Germany’s “Open-Door” Policy in Light of the Recent Refugee Crisis

An Interpretive Thematic Content Analysis of Possible Reasons and Underlying Motivations

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the medially conveyed open-door refugee policy approach of the German government, in light of the recent refugee crisis in Europe. To gain an understanding of the reasons for this policy approach, a thematic content analysis is carried out, identifying and extracting themes, as portrayed in the national, international media, and political debates in the German Bundestag. These themes are then used in a comparison with actual refugee polices and further analysed from a constructivist and a structural realist perspective so as to investigate underlying motivations behind them.

Fifteen themes and reasons were identified, with the three most frequently occurring themes, Capacity and Capability, Humanitarian Responsibility, and Demography and Economy, making up about half of the number of themes found. The analysis also showed that both constructivist concepts – such as identity – as well as structural realist notions – for example national interests and capabilities – were largely contributing factors with regards to guiding, shaping and deciding on Germany’s refugee policies. Germany’s intake of about one million refugees was – in the context of identity – an acceptable decision, following its normative, national, moral, historical and humanitarian standards; and the perceived benefits of the policy provide strong arguments in regards to the country’s capabilities and national interests.

The thesis concludes that because Germany’s highly internal-moral-driven identity aligned well with its capabilities and national interests, Germany was able to continuously pursue its “open-doors” refugee policy despite resistance from a vocal opposition.

Key words: Germany, Refugee Crisis, Refugee Policy, Open-Door Policy, Reasons, Motivations, Constructivism, Structural Realism, Content Analysis, Thematic Analysis, Themes, Media, Parliamentary Debates

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Linköping, 29.08.2016,
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## List of Abbreviations

AA: Asylum Abuse  
AfD: Alternative for Germany  
ANTI: Anti-Refugee Sentiment  
AP1: Asylum Package I  
AP2: Asylum Package II  
AVWS: Aid for the Victims of War in Syria  
BAMF: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees  
CAPA: Capacity and Capability  
CDU/CSU: Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union  
CC: Clash of Cultures  
CHR: Christianity  
CSTT: Crime, Security and Terrorist Threat  
DE: Demography and Economy  
DFC: Deportation of Foreign Criminals  
DR: Dublin Regulation  
ER: Election Results  
EU: European Union  
EURO: EU and Europe: Political Affairs and Identity  
GH: Germany's History  
HR: Humanitarian Responsibility  
IA: Integration Act  
IOC: Impact on Other Countries  
IFSD: Integration, Financial and Socio-political Development  
MS: Member State, Member States  
NAP: New Asylum Procedures  
NPD: National Democratic Party of Germany  
OPP: Opportunity for Germany  
RAS: Repatriation of Asylum Seekers  
SA: Schengen Agreement  
SPD: Social Democratic Party of Germany  
SUBP: Subsidiary Protection and Right to Family Reunification  
LAW: The Law  
WEL: Welcoming Culture
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1 Introduction

In 2015, a rising number of refugees and migrants attempted the journey to Europe and to the European Union (EU) to seek asylum, traveling through South-East Europe or across the Mediterranean Sea (UNHCR, 2015a; BBC, 2016d). These new conditions, which have been rated as critical, in connection with the entry or transit of hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants into or through many European countries is commonly referred to as the European refugee crisis. This European refugee crisis is part of an unprecedented global refugee crisis which according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees affected almost 60 million forcibly displaced people worldwide in 2015 (UNHCR, 2015a).

Refugees and migrants arriving in Europe and the EU mostly come from regions such as South and Western Asia, Africa, and the Balkans (Delauney, 2015; Kingsley, 2015; Park, 2015; Eurostat, 2016a, 2016b). However, the refugee crisis which the EU is currently facing is caused mainly by the conflict in Syria, which saw more than four million people fleeing the country (Tsourdi & De Bruycker, 2015; Zavis, 2015). Consequently, many of those seeking protection in Europe come from Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya and other Middle-Eastern countries (Lehne et al., 2015). Among the more than one million people arriving in the Mediterranean Sea area in 2015, the three most-represented nationalities were people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, as seen in figure 1 (UNHCR, 2015b; Eurostat, 2016a, 2016b; Lehne, 2016).

![Figure 1: First time asylum applicants registered in all EU Member States, 2014-2015 (Eurostat, 2016b)](image-url)
Trying to escape violence, seeking freedom, protection and safety, as well as hoping for a future and better livelihoods, a continuously rising number of people attempt to make the long and often highly dangerous journey to Europe (Peter, 2015; USCRI, 2016). However, there are very few legal ways and no organised system for transportation for refugees and asylum seekers to enter the EU, thus human traffickers and smuggler engage on transporting them in inhuman conditions via sea and land. During this journey, they are risking their lives facing many dangerous situations and threats along the way in order to seek protection within Europe and the EU (Human Rights Watch, 2015). There, they are often being detained in refugee camps or immigration detention centres, or they find themselves waiting for several months for their country of entry to process their asylum application and grant them the status of refugee, while others are being sent back (Peter, 2015; USCRI, 2016).

This refugee crisis, and especially the arrival of more than one million asylum seekers in Europe in 2015, has challenged and unsettled the EU and its current institutional, organisational and legislative arrangements (Lehne, 2016). The EU and its leaders have so far been unable to appropriately and effectively deal with this critical situation and it became clear that the current frameworks cannot deal with the high influx of refugees and migrants. Moreover, the Member States (MS) of the EU have addressed the crisis in a very incoherent manner, thus revealing great divisions among the MS on matters of migration and how to handle the refugee situation (Carrera & Lannoo, 2015; Lehne, 2016).

On an EU level, it has become apparent that past attempts at harmonisation and coordination of asylum systems, as well as burden-sharing in regards to the distribution of asylum seekers and refugees have been rather ineffective, mostly due to the fact that asylum systems and conditions vary greatly between members of the EU. Despite efforts to harmonise EU asylum policy on a supranational level through, for example, the creation of a Common European and Asylum System, the EU still lacks solidarity in this area since the responsibility for processing asylum applications and granting protection to refugees is currently shared in a highly inequitable manner among the MS (Thielemann, 2008; Hansen & Hager, 2012).

Confronted with such high numbers of refugees arriving in the EU, arrangements like the Dublin and the Schengen system started to show a lack of robustness, unable to cope with critical situations and ultimately proving to be unfair and unsustainable (Lehne, 2016). The EU’s Dublin Regulation, for instance, which regulates refugee arrivals and assigns the
responsibility for registering and processing asylum applications to the first country of entry, has brought to light several flaws in the system. For instance, the first country of entry rule has put countries like Italy and Greece in very difficult positions where they are disproportionately responsible for receiving and processing asylum claims of new arrivals (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015; Lehne, 2016). This has led to the collapse of the system under the burden of the increasing influx of refugees in 2014 and 2015 where front-line countries Greece and Italy were no longer able to meet and fulfil their responsibilities and obligations, thus allowing refugees to continue their way and access whichever country of the EU they wanted. As a consequence, a further unsustainable burden was imposed on other MS, i.e. high numbers of the refugees ended up in a small number of EU countries such as Germany and Sweden (Tsourdi & De Bruycker, 2015; Lehne, 2016).

The current situation has put high strains on all governments involved and the repercussions of the crisis are being felt across Europe (ECFR, 2015). As a response, many European countries have closed their borders. Hungary even closed its borders with Serbia by building a fence (Spindler, 2015). This temporarily reinstatement of border controls not only ended two decades of open borders in the EU, it also led to thousands of refugees being unable to continue onwards, turning the situation in Greece into a humanitarian disaster (ibid.). The continuously high numbers of migrants and refugees arriving in countries across Europe and in other parts of the world have led to many governments starting to turn their backs on those MS who have developed different, more welcoming approaches to deal with the refugee flows (Human Rights Watch, 2015; Spindler, 2015). Shifting towards their initial default position some countries have focused more on discouraging people from attempting the journey to the EU and pulling up national drawbridges, rather than dealing with the people who have already arrived on European territory (ECFR, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2015; Traub, 2016). Several countries, especially countries in Eastern Europe, have refused to take any refugees at all (Traub, 2016). Other countries are split between the optimists, such as Germany, who continue to encourage and hope for a coordinated European response, and states such as Sweden which are searching more independently for solutions on a national level (ECFR, 2015).

Sweden specifically has for a long time continued to take in refugees and has pursued a far more generous approach to newcomers than other European countries interpreting the standards for asylum in a comparatively liberal way. However, towards the end of 2015, the Swedish government experienced an increasingly negative reaction against the refugees from its public
forcing it to make several concessions to its former policies. Moreover, the financial costs connected to the refugee crisis became dauntingly high, leading Sweden to hit the brakes of its liberal policy approach to the refugee crisis by among other things instituting a temporary border control programme and no longer granting permanent asylum to those arriving in Sweden (Traub, 2016).

Just like the rest of Europe, Germany is currently facing a huge challenge. In 2015 alone, Germany received over a million asylum claims and throughout the crisis, the country has been widely praised and admired for opening its doors to such a high number of protection seekers (BBC, 2016b). Although the number of new arrivals has slightly declined since the beginning of 2016, thousands of people continue to arrive every day (BAMF, 2016a; Bundesregierung, 2016e). At the moment, the German government has made it clear, that the country cannot continue to take in as many refugees as before. Thus, Germany is working on both a European and an international level to improve the protection of Europe's external borders (DW, 2015; Bundesregierung, 2016e).

The German government has been widely observed to continue both with its multifaceted response to Europe's refugee crisis as well as its medially touted open-door policy toward protection seekers, especially those fleeing the war in Syria (DW, 2016). Moreover, Germany’s government has stated several times that it wants to continue to play a leading role within the EU in tackling the refugee crisis, and over the last few months, Germany has repeatedly tried to put the refugee crisis at the heart of debates between EU MS (Spiegel Online, 2015a; Barkin, 2016). The government around Angela Merkel has repeatedly warned its European partners about the long-term dangers of not handling the refugee crisis in an adequate way, also encouraging other European countries, especially EU MS, to follow its lead by for example not abandon core principles of the EU like free-movement, and to extend efforts of burden sharing (BBC, 2015a; 2015c Barkin, 2016). However, Germany’s attempts at finding and encouraging a common European solution to the crisis has so far led to a growing opposition both at home and from its European partners.

Despite all this, the German government, and specifically Chancellor Angela Merkel, seem to refuse to succumb to populist or oppositional pressure, showing little to no signs of wavering in their own policies and not seeming to change in their track (Dempsay, 2016). Germany’s continued support of the refugee influx and migration, as well as the fact that Germany is being
one of the last countries trying to keep its borders open and not close the Balkan route, means that Germany is currently faced with a situation where its European allies and EU partners are being increasingly reluctant to support it (Riedel, 2016). Headlines in various news sources, such as “Angela Merkel’s stance on refugees means she stands alone against catastrophe”, “Angela Merkel: Lots of foes, fewer friends”, and “The lonely Chancellor” now portray Germany as isolated, without allies and struggling on its own to deal with the refugee crisis (Nardelli, 2015; Küstner, 2016; Wagstyl, 2016).

It seems that Germany has become Europe's reluctant hegemon in regards to the refugee crisis, but also in the face of several different overlapping crises, and although the German government is trying its best to lead, not everyone is following (Barkin, 2016). This now paints the picture of Germany not only being very much alone in its way of approaching and handling the current refugee crisis, but also of the German refugee policy – as well as the reasons and underlying motivations behind it – as an interesting and worthwhile approach to study.

### 1.1 Problem Definition

As mentioned above, the number of arrivals of refugees and migrants to Europe reached critical and overwhelming new levels in 2015, dominating headlines and sparking national and international political debates (Spindler, 2015). Since the beginning of the current refugee crisis, countries across Europe and especially within the EU have had to face many problems and challenges in connection with the high influx of people arriving on the continent (Lehne, 2016). Although different countries had to deal with unique issues and have thus reacted differently, some efforts have been made to increase cooperation among EU MS, to find and execute a joint response and to the focus on migrants and asylum seekers inside the EU (Human Rights Watch; Lehne, 2016). However, the focus of many EU governments has since shifted back to their initial default position. This position is defined by a relatively weak support for potential asylum seekers and an unwillingness to accept more refugees into the country.

Moreover, it is mainly comprised of efforts to prevent or discouraging people from attempting the journey to the EU, addressing the issue of smuggling through for instance the reintroduction of border controls, and rapidly sending back individuals whose asylum claims were denied and thus have no right to remain in the EU (Human Rights Watch, 2015). However, as mentioned above, some countries have stood out in their way of approaching the situation. Especially Germany is now seen as one of the last or even the last country in the EU to continuously drive
and support an open-door policy in regards to the unchanged high influx of refugees coming to Europe (BAMF, 2016a). Germany is now often portrayed as the sole supporter of such a policy approach encouraging other countries to follow its lead, but as of now isolated from the other EU MS, and faced with wavering support for its policies both nationally and internationally (Nardelli, 2015; Küstner, 2016; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2016a; Wagstyl, 2016).

Considering all this, questions arise relating to the precise nature, scope and development of Germany’s refugee policy and to the reasons and motivations behind the decision of the German government to apply and arguably stick to this particular approach.

### 1.2 Research Questions and Research Objective

The aim of this thesis is to examine the media-conveyed open-door refugee policy approach of the German government, in light of the recent refugee crisis in Europe. Considering the situation presented so far, three central questions of this thesis thus emerge as follows:

- What are Germany’s policies in regards to the current refugee crisis?
- What are possible reasons for Germany’s refugee policy?
- What could be the underlying motivations for this policy approach?

The first research question intends to describe and present the refugee policies of the German government both on a national and international level, thus establishing the government’s general policy approach in reaction to the current crisis. This part of the thesis should answer further questions like what kind of policies has the German government had in place or has it implemented as a response to the crisis, have the policies changed and can this approach really be called an open-door policy?

The second research question will then focus on investigating possible reasons, i.e. arguments, explanations or justifications, for why Germany has chosen and stuck by its policy. By analysing themes as portrayed in the debate in parliamentary debates in the German Bundestag as well as different media sources and comparing these themes with actual policies, it will be investigated if and why Germany is pursuing it an open-door policy approach.
Answering question three will help to further gain a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations behind the reasons for pursuing this kind of refugee policy. In order to establish the underlying motivations for Germany’s refugee policies, these possible reasons found in the data analysis will subsequently be put in a theoretical context. By applying two different theoretical frameworks, i.e. the theory of constructivism and the approach of structural realism, this thesis attempts to determine whether or not reasons for Germany’s policy approach can be related to values and norms and by extension attributed to matters of identity, or if instead Germany’s refugee policy is a matter of realist behaviour, national interest and capabilities, rather than explicit ideological notions or moral and ethical premises.

By answering, and consequently relating and connecting these three main research questions, this thesis aims at both gaining a better understanding of Germany’s policy approach to the current refugee crisis and the reasons and motivations behind this approach as found in the media and in parliamentary debates. Moreover, this analysis will try to examine if there is a discrepancy between discourse and policy making, i.e. whether the German government is actually acting – nationally and internationally – on its proclaimed policies or whether the public application of its policies does not necessarily reflect the debate as such. Accordingly, the purpose of this thesis is also to understand the seeming steadfastness of Germany in regards to its refugee policy by investigating if the evidently humanistic approach can be understood from a constructivist or even a structural realist perspective, i.e. can the logic of the policy be reconstructed on the basis of the offered official arguments as well as the media reporting.

In order to answer the research questions and to reach conclusion in regards to the research puzzle, Germany’s general refugee policy will be described and a qualitative thematic content analysis Germany’s refugee policy will be conducted. The themes as found in the debate will be compared and matched with actual policies to establish their impact on policy making. This in turn will be analysed using the theoretical frameworks of constructivism and structural realism.

The first part of this thesis will focus on the methodological concepts, analytical approaches and theoretical points of departure which will be used in this thesis. In the methodology chapter, the chosen approaches for the analysis will be explained, discussed and criticised. The following theory chapter will then illustrate the theories used to analyse the research puzzle. After the methodological and theoretical frameworks for the thesis is laid out, the second part
of the thesis will focus on the research questions themselves. First, a brief account and
description of Germany’s current refugee policies will be given. In this part, Germany’s policy
approach in regards to refugees and asylum seekers throughout this crisis will be described,
thus, conclusions will be made in regards to the general nature of the German policy approach
in reaction to the current crisis.

Following this, the thesis will address the question of reasons and possible motivations for
Germany’s policy approach. In this context, a qualitative thematic content analysis will be
conducted using data material from both national and international news sources as well as
parliamentary debates. The themes found in these sources will then be analysed from the two
previously determined theoretical perspectives. This will serve as a means to further understand
the underlying motivations for Germany’s approach to its refugee policy. Putting the found
reasons for Germany’s refugee policy in a theoretical context will help to get a better
understanding of Germany’s policy approach: is it a case of identity or of capabilities and
national interests, some of both or possibly something else. Furthermore, the description of
Germany’s refugee policies, in connection with the data material derived from the media
analysis, will serve as a way to investigate whether or not discrepancies can be found between
reality and discourse.

