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A new adaptation or the same old script?

Political elites’ national role conceptions and domestic role contestation in the UK and Germany during the European ‘migrant crisis’

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A thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics and International Relations

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Abstract

The European ‘migration crisis’ in 2015-16 highlighted the stark variation in national policy responses to forced migration among European Union (EU) member states and engagement in responsibility-sharing arrangements. Whilst the United Kingdom framed the crisis as a security issue best addressed through foreign aid, Germany implemented a policy of ‘Willkommenskultur’, rooted in narratives of national responsibility and EU solidarity. By early 2016 Germany had backtracked on many of its ‘open door’ policies. Whether from the dispassionate perspective of absolute numbers or the narratives used to frame policy dilemmas, these developments raise important questions regarding what drives policymaking in times of increased migratory pressure and highlight the need to understand decision makers’ perceptions of appropriate policy responses. This doctoral thesis posits that role theory offers a promising analytical framework to further our understanding and explain these phenomena. Investigating policy developments in Germany and the UK during the peak of the ‘crisis’, this research examines the impact of policymakers’ national role conceptions, defined as “policymakers’ definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions, suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform…in the international system” (Holsti 1970, 246), and domestic contestation of roles on policy decision-making. Drawing on an interpretive approach, it proposes that an analysis of decision makers’ perception of the role their state should play provides insight into variation in policy behaviour and policy change. Since it is not assumed that role interpretations are homogenous across political actors, masses and elites, how domestic contestation constrains and drives the selection, and the enactment of roles is also examined.

This thesis offers a unique contribution to knowledge by bringing together scholarship from foreign policy analysis, migration studies and public policy research. At the theoretical level, this thesis contributes to our understanding of asylum and refugee policy decision-making by providing an array of conceptual tools, which enable the investigation of different levels of analysis; a process-orientated framework that offers a plausible account of situated actors and links norms and identity with politics and action through the concept of ‘role’, thereby operationalising the ideational dimension of policymaking. From a methods standpoint, it furthers role theory research by introducing migration studies and public policy concepts, including the ‘organised public’ and narrative analysis. Furthermore, this thesis develops a clear and transparent operationalisation to identify national role conceptions. Finally, at the empirical level, the research generates a typology of national role conceptions in the UK and Germany in a new policy area. It offers insight into the interpretation of domestic and international factors shaping migration policy decision-making. The empirical basis of the thesis rests predominantly on a systematic documentary analysis, supplemented with data gathered from explanatory semi-structured interviews conducted with politicians, civil servants, and representatives of NGOs in the refugee sector in the UK and Germany.
Lay summary

The European migration crisis in 2015-16 highlighted the stark variation in national policy approaches to an influx of asylum seekers among EU member states and international cooperation. Whilst the United Kingdom addressed the crisis as a security issue best resolved through humanitarian aid, Germany implemented a policy of ‘Willkommenskultur’, rooted in the ideas of national responsibility and EU solidarity. By early 2016 Germany had backtracked on many of its ‘open door’ policies. Whether from the dispassionate perspective of absolute numbers or the formulation of policies, these developments raise some important questions regarding what drives policy making in times of increased migratory pressure and highlights the need to understand decision-makers’ perceptions of appropriate policy responses. This doctoral thesis proposes a new theoretical approach derived from foreign policy analysis and international relations theory that offers a promising analytical framework to better understand and explain these phenomena. Investigating policy developments in Germany and the UK during the peak of the ‘migration crisis’, this research examines the impact of policymakers’ interpretations of domestic and international pressures and expectations, and domestic contestation over policy. It proposes that an analysis of decision-makers’ perception of how their country should respond to the ‘crisis’ provides insight on variation in policy between different EU member states and changes in policy approach over time.

This thesis offers a unique contribution to knowledge by bringing together scholarship from the study of foreign policy, migration studies and public policy research. It contributes to our understanding of asylum and refugee policy decision making by providing an array of conceptual tools, which enable the investigation of different levels of analysis, including the analysis of decision makers perceptions within the domestic and international context. It furthers research in foreign policy analysis by introducing concepts from migration studies and public policy, including the ‘organised public’ and narrative analysis. Furthermore, this thesis develops a clear and transparent method for identifying decision makers’ perceptions of their countries role in the ‘crisis’ in the UK and Germany. The empirical basis of the thesis rests predominantly on a systematic documentary analysis, supplemented with data gathered from interviews conducted with politicians, civil servants, and representatives of NGOs in the refugee sector in the UK and Germany.
Acknowledgements and dedication

My overwhelming thanks go to my supervisors, Professor Juliet Kaarbo and Professor Christina Boswell in the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh. These two titans of research in foreign policy analysis and migration policy and politics, respectively, have provided daily inspiration through their remarkable approach to research, teaching, leadership, and their down-to-earth perspective on academia. I feel incredibly privileged to have had the opportunity to work with them. This PhD would not have been possible without their unwavering support, belief, and patience. Special thanks also go to Dr Pontus Odmalm and Dr Sarah Kyambi. They, alongside Christina, encouraged my interest in the politics of migration, from when I first attended their course on Europe and International Migration, as a master’s student, to lecturing on the same course years later. I would also like to thank the politicians, officials, and practitioners who took time out of their busy schedules and agreed to be interviewed for this thesis at a time when migration policy and politics remain highly contentious.

Before embarking on this journey, I was warned that writing a PhD can be a lonely endeavour. Imagining late nights in dusty libraries with no one to share my musings with other than the scholars on the page, I was surprised to find that this was not my experience. The vibrant research community in Politics and International Relations at the University of Edinburgh provided support and camaraderie throughout my research, not least through the Foreign Policy Analysis research group. When Victor Gigleux, Consuelo Thiers and I founded this research group, we could not have imagined that it would develop into such a fruitful forum for knowledge exchange, feedback, and engagement with a network of foreign policy analysis scholars, colleagues, and friends from around the world.

The PhD process is unlike any other, and the colleagues with whom you share the experience become family for the duration. Then some become friends for life: thanks go to Dr Cleo Davies, Dr Consuelo Thiers, and Dr Luba Zatsepina for providing feedback on drafts, sharing ups and downs, hotel rooms at conferences, and red wine. A special acknowledgement also goes to my partner in crime and fellow political scientist Dr Ingmar Versolmann. His unwavering belief in my abilities has been a constant source of strength to counter the inevitable imposter syndrome inherent in the endeavours of all early career academics. On occasion, I reflect with frustration and amusement on the irony that my field of research, the politics of migration, has become a factor in our lives together in the changing European landscape.

My family instilled an inherent belief that anything can be achieved if you put your mind to it. Their support has always given me the courage to challenge myself in my career and personal development. My brother-in-law, historian Roger Moorhouse, first sent me to the archives in Berlin and London as a research assistant and instilled an infectious enthusiasm for research. One couldn’t ask for better cheerleaders in life than my dearest friends Sarine Sofair and Kate Gilbert. Finally, as a predominantly self-funded PhD researcher, I spent the duration of my PhD working as a Communication Manager for a policy intermediary. This was only possible due to the support of my former boss, Euan Leitch, and the rest of the team at the Built Environment Forum Scotland.
I dedicate this thesis to my grandparents, Paul Schmidt (1921-2015) and Hildegard Schmidt (1926-2018). They were my intellectual and creative inspiration throughout my formative years and into adulthood. Whilst no description here could capture how the tumultuous geopolitics of 20th century Europe affected their lives, suffice it to say, my grandparents survived, thrived, and built a family, despite being posted to the Russian front during WWII, living under Russian occupation, teaching in Chemnitz under SED rule, escaping to West Germany as asylum seekers in 1958, and even acquiring British in-laws in 1968. The sheer enormity of their shared life experience has not only fuelled a fascination for my family heritage but also drives a desire to understand the complexities of national identities, history, and the impact of the stories we tell on societies, politics, and international relations.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMIF</td>
<td>Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAMF</td>
<td>Federal Office for Migration and Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDA</td>
<td>Confederation of German Employers’ Associations</td>
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<td>BDI</td>
<td>Confederation of German Industries</td>
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<td>BKA</td>
<td>Federal Criminal Police Office</td>
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<td>BMI</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of the Interior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brexit</td>
<td>The UK’s exit from the European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEAS</td>
<td>Common European Asylum System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>Christian Social Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGB</td>
<td>German Trade Union Confederation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIHK</td>
<td>German Chamber of Industry and Commerce</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECJ</td>
<td>European Court of Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECtHR</td>
<td>European Court of Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECHR</td>
<td>European Convention on Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCO</td>
<td>Foreign and Commonwealth Office (former)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>Free Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGR</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPA</td>
<td>Foreign Policy Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAL/TAN</td>
<td>Green/Alternative/Libertarian vs Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GDR</td>
<td>German Democratic Republic</td>
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<td>GG</td>
<td>Basic Law of Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHCLG</td>
<td>Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government</td>
</tr>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>QMV</td>
<td>Qualified majority voting</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UASC</td>
<td>Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children</td>
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Dates in ()  
In-text dates in brackets following a name denote the person’s time in post. For instance, Prime Minister David Cameron (2010-2016). This is pertinent given that a few of the politicians in the analysis held more than one relevant post during the time frame under investigation. For example, Home Secretary Theresa May (2010-2016); Prime Minister Theresa May (2016-2019).
Chapter I

Introduction

In 2015, a record number of over 1.2 million first-time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the European Union (EU), double the number of applications from the previous year (Eurostat 2016). What has become known as the European ‘migration crisis’ in 2015-2016 lay bare the limitations of migration governance and ‘burden-sharing’ measures in the EU, highlighting the challenge of asylum seekers and refugees for the division of competence between member states and supranational institutions, and sparking an intense political debate on international roles and responsibilities. Member states’ responses to this increased migratory pressure varied significantly, and debates on countries’ roles and responsibilities have played a crucial role in several general elections and referenda. This is notable in Germany and the United Kingdom (UK).

On 24th August 2015, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF) announced that Germany would be suspending the Dublin III Protocol (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of 26 June 2013), whereby asylum seekers are returned to the first country through which they entered the EU to lodge their asylum claims. Germany revoked all expulsion orders for Syrian asylum seekers and opened its borders to new arrivals from Syria, taking responsibility for processing their applications for protection on German soil. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, BMI), by the end of the year, authorities had registered approximately 890,000\(^1\) asylum seekers in Germany (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat 2016).

Germany’s ‘open-door’ policy approach, which Chancellor Angela Merkel strongly advocated, was rooted in narratives of national responsibility and EU solidarity. However, it soon came in for stark criticism from within the coalition government; from opposition parties, in particular, the far-right ‘Alternative for Germany’ (AfD) party; from neighbouring countries for instigating a perceived ‘pull factor’ that was seen to increase migrant flows along the Balkan route (Dostal

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\(^1\) This figure was revised from an initial estimate of 1.1 million asylum seekers. According to German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizièr, the initial figure was inflated due to asylum seekers registering in multiple locations, returning to their country of origin or moving on to another European member state (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat 2016).
2017); and even at the supranational level, for acting unilaterally and operating outside of the EU Dublin Regulation framework. By early 2016, Germany’s ‘open door’ policies had been largely rolled back, and the narrative of ‘Willkommenskultur’ was being called into question by international and domestic audiences alike.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom (UK) was not experiencing an unprecedented number of asylum claims. The UK received 38,370 first-time asylum applications in 2015; only 3% of the total asylum claims lodged in the EU and just a 19% increase compared to 2014 (Eurostat 2016). By early 2016, application numbers had returned to ‘pre-crisis’ levels. The relatively low number of applications in the UK is thrown into sharp relief when compared to the 84,130 applications for asylum registered in 2002, the highest recorded number of asylum claims in the UK to date (Home Office 2003). Two weeks after Germany’s suspension of the Dublin regulation, British Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the UK would resettle a maximum number of 20,000 Syrian refugees from UN refugee camps in the Middle East during the parliament (over five years) (Cameron 2015a).

The UK government’s ‘light touch’ response to the Syrian refugee crisis received criticism both at home and abroad, with calls for the UK to step up and play a more active role in support of its European neighbours and to fulfil its international obligations to protect those who are fleeing persecution (Gentleman 2016). This notwithstanding, the British government proceeded to limit legal routes into protection for asylum seekers by restricting visas for Syrian nationals and limiting family reunion rights, prioritising the allocation of international humanitarian assistance in response to the developing situation in Syria.

The ‘migration crisis’2 in Europe highlighted the stark variation in national approaches to forced migration and international cooperation among EU member states. Whether from the dispassionate perspective of absolute numbers, policy interventions, or the narratives used to frame policy dilemmas and legitimise policy approaches, these developments raise some important questions regarding what drives policymaking in times of increased migratory pressure and highlight the need to understand decision makers’ perceptions of appropriate policy responses to migration crises.

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2 In this thesis, ‘migration crisis’ is referred to in quotation marks to emphasise the socially constructed nature of the ‘crisis’. This is explored in further detail in section four of this chapter.
1. Research aims and research questions

This thesis proposes that role theory offers a promising analytical framework to understand and explain these phenomena of variation in national approaches to forced migration and international cooperation among EU member states. It posits that within the context of an increasingly ‘global’ refugee regime, comprising of international human rights laws, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the ‘communitarisation’ and ‘judicialisation’ of the asylum process in the EU through a common legislative framework of Regulations and Directives (the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)), both domestic factors and international obligations and expectations, as perceived by political elites, need to be investigated to explain and understand decision-making, and ultimately variation in policy behaviour in response to a ‘migration crisis’. As this research demonstrates, this can be realised through the application of foreign policy analysis’ role theory, a ‘mid-range theory’ and an ‘actor-specific’ approach.

This thesis investigates the UK’s and Germany’s policy responses during the ‘peak’ of the European ‘migration crisis’ in 2015-2016. The focus is on the domestic sources of international action to understand and explain variation in levels of provision for asylum seekers and refugees and engagement in ‘burden-sharing’ measures. Building on scholarship in foreign policy analysis and role theory, as introduced in International Relations by K. J. Holsti in 1970, this research investigates the impact of political elites’ national role conceptions on refugee policy decision-making and international cooperation. National role conceptions (NRCs) are defined as “policymakers’ own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions, suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform...in the international system” (Holsti 1970, 246). According to role theory, to

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3 These concepts are expounded upon in Chapter II. See also Léonard and Kaunert (2019, 88-109) for a comprehensive treatment of the Common European Asylum System.

4 Political and policy debates refer to ‘burden-sharing’, meaning the economic, social and political ‘burdens’ of asylum seekers and refugees on receiving countries. The inference of people as ‘burdens’ to a state remains fundamentally problematic, especially given that it is not borne out by the research, which suggests that whilst upfront costs may be high, in the medium to long term, refugees are net fiscal contributors to host countries (d’Albis, Boubtane, and Coulibaly 2018; Ruist 2020). However, less loaded alternatives have largely failed to catch on in the academic literature or political discourse (Thielemann 2012). This thesis adopts the terminology of the European institutions, which commonly refer to ‘responsibilities’ and ‘responsibility-sharing’, as less loaded alternatives, unless directly citing the literature or political discourse.
understand the impact of material, ideational and structural factors on policy behaviour, we must first analyse how decision makers understand and perceive them “as the conditions on which policy is shaped and formulated” (Aggestam 2004, 17).

The underlying assumption is that the influence of domestic and international expectations and pressures, institutional and situational context, material capacities, and ideational factors are mediated through the interpretation of decision makers. Correspondingly, a central aim of this research is to unearth the beliefs and perceptions of decision makers on policy dilemmas and their role in the world that shaped the formulation of asylum and refugee policy during the ‘crisis’. This is achieved by examining the extent to which refugee policy and engagement in ‘responsibility-sharing’ arrangements are shaped by decision makers’ national role conceptions and domestic contestation over national role conceptions within institutional settings. Considering the most recent role theory scholarship (see Cantir and Kaarbo 2012, 2016), it is not assumed that national role conceptions are homogenous across national political actors, political elites and masses. Consequently, the thesis investigates horizontal contestation (between political elites) and vertical contestation (between political elites and the public) of national role conceptions during the role selection process within the domestic arena and international role enactment.

Finally, decision makers do not shape policy in a vacuum. They are situated within domestic and international institutional contexts, existing policy practices and traditions (Wehner and Thies 2014, 416-418). Hence, to understand the influence of political elites’ national role conceptions, this thesis examines contestation over national role conceptions and decision-making processes within institutional settings and situational contexts, examining opportunities and constraints, power balances and access to decision-making fora at the domestic level. Political elites are conceptualised as both social and rational actors, whereby rationality is understood as bounded by cultural and situational context (Aggestam 2004, 34). Tracing the temporal and spatial development of domestic contestation within political processes enables the investigation of when and how national role conceptions influence role enactment (policy behaviour).

This thesis applies a conceptual lens that has not previously been applied to migration policy. It provides fresh insights and a holistic perspective on the domestic sources of international action related to migration by investigating the interplay between national role conceptions and asylum and refugee policy decision-making. Since role theory offers a collection of assumptions akin to a framework, as opposed to a grand theory (Thies 2010, Breuning 2011), it is not incompatible with more traditional approaches to the study of asylum and refugee policy. As this thesis will show, role theory offers a conceptually rich toolkit that bridges some
of the traditional divides and constraints that have prevented different areas of migration research from speaking to one another. The aim is to identify the ideas and perceptions of appropriate policy behaviour held by political actors in Germany and the UK to help understand and explain why specific policies were adopted, and decisions taken to address the European ‘migration crisis’.

The thesis sets out to answer a two-pronged research question:

1.) How did political elites’ national role conceptions shape asylum and refugee policy and international cooperation during the European ‘migration crisis’?
2.) Subsidiary question: When and how does domestic role contestation effect asylum and refugee policy change?

2. Research puzzle

Having identified the research aims of the thesis, this section provides more detail on the research puzzle, starting with a brief discussion of why the variation in policy responses to the ‘migration crisis’ is unexpected, given the institutional setting of the policy area. This is followed by a brief overview of the ‘external dimension’ of the policy area as justification for applying a foreign policy analysis approach to the empirical analysis.

2.1 Uneven distribution of responsibilities

The stark variation in national policy approaches in the EU is sharply exposed by an analysis of the relative ‘openness’ or ‘restrictiveness’ of asylum regimes and engagement in ‘responsibility-sharing’ arrangements – bilateral or multilateral cooperation with the EU, UNHCR, or others. While Germany declared its borders ‘open’ to Syrian asylum seekers in August 2015 and supported greater collective action at a supranational level, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary voted against the relocation of 120,000 refugees from Greece and Italy in September 2015. Hungary continued to block EU-led responsibility-sharing mechanisms for the distribution of asylum seekers, despite representing one of a handful of countries that would have potentially benefited from such arrangements, given the high number of asylum seekers travelling along the Balkan route. In fact, by the third quarter
of 2015, Hungary was receiving 26% of first-time asylum applications in the EU (Eurostat 2015). However, instead of engaging in multilateral or supranational measures to reduce pressure on the country, the Hungarian government closed its borders with Serbia and Croatia, building a 175km razor wire fence, and introduced strict sanctions on irregular border crossings (UNHCR 2015). By mid-November 2015, multiple European countries had temporarily reinstated border controls, marking the end of 20 years of open borders in the Schengen area.

The disparity in asylum regimes among EU member states is puzzling since one would assume that the implementation of an EU-wide common asylum system in the early 2000s and international refugee laws and norms dating back to the 1950s would lead to policy harmonisation (Boswell, Thielemann, and Williams 2010). Despite a drive toward policy convergence initiated by the heads of states and governments at a European Council meeting in Tampere in October 1999, stark variations in national policy approaches persist. This variation suggests a tension between EU legislation and international norms, on the one hand, and domestic policy behaviour, on the other.

The attempt to harmonise domestic policy through the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) since 2001 was based on the assumption that agreeing to a set of common asylum and refugee rules will create policy convergence and a more equitable distribution of responsibilities across member states (Léonard and Kaunert 2019, 89). It follows that the convergence of national refugee and asylum legislation would prevent variations in standards and policy decisions. Yet, this approach assumes that EU member states are unitary actors and overlooks the myriad of pressures and constraints within which decision makers operate at the domestic level. This suggests a capability-expectations gap as defined by Hill (1993), highlighting the tensions between EU expectations of policy harmonisation and domestic structures and pressures. This framing is especially pertinent in the case of asylum and

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5 ‘Irregular’ migration or border crossings refers to the “[m]ovement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination” (IOM n.d.).

6 France was the first member state to reintroduce border controls, citing the threat of terrorism. Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Slovenia, Hungary, Belgium and Norway had also reintroduced temporary border controls by the end of 2015, citing the ‘continuous big influx of persons seeking international protection’ pursuant to Article 28 of the Schengen Borders Code (events requiring immediate action) (European Commission 2016b).
refugee policy in the EU in times of crisis, which throws the complex interplay between domestic politics, EU norms and international expectation into sharp relief.

The international and supranational context aside, a rudimental analysis of EU member states’ contributions to refugee protection during the crisis highlights that the distribution of responsibilities cannot easily be attributed to traditional structural ‘pull-factors’, such as geographical location, size, or GDP, either (Thielemann 2018). Small member states, such as Sweden and Austria, accepted a disproportionate number of asylum seekers. At the same time, other member states ignored EU laws and regulations in favour of national interests, such as the Visegrad states\(^7\), which accepted an inequitably low number of asylum applications (see Appendix I for a statistical overview). In summation, some member states adopted policies that were neither aligned with material considerations and rational self-interest nor necessarily compatible with EU or international laws and norms.

Countries like Sweden initially accepted high numbers of asylum seekers in line with a tradition of humanitarian norms. Hungary’s protectionist regime can be attributed to its historically closed approach to immigration. However, Germany’s response to the crisis in 2015 is less easily explained by policy traditions (see Hollifield 1999; Thraenhardt 1999). Before August 2015, Germany’s asylum and refugee policy approach was dominated by ‘control logics’ and largely restrictive policies, following the mass influx of asylum seekers in the 1980s and 90s. German Chancellor Angela Merkel may have expected other EU member states to follow her lead in the summer of 2015. However, not sharing Germany’s unique history, other states did not follow suit. Instead, there was an abundance of ‘free riding’ across Europe.

The ‘migration crisis’ also highlighted changes in national policy approaches over time. We see distinctive changes in policy behaviour within member states throughout the first six months of the ‘crisis’. By the end of 2015, the domestic political situation in many member states had shifted significantly. The German government backtracked and largely reversed its ‘open door’ policies, introducing new legislation on ‘safe third countries’ and accelerated asylum procedures. By early 2016, Germany was spearheading EU negotiations with Turkey on an agreement to halt migrant flows to the EU, reopening negotiations on Turkey’s accession to the EU and offering the Turkish government €6 billion and paving the way for visa-free access to the EU for Turkish citizens, in return for closing its borders and accepting the return of refugees, essentially outsourcing refugee protection to Turkey. This suggests that

\(^7\) Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.
policies were neither stable over time nor independent of interaction with other states or the situational context at home and abroad.

Independently from its European neighbours and the EU, the UK government’s policy was to prioritise humanitarian assistance to Syria and the region rather than accept large numbers of fleeing Syrians to the UK. Despite setting up a programme to resettle the most vulnerable Syrians in January 2014, only an estimated 216 (including dependants) had been resettled in the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme by June 2015 (McGuinness 2017). Following the expansion of this programme in September 2015 with the promise to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees, during the Parliament, the UK government retained its position not to participate in EU resettlement or relocation schemes. It could be argued that by focusing on resettlement programmes for Syrian refugees from the region and leading on humanitarian assistance, the UK framed the ‘crisis’ as a foreign policy and development issue while demonstrating little to no solidarity with EU member states experiencing high migratory pressures.

In summation, the policy responses to the ‘crisis’ one might have intuitively expected, given domestic, structural, institutional, and material interests, on the one hand, or international human rights and refugee law and norms, on the other, were not met. These developments raise the question of how political elites make sense of a migration crisis and their international obligations and responsibilities to protect those fleeing persecution and as a member of a community of states, in this case, the EU. This thesis posits that policy responses were adapted and negotiated both domestically and internationally in response to the developing situation and other states’ behaviour throughout the second half of 2015 and into 2016.

Further to the empirical puzzle, the increasingly international dimension of asylum and refugee policy, a policy area traditionally regarded as a national concern, poses a theoretical challenge. Theoretical approaches to analysing asylum and refugee policy in International Relations (IR) and migration studies tend to adopt domestic politics or international institutions and norms as their level of analysis (Oltman and Renshon 2018). IR approaches commonly focus on the tension between refugees’ economic and security impact on host countries and international refugee rights and norms. However, they are less suited to explaining why liberal policies may persist despite ‘securitisation’. Whereas approaches to international ‘burden-sharing’ largely struggle to account for why states sometimes accept disproportionate responsibilities for asylum seekers and at other times do not. Moreover, IR approaches to the analysis of responsibility sharing in the EU often ‘black-box’ the member states (see Chapter II, section four, for a detailed discussion).
More empirically driven domestic politics approaches tend to neglect the external context and foreign policy dimension of asylum policy. As Haddad (2008, 3) explains, “[w]hile the impact of refugees on domestic concerns, the threat to national security and identity, the potential burden on national economies and welfare states, is well researched, the international dimension is often overlooked”. Finally, both IR and domestic politics approaches largely neglect the individual level of analysis, preferring to focus on institutions and structures, ignoring factors that fall either above or below the state.

In adopting a foreign policy analysis approach, this thesis posits that examining political elites’ perception of the domestic and international dimensions during a migration crisis, through the analysis of their national role conceptions, can help bridge some of these divides in the scholarship on asylum policy, and offer a more holistic framework that incorporates a conceptualisation of domestic and international factors in policymaking. To meet the challenge of analysing these phenomena, the theoretical framework developed in this thesis is grounded in a symbolic interactionist and process-orientated conceptualisation of sociological role theory.

2.2 External dimension

Historically, we know that the admittance of refugees has often aligned with foreign policy considerations, such as the admission in the West of asylum seekers from the Soviet bloc during the Cold War or the Kindertransport to the UK in 1938-40. Haddad (2003, 299) suggests that more than other migrant categories, the refugee is located at the intersection between the domestic and the international. The international or ‘external’ dimension of asylum and refugee policy begins with the framework of international and European human rights legislation. The European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe 1950), 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UN General Assembly 1951), and the 1967 New York Protocol (UN General Assembly 1967) define who is a ‘refugee’ and set out the rights of individuals as well as responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. They build on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly 1948), whereby ‘everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution’ (Article 14 (1)).

The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) defines and institutionalises an asylum process through a common legislative framework of Regulations and Directives, regarded as
the cornerstones of the EU's asylum *acquis* (see Chapter II for details). These directives set out asylum legislation, solidarity measures and instruments for practical cooperation to harmonise asylum standards (Léonard and Kaunert 2019, 89). In addition to the communitarised CEAS, where the supranational 'community method' (qualified majority voting or QMV) of decision-making applies, there is also an intergovernmental dimension of EU asylum and refugee policy.

The increasing externalisation of migration policy, and asylum and refugee policy in particular, to outside the EU represents a further foreign policy aspect (Boswell 2003). This refers to the EU's effectively 'outsourcing' of migration controls to third countries via, for example, readmission agreements or extraterritorial processing of asylum claims akin to the Australian Pacific Strategy, as the British government first proposed in 2003 (Léonard and Kaunert 2019, 131). Lavenex (2006, 330) argues that the rapidly developing externalisation of migration policy has become a “key focus of cooperation” in the EU and an “emerging foreign policy agenda”. Examples include the EU-Turkey agreement, the EU's mobility and migration partnerships with Morocco (European Commission 2013) and Tunisia (European Commission 2014), with EU negotiations on an agreement with Afghanistan and Libya ongoing.

As the above examples demonstrate, the move towards European integration in asylum policy has highlighted issues that constitute a distinct foreign policy dimension of a policy area traditionally regarded as exclusively a national concern (Hatton, Richter, and Faini 2004). As Dowty and Loescher argued, “a large-scale movement of people across national borders, under duress, internationalizes what might otherwise be purely domestic issues related to the causes of that movement” (Dowty and Loescher 1996, 44). In other words, in addition to the institutional and legislative framework within which states operate, asylum regimes' relative ‘openness’ is increasingly perceived as a significant ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factor (see, for instance, Hatton, Richter, and Faini 2004).

The leniency or restrictiveness of asylum regimes can deflect asylum seekers from one country to another, resulting in tensions between countries. Recent examples include tensions between France and the UK over the Grande-Synthe refugee camp at Dunkirk (Barrett 2015) and between Austria and Germany in response to Germany’s ‘*Willkommenskultur*’ and the management of their shared border (Wagstyl 2015). Moreover, states, not wanting to appear a ‘soft touch’ compared with neighbouring states, introduce increasingly restrictive asylum policies, potentially triggering a ‘race to the bottom’ in access and standards (Hatton, Richter, and Faini 2004, 51). It follows that these external expectations and pressures, a distinct foreign policy dimension, affect the decision-making process in times of crisis.
Finally, the concepts of solidarity among member states and ‘responsibility-sharing’ intrinsically assume the normative notion that states have a duty and responsibility to share the economic, social and political ‘burdens’ of provision for asylum seekers and refugees. It implies that states have an obligation not only to refugees in accordance with international human rights and refugee norms but to other states within a geographical or political community of states. The term ‘burden-sharing’ was first used concerning the allocation and distribution of NATO defence costs in the 1960s and subsequently emerged in the scholarship on international collective goods and alliances (Olson 1965; Olson and Zeckhauser 1966). The EU’s discourse on responsibility-sharing can be traced back to the Schengen Agreement and the Single European Act in 1986 (Boswell 2003). The development of the CEAS gave rise to extensive scholarship on EU ‘burden-sharing’ for asylum seekers and refugees, explored in Chapter II.

Despite the external dimension and distinct foreign policy aspects highlighted by the German and British cases during the ‘migration crisis’, immigration policy is rarely theoretically or empirically conceptualised as a foreign policy issue. The following section discusses a few notable exceptions.

2.3 Migration and foreign policy analysis

The acknowledgement of the intermestic\(^8\) nature of the politics of migration in recent years has given rise to a small body of scholarship that examines immigration from a foreign policy perspective (Olta man and Renshon 2018). Two distinct approaches can be identified: conceptualising immigration as a ‘soft power’ in international relations and politics on the one hand (Greenhill 2002; 2010; 2016; T sourapas 2018); and the effects of immigration and multicultural societies on host countries’ foreign policy approach, on the other (Hill 2013; Tsourapas 2019). Greenhill (2010) offers a systematic examination of immigration as an instrument of foreign policy and state influence in her seminal book, Weapons of Mass Migration, Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy. Using case studies from Europe, East Asia and North America, she posits that the creation or manipulation of actual or threatened mass population movements is used as a foreign policy tool through ‘coercion by punishment’ strategies. This unique form of a foreign policy instrument that plays on the

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\(^8\) The term ‘intermestic’ was first coined by Manning (1977, 309) to refer to issues that are “simultaneously, profoundly and inseparably both domestic and international”.

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perceived threat of mass immigration, be it cultural, security or economic, has been attempted over 70 times since the inception of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Greenhill 2010).

In her analysis of the European ‘migration crisis’, Greenhill (2016) shows how unilateral and national responses made the EU vulnerable to a “unique brand of coercive bargaining that relies on the threat (or actual generation) of mass population movements as a non-military instrument of state-level coercion” (Greenhill, 2016, 317). Applying her ‘coercive engineered migration’ approach, she shows how Turkey used the threat of mass migration during the negotiation of the EU-Turkey agreement (European Council 2016) to compel the EU to accept favourable terms for Turkey. Dowty and Loescher (1996) argue that large-scale refugee movements of people across national borders are considered to present a threat to peace and security and therefore provide grounds for international action beyond humanitarian intervention. Tsourapas (2018) examines the use of ‘migration interdependence’ of labour migration as foreign policy leverage in the Middle East. He argues that “economically driven cross-border mobility generates reciprocal political economy effects on sending and host states” (Tsourapas 2018, 1). Tsourapas (2019) argues that states also leverage their role as hosts of displaced communities to extract material gains from other states or non-state actors in what is referred to as “refugee rent-seeking behaviour” (464). Analysing the foreign policy response of Turkey, Jordon and Lebanon to the Syrian refugee crisis, Tsourapas (2019) concludes that the first engaged in ‘blackmailing’ strategies threatening mass migration, whilst the latter two states deployed a ‘back-scratching’ strategy during bargaining.

The above scholarship represents a first step in the investigation of the interplay between migration and foreign policy. However, except for Hill (2013), these contributions are largely empirically driven and remain mostly ‘a-theoretical’. Moreover, they tend to ‘black-box’ the state and neglect the range of actors and institutions above and below the state that influence policy, barely scratching the surface of opportunities that theoretical and methodological approaches in FPA can provide for the study of migration policy and politics. They also tend to underconceptualise the agency of migrants. As Oltman and Renshon (2018) argue, immigration policy is well-suited to an FPA approach, noting FPA’s potential to link macro and micro factors, to identify the intersection between material and ideational factors, and its actor-specific orientation that unpacks the ‘black box’ of the state (for a comprehensive discussion of the hallmarks of FPA see Hudson 2005, 2-5).

As demonstrated in the following two chapters, an actor-specific approach is particularly suited to the study of asylum and refugee policy in the UK and Germany, as it enables the analysis of domestic and international factors and links ideational and material factors with policy
behaviour. Thus, this thesis contributes to this growing body of scholarship by applying foreign policy analysis’ role theory to asylum and refugee policy during the European ‘migration crisis’, advancing our understanding of decision-making in this policy area.

Gibney’s (2004) analysis of liberal democracies’ responses to forced migration succinctly describes the importance of international roles in asylum and refugee policy. As he explains,

“Like any modern state, the British state occupies a number of different roles from which flow complex and conflicting interests relevant to considerations of entrance. Some of these roles – its international commitments and its membership in the European Community – have only been acquired in the post-war period, but others – its position as a capitalist state, as representative of a distinct political community and as leader of the Commonwealth – have a far longer history. Post-war British governments have had to construct asylum policies in a context framed by these considerations.” (Gibney 2004, 108)

In his historical analysis of post-World War II asylum and refugee policy in the UK, Gibney identifies five distinct roles that have influenced the British government’s decision-making on the relative ‘openness’ or ‘closedness’ of the UK’s asylum regime: capitalist state, commonwealth state, political community, state of refuge and European state. Whilst he does not utilise the rich conceptual language of FPA’s role theory (and not all five categories would be regarded as a ‘role’ from a foreign policy analysis perspective), Gibney’s contribution demonstrates the applicability of a role theory approach to the field of asylum policy.

Role theory in foreign policy analysis was first introduced to political science by the publication of Holsti’s (1970) seminal work on national role conceptions and foreign policy. The approach originates from sociology, social psychology and anthropology, and its central concept of ‘role’ is a reference to the theatre (Breuning 2017; Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011; Thies 2010). The premise is that individuals play roles within a group of individuals (or society), much as an actor follows a script and plays different roles on the stage. Holsti applied the metaphor to the international state system to explain states’ foreign policy behaviour. He argued that decision makers’ interpretation of their state’s role in the international system shapes foreign policy decision-making. Long before the dawn of constructivism in international relations theory, Holsti had identified the importance of national identity, international and cultural norms and the related concept of ‘roles’, alongside structural and material factors, for the study of state behaviour in international relations. This thesis adopts and adapts this approach to analyse the UK’s and Germany’s response to the European ‘migration crisis’, focusing on decision makers’ national role conceptions and domestic role contestation.
3. Scope and definitions

Whilst the last section outlined the external and foreign policy dimension of asylum and refugee policy, the following section sets out some definitions and parameters for the overall thesis.

3.1 Crisis, which crisis?

It became apparent early on in my research that the terminology used to describe the ‘crisis’ varied significantly depending on the source of information, be it statements by individual politicians or institutions, media coverage or secondary literature. The influx of migrants to the EU, which reached its peak in 2015/16, has been referred to as the ‘refugee crisis’, the ‘Mediterranean crisis’ or ‘Mediterranean emergency’, the ‘European migration crisis’ and the ‘protection crisis’, to name but the most common. Each label infers a slightly different focus and understanding of the ‘issue’ at hand and therefore represents a somewhat different subject of inquiry. Moreover, the terminology is frequently used interchangeably, thereby conflating crises of migration governance and humanitarian crises.

The understanding of the European ‘migration crisis’ as a crisis of policy and governance, as opposed to one of the people, is gaining traction among migration scholars (Geddes 2019; Guiraudon 2018; Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2016; Trauner 2016; Triandafyllidou 2018). This perspective takes a macro-level view of the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide in 2015-2016 (see UNHCR 2020 for details). The 1.2 million first-time asylum seekers registered in Europe in 2015/16 (Eurostat 2016), whilst more than double the previous year, was only a small percentage of the 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at the time (UNHCR 2016). Various studies also argue that the ‘crisis’ context in the EU in 2015-16 has now become the *modus operandi* for migration governance in Europe (Geddes 2019; Guiraudon 2018; Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2016). Moreover, the crisis in question is not the first ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe since the inception of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, making a definition of terminology necessary to prevent ambiguity in the subsequent empirical analysis.
This thesis understands the period under examination as one of multiple crises (Léonard and Kaunert 2019; Triandafyllidou 2018) and deploys two key terms henceforth. Firstly, the increased migratory pressure on the EU is referred to as the European ‘migration crisis’. Whilst this research focuses on asylum policy, the ‘crisis’ is referred to as one of migration, given that movements of people from one country or continent to another invariably included those in need of international projection and other categories of migration (e.g., economic migration). The ‘migration crisis’ is referred to in quotation marks (and can be understood as such hereinafter) to highlight the socially constructed nature of the ‘crisis’ context. Secondly, any reference to the ‘refugee crisis’ relates to the broader context of the number of forcibly displaced people as a consequence of, but not limited to, the Syrian civil war.

The benefit of this nuanced understanding of the international contexts for the empirical analysis is twofold: firstly, by clearly making this distinction from the outset, we can tease out decision makers’ beliefs regarding the external dimension of the policy area and their states’ *alters* (expectations of significant ‘others’9), and therefore the sets of norms and external expectations perceived as relevant to the policy dilemma. The extent to which decision makers foreground or prioritise one perceived dilemma over another tells us about their perception of roles and responsibilities in the European community and on the world stage. For example, by focusing on the European ‘migration crisis’, an actor may be demonstrating solidarity with its European neighbours and foregrounding responsibilities, norms and expectations as a member of the EU (a fuller explanation of the role of *alters* can be found in Chapter III). This, in turn, prescribes which policy mechanisms might be considered appropriate, such as participation in EU resettlement and relocation programmes.

Secondly, it tells us about their interpretation of the policy problem that a policy measure should address, specifically, the ‘target audience’ of any policy intervention (Boswell, Geddes, and Scholten 2011). Role statements that focus on solidarity with European member states over solidarity with refugees could elucidate the dominant role conception as, for example, one of a *faithful ally* as opposed to a *defender of human rights*. It should be noted, however, that decision makers, media and, on some occasions, the academic literature analysed can use these terms interchangeably, making some interpretation necessary based on the context.

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9 Significant ‘other’ is a concept derived from Mead’s (1934) theory of the ‘self’ and refers to those who influence or shape the behaviour of another.
3.2 Migration and crisis

Commentators have characterised refugee crises as a conflict between refugee rights and national interests, where asylum seekers are considered to impose a financial, social and political "burden" on receiving states (Boswell 2000, 2005). The rationale for investigating a period framed as a ‘crisis’ is based on epistemological and methodological considerations. Firstly, the act of “crisis labelling is conducive to the adoption of emergency or exceptional measures” (Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2014, 115), which provides rich empirical data for the analysis of decision-making processes. Moreover, a ‘crisis’ narrative is linked with “threat, urgency and uncertainty”, which gives political elites more room for manoeuvre beyond their usual purview (Boin et al. 2017, 4).

From a role theory perspective, Nilsson (2018) argues that in the situational context of a crisis, national role conceptions become essential reference points for decision makers when formulating policy responses. At the same time, Hagan (2016) argues that an international crisis intensifies fragmentation within a decision-making authority and increases contestation over national role conceptions. The underlying assumption of this thesis is that within the context of a perceived international ‘migration crisis’, political elites and decision-makings draw upon interpretations of not only domestic policy and traditions but also international roles and responsibilities to help shape policy interventions.

Secondly, crises are associated with ‘crisis management’ tasks, such as a government communicating decisions to its citizens and accountability through increased media and public scrutiny. As Boin et al. (2017) elucidate,

"[i]n a crisis leaders are expected to reduce uncertainty by providing an authoritative account of what is going on, why it is happening, and what needs to be done. When they have a sense of the events and have arrived at some sort of situational appraisal and made strategic policy choices, leaders must get others to accept their definition of the situation" (Boin et al. 2017, 17).

Therefore, within the ‘crisis’ context, decision-making and possible policy interventions are explicitly communicated and debated in public, for instance, in parliaments and through statements, speeches and press releases, thereby significantly increasing the salience of a given policy area and the observability of decision-making processes.

In the context of the European ‘migration crisis’, the sudden influx of migrants that could threaten internal security elevated asylum policy, an otherwise predominantly technocratic and
bureaucratic policy area, to the realms of ‘high politics’. The act of ‘crisis labelling’ significantly increased salience, both concerning the intensity of debate and the degree of importance or weight that the public attached to immigration as a policy issue (Hatton 2021), generating increased public engagement with the policy area. According to Oppermann and Viehrig (2009, 925), the “more important general publics consider an issue to be, the more governments are likely to feel inclined to account for public opinion in their policy on that issue”. The assumption is that while it may not be the only consideration, elected politicians pay attention to public opinion on immigration when formulating policy to mitigate the risk of being sanctioned by the electorate for unpopular policy decisions in the next elections (Hatton 2021) (discussed in further detail in Chapter II). It follows that during the ‘migration crisis’, policy decisions were made against the backdrop of increased public and international scrutiny.

However, the assumption of a state of ‘exceptionalism’ is an empirical challenge – how do we identify what is ‘normal’ and what is a ‘crisis’? Indeed, as previously stated, various scholars have described the ‘crisis’ context in 2015-16 as the ‘new normal’ for migration governance in Europe (Geddes 2019; Guiraudon 2018; Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2016). Moreover, as indicated, the number of first-time asylum applications to the UK remained comparatively stable, with only a 19% increase in applications in 2015 and ‘pre-crisis’ levels reached by 2016 (see Appendix 1). This suggests that the UK was not experiencing an ‘exceptional’ influx of asylum seekers. However, the ‘crisis’ narrative was prevalent in political speeches and statements, reflecting the broader internationally recognised ‘crisis’ situation. Therefore, it is the act of labelling that is significant for this thesis and the explicit linkage between asylum policy and international roles and responsibilities. This brings us to an important caveat of the thesis.

While the merits of a role theoretical approach to asylum policy are numerous (see Chapter III for discussion), they are limited to the external dimension of migration policy and decision-making that has international or foreign policy ramifications during a perceived ‘crisis’ or a potential and perceived ‘threat’ of a large influx of migrants. The focus is on the domestic sources of international action during a ‘migration crisis’. As stated, it is through the increased salience in the ‘crisis’ context that migration policy is pushed up the political agenda and into the realm of public scrutiny and debate. Outwith the ‘crisis’ context, asylum policy is a highly technocratic policy area that overlaps with a myriad of welfare policies, integration policies and

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10 Defined as policy issues “affecting relations between states, including questions of war and peace”, usually associated with national and international security (Cornelius, Martin, and Hollifield 1994, 7).
social policies. Moreover, political elites do not commonly discuss approaches in relation to international roles and responsibilities nor necessarily communicate them to the public.

This research also remains sensitive to the possibility that not all aspects of asylum policy or the policy responses to the ‘crisis’ entail a role dimension. For instance, discussion regarding reception conditions, accommodation and integration of asylum seekers and refugees predominantly focuses on domestic politics and concerns. Even aspects of the ‘migration crisis’ with foreign policy ramifications may not necessarily be discussed, negotiated, or formulated in terms of international roles and responsibilities, and contestation on policy responses may not be role-based. McCourt (2020) conceptualises domestic political contestation over foreign policy as lying on a scale “from pure role contestation at one end, to political contestation with implications for foreign policy but which is not role-based, at the other” (McCourt 2020, 12). I acknowledge, therefore, that the proposed framework enables an analysis of ‘exceptional measures’ and decisions with international ramifications, such as access policies and international cooperation on ‘responsibility-sharing’ measures but will not capture the technocratic decisions made on a day-to-day basis and their consequences11, or non-role based domestic contestation on migration policy.

3.3 European ‘migration crisis’

The original motivation for the thesis stemmed from research on ‘responsibility-sharing’ undertaken in 2014. This pilot study was instrumental in developing the research questions and plan for this thesis by clearly illustrating the vast disparity in levels of provision for asylum seekers in the EU, despite the increasingly institutionalised context both internationally and in Europe. Whilst this variation in policy approach was widely acknowledged among migration scholars and policy experts in 2014, it was far less prevalent in public discourse on immigration, either in the media or by politicians.

