



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

In 2015, a rising number of refugees attempted the journey to Europe and the European Union (EU). They were seeking asylum and traveling through South-East Europe or across the Mediterranean Sea. Refugees that arrived in Europe and the EU mostly came from regions such as South and Western Asia, Africa, and the Balkans. However, the refugee crisis which the EU faced mainly caused by the conflict in Syria. Hence, many of those who sought protection in Europe come from Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya and other Middle-Eastern countries. More than one million people arrived in the Mediterranean Sea area in 2015 and the three most-represented nationalities were people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

They tried to escape themselves from violence, sought freedom, protection and safety, as well as hoped for a future and better livelihoods. Those reasons caused an endless rising number of refugees that attempted to make the long and highly dangerous journey to Europe. They went through illegal ways and no organized system on transportation for refugees to enter the EU. Thus, human traffickers and smuggler engaged on transporting them in inhuman conditions via sea and land. They were risking their lives facing many dangerous situations and threats during this journey in order to seek protection within Europe and the EU. (Schmid, 2016)

A big historical move that was made in German happened in August and September 2015 when thousands of refugees made their way into Europe. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel decided to engage an open door policy toward the newcomers. It all began on August 2015.

First on August 25 2015, Germany suspend the Dublin Procedure for Syrians. This was meant that Syrian refugees no longer had to be sent back to the first EU country that they entered. Later on August 31 2015, Germany Chancellor, Angela Merkel declared "*Wir schaffen das*" or "We can do this" as Europe was troubled with the largest refugee crisis. The wars in the Middle East resulted German government granting protection to thousands of refugee and called it as "national duty".

Germany and Austria first took refugees that were stuck in Hungary on September 4 2015. At that time, there were lots of volunteers from Germany who gave candy and greeted the refugees. This was mark as "*willkommenskultur*" or welcome culture. After the "welcoming party" for the refugees, something went a little bit out of control. Trains between Germany and Austria were suspended for twelve hours. This accident caused thousands of refugee who had been arrived and many small towns in Germany couldn't deal with the refugee influx. This was also making Germany strengthen the controls on its border with Austria on September 13 2015. Things were getting hotter start on October 2015.

Germany's lower house of parliament, The *Bundestag*, changed the asylum law which appointed Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro as safe countries of origin on 15 October 2015. The asylum law was changed due to the EU and Turkey joint action on a plan to deal with migration flows to the European Union. In December 2015, around 890.000 refugees came to Germany. Reported that in New Year's Eve in 2015, there were incidents of sexual assault, rape and theft to at the Germany's main train station. The police reported and confirmed by witnesses that the perpetrators were allegedly of an "Arab or North African appearance". Some critics stated that Chancellor Merkel's

open-door policy responsible by allowing the perpetrators into Germany.

On March 2016, the borders of Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia and Macedonia closed for refugees due to the incidents that happened by them. They were also limiting the route which many of the refugees used to come to Germany, the Balkan Route. EU and Turkey signed a deal which agreed to send the refugees who arrived in Greece back to Turkey. Then, EU began the resettlement of refugees from Greece to Turkey also the redistribution of Syrians from Turkey. Not only that, the European Commission initiate a proposal to fine EU member states if they didn't take in their quota of refugees.

The incidents didn't stop until then. 17-year-old Afghan refugee attacked 20 passengers with a knife on a train near the southern city of *Würzburg* on July 19 2016. Then on 25 July 2019, Syrian refugee set off an explosive device which killed himself and injured 12 others in the southern city of *Ansbach*. Due to this continuous attacks, Germany started to reject the deportation flight of rejected Afghan refugees back to Kabul on December 2016. To make it more tense, the peak of all incidents was the attack from Anis Amri. He was a failed refugee from Tunisia who deliberately drove a truck into a Christmas market in Berlin which killed 12 people and injured 56 people. This was making Angela Merkel's open door policy into question.