1.3 Importance and Relevance of the Thesis Topic
Despite the fact that this thesis will only focus on the case of Germany and its policies, the topic
of this analysis is by no means unrelated to the studies of International and European Relations.
Policy-making in regards to issues of migration and granting asylum can generally be
considered part of foreign policy and thus involves several different actors, including for
instance, the countries of origin such as Syria and Iraq, the very people coming and migrating
to Germany and other European states, as well as Germany itself as a country passed in transit
or even as the country of destination as shown in figure 2 (Teitelbaum, 1984; Mitchell, 1989).

The current refugee crisis effects millions of people and constitutes one of the biggest
challenges the EU has yet to face, i.e. the current refugee crisis is also a European and EU
matter (UNHCR, 2015b; Lehne, 2016). As one of the EU’s biggest and economically most
powerful MS, Germany is a leading force in shaping EU politics (Heyer. et al. 2016; Lehne,
2016). It is also the EU MS taking in the most refugees in absolute numbers (Eurostat, 2016a,
2016b). Therefore, Germany is a key player and leading country in the current refugee and
migration crisis. In this context, the relations between the EU institutions in Brussels and its MS such as Germany are also relevant, for they could have a great impact on the policy-making of the German government and vice-versa.

Figure 2: Main migration route to Germany (BBC, 2016c)

Studying Germany, its policy approach to the crisis as well as reasons and motivations for said policies, allows for parallels to be drawn to other EU countries. Also, analysing refugee policies of individual EU MS can shed light on the inner workings of the Union, thus improving our general understanding of this supranational institution. As a result, problems – in regards to the policies of individual states, but by extension also in regards to unified efforts of policy making, action and cooperation on issues of migration – might be identified and subsequently improvements and new approaches could be developed.
2 Methodology

Methodology refers to the systematic analysis of theories, concepts, as well as basic principles of reasoning and involves techniques used to settle epistemological and theoretical issues (Moses & Knutsen, 2007: 5). Thus, this chapter will lay the foundation for the following analysis on the topic on Germany’s refugee policies in regards to the current crisis in Europe. A short overview of basic methodological concepts will be given as an introduction before presenting and describing methodological techniques and analytical methods chosen and used in the description and analysis of this thesis. Towards the end of this chapter, the analytical and methodological framework in which this analysis will be conducted, will furthermore be inspected in regards to its limitations and possible problems.

2.1 Qualitative vs Quantitative Method Research

Methodological issues are often divided into two different kinds of research: quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2012: 380ff). The usefulness or appropriateness of this distinction is debatable, it can, however, act as a helpful way to classify and refer to different methodological approaches and practices of social science research (Åsberg 2001; Bryman 2012: 35f). In the analysis of content, both qualitative and quantitative research strategies can be used depending on what the main focus of analysis is (Bryman, 2012: 35f).

Generally, quantitative research is as a research strategy that focuses on the quantification in data collection and the analysis of the data material (Bryman, 2012: 35f). Quantitative research usually follows the logic of inference, thus the main aim of this research approach is to identify, assess and eliminating other rivalling explanations (Della Porta & Keating, 2008: 26). Qualitative research on the other hand puts the focus of the research on words rather than quantifications (Bryman, 2012: 35f). In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research rejects the practices and norms of the natural sciences and instead tries to understand social phenomena by exploring and discovering the meanings that individuals attribute to their behaviour and interpret the social world. The emphasis of qualitative research is therefore on human nature and the underlying motivations of human behaviour (Della Porta & Keating, 2008: 26; Bryman, 2012:35).

In the conduction of the analysis, this thesis will use a mixed-method approach, i.e. research that combines quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2012: 628). In the context of
thesis, the mixed method strategy is used as a way of explaining the findings generated by one research method with the help of the other (Bryman, 2012: 633). More specifically, the methods used in gathering and analysing the data are quantitative and qualitative methods using empirical description of policies as well as an interpretative thematic content analysis of argumentative themes according to frequency. This research will be conducted both through examining the interpretation of the world by its participants as well as through adopting a kind of natural scientific research model (Bryman, 2012: 380). A mix-method research strategy is in accordance with the aim of listing facts and providing a detailed account of what goes on in the setting being investigated as well as interpreting this content, thus explaining the findings previously generated (Bryman, 2012: 401, 633).

Consequently, this thesis will use the mixed-method approach in order to investigate intervening variables, which are influenced by the independent variable but which also have an effect on the dependent variable, see figure 3 (Bryman, 2012: 641).

2.2 Analytical Approaches
After having logically concluded to use a mixed-method research approach, the next step is to decide on an inferential approach. As shown in figure 4, there are several different kinds of inference. Induction is an analytical approach to the analysis of data in which the researcher tries to find broad and general explanations for a given phenomenon or research problem. This is done by gathering and analysing data before looking at any kind of theoretical framework. Based on the observations or results found in the analysed empirical data material a theory is then formulated a theory which serves as an explanation for the investigated research phenomenon (Bryman, 2012: 566ff).

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**Figure 3: Independent, intervening and dependent variables (own illustration, 2016)**

Consequently, this thesis will use the mixed-method approach in order to investigate intervening variables, which are influenced by the independent variable but which also have an effect on the dependent variable, see figure 3 (Bryman, 2012: 641).
Deduction starts from a theoretical perspective or issue. From the existing theories hypotheses are then developed before the data is gathered. The empirical material is then collected and illustrated in regards to and by the hypotheses, i.e. research questions are posed and subsequently tried to be answered through the analysis of data (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Bryman, 2012: 24f, 711).

Both analytical approaches often contain traits of each other as part of the theorising and data collection process. Thus, an iterative procedure between deduction and induction is frequently applied in social science research. Such a combination of induction and deduction is called abduction. The abductive method attempts to link the two approaches by joining and interspersing theoretical and empirical analysis in order to explore a given research question. This is being achieved for instance by firstly developing hypotheses from theoretical frameworks and then moving on to an initial analysis of the empirical material, thus exploring the field and gaining new insight into the data. This newly derived knowledge could lead to adaptations of pre-existing hypotheses, as well as to the generation of additional hypotheses which should then be situated within a larger theoretical framework. Afterwards, these hypotheses are subjected to a more thorough analysis and systematic empirical validation with more or new data material (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Bryman, 2012: 401f).

This thesis will apply an abductive approach to the conduction of research, see figure 5. Although this thesis sets out with predetermined research questions, as well as theoretical frameworks and assumptions, the data collection will be approached inductively. After a sighting of the quantitative data material, the predetermined points of departure and
assumptions will be revised and reworked iteratively through a more thorough theoretic analysis of the data, thus the finding of this research will be abductive based on the generated perspectives (Della Porta & Keating, 2008).

![Abductive approach](image.png)

Figure 5: Abductive approach (own illustration, based on Della Porta & Keating, 2008)

### 2.3 Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

Epistemology and ontology, the science of knowledge and understanding, and the study of the nature of being and reality, are two very important aspects of conducting research. A researcher should consider and reflect on these – often implicit – assumptions about the existence of a real and objective world and the possibility of knowing this world throughout the entire research process, i.e. before, during and at the end of their research, not least because the stance that the researcher chooses to take on will have implications for the way in their research is conducted. (Della Porta & Keating, 2008: 1ff; Bryman, 2012: 6; 41f). There are several different and alternative stances on knowledge and reality and there is no definite answer or guideline to which approach researchers, interpretive or otherwise, should adopt (Walsham, 1995: 79). It requires the researchers to carefully think about these philosophical approaches and their own values. Embracing a particular stance on epistemology and ontology will lead the researcher to the appropriate methods and tools of analysis, which is why researchers must subsequently account for the applied approaches in a clear manner. This will also make it possible for future researchers to interpret the basic assumptions behind the research results (Walsham, 1995: 79; Bryman, 2012: 41f).

In this context, it is important to note that the epistemological perspective I, as the researcher, have taken on is anti-positivistic, referring to the idea that in scientific knowledge consists of
both facts and values which are not separate, but interwoven in science. Ontologically I chose the perspective of internal realism, i.e. the idea that reality is an intersubjective construction created by people and the human cognitive structures (Walsham, 1995: 76). Given these epistemological and ontological prepositions applying an interpretive or hermeneutical approach to research seems natural to me. This kind of approach is also very well suited for a mix-method research approach (Walsham, 1995; Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

2.4 Reliability and Validity
The reliability of an analytical tool is measured by the degree to which a measure of a concept is stable, i.e. the degree to which the results of a study can be reproduced (Diekmann, 2011: 247ff; Bryman, 2012: 46f). Therefore, for a study to be able to be replicated in the correct manner, i.e. to be replicated in a way that the same or at least similar results are achieved, it should be reliable (Bryman, 2012: 46).

According to Bryman (2012: 717) validity is “a concern with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research”. Moreover, the validity of any analytical tool or central research concept is thus assessed and measured in regards to whether or not it enables the researcher to find logical and conceptual interconnections (ibid.). There are several different forms of validity including internal and external validity (Diekmann, 2011; Bryman, 2012: 47).

Internal validity is among other things concerned with the elimination of confounding variables and with whether or not the measure of a concept actually measures that concept (Bryman, 2012: 47f). External validity is concerned with the idea of generalisation and the generalisability of research findings (ibid.). According to Bryman (2012: 47ff), external validity describes whether or not “the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context in which it was conducted”. While some authors state that external validity is an important concept to be applied to social science, e.g. by carefully selecting representative cases and studies (Bryman, 2012: 47ff), others have suggested that in the context of social science and especially qualitative social science, validity concerns have been rendered obsolete or at least do not fully apply (Payne & Williams, 2005; Flyvberg, 2006; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011):

In this context, Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) argue that since we lack a perfect understanding of the social world it is impossible to attempt any kind of empirical verification or validation of
its objective reality (p. 27). Thus, in contemporary social science it has been realised that less emphasis should be put on verification and validation, and that empirical data should not be given the function of being the “ultimate validator”: empirical data should thus only function as indicator for whether or not something is true (ibid.). So because we do not have a complete understanding of the social world, empirical data can be used interpretatively and thus the main focus of social science research should not be on understanding, but on interpretation instead (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011: 27ff). Despite these validity issues, researchers should continue to conduct qualitative research, even if ideas cannot always be examined and checked due to the fact that empirical measures can always be contested. Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) defend the concept of validity arguing that since nothing has the ability to speak for itself interpretation is one of the basis for social sciences, and thus the analysis of data should be read “as ambiguous empirical material standing indirectly and frequently loosely for social reality ‘out there’” (p. 28f). On the other hand, some authors believe that that generalisation in the social sciences is a highly overrated tool, since conclusions can still be drawn even from a smaller sample and small case studies (Payne & Williams, 2005; Flyvberg, 2006).

The concepts of validity and reliability are important aspects of conducting objective research and should be taken in careful consideration and provided for when carrying out a study (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011; Bryman, 2012). Some scholars argue that by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, the strengths of both methods are utilised while simultaneously some of their weaknesses are evaded (Bryman, 2012: 628). Consequently, using a mixed method approach, i.e. using different procedures for collecting and analysing data as well as obtaining the data material through different sources, can strengthen the validity and reliability of the data and their interpretation (Bryman, 2012: 628; Zohrabi, 2013).

It is thus worth noting that this thesis seeks to meet these requirements to conduct objective research by using a mixed method research approach in order to answer and explain the research puzzle as well as several specific data gathering methods, e.g. triangulation of data sources, to further augment this research’s validity and reliability. However, it should also be mentioned that this thesis’s use of a mix-method research approach and especially the use of interpretative thematic content analysis makes the adoption and application of validity and reliability as concepts seem less suitable due to the reasons mentioned above.
More specifically, due to the fact that at the core of this thesis lies the assumption, that the social world as constructed through the meaning that is given to it, the gathered data will be analysed as constructions of the social world through language, debates and arguments. This consequently lead to this thesis’ analysis being subjective rather than objective as the findings will be interpreted by the researcher. It follows that the same study can thus be conducted from different points of view and with different interpretations of the data and the findings. However, the subjective interpretation of an area of study is also valuable due to the fact that the social world cannot speak for itself but the meaning is given through the interpretation of it. Thus, by identifying certain argumentative themes and patterns, this research aims to interpret the underlying motivations for Germany’s refugee policy and how the country’s identity and national interest may have affected the government’s policy making.

2.5 Data Gathering

Policies as implemented by the German government as well as themes will be part of this research’s analysis. First, policies which have been implemented by the government until March 2016 in regards to the management of the refugee crisis will be described and summarized. Secondly, themes, i.e. reasons, in the form of arguments, explanations and justifications will be derived from a triangulation of sources by means of an interpretative thematic content analysis.

2.5.1 Triangulation

Triangulation can be referred to as the use of more than one single source of data in the process of studying a social phenomenon so that the found results may be cross-checked (Dezin, 2006; Bryman, 2012). Generally, triangulation is intended as a means to control qualitative data by collecting quantitative, and vice versa. However, it is also possible to simple use additional quantitative data from the qualitative data sources. This can also provide another valuable perspective (Diekmann, 2011; Bryman, 2012: 392).

Applying the concept may provide a better understanding of the research phenomenon than if just one method had been used, but also enhance the confidence and credibility of the research findings. By possibly reaching the same conclusions or reproducing the same kind of data with different sources, validity of the results will improve and the trust in the finding of the research might increase (Diekmann, 2011). Furthermore, the reliability – and by extension, the validity – of the presented results can be increased (Bryman, 2012: 392ff). Triangulation can be a
valuable tool for researchers who only have limited experience in a complex field of social sciences. Therefore, three different data sources will be used in this thesis as a means of triangulation. The first source will consist of data derived from political debates in the German Bundestag. The second source will gather data from national media sources, and as the third source, two international media sources will be used for data collection, see figure 6.

![Figure 6: Triangulation (own illustration, based on Diekmann, 2011; Bryman, 2012: 392f)](image)

### 2.5.2 Data Sources

In order to gather data in regards to the description of refugee policies as implemented by the German government, available information and publications as issued by the Federal Government of Germany on their official website were used. Additionally, newspaper articles and other online sources were consulted for the purpose further describing the policies, as well as reconstructing and thus better comprehending the chronological and social context during which these policies were decided on.

For the thematic content analysis, three different sources of data that are relevant for attaining in-depth knowledge about the debate regarding Germany’s refugee policy are integrated: parliamentary debates, German media sources, and international media sources.¹

¹ Instead of directly quoting and listing all of the themes found in the data, these themes are summarised in the empirical data directly from the examined data sources. In case of German data sources, I will translate the material into English and only reference the original source. The identified themes will subsequently serve as the basis for further theoretical analysis.
Choosing transcripts of parliamentary debates in the Bundestag regarding the refugee crisis and Germany’s open-door policy seems a natural choice since it most likely will provide a comparatively direct insight into the reasoning of very important actors in the debate, i.e. leading government representatives and policy makers.

Moreover, national and international media sources will be used as a means for gathering data, because of the fact that media play a very important role in the context of politics and more specifically in regards to the current European refugee crisis. This is among other things due to the fact that particular media sources are perceived as trustworthy by the public, thus having a high potential to influence the said public (GlobeScan, 2006). Furthermore, a change has taken place over the last few years which has seen the public sphere anchored around national institutions of states and territorially bound societies steadily shifting to a more public sphere constituted around the media system. Consequently, the media has taken on the role of mediator and has become an arena of struggle, as well as a shaper of discourse and influencer of policy making (Castells, 2008). Thus, the media can potentially be a rich resource of data material, not only because of the high trust that is placed in them and the influence the media has on the general public, but also because arguably, the media is where politics and policy-making re happening (GlobeScan, 2006, Castells, 2008). Therefore, it makes sense to use media sources as a source for data material.

The sources for data collection were chosen on the basis of their influence as well as the trust that is based in those specific types of media. According to a survey on attitudes towards media conducted by GlobeScan (2006), about 80% of the German public following the news every day. Germans are generally confident in regards to the independence of their media from government and foreign influence. Furthermore, almost half the Germans (45%) name newspapers as their most important news source (GlobeScan, 2006; InterNations, 2016). Almost the same percentage (44%) of Germans claim to read newspapers on a daily basis (ibid.). Not only are newspapers important news sources, they are also viewed by Germans as one of the most trusted of news sources with 80% declaring trust in national and regional newspapers and 74% trusting local newspapers (ibid.). Due to the fact that the German public places high trust in this kind of news source, the fact that some newspapers have the ability to reach and thus influence rather large parts of the public, as well as the trust placed specifically in some of these newspapers, national newspapers will serve as one of three data sources. The media sources used in this thesis include two of Germany’s biggest newspapers and the ones
with the highest circulation, BILD Zeitung and Süddeutsche Zeitung, as well as two of the biggest and most trusted international news sources, Reuters and the BBC (Engel, 2014; Statista, 2016). While national media sources will provide a more specific view of the debate in Germany and the reasons of the actors directly involved in the debate, international media sources are used in order to gain a more distant, broader and international perspective on the matter.

2.5.3 Data Sample
Since a complete enumeration and analysis of all the before mentioned media material and data sources would go beyond the scope of this thesis, only a specific sample, i.e. a limited set of data collected from a statistical population by a defined procedure, will be used in the following analysis. This sample should then represent a subset of data of a more manageable size (Diekmann, 2011).

