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**Europe's Reaction to the Arab Immigration: The Case of  
Post-Arab Spring**

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*This dissertation is dedicated to:*

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## **Abstract**

This study explores Europe's responses to Arab immigration in the Post-Arab Spring era, in which some Arab countries witnessed anti-government revolutions in the late 2010's. These incidents have prompted large waves of immigration to the neighbouring countries, as well as European ones. This dissertation aims at examining and analysing the various attitudes of European countries to the new waves of immigrants coming from Arab Spring countries, as well as the different strategies that have been adopted as a response to the influx of Arab immigrants. Employing a descriptive and analytical approach to analysing official and media documents, we focused on the description of the perspectives of Europe's nations towards the Arab Spring Revolutions and the impact of Arab immigrants on Europe as well; besides, we analysed the responses of Europe to this influx of immigrants. The findings of this study reveal that Europe's responses could be classified into two categories. One is the welcome response to the influx of immigrants facilitated by an open door policy introduced by some European governments. The other is the restrictive response in receiving refugees and at worst discriminatory practices against the influx of immigrants. Our analysis also shows that there are various economic and political factors behind these responses; starting from the ageing population and labour market shortage to the growth of right-wing parties and anti-Islamic attitudes.

**Keywords:** Arab Immigration, Arab Spring Revolutions, European countries, European responses, Post-Arab Spring Era.

## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<b>AfD</b>	Alternative for Germany
<b>CNN</b>	Cable News Network
<b>DIHK</b>	German Chambers of Commerce and Industry
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>TRT</b>	Turkish Radio and Television
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>WWII</b>	Second World War

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# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

### **1. Background of the study**

It is undeniable that the Arab immigration to Europe is currently one of the greatest population movements in the Arab-Euro contemporary history. This phenomenon has increased over the last decade in particular due to political unrest in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which famously known as the Arab Spring Revolutions. The events of Arab Spring that took place shared a common sentiment to protest and voice people's anger and were anti-government movements in essence. These movements swept across the MENA region, beginning with an incident in Tunisia which fuelled people's rage and caused the largest civil unrest witnessed than ever. The incident happened on December 17, 2010, with a Tunisian fruit vendor setting himself on fire in reaction to the maltreatment and humiliation of a police officer during his work (Lageman, 2016). Few days after this incident, Mohamed Bouazizi died on January 4, 2011, and his death prompted people to protest and revolt against their autocratic regime across the country.

In this regard, the Arab Spring movements refer to the series of peaceful and violent events that took place in the MENA region, starting from Tunisia and extending to Egypt, Syria, Libya and Yemen. In the media, it was also known as the Arab Awakening, Arab Uprisings, or Arab Revolutions. Subsequently, the political turmoil in Tunisia and Egypt, and the civil wars in case of Libya, Syria, and Yemen have led to the emergence of a refugee crisis in Europe.

The influx of immigrants from Arab Spring countries became a challenge to the European countries, triggering off different responses to the massive flows followed by several decisions, from short-term to long-term responses. For example, on the one hand, some think that the crisis has profoundly impacted the European continent in many aspects, shaping controversial attitudes within different European countries, which have helped to shatter their unity. On the other hand, another perspective on the crisis suggests that the

influx of immigrants would help different European nations in multiple sectors, especially the economic one. For example, Germany provided an example of the latter perspective by demonstrating a unique response to the refugee crisis by employing an open border strategy to receive an enormous number of immigrants compared to other European counterparts. The contributions of Arab immigrants will be explored in much detail in the third chapter of this dissertation by focusing on Germany as a case study. However, the impact of Arab immigration will be explored throughout the first chapter.

## **2. Aims of the Study**

This study aims at exploring and analysing the different European responses and attitudes to the influx of immigrants from Arab Spring countries, and their strategies to deal with this phenomenon. It also seeks to highlight the impact of Arab immigrants on the European hosting countries. To meet these aims, we have outlined the statement of the problem we attempt to investigate in this dissertation and formulated research questions to guide our quest.

## **3. Statement of the Problem**

Immigration from Arab to European countries has never ceased, but it has increased after the Arab Uprising events in 2011. As explained above, it has created a controversial issue globally and particularly among European countries, which has affected their unity. Thus, different European responses have emerged as a result of the new waves of Arab immigrants in the Post Arab Spring era. Thus, the problem we attempt to explore is a contemporary one and requires careful considerations of all interpretations and opinions.

## **4. Research Questions**

The present study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What were Europe's attitudes towards the Arab Spring events?
2. How did the influx of Arab immigrants influence Europe?

3. What were the European responses to Arab immigration movements after the Arab Spring Uprisings?
4. How did the open border policy contribute to the increase of immigration in one European receiving country?

## **5. Research Hypotheses**

To answering the above questions, the following hypotheses are assumed:

1. European attitudes to the Arab Spring events have swung between two sides: some supporting the Arab voices calling for independence for certain governments, while others have reinforced their Arab counterpart regimes. Thus, each has responded according to its interests in the region.
2. The presence of Arab immigrants in Europe has had positive contributions which provided solutions to the problem of ageing population and labour shortage. However, it has had a negative influence on the stability and unity of the European countries.
3. Some European countries welcomed the influx of immigrants from humanitarian perspective and benefited from the young immigrants, while others closed their borders and implemented a restrictive policy due to the rise of the right wing in those countries.
4. Open border policy has contributed to an increase in humanitarian attitudes, and welcomed more immigrants in the host country; nevertheless, it has been exploited by the far-right parties, which led to the tightening and control of borders in the face of the influx of immigrants and refugees.

## **6. Research Methodology**

The methodology adopted to conduct this research was descriptive-analytical approach by drawing on qualitative research. This approach was employed because it allows for more an in-depth exploration and learning about the attitudes we sought to investigate in

the available literature. In this regard, the study has provided an analysis of the European responses to the new waves of Arab immigrants in light of the Arab Uprisings. Additionally, it sought to describe the attitudes of European governments concerning Arab spring revolutions as well as the influence of Arab immigration on their territories. In an attempt to construct an overall idea of the subject, this study was based particularly on the analysis of political and media discourses. Hence, the main method used was the analysis of available documents, mainly books, media articles, official and non-official reports.

## **7. Structure of the Study**

The research is composed of three main parts: two theoretical chapters and a practical one. The first theoretical chapter is entitled: Europe and the Evolution of Arab Spring, which consists of three main sections. The first displays the attitudes of European countries about the Arab Uprisings. The second involves discussing the different interventions of European nations in the Arab revolts. The final section tackles the effects of the Arab immigrants on Europe from political, economic, social, and cultural grounds.

The second theoretical chapter is entitled: “Europe and Migration Waves from Arab Spring Countries”, which covers the immigration waves from the MENA region to Europe before and after the Arab Uprisings. It particularly discusses the various kinds of Arab immigrants to Europe followed by the factors that lead them to leave their countries of origin; and it also highlights the role of the European Media in the representations of Arab immigrants and refugees. The chapter concludes by the discussion of Europe’s responses to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from Arab Spring nations.

The practical chapter is entitled: “Towards an Understanding of Europe’s Reactions to Arab Immigration: The Case of Germany”. This chapter was wholly devoted to the study of Germany’s response to the new waves of immigrants from Arab Spring countries, characterizing its unique response compared to other European governments. First, it

addresses the root causes of the welcoming opening of Germany's borders to these waves. Second, it sheds light on the shifting process in the German response, and highlights the role of the far-right parties on the rise of anti-refugee and Islamophobic attitudes as well. Finally, the chapter concludes by presenting attempts through which the German's official discourse tried containing the anti-immigration voices and refugees by defending Muslim and refugee minorities in the country.

# **Chapter One**

## Europe and the Evolution of Arab Spring

## **1.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we will present the European perspectives with the evolution of the Arab Spring that occurred as a result of several years of silence and tyranny; in which Arab people have woken up to demand one's dignity, democracy, and to put an end to the long-term regimes. This unexpected awakening astonished the world, particularly Europe, as it is considered a unique appeal for democracy. In the first section of this chapter, we will discuss how the European countries had perceived the events of the Arab Revolutions based on their national interests as well as their relationships with the Arab Spring countries. In the second section, we will shed light on the intervention of European powers in determining the destiny of the revolutions. The aforementioned intervention differs from one country to another, in which some of them had either intervened politically, economically, or militarily. In the third section, we will highlight the impact of Arab immigration caused by the Arab Uprisings on European nations, in which the Arab immigration influence has multifaceted fields, including the political, economic, and social and cultural domain.

## **1.2 Europe's Attitudes to the Arab Spring**

Since the beginning of Arab Revolutions in Tunisia, the European Union (EU) has been in perplexity either to support the demonstrators' demands for liberties that are always one of the EU principles, or to uphold the familiar and trustworthy autocracies. Whereas different local and international powers, such as the United States of America (USA), have increasingly engaged with the unrest in the Middle East, the EU has immediately remained as an observatory power and looked marginalized of its usual impact. Indeed, the EU had not presented its real attitude towards the Arab Spring events in MENA region for maintaining the unity of its members. In sharp contrast to the situation of international authorities, the structural shortcomings of the EU showed an excessive reduction in its international influence. There is no doubt that after the downfall of both regimes of Tunisia and Egypt,

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Štefan Füle, the Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy congratulated Tunisians and Egyptians people. However, those moral words require immediate actions and real support for the Arab protestors (Driss, 2012; Vimont, 2018).

Yet, after a considerable period of silence, Driss (2012) noted that the EU took its first steps indicating its interest towards the Arab Spring Revolutions. Starting with the political interests, many EU officials visited the Tunisian's Capital in a sequence, including the EU's High Representative in February, the European Parliament President in March, and the Commission President in April, to support the democratic transformation. As has been remarked in Ashton's speech, "The EU is wholeheartedly behind the Tunisian people's aspirations for freedom and democracy [...] There is much that the European Union can do to support them. We want to be Tunisia's strongest ally in their move towards democracy" (2011, p. 2). In this context, Ashton confirmed the desire of the EU to support the Tunisian revolution against their autocratic regime. Conversely, the French foreign minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, had a different attitude towards the Tunisian revolution in which she suggested, during her visit in the upheaval period, to provide the regime with security forces to help with the suppression of protestors. Subsequently, she received harsh criticism because of the strong relationships with the Tunisian government that led her to resign in February 2011(Lindström & Zetterlund, 2012).

Beside the political support, Driss continued that the EU also showed its economic interest in which it suggested its contribution to financial assistance in the region (2012). Since the EU is considered as a standard power and a supporter of democratic freedom movements and the economic free marketplace; however, it exploited the Arab Spring incidents as a rare chance to impose its political and economic ideology (Vimont, 2018). Moreover, Driss argued that the EU supported the Arab Spring countries with significant

humanitarian help and considerable political and economic collaboration for retrieving peace and stability into the region. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the Tunisian transit governors, the EU political speech did not follow by adequate financial assistance; thus, the bid from the EU seemed to be entirely sarcastic and did not meet the country's actual needs (2012).

In the case of Syria, after it had been excluded from the Arab League, the Prime Minister of Russia expressed his attitude by criticizing the western powers for affecting the resolution of the Arab League concerning Syria. He strongly confirmed his corroboration to Al-Assad by supporting all attempts to end the bloodshed through political discourse, maintaining that Russia did not want to see a Libyan-like situation. Moreover, the Russian government insisted that the Syrian citizens are wholly responsible for determining their destiny, considering who should govern them and how they would conduct their lives (Kabbara, 2015).

