it would help Italy with higher migratory pressure, by giving emergency funding to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and by extending Frontex's Triton mission in Italy until the end of 2015 (European Commission. 2015b). Triton mission's main goal was border control, with other priorities being surveillance, search and rescue in Central Mediterranean (Frontex. 2016). Commission's statement also said that EU is ready to react quick, if any other member states in the Mediterranean region need help from continued high pressure because of the instability of some countries in their neighbourhood (European

Commission. 2015b). This shows that EU was already cautious with the inflow of migrants and it was showing that it is standing together with member countries to help them deal with the inflow. It also painted a picture to the member states, that EU is ready and prepared for what might happen, but it couldn't foresee the volume of migrants it soon would have to deal with.

The criminal organisations that smuggled people into Europe had already started operating. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, said that EU has started working with third countries to dismantle the criminal smuggling operations and is trying to tackle the situation in Libya (European Commission. 2015b). Another commissioner of Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos said that Europe needs to manage migration better in all aspects and will help Italy out more with the inflow of migrants, he also stressed that EU will work toward more legal ways for migrant to enter the Union (European Commission. 2015b). This can be interpreted again as EU is going to stand together in this. Furthermore, this means that EU will try to help all migrants who try to reach Europe. Avramopoulos also stated that there's not going to be "fortress Europe" (European Commission. 2015b). This indicates, that EU will not become isolationist in this issue and will not turn down those who need help. It also sets the course nicely for what is going to be the European narrative during this crisis, that although EU is struggling, then the Union itself will be welcoming of migrants. This is illustrated by a statement from European Commission from April of 2015, where the Commission calls for both fighting sides in Syria to respect human rights, but more importantly it calls for both sides give a safe passage to all migrants who wish to escape (European Commission. 2015c). This shows that Europe is ready and willing to help out all migrants, who are displaced or in danger in the Middle East because of the conflict.

In May of 2015 European Commission released a speech praising Turkey for their work with migrants. Among many things, the speech stressed that Turkey has become an equal partner with EU that shares common goals and is carrying a heavy burden by housing Syrian refugees and helping them (European Commission. 2015f). In addition to that the speech made a great deal about this marking the beginning of permanent direct cooperation between Turkey and EU and possibly future cooperation on other aspects between both entities in the near future (European Commission. 2015f). This means that EU was already seeing Turkey as the saving grace for EU and quite possibly the country by which help EU could solve the migrant crisis.

European Council released a set of conclusions on the 18th of February 2018 on the topic of migration. It regarded many important aspects on how EU will continue to address and solve the migrant crisis. The first paragraph of the statement said that EU's main objectives should be to rapidly reduce the flow of migrants, protecting external borders, reducing migration and guarding the integrity of the Schengen area (European Council. 2016). It also stated that the implementation of EU-Turkey deal should remain a priority to reduce migration inflows and to deal with traffickers and smugglers (European Council. 2016). What's important is that the statement said that EU-Turkey deal is taking too long to implement and needs to be a top priority not only for EU but also Turkey (European Council. 2016). This can be interpreted as that EU was in a terrible hurry to stop the huge influx of migrants. Which is a huge change from the beginning of 2015, when EU was still practically welcoming migrants with open hands into the EU to escape the crises taking place in Middle East and Africa. Not it seemed like that EU had realised that they cannot take in many migrants anymore, for which the reasons might be the tensions inside the EU or for economic reasons. This also shows the shift of attitude inside the EU towards migrants. As before migrants were welcomed, their humanitarian needs were put first but now it seemed like EU wanted them to stay where they were. The situation with the migrant crisis in the eyes of the EU can be illustrated by the saying: "out of sight, out of mind".