Germany's citizen began to doubt the purpose on welcoming thousands of refugees into their country. They were also questioning Angela Merkel's mission on establishing the open door policy. To reduce citizen's concern, Angela Merkel started her move on February 2017 by presenting a plan to speed up deportations of refugees, especially to Afghanistan, caused by Anis Amri

attack in Berlin. She also made a deal with Tunisia to take back 1,500 rejected Tunisian refugees from Germany. On August 11, Merkel met Filippo Grandi, UN Refugee Commissioner to pledged 50 million euros (\$59 million) for the International Organization for Migration and the UNHCR. As to human smuggled that happened in Mediterranean Sea area, Merkel promised to give a support to fight people who were doing it. (Dockery, Two years since Germany opened its borders to refugees: A chronology, 2017)

Angela Merkel's "open-door" refugee policy encouraged a fierce debate among the Chancellor's political opponents and ordinary Germans. Citi Research's November reported that the German Chancellor's popularity rates decreased to 49% in November from 67% in August. This data created doubts on Merkel's political prospects. A senior member of the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party in Thuringia Björn Höcke, during the latest party in Erfurt, proposed to remove the German Chancellor from her office "in a straightjacket". (Time to Step Down? Merkel's Open-Door Refugee Policy Fails, 2016)

When the refugee crisis began, Angela Merkel as Germany's Chancellor spoke a lot about values. She insisted that European and Christian values must be defended. What she meant was that refugees had to be welcomed and that moral imperative prompted the chancellor to decree Germany's open-door refugee policy in 2015. She said that there would be no limit to the number of immigrants the country would welcome. (Hasselbach, 2016) By receiving the refugees, Angela Merkel insisted that it was a mandate from the 1951 Geneva Convention which regulated the rights and duties of migrants. (Sinambela, 2017)

The 1951 Geneva Convention article 31 no.1 stated that first, the contracting states shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence. Second, the contracting states shall not apply to the movements of such refugees restrictions other than those which are necessary and such restrictions shall only be applied until their status in the country is regularized or they obtain admission into another country. The contracting states shall allow such refugees a reasonable period and all the necessary facilities to obtain admission into another country. (Goodwin-Gill, 2001) This article encouraged Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel to accept thousands of refugees who sought freedom, protection and free themselves from violence. Merkel said that it was a nation duty to accept them.

As other EU member countries began closing their borders to refugees, Germany were holding onto its open-door policy. People were questioning why did Merkel keep holding onto the open-door policy? These next key factors can explain why. First, it was a *wilkommenskultur*. A survey that were arranged by the *Bertelsmann Stiftung* resulted that Germans are more comfortable with the notion which stated that Germany became a country of refugee. Although some right-wing movements, such as the Alternative for Germany (AfD) gained momentum, it showed that a large majority of Germans believe that their country should be open for refugees. When the inflow of refugees increased in July 2015, 93% of the German's supported by welcoming the refugees. Meanwhile other

80% of the German's said that Germany should accept the refugees from political or religious persecution. This was reflected also in the public response to the refugee crisis. Many Germans committed themselves that they would help the refugees to find facilities despite of some groups that were rejecting them.

Second, it was Merkel's personal project. Merkel is the face of Germany's refugee policy. In 2015, before the summer, Merkel's politic style was characterized by pragmatism and steps rather than following a political vision. Merkel actually has made Germany's open door policy become her personal political project. Many cite two encounters in particular as critical to shape Merkel's stance on refugees. In July 2015, a 13-year-old Palestinian refugee named Reem Sahwil troubled Angela Merkel. She spoke about her desire to stay in Germany to receive proper education. But, Sahwil expressed her anxiety saying that her uncertain refugee status left her future in doubt. In response, Merkel stiffly explained that it was impossible for Germany to accept all refugees. Also in an awkward way, while the girl broke down in tears, Merkel patted Shawil on her shoulder. The video of this interaction went viral because of Merkel's expression in explaining that she forced herself to do so. Late August 2015, Merkel visited a refugee shelter which located in the town of *Heidenau*. There were furious crowd of German's assembled who shouted insults at Merkel outside the shelter due to how she acted differently in front of the refugees.

After these event happened, Merkel changed her tone at her annual summer press conference in Berlin. She stated that Germany was capable to help all of the refugees. Then Merkel made a decision that Germany would honor its historical commitment to protect refugees.

She also found her political project, her vision, and was ready to fight for it. This made commentators link this course to her personal biography. A socialist pastor's daughter who grew up in East Germany behind a large fence.