Prior to 2015, media attention in western Europe primarily focused on economic migration following the 2004 enlargement of the EU and the corresponding movement of A8 labour

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11 The so-called ‘Windrush scandal’ illustrates the point. Whilst a role theory analysis of political elites’ speeches during the height of the scandal in April 2018 may provide interesting insight into underlying beliefs inherent in the UK’s migration regime, the policies that brought about the scandal, the ‘hostile environment’ policies, were implemented in 2012, with comparatively little public or political scrutiny at the time (Griffiths and Yeo 2021).
migrants from Eastern Europe; and Eastern European migration was largely the focus of public concern (Interview, April 2019). Sporadically, the media would pick up on individual instances related to European irregular migration and border controls, such as the death of 58 Chinese migrants in a lorry at Dover (BBC 2000) or the deaths of more than 360 mainly Eritrean and Somali migrants off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa in 2013 (BBC 2013). However, public and political interest and debate were fleeting and often limited to the country directly affected (the UK in the first example and Italy in the second).

It was not until the autumn of 2015, when media around the world shared the picture of a three-year-old Kurdish boy from Syria, Alan Kurdi, face down on a Turkish beach, that public debate was reframed in this policy area (Guiraudon 2018). The Syrian civil war and the ensuing movement of people both in the region and to the EU, the likes of which Europe had not witnessed since the wars in Croatia and Bosnia (1991-93) and violence in Kosovo (1998-99), launched the “refugee problem” (Haddad 2008) into the public domain once more.

During the crisis, the policy area, which previously was predominantly discussed among experts and civil servants behind closed doors, became a national and international dialogue about roles, responsibilities, and appropriate responses (Guiraudon 2018). With increased salience and public scrutiny, different policy responses to the ‘crisis’ and the corresponding domestic challenges, international ramifications, and expectations became starkly apparent. Moreover, at the height of the crisis, political elites and decision makers were making regular public statements to legitimise and explain policies adopted and decisions taken to address the emergency.

Consequently, the ideational factors, perceptions and narratives decision makers were falling back upon to determine and legitimise appropriate policy behaviour and justify their policy responses, including policy traditions, interpretations of policy dilemmas, historical approaches, and material capacity, became highly visible – and therefore empirically observable - in a policy area where decisions are not usually explicitly and publicly addressed. In this sense, the European migrant crisis and refugee crisis provide a particularly relevant and unique opportunity to investigate, unpack and analyse decision makers’ perceptions of the domestic and international expectations, opportunities, and constraints in this policy area.

I acknowledge that by focusing on the European ‘migration crisis’ and the EU context, this thesis could be viewed as bolstering the understanding of European ‘exceptionalism’ both with regards to asylum and refugee policies and social science research, more generally (van Selm 2018; Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz 2018, 4). The former refers to the interpretation of the current international refugee protection regime, centred on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status
of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol and the Statute of the UNHCR, primarily based on the European values of human rights and the rule of law, and thus a distinctly European concern; the latter refers to the understanding of the EU as *sui generis*, and the ‘distinctiveness’ of the European context (King 2018). It is not the intention of this thesis to make such claims. Instead, the EU/European context is identified as a means to facilitate the application of a conceptual lens to a policy area that has been hitherto unexplored from this theoretical perspective.

The analytical benefit of the EU context is significant to this endeavour. The EU and the institutionalisation of asylum and refugee governance through the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) provide a well-documented political community as the external dimension and a welcome degree of parsimony in the way of established norms and regulations within which national actors must operate. This does not signify, however, that the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter III could not be applied to a non-European context. Indeed, the study of non-western regional migration governance represents a growing body of scholarship (see, for example, Geddes et al. 2019), and the proposed framework of analysis could be applied to other communities of states.

4. Arguments, contributions, and relevance

4.1 Main arguments

The central claim of the thesis is that the analysis of political elites’ national role conceptions and disputation around national roles will advance our understanding of the disparity in levels of provision for asylum seekers and refugees in the EU and help explain decision-making during the European ‘migration crisis’. As illustrated, asylum and refugee policy in times of ‘crisis’ has a distinct external or foreign policy dimension. The core assumption is that given this external dimension of asylum policy, political elites will communicate policy behaviour in terms of international roles. These national role conceptions are observable in decision makers’ expressions of their states’ duties, commitments, functions and responsibilities, which reflect the expectation of specific policy behaviour (Aggestam 2000, 97). Therefore, I posit that decision makers will refer to their states’ international roles when shaping, formulating, and negotiating policy responses to a ‘migration crisis’.

These perceptions of ‘national roles’ are understood as socio-cognitive frames through which politicians make sense of complex information and shape the formulation of policy behaviour.
They incorporate interpretations of strategic national and material interests and international human rights norms and expectations during a ‘migration crisis’, as mediated by decision makers’ perceptions. Consequently, an analysis of national role conceptions related to immigration policy reveals how decision makers make sense of the policy area and dilemmas during the ‘peak’ of the ‘crisis’. Whilst decision makers’ perception of their states’ international role may not be the only or even primary causal factor of policy behaviour; national role conceptions demonstrate the ideational, material, domestic and international factors shaping decision-making processes. Thus, analysing political elites’ national role conceptions can provide insight into the ideas and policy traditions that decision makers draw upon to formulate and legitimise policy behaviour. Moreover, since national role conceptions prescribe specific action, we can trace how they influence policy behaviour (role enactment).

These national role conceptions are neither understood as homogenous across political elites and masses nor are they purely endogenous. National role conceptions are conceptualised as interactionist and are negotiated both domestically among political elites and between elites and masses. Moreover, given that roles are played on the international stage, they also need to be accepted and negotiated at the international level. Therefore, political elites’ perception of both domestic expectations and constraints as well as international expectations need to be considered. Furthermore, actors are embedded within domestic and international institutions, which provide both opportunities and constrain agency during the role selection process and role enactment. The extent to which dominant national role conceptions are enacted depends on an actor’s access to decision-making fora or ability to persuade others of the appropriate role to be enacted. Therefore, this thesis posits that in addition to identifying dominant national role conceptions among political elites, domestic role contestation during the role selection process further helps elucidate the sources of policy behaviour (role enactment).

National role conceptions are expressed in speech acts. They can be observed in narratives on the state’s international duties and responsibilities, be it in relation to international humanitarian norms, supporting countries of origin, or supporting neighbouring countries receiving high numbers of migrants during the ‘crisis’. Thus, I also posit that national role conceptions are embedded in dominant narratives on migration, such as the drivers of mass migration movements, push and pull factors, humanitarian commitments, migration management and control logic, and narratives on terrorism and criminality. These narratives provide further observable information on the origins of national role conceptions, including policy traditions and practices; domestic and international norms; significant ‘others’ (alters) and socialisers; and the relationship between roles, such as between issue-specific roles.
(auxiliary roles) and ‘master’ foreign policy roles or role-sets. Ultimately, I posit that analysing national role conceptions and domestic contestation processes can advance our understanding of the drivers of policy decisions, continuity and/or change in asylum and refugee policy.

4.2 Contribution and relevance

In a recently published seminal book on the dynamics of regional migration governance, Geddes et al. state: “it is a truism to observe that international migration is and will continue to be one of the most pressing concerns in global politics” (Geddes et al. 2019, 1). The motivation for international migration, the destination of movements, the societal, economic and political implications and effects of international migration at local, national, regional and global levels will continue to top political agendas and make headlines around the world for the foreseeable future. National and international news outlets report daily on the latest geopolitical upheaval and associated movement of people fleeing persecution or looking to make a better life across borders. Whether we look to Syria, Venezuela, South Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar, Somalia, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Eritrea, or the Republic of Congo, refugee crises around the world continue to be a significant concern. At the time of writing, the emerging refugee situation in Afghanistan is only the latest in a long line of crises in recent years.

The human cost aside, how receiving countries should respond to large movements of people has sparked countless political debates and crises of policy and politics in developed countries. We need only look to the United States, the UK, Germany, France and the EU to gauge the political significance of migration for destination countries. In early January 2016, European Council President Donald Tusk declared that the EU had no more than two months to save its passport-free Schengen Zone and maybe even the Union due to the lack of consensus among member states on how to respond to the ‘migration crisis’ (Euronews 2016); a dispute between coalition partners on refugee and asylum policy nearly bought down the German coalition government in June 2018 (Smellie 2018); immigration played a central role in the referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU (see Dennison and Geddes 2018), and is once again in the headlines, as the British government grapples with an increase in the number of migrants crossing the English Channel in dinghies, including asylum seekers that the UK can no longer ‘returns’ to another EU member state under the EU’s Dublin regulation (BBC 2021). Despite this state of affairs, there is a surprising lack of scholarship on how
political leaders and decision makers perceive migration crises and what influences how they shape and formulate policy responses.

The International Relations (IR) orientated scholarship commonly focuses on the contradictions and tensions between the economic and security impact of asylum seekers and refugees on the one hand, and humanitarian norms and international human rights law, on the other (Levy 2005; Schuster 2000). More empirically-driven research suggests that both strategic national and material interests, as well as human rights norms, influence decision-making (Betts 2003; Thielemann 2018). However, these studies tend to neglect the individual level of analysis and 'black-box' the state. This thesis takes an important step towards closing this gap by investigating decision makers’ perceptions of the national and international pressures, opportunities and constraints shaping decision-making. In doing so, it not only speaks to the development of socio-cognitive approaches to the study of migration policy decision-making and the growing body of scholarship on migration and foreign policy (Greenhill 2002, 2010, 2016; Hill 2013; Oltman and Renshon 2018; Tsouraras 2018, 2019) but also engages with the emerging dialogue between foreign policy analysis and public policy research (Brummer et al. 2019; Charillon 2018).

The thesis offers a unique contribution to knowledge by bringing together scholarship from foreign policy analysis, migration studies and public policy research. It does not set out to invalidate more traditional approaches to the study of asylum and refugee policy but to offer a conceptually rich toolkit that bridges some of the traditional divides and constraints that have prevented different areas of migration research from speaking to one another. In doing so, it makes a further three distinct contributions to research in this field.

At the theoretical level, this thesis advances our understanding of asylum and refugee policy decision-making by introducing the rich conceptual language of foreign policy analysis’ role theory to the study of migration policy. This approach offers a holistic analysis of domestic and international factors of decision-making, as mediated through decision makers’ perceptions, thereby providing a multi-levelled account of the sources of policy behaviour. The process-orientated framework of symbolic interactionist role theory developed in Chapter III also provides migration studies with a plausible account of a ‘situated actor’ that bridges the traditional structure-agency dichotomy. Decision makers are conceptualised as actors who possess agency within the boundaries of the domestic and international material, institutional and ideational structures within which they are embedded (Aggestam 2004, 34). Finally, the unique concept of ‘role’ provides a link between norms and identity and action, thereby operationalising the influence of ideational factors on policy behaviour.
Role theory has been criticised for being conceptually rich but methodologically poor (Breuning 2011; Thies 2010; Walker 1987, 2). Consequently, from a methodological standpoint, this thesis aims to contribute to the development of role theory research by offering a clear and transparent operationalisation for identifying national role conceptions in political elites’ speech acts. This is achieved by introducing methodological tools from migration studies and public policy, including the concept of the ‘organised public’ to operationalise the role of advocacy groups in vertical contestation processes and Jones and McBeth’s (2010) narrative policy framework for the identification of national role conceptions.

Finally, at the empirical level, the research generates a typology of national role conceptions in the UK and Germany in a new policy domain. It offers insight into the interpretation of domestic and international factors shaping migration policy decision-making. In doing so, this thesis proposes a research agenda focusing on the interplay between foreign policy and migration policy, broadly defined, adding conceptual and empirical value and advancing our understanding of decision-making in this policy area.

4.3 Chapter outline

This chapter has set out the research aims and questions of this thesis. It provided an overview of the research puzzle from a theoretical and empirical perspective before describing some of the main parameters of the thesis and outlining the main arguments and contributions. The remaining eight chapters proceed as follows.

Chapter II provides the necessary context for the subsequent theoretical discussions and empirical analysis and gives further substance to the research puzzle outlined in the introduction. It starts by demonstrating the disparity in levels of provision for asylum seekers and refugees in the EU during the ‘peak’ of the crisis through a statistical analysis of refugee stocks and asylum flows. It then engages in a brief discussion of the challenges of how to understand and define asylum and refugee regimes. It provides an operationalisation of the kinds of decisions that are the focus of the empirical analysis. This section concludes with a succinct overview of the institutional context of asylum and refugee policy at the international, EU, and national levels. Section two introduces the country case studies. The specific context of asylum policy in each country is discussed. Finally, section three discusses the extensive migration studies literature, identifying complementary approaches and the areas for further development that this research seeks to address.
Chapter III introduces the key theoretical concepts for a role theory analysis of responses to the European ‘migration crisis’. The origin of role theory in social psychology and sociology is outlined, and the framework is positioned within the context of existing role theory scholarship.

A symbolic interactionist role theory framework for refugee and asylum policy decision-making is proposed that focuses on three analytically distinct processes: 1) national role conceptions; 2) the role location/selection process; 3) role performance/enactment. Finally, the chapter demonstrates how a role theory approach offers a rich vocabulary and an array of conceptual tools, which link norms and identity with politics and action through the concept of ‘role’ as a means to operationalise the ideational dimension of asylum and refugee policy decision-making. Secondly, it illustrates how by adopting a process-orientated model that utilises both agents and structures, the approach offers a plausible account of agents embedded in structures. Thirdly, it highlights how the approach enables the investigation of different levels of analysis.

Chapter IV outlines the research design and methodology applied to achieve the stated research aims and address the research questions. Building on existing role theory scholarship, this chapter proposes an interpretive approach and qualitative case study methods. The aim is to identify the ideas and perceptions of appropriate policy behaviour held by political actors in Germany and the UK to understand policies adopted and decisions taken to address the European ‘migration crisis’. It is argued that case study methods, content analysis and narrative analysis are the most suited methods to systematically analyse national role statements, investigate decision-making processes and examine instances of vertical and horizontal role contestation. This chapter also contributes to the development of role theory by addressing the criticism of the approach as conceptually rich but methodologically poor. This is achieved by introducing conceptual tools from public policy research, and migration studies and providing a clear and transparent operationalisation for identifying national role conceptions.

The following four chapters concentrate on the empirical analysis of the two country case studies, Germany and the United Kingdom. Chapter V on the United Kingdom and Chapter VII on Germany focus on political elites’ national role conceptions. They begin by examining role theory research on national role conceptions in each country case study before detailing the dominant national role conceptions identified in political elites’ statements and parliamentary debates during the ‘migration crisis’. Each dominant national role conception is discussed in relation to the narratives in which they are embedded and their interpretation (how national role conceptions should be enacted in policy). Both chapters conclude by
discussing possible links to broader foreign policy role conceptions and limitations identified during data collection and the coding of national role conceptions.

Chapter VI and Chapter VIII subsequently engage in an analysis of the contestation of national role conceptions. Contestation between political elites (horizontal contestation) and between elites and the public (vertical contestation) is examined in each country. Through an analysis of the cases and secondary literature, these chapters trace the temporality and spatial dimensions of contestation and how it unfolded during the crisis, who said what, when and how much power they held. Dominant national role conceptions and instances of contestation are traced in relation to policy decisions to determine the impact of national role conceptions and contestation thereof on role enactment (policy behaviour). Chapter IX concludes the thesis with an assessment of the main findings and contributions, a discussion of the challenges and limitations of the research, and a discussion of a future research agenda drawing on the insights from this thesis.
Chapter II

Asylum Policy and the European ‘Migration Crisis’

This chapter provides the relevant context for the subsequent theoretical discussions and empirical analysis and gives further substance to the research puzzle outlined in the Introduction. It commences with an illustration of the disparity in levels of provision for asylum seekers and refugees in the EU, at the ‘peak’ of the crisis, with the aid of a quantitative analysis of refugee stocks and asylum flows. The comparative asylum and refugee policy literature is summarised, and the challenges of measuring asylum regimes are discussed. Section 1.2 then details the conceptualisation and operationalisation of asylum and refugee policy decision-making and ‘responsibility-sharing’ in the EU that this thesis applies. Section one concludes with an overview of the international context of national asylum and refugee policymaking, identifying the key institutional and normative factors that constitute the external dimension from a role theory perspective.

Section two engages in a succinct discussion of the domestic actors and constraints that influence decision-making from a foreign policy analysis perspective. Particular attention is paid to the role of parliaments, political parties, public opinion and the judiciary as the most relevant domestic institutions and actors during the ‘migration crisis’. The specific national context in the UK and Germany is then explored. This includes an overview of the relevant domestic institutions and actors in asylum and refugee policymaking and the historical policy contexts, representing the domestic realm of the subsequent role theory analysis. Country-specific and issue-specific external actors and international partners (‘significant others’) are also identified. The domestic and international factors identified in sections one and two constitute the basis for applying the role theory framework developed in Chapter III. Finally, section four discusses the relevant migration studies literature, identifying complementary approaches and the areas for further development that the theoretical approach adopted in this research addresses.
1. A lottery of protection

This section provides a brief statistical overview of the distribution of asylum seekers and refugees in the EU in 2015-16 before giving a more fine-grained definition of how this thesis defines and operationalises asylum and refugee policy decision-making and responsibility-sharing in the EU. It also introduces national asylum and refugee policy's international institutional and normative context.

1.1 Statistical overview

Variation in refugee and asylum regimes and the uneven distribution of ‘responsibilities’ across EU member states in response to the European ‘migration crisis’ is thrown into sharp relief by an analysis of stocks and flows of refugees and asylum seekers, respectively. Asylum seekers are defined as those who have registered for protection in a receiving country and are, therefore, in the process of applying for refugee status. Refugees are those who have been granted protection status (full refugee status in accordance with the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as opposed to a subsidiary or humanitarian protection status) by a receiving country\textsuperscript{12}.

Data on asylum-seekers and refugees, including the number of first-time applications, recognition rates, and rejection rates, commonly serve as ‘proxy-indicators’ to gauge the stringency or leniency of national asylum and refugee regimes comparatively across Europe (for examples, see Hatton, Richter, and Faini 2004; Hatton 2009; 2017). These statistics illustrate the variation in levels of provision both in terms of absolute numbers of refugees hosted in a receiving state, as well as in terms of ‘responsibilities’ relative to population size or gross domestic product. Furthermore, different nationalities applying for protection across different countries can be examined as an indication of variation in the interpretation of legislation and minimum standards within the EU. This data is readily available from Eurostat

\textsuperscript{12} It should be noted that those who have not yet registered an asylum claim fall into the nebulous category of ‘migrant’. They may have entered a country ‘regularly’ (with the required documentation or visa) or irregularly, or indeed may already be resident in a host country, for instance on a student visa, during which the situation in their country of origin deteriorated to warrant a claim for protection. This illustrates just some of the challenges of using these ‘proxi-variables’ for a cross country comparison, and yet there remains no better way to illustrate the inequitable distribution of provisions.
and the UNHCR, which compile aggregated data provided by national governments and institutions.

Figure 1. First time asylum applications in selected EU Member States, 2014-2017

Figure 1. illustrates the number of first-time asylum applications in selected EU member states from 2014-2017\(^\text{13}\) (see Appendix 1 for the full data on first-time asylum applications in the EU, 2014-2017). The graph demonstrates the considerable increase in asylum claims in 2015. There were a recorded 1 255 640 first-time applications to the EU in 2015, which represented a 123% increase from 2014 (Eurostat 2016). It also shows that 61.5% of the total share of applications in 2015 were made in Germany (35.2%), Hungary (13.9%), and Sweden (12.4%). By 2016, 60% (722 265) of the total EU share of 1 204 280 applications were accounted for in Germany. The number of applications dropped significantly in Germany, and most other

\(^{13}\) Member states were selected based on those that were experiencing the largest number of applications and the highest (practical and political) pressures. For example, Greece received 11,000 asylum applications in 2015, a 50% increase from 2014, but fewer than, for example, Finland. However, due to Greece’s geographical location along the Eastern Mediterranean migrant route (from Turkey and Egypt) and on the external border of the EU, Greece became central to political debate on the EU’s response to the crisis. The complete data on first-time asylum applications to the EU can be viewed in Appendix 1.
countries, in 2017, reflecting ‘pre-crisis’ levels, with the exceptions of Greece, Italy and France. Looking at the UK, we can see that application numbers remained comparatively stable during this period. Asylum applications were evidently distributed unevenly across different EU member states.

Looking at the same EU member states, Table 1 examines refugee stocks (those granted refugee status and, therefore, leave to remain in the receiving state) relative to population size and gross domestic product (GDP). It should be noted that due to the processing of asylum claims, there is a time lag between applications and decisions. Therefore, we would not expect the increase in asylum applications illustrated in Figure 1 to be borne out in the statistics on refugee stocks\textsuperscript{14}. However, given that the Syrian civil war and the movement of Syrian asylum seekers began in 2011, by 2015 we can already see disparities in the numbers of refugees being hosted in EU member states.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Refs/Pop</th>
<th>Refs/GDP</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Refs/Pop</th>
<th>Refs/GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>72,216</td>
<td>8.35</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>169,520</td>
<td>17.31</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>35,314</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>123,067</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>273,126</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2,541,352</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>316,115</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1,070,854</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>21.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>18,489</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>277,701</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>118,047</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>664,118</td>
<td>71.67</td>
<td>17.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>4,393</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>212,500</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>88,536</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As might be expected, larger EU member states, including Germany, France, and the UK, were hosting larger numbers of refugees. However, as soon as we include the data on the

\textsuperscript{14} For example, four years after the record number of asylum applications in UK in 2002, Home Office figures suggested that there was a significant backlog of approximately 400,000-450,000 ‘unresolved claims’, including open decisions and failed asylum seekers awaiting deportation (Boswell 2015b).
number of refugees relative to population size and GDP, the statistics paint a slightly different picture. Austria, the Netherlands, and Sweden, for example, were hosting significantly more refugees relative to their total populations. Similarly, when accounting for GDP, these three countries stand out as hosting more refugees per million dollars of GDP. Therefore, this suggests that they were shouldering more responsibility for the provision of refugees by hosting more people relative to GDP and population size when compared to their wealthier and larger neighbours.

Finally, Table 1 provides some perspective on refugee numbers in non-EU countries by including statistics from 2015 on five countries that have become major refugee-hosting states since the outbreak of civil war in Syria. It is particularly striking that in 2015 Lebanon was hosting 164 refugees per 1000 inhabitants and 21 refugees per million dollars of GDP; a dramatically higher number than any single EU member state and more than the five largest hosting EU countries combined.

Disparities in protection become equally apparent if we look at recognition rates, which vary significantly from one member state to the next. In 2016, Sweden reported an overall protection rate of 77.4%, whereas neighbouring Finland had a rate of 35.2%, and Hungary had a strikingly low rate of 8.5% (AIDA 2017). While this could be attributed to variation in the composition of nationalities within migrant flows, recognition rates also vary for the same nationalities across countries. While positive decisions for asylum seekers from Afghanistan in 2016 stood at 89.4% in Switzerland, rates in Norway were 30%. Similarly, recognition rates for Iraqi nationals were reported to be 70.2% in Germany, while only 12.9% in Hungary in the same year. This has established what is now frequently referred to as an ‘asylum lottery’ across the EU (AIDA 2017); this lottery of protection persists, despite an overall decrease in the number of new arrivals compared with 2015/2016.

1.2 Measuring asylum and refugee regimes

Whilst the figures above provide a quantitative illustration of the uneven distribution of responsibilities in Europe, these statistics represent the outcomes (intended or otherwise) of policy measures, as opposed to the policy output (policy decisions), and therefore can only serve as proxy indicators of policy behaviour. Setting aside the well-documented issues with
enumeration and the comparative cross-national analysis of immigration statistics\textsuperscript{15}, focusing on policy outcomes would not account for any unintended consequences of policy output, the so-called ‘policy gap’ between migration policies and their outcomes (see Guiraudon and Lahav 2007; Lahav and Guiraudon 2006), nor any disparity between expectations, capacity, and performance of policy measures (Elgström and Smith 2006a; Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011a; Hill 1993). Moreover, the statistics tell us even less about what factors influenced policy decisions. Therefore, before analysing policy behaviour, we must determine how asylum and refugee policy decisions are conceptualised and how we might determine the relative ‘openness’ or ‘restrictiveness’ of regimes.

In recent years, asylum and refugee policies in European countries have become significantly more stringent (Geddes and Boswell 2010; Hatton 2017; Léonard and Kaunert 2019). As Gibney noted already in 2005:

“[F]ew people could be unaware of the way willingness to implement tough measures on asylum has become a touchstone for Western governments of all hues recently. Buoyed by rising numbers of asylum seekers since the early 1980s, as well as widespread public concern over illegal migration, governments in countries as different as Germany and Australia, the US and Ireland, and Italy and the UK, have implemented a raft of measures designed to make life very uncomfortable for those applying for asylum.” (Gibney 2005, 3)

To prevent people from applying for asylum, European countries have implemented an array of legislative measures that can largely be characterised by falling into one of the following three categories. Firstly, policies that aim to deter potential asylum applicants. Deterrence measures include policies that address rights, entitlements, and benefits, including access to labour markets, access to welfare or ‘in-kind’ benefits, dispersal and quota systems, and detention. Secondly, policies that restrict access to the territory. This policy approach aims to avoid costs and responsibilities under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees by preventing asylum seekers from reaching the country, thereby preventing claims for protection from being lodged. This group of policies includes visa regimes, ‘safe third country’ principles, ‘internal flight alternatives’ (also known as ‘internal protection alternatives’), pre-inspection

\textsuperscript{15} The challenge for comparative statistics on migration stems from the intrinsically idiosyncratic nature of the policy area. Variations in definitions of migrant categories, in data gathering methods and bureaucratic processes pose an ongoing challenge for research. For a full account of how migration statistics are susceptible to differences between countries and over time, see Di Bartolomeo’s (2018), *Apples and oranges? Politics of data sources on international migration in Europe.*
regimes, international zones, interdiction, and carrier sanctions. The final policy approach pertains to limiting the time spent in the destination country. This covers policies that streamline procedures or restrict access to the process due to, for example, ‘non-compliance’, restrictions on permanent residence status, temporary protection schemes, readmission agreements, removal, and deportation.

This summative list of policy measures provides some indication of the sheer breadth and complexity of the policy area. It overlaps with a myriad of other policy agendas and issue areas, including social and welfare policies, integration policies, border management and foreign policy. Unlike foreign policy decision-making, policy decisions do not occur within a single or defined decision-making unit, nor in a single decision-making venue or ministry (this was confirmed by all interviews with officials and practitioners, who described working across multiple ministries and departments during the ‘crisis’). Moreover, decisions can relate to primary or secondary law, the introduction of new regulations, policy measures and mechanisms, or an adaptation or change in approach utilising existing policy frameworks. This complexity has frequently resulted in studies conflating asylum and refugee policy with the analysis of policy related to other migrant categories (Léonard and Kaunert 2019, 6), despite their distinct legislative and institutional settings, and was one of the challenges for this research in applying foreign policy analysis concepts to asylum and refugee policy.

Furthermore, despite the breadth of comparative research on migration policy, there is no consensus or established method on how to measure the relative leniency or stringency of migration regimes over time and space (Beine et al. 2015, 2). With a focus on asylum and refugee policy, some studies concentrate on the effectiveness of states’ policies in deterring asylum seekers (Neumayer 2004; Schuster 2000; Thielemann 2003, 2004), finding some evidence to suggest that countries with more difficult asylum procedures received fewer claims. Schuster (2000) explores the differences and convergences in asylum policies in seven EU member states (France, Greece, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK) by comparing changes in policies relating to entry, welfare and temporary protection.

Other studies develop policy based stringency indices (Czaika 2005; Hatton 2009, 2017; Hatton, Richter, and Faini 2004; Thielemann 2006). Czaika (2005) developed a refugee capacity index based on other indices that cover factors such as population density, the share of ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, civil liberties and political rights, and income per capita. Thielemann (2006) compares the stringency of asylum regulations in all OECD countries by developing an asylum deterrence index for the time period 1985-2000. Utilizing UNHCR statistics, he investigates the extent to which the relative leniency or restrictiveness of asylum regimes acts as a pull factor and the extent to which public policy measures can
effectively influence the number of asylum applications a state receives. Hatton’s index (Hatton 2009, 2017; Hatton, Richter, and Faini 2004) breaks down asylum and refugee policies into three categories: access policies, processing policies and welfare policies (see Table 2.).

Table 2. Components of Hatton’s asylum and refugee policy index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access policies</th>
<th>Processing policies</th>
<th>Welfare policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visa requirements</td>
<td>Definition of a refugee</td>
<td>Permission to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border control/security</td>
<td>Humanitarian category</td>
<td>Access to welfare benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafficking regulations</td>
<td>Manifestly unfounded claims</td>
<td>Detention policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrier sanctions</td>
<td>Expedited procedures</td>
<td>Deportation policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications outside country</td>
<td>Scope for appeals</td>
<td>Family reunification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hatton (2017)

Finally, Noll (2000) first proposed that costs connected to the reception of asylum seekers and hosting refugees could be divided into three main categories. Thielemann’s extensive work on asylum and refugee policy has since adopted and refined this typology in numerous studies on the distribution of ‘burdens’ in the EU (see Thielemann 2003, 2004, 2006, 2012, 2018). Thielemann (2018) defines ‘burden-sharing’ as measures to address the unequal distribution of ‘burdens’ and develops a ‘burden-sharing’ typology, identifying the physical ‘burden-sharing’ (‘sharing of people’), sharing of resources (funding and expertise) and the harmonisation of legislation as key indicators of the distribution of responsibilities.

The International Migration Policy and Law Analysis Database (IMPALA) project, a joint initiative of the universities of Harvard, London School of Economics, Sydney, Amsterdam and Luxembourg to develop the world’s first large-n database of immigration policy, criticises existing research for failing to identify standardised measures for cross country comparisons of migration regimes (Beine, Boucher, et al. 2015, 2; Beine, Burgoon, et al. 2015). The IMPALA project recommends focusing on safe routes into protection as a measurement for the stringency of asylum and refugee regimes. Another criticism levelled at existing studies comparing asylum and refugee regimes is the frequency with which immigration law and de facto implementation in the form of policy is conflated (Beine, Burgoon, et al. 2015, 7).

Considering the existing research, the criticism outlined by the IMPALA project, and the research aims to focus on the external dimension of asylum and refugee policy, this thesis incorporates the comparative politics approach from the IMPALA project, with the
understanding of ‘provision for asylum seekers’ explored in the ‘burden-sharing’ literature. Taking Noll’s (2000) and Thielemann’s (2003) ‘burden-sharing’ typology as a starting point, this thesis reconceptualises ‘sharing of people’, from focusing on reception and asylum applications (flows) and refugee stocks to analysing safe routes into protection, as recommended by the IMPALA project. There are two main routes into protection. Firstly, through bilateral or multilateral resettlement programmes, and secondly, via the ordinary asylum process, which requires an asylum seeker to place a claim once they have arrived in a destination country. Therefore, the first group of decisions this research focuses on is policy decisions relating to the establishment of safe and legal routes into refugee protection, including access policies (see Table 2), the establishment of resettlement and relocation programmes, and processing policies such as expedited application procedures.

The second group of decisions relates to the ‘resource sharing’ category from the ‘burden-sharing’ literature, broadly defined as the allocation of funding (Official Development Assistance (ODA) and humanitarian assistance), resources and expertise. Finally, this thesis investigates decisions on law and policy, in line with the research design of a small-n, in-depth within-case analysis, and is inductively led by the developments in the selected country case studies during the height of the ‘crisis’, be it the implementation of new policy measures, the adaptation of existing mechanisms, or the introduction of primary or secondary legislation.

1.3 International context

This section provides a brief overview of the international institutional and normative context within which decision makers of asylum and refugee policy in the UK and Germany operate. It is not meant to be an exhaustive investigation of the international institutional framework of asylum and migration policy in Europe but provides context for the subsequent empirical analysis. Role theory scholarship has in the past been criticised for continuing to reify the role of structures and institutions as determinants of international behaviour (Bevir, Daddow, and Hall 2013). In Chapters III and IV, this thesis develops a conceptualisation of actors as situated within domestic and international institutions. This approach acknowledges the interpretivist and interactionist view that actors can amend, adapt and change existing patterns but understands decision makers’ agency as bounded by their perception of appropriate

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16 For a comprehensive analysis of the historical and institutional development of European asylum and migration policy see Geddes and Boswell 2010, Geddes and Scholten 2016 and Weinar, Bonjour, and Zhyznomirska 2018.
behaviour given institutional context, material considerations, policy legacies and traditions (Aggestam 2004; McCourt 2012; Wehner and Thies 2014). Therefore, before engaging in an analysis of national role conceptions, we must consider what the normative and institutional contexts entail.

The ‘refugee’ is defined and protected in international law, which comprises of treaty law (bilateral and multilateral), customary international law (universal and regional norms based on general practice accepted as law), general principles of law, and national standards and laws (UNHCR 2018b). The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) (UN General Assembly 1951), and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967 New York Protocol) (UN General Assembly 1967), define who is a ‘refugee’ and set out the rights of individuals as well as responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. They build on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly 1948), whereby ‘everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution’ (Article 14 (1)). Initially limited both temporally and geographically to events in post-WWII Europe, the Refugee Convention now has 149 state signatories. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the UN body that holds the mandate and legal responsibilities to oversee the Refugee Convention and act as custodian of the international refugee protection regime (UN General Assembly 1950).

The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UN General Assembly 1951) provides the modern codification of a ‘refugee’, defines ‘refugee status’ and sets out conditions for the treatment of refugees. Article 1(A) defines refugees as a person “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. The Convention also sets out the core principle of international refugee and human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement (Art. 33), which prohibits states from returning an individual to a country where they are at risk of being persecuted. This means that states are prohibited from returning refugees to countries or territories where their lives or freedoms are threatened in the sense of Article 1 (A) (UN General Assembly 1951). In addition, refugees are protected against being penalized on account of unauthorized entry or stay in a state if they have come directly from a territory where they were at risk of persecution (UN General Assembly 1951, Art. 31(1)).

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), a regional treaty with 47 state parties and the EU, further codifies these core principles of refugee law (Council of Europe 1950). It sets out additional (qualified) rights, such as the right to respect for family and private life (Article 8) and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 9). It also sets
out one absolute right: “the prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (Council of Europe 1950, Art. (3)). Although the ECHR does not explicitly refer to non-refoulement, the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has developed a refoulement prohibition both directly and indirectly (through removal to a third country from which a person is at risk of being returned to the country from which they are fleeing persecution) under Article 3. of the ECHR (see for example Sharifi v. Italy and Greece 2014; Tarakhel v. Switzerland 2014).

In addition to international and EU law, several EU provisions provide important context for migration governance in the EU. Firstly, the Schengen free movement provisions abolished internal border controls and established a focus on strengthening the EU’s external border and EU internal security (Schengen Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985). However, in November 2015, multiple European countries temporarily reinstated border controls, marking the end of 20 years of open borders in the Schengen area. France was the first to reintroduce border controls, citing the threat of terrorism. Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Slovenia, Hungary, Belgium and Norway had also reintroduced temporary border controls by the end of 2015, citing the ‘continuous big influx of persons seeking international protection’ (European Commission 2016b).

Closely related to the Schengen free movement provisions, the Dublin Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003; recast as Dublin III Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of 26 June 2013), which replaced the Dublin Convention (European Union 1990), determines responsibility for examining asylum applications lodged in the EU. Established to prevent asylum seekers from lodging multiple claims in the EU (‘asylum shopping’) or being unable to find a single member state willing to examine a claim, the regulation sets out a hierarchy of criteria for which member state is responsible for processing an asylum claim. The Dublin system is dependent on EuroDac (Council Regulation (EC) No 2725/2000 of 11 December 2000; replaced by Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of 26 June 2013), which established a fingerprinting mechanism to prevent duplicate protection claims from being made in different member states.

The main principle of the Dublin system, the so-called ‘first country of entry’ principle, states that the member state through which an asylum seeker entered the EU is responsible for processing their claim for protection. This has led to extensive criticism for effectively transferring responsibility for processing asylum claims based on geographical position (specifically from northern and western Europe to member states on the southern and eastern EU border) (Thielemann and Armstrong 2013). Whilst the Dublin III regulation extended legal safeguards, the criteria for family reunion, and improved efficiency of ‘Dublin transfers’ of
asylum seekers between member states, the ‘first country of entry’ rule remains central to the Dublin system. Nevertheless, in August 2015, Germany unilaterally suspended the Dublin regulation, halting Dublin transfers to first member states of entry.

In addition to Schengen and the Dublin system, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) defines and institutionalises the asylum process through a common legislative framework of regulations and directives, regarded as the cornerstone of the EU’s asylum acquis. These directives set out asylum legislation, solidarity measures and instruments for practical cooperation to harmonise asylum standards (Léonard and Kaunert 2019, 89). The first directive under the CEAS, implemented in 2001, was the Temporary Protection Directive (Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001) on ‘minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof’, and represents the first attempt to institutionalise the sharing of responsibilities between EU member states. Notably, despite the increase in migration flows and asylum applications in the EU in 2015-2016, this directive was not triggered.


In more recent developments, the EU has committed to ensuring more convergence in asylum decisions across its member states by reforming the criteria for granting protection under the proposed Qualification Regulation (European Commission 2016a). The proposal aimed to oblige member states to apply the concept of the ‘internal flight alternative’ so as to refuse protection to those who are considered able to find safety in other parts of their home country (AIDA 2017). In 2016, the application of this principle led to lower recognition rates for asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, border management is coordinated by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), including coordinated sea and land operations targeting irregular migration.
The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) supports member states experiencing high pressures and manages voluntary mechanisms of redistribution of asylum seekers and resettlement programmes. Finally, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which replaced the European Refugee Fund in 2014, was established to contribute to four specific objectives: to develop the efficiency and application of legislation under the Common European Asylum System; support legal migration and integration; combat irregular migration through effective return strategies; and finally, “make sure that EU States which are most affected by migration and asylum flows can count on solidarity from other EU States” (European Commission n.a.). A total of 3.137 billion euros was allocated to the fund for the period 2014-20.

The fourth objective of the AMIF regarding the principle of ‘solidarity among member states’ highlights a normative dimension of the CEAS. The principle of solidarity is highly institutionalised with frequent reference to ‘solidarity’ in the EU’s treaties and official texts. Reference to ‘responsibility-sharing’ and solidarity among member states can be found in the Lisbon Treaty regarding various policy areas, including foreign and security policy, justice and home affairs, energy, and climate change. Moreover, Article 80 of the Lisbon Treaty explicitly states that the EU’s border, asylum and immigration policies should be “governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between member states” (Treaty of Lisbon, 13 December 2007).

The principle of solidarity features strongly in official documentation on the CEAS and throughout EU statements on the European ‘migration crisis’. The European Commission identified one of the overarching objectives of the CEAS as, *inter alia*, to:

“[D]etermine responsibility and support solidarity: the CEAS must include rules on the determination of the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application and provide for genuine solidarity mechanisms, both within the EU and with third countries” (COM 2008; 3)

The Dublin III Regulation defines solidarity as “a pivotal element in the CEAS” that provides “concrete measures of genuine and practical solidarity towards Member States...to give effect to the principle of solidarity” (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, para. 22).

Thielemann (2012) argues that EU asylum and refugee provision represents the most advanced example of EU responsibility-sharing between member states and that the principle of solidarity has been accepted as “one of the Union’s general principles of law” by the
This suggests that the principle of solidarity between member states is a fundamental norm of asylum and refugee governance in the EU. Since these pledges are non-committal and non-binding, it has been argued that statements on solidarity will not necessarily incentivise collective action on asylum and refugee provision (Boswell et al. 2010). However, from a role theory perspective, we can identify the principle as a socialising factor and EU norm for member states that may influence national role conceptions and international expectations during the European ‘migration crisis’.

2. Domestic actors and constraints

Domestic actors and structures operate as gatekeepers determining access to the policymaking process. As Cortell and Davis Jr. (2000, 66) state, “domestic political structures are important because they condition access to policy-making fora and privilege, certain actors, in policy debates”, thereby constraining or creating opportunities for political elites. Moreover, domestic structures and institutions create the arenas for contestation over policy and influence the impact that contestation will have on final policy decisions. This section focuses on the role of parliaments, political parties, executives, bureaucratic agencies, public opinion, and the judiciary from a foreign policy analysis perspective before reviewing the migration studies literature in section three.

2.1 Parliaments

Conventional wisdom suggests that legislatures in parliamentary democracies play a minor and limited role in foreign policy, since formal decision-making powers in this area are reserved to the executive branch, who frequently circumvent the parliament in matters of ‘high politics’ (Hill 2003). This is also based on the premise that parliamentary involvement may delay important foreign policy decisions and public scrutiny could jeopardise national security (Raunio 2014). However, the notion of ‘executive dominance’ is questioned in recent studies on the subject, that suggest that national parliaments may play an increasing role in foreign and security policy, especially in relation to parliamentary votes on military intervention (Ihalainen and Matikainen 2016; Kaarbo and Kenealy 2016; Kesgin and Kaarbo 2010; Raunio and Wagner 2017). Specific institutional, legal, and constitutional powers, and the nature of the external threat, enable parliaments to exercise influence over executives, including significant ratification and oversight authority (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012).
Political parliamentary opposition plays a role in foreign policy decision-making, since decision-making power is shared across the cabinet, which depends on the support of parliamentary party groups (Kesgin and Kaarbo 2010). Even in single-party majority cabinets, such as commonly in the UK, intraparty conflict within the ruling party or a lack of cohesion in the cabinet can become a constraint on the government (Raunio and Wagner 2017, 7). With reference to Putnam’s two-level games (Putnam 1988), Kesgin and Kaarbo (2010) also remark that “executives may use the potential of parliamentary veto to their advantage in international negotiations” (Kesgin and Kaarbo 2010, 22).

This is particularly relevant to asylum and refugee policy, for example, when human rights and access to protection is set out in the national constitutions of individual member states and negotiations take place at the EU level. Moreover, European integration and the development of international organisations since the Second World War, such as the UNHCR, has created new venues and opportunities for national parliaments to discuss the policy approaches that should be adopted at the domestic, international and supranational levels (Ihalainen and Matikainen 2016). Finally, the increase in international regulation in this policy area, interdependence of national and international (EU) agendas on migration, increased salience and politicisation has incentivised stronger parliamentary engagement in this policy area.

From a role theory perspective, the legislature in parliamentary democracies represents the primary site of contestation over national role conceptions (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012, 2016). Given the inclusion of cabinet members and parliamentarians from a range of political parties, debates include representation of a diverse range of positions on a specific issue area and provide a unique site to observe the full repertoire of national role conceptions advocated. Moreover, legislative measures introduced by a government for the adoption of a national role conception must be approved by parliament (Brummer and Thies 2015). The empirical chapters, for instance, analyse parliamentary deliberation over two asylum packages in the German parliament and the Immigration Bill 2016 in the UK parliament, within the context of the ‘crisis’.

2.2 Political parties

Parliaments are party-political institutions and although a neglected area of research in the past, foreign policy analysis is increasing looking at the impact of political parties, party ideology, party organisation and party leadership on foreign and security policy (see, for example, Hofmann and Martill 2021). Party ideologies impose limits on policy options due to
electoral commitments. They also result in different interpretations of international affairs (Kaarbo 2012). For example, previous studies in foreign policy analysis suggest that right-wing parties “are more ‘hawkish’, ‘militarist’ and ‘nationalist’”, whereas left-wing parties are “more ‘dovish’, ‘inclusive’ and ‘internationalist’” (Raunio and Wagner 2017, 9). As previously stated, in relation to multi-party coalition governments, different foreign policy preferences along party lines can result in conflict between governing parties allocated relevant ministries within the cabinet (Kaarbo 2012).

In relation to national role conceptions, Cantir and Kaarbo (2012, 14) argue that “role conceptions may stem from party ideology and be institutionalized in electoral platforms.” Consequently, opposition parties are unlikely to share the same national role conceptions as a governing party and may utilise institutionalised authority to try to push through their preferred national role conceptions. Moreover, if national role conceptions form along party lines, role conflict could surface within the cabinet of a coalition government (Brummer and Thies 2015). Electioneering ahead of an (national or regional) election could also result in role contestation between coalition partners.

2.3 Multiparty coalitions and bureaucratic agencies

The executive branch holds formal foreign policy decision-making powers and represents the primary foreign policy decision making body (Hill 2003). However, if we accept that foreign policy preferences can form along party lines, different foreign policy preferences along party lines can result in conflict between governing parties in coalition cabinets allocated different ministries (Kaarbo 1996, 2012; Oppermann, Kaarbo, and Brummer 2017). Research on multi-party coalition governments suggests that this can act as a constraint on foreign policy decision-making, or an opportunity for smaller partners/junior coalition partners to play a larger role by ‘hijacking’ decision-making if they control key ministries in cabinet, their goals align with public opinion, and salience is high enough (Kaarbo 2012).