ACTIONS

In the beginning of 2015 EU wasn't aware of the scale of migrant inflow it soon has to face. A statement from the beginning of 2015 from European Commission states, that EU had mobilised one billion euros to help mainly Iraq and Syria, but also Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, with the aim to create peace and stability in the region (European Commission. 2015a). This funding was focused on essential priorities like to promote relief, stability and development in the region, in addition it was aimed to counter the threat of Da'esh (European Commission. 2015a). This proved to be ineffective, as the first signs of growing migration inflow had already started to show for the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, operation Triton which we talked about briefly before, used to support Italian authorities with the registration of arriving migrants and by collecting information and sharing it with Italian authorities and Europol about the smuggling networks (Frontex. 2016).

EU didn't think that much of the crisis at that point and the narrative on the migrant situation stayed on side that EU should be giving humanitarian aid to the countries affected by wars, this can also be sided with both the theory of NPE and Europeanization, by EU being able to influence outside or at least thinking that it can.

EU started putting together a strategic plans with the African countries to stop migratory pressure and to tackle trafficking routes. In April of 2015 EU started cooperating with African countries in many important aspects to alleviate the pressure from migration on continental, regional and bilateral level with countries like Tunisia, Morocco and many others (European Commission. 2015d). On continental level EU agreed on an action plan which was supposed to fight irregular migration and address its relevant aspects, which included addressing the root causes of migration, cooperation with Africa on addressing human traffickers and providing assistance, strengthening border control and the return of illegally entered migrants (European Commission. 2015d).

On the regional level EU started policy dialogues along the western and eastern migratory routes, which were underpinned by concrete plans and financial resources (European Commission. 2015d). The western migratory route included dialogue between 55 European and African countries with the intent to create operational and practical cooperation in order to alleviate migration and to strengthen development in the region (European Commission. 2015d). But by financial aid EU was supporting the region for the free movement of the people there, even to enter the Union (European Commission. 2015d). This means that EU was against the illegal entry of migrants but was welcoming for legal entries. This can be explained by the risk, that unknown entry of migrants could bring to EU, by legal entry, EU knows who has come to the Union and can keep cautionary measures of the individuals. Eastern migratory route and its member states were significantly lower than in the western routes but its goals were similar but more focused on prevention of illegal smuggling of migrants (European Commission. 2015d).

Bilateral cooperation was practically started with all countries neighbouring EU. The aims of the bilateral dialogue were to provide better framework for legal migration, to stop human trafficking and illegal migration, supporting the voluntary return of migrants and providing asylum and international protection to migrants entering EU (European Commission. 2015d).

In addition to cooperation with African countries, EU itself was providing resources to protect its borders, ideals and migrants. Frontex was given additional resources for search and rescue missions to help the national border guards in their work in guarding the borders, rescuing migrants and admission of new arrivals (European Commission. 2015e).

The migration crisis was ended by essentially EU and Turkey signing a deal. The EU-Turkey deal nearly stopped all illegal immigration coming into Europe through Greece. The deal meant that all migrant who illegally into Greece through Turkey could be returned to Turkey, Turkey will take immense measures to stop all migration through land and sea into EU and for every Syrian that will be returned to Turkey a Syrian that tries to enter EU through legal ways will be accepted (Council of the EU. 2016). In return, Turkish citizens received visa-free travel into EU, Turkey will receive 6 billion euros to improve the refugee's situation in Turkey and the talks for Turkey to join the EU will be restarted (Council of the EU. 2016). If looking through these documents, it seems that EU and Turkey struck a deal, for Turkey to hold the refugees in Turkey until they signed papers to legally migrate into EU. But what this deal really meant was that EU essentially paid Turkey off so that Turkey wouldn't let any of the migrants into the EU anymore.

5.2. EU-BELARUS CRISIS

The Belarus-EU migrant crisis was different from the 2015-16 crisis for why it started. While the 2015-16 crisis was mainly a humanitarian crisis, in which the migrants fled their countries because of the war, then the Belarusian migrant crisis started because of tensions between Belarus and the EU.