Third, it was demographic boon. It was reported that Germany's disadvantageous demographics and labor shortages in certain sectors and regions played a role on welcoming policy toward refugees. Germany's population is shrinking and aging. The number of people on working age would decrease 36% in 2050 if labor force participation rates remained without refugees. Even though lack of support from other EU countries, the rigid labor market and low unemployment in 2015 helped boost the German's position toward refugees. Nevertheless, the reason of Germany's open door policy was a humanitarian assessment rather than economic purpose. Few refugees able to speak German and English. They were also many of the refugees who lack on the professional qualifications. The market is hard to enter for foreigners because the qualifications from other countries are often not accepted. Even for a blue-collar professions require years of training. Literature assistant suggests that only around 20% of refugees in Germany hold a vocational qualification or university education. On the other hand, 30% to 40% who have been experiencing work is potentially relevant to the German labor market. Merge the refugees into the regular labor market would require significant investment from both the government and private sector. (Mayer, 2016)

Meanwhile at the European Council summit in Brussels, Merkel tried to prove that critics toward her decision was wrong. But unfortunately there was one point that made her losing her voice. She was relying on an



argument that was losing its resonance. Things wasn't that worst as Merkel has suggested time and isn't Germany's refugee policy, but the very survival of the EU. "Europe has to stay together," she said in an attempt to deflect the attacks against her. "Especially in this situation, in which Europe is in a very fragile position, it's very, very important to me that Germany doesn't act unilaterally." Timo Lochocki, a fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States said that Angela Merkel maneuvered herself into this situation. "Her actions in the Eurozone and refugee crises irritated many European allies she now needs. And the unsolved conflict within her own party over refugee matters alienated its conservative wing, foremost the CSU."

Angela Merkel yet defended herself, insisted that she had no regrets. In an interview published in the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper four weeks before Germany's September 24 federal election, Merkel said she would take the big decisions the same way again. "It was an extraordinary situation and I made my decision based on what I thought was right from a political and humanitarian standpoint," she told the *Welt am Sonntag*. On 2017, Angela Merkel said that she would continue pushing for a fair distribution of refugees around Europe because Greece and Italy were bearing a disproportionate burden of the refugee crisis "simply because of their geography." (Baume, 2017)

## **B. Research Question**

Regarding to the case that have been explained in the background, there is one thing that questioning author:

How did the Germany's open door policy affect other EU member countries?

## **C. Theoretical Framework**

### **1. Core-Periphery Model**

There may be a possibility that the Germany's open door policy affected other EU members because of the strong relation that linked on them. Eventually, this core-periphery model can explain it. The core-periphery model was conceived in the 1960s and early 1970s. It came up as one of the various theoretical phenomenon explanations of socio-economic development, especially underdevelopment. The world can be divided into two major world regions: the "core" and the "periphery" countries. The core-periphery model is not limited to a global scale. Contrast in wages, opportunities, accesses to health care, and so on among a local or national population are commonplace.

The core resembles country who stand in the center which has a bigger power or influence among other countries, especially countries that linked by bilateral diplomacy. The opportunities from this advantages sustain a world that driven by country in the core. People who got the positions of power and influence are often brought up or educated from the core. (Steif, Core and Periphery, Two Types that Make the World, 2019). Meanwhile, the periphery means subject or area of interest. Periphery is the part of the world that is not considered to be as important as the main part. To make it simpler, periphery is the countries that got affected by the power of core country and resembling to countries that depend to the core countries. (Periphery, n.d.)

The core-periphery model examines how economic, political and cultural divergences have transformed the European Union and how these crises have both

aggravated the tensions in center-periphery relations within and outside the Eurozone. Accordingly, the EU as a supranational organization may have reached its limits in terms of multilevel governance. Within the context of the Eurozone crisis, most of the contributions focus particularly on the asymmetrical relations among Germany, Austria, Netherlands, and Finland or the economically stronger core countries with Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy or the of periphery countries.

Angelos Sepos, an assistant professor of international studies in Al Akhawayn University outlines the theoretical foundations of the core-periphery model and their appropriateness to the economic and political power relations in the European Union. He also conclude that the creation of a full-fledged symmetrical, cooperative EU federal model, could help the Union to bridge the divide. Despite it was considered as a wishful thinking, it had already happened. (A.Musto, 2016)

Germany, In September 2015 has decided to take leadership of Europe's refugee crisis by declaring the open-door policy. Angela Merkel said that, if Germany showed courage and lead the way, a common European Union approach is more likely possible. Countries who support the open-door policy believe that Germany's decision on open-door policy is overwhelmingly a positive light on guiding European Union's to solve the refugee crisis. They agreed to follow the open door policy simply because they acknowledge it that how Germany's power has taken on its natural leadership role in the EU's economic, monetary and world affairs. Besides, seven-in-ten Europeans outside of Germany see that country favorably and about half trust Merkel to do the right thing regarding world affairs.