Eventually, as mentioned before that freedom is one of the EU principles, Driss believed that the EU must shed light on both freedom of expression and press. Besides, it should also organize credible election by global controllers and a thorough examination of crimes perpetrated by authoritarian regimes (2012).

### **1.3 European Interventions in the Arab Spring Revolutions**

Since 2011, MENA countries have witnessed political, economic and social unrest triggered by people's upheaval against the long-term dictatorships. These incidents brought the international limelight and led to foreign interventions. In this regard, we address the European interventions in the Arab Spring revolutions in this section. First, the military/ humanitarian interventions that took place in the Libyan revolution had introduced. Next, we move to discuss the other interventions, which was the political/ diplomatic one focusing on

the Syrian revolution. Finally, we conclude the section by discussing the economic/ financial interventions in various Arab Spring countries, including Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

### **1.3.1 Military/ Humanitarian Interventions**

The foreign military intervention in the Arab Spring Revolutions was implemented solely in the case of Libya, where the Arab League played a crucial role in promoting this intervention in the revolution's events. In contrast to Libya, this intervention was not supported in the Syrian case because of the different international perspectives towards the ongoing situation (Rózsa et al., 2012).

Indeed, Libya experienced a foreign intervention following nearly one month as the popular Libyan Uprisings took place. The intervention was an international resolution admitted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) requiring its members to put an end to the Gaddafi's regime and brutal crimes, by taking all necessary measures (Kabbara, 2015). At the end of February, the United Kingdom (UK) was planning to set out a no-fly zone probably directed by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as announced by the British Prime Minister Cameron at that time. In this context, the UNSC on 17 March 2011 enforced a no-fly zone on the Libyan airspace and strengthened restrictions on Gaddafi's government along with its followers. The decision came into effect since 10 members voted for and no one against, with five members abstained, including Russia and Germany. From a military perspective, many EU states have behaved independently based on their national priorities or have served behind the NATO symbol, which led to the marginalization of the EU. On 19 March 2011, in the run-up to the emergency meeting held in Paris by the alliance powers and the EU, France coupled with Britain unleashed air attacks on the Libyan territories. On 27 March 2011, 10 EU member states, including France and Britain, entered NATO operation termed as "Unified Protector" under the United Nations (UN) authorization;

this operation was carried out on 31 March 2011 (Marchi, 2017; Steindler, 2013; Tarnawski, 2013, p. 134).

To back the humanitarian intervention concerning the Libyan Arab Spring conflict, the Council of the EU on 01 April 2011, embraced a resolution on a military intervention that called EUFOR Libya. This operation sought to displace the Libyans from the conflict zones to other safe areas and to strengthen the projects of the humanitarian agencies. The EUFOR Libya operation was not put into practice due to two main reasons. First, the failure of the EU members (Germany, France, Sweden, and Denmark) to move collectively for humanitarian aspects on the one hand; second, this operation was declined by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the other hand (EU Council, 2011; Steindler, 2013).

Indeed, the NATO intervention led to the change of the Libyan regime, and it was apparent that a modern patrimonial structure has been established as an alternative to democracy. There is no doubt that the use of NATO forces against the Libyan regime was aimed at maintaining their regional benefits under humanitarian intervention, especially as Libya has been the single petroleum producer among the Arab Spring countries. Ultimately, the end of foreign intervention was marked by Muammar Gaddafi's assassination; therefore, NATO confirmed the end of military operations in Libya on October 31, 2011 (Al Taie, 2014; Rózsa et al., 2012).

In the same vein, but in a completely different country, Turkey was against the violence of Al-Assad's government, for instance, Ankara shielded guiltless Syrians in Idlib. Besides, it contributed to repelling the inhumane actions taken by the Syrian regime and its allies Russia and Iran. On the one side, to control the potential assaults by the regime, Turkey has intensified its deterrent-armed force in the area; on the other side, Turkish authorities along with civilian organizations had supplied food and safe zones for Syrians. However,

western powers were hesitant to engage in the Syrian humanitarian catastrophe and its security issues (Ataman, 2020).

### **1.3.2 Political/ Diplomatic Interventions**

Both Arab Spring Revolutions in Libya and Syria had turned to civil wars, but the international interventions differ over those wars. In this context, Kabbara (2015) argued that despite five years of similar circumstances to that of Libya, Syria has not experienced any external armed intervention, as mentioned before.

Admittedly, the single intervention that characterized the Syrian situation was political/ diplomatic in terms of putting an end to the humanitarian tragedy peacefully. On the one side, both the EU and the USA supported the Syrian revolution against their autocratic regime and confirmed that the UN should enforce penalties on Al-Assad. For instance, as in the Libyan situation, France and UK collaborated for encouraging western powers to intervene in the Syrian Arab Spring Revolution. On the other side, Russia and China were the notable allies to the Syrian President, and they contributed significantly in thwarting all UNSC attempts to punish the Syrian regime, considering the Syrian revolution as an internal matter. As declared by the Russian Prime Minister, imposing a no-fly zone on Syria would decrease its autonomy. To protect the vital interests, the continuity of the current regime is of particular importance to Moscow, as Syria represents the sole Mediterranean navy base and a significant Russian weapons client (Kabbara, 2015; Rózsa et al., 2012).

Steindler (2013) stated that announcements, dispute mediation, and involvement in global seminars and discussions were among the political/diplomatic techniques applied by the EU's external officials, such as the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Presidents of the European Council and Commission. Indeed, the political EU intervention might be better represented as an external mediator. The ongoing situation in MENA region, especially in Libya, was addressed in a meeting held in Geneva by

Ashton along with U.S. Secretary of State Clinton, the Russian and Turkish Foreign Ministers (Lavrov and Davutoglu respectively).

### **1.3.3 Economic/ Financial Interventions**

The EU adopted several procedures in terms of economic/financial interventions in some Arab Spring countries through its Council Decisions. Starting with the Syrian case, the Council Regulation (EU) No 36/2012 (2012) implemented on May 09, 2011, conditional procedures on different fields to limit the power of Al-Assad's regime. This Decision provided sanctions on both importing and transporting of firearms, munitions, armed transport means and other different military equipment from Syria or generated in Syria. Moreover, the EU has prevented its members from offering concessions and financial aid to the Syrian regime, excepting for humanitarian and development aid (Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP, 2013).

The Decision also prohibited the European Investment Bank to lent or enter investment deals with Syria; additionally, it should discontinue all established supremacy plans by Technical Assistance Service Contracts in the region. The EU imposed an asset freeze on each financial properties related to or managed by Al-Assad, his retinue, and supporters (Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP, 2013).

In the same regard, Department for International Trade and Export Control Joint Unit (2020) affirmed that the EU Council adopted a new resolution in 2013, which prohibited the import and export of the following:

- a) All tools that could be used for repressing protesters, including chemical and biological weapons as well as surveillance and objection devices.
- b) Precious resources such as gold, diamonds, metals, and money (paper currency and coins).
- c) Energy resources, for instance, natural gas, petroleum, and plane oil.

Since the outbreak of the Tunisian revolution in 2011, the EU granted financial aid to Tunisia estimated about €1.3 billion in 2015 to reduce the crisis in the region (“EU aid to Tunisia”, 2017). Despite the latter assistance, the EU introduced sanctions towards those individuals, institutions, and organizations, which are accountable for robbing the state treasury (Her Majesty’s Treasury & Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation, 2020). It was implemented on January 31, 2011, to punish Ben Ali, his wife, and 46 others. The Council viewed that the embezzlement of the Tunisian treasury led to the denial of the citizens’ sustainable economic and social growth as well as the threatening of the Tunisian democracy growth (“Tunisia: Council extends,” 2018).

Ever since, those frozen sanctions have been updated each year, for instance, the EU Council recently updated these sanctions on those 48 persons on January 27, 2020. Thus, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Moldova showed their agreement to this resolution (Lester QC, 2020). The same resolution was imposed against the Egyptian regime on March 22, 2011, following over month when the Supreme Council of Armed Forces pressured the Egyptian President to resign (Boogaerts, Drieskens & Portela, 2016).

In Libya, the UNSC adopted restrictions on Gaddafi’s government by both 1970 and 1973 decisions, prohibiting weapons and banning Gaddafi and his prominent supporters. According to Koenig, in succeeding penalties’ series, the EU barred the economic entities, the National Oil Corporation along with its five branches, additionally to 26 energy companies implicated of funding the government of Gaddafi. Subsequently, all of these sanctions enforced restrictions on oil and gas movements. Finally, according to Harrison and Brunnstrom, the Council blocked six Libyan seaports, such as the capital’s seaport, which put an end to the European sea business in the Libyan harbours (Boogaerts et al., 2016).

## **1.4 The Impact of Arab Immigration on Europe**

The Arab Spring immigration was a key factor of changing policies in both origin and European destination countries. Consequently, this immigration had a multifaceted impact on different levels that will be introduced in this section, including the political, economic, social and cultural one. In this context, as Europe and MENA region are separated only by the Mediterranean Sea, Bani Salameh (2019) argued that the geographical position of the host country plays a significant role in this impact, as it differs from one country to another according to the closeness to Arab Spring region. For instance, countries like Italy and Greece dealt with the waves of immigrants differently from countries such as Germany and Norway.

### **1.4.1 The Political Impact of Arab Immigration**

According to Bani Salameh (2019), massive numbers of immigrants from Arab Spring countries had entered Europe to escape civil wars, political, and economic unrest during the last decade. This influx created challenges, pressures and conflicts among European countries on how to lessen its consequences.

Since the start of immigration flows, a security concern has become one of the major themes of public discussion concerning the immigration crisis. European nations viewed the influx of immigrants as a threat because it might bring individuals who are vulnerable to religious extremism. However, Islamophobia and terrorism are not explicitly linked with the current immigration crisis (Valdaru, Asari, & Mälksoo, 2017). These divisions resulted in adopting two contradictory policies by different European countries, according to Bani Salameh (2019):

#### **1.4.1.1 Welcoming and Hosting Policies on Immigration**

Recently, the European nations that have hugged the Arab refugees' waves after the Arab revolts in 2011 turned into areas for political clash and an attractive centre for public discussions (Fakhoury, 2016). Germany, for example, was among the first countries welcome many immigrants into the country and many European countries criticized its policy towards immigrants. As Meakin declared that, "The crisis is attracting increasing levels of criticism for being overly soft on migrants. Chancellor Merkel is playing with fire and has had to toughen up her policies" (2016, "Impact on the European Union," para. 2).

Italy was another country that received many immigrants, especially those who were victims of human trafficking. Thus, several European nations regarded both policies of Germany and Italy as risky actions that might severely harm the European unity.

#### **1.4.1.2 Hostile Policies of Calling for Building Borders and Leaving Europe**

Britain, for instance, was the first to vote for leaving the EU and many more are expected to follow this path. Furthermore, immigration and safety issues became at the peak of the secession list because there is no sign concerning the end of Arab immigrants' waves.

Countries like France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain witnessed incidents of terrorism that led to the misrepresentation of Arabs' and Muslims' picture in European society. Consequently, those countries also experienced the rise of the right wing, which took advantage of these incidents and linked the immigration of Arabs and Muslims to extremism and terrorism.

Overall, the immigration from Arab Spring countries exposed the false claims of the European openness, integration, globalization and ideas. Moreover, the anti-immigration process might lead to the rise of racism in Europe if the right parties have come to power. In the same context, Stokes claimed that "If the far-right continues to surge in the months ahead

in countries like France and Germany, it could mean a return to nationalist politics that have more than once left Europe with a sorry legacy” (2016, para. 13).