In addition to limiting the data sample by focusing on three specific data sources, only data produced during a specific time period of the refugee crisis will be taken into consideration. As mentioned in the introduction indicators of why Germany has stuck to its policies may be found in the political and rhetorical aftermath of turbulent events that not only challenged the perception of the migrants and refugees, but also put political pressure on the actors that carry social, societal and political responsibility to act through their given channels, in their given venues. While this is only an assumption which will not be at the centre of this analysis, this strategy is used as a means of limiting the data set and as a guide to which data material to analyse.

Current, but by no means exhaustive, examples of such events are presented in figure 7. The reactions and arguments following these events give an insight into what the themes are, when tested, and what the motivations may be. When seen from different perspectives, these reasons and motivations can be interpreted differently, which is why an analysis of these perspectives, alongside an analysis of the themes themselves as perceived from these perspectives, can further illuminate the actors’ intent and provide additional insight into their reasoning.
Thus, only parliamentary debates and media pieces which have been produced or taken place closely after these five critical events or within the time period defined by these event which most possibly re-sparked the debate surrounding the issue of the refugee crisis and Germany’s open-door policy will be taken into account.

Furthermore, a convenience sample is chosen for this analysis as the data-collection method in order to define and limit the amounts of data which will be used in the analysis. A convenience sample is a form of non-probability sample which is simply selected due to its availability and accessibility to the researcher (Diekmann, 2011; Bryman, 2012: 710). Thus, available articles or news reports regarding the refugee crisis and the debate about Germany’s refugee policy published by one of the three mentioned material sources and within the time period of the five pre-determined critical events, i.e. September 2015 to March 2016, will serve as the basic data pool from which several articles will be chosen in order to extracted themes and possible reasons in relation to the research question.

2.6. Method of Analysis: Interpretative Thematic Content Analysis

A qualitative content analysis is a common method to the qualitative analysis of documents (Bryman, 2012: 557). Such an analysis involves the searing for underlying themes in the data material; however, the process through which themes are identified is not always specified in great detail (ibid.). Qualitative content analyses have been referred to as coding exercises which main purpose it is to extract themes from data material, and to then identify and retrieve those sections of text concerning these themes (Aronson, 1994; Bryman, 2012: 558).
As part of this content analysis, an interpretative thematic content analysis will be conducted. Similar to a content analysis, a thematic analysis investigates texts and results in the numerical description of the text’s features; however, it pays greater attention to the qualitative aspects of the analysed material (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). The content analysis method will be used to establish categories and themes as well as to count the frequency with which they are used in the data material (Joffe & Yardley, 2004; Bryman, 2012). The analysis will also be used in order to establish categories and themes, but is used in order to not only extract themes which are manifest content of the data and directly observable, but to also identify themes on a more latent level as well as to gain a deeper understanding behind the identified themes (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Thus, using a combined analysis method constitutes a not only a common, but logical and useful approach to this thesis’s qualitative data analysis (Joffe & Yardley, 2004; Bryman, 2012).

Since this research is specifically interested in the underlying themes regarding arguments, explanations, and justification for Germany’s refugee policy, a group of codes and concepts will be employed in order to identify and extract these themes. In order to do so, an index of central themes, i.e. recurring motifs, will be constructed and applied to the data. Themes will be extracted through a thorough process of reading and rereading of the data material which make up the data: national and international media sources as well as transcripts of parliamentary debate. More specifically, in the search for themes, a number of codes and criteria, as partly suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2003), will be applied to the data. These codes and criteria include the following:

- Repetitions, i.e. issues and topics that recur frequently.
- Similarities and differences, i.e. different ways in which a topic is discussed.
- Linguistic markers and connectors, i.e. examining the use of specific, research related words, in this case words like ‘refugee’, ‘crisis’, ‘refugee policy’ in order to establish a relevant connection with the thesis topic. Additionally, the data will be examined in regards to words like ‘because’, ‘since’, or ‘therefore’, due to the fact that such terms point to causal connections in the minds of participants, thus possibly leading to themes.
- Theory-related material: using the social scientific concepts as established by the to be applied theories as springboard for themes.
While conducting the interpretative thematic content analysis, the data material, i.e. transcripts of parliamentary debates, national and international media sources, will be carefully examined line by line. Themes will be noted down as they appeared in the data. These thematic items will be gathered and from this initial, detailed analysis, wider and more general thematic categories which represented a number of items will be constructed. The data material will then be examined again in order to piece together and summarise the segments of data which represented each them.

In a further step to reach a deeper understanding of the identified themes, a match analysis will be carried out in order to match themes with policies. This should establish which themes appeared in the actual refugee policies as decided on by the German government. This analysis of the reasons for Germany’s refugee policy will be the basis for subsequently applying the theoretical frameworks of constructivism and realism in order to investigate if, how and why different themes have guided, shaped and influenced the policy making process, i.e. why Germany has chosen this particular policy approach as a response to the current refugee crisis. This last step using theoretical concepts, will help create a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations behind the reasons for the German refugee policy, see figure 8.
2.8 Limitations and Self-critique

2.8.1 Methods

The main issue with applying a content as well as a thematic analysis is the fact that these research methods are no easily identifiable research approaches as it there is only insufficient literature and material that specifically outlines the pragmatic process of thematic analyses and mostly relies on the analyst’s awareness of recurring issues, categories and topics in the data (Aronson, 1994; Joffe & Yardley, 2004; Bryman, 2012: 580). This makes the research rather subjective, as it is the researchers responsibility to interpret the data, thus influencing the validity and reliability of the findings.

As mentioned before, the concepts of validity and reliability as traditional means of conducting research have been critically discussed in recent years and should or do not always apply to contemporary social science research (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011: 27f). Considering that the basis of this thesis is a both quantitative and qualitative, i.e. quantifying and interpreting, thematic content analysis, the concepts of validity and reliability cannot be fully adopted. Thus, since the data for the thesis will be collected, analysed and interpreted subjectively rather than objectively by the researcher due to their specific predispositions, the finding of this analysis will also be quite subjective and the same analysis could be conducted from different points of view and with different interpretations.

It is still important and worthwhile to subjectively interpret social phenomenon and areas of study, because the social world is not yet fully understood and cannot speak for itself. Instead, meaning is given to it through interpretation. The results of this study can thus not be seen as an attempt to verify a social phenomenon, but instead as indicators for what might be possible explanations of the research phenomenon (ibid.). Moreover, due to the triangulation of source material, the findings of this thesis will be enhanced in their confidence and credibility as well as possibly provide a better understanding of the research topic. Furthermore, both the reliability and the validity of the presented results may be increased (Diekmann, 2011; Bryman, 2012).

Another issue with content and thematic analyses is the strong focus on recurrence and repetition as criteria for identifying themes. This is insufficient, because arguably a theme is more than a topic which has been referred to by a great number of people (Bryman, 2012). Thus, this research took care to employ other criteria in the process of identifying themes as
outlined above. In doing so, reflections were made on the initial codes that have been generated and consequently gaining a sense of the continuities and linkages between them.

2.8.2 Sources

Ignoring other sources that are perceived as trustworthy by the German public, such as for instance radio or local newspapers, might result in overlooking important arguments and actors in the debate surrounding the refugee crisis and Germany’s policy approach. Picking a very limited number of very specific newspapers, also runs the risk of missing an integral part of the debate. Having included more sources as the basis for data gather may have provide this thesis with a more specific and diverse picture of the themes in the debate on Germany’s open-door policy. For instance, themes and arguments presented for on a more regional or local level might be potentially more influential and effective in terms of shaping public option and thus indirectly policy making. However, only national and broader news sources where chosen for data gathering, because including more data would first and foremost exceed the scope of this thesis. Another important reason for focusing on these news sources is the fact that they reach a greater number of people and might focus on the most central and general arguments in the debate.

Having selected the basis for the source material, it has not been fully established how credible or trustworthy the chosen data sources are objectively. It may have been more advantageous to have created and then judged potential data sources to a credibility index of some sort. However, the credibility of a source thus not automatically translate into influence of the source material or its communication effectiveness, thus it was decided to forgo establishing and applying such a methodological device (Hovland & Weiss, 1951).

Using a convenience sample as a sampling strategy results in the problem that it is difficult to generalise the findings of the study, because it cannot be certain of what population this sample is representative of. However, in some cases it is acceptable to use convenience sampling as a means of data gathering (Bryman, 2012: 418). In this case, the chance presents itself to gather data from a convenience sample and it represents a very good opportunity to manage the vast amount of data material, i.e. choosing the data material and those sources which seem most relevant and adequate can function as good way to limit the source available material. As a consequence, and despite other methodological efforts to enhance the validity of this study’s findings, the data will still not allow definitive findings to be generated, because of the problem
of generalisation (ibid.). As thoroughly discussed above, the concepts of reliability and validity are not as relevant anymore in the context of qualitative social science research and the results of this study could still provide a starting point for further research or allow links to be forged with existing findings in an area.
3 Theoretical Points of Departure

Relationships between different actors in the international system and the arena of world politics, their actions, as well as the underlying meanings and motives of these actions within the system of international relations can be analysed and interpreted differently within different IR schools of thought. Thus, applying different theoretical frameworks in order to analyse the themes in the debate about the refugee crisis and Germany’s policy approach will help generate a better understanding of these themes as well as illuminate possible reasons and underlying motivations for them.

Since there are usually several theories which could plausibly explain an outcome or could be used to account for a given phenomenon, one reason for choosing two very different theoretical perspectives as a means of analysis is the possibility of being able to offer an extensive range of possible reasons for this specific political outcome (Della Porta & Keating, 2008).

In order to theoretically analyse the data and explore the question of why the German government has stuck to its open-door policy approach in regards to the current refugee crisis, the following general perspectives will constitute the framework of this case study: the theory of constructivism as well as the political approach of structural realism. These theories in particular were chosen among other things, because of the possibility of testing the explanatory potential and limitations of these particular theories. After presenting Germany’s refugee policy, analysing the data, identifying reasons for said policies, and comparing the themes with the actual policies, these theories shall be used in order to gain a deeper understanding for the underlying motivations behind the reasons for Germany’s refugee policy. The following theoretical concepts will thus be used in explaining how and why some themes seem to be the foundation for certain policies.

While the approach of structural realisms is generally focused on state’s national interests as well as their capabilities and their structural position in the international system, constructivism emphasises the importance and agency of the individual in the process of creating and constructing values and norms. Furthermore, the constructivist perspective belongs to the post-positivist school of thought stressing the importance of ideas and values. Constructivism thus acts as a balance to the more positivist realist perspectives which are based on the idea of an objective understanding of reality. In regards to the research puzzle of this thesis, choosing
these particular theoretical approaches seems only natural. This is, because a quick pre-
investigative examination of the general debate about Germany’s refugee policy, and moreover
about the matter of Germany taking in such a high number of protection seekers, reveals two
main comprehensive explanations. The first general explanation to become evident refers to
Germany as a humanitarian power with a unique history which is altruistically following its
current refugee policy due to beliefs, values and norms, thus it can be argued that Germany’s
policy approach can be explained by its identity (Akrap, 2015; Bird, 2015; Horn, 2015;
Lochocki, 2015; SeekerNetwork, 2015; Dempsey, 2016). The second broad explanation refers
to Germany being egoistic and simply following its own agenda according to its own interests
and capabilities (Bird, 2015; Lochocki, 2015; Reuters, 2015; SeekerNetwork, 2015). Therefore,
applying both constructivism as well as the perspective of structural realism to the analysis of
the research puzzle seems fitting.

Moreover, adopting these theories has the benefit of being able to operate on several different
analytical levels and analysing the arguments found in the debate surrounding this issue from
these different theoretical point of view will help illuminate the intent of the actors involved in
the debate as well as provide additional insight into their reasoning. In the following, each
theory will be shortly introduced and hypothesis deriving from the basic postulations of each
theory regarding the possible motivations behind Germany’s open-door policy will be
established.

3.1 Constructivism
Constructivist theory as an IR theory postulates that essential and significant aspects of
international relations are historically and socially constructed as opposed to being inevitable
consequences of human nature or other fundamental characteristics of the international system
and features of world politics and (Jackson & Nexon, 2002). Said historical and social
construction takes place as core aspects of international relations are being given their form
through ongoing processes of social practice and interaction (Wendt, 1992; Reus-Smit, 1996).
Thus, Constructivism takes a view on reality which assumes that reality as such is a product of
conceptualizations and constructions. Every single person in society is constantly involved in
the creation of these concepts and constructs (Della Porta & Keating, 2008: 81).

Since the data material used in this thesis is mainly derived from national and international
media sources, constructivist theory lends itself quite well to the analysis of said data material.
This is, because the theoretical framework of constructivism is well fitted to analyse language and discourse which are both means of construction in regards to identity, values and norms (Milliken, 1999; Fairclough, 2013). Applying constructivist theory to the analysis of the data material will thus allow for conclusion to be draw both in regards to the arguments presented in the debate, and the possible discrepancy between the discourse and the actual policy making.

Furthermore, one of the prominent comprehensive explanations for Germany’s refugee policy is related to country’s identity, as well as its specific cultural values and norms. Moreover, the current refugee crisis marks a critical moment in European and German history. This very unusual situation as experienced in countries across Europe which tries and tests national identities, value and norms, could arguably lead to a clash of cultures, or redefinitions of identity across Europe, thus also in Germany.

Constructivism considers such domestic factors in the context of national history and identity in order to understand the actions of political actors, such as states’ inherent policies. Due to this focus on historic and social construction and the concept of identity, constructivist theory can serve as one of the perspectives used to analyse the reasons for Germany’s refugee policies related to the current crisis as well as the possible underlying motivations, thus providing additional insight into both the actors’ initial intent and subsequent reasoning.

There is a number of different approaches to the theory of Constructivism, which makes it hard to talk about the theory in general, but also to agree on a unified set of prediction. Nevertheless, all approaches of Constructivism try to explain political action and patterns through social situations, ideas and identities. Furthermore, all Constructivist approaches put emphasis on the fact that IR is a social construction. So despite this division it is possible to identify a unified set of assumptions concerning three basic ontological concepts.

Firstly, the theory is commonly defined by its emphasis on the importance of normative as well as material structures. Secondly, the theory gives great weight and importance to the role of identity in shaping political action, andthirdly, Constructivism emphasises the mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures (Reus-Smit, 1996). Constructivists thus claim that structures, normative or ideational as well as material, shape the behaviour of social and political actors to varying, but similar degrees, be they individuals or states (Wendt, 1995, Reus-Smit, 1996). Or as Wendt (1999) puts it, constructivist theory assumes “that the structures
of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.” (p.1). Moreover, Wendt (1995) argues that material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded in (p.73). A shared identity has structural features that can influence action. Additionally, identities influence interests and actions of both social individuals and states. It is therefore crucial to understand how actors have formed and develop their identities over time. Thus, depending on the situation, the interests and actions of an agent can be very different. It is also assumed in constructivist theory that actors and structures constitute each other. While the structures can dictate actors’ actions, the structures only exist as a consequence of the practices and actions of those actors (Wendt, 1992; Reus-Smit, 1996). Constructivism stresses that human beings are not or at least more than mere products of societal categories such as gender, class, or race. Instead individuals have the possibility and the freedom to construct their own realities through the interaction with others (Jørgensen, 2010: 164). In the same way, states have different identities in different situations and are not defined in or confined by a global structure or already existing positions (Wendt, 1992).

As for the case of Germany, it can be expected that normative as well as material structures, national identity – or even other layers of identity, such as regional, European or political – and the mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures, differ in comparison with other countries, both in the EU and in other parts of the world.

All this could arguably play an important role in and have a distinct effect on shaping the political actions of the German government.

3.1.2 Constructivist Assumptions

Considering this constructivist point of view as well as Germany’s history and what could currently be perceived as the German identity – or the possible lack thereof – the several assumptions are being derived in regards to Germany refugee policy. These assumptions will serve as the foundation for discussion of the research findings where they will be reconsidered and debated once more.

Firstly, since a shared or common identity is essential to and distinguishing for the actions of international actors such as states – here the German government and people – it could be
possible that the idea of including anyone new as part of the pre-existing identity, i.e. accepting refugees and asylum seekers into the country, integrating and supporting them, would be rejected, because of the differences in identity constitute a clear obstacle in regards to living in the same country. Moreover, accepting, including and integrating populations with a dissimilar identity could constitute a destabilising threat to the existing German identity.

Secondly, as a still rather religious country, arguments to help the refugees could be brought forward according to Christian values, e.g. charity, however, depending on the way religion manifests itself in the German identity, this could also result in a reluctance to accept refugees on basis that their religion is decidedly different from the main religion in Germany, i.e. Christianity.

Thirdly, due to its long history with refugees and labour migration after World War II, Germany will encourage, invite and argue for the support of refugees, possibly because of a certain sense of solidarity. Moreover, Germany’s role in both World Wars, as well as the nation’s collective post-war guilt has shaped the German identity to great extent. In order to leave this negative reputation – and by extension identity – behind, Germany needs to reinvent itself. The refugee crisis serves as an opportunity to shape, reinvent and even strengthen the new and very contrasting German identity as for instance a strong humanitarian actor, defender of human rights and decidedly un-nationalist nation in order to prevent events similar to World War II.