## 2. Geo-politic Theory

Geo-politic comes from two words, namely "geo" and "politics". So, discussing the understanding of geopolitics, is inseparable from the discussion of geography and politics. "Geo" means Earth / Planet Earth. According to Preston E. James, geography is concerned with spatial planning, which is a system in terms of occupying a space on the surface of the Earth. Thus geography has to do with the interrelation between humans and the environment in which they live. While politics, always associated with power or government.

In the study of International Relations, geopolitics is a study that looks at problems / international relations from a spatial or geocentric point of view. The territorial context in which the relationship occurs varies in the function of the region in interaction, the scope of the region, and the hierarchy of actors: from national, international, to continent-region, also provincial or local. From some of the above meanings, the understanding of geopolitics can be further simplified. Geopolitics is a study that examines issues of geography, history and social science, with reference to the international political arena. (Danny, Memahami Geopolitik Dalam Konteks Negara Bangsa (Nation State) dan Masyarakat Global)

According to Hagget, Geopolitics or political geography is a branch of human geography whose field of study is the spatial aspects of government or state which includes regional relations, international relations, and also government or state on the surface of the earth. In political geography, the geographic environment is used as a basis for development and also state relations. Hagget also stated that the field of study of political geography was relatively broad, such as spatial aspects, political aspects, aspects of regional to international relations.

In the geo-politics factor, it can be seen from the Western Balkan Route that runs from Turkey to Germany. The root of the problem is this Western Balkan Route is the only path that the refugee can pass to get to Germany. When Angela Merkel announced the matter of accepting refugees through open-door policy, this pathway became a solid route used by refugees. Because the trip took days, there are several other countries alongside the Western Balkan Route that became a transit point for the refugee to rest. However, because most of these refugees were lack of financial, health and how the journey was too long, some of them decided to stay in the transit countries and this caused those countries alongside the Western Balkan Route experienced a surge of refugees. Knowing this phenomenon, Germany discussed and asked the countries alongside the Western Balkan Route to join on accepting refugees so that the surge of refugees would not be severe in some countries with the lure of cooperation as fellow EU countries.

#### **D. Hypothesis**

1. Germany open door policy influenced other EU member countries due to its position as the core country among other EU member countries.
2. The EU geographical pattern, which the route that the refugees usually took to go to Germany, encourage the implementation of open door policy for other EU member countries.

#### **E. Research Methodology**

The approach that is used in this thesis is a qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is a technique that does not

use calculations or termed scientific research which emphasizes the natural character of data sources. This type of research is a case study, because this thesis includes a case study and is explain into descriptive analysis. This thesis is mainly talk about how the open door policy was run and its impact to both Germany and EU member countries.

This thesis used a secondary data obtained from indirect sources such as journals and article that related to Germany's Open Door Policy. The author also got some data sources from online news websites such as Politico. This thesis used historical research where the stages of research were carried out the past by examining facts and data that are already available relating to the title of Germany's Open Door Policy from the history down to the fallout. Then the author explored the case by including several facts about open door policy from the official data and adding the opinions and analysis of the author.

#### **F. Writing Objectives**

This thesis was made to explain the history of open door policy, the reason of its establishment, and the effect that open door policy gave to other EU countries.

#### **G. Time Frame**

This case happened in two years (2015 – 2017). In the past 2 years, the policy that was established by Angela Merkel created such pros and cons by accepting thousands of refugees toward lots of country especially EU members. This thesis also explain the condition of refugees in the present after the downfall of open door policy in 2017.

## **H. Writing System**

In this thesis, the table of contents classified into 5 chapters. First, in the chapter 1, the author briefly explained the history of immigrants and refugees in Germany. The writer also justified about Germany's open door policy in Angela Merkel's administration, Germany's reason behind the establishment of open door policy and the problems that happened due to the establishment of the policy.

Second, in the chapter 2, the author will be exploring more about Germany's condition due to the establishment of open door policy from 2017-2015, how Germany and other EU member countries act toward the refugee crisis and the refugee growth in 2015 – 2017 both in Germany and other EU member countries during the refugee crisis.

Third, in the chapter 3, the author will be reviewing the reason behind the downfall of open door policy, the future of the refugee policy both in Germany and other EU member countries and the condition of refugees after the downfall of the policy.

Fourth, in the chapter 4, the author will be answering and explaining the hypothesis based on the theory that has been chosen.

Last, in the chapter 5, the author will write the summary of the case.