There is no doubt, as Fakhoury (2016) argued that some European countries had either exploited the movements of immigrants to promote their national affairs or used them as safety problems. Turkey, for instance, welcomed early many immigrants, including Syrians, and endeavoured to reform the immigration policy to strengthen its influence in the Middle East. Lately, Turkey had established a visa-free system with some MENA countries, including Syria, Yemen, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia because of the decrease in the Turkish visa demands (“Greece measures Arab,” 2011).

#### **1.4.2 The Economic Impact of Arab Immigration**

According to Bani Salameh (2019), the flow of immigrants from MENA region to Europe has affected the European economy negatively. Consequently, the burdens on different basic needs of life such as homes, schools, welfare care, and jobs have risen, resulting in a destabilization at the political and financial level.

The European countries had faced a binary problem related to the immigration issue. Firstly, they are holding the responsibility of those who flee war and see Europe as the sole shelter to continue their lives and get asylum right. Secondly, they suffer from certain kinds of immigrants called economic immigrants, who reached Europe just for enhancing their living conditions (Bani Salameh, 2019). In the same vein, Meakin stated that this type of immigrants should be sent to other places, and their asylum applications should be declined (2016).

Another economic drawback of this immigration crisis, from the perspective of Bani Salameh (2019), is that it forced EU countries to treat the problems in the immigrants’ origin

countries, which lead them to leave their homelands, and this requires various kinds of support at different levels, including financial and military aid. Moreover, Bani Salameh continued that there is a deep relationship between migration and economic standards. Therefore, European countries became obliged to double their efforts and create other economic alternatives to migration process as it turned to be a source of worries for most of them. All these actions were made to provide employment opportunities and ameliorate living conditions in the immigrants' countries.

The International Monetary Fund argued that the bulk number of immigrants has a positive side in which those grantees of asylum requests strengthen the European economic development; however, this financial influence differs depending on the long or short-term of immigration. Concerning the short-term, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is being enhanced due to Arab refugees as a result of the rise of European costs in promoting the grantees of asylum requests and the rise of consumers and employees. For instance, the total average growth in GDP from those grantees in the EU was measured by 0.13%. Whereas, the long-term influence of the entry of refugees is coupled with the integration of the asylum requests' recipients into the European society (Valdaru et al., 2017).

Consequently, numerous EU countries were responsible for supplying MENA countries with considerable economic support. In this regard and to meet the population as well as immigrants' requirements, these EU countries need an international intervention in this issue from countries that do not receive immigrants, such as Japan and China, which can help decrease pressure on Europe (Bani Salameh, 2019).

In short, as immigration from Arab Spring countries to Europe has a negative impact, it can be beneficial in several fields. Europe is notorious for its ageing workforce, in which the majority of its population in the labour market is ageing, whereas the number of young

people is still inadequate. Immigration, in this case, is viewed as a solution to labour shortage, citizens' needs and the ageing workforce, since it plays a crucial role in the population growth in Europe (Bani Salameh, 2019).

### **1.4.3 The Cultural and Social Impact of Arab Immigration**

The sudden Arab immigration holds various social and cultural effects on western civilizations as a direct outcome of the Arab revolts. Indeed, the recipient of the enormous number of Arab immigrants into European nations had varied consequences; in this situation, the Arabs need to make sense with new circumstances or combine with European citizens (Bani Salameh, 2019).

Admittedly, the culture of the Arab nations differs from the culture of the European one, and this difference leads to the probability of harmony or conflict between the two societies. Consequently, Arab immigrants attempt to maintain their social and spiritual background, which appears in their daily routines, such as clothes and food, at the same time, they decline the European identity. Most notably, the Europeans viewed immigration as a threat to their civilization in general. Hence, this situation illustrated the anti-immigration Europeans' opinion towards Arabs and Muslims (Bani Salameh, 2019).

According to Fakhoury (2016), refugees from Arab Spring countries were either hosted by European countries, or they considered as a risk to European nationalism and faith. Thus, this situation explained the different behaviours of authorities towards refugees, in which they interpreted their actions as safety perspectives. As an example, the difference between Arab and European civilizations became disquietude for the possibility of refugees' integration within the European society.

According to Bani Salameh, the Arab immigrants had a profound influence on shifting several Europeans customs, for example, the manner of production, consumption of food and sports. Besides, the EU's political traditions in numerous European towns were

characterized by features of Arab towns such as shops, restaurants, areas for prayer and so on (2019).

Among the social and cultural impact of Arab immigration on European societies is the dissatisfaction of European citizens, who viewed this immigration as a threat to their rights, especially their job opportunities. Countries such as Belgium, Italy, France, Sweden, Germany, Hungary and the UK had supplied basic life needs to these immigrants, including all kinds of human rights, which generated a pressure on European's accessibility to these rights (Valdaru et al., 2017).

To sum up, there is no excuse for European countries to take a negative act towards Arab immigrants, and the Europeans must coexist with Arabs in terms of acceptance, understanding and combination to reach the stability of the community and aid Arabs to integrate within the new nation. Besides, the cultural and social gap between the two civilizations will be reduced, in the future, through the new mixed generations between immigrants and the European citizens (Bani Salameh, 2019).

## **1.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we began with a discussion of European attitudes towards the incidents of Arab Revolts, in which we pointed out two major attitudes. The first attitude was the support of some European governments to the Arab regimes against their people; the second attitude was the encouragement of other European countries to Arab people's revolts against their autocratic regimes. Then, we outlined the role of the international interventions, particularly the European one, in these revolts. In this regard, we tackled the various standards concerning the European interventions, including the military/humanitarian, political/ diplomatic, and economic/ financial interventions. At the end of this chapter, we addressed the influence of Arab immigration on changing many European aspects and policies in terms of political, economic, and social and cultural impact. Therefore, the

negative impact of this immigration was mainly at the political level, causing conflicts and problems within European countries. Besides, it also negatively influenced the social level, in which the influx of immigrants from Arab countries has triggered a misunderstanding between civilizations. For instance, these immigrants found difficulty to integrate in the new culture because some Europeans and politicians have criticized their situation. The positive effect was on the economic level in which immigrants had contributed to the solution of the issue of ageing population and labour deficiency.

## **Chapter Two**

Europe and Migration Waves from Arab Spring

Countries

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to explore the phenomenon of Arab immigration to Europe from Arab Spring countries in an attempt to analyse and identify the various European responses to this phenomenon. The chapter is composed of six sections, starting from providing an overview to the Arab migration movements to Europe before the Arab Spring events and discussing European policies in dealing with these movements, to compare this issue with the case of post-Arab Spring revolutions in the further section. The second section of the chapter outlines the different types of Arab immigrants in European states and the impact of each kind as well as highlighting the way that European countries deal with each one. Besides, in the third section, we highlight the root factors that motivated the Arabs to escape their homelands to Europe. Such factors could be divided into attractive motives in the host country or pushing factors in the origin country, while at the same time being categorized as political, economic, and social factors. Moreover, the fourth section addresses the influx of immigrants to Europe after the outbreak of Arab Revolutions in late 2010 based on statistical evidence to see the impact of these revolutions on the pace of immigration. This section also discusses the challenges facing those immigrants during their journeys to Europe. In the fifth section of this chapter, we shed light on the representations of the Arab immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the European media, through which we discuss the role of media in shaping the public opinion and influencing Europe's attitudes to this group. Finally, the sixth section concludes this chapter by drawing particular attention to the different reactions of European countries to Arab immigration that accompanied the Arab Spring events. By doing so, the section addresses several issues relevant to the various policies and strategies adopted by European countries in response to the flood of immigrants and their efforts to cope with the massive numbers of immigrants in both exporting and receiving countries.

## **2.2 Migration from MENA States to Europe before the Arab Spring**

Human movements had already acquired international attention because it performs a tremendous role within the process of development throughout global history. Therefore, as

Nui and Fan (2016) argued that with the non-stop globalization growth, human movements were described as “the third wave of globalization” alongside with the financial wave (money) and the commercial one (goods) (p. 52).

Migration from MENA region to European countries is not only a consequence of Arab Spring events, but also a common phenomenon that dates back to multiple past centuries. As Europe and MENA are geographical neighbours, this has contributed to the increase of human movements between the two regions. Though the start of this immigration is hard to turn out, Nui and Fan (2016) noticed that it propelled from the earlier European settlements, for example, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, and different nations, towards their suzerain nations in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, from the perspective of De Haas, it was marked by colonial immigration from Morocco to France, particularly labourers immigrants during the First World War because of labour deficiency in France (2014).

In this context, statistics in 2007 estimated that overall 18 million from MENA states live in foreign lands, 7.1 million of them dwell within the region in other different countries, 7.4 million reside in the member states of EU, while 3.3 million live in other countries around the world (Ulrich, 2014). Fargues (2006) stated that Europe hosts the most significant number of first-generation immigrants from Arab countries, and received 4,897,462 out of 8,347,869 persons (59 % of the total number of these immigrants in the world), as reported in the statistics of five exported nations: Algeria (1995), Egypt (2000), Lebanon (2001), Tunisia (2003), and Morocco (2004).

Notably, before the revolutions broke out in several Arab countries in late 2010, the region witnessed large outflows of immigrants towards the nations of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. According to Fargues and Fandrich (2012), the number of those immigrants increased from 3.5 to around 5 million, i.e. 45 % between 2001 and 2010. In this regard, European countries hosted 91 % of these Arab immigrants,

especially in three neighbouring countries of Arab states: Spain, Italy, and France. Many of them and particularly intermediate-skilled labourers and family members went due to a family reunion, the fast rise of living standards, and the prosperous economy.

Yet, the European Commission reported that Europe initiated plans to promote the refugees' return for saving costs and employment opportunities for its citizens. Spain, for instance, attempted to grant unemployment benefit to immigrants in two stages, one on the way to the country of origin and the second on arrival with the guarantee that they will not go back in Spain for at least three years. Therefore, less than 4,000 immigrants took advantage of the bid, a small percentage compared to the one million unemployed immigrants who were then hosted by Spain (Abdelfattah, 2011).

Overall, Europe went through several phases of immigration from MENA area, in which each phase was characterized by its reasons, kinds of immigrants, and immigration policies.

### **2.3 Types of Arab Immigrants in Europe**

It is undeniable that the Schengen territories are the main destination for different immigrants, including the Arabs, due to the open internal borders among the member states. These immigrants are classified according to their goals and ways of immigration, which differ from one immigrant to another. In their article, Nui and Fan (2016) mentioned that by the national immigration policy and immigration practice of EU; there are four types of Arab immigrants in European countries: workers, family members, refugees and asylum seekers, or illegal immigrants.

The first category may include qualified and unqualified workers such as temporary employees, workers for training, and other professional employers. These labour immigrants coming from MENA countries had a profound impact on the EU states, especially after the Second World War (WW II) in which many of them were inducted by European countries

such as France, Britain, Germany and others, during the period of social economy revival. Next, the second type is known as immigration for a family reunion or family reunification. King and Lulle stated “Family reunification is often called the ‘quiet migration’ since it takes place outside of formal policies related to the labour market or refugee intakes” (2016, p. 23). Most of EU countries believe that foreign workers had the right to meet their family members because they do not have time to go homes. Subsequently, numerous Arab immigrants move to Europe to possess a family reunion.