STATEMENTS

The President of the European Council arrived in Vilnius in the beginning of July to meet with heads of government of Lithuania. In the speech that he gave there, among other things he talked about migration and European Unity (European Council. 2021f). Quoting him: "And we are extremely clear, and the last European Council affirmed this in the strongest terms: we condemn all attempts to instrumentalise irregular and illegal migration to try to exert pressure on EU Member States," (European Council. 2021f). This already shows that EU didn't really think of this migrant crisis as a textbook example migrant crisis, but more as an extortion

method created by the Belarusian government to cripple the EU's unity and to create disputes between member states in an effort to steer the EU's attention away from the repression of Belarusian citizens in Belarus. Furthermore, in his speech he mentions that EU will continue to support the dialogue with counterparts to return and readmission the migrants (European Council. 2021f). He also emphasized that world is facing increasing pressure from authoritarian systems putting pressure of democratic model and that it is EU's obligation to fights against these authoritarian regimes, and that the only way to do it is by staying united, because being united is where EU's strength comes from (European Council. 2021f).

As the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security said: The Belarusian regime tries to distract from the appalling situation in the country by taking advantage of people's dismay and pushing them towards the EU's borders. They will not succeed. In response, we expanded our sanctions regime and are adopting another package of measures against the perpetrators of this hybrid attack by the Lukashenko regime. Together with UN agencies, we will provide humanitarian aid to those in need. We will continue our diplomatic outreach to our partners. The EU stands firm against this hybrid attack," (European Commission. 2021h). This is a great quote from the High Representative as it really summarises the EU's standpoint of this crisis. The way that EU has been condemning Belarus actions from the beginning and its unity which has been shown by the humanitarian aid given to the migrants and direct support to the countries bordering Belarus.

As part of the measures taken by the EU in trying to deescalate the situation at the border, EU released a press statement about a new proposal to blacklist all transport operators that were involved or facilitated the smuggling of migrants (European Commission. 2021h). Commission argued that it would give EU a new tool to fight the current crisis in which migrants are used a form of hybrid-warfare and in the future if such conditions should occur again (European Commission. 2021h). The blacklisting would have included measures against operating within the Union, suspension of licenses or authorisations, prohibition of refuelling inside EU and transiting through the borders of the EU through air, sea or ground (European Commission. 2021h). As the Commission put it itself, it would have given the EU a new tool to its arsenal to use against transport providers in the case if EU faced another crisis in which countries might use migrants as a tool of hybrid-warfare. This assumption might have stemmed from the fact that currently Turkey is holding a huge number of migrants out of EU and if EU-Turkey relationship should deteriorate, Turkey could be using those same migrants in the same way.

Unfortunately, this legislation hasn't been passed yet and was sent back to the drawing board in February of this year with suggestions to improve the legislation (Vela et al. 2022), as the legislation was never put to use during the crisis, EU wasn't able to use it against the operators either.

ACTIONS

Different from the previous crisis, EU was quick to act. In the beginning of August, EU commissioner met with the Iraqi ambassador with the intent to suspend flights from Iraq to Belarus (European Commission. 2021g). Additionally, EU officials in Iraq were maintaining regular discussions on the topic with their counterparts in Iraq, including Iraqi Foreign Minister (European Commission. 2021g). Commissioner also stated that EU will continue its diplomatic efforts with the Iraqi counterparts and until that moment at least the discussions had been supported by the goodwill of both parties (European Commission. 2021g). It is worth mentioning, that EU had already in July threatened Iraqi government, to restrict visas for Iraqi citizens in effort to help with the talks in suspending flights from Iraq to Belarus (Eccles, et al. 2021). This shows that EU was quick to act, as the President of the European Council had spoken about starting dialogue with counterparts to start the return and readmission of migrants (Eccles, et al. 2021). Later in November European Commissions statement proves that direct flights coming from Baghdad to Belarus indeed had been suspended and flights from Erbil transiting through third countries had been suspended as well (European Commission. 2021h). This shows that although EU wasn't able to get Iraq to suspend all flights into Belarus from Iraq, then EU still was quick to act and had been able to use its global influence to some degree in the suspensions of flights from Iraq. Even though it is an important feat for EU then it cannot all be attributed to EU either, because Iraqi government might have wanted to suspend these flights for themselves, because of the reports coming from the Belarusian border about abused migrants mainly from Iraq.