Furthermore, if national role conceptions also form along party lines, role conflict could surface with in the cabinet of a coalition government (Brummer and Thies 2015). Electioneering ahead of an (national or regional) election could cause role contestation between coalition partners. For example, disagreement over the fundamental approach to the ‘migration crisis’ was cited as one of the reasons for the collapse of coalition negotiations after the German federal
elections in September 2017, preventing the formation of a so-called Jamaican coalition\textsuperscript{17} and leaving the country without a government until March 2018 (Smellie 2018).

Furthermore, the interests of different bureaucratic agencies could play a role in decision making. Since the key cabinet posts of Foreign and Defence minister are often allocated to different coalition partners from the Prime Minister (or Chancellor in Germany), differences in party ideology could cause conflict over proposed national role conceptions and influence policy. Bureaucratic politics is particularly relevant for this research, as illustrated in section 1.2, policy responses to increased migratory pressure include access policies, processing policies, welfare policies, and Official Development Assistance (ODA), which cut across departmental and ministerial boundaries. Therefore, organisational cultures (Mayblin 2019), bureaucratic interests, practices, and preferences may play a role in role contestation and role selection (Cantir and Kaarbo 2016, 15–16).

The scholarship on cabinets, parliaments and parties is particularly relevant to this thesis. Merkel’s approach to the ‘migration crisis’ proved contentious both within the CDU and with the junior coalition partner and sister party, the CSU (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2016, Interviews 2019). In the British case, opposition parties were vocal in their disapproval of the government’s response to the ‘crisis’ and appealed to the electorate regarding a different approach (Yvette Cooper 2015). In both cases the extent to which these conflicts were borne out in contested role conceptions and policy is explored in the four empirical chapters.

2.4 Public opinion

The extent to which public opinion influences foreign policy remains controversial (Foyle and Belle 2017). It is argued that political elites manipulate public opinion and frame issues suggesting effects on policy are limited (Shapiro and Jacobs 2000). And yet, increasing attention paid to opinion polling by political elites implies that public opinion does have an impact on decision makers’ perceptions of a policy area. Risse-Kappen (1991) suggest that the extent to which public opinion influences policy depends on the democratic structures of the country in question, although the full extent of the impact on policy is disputed.

\textsuperscript{17} A Jamaican coalition is between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), their sister party Christian Social Union (CSU), the Greens, and the market liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP).
Nonetheless, research suggests that masses and elites do disagree on both specific issue areas and general foreign policy orientation (Cantir and Kaarbo 2016).

The impact of public opinion on national role conceptions, role selection and enactment has been largely unexplored in role theory (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012). However, since the public elect members of parliament, opposition parties and a governing party or coalition may be “rewarded/punished” by the electorate for the national role conception they advocate (Brummer and Thies 2015, 278). This suggests that opposition parties and governing parties likely invoke national role conceptions strategically, taking opposition and public opinion into account. As previously stated, the “more important general publics consider an issue to be, the more governments are likely to feel inclined to account for public opinion in their policy on that issue” Oppermann and Viehrig (2009, 925). Therefore, given the increased salience of migration and asylum issues, due in part to ‘crisis labelling’ by political elites and extensive press coverage of incidents such as the drowning of two Syrian boys near the Turkish holiday resort of Bodrum (see Smith 2015), I expect to find that decision makers took public opinion into account when formulating policy responses during the peak of the ‘crisis’.

2.5 Judiciary

A notable omission in role theory research on domestic role contestation, and foreign policy analysis more generally, is the influence of the judiciary. The courts play a significant role in asylum and refugee policy in liberal democracies, at both the national level and in the EU (Joppke 1998b, 1999; Léonard and Kaunert 2019). In interpreting the law and practice, the legitimacy of asylum claims and setting precedents, migration lawyers, judges, officials and interpreters act as “gatekeepers” of protection (Campbell 2020, 7). Campbell highlights, for example, the power of judges to “accept, reject or modify” expert evidence based on their professional socialisation, training and situated perspective (Campbell 2020, 9). In this sense, the judiciary can overturn official decisions and refusals to grant protection through litigation, asylum appeals and judicial reviews. The judiciary can also act as a direct check on executive and legislative power, intervening in policy decisions that breach national or international law.

At the international level, Léonard and Kaunert (2019, 83–87) provide a comprehensive argument for the ‘judicialisation’ of EU asylum and refugee policy. They highlight the significant increase in the importance of judicial actors, such as the ECJ and ECtHR, and texts, such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights since the Treaty of Maastricht (see the previous section on international context for details). Judicial actors may intervene where national policy decisions are in tension with international obligations. Joppke argues that in this respect the
judiciary can act as an aggressive defender of migrant rights, and block restrictionist policy or securitisation moves by executives pandering to popular sentiment (Joppke 1998b, 1999; Léonard and Kaunert 2019). Statham and Geddes (2006, 266) argue, however, that the role of the judiciary might be overestimated. Compelling a state to comply with its international obligations remains problematic, given the limited scope for enforcement, as demonstrated by the now common policy practice for states to prevent asylum seekers from gaining access to their territory, thereby restricting the ability to claim the right to protection, arguably in breach of international law (Campbell 2016).

This notwithstanding, this thesis conceptualises judiciaries as “sometimes modifiers [of policy], but not initiators of legislation” (Statham and Geddes 2006, 255). The caveat lies in this thesis’ explanandum: initial political decisions taken to address the migrant crisis (role enactment). The judiciary is not directly engaged in the selection of policy and legislation in response to increased migratory pressure but rather in the review and interpretation thereof. Consequently, the judiciary as an institutional actor is only included in the subsequent empirical analysis of domestic contestation processes where legal interventions occur.

3. National context

This section provides further information on the relevant institutions, actors, and context specific to the two country case studies. Whilst this thesis does not engage in a direct comparison of Germany’s and the UK’s response to the ‘migration crisis’, the following sections do illustrate institutional and historical differences between the two countries as context for the subsequent empirical analysis.

3.1 British context

This section considers the domestic context, institutions, actors, and constraints concerning the British case study.

3.1.1 Historical context
In one of the few studies that conducts a historical analysis of asylum policy in Britain, Shaw (2015) identifies a distinct ‘Britain tradition’ as a state that offered sanctuary to those fleeing religious or political persecution, which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, from a popular movement that equated the provision of refuge with a national liberal identity (Shaw 2015). The perception of this humanitarian norm has persisted over time and become a “theme in the collective imagination of the nation” (Ibrahim and Howarth 2018, 358). Nevertheless, the imperative to restrict asylum, which has been reframed as a ‘problem’ since the mid-1990s, has become the focus of successive British governments on both the political left and right.

Until the late 1980s, the number of asylum seekers and refugees in Britain had remained relatively low and stable. However, in the 1990s the number of asylum seekers increased significantly, reaching a peak of 84,130 first-time applications in 2002, the highest recorded number of asylum claims in the UK to date (Home Office 2003). In comparison, the lower figure of just 38,370 applications lodged in the UK at the height of the crisis in 2015 does not reflect fewer displaced people around the world but rather the stringent asylum controls implemented in the UK since the early 2000s. Geddes and Scholten (2016, 34) refer to asylum policy as the “political obsession” of the second Labour government lead by Tony Blair from 2001-2005, which while significantly liberalising labour migration, implemented stringent asylum policies characterised by the control of external borders at both the domestic and EU level, such as tougher penalties for carriers of irregular migrants, restricted access to the welfare state and labour market, and the introduction of fast-tracked legal processes and restrictions on the right to appeal negative decisions and deportation orders.

The justification used to legitimise these policy approaches was what the government called “the problem of ‘abusive’ asylum applications” (Gibney 2005, 126). This narrative of the ‘bogus asylum seeker’ in contrast to ‘genuine’ refugees was extensively propagated by the Blair government (Maughan 2010). However, it can be traced back to the Aliens Act of 1905, which defined in law the notion of the ‘underserving immigrant’ linked with criminality and a drain on the welfare system (Ibrahim and Howarth 2018). As will be demonstrated in Chapter V, this narrative was a powerful component of asylum debates during the European ‘migration crisis’ in the UK.

The historical context of Britain’s international development and overseas assistance is closely associated with Britain’s colonial past and role as the leader of the Commonwealth. The Colonial Development Act of 1929 was the first of a series of acts that established a fund for development initiatives in British colonies and territories. By the 1960s the total annual colonial development and welfare expenditure had risen to £18 million (Ireton 2013). In 1997, the newly elected Labour government set up a new ministry - the Department for International
Development (DFID) – dramatically increasing the profile of international development and aid in government. As one interviewee explained, over the last fifteen years DFID had become “one of the most internationally respected government departments” and earned the UK a reputation as experts and a leader in the policy area (Interview, 2019). The UK’s commitment to the UN’s development expenditure target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) was enshrined in law in March 2015, in the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015.

3.1.2 Actors and institutions

The government formulates asylum and immigration policy, and approaches are outlined in their programme for government. Immigration and asylum are reserved matters, which means provisions largely apply across the UK. Immigration and asylum policy implementation and enforcement predominantly fall within the remit of the Home Office. Consequently, the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Home Secretary), described as "one of the three great offices of state", alongside the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary (Gaskarth 2013a, 20), holds considerable sway over asylum and refugee policy. The Home Secretary also sits on the National Security Council, the cabinet committee which coordinates foreign policy and defence strategies (British Government n.d.).

As illustrated in section 1.2, policy responses to increased migratory pressure include access policies, processing policies, welfare policies, and Official Development Assistance (ODA), which cut across departmental and ministerial boundaries. In the UK this included the Home Office, Department for International Development (DFID) and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)\textsuperscript{18}, and the Department for Communities and Local Government\textsuperscript{19}. The inter-ministerial nature of the UK’s response to the ‘migration crisis’ was illustrated when a new Ministerial Committee for Syrian Refugees met for the first time on 11th September 2015 (Home Office 2015c) and appointed a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, jointly at the Home Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the Department for International Development, with the responsibility for Syrian refugees (Home Office 2015a). As one interviewee explained, “I still do report to three ministries, ultimately, and it does reflect

\textsuperscript{18} Both departments were merged on 2 September 2020 to form the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

\textsuperscript{19} The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), at time of writing.
the wide range of policy areas that asylum inevitably takes you to. Exactly on your international to domestic split” (Interview, April 2019).

The primary source of scrutiny and critique on immigration policy comes from the Parliament and its committee system. The British parliament held regular debates on the UK’s response to the ‘migration crisis’, during which the government reported on and was questioned on their activities. The most prominent select committee in this area is the Home Affairs Committee, a cross-party committee of eleven MPs from the three largest parties (Conservatives, Labour and the Scottish National Party, at the time), which launched an inquiry into the ‘migration crisis’ on 1 September 2015 (Home Affairs Committee 2015). In this regard, the parliament’s role was one of scrutiny as opposed to participation in decision-making. The one exception was during the ping pong stage of the Immigration Bill 2016 (discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI).

A major feature of the British parliamentary democracy is the duopoly that has traditionally dominated British politics. This refers to the relative stability of the two-party system, whereby either the Labour party or Conservative party run a majority government. Whilst this status quo has been less stable in recent years, not least by the establishment of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010 (the first coalition government in the UK since Churchill’s war ministry during the Second World War), Cameron’s second ministry formed on 8 May 2015 was the first Conservative majority government since 1996. The British electoral system continues to limit access to decision-making power for small political parties, especially new or ‘niche’ parties. The UK’s first-past-the-post system makes it hard for smaller parties to win seats in the parliament. According to Gaskarth (2013, 31), the “tradition of bipartisanship prevails over much British foreign policy discussion, limiting the scope for radical new policy directions”. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) provides a perfect example. Despite gaining a striking 12.6% of the total votes in the May 2015 general election, partially on an anti-immigration platform, they only won a single seat in Westminster.

The courts play a significant role in the UK asylum and refugee regime; three-quarters of rejected asylum claims go to appeal and a third of initial decisions are overturned (Sturge 2021). Moreover, in June 2015, a High Court Judge of the England and Wales High Court, ruled that the Detained Fast Track (DFT) appeals process, whereby many people arriving in the UK to claim asylum were immediately detained in high-security immigration detention centres, while their claims were processed, was ruled unlawful (Detention Action v First-Tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) & Ors [2015] EWHC 1689 (Admin) 2015). The Court found that the DFT was ‘ultra vires’ and ‘structurally unfair’ resulting in the suspension
of the process. However, as noted above, the courts play a significant role in reviewing the interpretation and implementation of legislation and policy measures as opposed to initiating responses to the crisis.

3.1.2 Significant ‘others’

Moving from domestic structures and actors to the international level, from a role theory perspective, France represents a significant ‘other’ for the UK (alongside the US) (McCourt 2014). This is also the case in relation to immigration policy, owed in no small part to the UK’s extraterritorial southern border. The Le Touquet Treaty, a bilateral agreement between the UK and France, established so-called ‘juxtaposed’ border controls (UKTS 2003). Under the treaty, British security controls and border checks take place on French territory, at ports and terminals in northern France and Paris. British border guards conduct checks in Coquelles, Calais and Paris to prevent the irregular entry of migrants to the UK via the Channel tunnel, ferries, or the Eurostar, and thereby preventing access to UK territory for asylum seekers.

Regarding EU asylum and migration governance, the extent to which the UK participated in the CEAS and EU immigration legislation in 2015/16 requires some clarification. The UK always held a distinctive position in relation to immigration and border controls in the EU. The UK (and Ireland) opted out of the Schengen agreement from the outset, establishing a special protocol to the EU Treaties, which states that both countries can retain autonomous border controls (TFEU Protocol (No 21)). However, the UK did opt-in to some border control and enforcement areas of the Schengen acquis, such as police and judicial cooperation (European Council 2000). Subsequently, the UK selectively opted into some provisions, specifically, the first phase of the CEAS, including the Temporary Protection Directive (Council Directive 2001/55/EC) and the initial asylum qualification, procedures, and reception conditions directives implemented between 1999-2004 (Geddes 2005). However, the coalition government in 2013 declined to participate in the second phase, the recast asylum directives, citing that “we do not judge that this would be in Britain’s best interests” (Home Office 2013).

The UK did, however, opted into the Dublin III Regulation and the recast EUROPDAC Regulation. Notably, under Dublin, the UK was able to return asylum seekers to the first

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20 A ‘significant other’ is a concept derived from Mead’s (1934) theory of the ‘self’ and refers to those who influence or shape the behaviour of another (refer to Chapter III on the theoretical framework for further information).
country through which they entered the EU (‘Dublin returns’). Geddes (2005, 723) observes that Britain opted into the policies that “reinforced rather than overturned established patterns” in domestic politics. The UK’s approach can be interpreted as opting into policies that strengthened border controls and limited immigration, which was perceived as in the national interest, and opted out of directives on minimum protection standards. Furthermore, whilst the UK only had observer status on the Frontex Management Board, it did contribute to joint operations to tackling irregular migration to the EU, coordinated by Frontex, on a case-by-case basis.

3.2 German context

The section discusses the domestic context, institutions, actors, and constraints specific to the German case study.

3.2.1 Historical context

The historical context of asylum and refugee policy in Germany differs significantly from the UK. The decision to enshrine the right to political asylum in Article 16a of the German Basic Law (Art. 16a GG) in 1949 was a response to Germany’s experience of National Socialism and a step towards addressing the country’s past (Vergangenheitsbewältigung). It was also influenced by the relatively small number of European countries that accepted asylum seekers fleeing National Socialism during WWII (Laubenthal 2016). In the aftermath of the war, an estimated 12 million ethnic Germans (Aussiedler) immigrated to West Germany, with a further 4 million repatriates immigrating to (West) Germany from the former Soviet Union in the early 1950s (Green 2013). By 1950, 16% of the West German population were refugees and expellees (Scholten and Geddes 2016, 77).

The mid-1950s to early 1970s were characterised by the large scale recruitment of ‘guestworkers’ (Gastarbeiter) predominantly from southern Europe and Turkey and the subsequent (unexpected) arrival of their families. The 1990s saw the incremental introduction of policies to restrict the immigration of Aussiedler, such as setting criteria based on date of birth and limiting rights upon arrival. Moreover, the end of the Cold War and conflict in the former Yugoslavia saw a dramatic increase in asylum seekers, with 1.2 million asylum claims in Germany from 1990-1994 (Scholten and Geddes 2016, 79).
The increase in asylum seekers in the 1980s-90s triggered debates over Germany’s ‘special obligations’ under Article 16 of the Basic Law and a move to reassert control over asylum seeking migration. This was achieved through an amendment of Article 16a of the constitution that restricted the scope of Germany’s provisions for asylum seekers. The amendment, referred to as the ‘asylum compromise’ (Asylkompromiss), tightened admission policies by introducing a new clause (Art. 16a (2) GG) that excludes those who have entered the territory through a ‘safe third country’, defined as a country were the Refugee Convention and European Human Rights Convention is assured (Rietig and Müller 2016). Since all countries bordering Germany are ‘safe’ under this definition, no asylum seekers entering Germany by land have access to protection.

Despite significant immigration movements, Germany held on to the counter-factual national mantra that it was ‘not a country of immigration’, a leitmotiv of coalition agreements throughout the 80s and 90s, until the early 2000s (Green 2013). In July 2001, the Independent Commission of Immigration, led by former Bundestag President Rita Süßmuth, officially declared Germany a country of immigration in a report to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Otto Schilly (Unabhängige Kommission “Zuwanderung” 2001). The report stated that Germany needed immigration to remain economically competitive and tackle a declining and ageing population. This report is regarded as the “official, legal and political recognition” of Germany as a country of immigration (Foroutan 2017, 125) and led to a reorientation of migration policy and the first proposed legislation to give Germany a regulated immigration system.

3.2.2 Actors and institutions

The German institutional context differs from the UK in several significant ways. Firstly, Germany is a federal democratic republic with sixteen federal states (Länder). Asylum and refugee policy is predominantly reserved to the federal government and the Ministry of the Interior has the initiative and sets the tone on policy development, implementation, and enforcement. Germany is also a consensus democracy led by multi-party coalition governments. Chancellor Angela Merkel’s third cabinet (December 2013 - March 2018) was a ‘Grand Coalition’ led by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), with their Bavarian sister-party Christian Social Union (CSU), and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). As discussed in the previous section, coalition politics can act as both a constraint on asylum policy decision-making or increase the likelihood of party politics affecting migration policy, depending on the allocation of ministries and whether party ideology maps onto bureaucratic function
During Merkel’s third cabinet the most important ministries in asylum policy, specifically the Interior Ministry, but also the Finance and Defence ministries, were held by the CDU. The SPD was allocated the Foreign Ministry, while the CSU was assigned the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, which is responsible for the allocation of ODA.

Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maizière, was primarily responsible for asylum and refugee policy in 2015/16. However, it became clear in August 2015 that Chancellor Angela Merkel was taking the lead in response to the crisis, supporting the premise that in a crisis scenario, decision-making reverts to the leadership (Boin et al. 2017, 3). Moreover, in early October 2015, Merkel appointed her chief of staff and Minister for Special Affairs at the Chancellery, Peter Altmaier, as the political coordinator of Germany’s response to the ‘migration crisis’, thereby transferring decision-making authority from the Ministry of the Interior to the Chancellery.

German bicameral parliament is the primary source of scrutiny and the elected lower house, the Bundestag, is the main arena for publicly holding the government to account. However, in the case of a grand coalition, it is highly unlikely that government proposals will be rejected in the Bundestag (Brummer and Oppermann 2016). The federal states can exert some influence over immigration policy through the Bundesrat (the upper house and representative body of the federal states), which must approve legislation that directly affects the federal states, and also possess veto rights over all other law.

At the bureaucratic level, asylum applications are processed by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), which sits under the Ministry of the Interior. However, upon arrival in Germany, asylum seekers are distributed among the federal states according to the so-called ‘Königstein key’, a quota system that determines the allocation of asylum seekers based on the population size and tax revenues of each federal state. The federal states are then responsible for accommodating the asylum seekers and providing money and services in kind for their subsistence while their claims are processed by regional BAMF offices.

The German Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) plays a very important role in asylum and refugee policy. The first seven articles of the German constitution, German Basic Law (Grundgesetz (GG)), protect human rights irrespective of nationality. Moreover, the right to seek asylum from political persecution in Germany is enshrined in Article 16a of the Basic Law and in sections 22–25 and 60 of the Residence Act and in the Asylum Act. In contrast to most other European countries, it recognises the right of an asylum seeker to make a claim as opposed to the responsibility of the state to process an application. Consequently, the
Federal Constitutional Court is fully empowered to uphold Germany’s human rights obligations against restrictionist government policies. Thus, counter to the claim that external international law constrains national sovereignty, in the case of Germany, the subordination of state power to individuals’ rights and the right to asylum enshrined in the Basic Law is self-imposed.

Due to Germany’s corporatist political system, non-political actors, such as church organisations and other societal actors, and economic actors who benefit from immigration, such as industry and employer associations also play an institutionalised role in lobbying the federal government and shaping public opinion (Ilgit and Klotz 2018). Finally, given the high salience of asylum and refugee policy in public discourse during the height of the ‘migration crisis’, it is expected that politicians took account of public sentiment so as not to affect their electoral prospects.

3.2.3 Significant ‘others’

As stated, asylum rights were enshrined in German constitutional law in reaction to Germany’s National Socialist past, supporting the proposition that history was (and remains) a negative ‘significant other’ in Germany (Harnisch 2012, 61). Given the scale of the movement of people within the context of the European ‘migration crisis’, and the associated perception of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, Germany’s neighbours can also be viewed as significant in exerting pressure and expectations regarding Germany’s response to the ‘crisis’. Austria and Hungary were identified as particularly relevant due to Germany’s shared southern border with Austria, and both countries geographical location along the West Balkan migration route. Moreover, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was the most outspoken leader of an EU member state in his criticism of Germany’s approach to the ‘migration crisis’.

The most significant ‘other’ for Germany in this policy area is, however, the EU. Germany was instrumental in the integration of EU migration policy and a keen advocate of the development of the CEAS and responsibility sharing measures (Geddes and Scholten 2016, 95). Germany also has a history of ‘uploading’ national policy preferences on immigration to the EU level (Laubenthal 2019). For instance, in the early 1990s, the German government under the leadership of Helmut Kohl strongly advocated for the inclusion of the ‘safe third country’ principle, institutionalised in German constitutional law in 1993 (Art. 16a (2) GG), at the EU level.
Germany’s national policy preferences were essentially facilitated by the EU’s Dublin system, in particular via the ‘first country of entry’ rule, ‘safe country of origin’ and ‘manifestly unfounded application for international protection’ principles. This in turn, significantly reduced the number of asylum applications to Germany (Geddes and Scholten 2016). During the ‘migration crisis’, Germany put a great deal of political pressure on EU member states to accept the EU relocation scheme and played an instrumental role in negotiating the EU-Turkey agreement; two examples of Germany’s role in EU migration policy, which are explored in greater detail in Chapter VIII.

4. Review of the migration literature

This section focuses on the main approaches that set out to explain migration policy, defined as the regulations, rules and procedures governing the selection and admission of foreign nationals (Meyers 2000), as opposed to policy that determines conditions for resident migrants and integration. The review demonstrates that approaches to the analysis of migration policy largely focus on either domestic politics or international relations, with very few contributions that bridge the domestic/international divide or adopt an actor-specific approach. In focusing on either the domestic or international level of analysis, I suggest that the existing research is rather siloed; a micro approach is commonly adopted in Comparative Politics and macro approach in International Relations.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, asylum and refugee policy decision makers are embedded in both domestic and international structures and norms. Consequently, I posit that during the decision-making process political elites take international and domestic factors and audiences into account. However, the division in migration research between comparative politics and IR approaches does not currently reflect this phenomenon. Therefore, I propose that FPA’s role theory provides an opportunity for a comprehensive understanding and explanation of asylum and refugee policy decision-making and policy behaviour, that takes the interaction between the international and domestic realms during the decision-making process into account.

Research on migration policy is largely dominated by two theoretical schools of thought: neoclassical political economy (see Freeman 1995; Menz 2008; Ruhs and Martin 2008) and neo-institutionalist approaches (see Soysal 1994; Joppke 1998; Hollifield 1999; 2000). In addition to these paradigms, this section examines a small body of work on political opportunity structures (Bale and Partos 2014; Boswell and Hough 2008; Hampshire and Bale
International Relations approaches including theories of securitisation (Bigo 2002; Gammeltoft-Hansen 2011; Heisler and Layton-Henry 1993; Huysmans 2000; Koslowski 1998b; Lahav and Courtemanche 2011) and work that focuses on collective action and responsibility-sharing (Betts 2003; Sandler and Arce M. 2003; Thielemann 2012; Thielemann and Armstrong 2013) are also analysed.

4.1 Domestic politics approaches

Domestic politics approaches to the analysis of migration policy tend to be empirically driven. Experts in law or an aspect of social life commonly focus on a specific factor of migration policy, such as the role of courts, interest groups or political parties, in one or a few countries, providing rich empirical data to support claims. However, this extensive body of research, across multiple disciplines (law, geography, sociology, anthropology, and political science), has occasionally been described as “a-theoretical” (Meyers 2000, 1259). Therefore, given this thesis’ theory-building aims, the domestic politics approaches examined in this section have been identified for their theoretical contributions and relevance to the research and does not represent an exhaustive overview of all scholarship in migration studies. Note that research on ‘liberal constraints’ (Hollifield 1992), which examines domestic political constraints as factors exogenous to preference formation that shape and constrain policy decision-making, is explored under neo-institutionalist approaches.

4.1.1 Political economy

The majority of political economy accounts focus on the causes of migration and asylum flows and the effects on the labour market, welfare state or the cultural homogeneity of the receiving country, as opposed to what shapes policy decisions (see for example Borjas 1989; Massey et al. 1993). These approaches tend to focus on ‘pull factors’ and demand, e.g., for labour. The most ground-breaking account of migration policy from a political economy perspective was developed by Gary Freeman (1995).

Freeman posited that organized interest groups drive immigration policy. Initially applied to liberal democracies, he argues that those who either carry the costs or benefit from immigration are incentivised to organise and lobby governments, thereby influencing decision-making. Policymakers are conceptualised as brokers of public interests and self-interested
vote-maximisers. Thus, pro-immigration ‘clients’ who are incentivised and well-resourced, such as labour market employers, strategically lobby governments and influence policy decisions. The costs of immigration, on the other hand, are difficult to define and comparatively diffuse, and largely fall on disadvantaged communities that may compete with migrants for housing, benefits, and services, such as education, but are unlikely to organise and lobby politicians. Therefore, organised pro-immigration interest groups have a larger influence on policy decisions, which accounts for liberal immigration policies despite diffuse anti-immigration sentiment among publics.

This approach would suggest that the relative weighting of organised interest groups within a given state explains variation in refugee regimes. However, this model highlights several significant issues with political economy and narrow interest-based approaches to migration. Firstly, there is little empirical evidence to support a purely costs-benefits understanding of interests in this policy area (see, for example, Thielemann and Armstrong 2013). The rational choice theory of agency has been challenged for not taking institutional and ideational factors into account in mediating interests (Boswell 2007, 76; Statham and Geddes 2006). Freeman’s conceptualisation of the state as a broker of organised societal interests has been criticised for being reductionist. Finally, EU scholars have stated that the model overlooks the role of other actors, including political parties, at a time when immigration issues in Europe have become increasingly ‘politicised’ (Perlmutter 1996, 376).

4.1.2 Political opportunity structures and parties

Research on migration policy notes a range of domestic actors that influence policy output. However, political parties have traditionally received relatively short shrift due largely to a lack of dialogue between political scientists working on parties and those working on immigration policy (Perlmutter 1996; Triadafilopoulos and Zaslove 2006). More recent exceptions highlight the challenge, like European integration, of immigration for mainstream political parties (Bale 2008; Bale and Partos 2014; Dennison and Geddes 2019; Hampshire and Bale 2015; Odmalm and Bale 2015; Odmalm and Super 2014). However, the extent to which migration ‘issues’ fit the traditional socio-economic party-political left-right dimension is disputed.

Some studies suggest that immigration divides mainstream parties and voters along multi-dimensional ideological and strategic lines (Baylerlein 2021; Odmalm and Bale 2015; Odmalm and Super 2014). Odmalm and Super (2014) argue immigration strains parties’ stances on state-market relations (State Interventionist (SI)/Free Market (FM)) and state-individual
relations (Green/Alternative/Libertarian (GAL)/ Traditional/Authoritarian/ Nationalist (TAN)) resulting in intra-party disagreements:

“The framing challenges presented by immigration therefore captures the tensions between the FM and the TAN aspects of some centre-right parties, and the SI and the GAL facets that are equally characteristic for some centre-left parties.” (Odmalm and Super 2014, 302)

Others argue that the liberal-restrictive policy axis regarding immigration control maps onto the single dimensional left-right continuum, with centre-right parties focusing on immigration control and adopting more restrictive policies than centre-left parties (Bale 2003; Perlmutter 1996). Nevertheless, like the FPA scholarship on parties, the migration research does, however, agree that ‘parties matter’ through electoral commitments, mediating policy preferences, issue-ownership, agenda setting, increasing the salience of immigration policy and public opinion.

The area that has received the most attention is the impact of ‘fringe’ or ‘extreme’ parties. The rise of anti-immigration sentiment and populist radical right parties in Europe in recent years has become the focus of research on competition party politics and policy selection in migration studies (Bale 2003; Bale et al. 2009; Boswell and Hough 2008; Odmalm and Super 2014). This work suggests that political parties can mobilise electoral support by occupying the ‘space’ (or set of preferences) that is underrepresented by other parties, thereby influencing policy. Boswell and Hough (2008), for example, focus on the risks and opportunities for political mobilization that migration and asylum issues offer centre-right parties by championing restrictive policies.

Once anti-immigration sentiment is mobilized, mainstream parties may be persuaded to adopt more restrictive policies in line with populist public opinion to regain support from the populist or radical right (see Meguid 2005 and Odmalm 2018 for a discussion of mainstream party strategies in response to niche parties). However, by framing European mainstream parties’ approach to immigration purely in relation to the populist radical right implies that mainstream parties are incapable of coming to their own conclusions (Bale 2008, 320). The approach is also criticised for under-theorising the risks of taking the opportunities to mobilise (Boswell and Hough 2008, 331) and being tautological and vague in defining ‘opportunities’ and ‘structures’ for social mobilisation and collective action (Koopmans 1999, 94).

The main limitation of the research on parties, political cleavages, and immigration policy is that it rarely differentiates between sub-categories of migration (labour, family reunification,
student, and asylum migration) and often neglects asylum policy altogether (see, for example, Hampshire and Bale 2015, Bale 2015, Partos and Bale 2015). This is surprising given (or is perhaps due to) the distinct domestic and international legal, institutional, and normative context of asylum policy, addressed earlier in this chapter. And yet, we know from empirically driven research, that political parties in Europe adopt different approaches based on the salience of different migrant categories, commonly liberal policies on high skilled immigration and restrictive policies on asylum (see Geddes and Scholten 2016). Finally, despite an increase in scholarship on the influence of parties on migration policy, research into the role of parliaments and the executive-legislative relationship in this policy area remains lacking.

4.1.4 National identity approaches

Public philosophies or ‘national identity’ approaches represent another body of research (Brubaker 1992, 1995; Hollifield 1999a; Kurthen 1995) that most closely resembles constructivism in International Relations (Wendt 1992), but could also be considered a ‘domestic politics approach’, given that it focuses on characteristics within the state. Brubacker’s (1992) comparative work on citizenship and nationhood in Germany and France suggests that historical patterns and traditions of thought on identity (cultural, ethnic and language-based) determine policy. The collective memory of a country’s approaches to migration influences asylum and migration policy decision-making. Hollifield (Cornelius, Martin, and Hollifield 1994; Hollifield 1999a) attributes France’s liberal migration policies to its political culture of republicanism. Kurthen (1995, 914) argues that post-reunification tensions in Germany between nationhood and immigration can be traced back to “unresolved contradictions between exclusive ideas of the nation-state and inclusive ideas of republican and universal principles of individual human and civil rights”.

While these approaches offer an explanation of divergent policy based on national identities, traditions, cultural idioms, and unique histories that “frame and shape judgments of what is politically imperative”, they commonly neglect the external dimension, situational context or exogenous shocks (Meyers 2000, 1255). Moreover, in comparison to other approaches, they do not theorise policy change. Furthermore, the introduction of increasingly protectionist policies since the 1990s, in countries such as France, which was understood to practice liberal integration and naturalization policies due to its republican traditions, has called these approaches and their continued relevance into question.
4.2 International Relations theories

The study of migration policy has traditionally been dominated by other disciplines, including geography, sociology and anthropology and is not a well-established field of International Relations (IR); it has mainly been incorporated into subfields such as security studies or nationalism studies (see Lahav and Lavenex 2012 for discussion). Since international migration debates are often characterised by interdisciplinarity and linked to several issue areas, including security, development, trade, markets and human rights, the subject has proved incompatible with many ‘pure’ International Relations approaches. For example, neo-realist perspectives, stating that migration policies represent the outcome of states pursuing their ‘national interests’ (see Weiner 1985), have been debunked as reductionist; not only is there limited evidence to suggest that individual states can control migration flows, as self-serving interest-driven policies are constrained by domestic and international laws and institutions (Hollifield 1999b), but the approach also struggles to explain why states are increasingly cooperating in this policy area and ceding sovereignty to supranational (EU) institutions (Koslowski 1998a).

4.2.1 International public goods

A significant amount of existing IR analysis on policy responses to forced migration has been on the conditions under which international cooperation occurs (Betts and Loescher 2011). International public goods paradigms have been applied to asylum policy to explain why states might carry greater responsibility (rights enhancing policies) or less responsibility (restrictive policies) for asylum seekers within a community of states. Public goods theory has become a crucial analytical tool for assessing responsibility-sharing structures and has been applied extensively to the analysis of collective action in the area of defence (Olson and Zeckhauser 1966), environmental and climate change policy, and ‘burden-sharing’ for asylum seekers and refugees (Noll 2003; Suhrke 1998; Thielemann 2003, 2018; Thielemann and Armstrong 2013). The benefits of collective action or responsibility sharing are understood to outweigh the costs to individual members of a community or alliance of states. The public goods conceptualisation of refugee and asylum provision is either implicitly or explicitly an assumption of the theories on collective action and ‘burden-sharing’.

The ‘insurance scheme’ model (a cost-benefit rationale) suggests that states offset the costs of provision for asylum reception against the expectation of shared responsibility in the event of increased pressures in the future (Noll 2003, 237). The ‘free-rider’ hypothesis (Olson and
Zeckhauser (1966) posits that larger and economically wealthier states within an alliance will shoulder international public goods ‘burdens’, while small states ‘free-ride’ off their provision. Betts (2003) posits a ‘joint-product’ model, stating that a combination of public goods (international benefits) and private goods (country-specific benefits) determine whether a state enters into responsibility-sharing arrangements. While the literature tends to be dominated by rational choice assumptions, a few academics have suggested that states enter into responsibility-sharing arrangements driven by ‘logics of appropriateness’ as opposed to ‘logic of expected consequence’ (March and Olsen 1996, 252). They posit that solidarity with other states or with asylum seekers based on established norms, beliefs and human rights obligations determine levels of provision for asylum seekers (Thielemann 2003).

4.2.2 Critical security studies

The influx of migration following the end of the Cold War and the accession process of central and eastern European countries to the EU resulted in “control logics” and the development of the concept of “bogus and economic asylum” (Vollmer 2011, 317). The apparent failure of policy to control the entry and residence of irregular migration since the 1990s saw the introduction of increasingly restrictionist legislation at both EU and national levels, legitimising concern of ‘uncontrollable’ migration. Research on migration policy shifted from a socioeconomic issue to a security issue (Weiner 1993). An extensive body of scholarship emerged that explores the domestic and international security implications of migration, including forced migration (Bigo 2002; Dowty and Loescher 1996; Guild and Selm 2005; Léonard and Kaunert 2019; Loescher 1992; Loescher et al. 2008; Newman and Selm 2003; Weiner 1993).

The ‘securitisation of migration’, both in relation to law and policy in Europe, was reinforced following the 9/11 terror attack and the subsequent salience of international terrorism (Faist 2006; Lahav and Lavenex 2012). Copenhagen School securitisation theory (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998; Wæver 1995) became an important addition to the discussion on the securitisation of migration, focusing on claim-making and speech acts (Boswell 2007; Bourbeau 2011; Buonfino 2004; Huysmans 2000, 2006; Léonard and Kaunert 2019; Neal 2009). The Paris School approach suggests that mundane security practices outwith political debate, often associated with enforcement, such as surveillance or border patrols, securitisises migration (Bigo 2002). European scholars have broadened research on migration and security to include demographics and transnational criminality (Koslowski 1998b), societal security and
conflict (Heisler and Layton-Henry 1993), and the role of networks and immigration concerning the threat of terrorism (Lahav and Courtemanche 2011).

This extensive body of work offers an *explanans* for the political construction of migration as a security issue, and the implementation of increasingly protectionist policies evident at both national and EU levels since the early 1990s (Huysmans 2000). However, it is less effective at explaining the gap between the political discourse on migration and security issues and the implementation of relatively liberal policies (Hollifield 1992). Why do states implement liberal policies despite security discourses? Accounts also struggle to account for policy change and the implementation of rights enhancing policies at a time when the threat of terrorism is high, as in the case of Germany in 2015. This phenomenon has been most convincingly addressed by scholarship situated in the neo-institutionalist school, often referred to as ‘liberal constraints’ theories (Boswell 2007).

4.2.3 Neo-institutionalism

Neo-institutionalist accounts identify the relationship between the state and institutions as the key explanatory variable of asylum and migration policy. According to this approach, both formal (electoral systems, constitutional provisions, courts etc.) and informal (shared norms and beliefs) institutions constrain national governments, preventing the implementation of overtly restrictionist regimes. This may include a range or combination of constraints including systemic, institutional, material or normative (see Soysal 1994; Hollifield 1999a; Joppke 1998a) and is referred to as the ‘liberal constraints’ hypothesis (Hollifield 1992, 1999, 58–59).

Interaction between domestic and international or supranational institutions. International human rights logics and norms, domestic constitutional and judicial institutions and institutionalised rules, the rule of law, liberal markets and EU free movement provisions act to shape and constrain what is feasible at the domestic level (Hollifield 1999b; Joppke 1998a; Soysal 1994). Guiraudon (2000), on the other hand, argues that EU cooperation in this policy area has created an opportunity for ‘venue-shopping’, whereby policymakers seek to use EU institutional policy venues to push through restrictive asylum and migration policies that would not be possible at a domestic level, due to institutionalised constraints, such as national constitutions.

In conclusion, a review of the literature has shown that scholarship on migration policy tends to focus on domestic politics or international relations (international law and norms or
international cooperation). The International Relations (IR) scholarship commonly focuses on the contradictions and tensions between the economic and security impact of asylum seekers and refugees on the one hand, and humanitarian norms and international human rights, on the other (Levy 2005; Schuster 2000). However, these approaches tend to ‘black-box’ the state. Neo-institutionalist approaches, while examining some variables within the state and at an international/supranational level, have been criticised for assuming institutionalised rules, norms and expectations are exogenous, unitary and uncontested (Boswell 2007, 78). Moreover, although neo-institutionalist approaches help explain the broad trajectory of asylum and migration policy, they do not theorise policy change. Public goods approaches and the joint product model address the importance of states’ interests in explaining motivations for collective action and variation in refugee and asylum policy. However, they are rooted in the a priori assumption that the state is a unitary rational actor and stop short of examining factors within the state that shape and constrain preferences in this policy area.

More empirically driven research on the domestic politics of migration policy suggests that both strategic national and material interests, as well as human rights norms, influence decision-making. However, these studies commonly focus on a specific factor of immigration policy, and largely neglect the international context. Finally, the research examined suggests that few scholars in migration studies focus on the individual level of analysis or the impact of political elites’ beliefs and perceptions on decision-making. When considering the national and international dynamics of refugee and asylum policy explored in this chapter, it is surprising that the impact of decision makers’ perceptions of domestic (internal) and international (external) pressures, obligations and expectations on shaping preferences and policy behaviour has not received more attention. Moreover, by focusing on either a domestic or international level of analysis the research explored does not offer a comprehensive or holistic understanding and explanation of asylum and refugee policy decision-making.

Consequently, the benefits of applying FPA’s role theory, which cuts across traditional boundaries between comparative politics and IR, focuses on a variety of decision makers and audiences in institutional settings (thereby unpacking the state) and bridging levels of analysis, for the study of asylum and refugee policy are vast. I argue that a role theory frame puts decision makers and their understandings/perceptions/beliefs at a central analytic position but integrates the other, relevant domestic and international factors in a multi-levelled framework. This argument is developed further in the following chapter, which explores role theory and its potential for the analysis of asylum and refugee policy.
Chapter III

A Role Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of Refugee Protection Policy

This chapter illustrates the potential offered by adopting a theoretical framework grounded in role theory for the study of refugee and asylum policy decision-making. The theoretical approach developed borrows from Holsti’s role theory (1970) and work in foreign policy analysis, which examines foreign policy behaviour and the constraints and opportunities created by domestic political processes (see for example Risse-Kappen 1991; Oppermann 2012; Howell 2015; Brummer and Thies 2015; Cantir and Kaarbo 2012, 2016). The underlying assumption is that decision makers make policy decisions based on their perception of the role their state plays within a social system of states. It builds on scholarship that sets out to unpack the international and domestic sources of national role conceptions and their impact on decision-making (Brummer and Thies 2015; Cantir and Kaarbo 2012, 2016; Koenig 2016; Thies 2012; Wehner and Thies 2014). In turn, by developing a framework for a policy area that has not previously been explored from a role theory perspective, it contributes to a growing body of literature in foreign policy analysis that explores the strengths of the approach and areas for further development and investigation.

The chapter introduces some of the key theoretical debates within the field that are relevant to the policy area and therefore this research. It is not meant to be an exhaustive or comprehensive overview of role theory scholarship21 but an outline of some of the larger debates as justification for the decisions made in the development of the theoretical model applied. The discussion illustrates the novelty of the theoretical framework and how a sociological role theory approach has the potential to address some of the criticisms levelled at the existing literature on states’ policy responses to forced migration, explored in Chapter

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21 For a comprehensive summary of role theory research see (Breuning 2017; Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011b; Thies 2010).
II. It should be noted that role theory research specifically on Germany and the UK is discussed later in the thesis, in Chapters V and VII, respectively.

The chapter proceeds as follows: the origin of role theory in social psychology and sociology is outlined and the framework is positioned within the context of existing role theory scholarship. A symbolic interactionist role theory framework for refugee and asylum policy decision-making is suggested that sets out to offer a comprehensive analysis of the political, institutional, ideational, and material factors that shaped the decision-making process during the European migrant crisis. The framework focuses on three analytically distinct processes: 1) national role conceptions; 2) the role location/selection process; 3) role performance/enactment.

Finally, the chapter demonstrates how a role theory approach offers a rich vocabulary and an array of conceptual tools, which link norms and identity with politics and action through the concept of ‘role’, to operationalise the ideational dimension of asylum and refugee policy decision-making. Secondly, it illustrates how through adopting a process-orientated model that utilises both agents and structures, the approach offers a plausible account of agents embedded in structures. Thirdly, it highlights how the approach enables the investigation of different levels of analysis.

1. The origins of role theory

Role theory was first introduced to International Relations and the study of foreign policy by the publication of Holsti’s (1970) seminal work on national role conceptions. The approach originates from sociology, social psychology and anthropology and its central concept of ‘role’ is a reference to the theatre (Breuning 2017; Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011b; Thies 2010). The premise is that individuals play roles within a group of individuals (or society), much as an actor follows a script and plays different roles on the stage. Holsti took the metaphor and applied it to the international state system to explain states’ foreign policy behaviour. He argued that decision makers’ interpretation of the role their state plays in the international system, be it *regional leader, faithful ally, mediator, independent* or one of 13 other roles he identifies, shapes the state’s foreign policy behaviour. Long before constructivism in

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22 Holsti (1970, 260-270) developed a typology of 17 roles in total, expressed by states between 1965-1967, including: *bastion of revolution-liberator, regional leader, regional protector, active independent,*
International Relations theory, Holsti had identified the importance of national identity, international and cultural norms and the related concept of ‘roles’, alongside structural and material factors, for the study of state behaviour in international relations.

Holsti’s pioneering piece on role theory in foreign policy analysis was proceeded by a succession of research in the field, which falls loosely into three waves of scholarship. Early role theorists in foreign policy analysis tended to focus on the impact of international systems on the role(s) a state adopts (Holsti 1970; Walker 1987; Wish 1980; Shih 1988). This research set out to explain state behaviour with reference to sets of duties, rights and responsibilities and the associated a priori roles in the international system. In doing so, these early contributions to the literature remained related to structural approaches to international relations by replicating the focus on the attributes of states (such as political system, population size, geography, material resources etc.) and “decision makers’ perceptions of the constraints and opportunities created by the international environment rather than domestic sources of role conceptions” (Breuning 2011, 17, 2017).