Moreover, the third type contains two confused varieties of immigrants who are refugees and asylum seekers. As reported by the Convention on the Status of Refugees of the UN in 1967 along with “the protocol of refugee status” in 1951, asylum seekers did not share the identical standards with the refugees (Nui & Fan, 2016, p. 56). Therefore, the UN provisions of the Refugee Convention in 1951 make a precise distinction between the two types of immigrants. It defines refugees as those incapable or hesitant immigrants to go back their hometown because they are afraid of being depressed, regarding their race, religion, ethnic identity, political thoughts, or being a member in a specific public group. Besides, asylum seekers are those who escape their native lands seeking protection in another foreign country. Thus, a refugee is already an asylum seeker, but the latter is not necessary to be a refugee because his/her asylum application may get refused. At the end of 1980s, many European countries found difficulty to differentiate between refugees and asylum seekers because Europe had witnessed a mass number of asylum applications, seeking for international protection there, from different countries around the world including millions from the Middle Eastern and North African countries.

Finally, the fourth category refers to those who crossed the borders of another territory illegally searching for better environmental standards or for work there, in which they did not hold the required papers, or they may hold fake ones with them. Irregular

immigrants also cover those whose asylum requests had been refused, and those who remained in the EU states or those who had moved to another EU state before their applications were assessed in a particular member state (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2016). MENA illegal immigrants are usually hopeless of the conditions in their home country; thus, they get exploited by people-smugglers in their journeys along with European employers who require inexpensive labour. Additionally, this kind of immigrants is also known as irregular, non-conventional, undocumented, or unauthorized immigrants.

#### **2.4 Underlying Factors behind Arab Migration to Europe**

As a result of numerous factors, millions of Arabs have fled their homelands towards Europe following different routes (sea or lands) and ways of immigration (legal or illegal). These factors usually differ from one country to another and from one immigrant to the other as well. They could be classified as push and pull factors; at the same time, they could be political, economic, or social factors (Bani Salameh, 2019; Nui & Fan, 2016). The push factors refer to those determinants that obliged people to leave their home voluntarily, looking for better living conditions and a safe place. It may include violence, “unemployment and underemployment, especially of educated youth”, civil wars, riots, unrest, poverty and so on. Besides, the pull factors are those attractive drivers in the host countries that motivate people to move out of their countries of origin. Among the main pull factors, we can find higher salaries, welfare systems, better and more job opportunities, “the desire to live within European cultures and lifestyles”, or for family members living there (Fargues & Fandrich, 2012, p. 12; Nui & Fan, 2016).

The motives behind immigration to Europe before the Arab Spring were mainly for work opportunities, or escaping conflicts and deteriorated environmental norms, while the reasons of immigration after the Arab Spring were due to the civil wars, political, economic, and social unrest in the region. On the one hand, the previous pull motives still exist until the

uprisings; on the other hand, the push factors were among the main implications of the Arab Spring revolutions. Ergün (2016) stated that these revolutions began on December 17, 2010, in Tunisia by the self-immolation of a Tunisian street vendor called Mohammed Bouazizi, then the revolts sprung throughout the country. By that time, the demonstrations had spread on other Arab countries such as Egypt and Libya as a result of the resignation of the Tunisian President Ben Ali. Therefore, thousands of Arabs fled their countries into European countries because they did not know the consequences of their revolutions. Egypt, for instance, remains in chaotic status and the protests increased again despite the downfall of Hosni Mubarak on February 11, 2011. Furthermore, the case in Libya and Yemen was so much worse that the protests have turned into a civil war despite the overthrow of their authoritarian regimes by the death of the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, by rebels together with the intervention of external forces, and the resignation of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Likewise, in Syria, though the President Bashar Al-Assad still in power till now and the protests began peacefully, it grew up soon to a civil war. Those civil wars in Libya, Yemen, and Syria in addition to the unrest situation in Tunisia and Egypt were the fundamental push factors for migration, which classified under the political factors. Additionally, the socio-economic factors have been reflected in the gap between the rise of demographic growth and the lack of job opportunities that led to poverty and unemployment among citizens (Bani Salameh, 2019).

In all these aspects, Arab Spring events trigger the desire of millions to escape to neighbouring countries and later on to Europe seeking security, better living conditions and stability. As Fargues and Fandrich stated that nearly 8 million first-generation migrants originated from Mediterranean Arab countries; the EU states hosted 62% of them, other Arab states received 27% of them (20% in the Gulf) and 11% in different countries around the world (2012). Thus, many of these immigrants were displaced and much more lost their lives during their journeys.

## **2.5 The Influx of Arab Immigrants to Europe after the Arab Uprising 2011**

After Arab Uprising broke out in 2011, immigration from MENA region led to the emergence of two major refugee crises in the surrounding countries, beginning with Libya and followed by Syria crisis (Fargues & Fandrich, 2012). Admittedly, Europe was the most prominent victim of Arab immigration because it received the highest number of Arab immigrants and asylum requests, in which EU states have registered 0.68 million asylum requests from April 2011 to March 2016 (Nui & Fan, 2016). Hence, the refugee crisis deeply affected the Unity of European countries and the stability of their policies. Indeed, the Arab revolutions gave rise to the developing influx of Arab immigrants into Europe as a result of unrest and violence triggered by its events. As reported by Eurostat, the growth of immigrants between the two areas was 92.5 % from Tunisia, 76 % from Libya, and 50 % from Syria in 2011 (Barry, 2012). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of refugees in EU territories was risen from about 60,000 in 2013, to 218,000 in 2014, and this number was doubled to 500,000 in 2015 (Nui & Fan, 2016). Furthermore, Byrne (2018) argued that the number of immigrants accessing European nations peaked in 2015, in which over one million and a half were Arab immigrants.

Since 2014, Turkey has been among the European countries that received the bulk of immigrants that was estimated by the end of 2018 around 3.7 million. The overwhelming majority of immigrants in Turkey were from Syrian origin, with 3622,400 in addition to 39,100 Iraqi refugees. In addition to Turkey, other countries hosted a significant number of Syrian refugees including Germany with 532,100, Sweden with 109,300, Austria with 49,200, the Netherlands with 32,100, Greece with 23,900, Denmark with 19,700, Bulgaria with 17,200, Switzerland with 16,600, France with 15,800, Armenia with 14,700, Norway with 13,900, and Spain with 13,800 (UNHCR, 2019, p.14). Indeed, the European Agency for Management of Operational Cooperation statistics have shown that the number of illegal

Tunisian immigrants crossing European borders rose from 323 in the last three months of 2010 compared with 20,492 in 2011 (Mohamed, 2017). According to the International Organization for Migration, Italy hosted an average of 153,842 illegal immigrants by sea only in 2015. Spain was also another country that received the majority of illegal immigrants from North Africa, with over 5.8 million immigrants in the same year. Globally, Spain has been considered as one of the top countries hosting immigrants due to its continuity of receiving them (Mohamed, 2017).

Besides, numerous challenges had faced those immigrants during their trip, especially for those illegal immigrants, many of whom lost their lives while crossing the Mediterranean Sea via sleazy boats. Moreover, the greediness of human smugglers and pirates to earn more money, some trips turned into a human catastrophe (Ergün, 2016). According to UNHCR, 479 refugees and immigrants sank passing the Mediterranean Sea from January to March 2015; just a month later, the number of deaths run to the top while 1,308 refugees and immigrants were missed at the Mediterranean (2015).

## **2.6 The Representation of Arab Immigrants and Refugees in the European Media**

The coverage of European media has performed a crucial role in framing both public and political debates that have affected the European attitudes towards the situation of immigrants and refugees. Fengler and Kreutler (2020) declared that images of Syrian immigrants fleeing the civil war on foot to European nations along with Hungarian borders' barriers became archetypal images of Arab immigrants sufferance in 2015.

In this context, many studies have discussed the European media representation of immigrants' influx, especially after the Arab Spring revolutions. According to the report of UNHCR (2015), *Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries*, the representation of the studied countries varies from one country to another in general, and within a particular press as well. The Swedish press,

for instance, had presented the immigrants and refugees in a most positive way. By contrast, the media of the UK had presented them in a negative tone mainly due to the rise of the far right, though there were positive attitudes in some British newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *Daily Mirror*. In September 2015, the negative representation soon turned into a positive after the drowned Syrian little boy, Aylan Kurdi, whose photo on the Turkish coast dominated the European headlines when his family had tried to enter Greece. Indeed, as *El Pais*, a Spanish newspaper said “An image that shakes the awareness of Europe”, the shocking photo became a turning point in most European attitudes (p. 5).

In 2016, the Finnish Institute in London and the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux published a report entitled *Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Press Coverage*. It examines the media representation in UK, Finland, and Belgium from 01 to 31 January 2016. The report showed that all the selected newspapers were neutral and objective towards the arrivals, and they are just giving information about the situation of refugees and leave readers to express positive or negative attitudes. The common themes in these newspapers were sexual harassment and the effect of the refugees on Europe, in which they were represented in a positive attitude. For instance, the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* noted in one article that the sexual harassment is not related to the influx of refugees and it happens in the western society as well because of patriarchy in their culture. The selected press has described immigrants using terms such as refugee, asylum seeker, and foreigners; and the vast majority of these immigrants were from MENA region including Arab countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Algeria (Table 1).

**Table 1. 1**

*Most frequent terms as well as nationalities and descriptions of Arab immigrants in European media*

NEWSPAPER	TERMS	NATIONALITY OR DESCRIPTION
HELSINGIN SANOMAT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASYLUM SEEKER (TURVAPAIKANHAKIJA)</li> <li>2. REFUGEE (PAKOLAINEN)</li> <li>3. IMMIGRANT (MAAHANMUUTTAJA)</li> <li>4. PERSON (IHMINEN)</li> <li>5. FOREIGNER (ULKOMAALAINEN)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IRAQI (IRAKILAINEN)</li> <li>2. SYRIAN (SYYRIALAINEN)</li> <li>3. AFGHAN (AFGANISTANILAINEN)</li> <li>4. SOMALI (SOMALIALAINEN)</li> <li>5. AFRICAN (AFRIKKALAINEN)</li> </ol>
AAMULEHTI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASYLUM SEEKER (TURVAPAIKANHAKIJA)</li> <li>2. REFUGEE (PAKOLAINEN)</li> <li>3. FOREIGNER (ULKOMAALAINEN)</li> <li>4. PERSON (IHMINEN)</li> <li>5. ARRIVAL (TULIJA)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SYRIAN (SYYRIALAINEN)</li> <li>2. IRAQI (IRAKILAINEN)</li> <li>3. AFGHAN (AFGANISTANILAINEN)</li> <li>4. IRANIAN (IRANILAINEN)</li> <li>5. NORTH AFRICAN (POHJOIS-AFRIKKALAINEN)</li> </ol>
THE GUARDIAN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. REFUGEE</li> <li>2. ASYLUM SEEKER</li> <li>3. PEOPLE</li> <li>4. CHILDREN</li> <li>5. MIGRANT</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SYRIAN</li> <li>2. AFGHAN</li> <li>3. IRAQI</li> <li>4. NORTH AFRICAN</li> <li>5. ARAB</li> </ol>
THE TIMES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. MIGRANT</li> <li>2. REFUGEE</li> <li>3. ASYLUM SEEKER</li> <li>4. PEOPLE</li> <li>5. CHILDREN</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SYRIAN</li> <li>2. AFGHAN</li> <li>3. NORTH AFRICAN</li> <li>4. IRAQI</li> <li>5. ARAB</li> </ol>
LE SOIR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. REFUGEE (RÉFUGIÉ)</li> <li>2. MIGRANT (MIGRANT)</li> <li>3. ASYLUM SEEKER (DEMANDEUR D'ASILE)</li> <li>4. ARAB/NORTH AFRICAN (ARABE / NORD AFRICAIN)</li> <li>5. FOREIGNER (ÉTRANGER)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SYRIAN (SYRIEN)</li> <li>2. IRAQI (IRAKIEN)</li> <li>3. IRANIAN (IRANIEN)</li> <li>4. ALGERIAN (ALGÉRIEN)</li> <li>5. AFGHAN (AFGHAN)</li> </ol>
DE MORGEN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. REFUGEE (VLUCHTELING)</li> <li>2. ASYLUM SEEKER (ASIELZOEKER)</li> <li>3. MIGRANT (MIGRANT)</li> <li>4. SUSPECT (VERDACHTE)</li> <li>5. RADICALIZED YOUTH (RADICALISEREND JONGERE)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SYRIAN (SYYRIER)</li> <li>2. IRAQI (IRAKEES)</li> <li>3. NORTH AFRICAN (NOORD-AFRIKANEN)</li> <li>4. AFGHAN (AFGHAAN)</li> <li>5. TURKISH (TURK)</li> </ol>

Source: The Finnish Institute in London and the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux, 2016, p. 37.