Furthermore, the notion of being "German" and the idea of a "German identity" are relatively new concepts, thus there is a lack of a leading culture (Leitkultur). This lack of clearly defined identity makes it easier to accept new people and cultures in the country (or at least harder to reject them). Welcoming refugees is then part of the identity, creating a welcoming culture and an identity of multiculturalism. These two parts of the newly constructed identity then serve as arguments to support the refugees and adopt an open-door policy. However, this could also result in a regression to old behaviour and identity features which were part of the “old” or previous German identity, thus possibly leading to a much less open and welcoming response to the incoming refugee flows.

Lastly, another way to reinvent the German identity could be seen in relation to the EU, as well as the values and norms it stands for. By supporting the refugees and asking other EU states to
follow its lead, Germany upholds EU principals, thus strengthen its identity as a humanitarian state as well as a political power and leading country in the EU or even the world.

3.2 Structural Realism

Generally, political realism in International Relations is a theoretical tradition of analysis which according to Burchill et al. (2005) “stresses the imperatives states face to pursue a power politics of the national interest” (p. 29). Political realism as such is considered the oldest and most frequently used theory of international relation, and a useful and important analytical approach to gain insights about and a deeper understanding of international politics (Donnelly, 2000; Waltz, 2000; Burchill et al., 2005). Although there are various forms of realism with each definition of the theory differing in detail, most of them are centred upon a number of general propositions (ibid.). For instance, realists stress the importance of the concepts of anarchy, i.e. the absence of any international government or hierarchical political rule, as well as egoism, also referred to as human selfishness (Burchill et al., 2005: 29). Both anarchy and egoism impose constraints on politics due to the fact that they need to be a priority in all political affairs of power and security (ibid.). Furthermore, realism assumes that states are the most important actors in the international system (‘state-centrism’), and that all states within the system are rational actors, i.e. act in order to pursue self-interest and strive to attain as many resources as possible (Keohane 1986; Donnelly, 2008; Burchill et al., 2005). As a theory of international politics, realism focuses on political structure where the worst aspects of human nature are allowed and encouraged to be expressed when handling international relations. As a result, international conflicts are not eliminated, but rather mitigated and managed thus seeking a less dangerous world instead of a safe and peaceful world (Burchill et al., 2005).

Like most other strands of realism, structural realism also adheres to these basic assumptions (Burchill et al., 2005). With egoism as a guiding principle, states tend to act solely in their own interest, either trying to ensure their survival or pursing other gains and further goals (Burchill et al., 2005; Humphreys, 2012) Furthermore, structural realism specifically emphasises the aspect of anarchy as a defining and ordering principle of the international structure (Burchill et al., 2005). In this international structure, all sovereign states are equal, acting on principles of self-help, unwilling to subordinate their own national interests to the interests of others. It also follows that a constant lack of trust and the struggle for power will continuously be at the centre of international politics even in times where there is no aggression, conflict or similar situations (Waltz, 1979; Burchill et al., 2005; Humphreys, 2012). Thus, states tend to engage in the
constant development, expansion, and increase of their capabilities for foreign interventions as well as their relative power (Humphreys, 2012).

Moreover, structural realism stresses the importance of capabilities, claiming that all states are formally equal and similar in regards to their needs, but different in regards to the capabilities for achieving those need (Waltz, 1979; Humphreys, 2012). This emphasis on capabilities thus further highlights the impact of anarchy and the distribution of capabilities (Burchill et al., 2005; Humphreys, 2012). Consequently, the international political structure is defined by the interaction of states, and in turn constrains or enables their ability to act (Burchill et al., 2005).

In connection with international politics, structural realism proposes a clear difference to hierarchically ordered political structures, i.e. little inherent functional differentiation between states due to the ordering principle of anarchy and the resulting fact that every state must ‘put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so’ (Waltz, 1979: 107; Humphreys, 2012). Or in other words: states only differ from each other in terms of capability and international political structures differ only in their distribution of capabilities, thus being defined by the state with the most capabilities (Waltz, 1990; Burchill et al., 2005).

Consequently, cooperation among states is impeded or at least limited by this structural distribution of capabilities due to fears of relative games made by other states (Burchill et al., 2005; Humphreys, 2012). The gains and resulting power of others is a threat to a state, especially when there is no higher authority to turn to for protection and since dependence is ideally to be avoided (Waltz, 2000; Burchill et al., 2005). As a result, states will try to balance power which is done both internally, i.e. allocating resources to national security, and externally, i.e. forming alliances, insurance schemes and informal agreements with other states (Waltz, 1979; 2000; Burchill et al., 2005; Humphreys, 2012.).

Pressures towards balancing and against cooperation are further enforced by relativity of power, thus shaping international relations in the anarchic system. As a result of this general principle, states are more concerned with relative power and strength rather than with absolute power or advantage (Waltz 1979, Burchill et al., 2005). Thus states must, as Burchill (2005) puts it ‘not only [consider] whether one gains but, more importantly, whether one’s gains outweigh those
of others.’ (p. 38). Relative gains are pursued by balancing and consequently limit efforts of cooperation (Burchill et al., 2005; Humphreys, 2012).

Structural realists also talk about systems of unipolarity, bipolarity and multipolarity, concluding that a bipolar system is more stable than a multipolar system due to the fact that balancing can be done internally, thus there is less chance and opportunity of a great power war (Waltz, 1979; Burchill et al., 2005).

In summary, structural realism distinguishes itself from other, more traditional forms of realism in several different ways (Waltz, 1990; 2000). Among other things, realists usually focus only on the interaction of states, for structural realists, however, interacting states can also ‘be adequately studied only by distinguishing between structural and unit-level causes and effects’ (Waltz, 1990: 32). Thus, structures constitute a new object of inquiry and an additional basis for argumentation (ibid.). Furthermore, structural realism re-envisions the concept of power as the combined capability of a state and thus a defining characteristic of the international political structure (Waltz, 1990; Humphreys, 2012). Moreover, structural realists consider power as a useful means, but not the ultimate goal or desire, which can in certain situations be security instead of power (Waltz, 1990; 2000). Another distinguishing aspect of structural realism is the fact that anarchy is considered a distinct structure which constrains states, orders them in regards to capabilities and mediates the outcomes states produce (Waltz, 1990). Realism on the other hand perceives anarchy as a general condition that sets and provides the problems and conflicts states have to deal with (Waltz, 1990; Burchill et al., 2005).

As for the case of Germany’s response to the refugee crisis, it can be expected that the country’s structural position in the international system, it’s capabilities and relative power might differ in comparison with other countries, both in the EU and in other parts of the world. Thus, this view of structural realism on international politics could also be applied to Germany’s refugee policy as well as the way the country’s political actions and responses to the refugee crisis were shaped and influenced.

3.2.1 Assumptions of Structural Realism

Considering Germany’s refugee policy under the previously presented structural realist assumption about the way international politics and relations work, several assumptions are being formulated in regards to Germany policy making. These assumptions will provide criteria
for evaluation for the discussion of the research findings where they will be reconsidered and debated once more.

Firstly, according to the idea of the distribution of capabilities, it is to be expected that arguments are being made concerning the capabilities, and on a related note on the capacities, of the German government to take in large(er) numbers of refugees. Depending on the source or argumentation behind these statements, points could be made both for and against Germany’s open-door policy, e.g. it could be argued that Germany – being both a major economic powers in the EU, but also already experienced in taking in and integrating migrants and refugees – (still) has the capability to take in refugees. Furthermore, it could be argued that using and investing material capabilities today could lead to a pay-off in terms of even high material capabilities in the future. On the other hand, however, it could also be argued that Germany simply has no more capabilities to take in refugees, or rather that taking in larger numbers of refugees will reduce the country’s material capabilities, thus placing Germany in relatively disadvantaged position compared to its European neighbours. Therefore, Germany open-door policy is not maintainable and the country should no longer accept refugees and asylum seekers.

Secondly, in the context of material capabilities and to some extend power, it could be argued that by accepting large numbers of refugees into the country, Germany is acquiring new and additional material capabilities, e.g. in terms of population (maintaining its own population in the face of demographic change, possibly and indirectly maintaining its power in the EU parliament) and labour force (indirectly keeping up economic strength and does further investing in material capabilities, power and security). In this case, Germany’s open door-policy can be seen as a way of investing in the future, thus boosting its material capabilities as well as absolute and relative power in the long-term.

Thirdly, in relation to the idea of security as a fundamental need for actors in the international system, arguments could be made that taking in refugees would destabilise or undermine the security of Germany by for instance becoming a target for terrorist groups.

Another assumption relation to the fact that structural change affects the behaviour of states and the outcomes their interaction produces. This could explain both national and international changes or divides in attitude regarding Germany’s refugee policy. Or in other words: as
capabilities change and structure changes, some might be more or less favourably inclined towards Germany’s open-door policy approach.

Lastly, because structural realism predicts that due to the extent of their interests, larger units existing in a contentious area will tend to take on system wide tasks, Germany might also consider more international or European systematic aspects when debating and deciding on policy action in regards to the refugee crisis.
4 German Policies in Regards to the Refugee Crisis

This chapter will offer a short overview of some Germany’s policies in regards to the current refugee crisis, presenting and describing the refugee policies and measurements taken by the German government on a national and international level. Thus the government’s general policy approach in reaction to the current crisis will be established.

4.1 National Policies and Measurements

New Asylum Procedures (NAP)

Due to the high number of asylum applications, the German government decided in the summer of 2015 to drive forth measurements which would speed up the application process (BAMF, 2015; Bundesregierung, 2015b; 2016a; 2016d; 2016e). The intention of this shortened application procedure was to be able to quickly reject asylum seekers from so-called ‘safe countries of origin’, i.e. countries within the EU, several countries the Western Balkans such as Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ghana and Senegal (BAMF, 2016b; Bundesregierung, 2016e). Moreover, for refugees from for instance Syria, Eritrea, and Iraq whose applications will most probably be accepted application procedures were also shortened and sped up (BR, 2015). In order to further improve the application procedures as handled by the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the German government decided to strengthen the BAMF’s workforce with 4000 additional new members of staff (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2015b, 2015c).

Integration, Financial and Socio-political Development (ISFD)

The funding for refugees and asylum seekers was increased by one billion euros for 2015 while for the year 2016 six billion euros will be provided (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d). With these financial measures, the budgets for job centres and educational programmes, were increased (Deutschlandfunk, 2015; FAZ, 2015; Bundesregierung, 2016e). These measurements should also facilitate the refugees’ entry into the German labour market and consequently further their independence from the German welfare system (Deutschlandfunk, 2015; Bundesregierung, 2016e). The government also decided to cut benefits in cases where asylum seekers refused to cooperate or to take part in integration measurements (Bundesregierung, 2016e).

It was also agreed upon to provide more non-pecuniary benefits, to strengthen the workforce of the federal police, to improve the cooperation between the Federal Employment Agency and
the BAMF, and to increase the budget of the Foreign Ministry by 400 million euro a year to fight causes of flight (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; Deutschlandfunk, 2015; FAZ, 2015). Moreover, the government has provided additional funds in different sectors which might be affected by the crisis, e.g. housing and health care, in order to accommodate and counterbalance the high number of refugees who have arrived in the country (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016d).

Repatriation of Asylum Seekers (RAS)
The German government started to pursue repatriations of those asylum seekers from the Balkans whose application has been denied (Bundesregierung, 2015c; 2016e). Moreover, incentives to support and increase voluntary returns of asylum seekers, e.g. monetary payments, have been enhanced (Faiola, 2016).

Subsidiary Protection and Right to Family Reunification (SUBP)
Towards the end of 2015, the German government agreed to suspend the right to family reunification for those protection seekers who were only granted subsidiary protection for the time being (Bundesregierung, 2016a). This new regulation as well as the status of subsidiary protection was later supposed to be also applied to Syrian refugees; this, however, was never implemented (Focus Online 2015; Zeit Online; 2015).

Asylum Package I (AP1)
At the end of September 2015, Germany decided on several changes to its existing asylum law which later came into effect in October the same year (Pro Asyl. 2015; Spiegel Online, 2015c).

As part of these changes, some countries in the West Balkans, i.e. Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro were placed on the list of safe countries of origin. Asylum seekers from these countries were to remain in initial reception areas (Pro Asyl. 2015; Riemer, 2015; Spiegel Online, 2015c). Furthermore, asylum application from these nationalities could generally be rejected as “evidently unfounded”, thus making the whole application procedure faster (Pro Asyl. 2015; Tagesschau, 2015). Asylum seekers were now allowed to remain in initial reception areas up to six rather than three months, and were supposed to receive more non-pecuniary benefits (Pro Asyl. 2015; Riemer, 2015; Spiegel Online, 2015c; Tagesschau, 2015. The reason for this was among other things, to not give people who experience economic hardship in their own countries any financial incentive to come to Germany (Riemer, 2015; Spiegel Online, 2015c).
To prevent asylum seekers from going into hiding, it was decided that deportations of rejected applicants would no longer be announced in advance (Pro Asyl. 2015; Riemer, 2015; 2015c; Tagesschau, 2015; Bundesregierung, 2016d). The German government also agreed to pay the federal states a monthly fee for each allocated refugee, under the condition to distribute these funds to their communities (Riemer, 2015; Spiegel Online, 2015c). Another change in the law was that certain laws which would delay the establishment of winterised quarters, e.g. laws regarding noise protection or the usage of renewable energies, were temporarily suspended. (Riemer, 2015; Spiegel Online, 2015c; Tagesschau, 2015).

Moreover, the government created conditions in the health system as to allow the states to adopt a so-called health card for refugees on voluntary basis (Riemer, 2015; Tagesschau, 2015). Lastly, changes were made in order to facilitate integration: asylum applicants with good prospects for receiving a residence permit are offered integration and German language courses as well as assistance to enter the labour market and gain access to work placements and internships (Pro Asyl. 2015; Riemer, 2015; Spiegel Online, 2015c; Tagesschau, 2015).

Asylum Package II (AP2)
At the beginning of February 2016, the government decided on further changes to its asylum law which later came into effect in March the same year (Bundesregierung, 2016a).

One of the main aims of the asylum package II was the establishment of several reception centres which will be built across the country, with at least two of them being in Bavaria (Tagesschau, 2016a). In regards to the already restricted right to reunification, the government decided to suspended this right for the next two years for those under subsidiary protection (Bundesregierung, 2016a; Tagesschau, 2016a).

Other changes included the creation of further provisions for ensuring a shorter and faster application procedure (Die Welt, 2016; Tagesschau, 2016a). It was made easier to deport refugees suffering from illness, asylum seekers from safe countries of origin, as well as those who refuse to cooperate or to take part in integration measurements (Spiegel Online, 2016; Tagesschau, 2016a). The government also decided on further cuts in benefits for asylum seekers who refuse cooperation, on laws that provide security of residence for those asylum seekers who are in educational or training programmes, and shared costs for language courses, i.e.
asylum seekers would have to pay parts of the language courses themselves (Die Welt, 2016; Spiegel Online, 2016; Tagesschau, 2016a)

Deportation of Foreign Criminals (DFC)
As a response to the events in Cologne during New Year's Eve 2015, a new law came into effect that would allow to deport foreign criminals faster and more easily (Bundesregierung, 2016b). The law constitutes that foreign offenders can be deported in case they are to be send to prison irregardless of whether or not they are on probation. This applies to crimes against health and life, against sexual self-determination, crimes against polices officers, as well as in violent or serial, but minor crimes against property (ibid.).

Integration Act² (IA)
In the beginning of 2016, the German government announced new measures to support and further the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the country (Bundesregierung, 2016c; Olterman, 2016; Tagesschau, 2016b). This planned Integration Act would be the first federal law on integration intending to integrate as many people as possible into the labour market and into society (Bundesregierung, 2016c; Deutscher Bundestag, 2016e; Olterman, 2016; Tagesschau, 2016b).

In addition to several educational programmes, the government planned on providing several thousand one-euro jobs in order to slowly introduce newcomers to the German labour market (Bundesregierung, 2016c; Deutscher Bundestag, 2016e; Tagesschau, 2016b). Refugees and asylum seekers with good perspectives to stay should receive extra educational assistance. They should be able to start their education or training earlier, possibly already three months after their arrival (Tagesschau, 2016b). Moreover, the government wants to provide security of residence for those refugees who are in training (ibid.). The legislative priority check under which refugees can only get jobs if no suitable applicants from Germany or the EU is available, is to be suspended (Bundesregierung, 2016c; Tagesschau, 2016b).

The Integration Act should also include tightened regulations of the permanent residence and a so-called condition of fixed abode (Tagesschau, 2016b). While the condition of fixed abode is to prevent the high influx into urban areas, the tightening of the residence regulations would

² The Integration Act as discussed and prepared in the beginning of 2016 was approved of by the Bundestag on July 07th 2016 (Bundesregierung, 2016c).
make it harder to obtain the right of permanent residence automatically after three years; instead a permanent residence or settlement permit will only be issued after five years and only on the condition of sufficient language skills and a secure livelihood (ibid.).

The bill is also supposed to include counter-terrorism measures as a response to the Brussels attacks in 2016. The government planned to strengthen security authorities and require more assistance from private companies in order to combat terrorism (Bundesregierung, 2016c). Furthermore, the preventive investigative authority of the federal police force should be extended, and cooperation with foreign intelligence agencies should be developed further (ibid.).