These early empirical studies identified some correlation between national role conceptions (NRC) and foreign policy behaviour. However, they have been criticised for downplaying agency in the agent-structure relationship and therefore not taking full advantage of role theory’s potential to bridge the agent-structure divide (Breuning 2011, 2017, 2; Thies 2010, 9). The sociological turn in political science following the end of the Cold War brought about renewed interest in foreign policy analysis and agency-orientated approaches in political science. This shift saw renewed endeavours to develop role theory and enhance its explanatory power (Barnett 1993; Breuning 1995; Chafetz, Abramson, and Grillot 1996; Kirste and Maull 1996; Macleod 1997).

The most recent wave of scholarship followed a workshop at the International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Conference in 2010 entitled Integrating Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations through Role Theory. The workshop aimed to explore ‘the ways role theory can bridge the divide between foreign policy analysis and international relations’ (Thies and Breuning 2012, 2). It initiated a dialogue between scholars from both traditions around the potential that role theory offers in integrating an IR focus on international structures with FPA scholars’ interest in agency. The workshop, an edited volume by Harnisch, Frank, and Maull

_**liberation supporter, anti-imperialist agent,**_ defender of the faith, mediator-integrator, regional-subsystem collaborator, developer, bridge, faithful ally, independent, example, internal development, isolate, and protectee.
(2011), and publications by McCourt (2011, 2012) around the same time, rejuvenated interest in the conceptual and theoretical potential of role theory.

The ensuing scholarship makes several significant theoretical and conceptual contributions, including, but not limited to, the integration of the concept of international state socialisation into role theory and the examination and disaggregation of the domestic sources of national role conceptions (Brummer and Thies 2015; Cantir and Kaarbo 2012, 2016; Thies 2013; Wehner and Thies 2014). Whilst borrowing heavily from earlier work, this research is situated in and builds upon the most recent role theoretical research, which unpacks the domestic sources of national role conceptions within the wider international context.

This thesis conceptualises role theory as a collection of assumptions akin to a framework, as opposed to a grand theory (Thies 2010, Breuning 2011). Roles are defined as sets of social positions and socially recognised categories of actors constituted by external (alter) and domestic (ego) expectations within a social system of states (Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011, 8). Roles set the parameters that help define policy preferences, and decision makers legitimise their policy actions based on their perception of the role that their state should play within the international community (national role conceptions). A state is understood to play multiple roles, or ‘role sets’, representing interests and preferences in different policy areas and interpretations of different policy issues (Holsti 1970). Different roles available within a set hold varying degrees of importance and not all roles are considered equally central to foreign policy (Breuning and Pechenina 2020, 21). Therefore, roles can be understood as hierarchical, comprising of master roles, and auxiliary roles that are specific to a particular issue area (Harnisch 2011; Thies 2010; Wehner 2015, 435).

Master roles are described as synonymous with status and are related to a state’s most salient attribute (Thies 2013; Wehner 2015, 435). For instance, in relation to the two country case studies, research suggests that Germany holds a master role as a civilian power (Harnisch and Maull 2001; Kirste and Maull 1996; Maull 1990; Wolff 2013); whereas Oppermann, Beasley, and Kaarbo (2020) argue that the UK is casting for a new foreign policy or master role, following the UK’s exit from the EU (Brexit), with political elites communicating several possibilities, including great power, global trading state, leader of the Commonwealth, regional partner to the EU, and faithful ally to the US. According to Thies (2012, 33), master roles limit the available auxiliary roles a state could play, since states will “pursue auxiliary roles consistent with their master roles, or be subject to socializing pressure to abandon them or transition to a different master status” (Thies 2012, 34). Although this research focuses on national role conceptions related to the specific issue of asylum and refugee provision during the situational context of the European ‘migration crisis’, it is assumed that master roles will
have limited the scope of possible national role conceptions the UK and Germany could have enacted.

According to Breuning and Pechenina (2020, 22), states can hold auxiliary roles that are inconsistent with master roles for an extended period of time. However, once the auxiliary role becomes salient, the dissonance between it and the master role becomes apparent and decision makers are incentivised to either modify or abandon the auxiliary role. Therefore, given the salience of migration policy during the crisis, we would expect any dissonance between master and asylum and refugee specific roles to be immediately visible. Thies (2013, 25) claims that “[f]oreign policy crises lead states to adjust their auxiliary roles within the boundaries established by their master status”. The assumption in this thesis is that the national role conceptions expressed during the ‘migration crisis’ were part of larger foreign policy role-sets related to foreign policy objectives and approaches to the Syrian civil war and regional roles as members of the EU.

2. A symbolic interactionist framework

Returning to the research puzzle outlined in Chapters I and II, the initial analysis of EU member states’ responses to the ‘migration crisis’ shows that member states did not necessarily behave as one would have expected. Some member states adopted policies that were neither in line with material considerations and rational self-interests nor necessarily compatible with EU and international laws and norms. Smaller member states initially accepted a disproportionate number of asylum seekers, whilst others ignored EU laws and regulations in favour of domestic considerations and interests.

We also see distinct changes in policy behaviour over the first six months of the ‘migration crisis’. This implies that the a priori roles that one may have intuitively expected to see, given structural, institutional, normative, and material considerations, were not enacted; rather, roles were adapted and negotiated both domestically and internationally throughout the third and fourth quarter of 2015, and into 2016, in response to the developing situation and other member states’ behaviour. It suggests that policy behaviour is neither stable over time nor is it formulated in a vacuum, independently of interaction or the situational context. Consequently, the theoretical framework developed in this thesis adopts a symbolic interactionist and process-orientated conceptualisation of sociological role theory.
Two distinct approaches to roles and how they understand social action can be identified in social psychology: symbolic interactionism and ‘structural’ role theory\(^23\), (Stryker and Statham 1985). The distinction between the two approaches to roles lies in their understanding of the extent to which the individual influences structures or structures influence individuals. As Stryker and Statham explain,

“Symbolic interactionism is a framework for the analysis of social interaction and the social person; it uses the concept of role to build “down” to the social person. [Structural] role theory is a framework for the analysis of social structure; it uses the concept of role to build “up” from interaction to larger units of organised social life” (1985, 344)

Thus, whilst they share the central tenet of ‘role’, the former focuses on the individual’s ability to negotiate, adapt, and change roles thereby influencing social structures, whereas the latter emphasises that individuals are socialised into roles. From a structural viewpoint, roles are sets of duties and rights associated with particular social positions, which constrain action and exist prior to social interaction (McCourt 2012, 375). In contrast, interactionist approaches focus on how “expectations that constitute roles emerge within interaction and on how individuals come to adopt and use them” (McCourt 2012, 376). This distinction between the two approaches to roles has prevailed within the application of role theory in political science.

Drawing on G. H. Mead’s social theory, outlined in his collection of lectures, *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), symbolic interactionist role scholarship applies Mead’s concept of the co-constitutive nature of the self and society to the roles of states in an international community of states. Mead posits that the ‘self’ is constructed of two parts that he terms the ‘biological individual’ and the ‘socially self-conscious individual’, which are in constant dialogue with one another (Mead 1934, 347). The former is unknown to the individual until the point of interaction, whereby it becomes an object of self-reflection through the reaction of the other; thus, becoming the latter. It follows that the ‘socially self-conscious individual’\(^24\), constitutes the internalized expectations or self-image of the role that should be played (behaviour), based on the ‘perceived’ expectations of the other (individual or ‘generalized other’), in any given situation.

Mead illustrates this co-constitutive relationship in social interaction by using the example of a ball game (Mead 1934, 151). To play an organised ball game, all participants must know the

\(^{23}\) Also referred to as ‘structural-functionalism’ (see for example McCourt 2012).

\(^{24}\) Or as Harnisch (Harnisch 2011, 39–40) refers to it: the ‘me’ as opposed to the ‘I’.
rules of the game, the expectations of the role they are playing in the game, understand the expected roles of other participants – who is pitching, catching, batting – and what each role involves. Thus, each player is constantly assuming the perspective of others, both in relation to their own role or expected behaviour and in relation to the role and expected behaviour of others. Moreover, a player may refer to their ‘historical self’, referring back to what they have done in a similar situation in the past (McCourt 2012, 377).

This analogy introduces the concepts of the self (or ‘ego’) expectations and the expectations of the other (or ‘alter’). Applying these concepts to state behaviour, the ‘ego’ can be understood as domestic expectations as to the appropriate role, whilst ‘alter’ expectations refer to the expectations of ‘significant others’ (state or non-state actors), ‘organised others’ (regional organisations) or ‘generalised others’ (the international community) (Harnisch 2012, 49). The ‘generalised other’ can also be understood as social norms or socially recognised ‘appropriate behaviour’, comparable with March and Olsen’s ‘logics of appropriateness’ (1996), whilst the ‘rules of the game’ are understood as more formal social norms, rules and responsibilities.

Within the context of asylum and refugee policy during the European ‘migration crisis’, significant ‘others’ could refer to neighbouring EU member states, sending states, international organisations, such as the UNHCR; the ‘organised other’ would refer to the EU and its institutions; whilst the generalised other would be, for example, all the signatories of the Refugee Convention and international refugee norms; the ‘rules of the game’ would refer to the formal national, EU, and international human rights and refugee laws. As discussed in Chapter II, section three, in immigration policy France is a ‘significant other’ to the UK due to the juxtaposed border controls. In Germany, the member states along the Balkan migrant route represented ‘significant others’ during the ‘migration crisis’, due to perceived ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, as well as the EU. It could also be argued that Germany’s National Socialist past acts as a ‘significant other’, where the differentiation is negative – a role never to be played again (negative othering) (Beneš and Harnisch 2015, 151; Harnisch 2012).

The ontological assumption of symbolic internationalist role theory is that meaning is derived from social interaction and through interpretation. Actors’ interactions with each other, the structures within which they interact, and their perception and interpretation of this reality determine behaviour. It seeks to unpack the relationship between the individual, their ideational structures and the structures of their environment that shape their behavioural responses to a given situation or policy problem (Crotty 1998). From this perspective, reality is created by social interaction and roles originate in the interaction between actors.
This thesis builds on the existing role theory scholarship from an interactionist perspective (Beneš and Harnisch 2015; Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011b; McCourt 2011, 2012; Teles Fazendeiro 2021; Wehner 2015, 2020; Wehner and Thies 2014), and develops a framework that focuses on three analytically distinct processes: 1) national role conceptions; 2) the role location/selection process; 3) role performance/enactment.

2.1 National role conceptions

National role conceptions are defined as a decision maker’s “perceptions of his/her position in relation to other’s (ego) and perception of role expectations of others (alter) as signalled through language and action” (Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011b, 9). They represent decision makers’ understanding of material and ideational factors at a domestic level and of the context and expectations of the international community. Holsti (1970, 246) describes national role conceptions (NRCs) as “policymakers’ own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions, suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform…in the international system”. Therefore, national role conceptions encapsulate decision makers’ perception of their state’s identity, cultural heritage and domestic audience, as well as the states material capacity and opportunities concerning a particular issue area (Breuning 2017, 14), in this case, asylum and refugee provision.

In addition to these domestic considerations (the ‘ego’ part of the role), role conceptions are influenced by perceptions of the external expectations and behaviour of others (the ‘alter’ part). Therefore, they are constituted by actors’ own perceptions of appropriate behaviour and by the expectations of others. Role expectations are conceptualised as either domestic or international expectations as to the ‘appropriate’ role a state should play and what that entails. This interpretation of role conceptions allows for parallels to be drawn with neo-institutionalist concepts of ‘logics of appropriateness’ (March and Olsen 2004). Actors behave in a way that reflects what they believe is expected of them in a given situation or context. Role conceptions can also vary significantly across time, institutional or organisational setting, and policy realm, and are therefore highly contextual (Beneš and Harnisch 2015; Elgström and Smith 2006b). Consequently, they are not necessarily stable as they are affected by learning and socialisation through interaction, negotiation, and context.

Moreover, "decision makers' perceptions of their state's role in the international environment form an important cue to the motivations and objectives that determine the policies they pursue" (Breuning 1995; 236). We know that national role conceptions have influenced foreign
policy decision-making, for example, in the allocation of foreign aid and development cooperation (Breuning 1995, 2016), inter-country adoption (Breuning and Pechenina 2020), in crisis management vis-à-vis Libya, Syria, and the Eurozone crisis (Koenig 2014, 2016, 2020; Oppermann 2012), and crises in Georgia (Nilsson 2018), Britain’s reinvasion of the Falklands in 1982, and parliamentary votes on military intervention in Syria (McCourt 2011; Strong 2018). I posit that policy interventions in response to the ‘migration crisis’ have also been shaped by decision makers’ perceptions of national roles.

2.2 Role selection/location process

Since individual decision makers hold national role conceptions based on their perception of ‘alter’ and ‘ego’ expectations, the role selection/location process refers to the process whereby decision makers interact, negotiate and bargain over which role will be enacted. Thies defines role location as:

“…the process whereby a social actor locates a suitable role in a social structure. The role location process is where role expectations of the self and other, role demands of the situation, and cues from the audience all come together to produce a role for the actor and set the conditions for its appropriate enactment.” (Thies 2012, 29)

As described above, roles and their performance are also closely related to the roles of other states and their respective behaviour (counter- and complementary-roles) (Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011, 8). Thies defines this socialization process as “interaction between states bargaining over their appropriate role and counter-role in a role relationship”.

These multiple roles and role conceptions may compete or be incompatible resulting in role conflict. National role conceptions can be found to be incompatible at a domestic level or conflict can arise through different aspects of roles (Cantir and Kaarbo 2016, 6). For example, in the context of asylum and refugee policy, a state may hold a role conception as a defender of human rights, which comes into conflict with a role as the defender of sovereign rights, associated with foreign and security policy. These types of role conflicts occur when dominant role conceptions within a role-set become incompatible due to competing expectations or a change or ‘critical juncture’ in the situational context from which the role originates (Aggestam 2006, 23).
Role conflict can result in role adaptation or change ultimately prescribing a change in policy behaviour. Role conflict can also occur as a “clash between domestically defined national role conceptions and externally defined role expectations (i.e., a disagreement between ego conceptions and alter expectations)”. Therefore, the expectations of other states within the community of states, in this case, other EU member states, are taken into consideration during the role selection process.

2.2.1 Horizontal contestation

In addition to role conflict, role contestation may also occur during the role selection process. Unlike role conflict, which illustrates tensions between conflicting alter and ego expectations or incompatible national role conceptions, role contestation disaggregates the ‘ego’ (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012, 2016). The underlying premise in early role theory research was that citizens and politicians of a state share the same biases regarding a given policy or issue area (Vertzberger 1990; Breuning 1995, 236). The assumption was that political elites and masses shared a consensus on the states role(s), stemming from shared national identities, norms, traditions, and socialisation. However, recent scholarship has criticised this assertion as an oversimplification that ‘black-boxes’ the state and does not account for domestic variables that shape and constrain national role conceptions and role enactment (see Cantir and Kaarbo 2012; 2016; Koenig 2014; Wehner and Thies 2014; Brummer and Thies 2015).

This growing body of scholarship examines vertical (between political elites and masses) and horizontal (among political elites) contestation over role conceptions, within the domestic political realm. It offers a nuanced understanding of the selection of national role conceptions. They propose that vertical (between elites and masses) and horizontal (among elites) disagreement or contestation over roles means that roles and foreign policy are not necessarily stable over time. Vertical and horizontal role contestation across various sites can potentially affect role selection and change (Wehner and Thies 2014; Cantir and Kaarbo 2016a).

As identified in section two of Chapter II, contestation over national role conceptions can occur (horizontally) between the executive and opposition parties, as well as within governing majority parties between representatives of different ministries and between coalition partners. (Brummer and Thies 2015, 278–79) posit that individual cabinet members may make use of their decision-making authority and agenda-setting powers to advocate for (a) national role conception(s) in the bureaucratic interests of their specific department, creating
intragovernmental conflict over national role conceptions. In the case of asylum and refugee policy, one might expect to find variation in dominant national role conceptions between ruling parties and their main opposition on the credible and appropriate response to the ‘migrant crisis’. Moreover, owing to the multi-dimensional nature of the policy area discussed earlier, it is also to be expected that variation in dominant national role conceptions may occur between coalition partners.

Examining contested role conceptions provides explanations for changes and inconsistencies between dominant national role conceptions and policy behaviour. As Cantir and Kaarbo (2012, 17) expound, “If [national role conceptions] are not shared, then different political actors may follow different foreign policies simultaneously or foreign policy may change over time due to changes in the dominant political actors or the internal power balance in the country.” In this regard, the examination of contestation processes provides fresh insight into policy disagreement. It allows for an examination of whether governments speak with one voice on the response to the ‘migration crisis’. We know that, for example, policy interventions in Germany in response to the ‘migration crisis’ were a point of contention between coalition partners, but how did this affect policy? The examination of contestation over role conceptions may shed light on why a certain policy approach was adopted in the first place and why it was walked back in the second half of 2015.

Moreover, investigating role contestation allows for an examination of the impact of domestic power balances and the influence of different actors regarding role selection and role enactment. What factors were decisive, shaped, or constrained, the role enactment of a particular policy response. Moreover, the more venues for role contestation the easier it becomes for political elites to strategically use roles to legitimise policy behaviour to EU or domestic audiences (Koenig 2014, 263). However, the extent to which role contestation influences policy decisions depends on the domestic democratic structures of the given state and the political constraints on decision makers (see ‘situated actor’ in section four for a fuller discussion).

2.2.2 Vertical contestation and the ‘organised public’

Role theory studies on the domestic sources of national role conceptions tend to refer anecdotally to public opinion when analysing the second site of contestation (vertical contestation between masses and political elites), without explicitly conceptualising the public and under what conditions it engages in contestation processes over role conceptions or
influences decision-making. References to the electorate/masses/public remain relatively underdeveloped and tend to draw upon a range of empirical evidence to support claims of contestation, including survey data, public opinion polls, voting behaviour, and media coverage (see for example contributions in Kaarbo and Cantir 2016).

There are limitations to this approach. For example, utilising secondary survey data and public opinion polls only provides data on pre-set questions to gauge public sentiment. This is particularly challenging for the analysis of attitudes toward asylum seekers and refugees since migration categories are rarely disaggregated. Moreover, Statham and Geddes (2006, 249) argue that this approach “has a tendency to reify aggregated individual responses, either implicitly or explicitly, into a ‘collective actor’, a ‘general public’, who ‘acts’ to influence…policies”. In role theory, this challenge has been largely addressed by assuming that decision makers internalise public opinion as a generalised ‘other’ (Cantir and Kaarbo 2016), which can be identified by the frequency with which politicians refer to the public/electorate, for example in parliamentary debates.

The assumption is that elected politicians pay attention to public opinion when the salience of an issue is high enough to constitute a threat to their ability to remain in power come the next elections (Oppermann and Viehrig 2009). However, in this case, the decision maker becomes the actor. As Statham and Geddes go on to argue, “public sentiment about immigration is not the same as collective action, nor is its impact on elites likely to be the same” (2006, 250). Furthermore, we know that, in addition to political elites’ perception of public opinion, the public arena includes organised actors that possess agency and actively engage in contestation processes on immigration and asylum policy. Consequently, this research proposes the importation of the concept of the ‘organised public’ from migration studies to enhance the analysis of the impact of domestic audiences and operationalise the role of NGOs in contestation processes during the role selection process.

The ‘organised public’ was first conceptualised by Freeman (1994, 1995, 1998, 2002) in his interest group model to account for the purported contradiction in restrictive public opinion on immigration, on the one hand, and the implementation of expansionist policies in liberal democracies, on the other. Freeman argues that, despite defuse anti-immigration sentiment among the public, the collective action of organised sectors of society advocating for expansionist policies accounted for the ‘policy gap’. Despite the shortcomings of Freeman’s model, discussed in Chapter II, his study prompted new research into the impact of political mobilisation and the influence of NGOs on immigration policy. Freeman’s original model was adapted by Statham and Geddes (2006), which serves as the basis for my conceptualisation of the role of the ‘organised public’ in vertical contestation over national role conceptions.
Parallels can be drawn with research on US foreign policy and ethnic political lobbies (see Smith 2000). However, as opposed to focusing only on ethnic lobby groups, the ‘organised public’ is conceptualised as “organised sectors of civil society” (Statham and Geddes, 250) at the national level, and commonly encompasses pro-rights and pro-market actors (Ilgit and Klotz 2018). This can include NGOs, pro-migrant rights, welfare and human rights organisations, churches, trade unions, professional organisations (such as lawyers), or ethnic minorities and migrant constituencies, that act as an intermediary between the public domain and political elites. The assumption is that these ‘organised’ groups of ‘the public’ can influence decision-making processes through instances of claim-making and public agenda setting activities that articulate political demands, proposals, calls to action, and criticism that create opportunities for public engagement and scrutiny, thereby shaping policy.

This conceptualisation of the ‘organised public’ provides a clear intermediary step between the public and political elites. It goes some way to addressing the question of under what conditions the public constrains and affects role contestation (Hagan 2016, 189), by providing a definition of who might activity engage in vertical contestation processes over national role conceptions on asylum and refugee policy.

2.3 Role performance/enactment

Finally, role enactment refers to the performance of a role once it has been selected (Thies 2010, 6–8). It can, therefore, be understood as policy behaviour. A state will enact several roles, or role-sets, at any one time. In his seminal study, Holsti (1970) identified 17 different roles expressed by seventy-one governments between 1965-1967 and on average leadership in each country expressed 4.6 foreign policy roles during that period.

2.4. Continuity and change

Roles are generally understood as ‘sticky’ concepts, based on the socio-culture of a country and, therefore, are relatively stable over time (Cantir and Kaarbo 2016, 5). However, role theory scholars have identified different types of role change, including learning (Harnisch 2012, 48–50), change through evolution (Oppermann 2012, 503, 2019) and transformation of identity (Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011, 253). Some studies focus on processes involved in role change (Beneš and Harnisch 2015; Thies 2013; Wehner and Thies 2014), whilst others
examine role change and continuity in different cases studies, such as the EU (Klose 2020), UK (Beasley, Kaarbo, and Oppermann 2021, Gaskarth 2014, 2016; McCourt 2020b), the United States (McCourt 2020b), Uzbekistan (Teles Fazendeiro 2021), Germany (Oppermann 2012, 2019b), and Venezuela (Wehner 2020).

According to socialisation theory, roles change through learning and when an actor internalises behavioural rules and norms to join a community of actors (Thies 2013). Alternatively, roles can be manipulated by changing one’s role behaviour to alter the role behaviour of other states (altercasting). As Kaarbo and Cantir (2016) explain, “[i]f there is congruence between ego and alter expectations, one will most likely find a coherent interaction between the two” and that policy behaviour is stable. Nilsson (2018) proposes that crises are particularly conducive to role conflict. In his analysis of Georgia’s foreign policy, he argues that the situational context of a crisis can result in conflict between external expectations with relation to appropriate behaviour and the immediate demand of the situation. If there is a conflict between roles or role expectations a process of change can be initiated, resulting in policy change. Furthermore, should role change be identified, one would expect to find a corresponding change in policy behaviour.

This thesis adopts the interpretive approach introduced to role theory by Wehner and Thies (2014) and further developed in a recent publication by Wehner (2020). Wehner and Thies emphasise the potential of the interpretive approach developed by Bevir and Rhodes (Bevir and Rhodes 2003, 2006, 2010) for role theory research, especially as it pertains to observing role adaptation or change at the domestic level. They highlight the benefit and compatibility of Bevir and Rhodes’ concepts of traditions, dilemmas and beliefs for a role theory approach and the analysis of domestic sources of role conceptions. Traditions are understood as legacies and “historic notions of governance” that actors draw upon “to provide guides to their roles and responsibilities” and can be reconstituted and adapted for present-day contexts (Bevir and Rhodes 2010, 157–58).

Dilemmas are conceptualised as new ideas that may challenge existing beliefs or practices (Wehner and Thies 2014). Policymakers must then excerpt agency by either incorporating the new idea into the existing beliefs and associated traditions thereby modifying the pattern or changing the policy tradition more significantly (Bevir and Rhodes 2003, 36). Either way, a process of adaptation or change occurs. Dilemmas can be both exogenously driven, as the result of an exogenous shock or unexpected situation, and also endogenous, as the result of experience and learning from existing practices (Wehner and Thies 2014).
From a role theory perspective, dilemmas can therefore generate role conflict and contestation, as new ideas conflict with existing beliefs (national role conceptions) and traditions (policy legacies), thereby inciting role adaptation or change. Consequently, the incorporation of the concepts of traditions and dilemmas into a role theory analysis can help shed light on how to observe role contestation and the “convergence/divergence” among political elites on “how roles are conceived, located and performed” (Wehner and Thies 2014, 6).

3. The value of role theory

Chapters I and II have identified the domestic, international, and foreign policy dimensions of asylum and refugee policy. However, as demonstrated migration scholarship has remained largely siloed, focusing on either the micro or macro level of analysis and neither one related to foreign policy. As Oltman and Renshon (2018) argue, “[t]his is particularly unfortunate given that a foreign policy approach – grounded in “mid-range theory,” and “actor-specific” approach, and a sensitivity to factors both above and below the state level – has the potential to add a great deal to our understanding of immigration in IR” (Oltman and Renshon 2018, 1). FPA’s role theory has been described as having descriptive, organizational and explanatory value (Thies 2010; Walker 1987). The following section sets out the added value of the role theory framework developed for the study of asylum and refugee policy decision-making.

3.1 Operationalising the ideational dimension

Roles are closely related to several ideational concepts including national identity, self-image, cultural values, heritage and norms (Breuning 2011). The analysis of domestic or international norms, national identity and history has been explored to some extent in migration studies (see for example Brubaker 1992, 1995; Freeman 1995; Hollifield 1999 in Chapter II). These approaches argue that the history of a country, its unique interpretations of nationality and national identity shape immigration policy. More recently scholarship has analysed the role of policy ideas (Boswell and Hampshire 2017), ‘framing’, ‘sense-making’ and ‘schemata’ (Geddes 2019; Pogliano and Ponzo 2020), narratives (Boswell, Geddes, and Scholten 2011), expert knowledge (Boswell 2015a; Boswell and Badenhoop 2021), and identity (Kotowski
Role theory’s unique contribution to these approaches is its novel ability to capture many of these factors and link them with policy behaviour. National identity, history, policy traditions and norms are understood as constitutive elements of national role conceptions, alongside more material considerations. Sociological role theory focuses on the reasoning and interpretation of decision makers and how they make sense of these factors when shaping policy responses to the ‘migration crisis’. Aggestam (2004, 29) posits that “a role conception suggests how cultural norms and ideas may translate into verbal statements about expected foreign policy behaviour and action orientation”. Thus, political elites’ role conceptions prescribe specific policy behaviour. Unlike national identity approaches (Brubaker 1992, 1995; Hollifield 1999b; Kurthen 1995), the concept of “role” can connect perceptions and ideational factors with action and migration policy behaviour. As Breuning (2011, 25) elucidates, identity is focused on “who we are” and roles focus on “what role we play”. Wehner and Thies (2014, 8) argue that in comparison with ‘role’, “identity lacks agency since it is not a concept that has an action-driven meaning at its heart. Thus, the way to link identity and action through motivational dispositions is through roles”.

Another important difference to some interpretations of identity, is that roles are understood as interactive and relational (Hopf 2002). They denote a position in a social group that is not set in time and depends on the purpose of the group. Beneš and Harnisch (2015) illustrate the notion in relation to membership of the EU, with the purpose to prevent war in Europe, that prescribes set goals for action, and provides reasoning and rationalisation for that action, e.g., ‘as Brits’, ‘as Germans’, ‘as Europeans’ etc. Thus, this approach promises to address a gap in the existing literature by improving our understanding of the political impact of ideational factors on responses to forced migration (Betts 2016) and offers a unique contribution on how ideas and beliefs influence policy behaviour.

3.2 Situated actors

In addition to operationalising the impact of ideational factors, the process-orientated framework developed in this thesis bridges the traditional agent-structure divide. Actors possess agency and are understood as rational, where rationality is bounded by the situational and institutional context within which actors are embedded (Aggestam 2004, 34-35).
As McCourt (2014, 55) explains, “the explanations of action cannot be based on beliefs alone”. The influence of material and ideational factors is mediated by decision makers’ perceptions but also the institutional and normative structures within which decision-making occurs. The material capacities and the institutional settings outlined in Chapter II cannot be ignored. For example, states cannot select any role conception during a ‘migration crisis’. Economic capacity, resources and, for example, in the case of mass migration movements, reception conditions and procedures, among many other material considerations will limit choices. However, interactionist role theory posits that agents can adapt and amend existing patterns of behaviour and have the “capacity to create modify and violate expectations” (McCourt 2012, 378). The onus is on the process of interaction and the mutual construction of a given situation upon which roles are selected.

An analysis of contested role conceptions provides further insight into the relationship between agents and structures. Cantir and Kaarbo (2012, 18) highlight, “when domestic political actors invoke roles to justify their positions, they are tapping into the normative power of roles. The impact of roles, however, is not uniformly felt across the country, but rather enters into and is shaped by the domestic political process.” Therefore, a key determinant of the impact of domestic role contestation on policy output is access to the decision-making process and the effectiveness of constraints on decision makers. As Özdamar (2016, 103) points out in a study of Turkish foreign policy, without democratic levers to effectively contest roles, the impact of disagreement on policy will be limited.

By investigating national role conceptions and instances of contestation within domestic political processes, this framework provides a plausible account of actors embedded in institutions (‘situated actors’) and bridges the agent-structure divide which has kept migration scholarship in comparative politics and IR from initiating a meaningful dialogue. In adopting this perspective, this research is not incommensurate with existing scholarship but sits comfortably alongside neo-institutionalist approaches, specifically sociological institutionalism’s understanding of ‘logics of appropriateness’ (March and Olsen 2004), and discursive institutionalism’s focus on interactive processes (Schmidt 2008).

Within the context of the EU, one would expect to find that roles are deeply embedded in formal institutions and norms, legal obligations and expectations as well as interaction with other EU member states (Aggestam 2006, 15–16). For example, EU Directives and Regulations on asylum and refugee provision and reception are loaded with references to solidarity among member states and responsibility sharing for the provision of asylum seekers. Therefore, identifying the extent to which these narratives are adopted at a domestic level will
provide an indication of the influence EU socialisation and norms have on national role conceptions during the ‘migration crisis’.

3.3 A multi-level model

Chapters I and II demonstrated the national, international, and supranational dimensions of asylum policy decision-making in the EU, illustrating the distinct foreign policy aspects of the policy area. The intermestic nature of the policy area illustrates the applicability of Putnam’s (1988) ‘two-level games’ logic. Decision-making in this policy area is highly relational, with international and EU institutional structures and norms creating pressures and obligations regarding minimum standards and responsibility for asylum seekers within the EU. The legislative framework of the CEAS and international human rights laws generate expectations rooted in ‘logics of appropriateness’ (as defined by March and Olsen 1996). These shared norms create obligations and the expectation that member states behave a certain way within the EU community (Aggestam 2006, 15). Moreover, integration in this policy area has increased the interdependence of national, international, and supranational agendas on migration. Thus, the spatial and political context of migration policy in Europe is relational and multi-levelled (King 2018, 37).

The promise of role theory is that it facilitates an analysis that can move across these different levels (Thies 2010). The role theory approach enables an investigation of the nexus between domestic politics and international relations offering fresh insight into refugee and asylum policy decision-making. Traditionally, this refers to three levels of analysis: people, states, and the international system (Aggestam 2006, Thies 2013). However, contributions in the recently edited volume by Kaarbo and Cantir (2016, 184) have introduced the subnational and supranational levels of national role conceptions, and the concept of ‘layered egos’ or ‘LEGOS’. Koenig’s (2016) chapter on EU crisis management intuitively speaks to research in migration studies on policy ‘venue shopping’ (see Guiraudon 2000), which argues that policy makers in the EU will seek out international and supranational policy venues to advocate for (restrictive) migration policies that would be prohibited at the national level due to institutional constraints, such as national constitutions.

Ultimately, by applying a role theory approach this thesis is answering the call for more research on migration at the intersection of multiple levels, including subnational, national, international, transnational and supranational (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz 2018, 12). Moreover, by facilitating an investigation of the nexus between domestic politics and international
pressures and expectations as factors shaping policy behaviour, it bridges the disciplinary boundaries between International Relations and Comparative Politics in migration studies.

To conclude, role theory offers a framework that facilitates an investigation of both domestic and international factors as mediated through political elites' perceptions. It enables an examination of decision makers' perceptions of the role their state should play in a given policy area and situational context, within a community of states, as determined by their perception of domestic and international expectations. Moreover, since political elites can use role conceptions to legitimise policy behaviour, they tell us how a policy problem is framed and what factors are prioritised.

The theoretical claim is that to understand EU member states' policy responses to the 'migration crisis', one needs to examine the contested selection of national role conceptions within the context of domestic political processes. I argue that a role theory approach offers a new framework for the analysis of asylum and refugee policy decision-making that is not incompatible with existing research in the field. Indeed, it can be understood as complementary to existing neo-institutionalist scholarship, specifically sociological and discursive institutionalism (see, for example, Boswell and Hampshire 2017). The role theory framework contributes to this literature in three distinct ways. Firstly, it links norms and identity with politics and action through the unique concept of 'role'. Secondly, the process-orientated model of contested roles within domestic political processes offers a plausible account of agents embedded in structures. Thirdly, the framework enables the investigation of different levels of analysis. The theoretical framework developed in this chapter provides a rich vocabulary for a reflexive and holistic analysis of the decision-making process that incorporates the investigation of vertical and horizontal relationships between actors, institutions, and structures during the 'migration crisis'.

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Chapter IV
Research Design and Methodology

The previous chapter explored the value of a role theory approach for the analysis of asylum and refugee policy decision-making and set out the theoretical framework of the thesis. This chapter outlines the research design and methodology applied to achieve the stated research aims and address the research questions. Building on existing role theory scholarship, this chapter proposes an interpretive approach and qualitative case study methods (Wehner 2020; Wehner and Thies 2014). The aim is to identify the ideas and perceptions of appropriate policy behaviour held by political actors in Germany and the UK to understand policies adopted and decisions taken to address the European migrant crisis. It is argued that case studies, content analysis and narrative analysis are the most suited methods to systematically analyse national role statements, investigate decision-making processes and examine instances of vertical and horizontal role contestation. This chapter also sets out to contribute to the development of role theory by addressing the criticism of the approach as conceptually rich but methodologically poor (Breuning 2011; Thies 2010; Walker 1987, 2). This is achieved by introducing conceptual tools from public policy research and migration studies and providing a clear and transparent operationalisation for the identification of national role conceptions.

This chapter proceeds as follows: the first section engages in a brief discussion of the methodological eclecticism of role theory research before outlining the benefits of adopting an interpretive approach to the analysis of national role conceptions and role contestation. This section introduces the concept of policy narratives as a useful conceptual and methodological tool for role research. The second section provides an overview of the research design, defines the empirical basis of the thesis and the rationale for applying content analysis methods. This section also provides a detailed account of the coding process applied to identify national role conceptions and how contestation processes were traced. Section three concludes with some reflections on the empirical and epistemological challenges and caveats of the thesis.
1. Methodology, epistemology, and ontology

Role theory research in foreign policy analysis has been described as “methodologically eclectic” (Breuning 2017) and ranges from formal models grounded in game theory (Thies 2012; Walker 2011), to interpretivist (Matzner 2018; Shih 2012; Teles Fazendeiro 2016; Wehner 2020; Wehner and Thies 2014) and constructivist approaches (McCourt 2011, 2012), and extensive case study research, focusing on specific countries (see for example the contributions in the edited volumes by Cantir and Kaarbo 2016 and Le Prestre 1997) and even the European Union’s roles (Elgström and Smith 2006b; Koenig 2014). These studies apply an array of methods from systematic content analysis of leaders’ speeches across countries during a specific timeframe (Breuning 1995; Hansel and Möller 2015; Holsti 1970; Walker 1987), to qualitative within-case methods, from narrative analysis (Thies 2013; Wehner 2020; Wehner and Thies 2014) to discourse analysis (Nabers 2011), process tracing, historical analysis, and more structured comparisons (Below 2015). Whilst some scholars have adopted or modified the 17 major foreign policy roles originally identified by Holsti (1970), others have created their own coding schemes to generate data on decision makers’ perceptions of their states’ role in international affairs (Breuning 1995; Hansel and Möller 2015).

Despite the scope and quality of the scholarship, an enduring critique of role theory is that whilst it is theoretically and conceptually rich, it is methodologically poor (Breuning 2011; Thies 2010, 2). This challenge relates to a lack of clarity in the treatment of roles, specifically about developing systematic and coherent ways of studying roles and national role conceptions (Wehner and Thies 2014). As previously discussed, the assumption is that role scripts prescribe specific action and policy behaviour. It follows that roles can be observed through their performance in policy (role enactment). However, roles are also offered as an *explanans* for specific policy behaviour and decisions taken, creating the potential risk of conflating policy and roles. Given that the policies implemented may represent the empirical evidence to identify roles, which in turn explain the decisions taken and policies adopted, we are in danger of falling into the “circular reasoning trap” (Müller 2011, 57). Furthermore, an interpretivist epistemology is often implicit in role theory research, which has in some cases resulted in a lack of transparency, particularly regarding the methods applied to identify national role conceptions (Wehner 2020). As Wehner and Thies (2014, 3) conclude, “we lack models for developing a coherent method of evidence collection and analysis”. Consequently, the ambiguity with regards to methods can create issues with comparison or replication of findings.
As a collection of assumptions akin to a framework, as opposed to a grand theory, role theory lends itself to the importation of methods and concepts from other disciplines (Thies 2010, Breuning 2011). Thus, this thesis posits that adopting an interpretivist methodology and importing tools from public policy research, specifically narrative policy analysis, can go some way to alleviate these challenges, by increasing transparency and rigour of methods. Methodological plurality is also a characteristic of qualitative research on European migration policy\(^{25}\), which can also provide some useful insights for role theory.

1.1 Interpretivism and narrative analysis

The Meadian interactionist framework outlined in the previous chapter informed the decision to adopt an interpretivist methodology and the application of qualitative research methods, such as discourse analysis, narrative analysis, historical analysis, thick description and process-tracing (George and Bennett 2005). Moreover, since ideational variables such as political elites’ beliefs and perceptions do not lend themselves to falsifiable hypothesis testing and generalisable conclusions on causality, interpretivist methodology was identified as best suited to the analysis. The interpretive approach has been increasingly used by foreign policy researchers (Beech 2011; Bevir and Daddow 2015; Bevir, Daddow, and Hall 2013, 2014; Bevir and Rhodes 2003, 2006; Bratberg 2011; Daddow and Gaskarth 2011; Gaskarth 2013b), and a growing body of role theory research is explicitly interpretivist (Aggestam 2004; Matzner 2018; Müller 2011; Shih 2012; Teles Fazendeiro 2016; Wehner 2020; Wehner and Thies 2014).

Interpretivism foregrounds the importance of the meaning that actors ascribe to a given situation. Wehner and Thies (2014; Wehner 2020) emphasise the potential of the interpretive approach developed by Bevir and Rhodes (Bevir and Rhodes 2003, 2006, 2010) for role theory research, especially as it pertains to the investigation of domestic role contestation and international role enactment. In particular, they highlight the benefit and compatibility of Bevir and Rhodes’ concepts of traditions, dilemmas and beliefs for a role theory analysis of the domestic sources of roles (see Chapter III section three on continuity and change for details).

Wehner (2020, 367) also notes the similarities between Bevir and Rhodes’ treatment of the relationship between traditions and dilemmas with Mead’s (1932) “notions of past, present and future”. Mead’s (1932) conceptualisation of the emergent present reflects Bevir and Rhodes’

\(^{25}\) For a comprehensive overview see Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz (2018).
understanding of dilemma, whereas Mead’s notion of the interpretation and reinterpretation of the past to make sense of new situations reflects Bevir and Rhodes’ understanding of traditions (Bevir and Rhodes 2003, 33–34). That said, this research does deviate from Bevir and Rhodes interpretivism on one significant point. Given that one of the main strengths of role theory is its potential to bring together agency and structure, offering a plausible account of a situated actor as discussed in the previous chapter (see section 4.2), this research assumes that policy is also shaped by institutions and structures (Aggestam 2006; Wehner and Thies 2014, 5). Actors possess agency despite structural and material constraints.

Building on the scholarship of Wehner and Thies (2014, 11; Wehner 2020), I contend that the most significant contribution of the interpretive approach to the study of roles is narratives as a method to observe the production, reproduction and contestation of national role conceptions and changes of traditions in response to new dilemmas. The assumption in this thesis is that narratives play a role in shaping beliefs, behaviour and policymaking. I posit that national role conceptions and their origins are expressed in narratives. Consequently, political elites’ interpretations of their states’ role during the ‘migration crisis’ can be observed in dominant political narratives on migration.

1.1.1 Narrative analysis

The concept of ‘narrative’ originates from the humanities, more specifically from literary studies and the analysis of Russian folklore (Czarniawska 2004). According to Polkinghorne (1988), contemporary narrative analysis was influenced and developed by movements in French hermeneutics (Ricoeur 1978), narratology (Todorov 1977), and German hermeneutics (Iser 1978). The ‘narrative turn’ in the social sciences soon saw psychology (Bruner 1987), political science (Fisher 1984) and sociology (Richardson 1990) adopt the narrative approach. As in the other social sciences, the introduction of the narrative approach in political science reflected the wider context of the shift away from purely positivist approaches towards constructivism, and specifically an interest in the study of the role of ideas in shaping political behaviour. The use of narrative analysis as a discursive method in political science and foreign policy analysis is not new (Suganami 1997, 1999). It has, however, experienced a resurgence in recent years (see Hagström and Gustafsson 2019; Oppermann and Spencer 2016, 2018; Spencer and Oppermann 2020; Subotić 2015).

There are two main arguments regarding the theoretical purchase of narrative analysis. Firstly, from a psychology perspective, narratives are cognitive structures through which people make
sense of their experiences and organise them into episodes (Sarbin 1986). Secondly, the cultural approach posits that narratives are culturally embedded stories and myths about a society’s identity, history and traditions (Hammack and Pilecki 2012). Both perspectives can be viewed as relevant from a role theory perspective, the former regarding political elites’ national role conceptions, and the latter in relation to how contestation over national role conceptions, in particular between political elites and the public, may unfold.

Although the concept of narrative has been adopted and adapted by many disciplines, we can identify several key characteristics. Narratives are a sequence of logically linked events that identify an issue and provide a solution. Thus, they tend to have a beginning, middle and an end (Toolan 2001), and, since they represent an interpretation of a sequence of events, they possess both a spatial and temporal dimension (Hammack and Pilecki 2012). Jones and McBeth (2010, 329) describe a narrative as “a story with a temporal sequence of events unfolding in a plot that is populated by dramatic moments, symbols, and archetypal characters that culminates in a moral to the story”. Therefore, narratives operate on three levels: the diagnosis of a situation, explanation thereof, and possible solutions (description, explanation and prescription) (Zapata-Barrero 2018, 83).

From a role theory perspective, Wehner and Thies (2014, 3) argue that narratives “are deployed by those speaking on behalf of the state to identify [national role conceptions] that speak to both new dilemmas and traditions”. Therefore, narratives provide a means to observe dominant national role conceptions and trace the role selection process through to role enactment, as well as identify contestation and change through deviation or reinterpretation of policy traditions. Wehner (2020) describes the methodological purchase of the narrative approach for the study of international roles:

“[I]nterpretive narrative analysis can make methodological sense of the purposive political act of conceiving of and performing roles in external relations through actors’ ruling narrations—wherein goals, interests and behaviour become salient in an emergent present or at the nexus of dilemma–tradition. This purposive political act of casting and performing a role via narrating a story is then reconstructed by the researcher, who identifies the events, times, actors, locations and points of view that constitute and allow the interpretation of a ruling narration—which tells the story of an international actor’s role and role relationships with others.” (Wehner 2020, 371)

Nevertheless, the application of the narrative approach in role theory is still on occasion somewhat nebulous and does not go far enough in applying the benefits of the approach in relation to the interplay between narratives and national role conceptions.
Wehner and Thies (2014) emphasise the benefits of narrative analysis to role theory regarding the incorporation of the rich historical analysis of foreign policy traditions in secondary literature to observe changes in traditions. However, I emphasize a slightly different benefit and conceptualisation of narrative analysis. The main reason for this is that migration studies does not provide the same rich source of secondary literature on policy traditions from a historical perspective. Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz (2018, 25) remark that “historical analysis has been largely ignored by qualitative migration researchers in Europe”. Consequently, this research cannot draw from a broad range of secondary studies on asylum and refugee policy history and traditions as is the case in IR and foreign policy analysis. Therefore, I propose that scholarship in public policy and specifically the narrative policy framework (Jones and McBeth 2010) can provide further clarification for the operationalisation of narrative analysis in role theory. This approach is not incompatible but complementary to Wehner and Thies’ (2014) approach.