In an Interview conducted on the 1st December 2017 with Torsten Moritz, General Secretary of Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe, on the report entitled *CHANGING THE NARRATIVE: Media Representation of Refugees and Migrants in Europe*, talking about the voice of immigrants in the European press. Moritz said, “No, there is a very clear underrepresentation of individual voices of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and when they are in fact included it is usually without any references to them as individuals”

(2017, para. 4). In other words, the immigrants were voiceless in European press coverage. He adds that the civil society organizations consider themselves as a protector of refugees' rights; however, he declares that refugees must represent themselves in the European media.

## **2.7 Europe's Reactions towards Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers from Arab Spring Countries**

The unexpected new waves of immigrants from MENA region after the Arab Spring Upheavals created a dilemma among European countries. This dilemma led the European countries to adopt several strategies and policies related to Arab immigration, which could be classified as short-term and long-term responses. To begin with, short-term responses were emergency measures that were implemented under the goal of organizing this immigration. As long as the inflow of immigrants was continuously increasing over time, European countries were obliged to shift their immigration policies from short-term to long-term responses. The long-term strategies were mainly focused on cooperative partnerships between the southern and northern Mediterranean countries to handle the crisis of Arab immigration in both the host and origin countries. Furthermore, these two types of European responses had been punctuated by humanitarian reactions.

### **2.7.1 Emergency Responses to Immigration Influx from MENA States**

As stated in the introductory section, European countries performed several and immediate solutions under its emergency responses against Arab immigrants. In this section, we explore these responses in some detail. The first emergency response introduced by the EU was to start controlling its external borders and organizing immigration influx. Then, we move to discuss another response to the influx of immigrants, which was the initiation of brand new legislation concerning the freedom of movement within the EU. Another response by the European continent to the crisis was the implementation of a pressure policy on the new authorities in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, which encouraged their potential to collaborate

in decreasing illegal immigration. To conclude this section, we discuss the extent to which these emergency responses have succeeded in managing the crisis of immigrants to the EU. Our analysis reveals that these responses have failed to contain the crisis and highlighted the need for long-term planned solutions.

### **2.7.1.1 Controlling European External Borders and Organizing Immigration Influx**

The European countries have executed short-term responses by securing its borders and managing unexpected immigration influx as a consequence of the Arab Spring events (Fargues & Fandrich, 2012). Thus, the European Parliament requested the reinforcement of the mobilization of the EU Border Agency, Frontex; and the European Commission, for instance, financially helped the agency with an extra €30 million in April 2011 (Carrera, den Hertog, & Parkin, 2012; Directorate General for Communication European Parliament [DGCEP], 2019). However, Frontex was criticized by different human rights organizations for their contraventions. Human Rights Watch, in 2011, blamed the Rapid Border Intervention Team, Frontex branch, for repatriation of 65 asylum seekers and detaining them in Greece. Besides, Frontex is accused again refusing above 6,000 refugees and pushing them to go back to their unrest origin countries in 2011 (Barry, 2012). In December 2015, to strengthen the EU's external borders security and help domestic border patrol to curb the influx of immigrants, the European Commission suggested a new agency, European Border and Coast Guard, which entered service in October 2016. In addition to 100,000 guards spread all over the EU external borders, the agency assisted with over 1,550 officers; moreover, the Commission will have provided it with an extra 10,000 border guards by 2027 (Directorate General for Communication European Commission [DGCEC], 2017; DGCEP, 2019).

In this regard, Turkey's capital, Ankara, proclaimed that it would open its doors to immigrants and allow them to reach Europe as a result of the death of over 30 Turkish

soldiers by the alliance of Syrian regime and Russian air forces. The Turkish-Greek borders soon crowded with thousands of Syrians and other different immigrants, taking advantage of Turkish open borders, hoping to reach European territories (Ataman, 2020). Hence, Turkey's decision of opening its borders led to the EU–Turkey agreement on 18 March 2016. This statement intends to put an end to the chaotic influx of immigrants over the Aegean Sea in addition to organizing the refugees' ways towards Europe. Therefore, the desired objectives have successfully been achieved since March 2016, in which the enormous number of refugees from Turkey remarkably decreased to less than 74 a day, compared to more than of 10,000 a day on Greece's borders in October 2015. They also agreed, "All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey" ("EU-Turkey statement," 2016, para. 5), including those immigrants who did not claim asylum or those whose asylum requests are refused. Under this agreement, they applied another measure in terms of that the EU shall resettle a legal Syrian immigrant for every illegal Syrian immigrant who has returned to Turkey from Greece. As a result, by 21 July 2017, the EU resettled 7,807 Syrian refugees from Turkey (DGCEC, 2017; "EU-Turkey statement," 2016). Hungary was one of the countries that did not welcome the refugees and to hinder their movements, the government secured its borders and fenced it by 175 km with Serbia's borders. The Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, expressed his rejection of refugees in a meeting with the European Parliament President, Martin Schulz, and declared that it would be safer for them to take Turkey as their final destination, particularly for children and women, rather than invading Europe and Hungary (Ergün, 2016).

### **2.7.1.2 New Legislation on the Freedom of Movement**

The immigration triggered by Arab revolts into Europe forced many European countries and particularly the Schengen area members to re-think its immigration and mobility law. For instance, in response to the temporary Tunisian waves of immigrants, some

members challenged the credibility of the Schengen agreement in controlling the flow of Arab immigration (Ergün, 2016; Fargues & Fandrich, 2012). According to Al-Serhan, Bani Salameh, Akhu Rsheideh, and Mashagbeh, the regulation of the current EU legislation, concerning the Schengen Convention Act and the visa policy, was another EU's response to Arab immigration. The main aim of these changes was to limit the freedom of movement inside the Schengen Zone (2017). Barry adds that, in 2011, the European Commission suggested such procedures represented in the interim amendments of Schengen area policy, which enabled the closure of frontiers between its participant states in extraordinary events (2012).

According to Brady (2012), the main reason for these reforms was the tension between EU member states, especially France and Italy. Therefore, France reinforced its border control in April 2011 with Italy because of the lack of monitoring immigration movement from Tunisia to Italian islands. Yet, the Italian Prime Minister, Roberto Maroni described the movements of immigrants coming from MENA region as "human tsunami" as a strategy to force the French government to receive francophones immigrants from its former settlement (p. 275). Besides, Maroni provided the Tunisian immigrants with residency documents and allowed them to move legally throughout the Schengen zone. No longer until the leaders of the two countries have resolved the problem and agreed to reform the basics of Schengen policy. However, in addition to France, Maroni's actions caused concern to the rest of Schengen members such as Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Consequently, they expressed their desire for changing the Schengen Border Code to facilitate introducing checkpoints in urgent cases or closing the borders with the member who poses a threat to the Zone.

As far as immigration legislation in European countries is concerned, numerous European countries were obliged to modify their immigration laws to cope with this crisis. In

this regard, Italy hosted a significant number of immigrants, but the need for reforms obliged it also to replace its immigration law to keep pace with the new reforms. Italy's immigration law, both 2002 and 2009 acts, was considering illegal immigration as a violation and is punishable by law with a fine, no matter the condition. However, the shocking event of the drowning of more than 300 people in October 2013 near Lampedusa was the turning point that gave rise to the changing of the previous immigration laws. In January 2014, the Italian parliament introduced a new law, which considered illegal immigration as no longer a crime (Al-Serhan, Bani Salameh, Akhu Rsheideh, & Mashagbeh, 2017).

The French immigration law took another path in 2012, which stated that illegal immigration is not an offence any more as have been described by Al-Serhan et al. (2017). He adds that while the prior law punished every illegal immigrant by pre-trial detention for up to 33 days, the new version goes hand by hand with the EU court of justice decisions that deal with illegal immigrants from another perspective with replacing the detention of immigrants by deportation. Notably, one of the most pliable regulations related to illegal immigrants is the French immigration policy, which offers rights that are not granted in other European laws, including the right to therapy.

Britain was the most severe European country in the way of treating illegal immigrants. According to Britain's harsh law that reformed in March 2013, illegal immigrants should be detained, and they are deprived of rights such as opening bank account, renting house, and treatment by all its forms. Furthermore, this law forced the British to pay 20,000 Euros if they handled an illegal immigrant (Al-Serhan et al., 2017).

### **2.7.1.3 Europe-North Africa Partnerships: Reinforcing Capacity against Arab**

#### **Immigration**

Since the collapse of some Arab dictatorships, the EU immediately pressured the new regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya to achieve its ultimate goal in curbing irregular

immigration. Thus, EU members have begun triggering mutual conventions with the transitional governments in North Africa to limit the waves of irregular immigrants. As an initial step, Italy and Tunisia signed a needed cooperation accord on 05 April 2011 to return the unwanted immigrants to their homes. As a tactic for this goal, Italy funded Tunisia with EUR 200 million in financial assistance for fighting this sort of immigration and welcome returning immigrants; almost inevitably, this deal led to a decline in the flow of Tunisian immigrants by 75 %. For the same goal, Italy reached another consensus on 17 June 2011 with the Libyan National Transitional Council. According to this consensus, from January to July 2011, they returned 113,000 immigrants to the Libyan territories. This agreement has been opposed by human rights associations, because Libya is experiencing a brutal civil war in addition to the rejection of the International law of deporting them to their origin countries if it would threaten their lives (Al-Serhan et al., 2017; Carrera et al., 2012).

In a narrow response, in the 2011-2012 academic years, the EU provided the Erasmus Mundus scholarships programme with 30 million Euros to ease immigration to the EU by promoting the academic period available for students (Fargues & Fandrich, 2012).

#### **2.7.1.4 The Failure of European Attempts to deal with the Refugee Crisis in North Africa**

To shed light on the mentioned agreements between Europe and North Africa, Al-Serhan et al. explained that these efforts were fruitless. Thus, for the purpose of strengthening the capability of refugees aid in both origin and transit nations, especially in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, the EU established a Regional Partnership Program (RPP) in North Africa to minimize immigration movements and to support the resettlement of helpless refugees in the region. Unfortunately, the RPP failed to reach its intended goal because it attempted to dominate the immigrants' movements outside the European boundaries (2017).