4.2 International Policies and Measurements

The Dublin Regulation (DR)

The so-called Dublin system establishes which EU MS is responsible for the examination of the asylum application (European Commission, 2016). The basic provision of this regulation is that asylum seekers have to register their application in the country where they first enter the EU (Bundesregierung, 2015a; European Commission, 2016). This ensures that each asylum application will only be processed by one MS (Bundesregierung, 2015a). In case it turns out that an asylum application is to be processed in another MS, a request of transferal or readmission is placed with the concerned MS. Once the MS agrees to the request, the asylum applicant is notified and both MS involved arrange and organise for the transfer. Legal basis for this system currently the Dublin III Regulation (Bundesregierung, 2015a; European Commission, 2016). In 2015, the BAMF decided to generally dispense with return transfers from Syrian asylum seekers to other MS of the EU (Bundesregierung, 2015a). Consequently, great numbers of refugees who had already arrived in other Dublin signatory countries continued their journey on to Germany unhindered (ibid.) Nevertheless, the German government persisted that it had in fact not suspended the Dublin System at any moment in time and that all corresponding laws and regulations were still in force; instead, the BAMF had merely undertaken procedural simplifications (ibid.).

The Schengen Agreement (SA)

In September 2015, Germany reintroduced internal border controls and passport inspections, with special focus on the German-Austrian border (BMI, 2015). As a result, the Schengen agreement was temporarily suspended, however, the German government has repeatedly stated
that this should not become a normal state (BMI, 2015; Spiegel Online, 2015b; Bundesregierung, 2016f). This measure was taken for security reasons and with the intention to limit the amount of refugees arriving in the country as well as to re-establish a more orderly and organised entry procedure (BMI, 2015). Due to the continuous arrival of refugees into the country, the government decided in February 2016 to ask the EU for an extension of these border controls until mid-May 2016 (2016; Reuters, 2016; von der Burchard, 2016).

Aid for the Victims of War in Syria (AVWS)

Between 2012 to 2015, Germany provided more than one billion euro in aid money for the victims of the war in Syria, and in 2016, Chancellor Merkel announced a further 2.3 billion euro in support for the years 2016 to 2018 (Ständige Vertretung Rom, 2016). In the same year, the German government also provided about one billion euro to the United Nations for humanitarian aid programmes, including the World Food Programme which is to receive 570 million euro thus further assisting and helping the victims of the Syrian conflict (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b; Bundesregierung, 2016g, Ständige Vertretung Rom, 2016). Germany is also contributing among others to the “Partnership for Prospects” programme, the “German Academic Refugee Initiative”, and the “Syria Recovery Trust Fund”, thus helping for instance to create jobs in the region, or finance basic infrastructure projects (Bundesregierung, 2016g, Ständige Vertretung Rom, 2016).

Aid measures for the Middle East also include the aforementioned budget increase of the Foreign Ministry by 400 million euro a year to fight causes of flight as well as joint effort with the EU to deliver humanitarian aid, to support development, and to further fight causes of flight (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; Deutschlandfunk, 2015; FAZ, 2015; FAZ, 2015; Bundesregierung, 2016; 2016g).
5 Interpretative Thematic Content Analysis

The data gathered from the three different data sources consists of themes, i.e. reasons, both against and in favour of Germany’s refugee policy. As a result of the thematic content analysis, 202 items were identified and grouped into 15 different themes. The classification and grouping was carried out in case items mentioned or referred to the same or a similar point of discussion.

This chapter will give an overview of the themes as found in the source material during the previously set timeframe and following the selected critical events. In the following, these themes will be illustrated with references from the data material, summarised, and presented according to the frequency with which the individual point was used in the debate, starting with the most frequently used one and ending with the point which was mentioned the least.

Capacity and Capability (CAPA)

The theme of Germany’s capacities and capabilities in relation to the refugee crisis comes up repeatedly in the debate and is used by various actors in different ways (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015d; Fried & Hickmann, 2015; McGeever & Geddie, 2015; BBC, 2016a; Deutscher Bundestag, 2016b; Körkemeier & Carrel, 2016; Severin & Martin, 2016).

For instance, Horst Seehofer from the CSU has repeatedly proclaimed that Germany has reached its breaking point and was now in a state of emergency (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015c). Many others, including members of the AfD, the CDU/CSU and the SPD, share Seehofer’s view (Fried & Hickmann, 2015; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b; Martin, 2016a). Their basic statement is that there are limitations to what Germany can manage and that in the coming years, Germany cannot take in as many refugees as in 2015 (BBC, 2015b; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2016c). They claim that is high number of refugees has already financially and socially overwhelmed the country (Kornelius, 2015; Martin, 2016a).

Some Experts expect that to Germany the cost of having taken in an estimated one million refugees may reach up to 25 billion euros which will put the country under a great a fiscal burden in the first two years after 2015 (McGeever & Geddie, 2015). These costs will include

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3 Two of the 202 items were only mentioned once each, thus not qualifying as a theme and consequently eliminated from the data set.
investments in housing, health care and education and could easily increase if the government fails to reduce the refugees’ dependence on state welfare and integrate them into the labour market (Nasr, 2015). This as well as accepting even greater numbers of refugees could in turn unsettle an already critical and sensitive situation (Solms-Laubach, 2016).

As well as members of parliament, local politicians, too, have claimed that Germany’s capacities and resources are at a point of exhaustion (Martin, 2016a). Many local authorities across the country have said they are struggling to cope with the influx, especially due to a lack of staff and housing (Martin & Busemann, 2015; BBC, 2016a; Carrel, 2016a; Preuss, 2016). Politicians and members of the public alike have voiced doubts about Germany’s resources and capabilities to integrate all the refugees (Severin & Martin, 2016). They argue that further taking in refugees would decrease the government’s ability to provide both adequate protection and integration assistance as well as continuously high quality of life of those who live in Germany (Deutscher Bundestag; 2015a; 2015b, 2015c; 2016b).

All in all, actors against the government’s policy are of the opinion that Germany does not have the financial means to help a growing number of protection seekers and that if it continues to pursue its current policy, it will ultimately have negative consequences for the population as well as the refugees who have come to Germany (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; Kornelius, 2015). In their view, further pursuing the government’s current refugee policy would be a mistake, not least, because it could attract even higher numbers of refugees to seek protection in Germany which would ultimately unsettle an already critical and sensitive situation (BBC, 2015b; Fried, 2015; Fried & Hickmann, 2015; Solms-Laubach, 2016). Consequently, many politicians have demanded a change in policy, especially in terms of restricting the amounts of refugees the country is taking in (Carrel, 2016a; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015d; 2016b; Kuhr & Kreuth, 2016).

Actors favouring the government’s refugee claim that Germany is able to cope with the number of migrants arriving and can stick to its current policy with there being no limitations to what Germany is capable of or to its capacities to take in refugees (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; Carrel & Barkin, 2015; Käppner, 2016; Körkemeier & Carrel, 2016). To explain Germany’s reaction to the current refugee crisis several politicians mention the fact that Germany is in a comparatively strong economic position, which is why the country has a special responsibility
and should do as much as it can to take in and aid refugees (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015b; 2015d; Carrel & Barkin, 2015; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2015).

Germany’s economy is strong, resulting in a record budget surplus of 21 billion euros in the first half of the year, and unemployment is at its lowest since reunification in 1990 (Carrel & Barkin, 2015; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2015). Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble said that, “We were very generous and we will remain very generous” (Körkemeier & Carrel, 2016). Due to its prosperity, the country’s fiscal capabilities in regards to the refugee crisis remain strong and Germany could afford to be generous in a way other countries in Europe simply cannot (Carrel & Barkin, 2015; McGeever & Geddie, 2015; Körkemeier & Carrel, 2016; Vehlewald, 2016).

In addition to the prosperity side of the argument, some politicians have argued that Germany has the necessary prerequisites and the capabilities to deal with the number of refugees coming to Germany (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; Käppner, 2016). Due to cultural, religious and traditional diversity as part of its immigration society, the country possesses the best possible foundation for organising good and peaceful coexistence (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a). Furthermore, they claim that the country’s democracy, its government and its institutions as well as its sense of freedom are strong enough to cope with the crisis and any problems which may arise as a result of it (Käppner, 2016).

All in all, these actors believe Germany has the capacities and capabilities to cope with the current crisis and due to its wealth and special position in the world has the responsibility to help. Thus, they are in favour of the current refugee policy and support its continuation.

Humanitarian Responsibility (HR)

Another frequently mentioned point in the debate about Germany’s response to the refugee crisis, is the theme concerned with the country’s humanitarian responsibility as well as its commitment to the right of asylum (BBC, 2015a; 2015b; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; Fried, 2015; Hill, 2015; Hewitt, 2015a; Kirchner, 2015a).

Especially German Chancellor Angela Merkel has repeatedly stated that Germany should stand by its humanitarian duties in this unusual emergency situation, and thus fulfil its moral and legal obligations (BBC, 2015e; Hewitt, 2015a; Hill, 2015; Kirchner, 2015a). Merkel also stated that allowing refugees into the country, especially those stranded in other parts of Europe where
they do not receive the necessary help they need, was a humanitarian imperative (Hewitt, 2015a). With this approach to the crisis, the chancellor said Germany was showing its commitment to the rule of law and right of asylum, its respect for the dignity of men as well as solidarity with the refugees and its European allies (Hewitt, 2015a; Hill, 2015, Deutscher Bundestag; 2016c). Merkel also stated that in the current situation, there is nothing else to do, but to deal with the situation and to help, otherwise a humanitarian disaster would be imminent (Carrel & Barkin, 2015; Hill, 2015; Kirchner, 2015a).

During several parliamentary debates, humanitarian convictions were declared to be the guiding principle of political action in Germany and the right of asylum was and would never be subject to negotiation (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c). In this context, several politicians have also defended the government’s response to the crisis with regards to the importance of The 1951 Refugee Convention and The European Convention on Human Rights and Germany’s obligation to uphold these treaties (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016b; 2016d).

There are several politicians who want a shift in policies who argue that there are more urgent matters to consider and although the country may have a humanitarian responsibility, the government had perhaps put too much emphasis on the humanitarian approach (Eichinger & Uhlenbroich, 2016; Martin, 2016b). Still others claim that the government’s current approach was not humanitarian at all and that would be more humane to process asylum applications outside the European borders than to let them make their way across the continent only to send them back later (Eichinger & Uhlenbroich, 2016).

Demography and Economy (DE)

Another theme identified in the debate was the theme of demographic development and by extension the country’s labour market and economy (Deutscher Bundestag; 2015b; 2016b; Grammaticas, 2015; Hewitt, 2015a; Preston, 2015).

Germany's decreasing population and rising dependency ratio, i.e. the proportion of older people in the population relative to younger tax-generating people, are the core issues of this theme (Bellon & Copley, 2015; Preston, 2015; Hellemann & Pfeffer, 2016). As a consequence, the government’s spending on for instance pensions and health is expected to rise considerably in the coming decades (Hewitt, 2015a). Furthermore, it is expected that the country would have
to have an influx of about half a million migrants a year until 2050 to counterbalance the subsequent fall in workforce (Nasr, 2015).

Politicians from different parties have claimed that immigration is important to Germany’s survival and that taking in high numbers of refugees will be beneficial for the country in the long-term, because once they are integrated into society and the labour market, they can help to ease and alleviate the demographic pressures the country is experience (Bellon & Copley, 2015; Carrel & Barkin, 2015).

In addition to that, economists argue that immigration promotes growth and the billions of euros that will be invested in private domestic companies and in areas like education, health, security services, and housing will have a similar effect like a stimulus package for the economy, thus helping Germany is boost or at least maintain its economy (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b; Hewitt, 2015a; McGuiness, 2015b; Nienaber 2015; Nasr, 2016). Moreover, the influx of refugees, especially young skilled workers, is viewed as an opportunity for businesses. Due to Germany’s low unemployment rate, some companies and sectors cannot fill their job vacancies resulting in a high demand of worker which could be solved by the influx of refugees, especially the young, motivated people who want to work (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015b; Deutschmann, 2016; McGuinness, 2015b). Additionally, refugees will bring new entrepreneurial spirit to a rather risk-averse German market, where the entrepreneurial activity of young people is decreasing and the number of companies founded each year has shrunk by drastically over the past decade (Copley, 2016a).

Other politicians and members of the public mainly expect economic drawbacks, such as financial strain or lower wages for the entire population (Beitzer, 2015; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b; McGuinness, 2015b; Nye, 2015). There are also those who fear that the refugees will take away their jobs (Beitzer, 2015). Others claim that due to the current legal situation, language barriers and difficulties with the approval of professional qualifications, it will not be easy to integrate the refugees into the labour market which will put a great financial strain on the government, because it will have to support and provide form them in the meantime (ibid.).

*Crime, Security and Terrorist Threat (CSTT)*

Several actors have suggested that taking in refugees threatens national security, because the conflicts they bring with them, the increasing number of conflicts among asylum-seekers in
refugee camps and shelters, and because of the possibility that Islamic State militants or other terrorists will enter the country posing as refugees or at the very least will try and influence Muslim refugees that made it into the country (Beitzer, 2015; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b; Hewitt, 2015b; Nye, 2015; Severin & Copley, 2015; Copley, 2016b; Elitz, 2016).

Experts predict crime rates to rise, because refugees from such different cultures will find it hard to adhere to German laws and because they might more easily resort to criminal measures in order to provide for themselves due to their dire situation (BILD, 2016c; Kürthy, 2016; Riechers, 2016). Also, crime rates are on the rise, because of the increased number of crimes committed against refugees. In 2015 alone, the number of offences against asylum seekers' shelters had tripled which is seen as an alarming development (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015c; Severin & Copley, 2015). In order to change this dynamic or at least calm down the situation, these actors demand stronger controls and a change in policy (BILD, 2016c; Copley, 2016b; Kürthy, 2016).

Germany’s History (GH)

It has been claimed, both in the media and during parliamentary, that Germany’s history has shaped both the country’s positive and negative attitudes towards the current refugee crisis (Grammaticas, 2015). Germany has had a long and complicated history of population movement, of migration and refugee seekers: the second World War forced people across the world to flee and seek shelter, later the post-war period and economic boom lead to huge numbers of guest workers arriving from Mediterranean countries (BBC, 2015d; Carrel & Barkin, 2015). In the 1990s, more than 200,000 Jewish people with their families immigrated from the former Soviet Union to Germany, an estimated 350,000 people fleeing the Bosnian conflict were given temporary refuge in Germany and Germany reunited (ibid). When West Germany experienced an economic boom after the war, the country required more workers, thus accepting a high number of guest workers from the Mediterranean region, e.g. Italy, Spain and Turkey, into the country (BBC, 2015d). Although the guest workers were expected to eventually return to their home countries, many stayed, and Germany successfully embraced this new part of the population (BBC, 2015d; Carrel & Barkin, 2015).

Most of all, however, Germany’s nationalistic past and the guilt in light of World War II seem to play an important role in shaping attitudes today: Politicians form several parties in parliament have argued that due to its role in World War II, Germany has a special responsibility
towards refugees and asylum seekers (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; McGuinness, 2015a). Since the atrocities committed by the Nazis, Germany has been highly sensitive to the plight of minorities, also trying to atone for desire to atone for Nazi crimes (Adler, 2016). Germany’s special position is further enhanced to the fact that some nationally and internationally very important legal documents were brought into being as a direct response to the million-fold human misery caused by Hitler’s Germany (Adler, 2016). For instance, the 1951 Refugee Convention, but also more specifically, article 16a of Germany's constitution stipulating that anyone fleeing political oppression has a right to asylum in Germany. Angela Merkel thus argued that closing the borders and refusing to help the refugees would mean changing the country's constitution. (Adler, 2016; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; 2016b; McGuinness, 2015a).

Experts also refer to the millions who had to flee their homes seeking protection in Germany after the country’s defeat in World War II. These millions of ethnic Germans who were forced to leave parts of Eastern Europe had to resettle in West and East Germany (BBC, 2015d). Scholars reason that due to this - family memories and passed down stories of the past about grandparents who were bombed and had to flee – Germany has a much more sympathetic, open and welcoming attitude to the plea of refugees arriving in Europe today; and moreover: if Germany managed to accommodate more than ten million refugees in 1945 in a country that was still suffering the consequences of war, lacking housing and basic infrastructure, it is argued that Germany today should be able to manage as well. (Carrel & Barkin, 2015).

Due to the post-war refugee experience and a desire to atone for Nazi crimes, some politicians have argued that it is only right to pursue a welcoming approach and an open-door policy (Carrel & Barkin, 2015; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d).

However, history has led to negative or at least sceptic attitudes towards arriving refugees as well: In Eastern Germany, most crimes against asylum seekers are perpetrated and some argue that this is due to the fact that the reunification of Germany happened not too long ago and the differences between the East and the West are still noticeable: Unemployment is comparatively higher in the east than in the west and there is a widespread feeling of having lost out when Germany was reunified. Politicians from the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), demanded a change in refugee policy, because asylum seekers would require a great deal of support, for instances jobs and housing, but many of the people in the East did not want to
provide this (Martin & Barkin, 2015). German citizens living in East Germany have voiced their fear that after having been given freedom from dictatorship 25 years ago, this freedom now seems to be taken away from them again, because they have to make room for “all these other people” without even having been asked (Martin & Barkin, 2015). This perception of the situation has led to a resentment of the refugees as well as the German government which is why they are calling for a change in policy (ibid.).