The narrative policy framework first developed by Jones and McBeth (2010, 340–41) determines that a narrative must possess the following four qualities: 1) a setting or context (institutional or policy setting that may include the basic assumptions of a policy controversy); 2) a plot with a temporal dimension (beginning, middle, and end), which sets out the relationship between characters and setting, as well as causal links; 3) heroes, villains and victims; 4) a moral of the story, which provides a policy solution. The approach assumes that policy narratives are central to the policy making process, operate on three levels (micro, meso and macro level), and are generated by a range of actors including political elites, interest groups and the media. Policy narratives influence the formation of coalitions of elites that share policy preferences. Moreover, “policies and programmes are translations of beliefs that are communicated through policy narratives, the vehicle for conveying and organizing policy information” (Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth 2011, 540). Stakeholders form coalitions based on congruent beliefs and desired policy output. According to Jones and McBeth (2010, 346), coalitions generate policy narratives “which in turn most certainly drive both policy change and policy outcomes”.

Narratives portray a coalition as winning or losing, determining a preference for the status quo or for policy change (Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth 2011). Narrators also distribute benefits and costs to construct the winning/losing dichotomy. Policy change occurs through learning

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26 There are a few exceptions as identified in the previous chapter, notably Brubaker's (1992) research on public philosophies. However, this approach has now been largely debunked as no longer applicable. Other exceptions include the work of Slaven and Boswell (2019) on irregular migration in the UK.
from experience or new information. Policy narratives offer a means to studying these dynamics since change occurs when new stories become dominant (Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth 2011). The new narrative, be it a new setting, causal relationship, or prioritisation of values, thus facilitates policy learning even if information (facts) has not changed. In contrast to historical accounts, narratives constitute the interpretation and reinterpretation of past, present, and future events, and can be strategically deployed to mobilise support and power in the policy process. Moreover, they can influence public opinion on policy in the case of high-salience issues (Shanahan, Mcbeth, and Hathaway 2011).

This definition of narratives emphasises the strength of narrative analysis over related concepts such as ‘framing’ or ‘discourse’ for role theory. It could be argued that statements on national role conceptions constitute narratives on a state’s position in the world (see, for example, Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle’s (2017, 8) “identity narrative”). However, not all qualities as defined by Jones and McBeth (2010) will necessarily be present in the expression of a national role conception. I posit that national role conceptions are embedded in wider policy narratives. It is the policy narrative that provides the issue-specific, situational context: information on policy traditions and practices, new dilemma’s, emergent endogenous and exogenous factors, and most importantly, the desirable course of action that will resolve the underlying issue. These narratives also reveal perceptions of significant ‘others’ and socializers, and the relationship between issue-specific roles (auxiliary roles) and ‘master’ foreign policy roles, or role repertoires, can be observed in the dominant narratives. Moreover, observing ‘winning’ and ‘losing’ narratives and the distribution of costs and benefits of policy solutions will elucidate whether speakers are in support of dominant national role conceptions or proposing alternatives.

The conceptualisation of policy narratives also provides clarification on how we can empirically observe whether an actor is interpreting, reinterpreting, or adapting national role conceptions, by observing the extent to which ‘the moral of the story’ dimension of the policy narrative (proposed policy solution) deviates from existing practices. Moreover, policy narrative strategies including the distribution of costs and benefits, as well as ‘winning’ and ‘losing’ narratives, could help us understand why one national role conception within a repertoire is selected over another. This is particularly relevant for the analysis of asylum policy decision-making since the upfront costs of admitting asylum seekers and refugees can be high. Finally,

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27 A ‘frame’ is defined as “a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman 1993, 52).
identifying policy narrative coalitions can elucidate aspects of consensus and contestation over national role conceptions between political elites.

1.1.2 Migration narratives

Narrative analysis has been widely applied to the analysis of migration in political science and media studies, including narratives of the causes, consequences and effects of international migration and the lived experiences of migrants (for a comprehensive overview see Boswell et al. 2021; De Fina and Tseng 2017; Sahin-Mencutek 2020). Studies on narratives by migrants, where the migrant is the protagonist, commonly focus on migrant journeys to a destination country, or their experience upon arrival, and often seek to counter media narratives on migration (Sahin-Mencutek 2020).

Research on narratives on and about migration explores multiculturalism, race, and citizenship, as well as the causes and consequences of international movements of people and the efficacy of policy approaches. For example, Brekke and Thorbjørnsrud (2018) examine the impact of ‘threat’ and ‘hero’ narratives and representations of the ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’ migrant in European governmental information campaigns. Other studies examine the Islamisation of migration narratives (D’Haenens, L.S.J. and Bink, S.C. 2006; Morgan and Poynting 2016) and Islamophobia (Clemons et al. 2020).

In media studies, much of the research focuses on the securitised or humanitarian frames of migration narratives in the media. For example, D’Amato and Lucarelli (2019) demonstrate that coverage of the European ‘migration crisis’ was dominated by anti-immigration claims with a limited number of humanitarian counter-narratives that depicted refugees as ‘victims’, thereby negating their agency. Others have explored the ‘crisis’ narratives on migration in European countries and the EU (Laine 2020). These studies show how frequently narratives cast migrants as villains, heroes, or victims (Boswell et al. 2021). The first frame poses migrants as a threat to public order, the economy (jobs), and national cohesion, often equating migrants with criminal behaviour or terrorism. The victim frame focuses on racism, xenophobia, and humanitarianism, often concentrating on asylum seekers and refugees. Whereas the hero is characterised as a ‘good worker’ contributing to cultural diversity and fulfilling their civic responsibilities.

Finally, there are studies that focus on the strategic use of narratives on migration deployed by political elites in policy and politics. Kirkwood (2018) analyses the use of narratives of
history and ‘humanising’ narratives (Kirkwood 2017) during parliament debates on the refugee crisis in the UK. Whereas Jones and McBeth (2020) apply their narrative policy framework to demonstrate the narrative strategies deployed by Trump, specifically the strategic use of a winning/losing narrative. They argue that Trump deployed the ‘loser’s tale’ “when he blames undocumented immigrants and refugees for increased costs”, crimes and for taking American jobs (Jones and McBeth 2020, 100-101). While Carmel and Paul (2010) identify four major policy narratives in EU migration governance that are utilised to engage and negotiate with other actors: rights and equality narrative, securities and risk narrative, economic needs narrative and social integration. Notable omissions in this literature include studies on the impact of migration narratives on public opinion (Boswell et al. 2021) and the impact of narratives on what drives and constrains migration movements (push and pull factors), such as the allocation of development and humanitarian assistance or reducing access to rights or territory. That said, as will be demonstrated in the empirical chapters, many of the themes identified in the existing literature, featured in the speeches and debates analysed on the European ‘migration crisis’ in the UK and Germany.

The following section outlines the research design, data collection and data analysis methods. It offers justification for the methodological choices made, which build on existing bodies of research.

2. Research strategy and design

The reasoning that underpins the research strategy of this thesis is perhaps best described as a ‘retroductive approach’, due to the constant back and forth between the core tenets, assumptions and concepts of role theory and the empirical data (Blaikie 2010). As discussed in the previous section, the research employs interpretive techniques and predominantly qualitative case study methodology to explore the richness and nuance of political views. The thesis applies a small-n case study approach and conducts an in-depth within-case analysis of the UK and Germany. Qualitative content analysis is applied to inductively develop a case-study-specific typology of national role conceptions in narratives. Narratives and contestation processes are then closely traced in their temporal and spatial context to determine the impact of domestic role contestation and the extent to which policy behaviour is consistent with the dominant national role conceptions.
The focus of the analysis is on how national role conceptions influence asylum and refugee policy decisions (role enactment). The emphasis here is on extra-ordinary measures introduced to address the ‘migration crisis’, with particular focus on the establishment of *safe routes into protection* (my adaptation of Noll (2000) and Thielemann’s (2003) ‘sharing of people’) and the allocation of resources and funding (‘sharing of resources’) (see section 1.2 in Chapter II for a fuller discussion). Domestic role contestation within domestic political processes and the expectations of ‘significant others’ represent intervening factors.

2.1 Qualitative research

Role theory studies commonly measure the frequency of role statements taking its cue from Holsti’s 1970 seminal study. Holsti’s 17 foreign policy roles are applied to country case studies and the frequency of role statements made by foreign policy elites determines dominant national role conceptions. Thus, the majority of role theory scholarship is qualitative in approach, with a quantitative element measuring the frequency of role statements, thereby forgoing the conventional dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research strategies. This thesis adopts a similar approach. Qualitative research is relevant for the study of migration politics, in general, and to achieve the research aims of this thesis, in particular. As Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz (2018) elucidate,

“…qualitative research has a particular importance for migration studies, considering its potential for producing rich, in-depth and nuanced analysis; allowing for conceptual refinements with higher validity; redefining the existing categories and generating new hypotheses and even theoretical paradigms; exploring complex, conjunctural, multi-faceted dimensions of the migration dynamics.” (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz 2018, 2).

Given the aim to generate a rich, multi-layered, and nuanced account of asylum and refugee policy decision-making and policy through an analysis of political elites’ beliefs and perceptions of domestic and international pressures, resources and expectations, a predominantly qualitative analysis was chosen as the most suitable approach. It was determined that a quantitative approach would not provide sufficient detail for the analysis of (vertical and horizontal) role contestation. However, it should be noted that some quantitative instruments are applied, specifically during the coding of national role statements, in the identification of the dominant national role conceptions; as well as descriptive statistics to provide context regarding migrant stocks and flows, and to gauge the salience of migration
concerns among the public. This thesis, therefore, adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis with descriptive quantitative data.

Early role research in foreign policy analysis commonly analysed a large number of states' foreign policy roles over a set period of time (Holsti 1970; Wish 1980). However, the most recent wave of scholarship, specifically research that seeks to unpack the domestic sources of roles and explore role contestation within the ego (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012; Hagan 2016; Wehner and Thies 2014), has seen small-\(n\) case studies and in-depth within-case analysis become more common (see for example the edited volumes by Cantir and Kaarbo 2016 and Le Prestre 1997). These studies apply a diverse range of methods, from narrative analysis (Thies 2013; Wehner 2020; Wehner and Thies 2014), discourse analysis (Nabers 2011), process tracing, historical analysis and structured comparisons (Below 2015).

The strengths of case study methods, as defined by George and Bennett (2005, 19-22), include conceptual validity (identifying and measuring indicators that represent theoretical concepts), deriving new hypotheses, exploring causal mechanisms (in-depth in case analysis), and modelling and assessing complex causal mechanisms. The case study approach was chosen as these strengths align with the aims of this research. The thesis develops and applies a theoretical framework to a new policy area. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of a small number of cases was identified as the most fruitful approach, as opposed to a more superficial statistical analysis of a larger number of cases.

A small-\(n\) qualitative case study approach was adopted that facilitates an intensive analysis of two country case studies, namely Germany and the UK. Instead of applying a comparative cross-national approach, this thesis conducts an in-depth within-case analysis twice, providing the opportunity for a deep contextual and multi-levelled analysis. The research design, therefore, is one of a single case study, conducted twice. This creates the opportunity to trace and explore the role of different structural and normative factors twice, to strengthen observations and include a wider spectrum of factors. The in-case methods applied include content analysis, narrative analysis and the in-depth interrogation and tracing of processes with in each case study.

The principle criticism levelled at small-\(n\) case studies is that a large number of variables in a small number of cases means that any conclusions regarding causal effect may lack representativeness and will not be generalizable (Lijphart 1971). The commonplace critique of idiosyncrasy levelled at case study research is lessened by remaining modest regarding the generalisability of any conclusions drawn from this research. The central aim of the thesis is to contribute to the understanding of the disparity in levels of provision for asylum seekers
and refugees in the EU and to help explain decision-making during a migration crisis. This is attempted by developing a theoretical model that incorporates the investigation of domestic and international factors through an analysis of decision makers’ beliefs and interpretation of international roles. It is not the intention of this thesis to prove causality but rather to make plausible inferences regarding the interplay between actors’ national role conceptions, role contestation and asylum and refugee policy behaviour.

The second general criticism levelled at small-n case research is a potential bias in the case selection, whereby cases are selected following hypotheses, which are falsified if a case deviates from expectations (George and Bennett 2005; Lijphart 1971). The rationale behind the case selection is detailed in the following section. Furthermore, this challenge is partially resolved by adopting an interpretative epistemology and by not pitting the two case studies against one another. Rather, this thesis conducts an in-depth within-case analysis twice, as a means to explore the theoretical claims in more than a single case. As will be demonstrated, the two country case studies offer intriguing examples of how political actors’ beliefs expressed through role statements set the parameters of policy interventions during the European migrant ‘crisis’. They also offer an illustration of the effects of role contestation on decision-making, and by extension, on policy change. It is acknowledged that any conclusions reached regarding a causal relationship between national role conceptions and asylum and refugee policy behaviour will need to be investigated utilizing further case studies in the future and the theoretical model refined accordingly.

Lastly, the research design could be criticised for focusing on a single episode of increased migratory pressure and a short period of time. The central aim of the thesis is to identify the interplay between national role conceptions and asylum and refugee policy decision-making. As illustrated in the chapter on role theory, roles change over time (Beneš and Harnisch 2015, 149; Harnisch 2011b), the selection of roles can be contested resulting in role change (Cantir and Kaarbo 2016, 16–17) or roles can be reinterpreted (Oppermann 2012, 506), adapted and transformed (Harnisch, Frank, and Maull 2011a, 253). Ultimately, roles are not fixed in time or space. Therefore, it is not the intention to determine a set of refugee policy role conceptions once and for all. Rather, the aim is to unearth beliefs and perceptions held by decision makers on policy dilemmas and their role in the world that structures asylum and refugee policy decision-making. By analysing two case studies in a single temporal context, depth, as opposed to breadth, is offered to increase the explanatory power of outcomes. The framework can then be applied to other case studies and historical contexts in future research.
2.2 Case selection

Several considerations motivated the selection of Germany and the UK as country case studies. It could be argued that both countries demonstrate some similar characteristics relevant to immigration policy. They are European liberal democracies with similar levels of development and economic makeup (Howell 2015). During the period under investigation, they were two of the largest EU member states and could be characterised as medium-sized powers in Europe (Aggestam 2004). They are also broadly understood as countries of immigration: the UK historically so, and Germany having more recently acquired the title 28.

Furthermore, during the crisis, both countries were led by centre-right governments. Chancellor Angela Merkel’s third cabinet (December 2013 - March 2018) was a ‘Grand Coalition’ led by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU). Prime Minister David Cameron’s second cabinet (May 2015 – July 2016) was a majority government and was succeeded by the first government led by Prime Minister Theresa May (July 2016-June 2017). In both cases, the conservative parties occupied the key ministerial position of Minister of the Interior/Home Secretary.

Nevertheless, since this thesis does not engage in a comparative approach, but rather prioritises depth of knowledge and the development of theory, it is the differences between these case studies that provide the most intriguing sites for analysis. At the international level, for example, Germany has been a driver of the development of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and ‘shared responsibilities’ among EU member states since the German presidency of the European Commission proposed a draft council resolution on responsibility-sharing in 1995 (Council Resolution of 25 September 1995). The UK on the other hand opted out of the Schengen free movement provisions and, after opting into the first phase of the CEAS (1999-2004), opted out of subsequent asylum measures (see subsequent sections on the British and German context for details).

At the domestic level, we see how a majoritarian system and a coalition-building system, respectively, influence domestic contestation between political elites, politicians, and the public, and varying degrees of access to decision-making fora for coalition partners and

28 In July 2001, the Independent Commission of Immigration officially declared Germany a country of immigration in a report to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Otto Schilly (Unabhängige Kommission “Zuwanderung” 2001). This report is regarded as "an official, legal and political recognition" of Germany as a country of immigration (Foroutan 2017, 125).
dissenting voices. The two cases thus provide illustrations of how different institutional contexts and associated norms, both concerning domestic and international institutions, influence decision-making by ascribing appropriate policy solutions to dilemmas (for a fuller discussion of institutional contexts refer to Chapter II).

In addition to institutional context, the cases offer a rich site for tracing the impact of different traditions, policy legacies, and public philosophies expressed through migration narratives, on asylum and refugee policy. Germany has previously had one of the world’s most generous asylum regimes, whilst British opposition parties propose withdrawal from the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees at the 2005 general election (Bale 2008). More recently, beyond the prima facia divergence in the relative ‘generosity’ of their asylum and refugee regimes in response to the European ‘migrant crisis’, we can observe a distinct variation in interpretation of solidarity for asylum seekers: policy responses suggest that for one country solidarity meant supporting asylum seekers and refugees in the region, through the allocation of funding and resource; for the other, it was providing sanctuary for asylum seekers in the EU.

For the purposes of theory building, the UK case offers a stable example – despite changes in government and increased salience and public engagement in the policy area - policy responses to the crisis did not deviate from historical norms. Germany’s policy response, on the other hand, could be understood as temporarily deviating from increasingly restrictive asylum policies and multilateralism, a key component of Germany’s foreign policy master role as a civilian power (Harnisch and Maull 2001; Kirste and Maull 1996; Maull 1990, 2000). Hence the cases provide scope for the investigation of the significance of continuity and change in this policy area and provide a rich empirical basis from which to draw conclusions.

Practical considerations also influenced the case selection. Firstly, I am a fluent German speaker, meaning that primary data was collected without the assistance of a translator or interpreter. Secondly, having worked for the German Federal Foreign Office in the UK, I was able to tap into an existing network of contacts working for both the German and British governments, civil service, and parliament, which proved useful for identifying interview partners. Initially, the case study selection also included France. However, it became apparent very early on that language barriers and time constraints would make a third case study untenable. Finally, by selecting country case studies that have been investigated extensively in migration studies and are the subject of a body of research in role theory, the outcomes of the analysis could be compared and contrasted with existing scholarship thereby increasing the explanatory plausibility of conclusions and highlighting areas for further investigation.
2.2 Data collection

The empirical basis of the thesis rests predominantly on a systematic analysis of primary sources and is based upon the principles of methodological triangulation (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2019). In other words, a multi-method approach to data collection was applied. First, an extensive review of the secondary literature was conducted to formulate the research aims and questions. It was then established that the most suitable data collection methods would be documentary analysis and semi-structured expert interviews in Berlin and London, facilitating a multi-sited dimension to the research design.

Figure 2. Asylum applications (non-EU) in the EU-28 Member States, 2006-2017

![Asylum applications (non-EU) in the EU-28 Member States, 2006-2017](Image)

Source: Eurostat 2021

2.2.1 Timeframe

The data collection process focused on the ‘peak’ of the crisis, during which public discourse on the emergency accelerated. The timeframe analysed runs from April 2015 until the end of 2016. April 2015 is identified as the start of the ‘peak’ of the crisis following the feared drowning of hundreds of migrants in Libyan waters south of Lampedusa, as multiple boats capsized within a few days of one another (Triandafyllidou 2018). The European Commission published its European Agenda on Migration in response to the crisis in the Mediterranean soon after (European Commission 2015a). Whilst the European Commission did not declare the ‘crisis’ to be over and Europe to be no longer in “crisis mode” until March 2019 (European
Commission 2019), we can see from the statistics on first-time asylum applications in Appendix 1, that by 2017 the numbers of first-time asylum seekers, as a proxy-variable for asylum flows, had returned to ‘pre-crisis’ (2014) levels.

In relation to the country case studies, this timeframe maps loosely onto the third cabinet under Chancellor Angela Merkel (December 2013 – March 2018), the second government under Prime Minister David Cameron (May 2015 – July 2016), and the change to the first ministry under Prime Minister Theresa May (July 2016 – June 2017). It is during this period that we see the most significant decisions taken and policies adopted to address the crisis, as illustrated by the chronology of events in Appendix 2. Furthermore, during the height of the crisis, we can observe the most intense debate regarding responsibilities, appropriate responses to the emergency and solutions to migration-related policy problems taking place in public fora, providing a particularly rich environment for analysis.

In addition to analysing political debates and statements on the European migrant crisis and refugee crisis, more generally, the analysis focuses on several episodes of particularly intense debate in the UK and Germany, as a means to target the data collection process.

For the UK case, the image of the drowned Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, and the government’s subsequent announcement to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees from UN camps in the region over 5 years sparked a particularly intense period of public and political debate. The second topic identified as particularly salient was the migrant camps in Calais and attempted border crossings during the so-called ‘Calais crisis’ in July 2015, culminating in the closure of the ‘Jungle’ camp (Camp de la Lande) in October 2016. The final topic that proved particularly salient in UK debates was asylum-seeking and refugee children. This pertained to proposed changes to Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (‘Dubs amendment’), regarding the transfer of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) from Europe and legal routes to family reunion.

For the German case, the European ‘migration crisis’ was at the top of the political and public agenda throughout the period under investigation. That said, particular attention was paid to debates following the decision to “open the border” to Syrian asylum seekers stuck in Hungary in early September 2015; debates on whether or not to set an upper limit on the number of asylum-seekers Germany should receive; and finally debates surrounding the reform of asylum legislation, including the Act on the Acceleration of Asylum Procedures (Asylum Package I or ‘Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz’) and the Act on the Introduction of Fast-Track Asylum Procedures (Asylum Package II).
These periods of intense domestic debate are analysed within the wider context of external developments, such as the creation of UNHCR and EU resettlement and relocation programmes and the negotiation of the EU-Turkey deal. This approach highlights developments in how the emergency is framed, how perceptions of policy dilemmas and solutions develop, and ultimately trace shifts in dominant national role conceptions expressed and contested by the political elite and public in response to the changing context of the crisis.

2.2.1 Documentary analysis

As this research aims to analyse the impact of political actors’ beliefs and perceptions, the primary source of data was generated from text-based documents that represent decision makers’ written and spoken statements on the migrant crisis and appropriate policy responses, including official transcripts of speeches, interviews, and parliamentary debates.

Parliamentary debates were selected for analysis as, given the inclusion of politicians from a range of political parties, including the three largest parties in the UK (Labour Party, Conservative Party and Scottish National Party) and the largest parties in Germany (CDU/CSU, SPD, Green Party, The Left), it allows for an in-depth analysis of how politicians formulated responses to the European migrant crisis (Breuning 1995; Kirkwood 2018) and identify plurality in the positions held both by parties but also within parties, the executive and between individual ministers/ministries.

German parliamentary debates were identified through the official Bundestag website, which hosts a complete database of the plenary protocol of all parliamentary sessions. A word search was carried out for references to the ‘refugee crisis’ (Flüchtlingskrise) and asylum policy (Asylpolitik), during the specified timeframe. Initially, other search terms were also used, including ‘refugee problem/issue’ (Flüchtlingsproblematik), refugee policy/politics (Flüchtlingspolitik) and ‘refugee question’ (Flüchtlingsfrage). However, it soon became apparent that the search terms were yielding the same results since all terms were used interchangeably within the context of a single debate. Over fifty parliamentary debates were initially identified. This number was whittled down through a thorough examination of the context within which refugees were addressed, to ensure that it was about either the European ‘migration crisis’ in general terms or of the identified episodes of intense debate. Eight parliamentary debates were identified as particularly relevant and analysed.
Thirteen UK parliamentary debates relating to the refugee and migrant crisis, which took place between April 2015 and December 2016 were identified, with a thorough analysis of the eight most relevant. These debates were held in the House of Commons (the lower house at the Palace of Westminster that deals with reserved matters relating to the whole of the UK). The debates were identified using the House of Commons Hansard and the limited number of debates made the selection process considerably easier than the German case. Once again, only debates that directly related to the response to the crisis were chosen and not those addressing interlinked policy areas, such as welfare or integration policies. In contrast to the German case, these debates often also covered security and foreign policy, such as intervention in Syria and terrorism.

In both cases, a final selection was made by choosing the debates that focused on the country’s response to the European ‘migration crisis’ as a specific agenda point and the topics identified as generating intense public debate above. Moreover, only debates were selected that addressed policy responses to the crisis in general terms, as opposed to related policy areas, such as accommodation for asylum seekers, integration policies, government expenditure, access to work, social benefits, education, health care etc. The migrant crisis was discussed in the Bundestag in some detail when Merkel reported back following G7, G20 or European Council meetings. These debates, however, were not selected for the initial content analysis (stage one of the investigation) since the aim was to identify political elites’ perceived roles for Germany and the UK and not the role(s) of the EU29. An exception was made in the German case for the debate on 24th September 2015, which was the first opportunity for German parliamentarians to question the government, following the contentious decision to open the border to Syrian asylum seekers the previous month.

The second category of documents identified as a source for data on national role conceptions was political elites’ speeches. In the UK case, this includes speeches by the Prime Minister, Home Secretary, and Secretary of State for International Development, who were identified as the main narrators of the response to the ‘migration crisis’. In the German case, speeches by the Chancellor and Minister of the Interior were chosen, as well as contributions by the Vice Chancellor and Minister President of Bavaria in order to incorporate the leaders of all parties within the coalition government. The assumption is that junior ministers will adhere to the dominant narratives on roles and responsibilities expressed by the head of the respective ministry (Chafetz, Abramson, and Grillot 1996). Moreover, it became apparent that statements by junior ministers were comparatively technical and included few expressions of international

29 For a comprehensive analysis of the European Union’s roles in international affairs see the edited volume by Ole Elgström and Smith (2006), and more recently Keonig (2014, 2016).
roles. Speeches were identified from party conferences, press conferences and interviews with the media. They were sourced from official government and institutional websites and were usually accessible in both video form and official transcripts.

The third category of document was official documentation, such as press releases and statements issued by the respective governments and reports from specific ministries. This data provides context for thick description and the tracing of decision-making processes and contestation. In the UK case, this includes documents published by the Home Office, Department for International Development (DFID) and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)\textsuperscript{30}. Reports published by, among others, the House of Common’s Home Affairs Committee and International Development Committee provided valuable oversight on policy developments and further insight into areas of contention on policy approaches. In the German case, this includes reports issued by the Federal Foreign Office, the Ministry of the Interior (BIM), the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the office of the Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration.

As this thesis also aims to shed light on the impact of international developments, expectations, and pressures on domestic political actors’ approach to the crisis and domestic contestation, official EU documentation was also identified as a valuable source of context to trace EU developments and the EU institutional framework for asylum and refugee policy. Thus, the fourth category is official documentation published by the EU institutions in the Official Journal of the European Union and by the European Commission’s department DG HOME in charge of migration and home affairs. A fifth category comprises press releases and reports published by the various IGOs and NGOs in the asylum and refugee sector: International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UNHCR; and, the Refugee Council, Amnesty International, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, Caritas etc.

Finally, data on public opinion, to illustrate issue salience, has been gathered from the Eurobarometer, and national survey data provided by Ipsos Mori in the UK and Infratest dimap in Germany. The limitation of using survey data on public opinion is that it only provides data on the pre-set questions. However, since the focus is on decision makers’ perception of public opinion and how they make sense of it, this does not present an insurmountable challenge. Furthermore, additional evidence is collected from newspaper articles, interviews and references made to the electorate during political debates. Secondary sources, such as

\textsuperscript{30} Both departments were merged on 2 September 2020 to form the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.
academic studies and newspaper articles have been used largely as context and to identify key decision and debates.

2.2.3 Expert interviews

The data gathered from primary documents were supplemented with explorative and explanatory semi-structured interviews with decision makers, representatives of political parties, civil servants, and stakeholders in Germany and the UK. This added a multi-sited dimension to the research design. The qualitative interviews aimed to elucidate details and areas of contention in the policymaking process not visible from the document analysis. As Bowen (2009) contends, documents alone may contain insufficient detail to answer a research question and are best analysed in combination with other research methods to seek convergence and corroboration. This is particularly relevant in the study of migration policy since much of the debating and negotiating within the policymaking process takes place behind closed doors, and interviews are therefore a means to collect information not easily obtained from written sources (Fedyuk and Zentai 2018).

Thus, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted to provide greater detail on key events and interpretations of the situations, policy dilemmas, debates, and context during which the primary documents were produced. In this sense, the interviews provided an invaluable opportunity to gain further insight and context on national role conceptions, role contestation and conflict, and explore specific issues and questions that arose during the document analysis. The value of interviews was particularly well illustrated during an interview with Lord Alfred Dubs, who recalled a conversation with Prime Minister Theresa May on asylum numbers and refugee children – an exchange that remains undocumented elsewhere.

Representatives of all main political parties and key NGOs in Germany and the UK were contacted for an interview. Officials working in the policy area are often hard to access, especially at times when immigration issues are salient. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that uptake was low. This was especially the case in the UK, where frequently no response was received, or a sense of interview fatigue was expressed by the recipient, due to the number of requests for interviews from researchers (UNHCR UK). Notably, it was not possible to secure an interview with a representative of either of the conservative parties (the Tories or the CSU/CDU). It is assumed that this was largely because many of the key politicians in post during the height of the European migrant crisis were still in similar roles or had been promoted to more senior positions within their respective party or the cabinet, at the time I contacted
them. Contacting potential interview partners through my existing networks in the British civil service, at the German Bundestag, and Auswärtiges Amt (German Federal Foreign Office) proved more successful, with additional interview partners successfully identified using snowball sampling.

A total of fourteen interviews were conducted in London and Berlin between February and October 2019 (for a full list see Appendix 3). Since the interviews were not a primary source of data, they were timed towards the end of the data collection process. To this end, the interview questions, whilst informed by the role theory approach, included questions tailored to the interview partner's area of expertise and experience, to maximise the value of the data collected (see Appendix 4 for an example of indicative questions provided to interview partners ahead of interviews). Each interview took between 30 minutes and two hours, depending on the interview partner’s availability and, on occasion, their interest in the research topic (interviews were scheduled for no longer than an hour but frequently ran over). Consent to record all interviews was obtained in writing or orally. Where interview partners are named and/or quoted, explicit consent was sought and given. As issues with obtaining a representative sample were expected, it was never the intention to code the interview data. This means that only content that was particularly relevant to answering the research questions were transcribed and included in the analysis.

2.3 Data analysis

The analysis of the empirical data was conducted in two distinct stages, which are outlined in the next two sections.

2.3.1 Coding national role conceptions

As Zapata-Barrero (2018, 79) elucidates for an interpretive conflict-based approach to migration studies, “the starting point is to frame the plurality of existing positions that surrounds a migration-related problem”. In this instance, this is understood as political elites’ beliefs surrounding the European ‘migrant crisis’ in the UK and Germany. Consequently, the first stage of the analysis focuses on the identification of national role conceptions held by political elites related to asylum and refugee policy.
Determining how political elites envisage their states’ role in the international system requires some interpretation since few commentators directly refer to roles. There is also the challenge that references to “role” in speeches and parliamentary debates may not correspond with the academic understanding of a role conception explored in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, as Gaskarth (2016, 113) explains, “it is often possible to interpret implied roles and surmise what kind of national role conceptions the commentators are envisaging from their choice of language and policy prescriptions, as well as the images they conjure up of how the [respective state] should be seen in international politics”. For example, political elites frequently make clear statements on the need to uphold international obligations or laws, defend national or regional interests, or to lead or intervene in a particular international issue or challenge.

The method applied to identify national role conceptions is content analysis. Content analysis has been used extensively in role theory research to identify dominant national role conceptions (Breuning 1995; Hansel and Möller 2015; Holsti 1970; Matzner 2018; Wish 1980). The majority of scholarship utilises content analysis to code for role conceptions in line with Holsti’s (1970) original 17 foreign policy roles. However, a small body of research has also posited that different policy areas and geographical contexts prescribe different roles and have consequently inductively developed their own role templates (Breuning 1995; Hansel and Möller 2015). Building on Breuning’s (1995) seminal work on foreign aid and Hansel and Möller’s (2015) research on India’s foreign policy role conceptions, this thesis inductively develops a role typology for asylum and refugee policy.

Data on national role conceptions was gathered by coding parliamentary debates, decision makers’ speeches and statements to categorise dominant national role conceptions based on the discourse of political elites (Breuning 1995; Brummer and Thies 2015). National role conceptions can be identified in discourse and narratives (Wehner and Thies 2014); a ‘ego’ dominated national role conception being self-referential, focusing on domestic society and domestic material considerations, and an ‘alter’ dominated national role conception referring to the expectations of others, such as the international community and norms (Beneš and Harnisch 2015, 149).

Whilst the theoretical framework detailed in the previous chapter, and existing role scholarship, provided instruction on the coding process, this stage of the empirical analysis was conducted largely inductively based on the roles expressed by decision makers. The purpose of identifying interpretations is not to evaluate the validity of actors’ beliefs but to highlight and understand conflict and contestation through the “identification of interpretations” (Zapata-
Barrero 2018, 83) of both the policy dilemma and the ‘appropriate’ policy solution(s), given the perceived roles and responsibilities of the respective state.

The unit of analysis in this stage of investigation is national role statements, and the level of analysis is the individual political actors engaged in the refugee and asylum policy decision-making process. National role statements are identified in texts and speech acts as statements about the UK and Germany and how each respective country should respond to the ‘migration crisis’. To avoid forcing data into predetermined categories or ‘ideal types’, the coding of national role statements was undertaken inductively and in three distinct phases (see Saldaña 2016 for a discussion of the three stages of coding).

Coding: step one

Statements were selected and coded that refer to the state as an actor that has particular functions, commitments, duties, status or responsibilities in the international community, which reflect the expectation of a particular kind of policy behaviour (Aggestam 2004; Hansel and Möller 2015; Holsti 1970). Statements that express opinions or attitudes on “what did, does, should or must motivate…policy” (Breuning 1995, 266) in response to the crisis were coded. These statements could be in a single sentence or over several sentences. The uses of ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’ were also considered as potential substitutes for the name of the country. Moreover, the uses of ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’ when referring to a community or group of states, of which the country is a member (such as the EU), were also coded.

The name of the speaker, their role in government or opposition, political party, date and location (intended audience) were captured. If a speaker referred to several different national role conceptions in the same sentence or over several consecutive sentences, each evocation was coded separately. Should, however, the same national role conception be evocated across several sentences in a row it was counted once.

Coding: step two

During a second reading of the empirical material I took note of reoccurring themes and the migration narratives in which the national role statements were embedded as a means to start to form categories of types of national role conceptions. This could include substantive role conceptions related to the specific policy area, general or ‘master’ roles related to the country’s position in the international system, or indeed leadership roles. Special care was taken at this stage not to equate policy statements with expressions of national role conceptions.
A narrative is defined as a central story or argumentation of a statement or speaking turn (refer to section 1.1 for a comprehensive definition). Themes I expected to identify included decision makers seeing asylum and refugee policy in terms of traditions of humanitarianism, ethical and moral obligations, in terms of ‘disaster relief’, preservation of EU/ international order, stabilising the EU/international environment, and in terms of security logics, protecting sovereign borders and the threat of terrorism.

An initial typology was then set out that captured the most frequently referenced national role conceptions. It is here that the methodological tools applied incorporate a quantitative element since the content analysis of role statements includes a measurement of the frequency of categories of role profiles to determine dominant national role conceptions held by political elites. Five dominant national role conceptions were identified in speech acts by British politicians: aid superpower, European partner, state of refuge, contributor to security and defence, defender of national interests / independent. Five dominant national role conceptions were also expressed by German politicians: responsible leader, Europe as an agent of security, defender of human rights, defender of ‘enlightened’ national interests, defender of the ‘Leitkultur’ (‘dominant culture’). All ten national role profiles pertaining to asylum and refugee policy are described and analysed in detail in Chapters V and VII, respectively.

Coding: step three

To minimize potentially misleading conclusions drawn from measuring the frequency of national role conceptions alone, in a final round of coding some scaling was introduced (Saldaña 2016). Firstly, the tense of the expression of the state’s role was considered to determine whether the speaker was referring to past, present, or future/desired national role conception (Breuning 1995). This was particularly important given the policy area to identify historical ‘others’ concerning a states’ historical roles in asylum and refugee provision. Secondly, given that one of the research aims is to shed light on when states cooperate in this policy area, whether the national role conception could be conceptualised as ‘cooperative’ or ‘isolationist’ was analysed. This was determined by the extent to which national role conceptions explicitly supported or rejected cooperation with ‘significant others’ or the EU as an indication of willingness to engage in common policy measures (Beneš and Harnisch 2015).

Finally, how the speakers interpreted how national role conceptions should be enacted in policy was examined, with a particular focus on policy related to ‘safe routes into protection’ (sharing of people) and the allocation of funding (sharing of resources), reflecting this thesis’
conceptualisation of how to measure asylum and refugee provision and ‘responsibility-sharing’ (see Chapter II).

The data on national role conceptions was not aggregated across political elites, masses, and institutions to prevent ‘black-boxing’ the domestic arena but recorded in relation to its specific and temporal context. By identifying the national role conceptions of different actors, dominant national role conceptions or sets thereof are identified. Further than identifying dominant national role perceptions, this approach provides insight into possible contestation among decision makers. This aspect of horizontal contestation is identified through an analysis of primary data sources that incorporates separate speaking turns of representatives of parties and administrations, allowing for any variation in national role conceptions and how they should be enacted to be captured.

Since the policy area straddles both domestic and international areas of competence, and their corresponding ministries, decision makers within a government will be preoccupied with sustaining legitimacy through meeting the expectations of different audiences (internal/domestic or external), resulting in potential role contestation between Interior Ministers, International Development Ministers, and the Chancellor/Prime Minister. It was expected that this would prove particularly relevant in the case of Germany’s coalition government. It is these variations that highlight areas of horizontal and vertical contestation over the appropriate role a country should play in the ‘migration crisis’ and even possible conflict between dominant national role conceptions.

Traditionally, coding has been conducted by copying segments of text into a ‘coding sheet’ whereby the relevant data is extracted and extrapolated based on the applied theoretical framework. In this thesis, parliamentary debates and speeches were coded with the aid of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), specifically NVivo. The software is a specialised qualitative data management programme that is designed to assist with qualitative data management and analysis. As stated by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2019), whilst the software does not analyse data automatically, it can aid the researcher with storing large amounts of qualitative data and material in a database, with the coding of text, and retrieving and linking data through the formation of categories and cases. It is also ideally suited to content analysis because it provides search functions that enable the counting of frequencies, patterns and locations of words, phrases, or categories created by the researcher. In summation, the software offers a transparent and accessible means to organise, inspect, check, and cross-reference large amounts of coded qualitative data, thereby increasing rigour and validity.
By conducting the three-stage coding process outlined above utilising NVivo, the data on speakers and their characteristics (name, position, party) and excerpts of the national role statements have been captured in a searchable database. A key benefit of this form of qualitative coding and data storage is that the different nodes (codes allocated to the different national role statements) can easily be checked for accuracy and cross-referenced with the different characteristics of the speakers to identify potential role contestation, be it within government (between different cabinet members or coalition partners), and between parties. Finally, to what extent policy behaviour is congruent with the dominant national role conceptions in the debates was analysed in stage two of the analysis.

2.3.2 Role contestation and decision making

Previous role theory scholarship has been criticised for being underdeveloped in relation to conceptualising the influence of endogenous factors (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012). Stage two of the empirical analysis investigates vertical and horizontal role contestation within domestic political processes. More specifically, it examines how domestic actors holding different national role conceptions, identified in stage one, interact in the policymaking process. Once national role conceptions are identified, the impact of vertical and horizontal contestation over national role conceptions is analysed to determine how contestation unfolded and identifying potential impact on decision-making (Wehner and Thies 2014). To achieve this, the level of analysis expounds to include an analysis of contested roles between political parties, bureaucratic agencies, individual politicians and the influence of non-governmental stakeholders and the public. Sites and processes of domestic contestation are interrogated in detail.

In process tracing the course of national role conceptions in migration narratives over time, I use a wide range of secondary and news sources in combination with my primary data, to piece together the emergence of salient role contestation and the policy response (George and Bennett 2005). Interrogating and tracing sites and processes of domestic contestation enables the exploration of factors in the domestic arena, the influence of different actors, structures, and context regarding the relationship between national role conceptions, contestation, and policy decisions. The approach combines “social and institutional structure and context with individual agency and decision-making” (Bennett and Checkel 2014, 3). It identifies the intervening processes or interaction between national role conceptions and policy decisions enabling “strong within-case inferences [to be made] about the causal process whereby outcomes are produced” (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 2).
To evaluate the impact of conflict and contested roles on policy responses the analysis also examines the extent to which political elites holding contested role conceptions on asylum and refugee provision are constrained or enabled by institutional settings (see the previous chapter for a discussion of ‘embedded agency/situated actor’) within domestic political processes. Using the data gathered on the cases and secondary analysis, the temporal and special dimensions of contestation and how it unfolded during the ‘migration crisis’ are traced: who said what, when and how much power they held, to determine the impact of their national role conceptions and contestation had on policy responses to the crisis (role enactment).

3. Reflections on epistemological and empirical challenges

Before embarking on the empirical analysis, I should briefly reflect on some challenges and introduce one or two caveats of the research.

3.1 Reflexivity and the double hermeneutic

The first caveat concerns the so-called double hermeneutic issue (Giddens 1987) in relation to both the chosen policy field and the theoretical approach. Jacobs (2018) cautions against the act of categorisation in migration studies, as “scholarly choices can quickly become performative acts with political consequences given the high political salience of the topic” (Jacobs 2018, 134). Whilst the locus of this research is on decision makers as the subject of inquiry, I am aware that in focusing on the asylum and refugee policy ‘problem’, I am accepting the legal definition of refugee protection as defined in international law\(^3\). The relevance of this definition is increasingly questioned as commentators cite the ‘protection gaps’ between existing refugee rights and provisions, and existential threats that drive people to migrate that are not subsumed under the definition, such as extreme economic inequalities, environmental disasters, and climate change (Betts 2013; Lindley 2014; Trombetta 2014). Many states now

\(^{3}\) Article 1 (A.2) of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a ‘refugee’ as one who has fled their country of origin “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UN General Assembly 1951).
offer alternative protection status, such as humanitarian or subsidiary protection for persons who do not qualify as refugees.

By taking asylum seekers and refugees as a starting point, the analysis also sacrifices a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of ‘mixed movements’ that invariably include both asylum seekers and other migrant categories (Haddad 2008), irregular migration during the European migrant crisis, and the interrelated challenges for policymakers (Crawley and Skleparis 2018). The reason for retaining the narrower focus over more inclusive ‘forced migration’ or mixed flows is a practical one; the approach allows for the examination of a set of events and policy developments in a concise way. Moreover, there is a tendency in the literature to conflate asylum and other migration categories, despite their analytically distinct legal and institutional contexts (Léonard and Kaunert 2019, 6). Therefore, I conclude that clear definitions and a targeted research design (thereby some degree of parsimony regarding migrant flows) are needed in order to assess the theoretical claims made in Chapter III.

The two-way relationship between social science terminology and “lay” concepts is arguably equally, if not more, problematic in relation to the categorisation of national role conceptions related to asylum and refugee policy. Teles Fazendeiro (2016) emphasises the narrative dimension of roles. By generating meaningful and aspirational narratives that incorporate expectations of action, they reproduce and normalise a particular understanding of a states’ identity and behaviour. He suggests therefore that academics participate in the “construction of the world out there” and urges reflexivity and an awareness of performativity and the dangers of over-generalisation in role theory scholarship (Teles Fazendeiro 2016, 488).

To address this challenge, I set out to be clear and transparent regarding the conceptualisation, categorisation, operationalisation, and methodological choices made throughout the research. As stated, national role conceptions have been identified inductively in decision makers’ role statements. Whilst the theoretical framework informs the analysis, a priori role templates are not tested on the empirical data. Moreover, this thesis does not attempt to determine whether role conceptions are ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, nor does it provide judgement on the ethics or morality of the roles expressed by decision makers. This research understands national role conceptions as a conceptual and methodological tool to capture the complex mosaic of decision makers’ beliefs regarding domestic and international factors of policy decision-making. It generates a means to categorise actors’ interpretations of their place in the world and action open to them; their interpretation of policy dilemmas and possible policy interventions in a given context, as determined by the perceived role of their state.
The aforementioned challenge has also been controlled for by adopting a reflexive approach and remaining reflective and aware of my own positionality throughout the data collection and analysis process (Mauthner and Doucet 2003; Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz 2018). For example, coding raises questions regarding the potential bias and reliability of the data, a common challenge in migration studies research (Bjerre et al. 2015). This was particularly pertinent during the coding process of national role conceptions, which was undertaken by the author and given the nature of doctoral research, not checked by another researcher. Moreover, given that this thesis represents the first attempt to apply role theory to migration policy, there was little opportunity to cross-reference the coding with other studies. Nonetheless, attempts have been made to resolve this issue by providing a clear outline of the coding rules and procedures applied to the data and including excerpts of the coded material, thereby ensuring the process is replicable in the future. Furthermore, all outcomes were compared with secondary literature on the UK and Germany in role theory and migration studies.