Under the same purpose, Carrera et al. (2012) conceded that the European Commission held a conference on 12 May 2011; consequently, several European countries, both EU and non-EU members, offered about 300 immigrants international protection in Malta. In addition to that, eight EU members promise to grant almost 700 places for Libyan refugees and others from neighbouring countries. Besides, the EU received 7,000 refugees from Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt as stated by UNHCR. Nevertheless, the conference project has been criticized by human rights and refugee groups; Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, recognised that:

Despite the clear humanitarian need, no European State took any serious initiative to provide shelter on its own soil to those in need of international protection. This in spite of the Commission, together with the UNHCR, making a global plea for resettlement for 8000 refugees in acute need of protection. (2012, p. 2)

In other words, European attempts showed a failure in refugees' assistance because they ignore the humanitarian appeal to protect refugees in their territories.

### **2.7.2 Medium and Long-Term Responses to Immigration Influx from MENA States**

The European countries' response shifted to the long-term strategies towards migration issues as a result of the failure of the short-term response in many regards. These long-term strategies are based on the cooperative partnerships between the EU-South Mediterranean countries to promote bilateral benefit in the fields of migration, mobility, and security. To begin with, the European Commission endorsed a 'more-for-more' strategy under its conversation on 8 March 2011 that entitled *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean Countries*. The main stipulation of this approach is that the more democratically improvements introduced in the origin countries, the more financial assistance they obtain from EU countries (Carrera et al., 2012; Fargues & Fandrich, 2012).

In this regard, the EU-MENA Task Force suggested financial support to help the democratic transitions in Arab Spring countries, in which the EU would support Tunisia with four billion Euros between 2011 and 2013, and it will formulate other Task Forces with Jordan and Egypt in 2012. As an expected plan, The Support for Partnership Reform and Inclusive Growth programme will supply 350 million Euros to strengthen the democratic transition and sustainable development. Moreover, the EU budget projected to rise significantly from 40 % to 18.1 billion Euros for both Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood (Fargues & Fandrich, 2012). According to the Directorate-General for Communication European Parliament (2019), to facilitate the integration of refugees in the European societies, the EU created the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund for 2014-2020 with 3.137 billion Euros in terms of developing the mutual EU asylum and immigration tactic and encouraging migration movements' control.

As pointed out by Carrera et al., the European Council, in its meeting on 24 March 2011, invited the Commission to submit a strategy for the improvements of capabilities to handle the movements of immigrants and refugees across the Mediterranean before June European Council. In contrast to the Partnership Communication, the power for improving the migration regards was handed over The Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, which eventually begin to be the Dialogue for Migration, Mobility and Security. This was a turning point in the domain and essence of the EU policy reactions. This strategy was confirmed again when the Commission introduced its updated Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), which also provided Mobility Partnerships within the context of Migration and Mobility Dialogues (2012). In this context, Seeberg (2013) affirmed that there are two systems in the GAMM, one of which is the Mobility Partnerships, provided primarily to Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt as well as the EU's surrounding region. The second system

involves the build-up of Common Agendas on Migration and Mobility to soften the partnership concerning the non-participants in the Mobility Partnership.

Fargues and Fandrich (2012) declared that “the MPC collaborative survey in Morocco found that Migration and Mobility Partnerships are viewed as a means for the EU to have readmission agreements with Morocco, with no real will to manage economic migration and mobility.” (p. 8); that is to say, both Northern and Southern Mediterranean have shown the distinction in their views about partnership scope, especially Morocco, which proclaimed that these agreements should achieve real mutual benefits.

### **2.7.3 The Humanitarian Side within Europe’s Reactions**

Admittedly, both emergency and long-term responses, mentioned above, were permeated with humanitarian aspects by the European governments as well as their citizens. These humanitarian aspects demonstrated contrast among European countries reactions towards immigrants from Arab Spring countries in terms of positive and negative ones. According to the Directorate General for Communication European Parliament, the Parliament has contributed significantly in assisting the Arab immigrants, in which it passed a decision in April 2016, emphasizing the significance of refugee integration by providing them several rights such as residency, education, healthcare, and jobs (2017). In contrast, Greece responded sharply to the influx of asylum seekers regardless of being a woman or child. Besides, the Greek police fired tear gas, opened fire against immigrants, and in some cases, they abused them using different violence actions (Ataman, 2020).

Beside the reaction of the European authorities to Arab immigrants, the European citizens also participated in offering humanitarian demands. Volunteers have played a crucial role in the European response in which they provide daily humanitarian needs in different aspects of life. Starting with Budapest, refugees were welcomed with meals, covers, and healthcare; moreover, many of them were saved from the sea by fishermen and nourished by

local villagers in the Greek and Italian territories. Furthermore, volunteers from Calais had travelled to Greece for help as early as Syrian refugees marked their first arrivals in the Greek lands. They participated in treating and saving refugees lives for months before the response of any humanitarian agency (DeLargy, 2016).

In short, while politicians promised to remain committed the humanitarian values and norms, Aleppo families were suffering in Greece, where they were missing the essential needs for living. Hence, Europe's humanitarian attempts must be considered a disappointment in certain aspects, namely it did not provide the fundamental necessities for Arab refugees (DeLargy, 2016).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we tackled first the influx of Arab immigrants crossing European borders before the Arab Awakening in 2011. After that, we presented the four types of those immigrants; also, we explained both push and pull factors of immigration. Furthermore, we introduced Arab flows triggered by Arab Spring events into Europe with the challenges that faced them during their journeys. Then, we addressed the issue of European press coverage towards the immigration crisis. Finally, we discussed both emergency and long-term European reactions, and for getting in-depth in these reactions, we dealt with the humanitarian side of this reaction.

## **Chapter Three**

Towards an Understanding of Europe's Reactions  
to Arab Immigration: The Case of Germany

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we will choose the response of Germany as a case study to understand Europe's reactions towards the new influx of immigrants from Arab Spring countries. We have chosen Germany because of the uniqueness of its attitudes in comparison to other European countries, among which Germany has been the most attractive destination for refugees on the continent during the refugee crisis. First, the chapter highlights the root causes that led German officials to implement an open border strategy towards Arab refugees in the wake of Arab Spring revolutions. Then, it focuses on the process of change in Germany's response to the refugee crisis in which we compare it against the backdrop of the rise of the far-right and anti-Islamic attitudes within the German society. We argue that the latter was one of the factors that created a hostile environment for refugees in general; and hence an added pressure to the government to change its open border strategy. Finally, the chapter concludes with the defence of Chancellor Merkel on Muslim minorities and Islam.

### **3.2 The Underlying Reasons of Open Border Policy on Arab Refugees**

Since the beginning of Arab immigration from Arab Spring countries to Europe, Germany's response has been prominent in opening its border to Arab refugees in comparison with other European nations' responses. Our analysis of the evidence available has shown that the German open border policy was mainly taken from a humanitarian perspective or for economic benefits that could be represented in the contributions of these refugees in solving the labour market shortage and the ageing population problem. The following sections are a presentation of our analysis as well as a discussion of these reasons.

#### **3.2.1 Humanitarian Assistance**

The German humanitarian response in opening its border to the refugees has been debated widely in media through the publications available of various articles, and has been

embodied in the German official discourse through speeches, interviews or statements. In addition to German citizens' response that has been documented through available evidence.

To start with the evidence available in media outlets, and according to the German broadcast, *Deutsche Welle*, Angela Merkel believed that hosting refugees from conflict zones should be considered as a "national duty" (Dockery, 2017, para. 2). However, the open border policy of Merkel was widely criticised by European official counterparts because they consider that the refugee crisis that faced Europe after the Arab Spring has been the greatest immigration movement since the WW II (Nardelli, 2015). In this regard, Merkel has consistently argued that a "Wir schaffen das" or "We can do this" on August 31, 2015, in response to the criticism of not being capable to cope with the huge influx of immigrants (Dockery, 2017, para. 2). Indeed, the same idea was discussed in the British newspaper, *the Guardian*, as pointed out by Nardelli (2015) that German Chancellor defended her decision by declaring that she could control the situation: "Wir schaffen das" or "We will cope" and she added that her country would keep welcoming the refugees (para. 2). In this vein, Nardelli supported Merkel's decision and declared that, by doing so, she ethically and legally is saving the rights and dignity of refugees. Moreover, according to De La Baume (2017), Merkel conceded to the German newspaper, *Welt am Sonntag*, that welcoming immigrants from conflict areas, especially from Syria and Iraq, was an exceptional case saying that "It was an extraordinary situation and I made my decision based on what I thought was right from a political and humanitarian standpoint," (as cited in De La Baume, 2017, para. 3). We think that this explicit statement in reaction to the crisis from the German Chancellor contributed to citizens' humanitarian response.

The concept "Willkommenskultur" or "welcome culture" used to describe the attitudes of Germans towards the refugees. The survey of Bertelsmann Stiftung showed that citizens are becoming more convenient with the idea of receiving refugees in their country.

Consequently, the influx of asylum seekers grew significantly in July 2015, which was also reflected in the rate of social admission for immigrants reaching about 93 % within the German society, especially towards refugees fleeing wars (Mayer, 2016, p. 6). Another stance that reflected the kindness of Germans towards refugees is the warm reception of welcoming volunteers at train stations such as Munich's main one, where they provided refugees with food, dessert, and greeting expressions (Dockery, 2017). Overall, from the previous humanitarian attitudes of people and the survey data, we deduce that the majority of German citizens have no trouble receiving refugees until 2015, which indicates that they have already agreed to Merkel's open border policy.

In 2015, Germany allocated an expense of 3.3 billion Euros to accommodate 800,000 refugees as a result of Merkel's open borders decision (Orchard, 2015). This financial expense shows the humanitarian efforts of Germany that indicates, at the same time, that Germany is a prominent EU's member, which can take responsibility of this enormous number of refugees. Supporting Merkel's decision, the head for European affairs in Pro Asyl (Germany's Refugee charity) Karl Kopp demonstrated to Cable News Network (CNN) that Merkel was right and should be proud of her humanitarian actions in opening borders and hosting refugees in Germany (Vonberg, 2018). Vonberg added that the majority of immigrants who entered Germany in September 2015 were coming from war-torn Syria. Germany awarded them a complete asylum protection so that they could seek to take their family members closer.

Additionally, Ayoub stated that under the Humanitarian Admission Program (HAP Syria), Germany supplied 20 thousand Syrian refugees with residence authorization between 2013 and 2014. Ayoub also argued that besides welcoming Syrians by dismissing Dublin Regulation, the German reaction to the 2015 crisis had enhanced the resettlement of refugees

and empathetic acceptance offers. Therefore, throughout the crisis period, the country witnessed an increase in asylum admission rate (2019).

In a nutshell, Merkel opened the doors for vulnerable people coming from conflict zones such as Arab Spring countries, especially from Syria. She was also committed to taking their responsibility by offering them basic needs through different programs, which encouraged the German citizens' humanitarian stances towards those seeking protection. As explained in the introduction of this section, humanitarian assistance was not the only reason behind the open border strategy embraced and employed by Germany. We have traced some evidence and explored another reason to this policy. Economic benefits were the other reason we have explored and will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.2.2 Economic Benefits**

Refugees from MENA region have had an impact on European nations, especially Germany, since there were skilled workers such as scientists, experts and educators as well as unskilled workers who were equipped later throughout the programmes created for their integration. The possible benefit that the refugees would bring to the German economy by addressing the labour market shortage and ageing population issue was another cause for German officials to welcome refugees.

#### **3.2.2.1 Ageing Population Problem**

Given that most of the refugees coming from Arab Spring countries whose hallmarks are young people, Germany has made use of this advantage to overcome the population ageing problem.