**EU and Europe: Political Affairs and Identity (EU)**

Germany’s close ties with the EU as well as its strong affinity with EU values have been said to play a role in the country pursuing and sticking to its open-door policy (BBC, 2015a; Kornelius, 2015; BILD, 2016b; Deutscher Bundestag, 2016c; Severin & Martin, 2016). Due to the country’s long history with and its current strong position within the Union, Germany is very much committed to the institution itself as well as the values and norms which it stands for (BBC, 2015a).

Several politicians, both in Germany and abroad, have argued that in order to protect and preserve the EU as it is today, its members – as well as other European countries – need to show flexibility, a willingness to compromise and political action based on the values of the EU (Kirchner, 2015b; Deutscher Bundestag, 2016c; Severin & Martin, 2016). Germany’s interior minister de Maizière thus argued that in order to do so, it was in the country’s interests to stick to its refugee policy and to the Schengen passport-free travel zone for as long as possible (Severin & Martin, 2016).

Furthermore, Chancellor Merkel has emphasised that, „Germany will only continue to thrive if Europe thrives as well” (BILD, 2016b). Merkel also declared that since the refugee crisis as well as the way in which it is dealt with, will most certainly change the EU and its MS in the coming years, she is very much committed to managing this challenge (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016c: 15745). Which is why it is important to not only work on solutions that work for individual countries, but to cooperate on a European and international level as well (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2016b). Merkel also spoke of Germany’s importance in solving challenges within Europe and finding European solutions (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b). In one parliamentary debate Merkel stated that “We have repeatedly experienced challenges in Europe where it specifically depends on Germany, Germany’s power and Germany’s strength.” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b: 11614). Merkel continued saying that during the euro crisis
Germany also stood alone for some time, but that the country’s readiness to find a solution as well as its strength ultimately made way for a European solution (ibid.).

Considering all this, it has been argued that Germany’s exemplary refugee policy could improve its power and negotiating position within the EU, either because the country will succeed in finding a joint approach to the crisis with support of the EU MS, or because the government will otherwise in possession of useful leverage in future negotiations. Whatever the topic on the agenda, Germany can point to its over-delivery on a key European policy issue. This will boost Germany’s power in European affairs even more (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016c). Thus, it has been argued that Germany is pursuing its open-door policy in order to pull its weight within the EU and to invest into the union and its future, while also securing its own well-being and possibly even strengthening its own position within the Union (ibid.).

On the other hand, though, a number of actors has argued that Germany will not be able to reform the EU’s asylum policies on its own and by taking in such a high number of refugees (Kornelius, 2015). Therefore, Germany should focus more on its national interests and act nationally rather than on an EU level. Consequently, Germany should consider changing its policy (Kornelius, 2015; Eichinger & Uhlenbroich, 2016).

Moreover, members of the German public have voiced concerns about the fact that values as held by many throughout the EU as well as the much-valued calmness, order, peace, and wealth which prevail in this part of the world will constitute a great contrast to those fleeing from conflict, disorder, chaos, war, and death. They argue that because of this it will not be easy for the refugees to integrate themselves into society, to start over or to even feel comfortable and at ease in Germany (Pantel, 2016).

*The Law (LAW)*  
On one hand, several of Chancellor Merkel’s fellow party members have accused her of pursuing a policy that is neither part of the party's official agreed upon programme nor in line with German and European law. Therefore, some of the CDU/CSU’s local party leaders demand that Germany should and is allowed to start turning refugees away at the border (Hill, 2015). On the other hand, however, some legal experts at Germany's lower house of parliament have serious doubts about these statements, especially in regards to introducing a cap on refugees (Martin, 2015). These independent legal experts working for the German government
reached the conclusion that EU asylum and refugee laws did not provide for any numerical limit being placed on people seeking protection. Furthermore, they emphasised that EU legal rules and guidelines generally override national laws on this issue and that the people granted refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention would have to be sent to safe third countries upon being turned away at the border; however, this is still considered to be highly problematic and unlikely. In a report about the legal situation, the government’s experts state that it was highly doubtful whether rejecting or just deporting refugees could be justified by the fact that a cap would otherwise be surpassed (ibid.). In this context, some politicians have called for a stricter adherence to the Geneva Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2016b). Furthermore, Chancellor Merkel has insisted that it is Germany’s goal and duty to uphold the law, thus arguing that taking in more refugees, not only in Germany, but across Europe, would just be fulfilling its legal obligations while also offering an effective way of ending deaths, criminality and illegality in the Aegean Sea (Kirchner, 2015a; Deutscher Bundestag, 2016c).

Election Results (ER)
The refugee crisis and current 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 (Reichelt, 2016). This has led to an overall drop in opinion polls for those politicians and parties supporting the chancellor and her open-door policy as well as poor election results in state elections for them in Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saxony-Anhalt in the beginning of 2016. Furthermore, these parties are losing ground to the AfD, a more right-wing party with a rather hard-line stance on refugees (BILD, 2016a; Carrel, 2016b).

As a reaction to this, some politicians, even within the chancellor’s own party, have argued that it should be considered to change the current refugee policy in order to avoid poor election results in the future, especially in regards to the upcoming general election in 2017 and the parties’, and possibly Merkel’s, desire to stay in power. Changing the course of policy action could attract new voters, gain other voters back, or at least keep the current voter base from switching to other parties such as the AfD (Carrel, 2016b; Drobinski, 2016). In this context, Horst Seehofer, a CSU politician, said „Our reaction has to be: We have understood. We have to change something.” (Eichinger &Uhlenbroich, 2016). Seehofer has demanded fundamental corrections to Germany’s refugee policy stating that „This descent can turn into a plummet; it
can turn into a crash. We need a different policy.” (BILD, 2016a). Another high-ranked member of the CSU, Gerda Hasselfeldt, made it clear that changes in policy making are needed so as to not experience similar election losses again in the future and that “we must give conservative people a home in our ranks again” (Schuler, 2016).

Others, however, argue that by standing by her policies, Merkel is showing strength and consistency. Fundamentally changing her mind, shifting her policies, and going against her convictions could possibly undermine her credibility and the public’s general trust in politics. Thus a policy shift could do great damage to her reputation and her politics (Drobinski, 2016).

**Welcoming Culture (WEL)**

The German population has reacted in several different ways to the current refugee crisis, among other things with acts of sympathy and help for the new arrivals from many ordinary citizens and widespread campaigns which openly welcomed refugees into the country (Noman & Wendling, 2015; BBC, 2016b). This open, warm and supportive welcome of refugees has been labelled and is now referred to as “welcoming culture” (Martin, 2016b).

Several politicians, for instance from the CDU/CSU and the SPD, then argued that one of the reasons for why Germany is still pursuing or rather can pursue its open-door policy, is that German culture is a welcoming culture resulting in openness, solidarity and the ability to welcome and support high numbers of refugees (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015b). This social commitment has been described as a key factor for why Germany had not been overwhelmed by the high influx of protection seekers, but instead was able to react to the crisis in a confident way (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a). Many public and politic authorities have stated that without the effort and dedication as displayed by numerous volunteers over the course of several months, the challenges posed by the crisis could not have been managed (Beitzer, 2015; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a). Furthermore, due to its welcoming culture, Germany has positioned itself as a moral leader within Europe, thus committing itself further to its current refugee policy (BBC, 2015b; Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; Hewitt, 2015a).

**Clash of Cultures (CC)**

Several political actors, including members of the AfD, the CDU/CSU, the NPD, and the SPD, have argued that Germany should stop taking in refugees, due to a feared clash of cultures (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; Fried & Hickmann, 2015; Martin & Barkin, 2015). Moreover,
members of the CDU/CSU and the NPD fear that refugees could pose a threat to Western or German identity values, norms and laws (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; Martin & Barkin, 2015; Pantel, 2016).

They reason that the people coming to Europe to seek protection as well as their cultural and normative background are inherently different from the cultural and normative standards in Europe and more specifically in Germany, thus it will be hard, if not impossible, to make them adhere to European and Germany standards, notions and values (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; 2016a; Martin & Barkin, 2015, Adler, 2016).

Furthermore, they predict that any attempts at merging such vastly different cultures and creating a modern multicultural society would ultimately fail (Fried & Hickmann, 2015). Instead, these actors fear negative consequences both for Germany and the refugees, for instance a disregard and violation of European and German culture, resulting in violent cultural conflicts, a social divide across the population, and a general disunion in the country (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d; 2016a; 2016c; Fried & Hickmann, 2015; Martin & Barkin, 2015). They accuse the current government of failing its voters by opening the country to “outsiders” without fully considering the impact or long-term consequences (Adler, 2016). This makes the refugee crisis not only into quite a challenge for the country, but also into a challenge which will be hard to manage (ibid.). Thus, they insist on a policy change (Fried & Hickmann, 2015).

Furthermore, members of the public have also voiced integration concerns arguing that they do not expect the refugees to fit into German society easily due to the fact that they are more familiar with war and chaos and less so, possibly even incompatible, with the Western self-image of among other things calmness, peace, order, comfort and wealth (Pantel, 2016; Severin & Martin, 2016). Despite the fact that many still believe that it is right to help and shelter refugees, there is also a growing scepticism about how the situation will develop and about how peaceful the merging of cultures will or can be (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a). In addition to this unease among the German people there is a growing fear of the unknown and a fear of losing control. Many believe that the government has lost control of the situation and should thus change its policy (Hill, 2016). As a result, thousands of people have marched in towns and cities in Eastern Germany in protest at asylum seekers being housed in their areas and against what they call the “Islamisation of the West” (BBC, 2016c).
Impact on Other Countries (IOC)

The argument that Germany’s refugee policy is having an impact on other countries is used both in order to prompt change and to justify the government’s course of policy action.

Those arguing against the current refugee policy state that by accepting high numbers of refugees into Germany, by not deciding on a cap or a quota and by sticking to its current policy, the German government has invited refugees into the country putting a strain on other European countries, especially those through which refugees travel in order to reach Germany, possibly even settling there instead of their initial destination (Carrel, 2015; Fried, 2015; Kirchner, 2015a; Shields, 2016).

Some foreign officials have voiced their disfavour of Germany’s approach to the crisis (BBC, 2015e; Carrel, 2015; Shields, 2016). Austrian politician Werner Faymann said it was unfair that his country had to deal with such a high number of refugees, just because of Germany’s open-door policy. He was also quoted saying that “Germany too must give a number for the refugees it is prepared to take from the Syria and Turkey region. Germany must finally create clarity or else refugees will continue to head off in the direction of Germany.” (Shields, 2016). The Czech prime minister, Bohuslav Sobotka, has criticised Germany for encouraging illegal immigration to Europe with its humanitarian response to the crisis and for prioritising its own humanitarian agenda over European security issues, thus harming other countries (Carrel, 2015). Furthermore, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that he blames Germany’s refugee policies for the high number of refugees crossing his country (BBC, 2015e). He added that in his opinion the refugee crisis is solely Germany’s problem and that it should continue to accept people into the country, because the government has actively invited the refugees into the country (Kirchner, 2015a). German CDU/CSU politician Horst Seehofer, too, has stated that Germany’s open-door policy is a disastrous mistake arguing that one reason for why Germany is coping with the crisis is the fact that other countries along the Balkan route are acting nationally and stopped taking in more refugees. He argued for a change in policy, because Germany cannot expect these countries to do its job for it and because its current course of policy is creating tensions with these countries which could have long-lasting negative consequences (Eichinger & Uhlenbroich, 2016; Gupta, 2016).

In this context, several members of the CDU/CSU and the SPD as well as members of the public have argued that countries like Greece and Italy have already done so much that in the interest
of solidarity it was now Germany’s turn to help and do its bit (BBC, 2015d; 2015e). It was also argued that Germany should take in more refugees, because it would show solidarity and provide relief for other countries, especially Turkey, saying that: (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d).

Opportunity for the Country (OPP)
This point is less an argument for taking in the refugees in the first place or an explanation for why Germany has done so, but a (retroactive) justification for holding on to its open-door policy (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016b). In this context, several politicians from different political parties have suggested that the refugee crisis should be viewed as an opportunity and a chance for Germany which will lead to many positive changes for the whole country (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a). Furthermore, it has been argued that by making the refugees one of the priorities in policy and law making, Germany could see huge improvements in different sectors, e.g. the education system, public transport, law making in regards to equality and sexual harassment as well as the health system (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015b; 2016b).

More specifically, Dietmar Bartsch from the party Die Linke has said, “The refugees are a challenge, but the refugees are likewise a chance for us.” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11520). Moreover, Federal Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble also reasoned that changes in different sectors of the law, such as housing, would be needed to deal with the crisis and that this would result in a much needed increase in flexibility in those law sectors. Thus, he argued, taking in refugees and dealing with the crisis would lead to innovation and progress for the whole country (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11515).

Anti-Refugee Sentiment (ANTI)
At the same time as Germany was opening its borders to high numbers of refugees, cheerfully welcoming them as they arrived in the country, protests were staged by the right-wing Pegida movement claiming to defend Germany from "Islamisation", a growing number of attacks on migrant shelters took place, and anti-migrant propaganda was spread in parts of the country (BBC, 2015a; BBC 2016b; BBC, 2016c; Hill, 2016). These incidents of intolerance and violence represent what some have called radicalisation of the German public and a growing anti-refugee sentiment (Hill, 2016).
Several politicians have since called for a change in policy in order to contain this development. They reason that a new refugee policy could prevent further political apathy, rein in racist tendencies, stop the rise of the right-wing anti-immigration party AfD, and also prevent feared backlashes against refugees as well as supporters of the current open-door policy (BBC 2016b; Bisky, 2016). Furthermore, Josef Schuster, President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, has voiced his concern about the high numbers of refugees coming to Germany and the associated growing anti-immigrant and by extension anti-Semitic sentiment (Drobinski, 2015). Schuster has called for a cap on refugees, reasoning that taking in more refugees would only further the already growing anti-refugee sentiment, thus feeding into racist propaganda. Furthermore, he argued that many refugees came from “cultures in which the hate against Jews and intolerance are integral parts” (ibid.). Because of these reasons, accepting more refugees into the country would change the German society for the worse and could have negative consequences for the German public and especially the Jewish population (ibid.).

*Christianity (CHR)*

Christianity as a theme and argument was found during parliamentary debates by representatives of different parties (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b; 2015d). Gregor Gysi, a representative of the Die Linke, refers to the Polish government using Christianity as an argument to proclaim that as a deeply Catholic nation, the country would be unfit to take in Muslim refugees. The same logic could then be applied to Germany as a Christian nation and ruled by a Christian Democratic party; however, Gysi contests the Polish government’s argument by referring to Jesus’s teachings, especially the Sermon on the Mount, thus stating that Christianity and charity are in fact reasons for taking in and taking care of the people seeking protection in Germany and all over Europe (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b). Katrin Göring-Eckardt, member of the green party, points out that as a Christian country, Germany should use the imagery and meaning of Pentecost, i.e. the coexistence and cooperation between people of different cultures, religions, origin and history, as a vision and guideline for its future. Taking in refugees should be seen as living this vision and as a chance for a new Germany (ibid.). Dietmar Bartsch from the CDU/CSU argues that as a Christian country, Germany should be guided by the messages and appeals of churches across the state, consequently forming its own message of ‘we have to help and we are helping’. Bartsch continues by demanding that this message should serve as a rule for all German citizens (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d). Furthermore, German Chancellor Angela Merkel from the Democratic Union of Germany has been said to orientate her actions not solely on election results, but as the daughter of a reverend
and as a devout Christian, she also bases her actions on a mixture of Protestant pragmatism and charity (Denkler, 2016).

*Asylum Abuse (AA)*

Several CDU/CSU members, including CSU chairman Horst Seehofer, have claimed that people might not only be coming to Europe and Germany in order to seek protection, but to seek economic and social benefits, thus taking advantage of the crisis and exploiting governments and welfare states across Europe (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a; 2015d). More specifically, they argue that the open-door policy of the German government would create pull-effects, attracting more refugees and asylum seekers than the refugee policies of other countries. Some CDU/CSU politicians thus fear that in the long-run helping and accommodating high numbers of refugees will just attract more refugees as well as others who will not be granted asylum under the Geneva Convention, but might still live in hard conditions, for instance people from now safe regions such as the Balkans to whom the German refugee policies might seem highly appealing. Having to deal with hundreds of people coming into the country seeking benefits in addition to an even higher influx of refugees would most certainly have negative consequences for Germany, e.g. taking up capacities in coping with the current crisis and slowing down the asylum process, which is why the country should change its policy and stop taking in high numbers of refugees (ibid.).
6 Frequency Analysis

In order to further analyse the themes as found in the data material, the identified themes were examined in regards to the frequency with which they were used, the actors who used them and in regards to whether the theme was used in a positive or negative way in regards to the government’s open-door policy. Although frequency alone is not a sufficient indicator for a theme and should also not be seen as a sole indicator of importance or significance, especially not in terms of actual policy making, examining and analysing the number of times a themes is mentioned in the debate can give information about its relevance in the debate. Looking at the themes, the way they were translated into policies as well as analysing this from theoretical perspectives could indicate discrepancies between the debate and policy making and between the stated reasons for the policies and the underlying motivations behind them.