3.2 The ‘decoupling’ phenomena

The second challenge for this research is both epistemological and methodological in nature. To what extent can we extract data on decision makers’ beliefs and interpretations of policy dilemmas from public statements on the ‘migration crisis’? It is widely acknowledged that immigration policy decision-making occurs largely behind closed doors. As illustrated by this author’s experience of securing interview partners, accessing decision makers for research remains notoriously difficult. Consequently, and in line with existing role theory scholarship, the empirical analysis is heavily reliant on data gathered from speech acts and public debates. However, extensive research in migration studies suggests that decision makers’ immigration policy preferences expressed in political discourse differ significantly from the policy on paper; a phenomenon referred to as ‘decoupling’ (Brunsson 2002; Dahlström 2004; Geddes and Boswell 2010).

The notion of ‘decoupling’ draws on insights from sociological institutionalism to describe the different functions between policy rhetoric and practice (Brunsson 1989, 2002; Meyer and Rowan 1977). It is proposed that the challenge of ‘decoupling’ is at least partially mitigated by the agent-centred process-orientated role framework. By carefully tracing role conceptions and contestation, the sources of disparity are unearthed. Indeed, the rich conceptual language of role conflict and contestation may yield some new insights into the phenomena. Moreover, a persistent gap between political discourse and policy behaviour may suggest the strategic deployment of role conceptions or prove a response or precursor to policy change (Breuning
Finally, and most importantly, this research posits that national role conceptions and contestation can affect the nature of the debate, dominant narratives, and therefore decision-making processes, even if decoupled from policy outcomes.

3.3 A note on translation

All data for the German case was analysed directly from the German texts and the interviews were conducted in German. In addition, all translations of primary data in this thesis are my own and I take full responsibility for any errors. This was possible as I am a fluent German-language speaker, who worked for the German Federal Foreign Office in the UK for several years and has previously worked and studied in Germany. This experience has provided me with a nuanced understanding of cultural differences in communication styles and most importantly a familiarity with the formal (and occasionally highly bureaucratic) German language used by some of the subjects of enquiry.

It is acknowledged, however, that by translating my data and interviews, I am once again inserting myself as a researcher into the knowledge production process. As discussed above, this challenge has been addressed by remaining reflective during the data gathering and analysis process. Furthermore, the thesis is informed by role theoretical scholarship on Germany, published in the German language (see, among others, Bulmer and Paterson 2016; Kirste and Maull 1996; Maull 2015; Oppermann 2019), which has provided a means to gauge the reliability of German-language data and enhanced internal validity.

In summary, this chapter outlined the research design and methodology of the thesis. Building on existing role theory scholarship, I develop an interpretive approach and qualitative case study methods for the analysis of national role conceptions and the domestic sources of role enactment (Wehner 2020; Wehner and Thies 2014). This chapter outlined a methodological contribution of this thesis to role theory by introducing narrative analysis from public policy research, specifically the narrative policy framework (NPF), and outlining the benefits of narrative analysis for role theory.

The second section provided an overview of the research design, defined the empirical basis of the thesis and the rationale for applying content analysis methods and tracing and interrogating contestation processes within their temporal and spatial context to determine the influence on decisions taken to address the crisis. This section also provided a detailed account of the coding process applied to identify national role conceptions. Section three
concluded with some reflections on the empirical and epistemological challenges and caveats of the research.
Chapter V

British National Role Conceptions and the ‘Migration Crisis’

This chapter examines British national role conceptions, focusing on political elites’ national role statements. The theoretical framework was applied to debates surrounding the UK’s response to the European ‘migration crisis’ and broader refugee crisis in 2015-2016. National role conceptions were coded in speeches and statements by the Prime Minister, Home Secretary, and Secretary of State for International Development. Thirteen parliamentary debates between April 2015 and December 2016 were also analysed, with an in-depth analysis of the eight most relevant debates, covering the refugee crisis, refugees in Calais, refugee resettlement, pathways for resettlement of Syrian refugees, child refugees, and debates on the Immigration Bill 2016 related to safe and legal routes into refugee protection. Five dominant national role conceptions are identified in the debates and statements, embedded in narratives on migration. Moreover, a closer examination of the political actors invoking the dominant role conceptions reveals significant contestation between the governing Conservative party and opposition parties.

The chapter begins with an overview of role theory research on the UK. Whilst the empirical data was coded inductively, these studies provided useful cues and insight on the general kinds of role conceptions that one might expect. The chapter proceeds with an analysis of the five dominant national role conceptions. Each national role conception is illustrated with the aid of empirical examples and an analysis of the migration narratives in which they are embedded. I also analyse the interpretation of each role conception, identifying any variation in perceptions of how the role should be performed and the kinds of policies each role prescribes.

Particular attention is paid to support of, or objection to, policy interventions related to the establishment of safe routes into refugee protection (my novel adaptation of the concept of ‘sharing of people’), the allocation of funding and expertise (‘sharing of resources’), as well as different forms of international cooperation. In section three the role statements are analysed by political party, cabinet office, and individual politician to determine instances and possible sites of (horizontal) contestation between the government and opposition parties, between elites within the cabinet, and finally between Prime Minister David Cameron and his successor.
Theresa May. Section three also engages in a discussion of additional national role conceptions identified in the data (miscellaneous roles), issue-linkage with foreign policy objectives, and finally limitations discovered during the data collection process.

1. Role theory research on the UK

In his seminal research from 1970, Kal Holsti described Britain’s balancing role and provided empirical evidence of British foreign policy elites’ favouring a national role conception as a faithful ally. Research on British foreign policy and international relations, more generally, frequently refers to the UK’s international role(s) in relation to historical roles – for instance, the UK’s imperial role, colonial role, or role as leader of the Commonwealth. In more contemporary foreign policy, the UK might be described as playing a certain role in a particular issue area in international affairs (Edmunds, Gaskarth, and Porter 2014; Gaskarth 2013b). For instance, a recent paper by Chatham House claimed the UK had the opportunity to remain internationally influential as a global broker, coordinating international responses to global challenges (Chatham House 2021). Whilst not all foreign policy and international relations research that refers to Britain’s international role(s) deploys a role theoretical approach, scholarship on the UK’s role on the world stage from a role theory perspective is relatively extensive and has seen a resurgence in recent years.

A common theme of this scholarship relates to whether the UK has retained its great power status since the end of the Cold War (Edmunds, Gaskarth, and Porter 2014; Gaskarth 2013b). The academic consensus suggests that Britain lost its “privileged status in the bipolar power structure” prompting the UK to have to seek a new international role (Aggestam 2000, 98). However, the debate on whether the UK can still be considered a great power in international affairs remains ongoing. Morris (2011) claims that so long as the UK persists in fulfilling the associated responsibilities of the role and is perceived to do so, it remains a great power. Whereas other scholars argue that the UK’s declining military power and capacities has weakened its position in international affairs (Gaskarth 2014; McCourt 2014). Referencing McCourt's (2011) role analysis of Britain’s invasion of the Falklands in 1982, Gaskarth (2013) suggests that given the UK’s permanent membership of the UN Security Council, British policy makers continue to advocated for a ‘status quo-oriented power’ national role conception (see also Aggestam 2000).

The referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU (Brexit referendum), and subsequent exit from the Union, prompted renewed academic interest in the UK’s national role conceptions. In
an article on the UK’s efforts to find a new foreign policy role after Brexit, Oppermann, Beasley, and Kaarbo (2020) conclude that “[i]n its efforts to avoid adopting the role of isolate, the UK has projected a disoriented foreign policy containing elements of partially incompatible roles such as great power, global trading state, leader of the Commonwealth, regional partner to the EU, and faithful ally to the US” (Oppermann, Beasley, and Kaarbo 2020, 133). In a study that links roles and sovereignty, Beasley, Kaarbo, and Oppermann (2021) develop a conceptualisation of the so-called “sovereignty-role nexus”, claiming that the UK engaged in role contestation related to domestic and international expectations during the role location process both before and after the Brexit vote. McCourt (2020), on the other hand, suggests that despite significant foreign policy implications, domestic contestation over Brexit was not, in fact, role-based, at all.

Glencross and McCourt (2018) conduct an analysis of the newly projected national role conception of global Britain, which, they argue, became prominent in political discourse during Brexit negotiations following the referendum, predominantly in statements made by then Prime Minister, Theresa May. In their scrutiny of the viability of the UK enacting the global Britain role conception, Glencross and McCourt (2018) note the practical challenges presented by the link between trade and immigration. The UK cannot separate the movement of people from the movement of goods. Therefore, the global Britain role would come into direct conflict with the government’s commitment to reduce net immigration to the “tens of thousands” (Conservative Party 2015). However, Glencross and McCourt (2018) claim there has been little indication of other role conceptions being promoted by politicians since the Brexit vote.

Table 3. Selected British national role conceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National role conceptions</th>
<th>Secondary literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional partner to the EU</td>
<td>Gaskarth 2014; Oppermann, Beasley, and Kaarbo 2020;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upholder of international law/ Rule of law state</td>
<td>Gaskarth 2014; Strong 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid superpower</td>
<td>Gaskarth 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of the national interest</td>
<td>Aggestam 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributor to defence and security</td>
<td>Aggestam 2004; Macleod 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sovereignty roles</td>
<td>Beasley, Kaarbo, and Oppermann 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, these studies highlight that there is currently little consensus on a definitive substantive UK foreign policy role conception or British ‘master role’. This supports the argument for a more nuanced reading of national role conceptions that investigates different
policy domains and situational contexts in order to gain insight into issue-specific ‘auxiliary’ role conceptions and foreign policy role repertoires (Breuning 1995; Breuning and Pechenina 2020). To this end, in Table 3 I identify a number of role theory studies on British national role conceptions that provided some indication of the types of national role conceptions in debates and speeches relating to asylum and refugee provision during the European ‘migration crisis’.

James Strong’s (2018) analysis of parliamentary votes on British intervention in the Syrian civil war, identifies three dominant national role conceptions in debates preceding votes on military action between 2013 and 2015: responsible great power, rule of law state, and faithful ally. Strong concludes that Britain intervened in Syria because military action fit with political elites’ broader foreign policy role conceptions, but only in a “limited fashion” due to contestation over the policy implications of the dominant roles (Strong 2018, 388). The rule of law state role conception was identified early on in this research as a possible role conception, given the domestic and international legal framework within which asylum and refugee policy is formulated (see also Gaskarth 2014).

Gaskarth (2014, 2016) posits that the UK might consider enacting the role of a global development superpower or aid superpower in his discussions of military intervention, the national interest, and national identity. This national role conception was also recognized as potentially pertinent given the UK’s prioritisation of humanitarian assistance during the ‘migration crisis’. Finally, Aggestam’s (2004) comprehensive analysis of European foreign policy in relation to British, German, and French national identities and national role conceptions also provided a rich source of insight for potential perspectives on the UK’s role during the crisis. Given the UK’s membership of the EU in 2015/16, research on the UK’s national role conceptions in relation to the EU (regional roles) were also considered.

2. UK national role conceptions in migration narratives

Five dominant national role conceptions were identified in 193 role statements on the European 'migration crisis' and wider refugee crisis. As illustrated by Table 4, they were expressed in varying degrees of frequency, assertiveness, and specificity regarding policy interventions (see Thies 2010).
Table 4. Dominant national role conceptions in migration narratives in UK, April 2015-December 2016 (absolute values and percentage of total role statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National role conceptions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid superpower</td>
<td>54 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European partner</td>
<td>49 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of refuge</td>
<td>34 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributor to security and defence</td>
<td>31 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of national interests / Independent</td>
<td>25 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>193 / 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 Aid superpower

This role was first posited as a potential national role conception for the UK by Gaskarth (2014, 47) but was not developed beyond the title. The *aid superpower* national role conception envisages Britain as a world leader in the provision of humanitarian and development assistance.

 Extract 1. Britain has a major role to play in terms of this conflict because we are the second biggest funder of these refugee camps, and we are the biggest donor of aid to many of these countries (Prime Minister David Cameron [Con.], 7 September 2015) (Hansard 2015d, col. 30)

 Extract 2. We should all be proud of the UK’s work in leading this effort. Whatever our debates on the details of how we respond to complicated crises month by month, I hope that we can continue to have consensus across the House on the 0.7% target and on Britain continuing to play its role in responding to the crises that we see around the world and in driving development (Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening [Con.], 9 September 2015) (Hansard 2015f, col. 427)

Political elites envisaged this role conception for the UK based on three distinct arguments. The first relates to the UK’s claim to an international leadership role in development assistance (Ireton 2013; Morrissey 2002). The UK’s commitment to the UN development expenditure target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI), which was enshrined in British law in March

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32 Frequency does not necessarily equate to support, as political elites may invoke a role conception that they are opposed to or action that should not be taken. Role statements that indicated opposition to a national role conception were nearly non-existent and therefore not included in this table. However, this nuance is addressed in the empirical analysis.
2015, is referred to numerous times by members of the cabinet, including Prime Minister David Cameron (Hansard 2015d, cols 23, 37, 46), Home Secretary Theresa May (Hansard 2015e, col. 258) and Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening (Greening 2015b, 2015a). Speakers invoking this role conception referred to the UK as the “only major state” to fulfil its UN commitment and the second largest bilateral donor of aid to the Syrian crisis, since the outbreak of the civil war (exceeded only by the United States), which was offered as evidence of the UK successfully enacting this international role (Hansard 2015e, col. 258).

With reference to £1.1 billion that the UK had spent on humanitarian assistance to Syria and the region since 2012, Home Secretary May (2010-2016) declared that it was “more than Britain has ever spent in response to a humanitarian disaster” (May 2015b). The UK’s leadership in this area was further emphasised by Prime Minister David Cameron (2010-2016), who engaged in the act of ‘othering’ his European partners, France and Germany. In his opening statement during the first parliamentary debate on the Syrian refugee crisis, on 7th September 2015, he repeatedly stated that Britain was spending “more than France, Germany and Italy”, ”more than Germany, more than France and many times more than most other major European countries” (Hansard 2015d, cols 34, 46). This narrative portrayed the UK as the ‘hero’ of the story and prescribed a specific policy approach to address the ‘migration crisis’. It was also the principal narrative in statements made by government MPs throughout the period analysed.

The second argument speakers used to advocate for the aid superpower role conception related to a narrative on what drives asylum and refugee movements (‘push factors’). Home Secretary May claimed that “aid and development money can be used to ensure that we develop the economies and stability of the countries from which people are seeking to move to Europe” (Hansard 2015b, col. 738). Similarly, in her first statement in post, International Development Secretary, Priti Patel (2016-2017), stated: “I want to use our aid budget to directly address the great global challenges that affect the UK – like creating jobs in poorer countries so as to reduce the pressure for mass migration to Europe” (Patel 2016).

The assumption in these statements is that by providing humanitarian and development assistance to countries of origin, the incentive to migrate and travel to Europe is removed and migrants are prevented from setting out on dangerous journeys. James Brokenshire, Minister of State for Immigration (2014-2016) argued “[w]e need to build stability in Libya and source countries, helping to create livelihoods and reducing the push factors to prevent the flow of people from these countries” (Hansard 2015a, col. 297). The underlying premise is that by enacting the aid superpower role Britain was taking a lead in tackling the drivers of
displacement and migration, at source: “the root causes of the problem” (Greening 2015b).33 “We must work to stop this problem at source” stated May, invoking the UK’s “proud record of providing aid to alleviate poverty and suffering overseas” (Hansard 2015b, col. 598).

The third argument made by speakers invoking the aid superpower role conception related to national security. It was argued that by reducing the ‘burden’ on the countries bordering Syria, hosting large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees, Britain was ensuring its own national security. Development Secretary Greening claimed that “if we don’t help sort out other countries’ problems, today, they become ours too….threatening our national security.” (Greening 2015b). This narrative made a causal link between migrant flows and terrorism and criminality. The accompanying policy narrative assumed that humanitarian support reduces migrant flows to Europe and, hence, reduces the risk of foreign terrorists reaching British shores. The combination of these three narratives presented the aid superpower role conception as the most ‘rational’, ‘sensible’ and ‘responsible’ way to respond to the crisis: “the smart thing to do”, as Greening put it (Greening 2015b).

The interpretation of the role conception and how it should be enacted appeared largely uniform across statements. Prescribed policy measures focused on the allocation of humanitarian and development assistance. Speakers referred to humanitarian assistance ensuring sufficient shelter, health care, and education for asylum seekers and refugees in the refugee camps in the region. Other measures mentioned by government MPs, in particular, included job creation programmes in Lebanon and Jordan (Hansard 2015a, col. 297). Providing education for displaced and refugee children resident in UN camps was also highlighted as an area of leadership by government MPs, with reference to DFID’s No Lost Generation Initiative (Greening 2015a).

Statements in support of the aid superpower role conception regarded Syria and the region as the setting or context of any policy intervention, with little reference to the unfolding situation in Europe. Along similar lines, the ‘significant others’ mentioned by political elites advocating this role conception included the recipients of bilateral development and humanitarian assistance, in particular Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Meanwhile, the UNHCR was identified

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33 There is little empirical evidence to support the proposition that humanitarian or development aid directly reduces migration flows. In fact, studies have shown that better income levels, health, and education are associated with a rise in emigration (Berthélemy, Beuran, and Maurel 2009; Clemens and Postel 2018; Mughanda 2011). However, a recent study by Dreher, Fuchs, and Langlotz (2017) suggests that bilateral humanitarian aid to countries bordering a refugees home can reduce onward movement.
as the predominant partner for international cooperation. In conclusion, supporters of this role prioritised a policy approach that focused on the ‘sharing of funding’, through the allocation of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the only route into protection in the UK that was promoted was through the (limited) expansion of the bilateral Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme (VPRP), which relocated refugees from UN camps in cooperation with the UNHCR.

2.2 European partner

As illustrated by the extracts below, this role orientation emphasises the UK’s long-standing cultural and geographical identity as a European country and EU member state. It conceives the UK as a regional as opposed to global power.34

Extract 3. We are told that it is the time for bold action by EU member states and institutions. I note the words “EU member states”—not just some of them: all of us, and that includes the United Kingdom. For the world, it is a matter of humanity and human dignity. For Europe, it is a matter for historical fairness… The United Kingdom is part of Europe geographically and culturally. Regardless of our views on the European Union, we have responsibilities as Europeans. (Angus Robertson [SNP], 9 September 2015) (Hansard 2015f, col. 413)

Extract 4. I am bound to decry the fact that this Government refuse once again to co-operate with others in the European Union on a collective approach. That affects our standing in the EU and the world (Tim Farron [Lib. Dem.], 9 September 2015) (Hansard 2015f, col. 458)

Extract 5. Why are we not recognising our responsibilities as one of the biggest and longest-standing EU countries to make sure that Europe responds? We should use that basic British diplomacy that we are supposed to be so good at to provide a bit of leadership on our continent at a time of crisis (Yvette Cooper [Lab], 8 September 2015) (Hansard 2015e, col. 255)

Political elites stressed the UK’s commitments and responsibility as an EU member state and a European country in respect to migrants in Europe. They called for greater cooperation and solidarity with other EU member states within the ‘crisis’ context. The notion of ‘fairness’ was emphasized, as was a moral imperative to work with European partners to support countries experiencing high migratory pressures, especially Italy and Greece, and to prevent further

34 This role conception is similar to Aggestam’s (2004, 131) European partnership role, identified in her analysis of national identity and the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, as well as Gaskarth’s (2014, 52) regional partner role but is understood as specific to the European and EU context during the ‘migration crisis’.
deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean. The benefits of cooperation with European partners were also emphasised. For instance, Labour MP and Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, Keith Vaz, pointed out that “repatriation agreements are more effective if they are arranged by the EU rather than bilaterally” (Hansard 2015a, col. 295).

Interpretations of this role conception centred around engagement with EU ‘responsibility-sharing’ initiatives, including calls for British participation in the resettlement of 160,000 refugees from Greece and Italy. However, specificity and interpretation of how the European partner role should be performed varied between speakers. There was even a marked disparity in the interpretation of the policy implications of this role between opposition MPs from the same political party. This variation in interpretation of the role conception was particularly evident among Labour MPs. For example, Labour’s Diane Abbott explicitly expressed support for UK participating in the relocation of refugees based on an EU quota system, stating, “It cannot be right that we refuse to take our quota” (Hansard 2015d, col. 51). Meanwhile, in a House of Commons debate a day later, Labour’s Yvette Cooper stated:

“I agree that we should not be part of a quota system drawn up by the Commission, but I do not agree that we should turn our backs, and I do not agree that we should say that the crisis in Europe is nothing to do with us and that the only people that we will help will be from the Syrian camps.” Yvette Cooper (Hansard 2015e, col. 250)

Speakers also called for the UK to act in relation to the developing humanitarian crisis in the migrant camps at Calais and Dunkirk and emphasised the plight of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Europe. Labour’s Shadow Minister for Immigration at the time, Keir Starmer, noted that “[t]he Opposition have repeatedly raised the plight of the 26,000 or so unaccompanied children in Europe, who are in desperate need of protection.” (Hansard 2016b, 682). Advocates of this role conception favoured a greater role for the UK in response to the developing ‘migration crisis’ in Europe but were less explicit regarding specific policy initiatives. However, there was a preference for establishing safe routes into protection in the UK for asylum seekers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from ‘hotspots’ in Greece and Italy, and the migrant camps at Calais and Dunkirk.

2.3 State of refuge

This role conception is based on Britain’s ‘humanitarian tradition’ of receiving asylum seekers and refugees, which long precedes the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
(Gibney 2005; Ibrahim and Howarth 2018; Joppke 1999). Whilst the UK’s response to refugees since the 1990s has been characterised by highly restrictive policies (Ibrahim and Howarth 2018), the prevalence of this national role conception in debates on the UK’s response to the ‘migration crisis’ suggests that the narrative of the UK as a ‘sanctuary’ state persists.

Extract 6. The history of these islands stands as testament to solidarity with fellow Europeans and to people from further afield. I am talking about the thousands of Huguenots fleeing religious persecution, the thousands of Russian Jews fleeing the pogroms of the 19th century, the thousands of Basque children fleeing the Spanish civil war and the thousands of Jewish children in the Kindertransport. (Angus Robertson [SNP], 9 September 2015) (Hansard 2015f, col. 417)

Extract 7. Helping 4,000 refugees this year is not enough. Compare that figure of 4,000…with the 10,000 we helped in just nine months under the Kindertransport; with the 19,000 Vietnamese boat people who fled to Britain from the Vietcong; and with the 24,000 Kosovans who came to Britain in the late ’90s. We can do more than this. (Yvette Cooper [Lab.], 8 September 2015) (Hansard 2015e, col. 249)

Extract 8. In the 1680s, 50,000 Huguenots fled here from La Rochelle. Two hundred years later, 140,000 Russians fled here from the Tsar. In the 1930s, despite the recession and hardship our country faced, we took in more than 80,000 Jewish and European refugees. In the Kindertransport debate 77 years ago, Philip Noel-Baker reminded parliamentarians of our common past… Let us live up to our predecessors. Let us live up to our history. (Yvette Cooper [Lab.], 8 September 2015) (Hansard 2015e, col. 256)

This role conception refers to the duty and responsibility to provide a safe haven or sanctuary to those fleeing persecution. It invokes liberal universalist perspectives of the equality of all human beings and the moral duty to protect people beyond borders. As illustrated by the extracts, expressions of this role conception are made in relation to the UK’s historical role in offering protection to asylum seekers in the past. For example, the UK’s role in providing refuge to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, with particular reference to the Kindertransport in 1938-1940, was mentioned twenty-six times during the debates on the ‘crisis’. In the motion for the Opposition Day debate on 9th September 2015, the SNP called for “the UK to play its full and proper role, in conjunction with European partners, in providing sanctuary to our fellow human beings”, which received cross party support from all opposition parties.

The central narrative casts the UK in a ‘heroic’ position and the ‘migration crisis’ as one of innocent asylum seekers fleeing a dictator, thereby legitimising greater provision for Syrian
refugees. Moreover, political elites’ rationale for the enactment of the state of refuge role conception was based on the need to remain consistent with the UK’s historical role. In this sense, the historical role becomes a ‘significant other’. Like the European partner role conception, the degree of specificity regarding policy initiatives to perform this role was limited. However, speakers focused on the UK meeting its humanitarian obligations and the moral imperative to act during a crisis by welcoming asylum seekers and refugees to the UK, irrespective of whether they came from Calais, elsewhere in the EU, from camps neighbouring Syria, or had applied through the ordinary asylum procedure, upon arrival in Britain. The state of refuge role conception was most frequently invoked during a parliamentary debate on Syrian refugees and resettlement held on Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January 2016 (Hansard 2016a).

2.4 Contributor to security and defence

This is a general role orientation that suggests Britain has a commitment to work against threats to peace and stability. Political elites advocating for this role conception focused on the UK’s duty and capacity as a member of UN Security Council, NATO and G7, and the UK’s military capacity and expertise that would otherwise be unavailable to the international community. This included references to military, security, and defence expertise and the UK’s perceived global security interests (see, also, Aggestam 2000, 145).

Extract 9. The UK is playing a leading role in the rescue efforts to prevent further deaths. We have sent the Royal Navy’s flagship, HMS Bulwark, to assist the Italian-led search and rescue mission. We have also deployed two UK Border Force cutters and three Merlin helicopters, in addition to police and military expertise. To date, UK assets have saved over 3,000 lives (Minister for Immigration James Brokenshire [Con], 16 June 2015) (Hansard 2015a, col. 296)

Extract 10. About 90 officers will be deployed in the UK, the Mediterranean and Africa to pursue and disrupt organised crime groups…to smash the gangs’ criminal operations and better protect the UK and the vulnerable people they exploit. In addition, we are providing practical and financial support to other EU countries, including help to process newly arrived illegal immigrants and distinguish between economic migrants and genuine refugees. (Home Secretary Theresa May [Con], 14 July 2015) (Hansard 2015b, col. 733)

In the context of immigration, responsibilities related to contributing to managing the EU external border, tackling the threat of terrorism, trafficking and smuggling, and contributing towards stability in the region around Syria. Political elites highlighted British willingness to
cooperate with the EU on security and defence, specifically in relation to control of the EU’s external border, if only on a flexible and task orientated basis. The focus was not on leadership but on strengthening and improving operational procedures, by providing (military and security) expertise and support to the EU external border control initiatives and the fight against terrorism in Syria.

Speakers invoking this role orientation based their argumentation on two key migration narratives. The first conceived the root causes of the problem as criminal gangs and trafficking networks facilitating dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean to Europe. For example, James Brokenshire, Minister for Immigration (2014-2016) stressed the need to “break the business model of people smugglers and traffickers, to break the link between rescue at sea and permanent settlement in the EU, and to address the root causes of migrants’ journeys” (Hansard 2015h, col. 1355). The second migration narrative related to understandings of ‘deservingness’ of protection and portrayed migrants as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ refugees, depending on their route into protection. By this logic, migrants who had reached Europe or the UK through resettlement were deserving of protection, whilst those who had entered the EU via other means (trafficked or smuggled) and applied for asylum through the ordinary route, upon arrival in the country, were less deserving of protection. May elucidated the position during a parliamentary debate, as follows:

“[S]ome of those making the dangerous journey to Europe are refugees, but others are economic migrants simply hoping to improve their lot. That is why we are leading the argument in Europe about breaking the link between making these journeys and achieving settlement in Europe for those who are not refugees” (Hansard 2015e, 261)

Therefore, support for this role conception focused on military and security initiatives as a preventative measure and deterrent policy to halt migrant flows to Europe and prevent economic migrants from ‘abusing’ the asylum system to gain access to the UK.

In addition to the deployment of military assets and Royal Navy ships in Frontex operations in the Mediterranean and the allocation of police and immigration offices to ‘hotspots’, the UK’s involvement in the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS and Rabat and Khartoum processes were mentioned. This refers to the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development, a framework to bring together countries of origin, transit and destination on migration routes between Africa and Europe (The Rabat Process n.b.); and political cooperation for countries along the migration route between Europe and the Horn of Africa (Khartoum Process n.d.). Moreover, following the government’s announcement in parliament on 7th September 2015 that it would be extending the UK’s Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme
(VPRP) in collaboration with the UNHCR, refugee resettlement became a key component of enacting this role conception.

2.5 Defender of national interest/Independent

This role expression stresses a commitment to retaining independence of action and a focus on the importance of national interests. Within the context of the ‘migration crisis’ it prioritises British interests over those of international partners or international ‘public goods’ (see Betts 2003).

Extract 11. Britain will play its part alongside our European partners, but because we are not part of—[Interruption.] This is important. Because we are not part of the EU’s borderless Schengen agreement or its relocation initiative, Britain is able to decide its own approach. (Prime Minister David Cameron [Con], 7 September 2015) (Hansard 2015d, col. 24)

Extract 12. Either we are a nation state, or we are not. Either we are able to be serious about helping the many millions who are affected, or we are not. We should decide who comes into our country, not the German Government, and not the people smugglers (Adam Holloway [Con.], 8 September 2015) (Hansard 2015e, col. 272)

Extract 13. We have an obligation to protect our borders and to safeguard the lives of people seeking to enter this country. We need to ensure that the border and the frontier are secure (Damian Collins [Con.], 8 September 2015) (Hansard 2015e, col. 279)

A central theme in expressions of this role conception was national sovereignty over border controls. Wiener (2000, 455) argues that border politics has been central to state-formation and control of borders is a central concept of sovereignty. By this logic, the UK must have control of its own borders in order to fulfil its role as a nation state (Biersteker and Weber 1996). Therefore, in the first instance, this role conception can be understood as reflecting a particular understanding of the nation state and sovereignty35.

This position was strongly advocated by Theresa May both in her capacity as Home Secretary and as Prime Minister. For example, at the Conservative Party Conference in October 2015, Home Secretary May (2010-2016) argued, “[t]o those who say the problem is too great for nation states to resolve themselves, I say it can only be resolved by nation states taking

35 For a discussion of sovereignty and its connection to roles see Beasley, Kaarbo, and Oppermann 2021.
responsibility themselves – and protecting their own national borders” (May 2015b). A year later, Prime Minister Theresa May (2016-2019) proclaimed that “countries have to be able to exercise control over their borders. The failure to do so erodes public confidence, fuels international crime, damages economies and reduces the resources for those who genuinely need protection” (May 2016).

The second prominent argument that speakers used to advocate for this role conception related to the UK’s unique position in the EU in relation to migration policy and tapped into Eurosceptic sentiment. Political elites invoking this role frequently did so by emphasising that the UK is not part of Schengen or the CEAS. For example, blaming the “chaos in Calais” on EU institutions, Conservative MP for North Thanet in Kent, Sir Roger Gale declared, “[i]t is time to abolish Schengen and bring back border controls.” (Hansard 2015b, col. 736). The assumption was that Schengen encourages large scale and uncontrollable migration movements across Europe.

The defender of the national interest role conception was also embedded in two established migration narratives, common in debates on immigration in the UK. The first relates to drivers of immigration. In a parliamentary debate on the situation in Calais, May stated that “[i]f a significant number of illegal migrants come through into the United Kingdom, an ever-increasing number of people would try to come through—it would act as a pull factor.” (Hansard 2015b, col. 740). This understanding of migration conceives stringent border controls as a key deterrent of migrants, and lax border management as a ‘pull factor’.

The second narrative relates to the characterisation of migrants as possible security threats, terrorists, or criminals (see, for detailed discussion, Eybergen and Andresen 2020), or those ‘undeserving’ of protection, who have “abused [the British asylum system] for years” (May 2015). According to this security frame, tightly controlling borders and who enters the country is a necessary security measure and in the national interest. In this sense, the performance of this role conception is strongly associated with deterrence policies and restricting access to British territory, thereby preventing asylum claims from being lodged.

3. Discussion

This section begins by discussing some of the less prevalent national role conceptions identified during coding. The dominant role conceptions are then analysed by political party, cabinet office, and individual politician. Explicit links to foreign policy objectives are discussed,
before outlining limitations identified during the coding of national role conception in the British case.

3.1 Miscellaneous roles

Before exploring horizontal contestation among decision makers, it is important to note the prevalence of the view that the UK should and indeed was morally obliged to respond to the ‘migration crisis’ in some way. Despite the increase in migratory pressures in Europe having comparatively little impact on the ‘island nation’\textsuperscript{36}, the data suggests a consensus existed among political elites that something should be done. This is demonstrated by parliamentarians negatively invoking the roles of isolate and bystander\textsuperscript{37}. The isolationist role conception was invoked in debates and speeches as a hypothetical option that was summarily rejected in favour of the UK enacting other role conceptions.

Whilst government MPs advocated for a leadership role in humanitarian assistance and stabilising the region in Syrian in response to the ‘crisis’, opposition parties also called for action. In response to the Prime Minister’s statement on the resettlement of Syrian refugees in early September 2015, and during the Opposition Day debate two days later, Harriet Harman, Labour Leader of the Opposition (May-September 2015), remarked: “is being British to be narrow, inward looking and fearful of the outside world” invoking the role conceptions of isolate, before dismissing it in favour of “being strong, confident and proud to reach out to those seeking refuge on our shores” (Hansard 2015f, col. 398, 2015d, col. 27). Similarly, in her opening remarks during the House of Commons Emergency Debate the following day, Yvette Cooper, Labour Shadow Home Secretary, stated that “we cannot stand on the sidelines and watch while this happens. We cannot be the generation that turned our backs” (Hansard 2015c, col. 253). Meanwhile, SNP parliamentarians such as Joanna Cherry, SNP Spokesperson for Home Affairs, stated that “the Scottish Government stand ready to do whatever they can to help to alleviate the crisis” (Hansard 2015e, col. 273). Thus, despite

\textsuperscript{36} Despite images of migrants trying to cross the British Channel on dinghies or scaling fences to get access to the Eurotunnel in Calais, asylum application numbers in the UK remained comparatively stable in 2015/16 and significantly below the highest number of recorded asylum applications in 2002 (Home Office 2003). See Appendix 1 for an overview of first-time asylum applications 2014-2017.

\textsuperscript{37} See Holsti (1970) for a comprehensive definition.
disagreement over the appropriate role for the UK, which will be explored in the following section, there was cross-party consensus that the UK should respond to the ‘migration crisis’.

An unexpected finding was the lack of prominence given to liberal universalist arguments of international norms in defence of refugee rights. Liberal universalist theories would suggest that those calling for the admission of greater numbers of refugees and defending against restrictive policies in liberal democratic societies would invoke international human rights laws and norms (Boswell 2003). Gaskarth (2013, 79) reflects on a sense of a British tradition of liberal values, “which recites Britain’s contribution of human rights from the Magna Carta in 1215 to the 1689 Bill of Rights”. One might, therefore, expect MPs to advance arguments for a defender of human rights or a rule of law state role conception, based on international human rights and refugee law.

While humanitarian norms could be interpreted as implicit in the state of refuge and aid superpower role conceptions, explicit references to responsibilities under international human rights law were conspicuous in their absence. For example, the UK’s commitment as a signatory of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees was only mentioned on three occasions in the parliamentary debates analysed over the two-year period. Instead, the need to admit and protect asylum seekers and refugees was most frequently linked to the UK’s membership of the European Union or the UK’s historical role as a state of refuge for those fleeing persecution in Europe. Moreover, as discussed in section 2.1, the motivation for the aid superpower role conception was based largely on stabilising the region and preventing migrants from reaching Europe, and therefore can be interpreted as foremost a security narrative, as opposed to one based on humanitarian norms or refugee rights.

3.2 Government and the Opposition

If we take a closer look at the five dominant national role conceptions by political party, illustrated in Table 5, we can identify a distinct variation in the dominant national role conceptions invoked by political elites along party political lines. Members of the governing Conservative party overwhelmingly invoked the aid superpower role conception, followed by the contributor to security and defence and defender of the national interest/independent.

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38 As previously noted, frequency was not automatically equated with support for a particular national role conception. Instances where roles were invoked in opposition of their enactment are discussed in the analysis.
Members of the Labour party, on the other hand, prioritised the UK’s role as a *European partner* and the historical role conception as a *state of refuge*. Similarly, the SNP and Liberal Democrats\(^{39}\) strongly advocated for the *European partner* role conception.

Table 5. British national role conceptions by political party (absolute values and percentage of total statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political party / NRC</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>SNP</th>
<th>Liberal Democrat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid superpower</td>
<td>49 (44%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributor to security and defence</td>
<td>21 (19%)</td>
<td>7 (13%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European partner</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
<td>23 (44%)</td>
<td>16 (73%)</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of national interests / Independent</td>
<td>21 (19%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of refuge</td>
<td>13 (12%)</td>
<td>16 (37%)</td>
<td>5 (23%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table demonstrates that the governing Conservative party supported the *aid superpower* role conception. Statements across the board were in support of the UK performing this role. In fact, not a single statement was identified that suggested that the UK should not enact this role conception. One interviewee suggested that the positive sentiment towards the UK taking a lead on ODA and humanitarian assistance, illustrated by a lack of negative elicitations of the role conception by opposition parties, stemmed from the reputation of DFID as one of the “most internationally respected government departments across a whole range of policy areas” (Interview, 2019). The only disagreement that arose in debates in relation to this role conception was whether the *aid superpower* role should be the UK’s sole response to the ‘crisis’ or whether, for example, the UK should also support its neighbours in Europe. For instance, Andy Slaughter, Labour’s Shadow Minister for Justice, declared:

“I do not think that any Opposition Member is criticising what the Government are doing, but what the Government are not doing, which includes their duty as a member of the European Union in respect of migrants in Europe” (Hansard 2015f, col. 420)

\(^{39}\) It should be noted that the Liberal Democrats were the only small party to express national role conceptions during the parliamentary debates analysed. However, with only 8 seats in parliament following the May 2015 election, their contribution to these debates was very limited.
This quote illustrates the contested nature of the UK’s role in Europe during the crisis. Across the parliamentary debates, 61% of statements by members of opposition parties supported the *European partner* role conception, calling for the Government to show greater solidarity with its European neighbours and resettle asylum seekers and refugees from within the EU.

“We are dodging our responsibility as a European nation and EU member. It is not fair to draw a line at the channel, and to be one of only three of the 27 EU countries not prepared to act collectively. I fear that this is more to do with the internal politics of the Conservative party or indeed European referendum politics” (Andy Slaughter [Lab], Hansard 2015, col. 451)

In addition to the geographical dimension of whether, as well as humanitarian aid to Syria and the region, policy interventions should also focus on Europe (a regional role), there was also a distinct temporal dimension. Opposition politicians declared their support for the UK’s humanitarian assistance efforts as a long-term strategy to stabilise the region around Syria but expressed an urgent need for a response to the situation in Greece, Italy, and the camps around Calais in France.

In contrast to the other four dominant role conceptions, the *European partner* role was the only role conception to be expressed negatively. Government MPs and members of the cabinet, in particular, invoked the *European partner* as a role that the UK should *not* perform. Notably, the regional role was associated with the erosion of national sovereignty over border and immigration control. In response to calls for a stronger presence in Europe, government MPs emphasised the UK’s independence as ‘not a Schengen state’ and the need to protect national borders. Invoking the *defender of national interest/independent* role conception, Cameron stated:

“Yes, we should be working towards a comprehensive approach, but we are not in the Schengen no-borders agreement, and I think that being able to maintain our border controls when others in Europe have given theirs up is right for Britain” (Hansard 2015d, col. 35)

Meanwhile, in her speech to the Conservative party conference in October 2015, Home Secretary Theresa May declared:

“We will take in 20,000 Syrian refugees over the course of this Parliament – a decision not imposed on us by Europe, but a decision taken by Britain, an independent sovereign country.” (May 2015b)
Another point of contention related to the European partner role conception was Conservative party objections to suggestions that the UK should participate in EU resettlement or relocation programmes. May proclaimed that EU members should not be engaging in resettlement within the Union, “[i]nstead, we should be – as the UK is doing – resettling people directly from the region” (Hansard 2015a, col. 295). This position is largely in line with the UK’s traditional approach to EU migration policy, whereby it has historically participated in provisions related to border controls and the right to send back migrants under Dublin, that were regarded as in the national interest, but not in measures on minimum standards or responsibility sharing, such as the recast CEAS regulations and directives (see Chapter II).

Although not as contentious as the European partner role, the second contested role between the government and opposition parties was the state of refuge role conception. Recent studies have explored the influence of historical analogies on foreign policy processes and outcomes, suggesting they can be deployed to influence preferences and procedures (Kaarbo and Kenealy 2017). Moreover, Kirkwood (2018, 1) argues that historical narratives about the UK during asylum and refugee debates “construct the nation in particular ways, mobilize collective identities, and legitimize or criticize political actions”. Historical narratives have also been conceptualised as a ‘significant other’ in foreign policy national role conceptions, most notably in the case of Germany (Beneš and Harnisch 2015; Harnisch 2012).

In this case, we see a previously held British role as both a national role conception – ‘what should be done’ - and as a historical alter, a role to emulate, being strategically deployed by opposition parties to criticise the government’s actions. Contestation over this role conception was reflected in the conflict between the government and opposition parties on the (limited) number of asylum seekers and refugees being offered protection compared with previous refugee crises. Moreover, opposition speakers who invoked the European partner role frequently also invoked the state of refuge role conception, as a historical ‘other’, as justification for offering protection to asylum seekers and refugees already in Europe. This suggests that parliamentarian’s views on the two role conceptions were interlinked, and the European partner role conception was conditional on the historical state of refuge role the UK was understood to have played in Europe in the past.

The contestation between the governing Conservative party and opposition parties fits with Brummer and Thies (2015) assertion that most role contestation arises between governments and opposition politicians. Nevertheless, the strong advocacy for the European partner and state of refuge role conceptions by the Labour party is surprising given how contentious the EU was at the time. As one interviewee described, anything related to Europe had become “politically toxic” in Westminster (Interview, 2019). Moreover, like EU integration, immigration
is a challenging topic for the Labour party that must balance the preferences of voters that include ‘progressive’ liberal elites concerned with social justice, on the one hand, and traditional ‘working-class’ Labour voters and unions, concerned with how immigration affects wage levels and workers’ rights, on the other (Bale 2014; Odmalm and Super 2014). This tension is illustrated in the Labour party’s manifesto 2015, which focuses on controlling (labour) immigration, while largely failing to mention asylum policy or refugees, which are addressed in only two sentences (Labour Party 2015, 67). Furthermore, we know that once elected, previous Labour governments have implemented some of the most stringent asylum policies in the UK (see Chapter II).

Similarly, the Conservative party’s advocacy for the aid superpower role conception does not fit with the commonsensical premise that centre-right parties are less generous in the allocation of aid than centre-left parties (see, for example, Thérien and Noel 2000). However, given that one of the Conservative party’s flagship manifesto commitments since 2010 was to reduce net immigration to the “tens of thousands”, which was reaffirmed in 2015 (Conservative Party 2015), it follows that the government envisaged a role in the ‘crisis’ that did not increase immigration to the country. Moreover, by performing the air superpower role, the government could claim to be fulfilling its international commitments, in line with the UK’s ‘humanitarian tradition’, while also not compromising on its commitment to control immigration.

The findings correspond with studies that suggest that centre-right parties focus on immigration control and centre-left parties favour more generous approaches to asylum provision (Bale 2003; Schuster 2000). And yet, we know that the Labour party has not historically been a fit for this model in relation to asylum and refugee provision. Bale (2014) claims that the Labour party has a history of changing its position on immigration to remain competitive with the Conservative party, as well as more recently to stem the loss of votes to UKIP. An alternative explanation relates to the function of parties when in opposition and once elected.

Studies suggest that once in government party politics and party ideology does not significantly influence whether asylum regimes are predominantly liberal or restrictive. For instance, in a study of asylum regimes in seven European countries, Schuster (2000) concluded that a shift from centre-right governments to centre-left governments, following general elections, did not result in a significant liberalisation of asylum policies. Hampshire and Bale (2015) argue that once in government, parties are confronted by policy traditions and path dependent processes, leadership, bureaucratic interests, potential vote ‘theft’ by the populist radical right (Odmalm and Super 2014), organised interest groups (Freeman 1995), the salience of different migrant groups, and public opinion, which can constrain newly elected
governments from implementing significant changes in immigration policy, and are rarely investigated by political scientists in parallel.

The narratives in which the dominant national role conceptions are embedded, provide further clarification on both parties’ preferred national role conceptions. Returning to the analysis in section two, we can see that the roles advocated by the Conservative party are embedded in narratives that frame the ‘crisis’ as a security threat to the nation, calling for restrictive policies and control of borders and migrant flows. The European partner and state of refugee role conceptions, advanced by the Labour party, on the other hand, frame the events first and foremost as a humanitarian crisis. This finding corresponds with a small number of studies on the discourse adopted by mainstream parties during refugee crises (see, for example, Gianfreda 2018). Moreover, from a foreign policy perspective, the Labour party views itself as having an internationalist tradition and advocating human rights as a key foreign policy goal (Gaskarth 2013, 31). Whereas the Conversative party has been regarded as predominantly Atlanticist, highlighting the UK’s relationship with the US and Commonwealth, and is commonly associated with Euroscepticism.