In a report published by Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, Fakude (2015) stated that the sympathetic hospitality that Merkel has provided to Syrian refugees has been seen as a demographic tactic, which attracted, excited and qualified individuals to become part of the ageing community, offering it with such a desired active strength. Numerous Syrians who

recently came in Munich were young people between their twenties and thirties, and offered an inspiring set of skills and ambitions, frequently paired with expertise in European languages. Fakude added that most of German people and Merkel, in particular, have recognized that Germany is one of the ageing European countries; at the same time, the economic development is still in need of youthful labour force, which reflects their response to the influx of immigrants. In the same context, Gebarski discussed that one of the arguments for Germany's refugees admission was mainly demographic. In doing so, Germany would assume the political leadership and also deliver powerful economic performance. Thus, Germany was comfortable in its willingness to welcome refugees since it considered as a local and international power (2019).

As studies have suggested, since the refugees came from Arab Spring countries, and most of them were young, German officials considered the arrivals of these refugees as an opportunity to solve their ageing population problem. Consequently, this ageing community would not be the labour force that Germany needs, at the time that most Arab immigrants were educated and lack job opportunities in their homelands. Thus, Germany needs these immigrants to alleviate the issue of ageing society and the labour market shortage, which will be discussed in-depth in the next section.

### **3.2.2.2 Labour Market Shortage**

In the German society, the shortage in the labour market is generally coupled with the ageing population problem, which is one of the German concerns since these ageing people became unable to work and a youthful labour force is needed to develop the economy.

Al Jazeera reported that the refugees' crisis after the Arab Spring events coincided with the suffering of the German economy of youth shortage, which is a fundamental factor of the shortage of labour; besides, the low unemployment rate since the West and East Germany reunified in 1990 (Dowling, 2019). Dowling added that the influx of refugees

would contribute to bridging the lack of qualified employees in Germany's firms. The first steps taken by German authorities towards the massive number of received immigrants were to enrol and provide them with a residence. After being a part of German society, numerous refugees began fostering their integration and studying languages through different programs to join the labour workforce. According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees study, in October 2018, approximately 35% of immigrants who entered the German territories in 2015 joined the workforce, in comparison to 20% in 2017 (Dowling, 2019). In the German labour market, the basic work condition is the occupational competencies; however, as "Herbert Bruecker of the Institute for Employment Research" argued in Al Jazeera report that despite 20% of refugees have the needed competencies, over 50% of these refugees gained professional occupations (Dowling, 2019, para. 8).

Accordingly, the report showed that Germany is benefiting from the demographics of the refugees to boost its economic growth. To do so, Germany has made various efforts to facilitate the integration of the refugees into the ageing western society through the provision of housing, the organization of job training programs and language courses. Therefore, a considerable number of refugees have joined skilled jobs, though some of them lack the qualifications of Germany's labour market.

Dowling (2019) added that almost half of 23 thousand companies are incapable of finding skilled workers over the long-term to fill the gap of the labour shortage, according to the study conducted by the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK). In this respect, the director of the DIHK program, Marlene Thiele, said to Al Jazeera that companies are motivated to save time and cash, to embrace challenges and transcend cultural gaps, since the labour environment is obliged to do so and companies consider it a significant social commitment. She added that many refugees are being coached by nearly half of these companies.

As study has suggested, most of the German companies are working on solving the current problems of labour deficiency through training the new arrivals from Arab countries. By way of example, Dowling (2019) discussed the case of Abdullah Hassoun as a representation of the Syrian refugees who came to Germany just for security purposes in 2015. After a while, he succeeded in joining a qualified job opportunity in an engineering company.

According to *the Washington Post*, the previous head of the Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research, Wolfgang Kaschuba, declared “If Germans want to maintain their economic well-being, we need about half a million immigrants every year,” ( as cited in Witte & Beck, 2019, para. 12). Through this expression, it is clear that Germany desperately requires immigrants to stabilize the labour force since it is characterized by an ageing workforce. In short, Merkel has welcomed refugees who fled wars in 2015 for economic benefits in which she seeks to combat the country’s labour deficiency since it has an ageing population.

### **3.3 The Process of Change in Germany’s Response to the Refugee Crisis**

#### **3.3.1 Initial Response of Germany’s Welcoming Policies**

Germany’s response to the Arab refugees, especially Syrians, was unique as mentioned above, namely when the Chancellor Merkel pledged to launch the treatment of all asylum applications on the country as a first response to the influx of refugees. On August 25, 2015, she decided to permit refugees from Syria who had already applied in other EU’s members to join and apply in Germany. Hence, she temporarily abolished the Dublin Rule of the EU, which states that asylum seekers should apply to the first EU’s state they reach. She also decreased restrictions on September 4, 2015, on German-Austrian borders which enabled a large number of refugees confined in Hungarian territories to access Germany. Afterwards, such an open border policy has been characterized as a humanitarian strategy towards

immigration on the one hand, and as a threat to the progress of the EU plans on the other hand(Orchard, 2015; Vonberg, 2018).

Vonberg (2018) asserted that the refugee crisis of 2015 is a landmark in the German history because it is unprecedented for a European nation to confront such an expeditious flood of refugees during peacetime. Subsequently, compared to other EU member states, Germany accepted the majority of asylum requests since 2015, followed by opening its doors to over 1.4 million refugees, approximately half of the entire submissions in the region. These show the uniqueness of Germany's response to the crisis in 2015 compared to other European countries by bringing into motion open borders and encouraging refugees to request asylum in the country.

Merkel's immigration policy has been criticized by European politicians, which contributed at the same time to the rise to popularity of Alternative for Germany (AfD). However, Merkel defended her decisions by claiming that Germany was a democratic country, and it was necessary to keep moving in her path, even though certain people were yelling (De La Baume, 2017). In this respect, Vonberg (2018) noted that Nguyen, a political expert in Berlin, argued that among the reasons for the ongoing discussion in Germany concerning the refugee crisis is: the difficulty of refugees' integration and the dramatic increase of the far-right against the immigration policy at the end of summer 2015.

In short, we deduce that 2015 was full of events and decisions in Germany due to the movements of refugees. As an initial response, Germany hosted a significant number of Arab refugees, which was then faced by a multifaceted criticism from both officials and citizens. Thus, Germany faced difficulty in dealing with its welcoming immigration policy and anti-immigration policy as well that comes from the far-right parties. The latter will be discussed more in the next section.

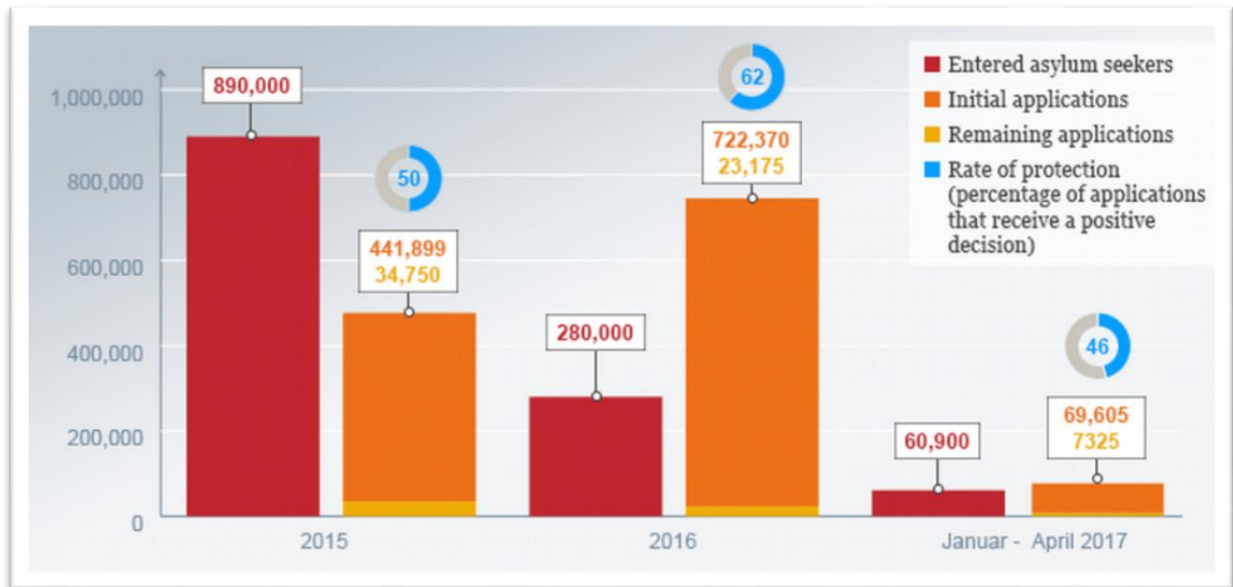
### **3.3.2 Controlling Borders and the Rise of Anti-Refugee and Islamophobic Attitudes**

As discussed in the previous section on the initial response of Germany's welcoming policy, opening the border to refugees was widely criticized by different parties which, we speculate, was the reason why Merkel had started to change her immigration policy by implementing reverse decisions.

Dockery (2017) argued that the first signs of shifting in Merkel's welcoming policy came on September 13, 2015, when German border checks with Austria started to be reinforced, with trains halting for 12 hours between the two nations. Among the reasons that prompted Germany to strengthen its borders is that several cities were not adequately able to accommodate the increasing flow of refugees. In the same perspective, Vonberg (2018) reported in CNN that a large number of refugees seeking to reach Germany are now banned from entering the country each year. The government estimates that 7,504 refugees were forced back to the German boundaries in 2017, with more than 90 % of them on Austria's borders.

As studies have suggested, Germany's response towards refugees has shifted after nearly two weeks of opening the borders, in which it tightened its borders with other nations because as has been argued that it could not control the influx of refugees. Moreover, German authorities started to prevent immigrants to reach the country, which would lead to the decrease in the number of refugees.

Asylum applications have been declined in Germany between 2016 and 2017 as a result of enforcement of the borders' restrictions again (Vonberg, 2018). As the graph below shows, there is a sharp decrease in the number of asylum seekers who entered German territories between 2015 and 2017 from 890,000 to 60,900, which indicates the change in Germany's response. It also suggests that between 2016 and 2017 the asylum requests have been remarkably reduced from 745,545 to 76,930.



**Figure 3.1.** The number of refugees in Germany from 2015 to 2017 ( Germany’s Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), Integration Media Service, as cited in Dockery, 2017, para. 7).

According to Vonberg (2018), Merkel committed that the 2015 events should not happen again; however, she never openly regretted her decision concerning opening the borders for refugees. She also confirmed the minimization of the receiving capacity of the coming influx of refugees to the country. As shown through the statistics and the statements expressed by Merkel, we can see that there was a change in the response to the refugees’ crisis beginning by a total open-border-welcoming policies and strategies on August 25, 2015, to reintroducing restrictions on borders to manage the Arab immigration movements.

In this vein, after the ambivalence in Germany’s primary response, the integration of immigrants was not as smooth as a result of both the rise of far-right and anti-Islamic attitudes in the country. According to *the Independent* newspaper, research showed that there is a rise in hostility against Muslims and immigrants in Germany. It also noted that the Competence Centre for Right-Wing Extremism and Democracy Research affirmed that in comparison to 36.5 % in 2014, over than 44 % of German citizens have expressed their

rejection to immigrants originating from Islamic countries or having a Muslim background. It added that 55.8 % of German voted against Muslims, who have been considered foreigners in their homeland, compared to 43 % in 2014, as stated in *the Die Welt* newspaper (Osborne, 2018).