Furthermore, EU was quick to give humanitarian aid to the migrants stuck on the border. EU attributed 700 000€ to the migrants stuck in Belarus, of which 200 000€ went straight to organisations such as Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the other 500 000€ would stay mobilised for further humanitarian aid (European Commission. 2021h). This shows that EU wasn't so much against the migrants, but the Belarusian government, who used these migrants as chess pieces to put pressure on EU for its own gain. In addition to the humanitarian aid given to organisations helping migrants stranded on the Belarusian border, EU has been giving direct

support to EU countries bordering Belarus. For example, European Commission granted 36,7 million euros to Lithuania, to support the implementation of asylum procedures and reception conditions (European Commission. 2021h). Commission had also been coordinating with other member states to provide material needs such as tents, beds and generators to Lithuania, Poland and Latvia (European Commission. 2021h). Furthermore, European Commission had made 200 million euros available to all three countries if need be for border management, other ways of support were available to them through Frontex in border surveillance and intervention and through European Asylum Support Office to help with the management of migrants (European Commission. 2021h). This shows that EU was coming together as one to help the countries dealing with the crisis and it was showing true unity at that time.

In November EU expanded its sanctions against Belarus in an effort to punish Belarusian regime for its crimes against its citizens and the use of migrants as form of hybrid-warfare (European Commission. 2021h). These sanctions targeted individuals and entities that were tied to the instrumentalization of people, these sanctions also included intermediaries such as airlines and travel agencies (European Commission. 2021h). This shows that EU was acting quick to solve the crisis with Belarus as EU might have been afraid that the situation could be getting worse at an exponential speed as it did in 2015-16.

5.3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In this chapter of the thesis the author will compare his finding from the comparative analysis conducted on both crises. Author will start by comparing the differences and similarities in narrative and continue by doing the same for the actions done by EU. By the end of the comparative analysis author will give his opinion on if EU was able to learn from the previous crisis and if it had used any of the new knowledge in handling the crisis.

One of the most obvious differences was the speed in which EU realised that there was a crisis. In the case of EU-Belarus crisis, EU was very quick to act. When migrants from Belarus started crossing into EU, EU was making statements practically in the same week that the first Iraqi migrants appeared on the European border. Same cannot be said to the 2015-16 crisis, EU didn't see it first as a problem and didn't mobilise as fast. This can be explained by two factors, first off migration through the Mediterranean had been constant for a long time and the sudden

spike in migratory numbers most likely wasn't noticed as much nor was it thought to be a problem yet. As the 2015-16 crisis went on, EU was starting to accept that it is a crisis and not just a spike in a migration activity that's going to affect a single region of the EU. This could imply, that having learned from the last crisis, EU was more cautious about rising migration and was quicker to act because of that.

This brings us to the second difference. From the beginning of EU-Belarus border crisis, EU was quick to accept that it is not just a regional challenge, that's going to affect the EU countries bordering Belarus, but it is a crisis that affects the whole Union. 2015-16 crisis first was thought of a regional problem, until the realisation that the volume of migration is just going to increase. When EU realised that the migration number is going to increase EU adopted that it is united in all that it does. That means that EU was united to helping the countries that were the place of entry for the migrants into Europe but also other countries were the migrants finally settled. This meant that Europe created the quota-system in which countries had to take in migrants according to the quotas set by EU. In a way it connects with Europeanization, as EU has been setting rules that EU member states have been adapting as their own. In another show of Europeanization in a way EU used export Europeanization when Turkey accepted EU's norms and restricted the entry of migrants into Europe.

Another difference of the narrative comes from how EU reacted to the migrants. First off, EU-Belarus crisis was never officially called a migration crisis, even though migrants were the main actors that really escalated the crisis. In EU's narrative these migrants were innocent bystanders who had been weaponised by Belarus in order for it to reach its regional goals. In the case of the 2015-16 crisis, when EU realised the volume of the migrants it started calling it a migration crisis from the get-go.