The SNP’s support for the European partner and state of refuge role conceptions, effectively calling for more asylum seekers to be welcomed to the UK, whether from the Middle East or relocated from Europe, is more easily explained. Prior to the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, the Scottish Government published a paper on immigration stating a pro-immigration stance and (rhetorically) differentiating its position from the rest of the UK (especially England) (Hepburn 2015). Indeed, in 2015/16 there was an understanding of a pro-immigration consensus among political elites in Scotland, owing to its distinct migration needs, including concerns over an ageing population, the need to fill key gaps in the labour market, and a world renowned university landscape (for a full discussion of Scotland’s differentiated immigration approach see Boswell, Kyambi, and Smellie 2017). This differentiated approach to immigration spilled over into asylum and refugee integration with the implementation of the New Scots refugee integration strategy in 2014, which established a collaborative approach to support asylum seekers within Scottish communities and essentially set out a ‘welcome culture’ for refugees in Scotland (Scottish Government n.d.).

Irrespective of the different parties’ track record on asylum policy when in government, this analysis demonstrates significant contestation between the government and opposition parties over which national role conception(s) the UK should perform in response to the ‘migration crisis’. The opposition challenged the legitimacy of the government’s policy approach to the ‘crisis’ by offering alternative policies based on alternative national role
conceptions. The extent to which this contestation process influenced decision-making will be explored in the following chapter.

3.3 Bureaucratic politics and individual elites

In addition to opposition parties, role theory research suggests that leadership and bureaucratic politics may also influence role contestation and selection (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012). Brummer and Thies (2015) posit that individual cabinet members may make use of their decision-making authority and agenda-setting powers to advocate for a role(s) in the bureaucratic interests of their specific department, potentially creating intragovernmental conflict over national role conceptions.

Table 6. British national role conceptions by cabinet office (absolute values and percentage of total statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet office/ National role conceptions</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Home Secretary</th>
<th>Development Secretary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid superpower</td>
<td>18 (50%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>31 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributor to security and defence</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>9 (31%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>13 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European partner</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of national interests / Independent</td>
<td>10 (28%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of refuge</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>72 / 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 illustrates the dominant national role conceptions expressed by the three most relevant members of the cabinet. Supporting Thies and Brummer’s (2015) proposition, the data suggests that the cabinet secretaries from the two key ministries, the Home Office and Department for International Development, advocated role conceptions in line with the bureaucratic interests, portfolios and traditions of their respective cabinet offices. The Secretaries of State for International Development, Justine Greening (Sept. 2012- July 2016) and Priti Patel (July 2016- Nov. 2017), overwhelmingly expressed the aid superpower role conception, reflecting the department’s portfolio. The Home Secretaries, Theresa May (May 2010- July 2016) and Amber Rudd (July 2016- April 2018), most frequently invoked the
contributor to security and defence role conception. This also reflects the broader portfolio of the Home Office as well as the institutional ‘culture of disbelief’ that drives control logics regarding asylum policy at the Home Office (for a discussion, see, for instance, Mayblin 2019), and the department’s “obsession with reassuring the public that immigration is under control” (Hampshire and Bale 2015, 159). The Prime Minister, on the other hand, advocated leadership on aid and the defender of the national interest role conception.

However, these variations do not necessarily suggest contestation. A qualitative analysis of the coded data reveals no observable dissonance between the three role conceptions and the policies they prescribed. This suggests a repertoire or set of three compatible role conceptions invoked by the executive in response to the ‘migration crisis’. We can also identify a hierarchy of importance allocated by the executive, reflected in the total number of role statements in Table 6, but also a more qualitative reading of the data. The greatest priority was placed on the aid superpower role, followed by, in equal measure, the defence of national interest and contributor to security and defence role conceptions. The extent to which these roles were enacted during the ‘migration crisis’ will be explored in the following chapter.

Table 7. British national role conceptions by individual Prime Minister (absolute values and percentage of total statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet office/ National role conceptions</th>
<th>Prime Minister David Cameron</th>
<th>Prime Minister Theresa May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid superpower</td>
<td>12 (50%)</td>
<td>6 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributor to security and defence</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European partner</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of national interests / Independent</td>
<td>7 (29%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of refuge</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In July 2016, Theresa May won the Conservative party leadership election, following David Cameron’s resignation, after he lost the national referendum on the UK’s membership of the European Union. Table 7 looks at the five dominant national role conceptions invoked by the two Prime Ministers. It should be noted that Theresa May did not take up office at 10 Downing Street until 13th July 2016. Consequently, there is a significant asymmetry in the number of
role statements made by the two Prime Ministers analysed in Table 7. This makes a detailed analysis of discrepancies between the two profiles of role conceptions somewhat tenuous, and any conclusions regarding the effects of changes in leadership premature. Nevertheless, the data does suggest the continued primacy of the aid superpower role conception, following the leadership election and cabinet reshuffle. Moreover, the prominence of the defender of national interests/independent role conception also remained largely the same between the two Prime Ministers. This supports the notion that role conceptions are ‘sticky’ (Cantir and Kaarbo 2016).

The only significant variation in perceptions of the UK’s role during the ‘crisis’, based on the limited data, appears to be that May continued to advocate for a contributor to security and defence role in her new office as Prime Minister. The most plausible explanation for this variation relates to May’s former role and portfolio as Home Secretary. Table 6 highlights that the Home Secretaries (May and Rudd) predominantly advocated for the UK to adopt a role focused on security and defence, which is linked with the Home Office’s approach to controlling immigration. Consequently, this analysis suggests that the influence of leadership on the selection of national role conceptions would be an intriguing avenue for future research.

3.4 Asylum roles and foreign policy

The link between the UK’s role in the ‘migration crisis’ and wider foreign policy objectives was made on several occasions but most explicitly in the three House of Commons debates in early September 2015, in relation to the UK’s strategy on Syria and counterterrorism. Firstly, the UK’s provision for asylum seekers and refugees was linked to the UK’s foreign policy objectives regarding the Syrian civil war and the possibility of military intervention. This connection was explicitly made by Prime Minister David Cameron in his opening statement on Syrian refugees and counter-terrorism on 7th September 2015 and was picked up by multiple parliamentarians in the ensuing debate (Hansard 2015d). The connection was made in relation to stabilising Syria and the region to prevent the displacement of people and further migrant

Unfortunately, this limitation was even more pronounced in relation to Home Secretary Amber Rudd (July 2015–April 2018) and Development Secretary Priti Patel (July 2016–November 2017). The small number of statements they made on the ‘migration crisis’ in their first five months in office made a reliable comparison of national role conceptions with Home Secretary Theresa May and Development Secretary Justine Greening untenable.
flows to Europe. Military intervention in Syria was, therefore, posited as a possible foreign policy solution to the mass movement of Syrian asylum seekers across borders.

Although less pronounced in parliamentary debates on migration after 7 September, military intervention remained a topic of debate until the parliamentary vote on military action against ISIL in Syria on 2 December 2015 (Hansard 2015g). In the Prime Minister’s opening remarks to that debate, he explicitly links asylum and refugee provision with wider foreign policy objectives by describing humanitarian support for refugees in the region as “one component of a broader strategy to bring peace and stability to Syria” (Hansard 2015g, col. 323). Intriguingly, given the vote in support of intervention in December 201541, those who referred to military intervention during debates on asylum and refugee provision, mostly did so to criticise the action as one that the UK should not deploy. For instance, Joanna Cherry, the SNP’s Shadow Home Secretary and Shadow Secretary of State for Justice (2015-2021) proclaimed, “[t]he humanitarian crisis should not be used as a cover for military intervention by the United Kingdom in Syria” (Hansard 2015c, col. 273).

The second interrelated and unambiguous link made between asylum provision and British foreign policy objectives related to the threat of ISIL (British Government 2015). At the Conservative party conference in autumn 2015, Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening claimed, “international development [is] at the heart of our national security and foreign policy…the Conservative Government is maintaining Britain’s national security by: meeting NATO’s 2 percent defence target; and meeting the UN’s 0.7 per cent aid target” (Greening 2015b). In this instance, we can identify issue-linkage between the UK’s role on humanitarian support and maintaining a robust counter-terrorism strategy. The assumption is that permitting large numbers of refugees from terror-prone states into a country will result in more incidents of terrorism (for a discussion, see Eybergen and Andresen 2020). Therefore, it follows that by supporting stabilisation efforts and forestalling the further flow of migrants to Europe, Britain’s national security and counter-terrorism objectives are served by “preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters” (British Government n.d.).

As discussed in section 2.1 of this chapter, the notion of ‘stabilising the region’ through the allocation of development and humanitarian assistance is a central argument in support of adopting the aid superpower role conception. However, following the debate on 7th September 2015, the nexus between asylum seekers and refugees and terrorism became significantly less pronounced. This fits with Huysmans and Buonfino’s (2008) findings that political elites

41 See Strong (2018) for a role theory analysis of the UK’s parliamentary votes on military intervention in Syria.
in the UK have been reluctant to instrumentalise the threat of terrorism in migration and asylum debates or as a means to legitimise migration policy decisions.

Whether with regard to the UK’s approach to the Syrian civil war or national security concerns, the inference is that the UK’s approach to the ‘migration crisis’ was closely linked to foreign policy objectives. The aid superpower role conception appears to have resonated with the UK government’s wider foreign and security policy objectives. This analysis supports the proposition that issue-specific role conceptions sit comfortably alongside other foreign policy roles, so long as there is no role conflict (or salience is low enough not to highlight instances of dissonance) (Breuning and Pechenina 2020; Thies 2013; Wehner 2015). Based on a reading of the secondary literature, I posit that the British government’s role conceptions of aid superpower, contributor to security and defence and defender of the national interest expressed during the ‘migration crisis’ were congruent at the time with broader foreign policy roles, such as a responsible great power role conception as conceptualised by James Strong (2018) in his analysis of British military intervention in the Syrian civil war.

3.5 Limitations

Whilst the national role conceptions examined in section two were prominent in the majority of statements and debates analysed, not all data collection activities were equally successful. An analysis of party-political material from the May 2015 general elections and party conference speeches yielded some unexpected findings with regards to national role conceptions. Firstly, as anticipated, not all facets of asylum and immigration policy in response to the crisis were communicated, formulated, or debated in terms of national role conceptions. Brummer and Thies (2015) suggest that electioneering and party-political strategy ahead of elections can potentially generate contestation over national role conceptions. The party manifestos of the main political parties, as well as UKIP42, ahead of the May 2015 general elections, however, did not present immigration or asylum policy in terms of national role conceptions (Conservative Party 2015; Labour Party 2015; Liberal Democrats 2015; UKIP 2015). This once again supports the proposition that in order for immigration policy to be regarded by political elites in terms of national role conceptions, a distinct foreign policy

42 UKIP was included in the analysis of political party manifestos as a ‘niche’ party that politicised immigration concerns (Geddes 2014).
dimension must be evident, through the labelling of a ‘crisis’ or a perceived threat of a mass migration movement (see Greenhill 2002; Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2016). Given that the ‘crisis’ narrative in the UK was not salient until a little later in the year, political parties were not yet framing immigration issues in relation to the crisis.

This also raises the question of the impact of intended audience. It suggests that the intended audience of statements may play a role in when political parties express policy preferences in terms of national role conceptions. The analysis of data acquired through coding government statements unearthed no perceivable variation in the expression of national role conceptions based on a domestic or international audience. However, there was some variation in the expression of role conceptions when representatives of the government were addressing a party-political audience. Whilst the same national role conceptions were invoked, representatives of the cabinet took a considerably harder line on immigration issues when addressing annual party conferences.

Despite the prominence of immigration in the Home Secretaries’ annual addresses at the Conservative party conferences in both 2015 and 2016, asylum and immigration policy were not presented in terms of national role conceptions at the latter. In the case of Home Secretary Amber Rudd’s (2016-2018), her speech focused on controlling labour migration and meeting the government’s commitment to bring net immigration down to the “tens of thousands” (Rudd 2016). This is surprising considering the international context; the speech was held days before the closure of ‘the Jungle’ migrant camp (known officially as Camp de la Lande) in the vicinity of Calais, and calls from rights-based organisations and NGOs to transfer child refugees to Britain were once again featured prominently in the British press (Kelly 2016). However, the focus on labour migration, as opposed to the ‘migration crisis’, can be attributed to the domestic political context shortly after the EU referendum vote.

The lack of role-based argumentation in Rudd’s speech is in direct contrast to Home Secretary Theresa May’s (2010-2016) half an hour conference speech a year earlier, which focused nearly exclusively on asylum and refugee policy, and which comprised of no fewer than nine distinct and explicit articulations of Britain’s international role(s). The variation in how immigration was communicated is most plausibly explained by the different situational context. May’s speech on 6th October 2015 was held during the ‘peak’ of the European ‘migration crisis’. However, it also begs the question of the impact of individual elites on role conceptions and whether the character traits of politicians in the same cabinet posts influence role conceptions and the likelihood of policy dilemmas being viewed in terms of international
roles. However, despite the changes in the British government during the period under investigation, neither Home Secretary Amber Rudd nor Development Secretary Priti Patel made enough statements on the ‘migration crisis’ in their first five months in office to conduct a reliable comparison of national role conceptions with Theresa May and Justine Greening.

Conclusion

This chapter identified five dominant national role conceptions in leadership speeches, statements and parliamentary debates in the UK during the peak of the ‘migration crisis’. Each role conception was found to be embedded in different migration narratives that elucidated how speakers perceived the new policy dilemma presented by the ‘crisis’, what traditions were regarded as relevant and the appropriate policy solutions. Given Britain’s self-image of having a historical tradition of refugee protection and contributing to human rights, identified in both the migration and foreign policy literature, the lack of argumentation based on refugee and human rights law and norms was an unexpected finding. Nevertheless, the data revealed a consensus across political elites that there should be a British response to the ‘migration crisis’.

The analysis of the dominant role conceptions expressed by political party demonstrated significant contestation between the government and opposition parties. While members of the governing Conservative party most frequently invoked the aid superpower role conception, followed by the contributor to security and defence and defender of the national interest/independent, opposition parties overwhelmingly supported a Europe partner and state of refuge role for the UK. The latter two role conceptions were found to be interlinked, with opposition members strategically deploying the state of refuge as a historical alter to criticise the government’s actions. The government, on the other hand, associated the European partner role conception with the erosion of national sovereignty over border and immigration controls and the state of refuge role as not in the county’s interest.

In the case of the SNP, support for a European role and stronger engagement in offering refugees protection in the UK was explained by the Scottish government’s pro-immigration and pro-European consensus. However, a plausible explanation for the Conservative and Labour parties’ respective positions was not as straightforward. The Conservative party’s

43 Research into the relationship between leadership traits and national role conceptions and selection is in its infancy, but gaining momentum (see Kesgin and Wehner (2021) and Wehner and Thies (2021)).
flagship manifesto commitments to reduce net immigration to the “tens of thousands” provided the most plausible explanation for a policy approach that did not increase immigration to the country. Moreover, the Conservative party was found to frame the ‘crisis’ predominantly in terms of a security threat to the nation. Whereas the Labour party framed the developing situation first and foremost as a humanitarian crisis.

An analysis of the role conceptions by cabinet office suggests that the Prime Minister, Home Secretary and Development Secretary advocated role conceptions in line with the bureaucratic interests, portfolios and traditions of their respective cabinet offices. However, there was no evidence of dissonance or conflict between these role conceptions, suggesting a set of three compatible role conceptions invoked by the executive in response to the ‘migration crisis’. Moreover, a comparison of the role conceptions expressed by David Cameron and Theresa May, once she was in office as Prime Minister was largely congruent, supporting the notion that national role conceptions are largely ‘sticky’. The one variation identified was attributed to May’s former role as Home Secretary, suggesting that the influence of leaders on role conceptions and their selection could prove an intriguing avenue for further research.

The next chapter investigates whether the Conservative government enacted the role set identified in this chapter, and the extent to which contestation between the government and opposition influenced decision-making. Moreover, by analysing contested roles in the domestic political process, it also reveals institutional opportunities and constraints and instances of vertical contestation over the UK’s response to the ‘migration crisis’ in 2015/16.
Chapter VI

Aid Superpower and Border Controls: The Geographical Bifurcation of Britain’s Response to the Crisis

The previous chapter outlined five dominant national role conceptions in British political debates and speeches during the European ‘migration crisis’. It identified a set of roles advocated by the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers, as well as significant role contestation between the government and opposition parties. This chapter interrogates key events and debates, tracing the temporal and spatial context of role contestation, how it unfolded in domestic political processes, and chronologically mapping it against policy developments. It determines that the British government largely enacted the role set identified in the previous chapter. In September 2015, pressure from opposition parties and a shift in public sentiment towards refugees resulted in the (limited) extension of the UK’s Syrian resettlement programme. However, the analysis finds that this decision did not mark a significant deviation in policy approach or a reorientation of the UK’s role in the ‘crisis’. Rather, the new policy idea was subsumed within the existing national role conceptions. Meanwhile, attempts by the Labour opposition to realise an alternative role for the UK through an amendment to the Immigration Bill 2016 was subsequently hollowed out by the executive. The chapter concludes that despite instances of vertical and horizontal role contestation, decision making was largely at the discretion of the government and policy responses to the ‘crisis’ did not deviate from historical norms.

The chapter proceeds as follows: section one investigates the so-called ‘Calais crisis’ in July 2015, when hundreds of irregular migrants tried to access the Eurotunnel to reach the UK. It explores the main narratives and the government’s policy response to determine which role the UK enacted. Section two explores the UK government’s decision at the beginning of September 2015, to expand the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme (VPRP) to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees from UN camps to the UK. Particular attention is paid to the role of the public, during this period of intense debate. Finally, section three investigates the UK’s approach to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, the influence of the refugee sector, as an ‘organised public’, and the so-called ‘Dubs’ amendment to the Immigration Act 2016.
1. The ‘Calais crisis’ and *defender of national interest* role conception

The situation in Calais, in the summer of 2015, when hundreds of migrants tried to access the Channel tunnel in an attempt to reach Britain, represented the most tangible manifestation of the European ‘migration crisis’ for the UK, due to its geographical proximity to the country. With an estimated 5000-7000 migrant inhabitants, the ‘Jungle’ migrant camp (known officially as Camp de la Lande) near Calais, as well as smaller camps that had sprung up along the French coast, such as the Grande-Synthe migrant camp at Dunkirk, were seen as the main source of unauthorised attempts to enter the UK from France (Home Affairs Committee 2016). This situation had been ongoing since the late 1990s but has seen waves of attention because of changes in the camps, patterns of movement, or developments in bilateral negotiations with France.

In June 2015, the situation was exacerbated by strikes by French port workers, which disrupted ferry and Eurotunnel services, resulting in queues of hundreds of lorries in Calais and Kent. It also generated opportunities for migrants to make increasingly bold attempts to board vehicles and trains heading to the UK. The situation came to a head on 28 July 2015, when an estimated 3000 migrants made 1500 attempts to access the Eurotunnel in a single night, marking a new record, and resulting in the death of a Sudanese man (Halliday 2015; O’Neill 2015).

The Channel tunnel was temporarily closed as a result and Prime Minister David Cameron chaired a Cabinet Office Briefing Room meeting (COBRA) on the crisis on 31 July 2015 (Halliday 2015). Cameron publicly blamed the situation on “a swarm of people” trying to cross the English Channel (Taylor, Wintour, and Elgot 2015) and vowed to expel “illegal migrants”, warning that the UK was “no safe haven” (BBC 2015). The Prime Minister was highly criticised for his “awful, dehumanising language from a world leader” by rights organisations and charities, such as the British Refugee Council (Elgot and Wintour 2015), and opposition leaders, such as Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron, who described it as "deeply alarming" (BBC 2015). Nevertheless, the threat of deportation represented an explicit deterrence measure and attempt to dissuade the displaced inhabitants of the camps from trying to reach the UK.

In August 2015 Home Secretary Theresa May and French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve signed a joint ministerial declaration on cooperation and security in Calais and the area (Ministère de l’Intérieur and Home Office 2015). The agreement set out measures to ensure effective security at the Channel Tunnel and the Port of Calais, stipulating cooperation
between French and UK law enforcement and border forces and the continued commitment to joint funding for physical and policing infrastructure, including fencing, floodlights, CCTV, and infra-red detection technology. At a UK-France summit in Amiens in March 2016, Cameron and the President of France, at the time, François Hollande, announced that an additional £17 million would be invested in “priority security infrastructure” projects, by the end of the financial year, to strengthen border controls and security measures (Cameron 2016). Despite calls to provide humanitarian aid and assistance to the migrants in the camps (Kelly 2016), the government’s response focused on strengthening border controls and security measures.

Although it was a manifestation of the broader situation in Europe, the events in Calais were communicated by the government in parliament and to the public in terms of a localised security threat in Calais and the surrounding area, on the one hand, and a foreign policy issue in the Middle East, on the other. In a statement to the House of Commons in July 2015, Home Secretary Theresa May declare that “the problems in Calais are clearly symptomatic of a wider issue that needs to be tackled at source and in transit countries” (Hansard 2015b, col. 732). Whereas, a year later, ahead of the clearance of the ‘Jungle’ migrant camp by French authorities, new Home Secretary Amber Rudd argued that the solution to the ‘issue’ in Calais was “providing support in conflict regions”, and “development work upstream.” (Hansard 2016d, col. 57). Therefore, in addition to the security narrative to ‘secure’ British borders, both Home Secretaries framed the crisis as a foreign policy issue that should be addressed in countries of origin.

The events in Calais in the summer of 2015 significantly increased the salience of immigration in the UK (see Figure 3). According to the Ipsos Mori issue index on the most important issues facing Britain, in August 2015, 50% of the public mentioned immigration among the most important issues facing the country, an increase of 8% on the previous month, and the highest level of concern about immigration recorded at the time (Ipsos Mori 2015a). While approximately a third (32%) stated immigration was the most important issue facing Britain. Although salience alone does not determine public opinion towards an issue, a longitudinal survey of attitudes towards immigration showed that, in June and July 2015, 67% of respondents thought that the number of immigrants coming to Britain should be reduced by ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ (Ipsos Mori 2016).
This suggests that Cameron’s ‘hard-line’ on immigration and security narrative of the ‘Calais crisis’, which called for greater control of those entering the country, was broadly in line with public sentiment at the time. Kaarbo and Cantir (2016, 175) suggest that vertical consensus enables political elites “to pursue their desired role because of the low risk and low cost of public disagreement”. Therefore, since the government’s role was vertically uncontested, it was able to pursue its preferred policy approach to the ‘Calais crisis’ unconstrained by public opinion. Moreover, opposition to the government’s approach, mainly from the Labour party – Yvette Cooper called the situation a “terrible crisis at our border in which lives are being lost and people are being injured” whilst calling for the government to do more to protect those in the camps (Hansard 2015b, col. 734) – had little room for manoeuvre or political leverage over the government at the time.

Measures adopted to address the crisis primarily focused on strengthening the UK border and secondarily on foreign policy objectives to stabilise countries of origin. Both the Prime Minister’s discourse and the policy measures adopted, suggest the performance of the
defender of the national interest role conception. Despite the humanitarian crisis developing in the Calais migrant camps, the government demonstrated no interest in providing humanitarian assistance or support in Calais, focusing instead on security measures.

Moreover, despite the juxtaposed border controls, cooperation with France was also framed in terms of the national interest, to prevent irregular crossings of the Channel. While under the Dublin regulation, the UK was responsible for unaccompanied children in the camps who had family in the UK, it was claimed that the responsibility for the inhabitants and conditions of the migrant camps lay solely with France. Furthermore, the Home Secretary blamed the slow response to the resettlement of child refugees with family in the UK (‘Dublin transfers’), ahead of the camp closure in October 2016, on French authorities not providing access to the site (Hansard 2016d, 57). Meanwhile, apparently French authorities claimed that, “because the migrants said they wanted to go to the UK, they were somehow not their responsibility” (Hansard 2016d, col. 57). This tension regarding responsibility for the migrant camps and juxtaposed border controls intensified ahead of the referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union in June 2016.

1.1 ‘Alter’ expectations, borders, and Brexit

According to socialisation theory, alters may reject or try to shape ‘ego’s’ roles in line with their own preferences (Thies 2013). As British political elites were exploring potential new foreign policy roles ahead of the Brexit referendum, France began to expert pressure on the UK in relation to their shared border arrangements, if the UK were to vote to leave the EU. The location of the UK-French border and the Calais migrant camps, if the UK were to leave the EU, became a continuation of the tensions between the UK and France over the ‘Calais crisis’ in 2015 into the following year (The Times 2016).

Hollande was quoted warning the UK to ‘expect consequences’, including having to move border checks back to Dover, if Britain were to leave the EU (BBC 2016a; Savage 2016). While Emmanuel Macron, French Minister of the Economy (2014-2016), stated that the Le Touquet agreement would probably have to be dismantled and revised if the UK were to leave (Chassany 2016). Former President Nicolas Sarkozy was quoted questioning the Le Touquet accord should Britain leave (Bremner 2016). Meanwhile, Hollande was quoted explicit linking the situation in Calais, future cooperation over the border and Britain’s response to the ‘migration crisis’ in Europe, stating “you cannot ask for solidarity when there is a problem and exonerate yourself from your duties when there are solutions” (Pitel, Elliott, and Bremner
This political pressure the UK’s neighbour was soon picked up by Remain campaigners.

Prime Minister David Cameron, for example, emphasised the potential risk of relying on the willingness of the French government to continue to host migrant camps in Calais and allow border checks to occur at French ports and terminals after Brexit. Other prominent Remain supporters, such as Sir Peter Ricketts, former UK Ambassador to France, and former national security advisor, also identified the risk of taking future cooperation with France for granted after Brexit (BBC Radio 4 - Today, 09/02/2016 2016). The Leave campaign, on the other hand, accused Cameron of scaremongering, given that the Le Touquet accord (UKTS 2003) was a bilateral agreement and was not related to the UK’s membership of the EU.

During a visit to Paris in August 2016, a few weeks after the Brexit referendum vote, the Interior Minister of France, Bernard Cazeneuve, reaffirmed his commitment to keep the Le Touquet accord, and British border controls at ports and terminals in Paris and Calais, in a joint statement with Home Secretary Amber Rudd (Home Office 2016a). The speed of this response suggests that the juxtaposed border arrangements were never under review. However, the analysis does indicate that the shared border management and ‘Calais crisis’ was politically instrumentalised and strategically deployed by political elites in France to exert pressure ahead of the UK referendum to remain in the EU. Nevertheless, when the UK did not meet the expectations of its ‘significant other’ there were no immediate repercussions related the shared border arrangements.

2. An aid superpower, vertical contestation, and resettlement

Until September 2015, the British government’s response to the ‘migration crisis’ focused on committing large amounts of aid to the relief effort in Syria and the bordering countries. Prime Minister David Cameron announced £100 million in aid for Syria, whilst on a trip to Madrid on 4 September 2015 (Cameron 2015b) and a further £115 million during the emergency meeting of the European Council on 23 September 2015 (DFID 2015). The Department for International Development (DFID) allocated a further £9.5 million to support stability in the region. By the end of 2015, DFID had spent £1.1 billion on development and humanitarian assistance to the region since 2012, making the UK the second largest bilateral donor to the crisis, after the United States (International Development Committee 2016).
In 2015 and 2016, the UK government met the United Nations General Assembly’s international target to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) (DFID 2016, 2017). The British government’s commitment to meet the UN’s aid and development target was enshrined in law in March 2015 in the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015. That same year the UK spent a total of £12.138 billion on ODA, an increase of 3.7% from 2014 (DFID 2016). The UK provided £4,473 million (37%) in contributions to multilateral initiatives and £7,664 million (63%) was spent bilaterally, an increase of 12.3% from 2014. Bilateral ODA means it was earmarked for a specific country or programme, either allocated directly or through a multilateral organisation. The humanitarian sector received the largest proportion of bilateral aid, at 16%, and Syria received £258 million. According to the OECD (2018), the UK was not only the second largest bilateral donor of aid to the Syrian crisis, since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, exceeded only by the United States. In the period 2014-2016, the UK was also the second largest donor of ODA and humanitarian aid through bilateral and multilateral routes to ‘fragile contexts’ worldwide (OECD 2018).

The UK demonstrated additional leadership in this area by organising a coordinated response to financing the ‘haven’ countries bordering Syrian\textsuperscript{44}. On 27th September 2015, British Prime Minister David Cameron met with the King Abdullah of Jordan and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, in New York, in a trilateral meeting that focused on expanding Jordan’s aid programmes to support continued provision for Syrian refugees (Royal Hashemite Court 2015). The meeting addressed the “repercussions of the Syrian refugee influx on Jordan, ways to provide grants and soft financial tools, and intensifying international efforts to help it fulfil the basic needs of Syrian refugees” (Royal Hashemite Court 2015, n.d.). The outcome of this meeting was a global conference, Supporting Syria and the Region, on sharing the financial ‘burden’ that had fallen on Syria’s neighbours, that the UK co-hosted with Germany, Norway, Kuwait and the UN, in London on 4\textsuperscript{th} February 2016. The conference raised significant funds for an immediate and longer-term response to the refugee crisis, including over $12 billion in pledges from national governments (British Government n.d.). Since 2017, this conference has been run annually by the EU.

This suggests that the UK performed the role conception most frequently invoked by the Prime Minister and his cabinet, that of an aid superpower, and that humanitarian assistance formed the cornerstone of the British government’s response to the ‘migration crisis’. As discussed in the previous chapter, the enactment of this role conception was largely uncontested both

\textsuperscript{44} Of the 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees by 2017, 2 million were registered in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, while a further 3.5 million were registered in Turkey (UNHCR 2018a).
within the executive and between the government and opposition parties during the period analysed. Although overseas aid is not considered a popular policy with the British public (see, for instance, a recent poll that suggests that two thirds of the public were in support of cutting the foreign aid budget (YouGov 2020)), this was not reflected in parliamentary debates, suggesting a consensus among the political elite in support of the UK’s approach to foreign aid. Nevertheless, the allocation of humanitarian assistance to Syria and the region was not the UK government’s most salient response to the crisis in 2015.

On the 7th September 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the UK would accept up to 20,000 Syrian refugees, from United Nations run migrant camps in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, during the course of the parliament (Cameron 2015c). This figure reflected around 0.5% of the total number of refugees registered in the region (International Development Committee 2016). A Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Richard Harrington, was also appointed with the sole responsibility of co-ordinating work across government for the resettlement of Syrian refugees. The decision represented an extension of an existing policy mechanism, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme (VPRP), which was set up in January 2014. At the time, the British government opted not to cooperate on pre-existing international resettlement programmes, coordinated by the UNHCR, but set up its own programme, in collaboration with the UNHCR, for the resettlement of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees from the region to the UK.

The extension of the Syrian VPRP in September 2015, and collaboration with the UNHCR, had the added benefit of ensuring that only pre-screened, ‘genuine’, refugees gained admittance to the UK. Moreover, resettlement programmes reduce the up-front costs of processing asylum claims, and housing and subsistence costs for asylum seekers while their claims are reviewed. However, by June 2015, a total of only 216 refugees had been resettled to the UK since the programme opened (Home Office 2015b). This notwithstanding, the decision to expand the resettlement programme in September 2015 represented a deviation from the British government’s policy approach of focusing solely on humanitarian assistance in the Middle East, while strengthening border controls and security measures, in response to the situation in Calais just weeks earlier. This raises the question of what prompted this policy decision.
2.1 The ‘Alan Kurdi effect’ and public opinion

On the 2 September 2015, the body of a three-year-old Syrian boy from Kobane was recovered on a beach in Turkey. The now iconic image of Alan Kurdi was shared by Turkey’s Dogan News Agency on social media and had reached over 20 million people around the world on Twitter and Facebook within 12 hours (Vis et al. 2015). According to researchers at the University of Sheffield, the image galvanised a global conscience on social media and empathy for asylum seekers trying to reach Europe (see also Klein and Amis 2020). According to this report, the image directly affected the language used in immigration debates online, with a significant increase in the use of the word ‘refugee’ as opposed to ‘migrant’, reflecting a differentiation between those fleeing persecuting and civil war and other migrant categories.

The impact of the image in changing the public agenda on immigration was reflected in the British case, as focus shifted away from the migrant camps in Calais to the movement of people across Europe. A day after the image went viral, on 3rd September 2015, a parliamentary e-petition, urging the government to accept more asylum seekers and increase support for refugees in the UK, reached 320,829 signatures in a matter of hours, vastly exceeding the 100,000 signatures required to be eligible for consideration by MPs in a parliamentary debate (UK Parliament n.d.). This petition was the basis for an emergency debate in the House of Commons proposed by Shadow Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, the following week; the emergency debate titled ‘Refugee Crisis in Europe’ took place on 8th September 2015.

The increase in salience of immigration in September 2015 was recorded by the Ipsos Mori issues index, which showed 56% of the public mentioned immigration as one of the most important issues facing Britain, whereas 40% claimed it was the single most important issue; a further 6% increase from the previous month (Ipsos Mori 2015b). This represented the most important issue across all ages, social grades, geographic areas, except for London (where it was second to housing), and party supporters, and represented the highest level of concern about immigration recorded to date (see Figure 3). However, in contrast to during the ‘Calais crisis’ the narrative was empathetic toward refugees. Multiple interview partners recalled the impact of the image of Alan Kurdi and a tangible shift in the political narrative to one whereby “something had to be done” (Interview, 2019). As one interviewee explained, “Alan Kurdi was a story. Whereas a picture of a load of anonymous people in a boat or trying to scale a fence somehow didn’t tell a story” (Interview, 2019).

The shift in public sentiment towards refugees was reflected in the media and can be illustrated by a comparison of the front cover of the right-wing tabloid, the Daily Mail. While the front
cover of the Daily Mail on 31st July 2015, during the height of the 'Calais crisis', included the title “THE SWARM ON OUR STREETS" in block capitals covering approximately a third of the page, the front cover of the publication on 3rd September 2015, just one month later, includes the now iconic image of Alan Kurdi’s limp body being carried by a Turkish policeman, accompanied by the caption “Tiny victim of a human catastrophe" (Daily Mail Press-reader: https://www.pressreader.com/uk/daily-mail/20150903).

A typically anti-immigration publication, the humanitarian frame in the second image was hitherto unheard of and was accompanied by an article titled 'Two little brothers, one epic tragedy', which was printed opposite a piece titled, ‘PM rules out UK taking in more migrants' (Daily Mail, 3 September 2015). The humanitarian frame of the articles at the beginning of September, compared with the anti-immigration narrative more commonly associated with the publication, illustrated by the front cover in July 2015, as well as the implicit criticism of the Prime Minister’s position are striking. It also suggests that in comparison to earlier in the year, public sentiment had shifted to a humanitarian narrative of refugees in Europe, potentially creating vertical contestation over the UK’s role in the ‘migrant crisis’.

The change in public mood and increased public scrutiny of government policy also had the effect of increasing engagement in the issue area among parliamentarians (Interview, 2019). During the debate following the Prime Minister’s statement on the resettlement of Syrian refugees on 7 September 2015, Labour politician Sir Gerald Kaufman declared, “the message from my constituents, in a huge postbag and at every event I attended in my constituency over the weekend, is: “Let them in! We’ll welcome them. We’ll do what the Germans did. Let’s get on with it!”” (Hansard 2015d, col. 33). During the emergency debate on the Refugee Crisis in Europe the following day, Shadow Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, stated “I pay tribute to all those who in the past seven days have signed petitions and contacted MPs, charities and newspapers to speak out and call for action. That has changed the Government’s mind, which is welcome” (Hansard 2015e, col. 248). According to SNP MP Anne McLaughlin, “had it not been for the public outcry and the political pressure, the clear indication was that this Government had no intention of taking anywhere near that number [of refugees]” (Hansard 2015f, 442).

Members of Parliament made twenty-two references to the death of Alan Kurdi during the three parliamentary debates held in early September 2015. Moreover, over seventy references to the British people and contact parliamentarians had had with their constituents over the European ‘migration crisis' were made in the same debates. This is in comparison with not a single reference to the public in the parliamentary debate on Calais, in June 2015, and comparatively few references to the electorate in debates by early 2016. The public outcry
over the image of the Syrian boy was reflected in parliamentary debates and emboldened opposition parties to call for the government to do more to protect asylum seekers and increase the number of refugees welcomed to the UK. This demonstrates the interplay between public opinion and the parliament and suggests significant vertical contestation over the UK’s role in the ‘migration crisis’ in September 2015. Reflecting on the influence of public opinion at the time, one interviewee explained:

“A backbencher, persistently following a line of questioning and really drilling down into policy and its impact on refugees does have an impact in so far as government ministers don’t like the exposure. But you can’t create an act of exposure unless some of the public are behind you” (Interview, 2019)

The analysis of the parliamentary debates supports the proposition that the image increased the salience of the plight of asylum seekers trying to reach Europe, resulting in a perceived shift in public opinion, which was reflected in the arguments made by opposition parties. Moreover, by questioning the legitimacy of the government’s policy approach and providing alternative and preferred national role conceptions, namely that of a *European partner* and *state of refuge*, the Labour party and SNP challenged the existing narrative on the ‘migration crisis’ and the UK’s role. In turn, by articulating political demands for the government to do more to help asylum seekers and proposing alternative policies, in the name of their constituents, opposition parties placed the government under pressure to respond, and increased the level of scrutiny and accountability of the government’s actions.

Initially, the Prime Minister maintained his hard-line position, despite pressure for the UK to do more to help amid the outcry over the pictures of the drowned refugee child in Turkey (Wintour 2015). News coverage would suggest that Cameron was even resisting calls from within his own party to accept more refugees the day the image went viral (Pitel 2015). Nevertheless, the high salience of the issue and vertical contestation increased the risk of the government’s position on the ‘crisis’ affecting its future electoral prospects. Moreover, with a majority of only twelve in parliament, it would not have taken much for Conservative backbenchers to rebel and for the government to have to change its position.

Two days after the image went viral online, Cameron announced that the UK would provide resettlement for thousands more Syrian refugees, at a press conference in Lisbon and increased aid to the region (Cameron 2015a). Three days later, the decision to resettlement 20,000 Syrian refugees from UN refugee camps in the Middle East was announced in the House of Commons. The decision came from 10 Downing Street without a great deal of consultation with the Home Office (Interview, 2019). At the time, Theresa May had been Home
Secretary for over five years and was seen as staunchly entrenched at the Home Office – “she wouldn’t budge an inch, and [Cameron] couldn’t make her”, one interviewee recalled (Interview, 2019). Therefore, it was not until the ‘issue’ had increased in salience to warrant the involvement of the Prime Minister’s office, that the decision to resettle more refugees was made public. This supports the claim that when the salience of a policy dilemma is high, especially in times of a ‘crisis’ (perceived or otherwise), decision-making powers revert to the leadership, and leaders gain more room to manoeuvre outwith their usual portfolio and political processes (Boin et al. 2017, 88).

2.2 The ‘deserving’ refugee and contributor to security and defence role conception

As demonstrated, in September 2015, pressure from the opposition, public, and some Conservative backbenchers resulted in the announcement of the (limited) extension of the UK’s Syrian resettlement programme. This represented a change in policy approach from focusing purely on humanitarian assistance in Syria and the region. However, since the resettlement programme already existing, it was within the bounds of existing policy mechanisms. Moreover, cabinet members did not change their narrative on the ‘migration crisis’, instead framing refugee resettlement in terms of security and defence.

In a statement to the House of Commons on the migration situation, Home Secretary Theresa May outlined three important reasons why the resettlement of Syrian refugees from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon was preferable over other policy approaches to asylum provision:

“Firstly, it ensures that we are taking the most vulnerable people – not just those who are sufficiently fit or who have enough money to make the journey to Europe. Secondly, it deters people – of any age or wealth – for attempting the perilously journeys which have already led to so many tragic deaths. And thirdly, it helps to break the business model of those callous criminal gangs preying on human misery in this way.” (May 2015a)

In this statement we can identify the two migration narratives that were prominent in decision makers’ statements when invoking the contributor to security and defence role conception (see Chapter V). Firstly, a hierarchy of legitimacy that distinguished between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ refugee, based on their route into protection. Common in statements by David Cameron and Theresa May, both in her capacity as Home Secretary and Prime Minister, this narrative casts a ‘good’ refugee as one who stayed in the region, privileging Syrian
refugees, whereas the asylum seeker who travelled to Europe or the UK was a ‘bad migrant’, underserving of state-funded assistance or protection\textsuperscript{45}. In her speech to the Conservative party conference in October 2015, May claimed that “the asylum system has been abused for years… there is a huge difference between a young Syrian family fleeing the tyranny of ISIL or Assad, and a student who claims asylum once he has been discovered overstaying his visa” (May 2015b).

By this reasoning, the Syrian VPRP, that resettles pre-screened Syrian refugees from UN camps prevents abuse of the asylum system and ‘bogus’ asylum claims. Privileging Syrian refugees from UN camps, propagated the government’s narrative that they had control over immigration and were preventing ‘abuse’ of the asylum system. Moreover, it prioritised the most vulnerable Syrian refugees, not the “wealthy” who were able to pay traffickers and risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean to Europe, who were relabelled “migrants” (see May 2015b).

This brings us to the second migration narrative, that claimed that criminal networks and traffickers were the root cause of the crisis in the Mediterranean. This reflected the government’s policy imperative to the situation in the Mediterranean that focused solely on disrupting people smuggling through the deployment of Royal Navy ships, aircraft, and personnel in Frontex operations. The UK participated in eight Frontex coordinated operations, including the deployment of HMS Bulwark as part of Operation Triton, which targeted irregular migration in the Mediterranean towards Italy; Operation Poseidon Sea, which targeted irregular migration between Turkey and Greece by sea; Focus Points Air, which focused on border management of air routes; and Operation Poseidon Land, which aimed to stem irregular migration from Turkey to Greece and Bulgaria (Frontex 2016). The UK also made financial contributions to Frontex, which took the form of direct financial contributions as well as equipment and staff (House of Lords 2017).

Therefore, according to representatives of the government, by resettling Syria refugees from camps in the region, the UK was combating the criminal gangs and people smuggles, who were perpetuating migrant flows to Europe, and fulfilling its responsibilities as a \textit{contributor to security and defence}. The narrative on the benefits of refugee resettlement, which framed the policy approach as a prerequisite of the UK fulfilling its international and domestic responsibilities regarding security and defence, suggests that the policy decision did not affect

\textsuperscript{45} Note, Article 31(1) of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees prohibits punishment and prejudice based on illegal entry to a country or territory.
the UK’s role or reflect a change in role conceptions. Rather, the UK’s role was adapted to the new policy dilemma to incorporate the idea of an extended resettlement programme.

3. Refugee children, a state of refuge and European partner

The final area of intense debate in the UK during the ‘migration crisis’ related to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Within the context of reports from Europol that 10,000 refugee children were missing in the EU and the image of Alan Kurdi going viral, attention had turned to the plight of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in migrant camps, in danger from pan-European gangs targeting minors for sex abuse and slavery (Townsend and editor 2016). At the time, the only route for unaccompanied refugee children to access protection in the UK was through (limited) family reunion rules under the Dublin regulation. However, in 2015 and early 2016, opposition party politicians and the ‘refugee sector’ came together to establish a new route into protection for refugee children stuck in Europe.

3.1 The refugee sector as an ‘organised public’

Immigration policy in the UK is generally determined ‘top-down’ and political elites are considered to hold relative autonomy over policy decisions (Statham and Geddes 2006, 266). Moreover, Hampshire and Bale (2015) find that not all pro-immigration interest groups are equal and face the same opportunity structures to influence policy. For instance, industry and business interest groups are more successful at lobbying government on labour migration than rights-based organisations. This was supported by analysis of the charities and the rights-based NGOs that constitute the so-called ‘refugee sector’ in the UK. As one interviewee explained:

“It’s quite difficult for an NGO sector like the refugee sector to act as a constraint on the most egregious decisions of government. If government wants to make egregious decisions, wants to turn the boats around, refuse to let children in, leave children in

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46 It should be noted that pro-immigration interest groups and NGOs are considerably more visible among the ‘organised public’ than anti-immigration actors (see Freeman 1994, Statham and Geddes 2006).
squalid conditions in camps in Calais, all the NGO sector has been able to do there is take them food and shelter.” (Interview, 2019).

Nevertheless, one campaign initiated by Save The Children to resettle 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children who had made it to Europe gained significant traction in 2015/16. This was owed in large part to what one interviewee referred to as “the synergy between the [refugee] sector and politicians” on this issue (Interview, 2019). The call to action was first taken up by acting leader of the Opposition, Harriet Harman, who challenged the Prime Minister to accept 3,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Europe, based on Save The Children’s recommendation, during Prime Minister’s Questions on 9th September 2015.

By December 2015, Liberal Democrat Leader Tim Farron was supporting the campaign (Perraudin 2015), and the influential International Development Committee endorsed the proposal in their inquiry report on the Syrian refugee crisis published in January 2016 (International Development Committee 2016). However, it was not until the prominent and charismatic Labour peer, Lord Alfred Dubs, himself a former child refugee who came to Britain with the Kindertransport, took up the cause that we see contestation over the government’s approach towards refugee children in Europe have a significant effect on decision making, through the processes of ratifying a piece of legislation.