In this analysis, positively used themes included topics used as a means of arguing for continuation of the policy, justifying the policy, or explaining why the policy is successful and beneficial, whereas negatively used themes included topics used in order to argue for an abandonment or change in policy, or explain why the policy has been a mistake.

Figure 9: Frequency of Themes (own illustration, 2016)
As shown in figure 9, the most frequently used theme as found in the debate was the theme concerning capacity with 43 mentions. The theme regarding the country’s humanitarian responsibility followed with 27 mentions. The third most frequent theme as found in the data material was the theme about Demography and Economy following closely behind with 24 mentions. Together, these three themes constitute 47% of all themes found in the debate concerning the refugee crisis and Germany’s refugee policies and are used by nearly all the actors involved in the debate during the pre-established time period.

As the most frequently used themes, it is also interesting to look at the specific actors using those themes. When examining the theme of Capacity and Capability, figure 10, it becomes clear that it is not only the most frequently used theme in general, it is also the theme which has been used by most actors (73%), thus arguably dominating the debate regarding Germany’s refugee policy.

The second most frequent theme is used by considerably fewer actors (55%), among them the ruling parties of the CDU/CSU and the SPD, as well as the two actors which exclusively made positive use of the themes surrounding the debate, the BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN party and the Die Linke party, see figure 11.
The more complex issue of Demography and Economy, see figure 12, is used by a greater number of actors (73%), however, it is only used by one of the ruling parties, the SPD, and not by the CDU/CSU.

The topic of Crime, Security and Terrorist Threat was being referred to 15 times, while Germany’s History constitutes another noticeably theme with 13 mentions. Other less frequently referenced themes are the arguments regarding EU and Europe: Political Affairs and Identity, The Law, and Election Results with ten mentions each, while Germany’s Welcoming culture as a theme was found nine times in the source material. Even fewer mentioned were
made of the themes Clash of Cultures, Impact on Other Countries, and the Opportunity for Germany with merely eight mentions each. The least frequently mentioned themes include the Anti-Refugee Sentiment theme, being mentioned six times, the theme of Christianity, being mentioned five times, and the issue of the Asylum Abuse, being mentioned only four times. Each of these themes was used by a number of different actors, however, none of them was used by more than half the actors involved in the debate.

In terms of actors and their use of themes, the analysis of the data also concluded that with 59% more than half of the themes as found in the debate were used positively, while 41% of the arguments were used in a negative way, see figure 13.

![Figure 13: Frequency of Positive and Negative Themes (own illustration, 2016)](image)

Looking more closely at the identified themes and which actors used them, a rather diverse picture emerges. As the ruling parties, however, and as the actors contributing the most themes – both the CDU/CSU and the SPD refer to almost all the identified themes. The Anti-Refugee Sentiment theme, as well as the issue of Demography and Economy were the only two themes not referred to by the CDU/CSU. While members of the SPD did not mention the Anti-Refugee Sentiment as well, they also did not refer to Asylum Abuse, Christianity, and the theme of Crime, Security and Terrorist Threat.

Figure 14 shows that themes were found in all three data sources, especially parliamentary debates making up 42.5% of all the items found in the source material, followed by international
media sources with 38.5% of all the items, and national media sources with 19% of all items being found there.

Although almost all themes were mentioned in all three data sources, the theme regarding the Law was only found in parliamentary debates as well as international media sources, but not in national media sources. Additionally, the theme regarding an Anti-Refugee Sentiment was only found in national and international media sources, but not in parliamentary debates, while themes more directly related to German domestic affairs, i.e. the themes of Asylum Abuse and Opportunity for Germany, were only featured in national media sources and parliamentary debates, but not in international media sources.
7 Match Analysis of Themes and Policies

From the previously identified themes, an additional qualitative analysis was developed through the detailed analysis of what different actors said about these themes and what this might signify in terms of policy making. Thus, for the themes as found in the debate to be fully understood, a match analysis was carried out, thus putting them into a policy context, see table 7.1. Care has been taken to only match themes with policies when there are explicit markers in both the theme and the policy to validate such a match, i.e. where there were strong connections between a theme and a policy, thus indicating that the theme may have influenced policy-making or even has been the foundation for the policy.

While the analysis was being made, each policy was closely examined in regards to the different themes, the related statements made by the various actors using the respective themes, and whether the policy may have been influenced by a certain theme and vice versa. If so, a match was marked (X). If not, no match was marked (-). If there are any discrepancies, unclear issues or only indirect connections, these themes have been marked as possible matches (P).

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Table 1: Match Matrix Analysing Themes and Policies,
“X = match, - = no match, P = possible match” (own illustration, 2016)

The match analysis of themes and policies showed that each of the government’s implemented refugee policies match with at least one or more themes as found in the debate surrounding Germany’s political approach to the refugee crisis. However, not all themes were directly
connected to the policies, especially the theme of Germany’s History as well as the themes of the Election Results, Opportunity for Germany, the Anti-Refugee Sentiment, and Christianity, thus only 10 out of the 15 themes were also appeared as part of the policies, see figure 15. This analysis shows that the Capacity and Capability theme seems to appear in the refugee policy nine out of eleven times. Similarly, the next frequently used themes, i.e. Humanitarian Responsibility, Demography and Economy, as well as Crime, Security, Terrorist Threat are also the next most frequently connected themes: While the themes of Humanitarian Responsibility and Demography and Economy connected to five out of the eleven policies, the theme regarding Crime, Security, Terrorist Threat only appeared in four policies.

![Figure 15: Number of matches by themes (own illustration, 2016)](image)

Also found in four policies is the theme of Asylum Abuse, which is the least frequently used theme found in the debate regarding the refugee policies. All other themes have either appeared in less than four policies, or not at all, at least not directly. However, some possible matches have been found for the Election Result theme, the Opportunity for Germany theme, the Anti-Refugee Sentiment theme, as well as the theme of Christianity. Possibly matches are justified by the fact that although a connection is not explicitly stated in the policy, they can be quite evident or at least plausibly be explained as a reaction to a theme. For instance, the Election Result theme, i.e. the drop in polls and the rise of the right-wing party AfD, may have prompted the government to decide on stricter asylum application and repatriation laws, to appease and calm down public opinion without fully diverting form other policies.
8 The Reasons and Underlying Motivations Behind Germany’s Refugee Policy

The examination of Germany refugee policies has shown that the German government has decided on a number of political actions, both nationally and internationally, in the course of the current refugee crisis. These policies mostly referred to issues of the application process as well as benefits received by the asylum applicants and the refugees’ integration into society. The analysis of themes as found in the debate regarding these policies has identified several different themes used differently by different actors with the most prevailing themes being the themes of Capacity and Capability, Humanitarian Responsibility, and Demography and Economy. Matching the themes against the policies, it became clear that not all themes are directly connected to actual policies. However, the most frequently used themes were also found in many of the implemented policies. For instance, the Capacity and Capability theme was matched with all presented policies. This is because all policies either regulate who, and thus how many people, Germany is accepting into the country as well as what kind of help and benefits Germany is prepared or able to give to those affected by war or seeking asylum in the country. This directly relates to the country’s capacity and capability and themes found on both sides, either arguing that Germany is strong and wealthy, thus able to be generous, to help and take people, or claiming that there is a limit to what Germany can do which is why there is a need for some restrictions.

In the following discussion, the connection and application of this thesis’ theoretical frameworks to the themes as extracted from the policy debates will be examined and presented, showing that both constructivist as well as structural realist reasons, i.e. themes, and thus motivations for the German refugee policy can be found.

From a constructivist perspective, the themes of Humanitarian Responsibility, Germany’s History, EU and Europe: Affairs and Identity, The Law, Welcoming Culture, Clash of Cultures, Anti-Refugee Sentiment, and Christianity can all be explained, due to the fact that the theory considers domestic factors in the context of national history and identity in order to understand the actions of political actors as well as a state’s inherent policies. Therefore, constructivism can offer theoretical explanations for about 53% of all themes found in the debate as well as for their appearances in policy.
Regarding this theory and the assumptions as previously made, it could be argued that Germany’s History will play an important role in the debate as well as in policy making. From a constructivist point of view, it would be expected that Germany will show great support for protection seekers due to a sense of solidarity and collective post-war guilt. The analysis of the debate regarding the refugee crisis and the resulting policies indeed show that the country’s history is often referred to and most often used to argue for a special responsibility towards the asylum seekers, thus proposing and supporting a generous and welcoming open-door policy. However, the historical development of the country also produced arguments and sentiments against such a policy, especially in regards to the country’s reunification in the early 1990’s and the consciously felt divide between East and West Germany. East Germany is comparatively poor, culturally less diverse than Western parts of the country and has a shorter history of democracy and freedom. Due to the different ways in which the identity has formed and developed over time, different parts of the country thus have distinctly different attitudes in regards to the refugee policies of the government. As such a crucial and also more commonly used theme it would be expected to appear and be connected in several of the government’s policies; however, no indication was found that historical aspects are parts of the policies. This could mainly be due to the fact that the country’s history, albeit a guiding principle, may not be something to be put directly into practice.

In this context, the themes of Humanitarian Responsibility, EU and Europe: Affairs and Identity as well as The Law and Welcoming Culture could play an important role. Due to their frequent use in the debate, these themes can all be seen as part of Germany’s new identity which has been built over the last few decades after the end of the war. In order to reinvent itself, the country needed and wanted a new, positive identity. In connection with the national post-war guilt, this could have resulted the shaping, reinventing and strengthening of a very contrasting German identity, i.e. Germany as an open and multicultural country, a strong humanitarian actor, who is strictly adhering to EU values and principles, and defending of the law and human rights. These themes are not only important to Germany’s identity and the debate surrounding the country’s refugee policy, they are also important in terms of policy making, as is shown by the fact that all four themes connected to the government’s policies, especially those that decide on cooperation with other European states, policies which lets asylum seekers (more easily) into the, as well as policies that protect the law such as the right to asylum, human rights and the dignity of men, as well as EU laws. Making up 28% of the themes referred to in the debate (35% when including the theme of Germany’s history) and being directly connected to 8 out of
11 policies, it seems that this new part of the country’s identity is an important underlying motive for the government’s response to the refugee crisis.

Another important theme in the context of constructivism is the themes of Clash of Cultures as well as Anti-Refugee-Sentiment. Since a shared or common identity is essential to the actions of international actors, including anyone new into this pre-existing identity, i.e. accepting refugees and asylum seekers into the country, would cause objections within the county. This is due to the fact that differences in identity constitute a clear obstacle in regards to living in the same country. Moreover, accepting, including and integrating populations with a dissimilar identity could constitute a destabilising threat to the existing German identity. Therefore, this constructivist assumption is reflected in the themes Clash of Cultures as well as Anti-Refugee-Sentiment. Both are concerned with the differences in cultures and the way the refugees are perceived as a cultural threat within the country and in the context of German society. As this issue could potentially affect everyone in the country, it would seem plausible to address these themes in policy making; however, the theme of Anti-Refugee Sentiment does not appear at all in the policies, while the Clash of Cultures theme directly appears four times. The Clash of Cultures theme matched with policies aiming at integrating refugees as well as possibly policies which facilitated the repatriation of those who refuse to fit into German society. Since the Clash of Cultures theme is comparatively more prevalent in the debate than the Anti-Refugee Sentiment theme it makes sense to be actually implanted in policies. Consequently, the fear of the unknown and different culture as well as a possible inadaptability of refugees seems to be an issue in regards to the refugee crisis, whereas the sentiment against refugees seems to only be an issue for a small part of German society, thus not mentioned often in the debate and also not directly appearing in the refugee policy.

Looking at another arguably constructivist theme, Christianity, it could be argued that as a rather religious country, arguments to help the refugees could be brought forward according to Christian values, e.g. charity, however, depending on the way religion manifests itself in the German identity, this could also result in a reluctance to accept refugees on basis that their religion is decidedly different from the main religion in Germany, i.e. Christianity. The analysis showed that no arguments were brought forward against the taking in of non-Christian refugees. Instead, all themes directly related to the theme of Christianity highlighted principles of support for those in need and charity. However, the theme of Christianity was not directly found in connection to any of the refugee policies. This may be due to the facts that Germany separates
the church and the state and practises religious freedom. Thus policies will most probably never actively include references to religion in general or Christianity in specific. However, policies such as for instance the Integration, Financial and Socio-political Development, or the Subsidiary Protection and Right to Family Reunification which regulate the benefits and help refugees and victims of war receive as well as protect their rights to family reunification could be guided by Christian principles. Considering that one of the ruling parties, the CDU/CSU, is also generally guided by Christian values it is possible that their policy actions in regards to the refugee crisis is also guided by the same values, although not explicitly stated.

From a structural realism point of view, it can be argued that the themes of Capacity and Capability, Demography and Economy, Crime, Security, and Terrorist Threat, EU and Europe: Affairs and Identity, Election Results, Impact on Other Countries, Opportunity for Germany, and Asylum Abuse can all be seen explained from a structural realist point of view, due to the fact that the theory stresses the importance of national interests, a state’s capabilities, as well as the needs for security and power. Therefore, structural realism can offer theoretical explanations for 60% of all themes found in the debate as well as for their connections to the refugee policy.

Regarding this theory, its defining concepts and the assumptions as previously made in the theories chapter, the theme of Germany’s capacities and capabilities should play a key role in the debate regarding the country’s refugee policy as well as its implementation. As shown in the analysis, this theme is the most frequently used theme in the debate making up about one fifth (21.5%) of all the identified themes. It also seems to partly be the foundation of all the government’s refugee policies. This is due to the fact that all policies are either concerned with granting the right of asylum, regulating the number of asylum seekers who are allowed to stay in the country, or allocating resources to the management of the crisis, both nationally and internationally. Since the theme has been used by almost all actors and in both positive and negative ways, different views on the capacities and capabilities of the country, or rather what the national interests are and how these capacities should be used to achieve them. This divide could be explained by the theories assumption relating to the fact that structural change affects the behaviour of actors and states and the outcomes their interaction produces.

On one hand it is argued that Germany, being economically strong and stable as well as culturally prepared, has the capability to take in refugees. Although this theme is very prevalent in the debate and in line with structural realist reasoning, it might not be a direct argument or
motive for accepting high numbers of refugees into the country. Nevertheless, this reasoning at least provides an explanation for why Germany is able to do so, and to do so continuously. However, on the other hand, it is also argued that Germany simply has no more capabilities to take in refugees, or rather that taking in larger numbers of refugees will reduce the country’s material capabilities, thus placing Germany in relative disadvantage position compared to its European neighbours. This reasoning as found in the debate, is also in line with structural realism and can account for policies which to some degree restrict or reduce the number of asylum seekers.

Furthermore, and in the context of acquiring and maintaining capabilities, survival and to some extend power, the themes of Demography and Economy, EU and Europe: Affairs and Identity, Election Results, Impact on Other Countries, Opportunities for Germany, and Asylum Abuse are relevant themes to consider. The themes of Demography and Economy, and by extension the theme of Opportunities for Germany, Opportunities for Germany, and Asylum Abuse are all related to the acquisition, maintenance, and protection of material capabilities: due to the high number of people coming to Germany, the country is acquiring new and additional material capabilities, e.g. in terms of population, i.e. maintaining its own population in the face of demographic change, and labour force, i.e. keeping up economic strength and thus further investing in material capabilities, power and security. In this case, Germany’s open door-policy can be seen as a way of investing in the future, and thus boosting its material capabilities as well as absolute and relative power in the long-term. In the same way, critical voices regarding asylum abuse try to limit and regulate amount of the capabilities spent. The country’s absolute and relative power and structural position is further secured and strengthened, by impacting other countries and possibly putting itself in a position of power in which it will have a relative advantage in the future, possibly even indirectly maintaining its power in the EU parliament due to the size in population, but also by having leverage. Moreover, the theme of Election Results also corresponds to the need for power, however, on a more national, instead of an international level. By adjusting the refugee policy or introducing new policies, the ruling parties respond to the loss in voters, thus trying to maintain their power within the structures of the state.

Since these themes make up 32% of all the extracted themes and have been directly matched to 9 out of 11 policies, it seems as though themes connecting to core principles of structural
realism, i.e. acquiring and maintaining capabilities, survival, and power, have a great impact on both the government’s refugee policy as well as the debate concerned with this policy.

Another important aspect of structural realism is the need for security which corresponds with the theme of Crime, Security, and Terrorist Threat. As the fourth most frequently used theme with four direct policy implantations, this theme seems to play an important role. Structural realist reasoning would see a threat in taking in high number of refugees, since this could destabilise or undermine the security of Germany, for instance by becoming a target for terrorist attacks. This would also put the country at a relative disadvantage compared to other countries. Although the latter part of this argument was not found in the debate regarding Germany’s refugee policy, the theme of Crime, Security, and Terrorist Threat refers to the first part of the argument. In the debate regarding the policy, it has been argued repeatedly that taking in a high number of refugees worsens the security situation in the country, which is why changes to the policy should be made. This concern was subsequently addressed by implementing several policies which would try to mitigate the conflict in Syria and reduce the causes of flight, or which would provide counter-terrorist measurements as well as measurements to improve the security situation in Germany, by for example repatriating asylum seekers who broke the law.