In an interview by the Turkish Radio and Television World (TRT World), Taner Aksoy, a German civil rights activist, explained that the Islamophobic attitudes have existed for a long time in the German society; however, these attitudes were growing aggressively due to numerous factors and far-right racist movements in the land. Among these factors was the negative media representation portrayed by far-right political parties towards Muslims minorities. Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West was one of the prominent campaigns against Muslims, which aimed to represent Islam as a threat to the western civilization. Another goal behind these Islamophobic campaigns has been exploited by the populist right-wing parties, including AfD, to achieve political power, bringing it to a variety of Germany's local parliaments ("Hate crimes against Muslims," 2017).

We noted that there was a rise of Anti-refugee and Islamophobic attitudes among the German society, as studies have suggested, in which the citizens expressed hateful emotions towards Muslim immigrants, and this stance was a consequence of the xenophobic campaigns by the far-right. In short, we can see that one of the main reasons that led Germany to control its borders and change its response to the refugee crisis was the rise of the far-right and Islamophobic campaigns.

### **3.3.2.1 Violent Crimes against Muslims**

As Aksoy told TRT World, violent crimes against the Muslim community were growing in Germany, and an alarming direction has been taken by long-standing conflicts between Germany's right-wing and Muslims. Before 2017, German police have classified Muslim incidents in the general intolerance class, which were instead identified as "anti-

Islamic” crimes. For instance, 208 attacks against Muslims have been recorded throughout the country during the first quarter of 2017 (“Hate crimes against Muslims,” 2017, para. 1).

Aksoy also stated that during recent years, the Islamophobic stance has increased globally due to different incidents, such as assaults attributed to Islam. In the heart of the refugee crisis, German cities such as Cologne witnessed widespread sexual harassments by North African immigrants on New Year’s Eve 2015-2016; this event became a symbolic mark of refusing Muslims in the nation (“Hate crimes against Muslims,” 2017; Kalmar & Shoshan, 2020). Another incident was witnessed on December 19, 2016, by a Tunisian asylum seeker, Anis Amri, who intentionally murdered 12 persons and wounded 56 others by a truck in one of Berlin’s Christmas shop after refusing his asylum request (Dockery, 2017).

In this regard, we suggest that these incidents and other similar attacks and assaults associated with Islam and Muslims were what resulted of racist attacks against refugees of Muslim backgrounds. In short, the assaults attributed to Islam marked the shifting attitudes of Europe, particularly Germans towards Muslims, which displayed the refusal of their existence in the western culture. Overall, we remark that the rise of far-right and intolerance attitudes in the German community have led to several attacks against Muslims minorities.

Besides, Aksoy added in his interview with TRT World that stereotypes of Muslims offended towards Muslims and their properties. Therefore, 91 Muslim prayer houses assaults were reported in 2016, and 30 other crimes were registered on mosques at the beginning of 2017 (“Hate crimes against Muslims,” 2017). On one hand, sentiments of Islamophobia reflect the false claims of Western openness and the fundamental freedoms of individuals, through which Muslims have become victims of such stereotyping that has framed them due to terrorist attacks. On the other hand, we suggest that these attacks and racist attitudes against refugees might have made their integration a difficult process and added pressure on

the government leading to the change, particularly revising and restricting the open border strategy.

To this end, and since the case discussed is Germany's response, we provide a brief discussion of the official response to the rise of the far right wing and its hostile discourse to refugees in general and those of Muslim backgrounds in particular.

### **3.3.2.2 Germany's Official Defence on Muslims and Islam**

The German Interior Minister, Horst Seehofer, declared to the German *daily Bild* that "Islam does not belong to Germany. Germany is characterized by Christianity," (as cited in Simsek, 2018, para. 7). This statement implied that Islam was not welcomed in the German community. He also announced that Muslims should not affect the German culture and beliefs (Simsek, 2018).

In this regard, Simsek (2018) reported in the *Anadolu Agency* that after the declaration of the interior minister, Merkel refused his perspective concerning Islam and replied that four million Muslims are belonging to the German society like the other religions, Christianity and Judaism. In her speech with the Swedish Premier, Stefan Lofven, in Berlin at a press conference, she confirmed that Islam along with Christianity and Judaism are an integral part of the German civilization. Since Germany ranked second in terms of the largest Muslim community following France, Merkel affirmed that "These Muslims belong to Germany, and also their religion of Islam belongs to Germany," (as cited in Simsek, 2018, para. 5).

In brief, the racist criticism of some politicians such as Horst Seehofer, revealed the hate sentiments against Muslims and shows their rejection of Islam. In contrast, Merkel proved her supportive attitude towards Islam and Muslims.

According to the *Deutsche Welle*, Merkel has stated that the most significant concern of Germany is combatting discrimination regarding religions, especially anti-Islamism and

anti-Semitism. Moreover, she assumed that everybody in the country should be secure, disregarding their skin colour or beliefs. These remarks were issued after the meeting of Merkel with government officials to put an end to racial prejudice in the wake of terrorist assaults (“Merkel says racist attacks,” 2020).

In brief, we deduce that Merkel policy towards fighting racism was one of the prominent concerns of the country, in which she strongly defended Islam and Muslims living in the region. By doing so, she was also defending her immigration policy since most of the refugees who entered Germany were from Arab and Islamic origin.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter addressed the underlying motives of Germany to open its doors to Arab Spring refugees, which were mainly for humanitarian purposes as well as for benefiting the country’s economy in handling the problem of ageing population and labour market shortage. It also discussed the shift in Germany's response to the refugee crisis along with the increase of the right-wing parties due to terrorist attacks and other incidents attributed to Islam and Muslims. Besides, the chapter tackled the impact of the far-right parties’ discriminatory speech on the rise of racist incidents against Muslim minorities and refugees and their integration in general. It concludes with the Official Germany defence on these minorities as a part of the German community, highlighting the official German efforts in creating an inclusive environment for refugees and Muslim minorities.

# **General Conclusion**

## **General Conclusion**

This dissertation, entitled *Europe's Reaction towards Arab Immigration: The Case of Post-Arab Spring*, sought to analyse the various reactions of European countries to the new population movements from Arab Spring countries to Europe. These new waves triggered by the revolts against the Arab authoritarian regimes contributed negatively to the present refugee crises in Europe. Furthermore, the current immigration movements between the two neighbouring areas generated divisive perceptions within the host countries, which differed in their dealing with the arrivals of immigrants by adopting multiple actions. This research aims at highlighting the influence of the Arab immigrants on the European continent, as well as at exploring the European responses to immigration control. Through this study, we adopted a descriptive analytical method to reach the stated aims.

This work is divided into three chapters: two theoretical and one practical. In the theoretical part, we addressed Europe's attitudes towards immigration and revolutions of the Arab Spring, its intervention in these revolutions, as well as the impact of the Arab immigrants on Europe. Furthermore, the issue of Arab immigration into Europe has been introduced with its underlying factors, types of immigrants and how European media portrayed them. In the practical part of this study, we have selected Germany as a case study to exemplify one of Europe's responses to the refugee crisis. The fundamental reasons behind opening borders to the immigrants were presented in the third chapter, as well as the transitional phase in Germany's response from welcoming to controlling borders. It also shed light on the role of the right-wing parties in this phase and the increasing xenophobic and Islamophobic sentiments in the country. The chapter concludes by presenting the German's Official response to the anti-immigration and refugees discourse by defending Muslim and refugee minorities as a part of Germany's community.

As a conclusion, the study showed the dilemma of European countries between either supporting Arab people's revolutions calling for democracy or supporting their Arab

counterpart governments based on their interests with each regime. Besides, it revealed the interventions of the western powers in determining the destiny of these revolutions, whether politically, military, or financially. Another important point highlighted in this study was how Arab immigrants influenced Europe's foreign policies on different levels, beginning with creating tensions in the continent which forced governments to introduce different policies to lessen the consequences of this immigration. It also showed the role of immigrants in solving the problem of ageing population and labour shortage which were major reasons in introducing an open border policy to refugees from Arab Spring countries. Additionally, we have also noted the influence of these waves on European society and culture, which has led to the labelling of several buildings with Arab features and names.

Moreover, this study revealed that Arab immigration to Europe had existed before the Arab Spring due to push and pull factors; however, it increased after the outbreak of revolutions in MENA region. It also showed that the European media played a significant role in shaping the attitudes towards and reactions against the waves of immigrants, causing tension in the public debate within the European countries. Therefore, each European nation had responded according to its interests, and several measures has been introduced; from emergency to long-term decisions pervaded by humanitarian aspects by citizens and governments as well.

After choosing Germany as a case study, since it provided a distinctive response to the influx of immigrants in comparison to other European countries, we revealed that Germany had implemented an open border policy on immigrants coming from Arab Spring countries due to several reasons. One reason for this policy referred to humanitarian motives since these immigrants are fleeing conflict zones; therefore, the German government, as well as its citizens, presented a narrative that it was their responsibility to help and welcome them. Another reason was mainly for economic benefits, in which we focused on two main points:

ageing population problem and labour market shortage. The German society is considered as one of the European societies that characterized by its ageing population, which contributed to labour market shortage; therefore, Germany regarded the influx of immigrants as an opportunity to fill the gap in its labour workforce. Besides, we tackled the impact of the right-wing in shifting Germany's response to immigration along with the rise of Islamophobia and xenophobia in the country.

In light of the discussion of Europe's responses to Arab immigration in Post-Arab Spring and of the German one in-depth, we may come to conclude that these responses could be classified into two categories. Some of the countries welcomed the influx for their interests and humanitarian regards as well, whereas other governments were restrictive in receiving refugees in their territories because of both the rise of right-wing parties and racist and anti-Islamic attitudes. The significance of our study is that it informs our understanding of the crisis of refugees of post Arab spring events by accounting for the various ideological, political and economic factors that shaped different Europeans governments' foreign policies, particularly in relation to immigration policies.

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## المخلص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة استجابات أوروبا للهجرة العربية في حقبة ما بعد الربيع العربي، حيث شهدت بعض الدول العربية ثورات مناهضة للحكومة في أواخر عام 2010. وأدت هذه الأحداث إلى موجات كبيرة من الهجرة إلى الدول المجاورة، وكذلك إلى الدول الأوروبية. ومنه يهدف هذا البحث إلى فحص وتحليل المواقف المختلفة للدول الأوروبية تجاه الموجات الجديدة من المهاجرين القادمين من دول الربيع العربي، وكذلك الاستراتيجيات المختلفة التي تم تبنيها استجابة لتدفق المهاجرين العرب. باستخدام نهج وصفي وتحليلي لتحليل الوثائق الرسمية والإعلامية، ركزنا على وصف وجهات نظر دول أوروبا تجاه ثورات الربيع العربي وتأثير المهاجرين العرب على أوروبا أيضاً؛ إلى جانب ذلك، قمنا بتحليل ردود أفعال أوروبا على هذا التدفق من المهاجرين. وكخلاصة للبحث، تكشف نتائج الدراسة أن ردود أوروبا يمكن تصنيفها إلى فئتين: الأولى هي الاستجابة المرحب بها لتدفق المهاجرين التي سهلت سياسة الباب المفتوح التي قدمتها بعض الحكومات الأوروبية، والآخرى هي الاستجابة التقييدية في استقبال اللاجئين وفي أسوأ الأحوال الممارسات التمييزية ضد تدفق المهاجرين. حيث يُظهر تحليلنا أيضاً أن هناك عوامل اقتصادية وسياسية مختلفة وراء هذه الاستجابات؛ بدءاً من شيخوخة السكان ونقص العمالة إلى نمو الأحزاب اليمينية المتطرفة والمواقف المعادية للإسلام.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الهجرة العربية، ثورات الربيع العربي، الدول الأوروبية، الاستجابات الأوروبية، حقبة ما

بعد الربيع العربي.