There is also a certain hypocrisy in the narrative of the EU. Although EU always stressed their help and upheaval of human rights and humanitarian aid given to all migrants in both crises, it tended to get rid or at least try to keep the migrants out of its borders under the cover. This is shown by both the deal signed with Turkey, in which Turkey does not let any new migrants enter EU in irregular ways nor did EU accept many of the Iraqi migrants from Belarus. These measures included using tear gas, water cannons and forcibly shoving them back over the Belarus border. That in a certain way is contradictory to theory of NPE, in which one of the core norms is respect for human rights and some of minor ones are social solidarity and anti-

discrimination. That suggests, that although EU might be working on these norms outside the EU borders, but if it comes to a massive migration into EU, then the Union tends to forget its core norms.

A difference in Europe's actions comes from how Europe communicated with the countries from where the migration originated from. In 2015, Europe called all Middle Eastern countries to give all people safe passage if their people wished to escape. Contradictory during the EU-Belarus crisis, EU stronghanded Iraq into suspending all flights into Belarus, in an effort to stop the migration. This shows a significant change in terms of how Europe was thinking about migrants, as EU did care less about the migrants during Belarus-EU crisis than in the previous crisis. Which in itself is contradictory to NPE and one of its core norms being the respect of human rights as EU had used force to stop migrants from leaving their countries.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis started with the aim to see if Europe was able to learn from the mistakes of 2015-16 migration crisis and had it implemented any of the new know-how in resolving the EU-Belarus border crisis. This was to be done through analysing EU's statements and actions from both crises and doing a comparative narrative analysis on them.

In addition to the analytical part of this research paper, author also explored in depth three theories, that should explain how EU deals with outside countries. These theories were the theory of Normative Power Europe, Europeanization and Institutional Learning. These theories were explained in the theoretical framework section of this thesis. These theories were chosen as they explain how EU influences other countries and how EU's institutions could learn from mistakes.

The analysis concluded that EU's approach to these crises had its similarities and differences. This suggests that EU was able to learn from past mistakes and change the things needed to better resolve the crises, which indicated that theory of Institutional Learning has been relative to EU. For example, when the migratory flows in 2015 started increasing, EU was slow to act, decisions and actions were made in a matter of months. On the other hand, during EU-Belarus border crisis, EU started stronghanded Iraq in a matter of weeks, after the first migrants arrived at the EU border. This goes together with the theory of institutional learning, which suggests that institutions can learn from mistakes.

Author further concluded from his analysis, that EU has been quite hypocritical in its actions and statements. For example, during 2015-16 crisis, EU was making a great deal about the human rights, giving a fair chance for migrants to enter EU and so forth. In reality, EU signed an agreement with Turkey in which Turkey agreed to prohibit migrants to enter EU. Similar hypocrisy could be seen during the EU-Belarus crisis in which EU provided countries like Poland and Lithuania with emergency funding, to support asylum procedures. In truth, Polish and Lithuanian border guards, working together with voluntary border guards and Frontex used measures such as tear gas and water cannons to push back migrants trying to enter EU and making them unable to apply for asylum. Which does not coincide with NPE theory, as EU has chosen to abandon some of its core norms when dealing with inflows of migrants. On the other

hand, the theory of Europeanization seems to be more relative to this topic. As EU has been using its influence on states bordering EU to execute its plans.

In conclusion, it seems that EU has been able to learn from the mistakes of 2015-16 crisis to handle the EU-Belarus crisis. Probably the biggest lesson for EU and which it implemented now, is taking the threat seriously and acting faster. Thanks to the fast reaction, EU was able to deescalate the situation on Belarus border quickly and the migratory inflow was minimal. However, there is certain contradictions in what EU says and what it does. Author would like to imply that maybe the second greatest thing that he learned during this research after concluding that EU has been able to learn certain things from past mistakes, is that EU's statements and actions don't always correlate. There certainly is certain hypocrisy and the general way of handling threats seems to be "out of sight, out of mind."

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„European Union’s Stance On The Belarus–European Union Border Migrant Crisis Compared To The 2015-16 Migrant Crisis,“

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