Lastly, the themes of EU and Europe: Affairs and Identity and Impact on Other Countries should be addressed once more. Structural realism predicts that larger, more powerful states which exist in contentious areas tend to take on system wide tasks due to the extent of their interests. This corresponds with the both the theme of EU and Europe: Affairs and Identity as well as the Impact on Other Countries theme. Germany is arguably one of the EU’s and Europe’s biggest, most influential countries, and economically strongest country. It is also depending on the cooperation and trade with countries in this area and in the debate regarding Germany’s refugee policy it was repeatedly stated that Germany has to do what’s best for Europe. As predicted, Germany also considers international or European systematic and structural aspects when debating and deciding on policy action in regards to the refugee crisis. Taking in high numbers of refugees could also be a strategy to initiate cooperation with other countries, by showing good will and thus lowering the threat as perceived by other states. This shows the importance of this aspect of structural realism, and consequently supports the notion that structural realism can be useful in explaining Germany’s policy approach to the refugee crisis.
9 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to examine what the Germany refugee policies are and what the possible reasons and motivation for this policy approach could be. As this research has shown, the policies as presented in chapter 4, intent to adjust and improve the asylum application process, the integration and repatriation of asylum seekers, adhere to EU law and provide additional aid to refugees and victims of war. Albeit a generous and welcoming refugee policy, restrictions have also been introduced limiting the number of refugees taken in by the country. This show’s a certain discrepancy between discourse and actual policy making, since a big part of the discourse focused on a continuation of the current refugee policy. However, this discrepancy is only minimal since the debate also featured many critical and negatively used themes. Thus, Germany’s refugee policy is not truly an open-door policy, however, it is a policy that does support the refugees and encourages or at least does not fully strict the intake of refugees, still allowing a high number of asylum seekers into the country.

Possible reasons for this policy approach were found by means of an interpretative thematic content analysis of data material from national and international media sources and parliamentary debates. All of the 15 identified themes could subsequently be accounted for by both the proposed theoretical frameworks of constructivism and structural realism. Thus it could be determined that reasons for Germany’s policy approach can be related to both values, norms, and matters of identity, and matters of state interests and capabilities. More specifically, a new part of German identity has become evident in light of the current refugee crisis and the resulting debate about Germany’s refugee policy. German identity is now also defined by core values of the EU, such as solidarity with other countries and the protection of human right. It is also shaped by openness, multiculturalism, and humanitarianism. These new defining normative aspects of the German identity, in connection with the countries Christian and Western values and ideals of culture have had a great impact on the debate regarding the refugee crisis and have consequently been connected to the government’s refugee policy.

In regards to structural realism, it was shown that core principles such as a state’s capabilities, its resulting position in the structure of international politics, and the need for power and security, were repeatedly referenced in the debate regarding Germany’s refugee policy and could also be connected to this policy approach.
It is to conclude that, as a result, it was found that Germany’s refugee policy reflects the discourse surrounding the policy to a great extent. Furthermore, identity and national interests and capabilities were great factors in regards to guiding and shaping both the discourse as well as the actual refugee policy. Overall, Germany’s acceptance of about one million refugees was an acceptable decision in context of its identity, i.e. by all its normative, national, moral, historic and humanitarian standards. The policy also presented a number of opportunities which offered great potential benefits which were in line with the country’s national interests and capabilities. It is therefore possible to conclude that because the country’s highly morally driven identity aligned so well with its national interests, Germany was able to steadfastly and continuously pursue its welcoming refugee policy.

9.1. Suggestions for Further Research
This thesis adopted the theoretical frames of constructivism and structural realism. Although these two theories seem adequate for explaining and accounting for the themes as found in the debate regarding Germany’s refugee policy as well as their influence on and connection to actual policies, other theories focusing on decidedly different aspects and motives for action could be worth exploring to gain an even deeper understanding of Germany’s approach to the current crisis.

In regards to the field of International Relations, it could also be productive to look at Germany’s approach from a more comparative perspective and investigating more closely how different Germany’s approach is compared to other countries in Europe and other parts in the world as well as analysing the debates, underlying themes and possible theoretical explanations for them in these respective countries.

Furthermore, this research was carried out within a comparatively short and limited timeframe. Thus it could be fruitful to expand and continue this research, both by gathering themes from the time before August 2015, but also from the time after March 2016. In doing so, it would be possible to further investigate the debate regarding the ongoing refugee situation and how the debate is being continuously be shaped. Especially in light of the attacks in July 2016 in Ansbach, Würzburg and in Normandy in August 2016, and with regard to the approaching general election in 2017, interesting new results might be produced.
References

Books


Articles


http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayFulltext?type=1&fid=149074&jid=DIO&volumeId=1&issueId=01&aid=149073


http://studysites.uk.sagepub.com/gray/Website%20material/Journals/soc_payne.pdf


**Internet Resources**


### Appendix

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<th>Capacity</th>
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| „Germany is certainly a strong country. Thereof arises a special responsibility. We will continue to take in more refugees than others also in the future.”  
  – Thomas Opperman, SPD (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b: 11619)                                                                                                                                          | „We stand by the reception of refugees, who flee from bombs and terror, and not just because the Geneva Convention demands it, but also because it constitutes deeply human action.”  
  – Sabine Zimmermann, Die Linke (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016d:15940)                                                                                                                                   |
| „I am firmly convinced that we will be able to solve the problems in regards to the refugee crisis, and that without new taxes or new charges.”  
  – Eckhardt Rehberg, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a)                                                                                                                                            | „Refugees are people, who themselves are victims of terror and who are fleeing this terror and these situations. Therefore, they need our protection.”  
  – Anja Hajduk, BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015c: 13543)                                                                                                                      |
| „Germany is looking good. This is, however, also the prerequisite for us being able to help. You are able to help only if you are doing well, if you are in a position to do so. We are in a position to do so. Which why we are doing it.”  
  – Johannes Kahrs, SPD (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11531)                                                                                                                                          | „The right of asylum is and will remain to be the unimpeachable self-commitment of our constitution and our history; and human dignity applies to everyone who lives here irregardless of how long they will be here and of how long they will be able to stay.”  
  – Norbert Lammert, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11514)                                                                                                                                   |
| „The strength of our country to integrate has its limits, and we have to consider these limits.”  
  – Gerda Hasselfeld, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016c: 15761)                                                                                                                                        | „Dear colleagues, we are meeting our humanitarian challenge. Who requests protection in Germany will receive protection in Germany.”  
  – Thomas de Maizière (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015c; 13547)                                                                                                                                 |
| „If politics were to ask him, he we would say: „We cannot handle this“.”  
  – Frank-Jürgen Weise, Head of the BAMF (Kuhr & Kreuth, 2016)                                                                                                                                         | „Germany does what is morally and legally required. No more, and no less.”  
  – German Chancellor Angela Merkel, CDU/CSU (Kirchner, 2015a)                                                                                                                                 |
| „There are growing doubts in parts of the population that state institutions are able to master this.”  
  (Inverardi & Nienaber, 2016)                                                                                                                                                                         | „Because [this crisis] is not a German Problem, but rather it is first and foremost a humanitarian duty.”  
  – Frank-Walter Steinmeier, SPD (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b: 11643)                                                                                                                               |
| „We cannot take in 5 000 to 10 000 new refugees every day and also deal with this challenge.”  
  – Reinhard Brandl, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015c: 13542)                                                                                                                                 | „We have to relieve the distress of the refugees now, so that their lives will become at least bearable to some degree. We can not only do this, but rather we have to do it. That is our humanitarian responsibility.”  
  – Gerd Müller, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b: 11681)                                                                                                                                 |

*Table A 1: Extract from thematic analysis, CAPA and HR (own illustration, 2016)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demography and Economy</th>
<th>Crime, Security and Terrorist Threat</th>
<th>Germany’s History</th>
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<td>„We would see a slowdown in the German economy, if it weren't for the massive stimulus of spending on refugees. [...] So it doesn't just benefit refugees, but the whole economy.” – Marcel Fratscher, head of the German Institute for Economic Research (McGuinness, 2015b)</td>
<td>„I do believe that the opinion of many people has now changed, because many are afraid now that terrorists will mix themselves among the refugees. [...] Who knows who is a terrorist and who is a refugee? They don't have it written on their forehead.” – Daniella, member of public (Nye, 2015)</td>
<td>„Some experts believe the country's own experience with refugees after the war, when over 12 million Germans were expelled from what is now eastern Europe, may influence the public mood more profoundly than any guilt tied to the Nazis. [...] It certainly has something to do with the past – family memories and the like, bombed-out grandparents and stories around the dinner table.” – Fritz Stern, emeritus professor of history at Columbia University (Carrel &amp; Barkin, 2015)</td>
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<td>„The Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán believes that Germany has acted in its own economic interest with little regard for the rest of Europe.” (Hewitt, 2015a)</td>
<td>„Merkel's critics have raised security concerns about letting in so many unchecked refugees, but German security officials say they have not found any proof that jihadists are among them.” (Heneghan, 2015)</td>
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<td>It's a great opportunity to answer the demand for workers.” – Artur Fischer, CEO of the Berlin Stock Exchange (McGuinness, 2015b)</td>
<td>„In the last months I have written exactly ONE criminal charge against a German. The rest was only refugees. At the central station, women are regularly being sexually harassed and bothered. When we impose bans, we are shouted at: You are not my police. You are a racist.” – Member of the Police Force (Kürthy, 2016)</td>
<td>„[...] [A]sylum seekers would need jobs and housing but many in the east did not want this. &quot;Look at east German citizens like me - we only got our freedom from dictatorship 25 years ago and now that freedom is being taken away from us bit by bit and we have to make room for all these other people without even being asked.&quot;” – Alexander Neubert, NPD (Martin &amp; Barkin, 2015)</td>
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Table A 2: Extract from thematic analysis, DE, CSTT, and GH (own illustration, 2016)
<table>
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<th>EU and Europe: Political Affairs and Identity</th>
<th>The Law</th>
<th>Election Results</th>
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<td>„Universal human rights are linked to Europe and its history. […] They were one of the founding motives of the EU. If we fail on refugees then the connection to those rights is destroyed and it won’t be the Europe that we wished for.” – Angela Merkel, CDU/CSU (BBC, 2015a)</td>
<td>„Thirty-four [Merkel’s] own conservative local party leaders have written to her, accusing her of pursuing a policy that is neither part of her party’s programme or in line with German and European law. It’s time, they say, for Germany to start turning people away at the border.” (Hill, 2015)</td>
<td>„[W]hen Merkel said Germany’s doors were open to all those fleeing Syria’s war - sent voters in droves to the AfD in Sunday’s elections. When Politbarometer asked people which party they would vote for in the 2017 federal election, 12 percent chose the AfD, giving the party its highest ever national poll rating.” (Bellon, 2016b)</td>
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<td>„It's our turn to help. […] This is Europe. Other countries like Greece and Italy have received these people. Now it's Germany's turn.” – Member of the Public and Volunteer (BBC (2015a)</td>
<td>„The right of asylum is and will remain to be the unimpeachable self-commitment of our constitution and our history; and human dignity applies to everyone who lives here irregardless of how long they will be here and of how long they will be able to stay.” – Norbert Lammert, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11514)</td>
<td>„A policy change by the Chancellor would be no way of ending this crisis of confidence; on the contrary. If Angela Merkel were to look like opportunist, who changes her policies due to extern pressure then she would tactically win nothing. […] There is nothing else for her to do, but to follow her compass […].” (Drobinski, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„We are the most potent county in Europe, and from this strength then also results responsibility. But this responsibility cannot be: „What id good for Germany?”, but rather must be: What is good for Europe.” – Katrin Göring-Eckardt, BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN (Deutscher Bundesta, 2015b: 11617)</td>
<td>„The law is the will to justice, and justice demands a humane existence for all humans, irregardless of their origin or skin colour. In these days, the dignity of men is threatened, and it has already been violated as well. […] Therefore, we are under the obligation, […] to take care of refugees in a humane way.” – Heiko Maas, SPD (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11561)</td>
<td>„Seehofer called on Merkel for a fundamental correction. The cause for the fall was &quot;very clear&quot;, he said. The central reason is the refugee policy.” (Wittl &amp; Zoch 2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A 3: Extract from thematic analysis, EU, LAW, and ER (own illustration, 2016)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welcoming Culture</th>
<th>Clash of Cultures</th>
<th>Impact on Other Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>„The people in Germany meet the refugees with an overwhelming readiness to help and solidarity. [...] This great involvement together with our economic strength are the reason for us being able to confidently meet this challenge and that we can manage it, too.” – André Berghegger, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11594)</td>
<td>„Many of them don't share the bulk of what any mainstream society would agree on. They come from different backgrounds, they have different views on how to respect women or not. They have different views on how to resolve conflicts, they have different views on how to respect, that we must respect other religions.” – Emily Haber, state secretary for Germany's Interior Ministry (Adler, 2016)</td>
<td>„If Turkey helps us secure the external borders of Europe, we have to help Turkey in return, not only financially, but also by taking in parts of their refugees.” – Thomas Oppermann, SPD (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d: 13623)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„This readiness to help is one of the most valuable virtues, the most valuable resources of our society. It makes our country strong, it holds it together, and it shows us all: We can do it.” – Thomas Opperman, SPD (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015b: 11619)</td>
<td>„In the east, thousands of people have marched in towns and cities in protest at asylum seekers being housed in their areas and against what they call the &quot;Islamisation of the West&quot;” (Hill, 2016)</td>
<td>„Germany too must give a number for the refugees it is prepared to take from the Syria and Turkey region. Germany must finally create clarity or else refugees will continue to head off in the direction of Germany.” – Werner Faymann, Austrian Politician (Shields, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„It is regularly stated by administrative bodies and politicians that the challenges could hardly be met without the voluntary involvement. People collect clothes, hold German curses, help with visits to the authorities or simply say: Welcome.” (Beitzer, 2015)</td>
<td>„The asylum situation is a threat to people's identity and has social and financial consequences. [...] People are scared about that.” – Jens Baur, NPD (Martin &amp; Barkin, 2015)</td>
<td>„Germany has, for the time being, given precedence to the humanitarian aspects of the crisis over security issues.” – Bohuslav Sobotka, Czech Politician (Carrel, 2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table A 4: Extract from thematic analysis, WEL, CC, and IOC (own illustration, 2016)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunity for the Country</th>
<th>Anti-Refugee Sentiment</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>„People are almost always uncertain towards the Unknown. You learn how to deal with it and you get used to it. Politics has to have be brave enough to say: that’s how it is. In a world in which money, goods, and people have become globally mobile, we cannot lock ourselves away. Germany has become more colourful in the last few decades. This has not harmed us. On the contrary. This will continue.”</td>
<td>„Among the refugees, there are a great many people who grew up with hostility towards Israel and conflate these prejudices with hatred towards Jews in general. [...] We don't approach the issue of refugees with negative expectations in general, [b]ut we are very worried and sceptical, and anecdotal evidence so far showed that we have reason to be scared.” (Bellon, 2016a)</td>
<td>„There is more behind Merkel’s course than election tactics Merkel is from a pastor's family. She is a practising and faithful Christian. She has not said it plainly, but a mixture of protestant pragmatism and charity seem to be a driving motive.” (Denkler, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„This great humanitarian, political and cultural challenge will change Germany. I’m sure that ultimately this will happen to the advantage of our country if act as bravely and decisively as we have during other great challenges […]” – Norbert Lammert, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11514)</td>
<td>„I do worry about this new tendency towards brutalisation as well as the current trend towards a lack of respect, about a brutalisation of language and on networks online, but also on our streets. This is a problem in our society.” – Thomas Strobl, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016a: 14578)</td>
<td>„Listen all to the message of the churches in Germany. Those should be the standard for us.” – Dietmar Bartsch, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d: 13607)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table A 5: Extract from thematic analysis, OPP, ANTI, and CHR (own illustration, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asylum Abuse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>„We are not the social welfare department for the whole world.” – Horst Seehofer, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015d: 13607).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„Firstly, the CDU/CSU fraction fears – from my point of view not without good reason – a certain pull-effect, not in regards to the refugees, who come here quite rightly, but in regards to those, who try to come here due to other, especially economic considerations, in order to be given asylum [...]” – Georg Nüßlein, CDU/CSU (Deutscher Bundestag, 2015a: 11548)</td>
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</tbody>
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Table A 6: Extract from thematic analysis, AA (own illustration, 2016)
### Theme Frequency

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<td>Anti-Refugee Sentiment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity for Germany</td>
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<td>Impact on Other Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clash of Cultures</td>
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<td>Welcoming Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Election Results</td>
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<td>The Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU Affairs and Identity</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany's History</td>
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<td>Crime, Security and Terrorist Threat</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Demography and Economy</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Humanitarian Responsibility</td>
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<td>Capacity and Capability</td>
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*Table A 7: Frequency Analysis, Themes (own illustration, 2016)*

### Positive Theme 82%, Negative Theme 41%

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<th>Positive Theme</th>
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<td>Negative Theme</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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*Table A 8: Frequency Analysis, Positive-Negative (own illustration, 2016)*

### Actors Positive Themes Negative Themes Total

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*Table A 9: Frequency Analysis, Actors-Positive-Negative (own illustration, 2016)*
### Table A 10: Frequency Analysis, Themes-Actors (own illustration, 2016)

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### Table A 11: Frequency Analysis, Themes-Sources (own illustration, 2016)

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