3.2 The ‘Dubs’ amendment

Conventional wisdom in foreign policy analysis would suggest that if a single party holds a majority in parliament and exclusive representation in cabinet, the capacity of parliament as an institutional actor to influence foreign policy is weak (Kesgin and Kaarbo 2010). The British government largely circumvented parliamentary power during the ‘migration crisis’, announcing policy interventions to address the crisis ex post facto, reducing the parliament’s role to one of scrutiny as opposed to participation in decision-making. The Conservative government held a (albeit small) majority in parliament. There was, however, one exception, related to the ratification of the Immigration Act 2016. Whilst the Bill did not directly address the ‘migration crisis’, one aspect related to the relocation and support for unaccompanied refugee children became highly salient and was directly juxtaposed with the UK’s response to European ‘migration crisis’.

Following months of campaigning by Save The Children, other charities, such as the Refugee Council, and opposition politicians, Labour peer, Lord Alfred Dubs, tabled an amendment
during the ping pong stages of the Immigration Bill 2016. The amendment to section 67 of the Bill, committed the government to the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children from the EU to the UK (see Figure 4 for the exact wording). The House of Lords voted overwhelmingly in favour of the amendment, which was passed 306 votes to 204 on 21st March 2016 (Hansard 2016e). The vote was reported widely as a significant defeat for the government by the opposition (BBC 2016c).

Figure 4. The ‘Dubs’ Amendment

116A: After Claus 62, insert the following new Clause –

“Unaccompanied refugee children: relocation and support

(1) The Secretary of State must, as soon as possible after the passing of this Act, make arrangements to relocate to the United Kingdom and support 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children from other countries in Europe.
(2) The relocation of children under subsection (1) shall be in addition to the resettlement of children under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.”

Source: Hansard 2016

The wording of the amendment, which became colloquially known as the ‘Dubs amendment’, specified that a minimum of 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children had to be resettled from Europe to the UK, once the Act was passed. However, the legislative procedure dictates that if a Lord’s amendment would incur substantial costs for the government, the amendment must be passed by a majority in Parliament. The ‘Dubs amendment’ was narrowly rejected in a House of Commons vote on 25th April 2016, with 294 votes to 276 (Hansard 2016c). Nevertheless, following increased pressure from Conservative party backbenchers (Mason and correspondent 2016), the amendment, excluding the specific figure of 3,000 child refugees, made it into the Immigration Act 2016 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Immigration Act 2016

Unaccompanied refugee children: relocation and support

(1) The Secretary of State must, as soon as possible after the passing of this Act, make arrangements to relocate to the United Kingdom and support a specified number of unaccompanied refugee children from other countries in Europe.
(2) The number of children to be resettled under section (1) shall be determined by the Government in consultation with local authorities.
(3) The relocation of children under subsection (1) shall be in addition to the resettlement of children under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

Source: Immigration Act 2016 c.19 PART 5 Section 67
Recalling events during an interview, Lord Dubs stated that during one-on-one negotiations behind closed doors, Home Secretary Theresa May tried everything in her power to prevent the amendment from being tabled, including increasing the number of refugees resettled under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme by 3,000, to 23,000 (Interview, 2019). Whilst the commitment to resettle 3,000 children was excluded from the Act, the government’s commitment to resettle an additional 3,000 ‘at-risk’ refugee children was launched as a new (if underpublicized) initiative, the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Programme, in late April 2016 (Brokenshire 2016; Home Office 2016b). It should be noted, however, that this programme, like the Syrian VPRP, privileged children from the Middle East and North Africa, once again excluding (child) refugees already in Europe.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of the ‘Dubs amendment’ in Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 resulted in a Dubs resettlement scheme, which ensured the relocation of unaccompanied refugee children from predominantly Calais to the UK. In utilising official powers during the legislative procedure of passing the Immigration Act 2016, the opposition were able to influence the government’s policy on refugee children and resettlement from within the EU. This supports the claim that if the opposition has access to decision making powers through the legislative procedure, they can push through alternative policy approaches that reflect alternative and preferred role conceptions, in this case, the European partner and state of refuge national role conceptions.

This notwithstanding, a month after the closure of the ‘Jungle’ migrant camp by French authorities in Calais, Home Secretary Amber Rudd was accused of renegading on the promise to resettle hundreds of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and failing to comply with section 67 of the Immigration Act. Moreover, in a low-key written ministerial statement on 8th February 2017, Minister of State for Immigration, Robert Goodwill, announced that the number of unaccompanied refugee children who would be resettled to the UK from Greece, Italy and France under the ‘Dubs amendment’ would be capped at 350 children (Goodwill 2017). This figure was a far cry from the initial figure of 3,000 child refugees and essentially marked the end of the Dubs scheme.
3.3 Refugee Family Reunion

Some commentators were cautiously optimistic that a policy legacy from the apparent shift in public and political sentiment in Autumn 2015 would emerge in the form of a Private Members’ Bill, the Refugees (Family Reunion) Bill, introduced by Angus MacNeil (SNP) MP in July 2017 (Interview, 2019). Under current legislation, an adult refugee could sponsor their spouse or partner and children under-18 to join them. However, unlike most EU countries, the UK did not allow unaccompanied refugee children to sponsor their family members, including parents, to join them. MacNeil’s bill set out to expand the UK’s definition of refugee family reunion to include the parents of child refugees. Describing the scene on its second reading in Parliament, which resulted in a 129 vote in support and 42 against, one interviewee said,

“Angus’ bill didn’t happen until March 2018 but there was the whole series of key events [that led to it]. The Dubs amendment debate, the failure to implement the Dubs amendment, the fact that [Lord] Alf [Dubs] has sort of sainted status for a lot of people and doesn’t give up and is so completely charming. He’s so charming. And thoughtful and smart as a politician. Those things all came together, and they came together that morning and there were people from the [refugee] sector who were up in the gallery with some refugees and when we met up afterwards a couple of people who were old hands at this said, ‘yeah, that’s quite a shift.’” (Interview, February 2019)

However, the Bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the end of the 2017-19 session, resulting in no further progress.

The opposition utilised formal decision-making powers during the ratification of legislation to change the governments approach to asylum and refugee provision and enact an alternative and preferred role conception. This was made possible through the parliament’s ratification authority and a perceived shift in public sentiment on child refugees. However, the changes were limited in scope and further constrained by the executive’s subsequent decision to set a cap on the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that would be accepted under the Dubs programme, significantly limiting the initiative. Ultimately, the government was not forced to amend its approach to asylum seekers and refugees in Europe in any significant way. In other words, the executive successfully blocked the enactment of an alternative role conception and did not take on a larger role in the ‘migration crisis’ in Europe. The pre-existing policy practices were maintained and the traditional approach of successive governments to limiting access to the territory for asylum seekers persisted.
4. Conclusion

This chapter interrogated key events and debates during the ‘migration crisis’, tracing the temporal and spatial context of the role contestation identified in the previous chapter, how it unfolded in domestic political processes, and chronologically mapping it against policy developments. During the ‘Calais crisis’ in July-August 2015, the British government was found to predominantly response to the humanitarian crisis at the UK’s border with the introduction of further security measures and border controls, framing the approach as in the national interest. Tensions between France and the UK as a result, spilled over into 2016, when the analysis suggests that French political elites strategically deployed pressure with regard to the ‘juxtaposed’ border controls ahead of the Brexit referendum.

The central finding of the analysis was the impact that vertical contestation had on the government’s policy approach to the ‘migration crisis’ following the widespread dissemination of the image of Alan Kurdi at the beginning of September 2015. The culmination of pressure from opposition parties and a shift in public sentiment towards refugees resulted in the (limited) extension of the UK’s Syrian resettlement programme. However, the analysis finds that since it represented an expansion of a pre-existing policy mechanism, this decision did not mark a significant deviation in policy approach. Therefore, it did not bring about a reorientation of the UK’s role in the ‘crisis’. Rather, the new policy idea was subsumed within the existing national role conceptions, by framing refugee resettlement in terms of a security narrative. Meanwhile, attempts by the Labour opposition to realise an alternative role for the UK through an amendment to the Immigration Bill 2016, whilst initially successful, were largely hollowed out and rolled back by the executive.

The selection of the UK’s national role conceptions was ultimately determined by the institutional powers of the actors involved. The opposition had limited access to influence decision-making largely due to the Conservatives majority in the Parliament. Lord Dubs’ attempt to push through an amendment to the Immigration Bill on resettling unaccompanied refugee children to the UK at the Lords ping pong stages was only partially successful. Moreover, the vertical contestation over the UK’s role in the ‘crisis’ in early September 2015 was short lived. As the Brexit referendum neared the immigration debate shifted back to membership of the EU activating latent concerns regarding immigration among the British population (for a discussion, see Dennison and Geddes 2019). Therefore, we see a continuation of policy approach restricting access to the UK and linking refugee and security issues, such as border control and terrorism.
Recent scholarship has suggested that the migrant ‘crisis’ in Europe has galvanised existing approaches to immigration as opposed to instigated policy change and represents the new ‘normal’ for immigration governance since the late 1990s and early 2000s (Guiraudon 2018, Geddes et. al. 2019). From this perspective, the British government’s role set in response to the ‘migration crisis’ goes some way to explain policy continuity in the British case. The British government’s response to the ‘crisis’ throughout the period analysed was characterised by the geographical bifurcation of policy approach: the allocation of humanitarian aid to Syria and the region, on the one hand, whilst response to the crisis on the UK’s doorstep in Calais and the Mediterranean with security measures and strengthening borders.
Chapter VII

German National Role Conceptions and the ‘Migration Crisis’

This chapter explores Germany’s response to the ‘migration crisis’, focusing on statements on national roles and the narratives on how Germany should respond to the perceived crisis in 2015/16 and why. It applies the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter III, hereby contributing to an abundance of role theory studies on Germany that moves beyond the traditional civilian power master role (Maull 1990, Maull & Harnisch 2001, Krotz 2001) by inductively coding issue-specific role conceptions on asylum and refugee provision during the migrant crisis. This chapter demonstrates that role statements made by the German Government, Chancellor Angela Merkel, Ministers, and opposition parties did not necessarily meet the expectations of Germany’s civilian power master role. More specifically key features of the civilian power ‘ideal type’ role, including a strong emphasis on multilateralism and EU integration were not always central to the role conceptions advocated.

The chapter is structured as follows. It begins with an overview of the main components of the civilian power master role before identifying several additional national role conceptions in literature that may provide insight on the general kinds of role conceptions that one might expect German political elites to express during the ‘migration crisis’. The chapter proceeds with an analysis of the five dominant national role conceptions identified in migration narratives on the European ‘migration crisis’. Each national role conception is described with the aid of empirical examples and analysis of the main debates and migration narratives in which they are embedded. In section three the dominant role conceptions are analysed by political party and individual politician to determine instances and possible sites of contestation between the government and opposition parties, between elites within the government coalition and with the governing senior coalition partner (horizontal contestation).
1. Role research in foreign policy analysis on Germany

There is extensive role theory scholarship on German foreign policy. Maull (1990) developed the civilian power role concept as an analytical tool to measure foreign and security policy and describe and explain from a constructivist perspective of Germany’s role in international relations following the Second World War. The master role is rooted in the assumption of systemic interdependence between states and, therefore, a need for international cooperation to reduce costs and prevent free riding; the primacy of economic over military instruments to secure national interests; and the willingness to cede power to supranational institutions. Based on these norms, “ideal type Civilian Powers are states which actively promote the ‘civilising’ of international relations” (single quotation marks in original) (Harnisch and Maull 2001, 2-3).

Most commonly used to describe the foreign policy of Germany and Japan, the role encompasses six objectives: 1) to constrain the use of force 2) strengthen the rule of law 3) implement participatory forms of decision-making 4) non-violent conflict management 5) social equity and sustainable development 6) interdependence and division of labour. These objectives are based on three fundamental norms: 1) civilising international relations through international action 2) the willingness to transfer powers to supranational institutions 3) civilised international order over national interest (Harnisch and Maull 2001, 4). As an ‘ideal type' the concept offers a means to gage whether a state is more, or less, of a civilian power. Two role elements of the civilian power concept are particularly relevant to asylum and refugee policy in the EU: the emphasise on the rule of law and multilateralism.

Despite the continued prominence given to the interpretation of Germany as a civilian power, we know that Germany’s response to the ‘migration crisis’ did not meet the expectations of the ‘ideal type’ civilian power role. On at least two occasions during the first six weeks of the crisis, Germany acted unilaterally, calling into question a tradition of multilateralism, and without prior consultation with the EU, calling into question Germany’s identity as a driver of European integration; initially when it suspended the Dublin regulation for Syrian nationals and then again, a few weeks later when Germany introduced border controls along its borders with Austria and the Czech Republic. This undermines the interpretation of Germany’s civilian power role and calls for a more nuanced interrogation of the issue-specific role conceptions (auxiliary roles) envisaged by political elites during the ‘migration crisis’ and the extent to which they fall within the parameters of the civilian power ‘master role’.

Recent role theory scholarship on Germany continues to demonstrate the relevance of the civilian power master role, suggesting, however, a re-conception or adaptation of Germany’s
role in foreign and security policy in recent years (see, for example, Koenig 2020). However, a number of recent studies refer to the ‘normalisation’ of Germany's foreign policy role (Brummer and Oppermann 2016; Hampton 2000; Hellmann 1999; Oppermann 2012). Describing a slow change in role towards that of a ‘normal ally’, these studies also identify growing tensions between external expectations for Germany to take on a more proactive foreign policy role in Europe, reflecting its status and economic power, and domestic politics and expectations of military restraint.

Table 8. Selected German national role conceptions from the secondary literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German national roles</th>
<th>Secondary literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Power</td>
<td>Maull 1990, Maull &amp; Harnisch 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Krotz 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal Ally</td>
<td>Brummer &amp; Oppermann 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter of Peace and Human Rights</td>
<td>Aggestam 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion of European integration</td>
<td>Létourneau &amp; Räkel 1997, Aggestam 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent of peace &amp; security in Europe</td>
<td>Létourneau &amp; Räkel 1997, Aggestam 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe’s liberal hegemon</td>
<td>Bulmer &amp; Paterson 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the vast majority of studies focus on the extent to which Germany can still be conceived as more or less of a civilian power, a limited number of studies have identified other national role conceptions political elites hold for Germany. Table 8 identifies several national role conceptions in the role theory literature on Germany that offer insight into possible dominant national role conceptions one might expect to find expressed during the ‘migration crisis’. Moreover, a number of studies explore Germany’s potential leadership role in the EU following recent crises, including the Euro crisis, Libyan crisis, Syrian crisis and most recently, the Ukraine crisis (Aggestam and Hyde-Price 2020; Koenig 2014, 2020; Oppermann 2019a).
2. German national role conceptions during the ‘migration crisis’

Five national role conceptions are identified as dominant in German parliamentary debates, political elites’ speeches, and statements during the European ‘migration crisis’ and wider refugee crisis.

Table 9. Dominant national role conceptions in migration narratives in Germany, 2015-2016 (absolute values and percentage of total role statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National role conceptions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible leader</td>
<td>9 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe as an agent of security</td>
<td>52 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of human rights</td>
<td>49 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of ‘enlightened’ national interest</td>
<td>30 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of the ‘Leitkultur’</td>
<td>7 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>147 / 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 Responsible Leader

Political elites invoking this role conception perceive a particular German obligation to show leadership in Europe in line with the countries ‘international responsibilities’ and firmly embedded in European institutions. It can be understood as an adaptation of Holsti’s original regional leader role conception (see also Koenig 2020).

Extract 1. Germany is a strong country. The way we approach the issue must be, we have achieved so much – we can do this!” (author’s translation) (Chancellor Angela Merkel [CDU], 31 August 2015) (Merkel 2015b)

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47 Frequency does not necessarily equate to support, as political elites may invoke a role conception that they are opposed to or action that should not be taken. Role statements that indicated opposition to a national role conception were nearly non-existent and therefore not included in this table. However, this nuance is addressed in the discussion of the empirical findings.
Extract 2. What will follow in Europe, operationally speaking, is that Germany and France are overwhelmingly in agreement over the next steps, and we will now of course consult the other member states (Chancellor Angela Merkel [CDU], 31 August 2015) (Merkel 2015b).

Extract 3. We know that in Europe we can only overcome this challenge through cooperation and solidarity. To this end we have formulated a comprehensive strategy which focuses on several areas simultaneously. Taking in the refugees requires more than the engagement of just a few EU countries; we really need commitment from the whole of Europe. (Chancellor Angela Merkel [CDU], 13 July 2015) (Merkel 2015c)

This role conception, predominately expressed by Chancellor Angela Merkel during the ‘migration crisis’, represents a cautiously formulated directional leadership for Germany within the EU. This form of leadership is best described by Young’s (1991) concept of entrepreneurial leadership, which seeks to set the agenda and secure cooperation and support for mutually beneficial solutions. Conceived as a means to emancipate from Germany’s national socialist past, a central narrative of the role conception suggests that Germany has a historical responsibility or a duty (‘Verpflichtung’) to ensure peace and stability in Europe (see also Aggestam 2004, 2006). The notion of ‘German responsibility’ according to Maull (2015, 12), “has its roots in a sense of German collective guilt and projected a desire to atone but also to regain political respectability and agency”. Koenig (2021) claims that Germany’s ‘international responsibility’ has become a narrative promoted by German political and foreign policy elites since 2014.

This perception of Germany’s role was most frequently expressed as a collaborative effort with Germany’s ‘significant other’, France (“the bedrock of European integration”) (see Merkel 2015). This role conception prescribes that Germany take the lead in European crisis management and was reflected in Merkel’s decision to lead by example, by taking a disproportionate share of asylum seekers and suspending ‘Dublin returns’ to Italy, Greece and Hungary, in the summer of 2015. At the summer press conference on 31st August 2015, Merkel stated “The world sees Germany as the land of hope and opportunity, which was not always the case” (Merkel 2015b). In relation to asylum and refugee provision, German leadership was also perceived as driving integration and cooperation on migration issues, including EU solutions to the ‘crisis’, such as the EU-Turkey agreement and a quota system for the allocation of asylum seekers across Europe.
2.2 Europe as an agent of security

This role conception predominantly relates to the role of the EU and an aspiration to speak with one voice to address the European ‘migration crisis’. It is based on the understanding that pooling sovereignty and solidarity among EU member states generates peace and stability (Aggestam 2004, 212).

Extract 4. Together as the European Union, we are better equipped for major tasks of our times than each Member State alone would be… Things work better together – this is the conviction that sustains Europe. (Chancellor Angela Merkel [CDU], 11 July 2016) (Merkel 2016b)

Extract 5. We need a European and an international solution. The truth is: there is not a drawbridge that we can pull up, either in Europe or in Germany. No fence, no wall in the world is high enough to keep refugees away. Instead, we need to do all we can to end the civil war in Syria and to defeat ISIS. (Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel [SPD], 2 October 2015) (Gabriel 2015)

Extract 6. Then there is the European dimension, and I think here, that we are allowed to say: Europe as a whole needs to get moving. The member states need to share the responsibility for asylum seekers. Universal human rights have always been closely linked to Europe and its history. It is one of the founding motives of the European Union. If Europe fails on the refugee question, the close link to universal human rights will be broken. It will be damaged, and it won’t be the Europe that we imagine, and it will not be the Europe based on the founding myth that we continue to develop today. (Chancellor Angela Merkel [CDU], 31 August 2015) (Merkel 2015b)

Policy makers invoking this role conception frequently merged German and European interests – ‘we’ referred to both Germany and the EU. A legacy of Germany’s ‘civilian power’ master role, the emphasis is on multilateralism and the rule of law, and a central narrative of this role conception is that no single member state can find a solution to the European ‘migration crisis’ unilaterally. Based on the tenet of solidarity among member states, the perception was that only an integrated EU can tackle the challenges of the crisis.

Similar to the responsible leader role conception, except without distinguishing between German and EU interests, decision-maker’s emphasised non-military aspects of security and EU migration governance solutions to the ‘crisis’. This reflected the role Germany has previously played in driving integration in this policy area and on occasion ‘uploading’ national policy preferences to the EU level (see Chapter II). In relation to the EU’s internal migration

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48 An adaptation of Aggestam’s (2004, 212) *Europe as an agent of peace* role conception.
governance, this included support for EU ‘responsibility sharing’ measures, such as establishing an EU quota system and relocating refugees from Italy and Greece. Regarding the external dimension of EU migration policy, speakers invoking this role understood its performance to include strengthening and securing the EU’s external border, to curb irregular entry, increasing opportunities for people to remain in their home countries, through humanitarian and development assistance, pursuing an EU-Turkey agreement, expanding EU migration partnerships in Africa (Merkel 2016b), and developing the Joint European Border and Coast Guard operations.

2.3 Defender of human rights

This role conception envisages specific humanitarian duties and responsibilities based on Germany’s status as a ‘Rechtsstaat’ (rule of law state/constitutional state) and the comprehensive articulation of asylum rights set out in German Basic Law49. Policy makers perceived a particular German obligation to uphold and defence human rights, including individual and minority rights, as a constitutional imperative set out in the German Basic Law.

Extract 7. These principles are derived from our Basic Law, our Constitution. This includes the fundamental right to asylum for the politically persecuted. We can be proud of the humanitarianism of our Basic Law. It is particularly apparent in this article. We also provide protection to all those who move here from wars. They also have the right to protection. The second principle is that of human dignity for every individual. This is a tenet, that is set out in Article 1 of the Basic Law. Irrespective of whether he is a citizen or not, irrespective of where and why he came to us and his prospects. (Chancellor Angela Merkel [CDU], 31 August 2015) (Merkel 2015b)

Extract 8. We are a country that places the worth of every individual centre stage. And when faced with a humanitarian catastrophe like the one in Syria, then we need to take a stand. (Chancellor Angela Merkel [CDU], 3 September 2016) (Merkel 2016a)

The role conception is strongly linked to democratic institutions and ‘constitutional patriotism’ (‘Verfassungspatriotismus’). It is also related to German identity defined in opposition to its national socialist past, as a significant ‘other’ and “self-conscious nation” (‘selbstbewusste

49 A variation on Aggestam’s (2004, 226) promoter of peace and human rights specific to the issue area. In contrast to promoter of peace and human rights the emphasise was no longer as focused on multilateralism that Aggestam identified in the 1990s.
"Nation") founded on civic political rights and locked into western liberal norms (see Aggestam 2004). Moreover, this self-image reflects Germany’s previously held status as one of the world’s most generous asylum regimes, until the ‘asylum compromise’ amendment of the constitution in 1993 (Bale 2008; Gibney 2005). During the height of the ‘migration crisis’ advocates of this role conception asserted that closing Germany’s borders or setting an upper limit on the number of asylum seekers Germany should admit annually, would be unconstitutional.

2.4 Defender of ‘enlightened’ national interests

This role orientation, first proposed by Aggestam (2004, 229), follows recent role theory scholarship on the ‘normalisation’ of Germany’s international relations and foreign policy role (see, for instance, Brummer and Oppermann 2016; Oppermann 2012) that suggests that Germany is becoming a ‘normal ally’ that must balance increasing external expectations for Germany to take on a greater role in international affairs, with domestic constraints and audiences, who remain predominantly in favour of Germany demonstrating military restraint. This is reflected in the debates on the European ‘migration crisis’ that highlight tensions between domestic expectations and a preference for European solutions with the international community of EU member states’ unwillingness to follow Germany’s lead on asylum and refugee admission. Within this context, this role orientation reflects political elites’ explicit determination of what policy behaviour is in the national interest.

Extract 9. In view of our strong economic position, we can meet the challenges, and let’s not forget: if the integration of refugees is a success, its beneficial to both sides. (Chancellor Angela Merkel [CDU], 3 September 2016) (Merkel 2016a)

Extract 10. We have a bit task ahead of us – a European, a Germany, a regional [task] – and we can only get there together. If we succeed, it is good for everyone. And it we fail; it is bad for everyone. (Interior Minister, Thomas de Maizière [CDU], 3rd September 2015) (de Maizière 2015a)

Extract 11. Germany is a strong country. We are cosmopolitan. We are wealthy. We welcome people and we are ready to help. In addition, our labour market is in good shape. Which means – this also belongs in this debate – that we need immigration. That’s why I clearly state: yes, we can do it. (Dr Eva Högl [SPD], 15 October 2015) (Deutscher Bundestag 2015, 12581)

Expressions of this role conception and its performance followed two distinct and diametrically opposed lines of argument. The first framed Merkel’s ‘open door’ policy approach not as an
act of altruism but in Germany’s national interests. This narrative defined Germany as a wealthy and economically strong country with a robust labour market capable of receiving and integrating refugees (‘Aufnahmefähig’) (Merkel 2015b). Furthermore, refugees would fill labour market gaps and shortages due to Germany’s low birth-rates and aging population. Consequently, accepting high numbers of asylum seekers was in Germany’s national interest.

The second narrative related to reducing the flow of migrants to Germany. In this interpretation of the defender of the national interest role, determining who had a right to asylum and who did not and setting an annual national cap on asylum seekers, were identified as key policies. For instance, Interior Minister de Maizière stated that it needed to be made clear that migrants from the Western Balkans would not be granted asylum in Germany (de Maizière 2015a). Like the British case, this migration narrative relates to a specific understanding of what drives immigration movements (‘pull factors’). Based on this rationale, implementing, and promoting stringent asylum policies acts as a deterrent. Speakers also envisaged the performance of this role to include speeding up the asylum application procedure, introducing new integration programmes, such as increasing language provisions, and preventing ghettoization in big cities.

2.5 Defender of the Leitkultur - ‘Germany must remain Germany’

This role conception most closely resembles the independent role conception. However, it is arguably more an orientation towards the ‘migration crisis’ adopted by the leadership of the Christian Social Union (CSU), in particular the party’s leader, Minister President of Bavaria, Horst Seehofer.

Extract 12. We are opposed to our cosmopolitan country being changed by immigration or refugee flows. (Bavarian Minister President, Horst Seehofer, 16 September 2016) (Seehofer and Neukirch 2016)

Extract 13. Immigrants from our Christian-Western cultures must be given priority (Bavarian Minister President, Horst Seehofer)

Extract 14. The more we realize that the European solution is not making progress, the more we have to depend on national measures. In practice, that means: controlling our national borders and rejecting refugees. (Bavarian Minister President, Horst Seehofer) (Seehofer 2016)
Extract 15. Multicultural and parallel societies in no way contribute to solving the issue of integration. That also means that the political and societal identity of our country must be preserved. (Bavarian Minister President, Horst Seehofer) (Seehofer 2016)

The main difference between expressions of this role orientation and that of a defender of ‘enlightened’ national interests relates to the interpretation of the policy dilemma at hand. The Christian Social Union politicized immigration as a matter of cultural and national identity (Schmidtke and Zaslove 2014). This can be traced back to a tradition within the CDU/CSU as well as Germany’s historical approach to integration policy, until recently defining membership of the German nation based solely on ethno-cultural criteria, \textit{jus sanguinis}, as opposed to \textit{jus soli} (Brubaker 1992).

Advocates of this role orientation prioritised national sovereignty and regional autonomy to control borders and reject refugees during the ‘migration crisis’. The main argumentation was based on a migration narrative regarding what drives immigration flows (‘pull factors’) and speakers proposed setting a cap on the number of refugees to dissuade migrants from trying to reach Germany. Seehofer claimed that since European solutions to the crisis were not working, and the EU external border was not being protected, the only solution was a national approach and closing Germany’s borders (Seehofer 2016).

This position can be illustrated by a controversial paper published by the CSU on 9\textsuperscript{th} September 2016 on asylum provision and integration (upon which the title of this role conception is based). In a section titled ‘Germany must remain Germany. Bavaria must remain Bavaria’, the CSU declared that the country should not be changed by immigration. The same publication also called for Germany’s ‘guiding’ national culture (‘\textit{Leitkultur}’), based on Christian values, customs and traditions, to be enshrined in the constitution, an upper limit to the number of asylum seekers, the abolition of dual citizenship, a ban on the burka, and highly inflammatory statements such as ‘German law applies in Germany, not Sharia law’ (CSU 2016).

3. Discussion

Unsurprisingly, given the migratory pressure Germany was experiencing in 2015/16, there was no indication of support for Germany not to play an active role in finding solutions to the European ‘migration crisis’. Merkel repeated stated that in a time of globalisation and social media, “isolationism is simply not a sensible option” (Merkel 2016a). Nevertheless, an analysis
of the dominant national role conceptions during the ‘migration crisis’ by political party and individual politician reveals contested roles, most notably within the coalition government. This section proceeds by examining role conceptions by political party and individual political elites within the coalition government. Explicit links to foreign policy objectives are then briefly discussed, before outlining limitations identified during the coding of national role conception in the German case.

3.1 Horizontal contestation

If we take a closer look at the five dominant national role conceptions by political party, illustrated in Table 10, we can identify variation in the dominant national role conceptions invoked by political elites along party political lines. Most notably both opposition parties, the Alliance 90/The Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and The Left (Die Linke) overwhelmingly invoked the defender of human rights national role conception. This reflects the positions of both parties as the most socially liberal parties on immigration policy and their position in defence of the preservation of individual fundamental human rights and the right to asylum (König 2017). Both parties strongly opposed the implementation of an upper limit for refugees and regarded the first and second asylum packages as a threat to the fundamental right to asylum (Bierbach 2017). Nevertheless, given that the governing coalition at the time was a Grand Coalition, making it highly unlikely that government proposals would be rejected in the Bundestag (Brummer and Oppermann 2016), it is not expected that role contestation with the Greens and the Left had a significant impact on decision making.

Table 10. German national role conceptions by political party (absolute values and percentage of total statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National role conceptions</th>
<th>CDU/CSU</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>Greens</th>
<th>The Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible leader</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe as an agent of security</td>
<td>32 (34%)</td>
<td>19 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of human rights</td>
<td>23 (25%)</td>
<td>11 (29%)</td>
<td>8 (89%)</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of ‘enlightened’ national interest</td>
<td>22 (24%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of the ‘Leitkultur’</td>
<td>7 (7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Social Democratic Party (SPD) supported the enactment of the European role, on the one hand, and *defender of human rights*, on the other, which also fits the expectations based on the party’s norms of European solidarity and social justice. However, according to Schmidtkle (2016) it should be noted that the SPD has tended not to address immigration-related issues in public discourse as a strategy to avoid the tensions between immigration issues and cultural diversity. This is reflected in debates during the ‘migration crisis. Although the SPD blocked restrictive policy perceived as threatening the right to asylum or as unconstitutional, such as setting an upper limit on refugees, the party did not play a leadership role in debates on the ‘migration crisis’.

The role conceptions invoked by the CDU/CSU paint a slightly puzzling picture, with no clear single role conception invoked by party members. The Christian Democratic parties (CDU/CSU) have traditionally politicized immigration as a matter of cultural and national identity (Schmidtke and Zaslove 2014). This is also closely interlinked with the established tradition of defining membership of the German nation based on ethno-cultural criteria, *jus sanguinis*, in contrast to *jus soli* (Brubaker 1992). However, it is not until we disaggregate the two parties and look at the role conceptions invoked by the different members of the coalition government that the picture becomes clearer.

Table 11. German national role conceptions by individual politician (absolute values and percentage of total statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National role conceptions</th>
<th>Merkel (CDU)</th>
<th>de Maizière (CDU)</th>
<th>Gabriel (SPD)</th>
<th>Seehofer (CSU)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible leader</td>
<td>8 (16%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe as an agent of security</td>
<td>25 (50%)</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>8 (44%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of human rights</td>
<td>14 (28%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (44%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of ‘enlightened’ national interest</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>19 (86%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defender of the ‘Leitkultur’</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, leader of the SPD, Sigmar Gabriel’s support of the European and *defender of the human rights* role conceptions is in line with his party’s position. However, a closer look at the two most relevant members of the CDU, the Chancellor, and the Interior Minister, reveal a
significant disparity in the national role conception being invoked. Merkel appears to favour a European approach to the ‘migration crisis’ followed by Germany performing a *defender of human right* role. Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maizière, on the other hand, most frequently invoked the *defender of ‘enlightened’ national interest* role conception, reflecting the portfolio of his cabinet office.

The variation in the Chancellor’s and Interior Minister’s preferred role conceptions is not in itself an issue. However, in this case it was, since de Maizière’s interpretation of the policies the role prescribed included setting an upper limit on refugees and introducing border checks along Germany’s southern border with Austria, in September 2015. These components of the role came into conflict with Merkel’s vision for a European solution and her understanding of Germany’s particular obligations to uphold human and asylum rights in accordance with the German constitution.

Arguably, contestation of the *defender of the ‘Leitkultur’* role conception advocated by CSU Leader and the Minister President of Bavaria, Horst Seehofer, posed an even bigger challenge for Merkel. The CSU holds a unique position in Germany, as the sister party to the CDU at the federal level, but as a regional party representing the interests of Bavaria that only stands for elections at the federal state level. However, the party has become a nationally significant political actor (Boswell and Hough 2008). This is evident through the pressure that Seehofer exerted on Merkel in opposition of her ‘open door’ approach during the ‘migration crisis’.

The CSU is generally considered more conservative than the CDU. During the ‘migration crisis’, the party politicised the debate over the impact of immigration on Germany’s ‘guiding’ national culture (*Leitkultur*), based on regional and religious identity and the ‘not a country of immigration’ mantra (Geddes and Scholten 2016, 75). In supporting the notion of a German dominant *Leitkultur*, the CSU can be seen to strategically deploy anti-immigration sentiment in competition party politics.

The extent to which these contested roles, between the Chancellor and the Interior minister, and between the Chancellor and the leader of her sister-party and junior coalition partner will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

3.2 Asylum roles and foreign policy

Similarly to the British case, the ‘migration crisis’ was linked to the wider civil war in Syria and Germany’s foreign policy objectives to “bring peace to the conflict in Syria” (Merkel 2015b,
During her speech to the annual reception for the diplomatic corps in July 2016, Merkel also connects the situation in Syria with the European Common Security and Defence Policy and the need to develop civilian and military capacities (Merkel 2016b). This once again suggests the existence of significant issue-linkage between asylum and refugee provision and wider foreign policy considerations and objectives.

Moreover, key components of Germany’s master role, ‘civilian power’, were present in the dominant national role conceptions identified during the ‘migration crisis’. Multilateralism and notions of the rule of law featured strongly in the responsible leader, Europe as an agent of security and defender of human rights role conceptions. They were even present in the defender of ‘enlightened’ national interest role conception, where political elites considered the national interest within the boundaries of the rule of law and membership of the EU. Multilateralism was a little bit more difficult to identify in the populist narratives that constituted the defender of the ‘Leitkultur’ role conception. Nevertheless, as the following chapter will demonstrate, Seehofer did not isolate himself or Bavaria during the ‘migration crisis’, and strengthened bilateral relations with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, during the height of the ‘crisis’ in autumn 2015.

3.3 Limitations

An unexpected finding during the coding of national role statements in the German case was that German political elites appeared to make fewer explicit references to their state’s role in the world, during parliamentary debates. This could be due to Germany’s political process as a consensus democracy. Given that policy decisions have already been negotiated between coalition partners before legislative debates in parliament, there are perhaps fewer instances of ‘grandstanding’ or ‘pontification’ on the countries identity and role in the world and more focus on policy developments and pragmatic implementation. An alternative explanation could be the policy area. Apart from Chancellor, Angela Merkel, the vast majority of press interviews and statements made by representatives of the coalition government did not make explicit references to Germany’s international roles and responsibilities.

Moreover, more so than in the UK case, the high numbers of migrants and asylum seekers reaching Germany in 2015/16 meant that the focus of debates and statements was on matters of integration and infrastructure, such as integration initiatives, including language programmes, concerns related to schools, housing, and jobs as well as cultural challenges
and cohesion (see, for instance, de Maizière 2015). This was particularly true of press interviews with Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maizière, reflecting the portfolio of his cabinet post. That is not to say that a role theory analysis became unsustainable but rather that, following Gaskarth (2016), the analysis required more interpretation by the researcher to identify the overall role conception(s) being expressed.

Furthermore, according to the interviews conducted in Germany and the secondary literature, one of the main political cleavages during debates on the European ‘migration crisis’ did not fall along partisan lines but emerged between the federal government and the federal states (multiple interviews, 2019). Although asylum and refugee policy is reserved to the federal government in Germany, the federal states did exert influence over policy. The federal states were solely responsible for supporting asylum seekers upon arrival, until the BAMF had reviewed and processed their claims for asylum. Moreover, the federal states had autonomy over the reception of asylum seekers, accommodation, integration programmes, and were responsible for the deportation of failed asylum seekers. As the number of new arrivals increased, the process became significantly backlogged, with initial reviews of asylum applications taking up to five months, and the costs for the federal states to accommodate and support asylum seekers increased exponentially.

Consequently, one of the aim areas of contestation was regarding the fair distribution of costs between the federal government, the federal states, and the municipalities (‘Kommunen’). This resulted in significant conflict in the chancellery between the federal government and the states, until the government agreed to pay the states a set sum for each asylum seeker being hosted, on a monthly basis (Interview, 2019). Furthermore, a number of legal proposals put to the Bundesrat by federal states, notably by Bavaria, in 2015, regarding the classification of ‘safe states’, immigration law, and access to benefits suggest that the federal states did try to influence asylum and refugee policies (Laubenthal 2016).

This supports the proposition that the German LÄNDER could impact the expression of national role conceptions (Harnisch and Maull 2001). Moreover, it suggests the possibility of ‘layered egos’ (LEGOS) (Kaarbo and Cantir 2016, 184) and contested role conceptions between different regions and between the regional and national levels of government. However, this dimension of contestation within the domestic political process was not captured during the coding of parliamentary debates and leadership speeches on the ‘migration crisis’. It became apparent early on, that debates on financing Germany’s response to the crisis were purely focused on domestic political concerns and were not role-based. Therefore, given the foreign policy perspective of the thesis, these debates were not selected for in depth analysis.
Conclusion

This chapter identified five dominant national role conceptions in leadership speeches, statements, and parliamentary debates in Germany during the peak of the ‘migration crisis’. Each role conception was found to be embedded in different migration narratives, based on different traditions in migration policy and foreign policy, that illustrated how political elites perceived the new policy dilemma presented by the ‘crisis’ and the appropriate policy solutions. Despite Germany’s unilateral decision making in the summer of 2015, the analysis suggests that Germany’s identity as a Rechtsstaat and strong preference for multilateralism and cooperative institution building (Hellmann 1999) persisted. Both principles were significant components of most of the dominant national role conceptions identified, suggesting that the legacy of Germany’s civilian power master role lives on in political elites’ perceptions of Germany’s role in the world.

The analysis of the dominant role conceptions expressed by political parties and individual political elites within the coalition government revealed intra-party role contestation within the coalition government. Individual politicians predominantly advocated for the national role conception that reflected their area of responsibility. Chancellor Angela Merkel advocated the Europe level of migration governance, whilst the Interior Minister invoked the defender of national interest role conception, and Seehofer expressed the defender of the Leitkultur role conception, reflecting the regional interests of Bavaria. However, in contrast to the UK case, these contested roles were not entirely compatible. De Maizière and Seehofer’s preferred role conceptions prescribed, among other restrictive provisions, the introduction of a cap on asylum seekers entering Germany, creating role conflict with Merkel’s preferred role conceptions that prescribed multilateralism at the European level and defending human rights.

The next chapter investigates whether role contestation between Chancellor Angela Merkel, her Interior Minister and leader of her sister-party and junior coalition partner, Horst Seehofer, influenced which role conception was ultimately enacted. Moreover, by analysing contested roles in the domestic political process, the chapter investigates institutional opportunities and constraints and instances of vertical contestation over Germany’s response to the ‘migration crisis’ in 2015/16.
Chapter VIII

Intra-Party Contestation and Merkel: Two-Level Games and the Strategic use of National Role Conceptions

The previous chapter outlined five dominant national role conceptions in German political debates and leaders’ speeches on the European ‘migration crisis’. It identified a set of roles advocated by Chancellor Angela Merkel and her coalition partners, as well as some evidence of potential role contestation between Merkel and Interior Minister, Thomas de Maizière, and between the Chancellor and leader of the CDU’s sister-party, Minister President of Bavarian, Horst Seehofer. This chapter interrogates key events and debates, tracing the temporal and spatial context of this contestation, how it unfolded in domestic political processes, and chronologically mapping it against policy developments. It determines that the intraparty role contestation and a shift in public sentiment instigated a change in policy approach and the introduction of more restrictive asylum policies in November 2015 and March 2016, through the ratification of the first and second asylum packages.

The chapter starts by investigating the decisions to suspend the Dublin III Regulation in August 2015 and to let in thousands of migrants stuck in Hungary in early September 2015. Commonly referred to as Merkel’s ‘open door’ policy, this section also examines the role of a pro-immigration coalition of non-state actors as an ‘organised public’ that created what became known as Germany’s ‘culture of welcome’ (Willkommenskultur). Section two analyses intraparty contestation and coalition politics on debates on whether or not to set an annual upper limit on the number of asylum-seekers Germany should admit; and finally debates surrounding the reform of asylum legislation, including the Act on the Acceleration of Asylum Procedures (Asylum Package I or ‘Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz’) and the Act on the Introduction of Fast-Track Asylum Procedures (Asylum Package II). The third and final section investigates Merkel’s attempts to find Europe solutions to the ‘migration crisis’, focusing on the EU relocation scheme and EU-Turkey agreement.
1. ‘Open doors’, *Willkommenskultur* and *altercasting*

As illustrated by Figure 1, in 2015-2016 Germany experienced an unprecedented number of first-time asylum applicants. Numbers were significantly higher than official forecasts and predictions, presenting a challenge for authorities at the Federal and federal state levels with regards to the reception, registration, accommodation of asylum seekers, and the processing of asylum claims (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2016). On 25th August, the Federal Government announced the temporary suspension of the Dublin III regulation to enable migrants in Hungary in search of protection to travel to Germany to apply for asylum (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2015). Critics hold that the decision had the unintended consequence of increasing the number of migrants travelling along the Balkan migrant routes trying to reach Germany (Dostal 2017). The situation sparked a national and international debate on the efficacy of the CEAS and on whether solutions to the refugee crisis should be a national concern or remain firmly in the spirit of European solidarity and cooperation. However, by 13th September 2015, Germany had reintroduced temporary controls along its border with Austria in an attempt to control migrant flows and manage the registration of asylum seekers. This in turn instigated a debate on the future of the Schengen ‘no-borders’ area.

1.1 “Wir schaffen das”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s declaration that “we can do this” ("*wir schaffen das*") at the summer press conference on 31st August 2015 (and Germany’s subsequent ‘open door’ policy approach to the ‘migration crisis’) has received a great deal of academic and media attention. Commentators at the time expressed surprise at Merkel’s announcement, due in part to her apparent ambivalence to immigration previously. In 2010, Merkel was highly criticised for fuelling debates on immigration by declaring that multiculturalism in Germany had “utterly failed” (Der Spiegel 2010). Moreover, only weeks before the summer press conference, Merkel sparked controversy after a video clip went viral of the Chancellor explaining to a tearful young refugee girl that not all Palestinian refugees in camps in Lebanon could come to Germany, clearly stating, “we can’t manage it” ("*das können wir auch nicht schaffen*") (Der Spiegel 2015). However, the temporal and spatial context of the initial decision that set Germany on a specific path in August 2015 is strikingly underreported outside of Germany.
In an episode reminiscent of Politburo member Günter Schabowski’s mistaken announcement that East Germans could freely travel to West Germany “immediately, without delay” in a news conference on 9 November 1989 (Gunter Schabowski 1989), the catalyst of Merkel’s summer announcement can be traced back to a tweet by an anonymous official in the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), a few days earlier, on 25 August 2015. The tweet read: “At the present time, the Dublin procedure is essentially no longer being enforced for Syrian nationals” (author’s translation, see Figure 6 for original).

Figure 6. Tweet from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)

Source: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2015

The tweet did not refer to ‘open borders’, per se, (although this frequently misused terminology is a misnomer, given the context of the Schengen no-borders agreement), but rather to the suspension of ‘Dublin transfers’ of asylum seekers back to Hungary, Italy or Greece, the first country through which they had entered the EU, effectively suspending the Dublin III regulation. In subsequent interviews, Merkel admitted that she was not made aware of the decision to suspend ‘Dublin transfers’ ahead of time (Merkel 2016a). Both the source and

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50 Günter Schabowski was a member of the ruling Socialist Unity Party in the former German Democratic Republic, who is credited with playing a role in forcing General Secretary Erich Honecker from power and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Günter Schabowski 2018). During a routine press conference, on 9th November 1989, Schabowski was asked when new travel regulations, allowing travel between East and West Germany, would come into effect. Shuffling through his paperwork for details, Schabowski shrugged and announced that the new regulations applied with immediate effect. Within minutes, thousands of East and West Berliners rushed to checkpoints along the Berlin Wall, overwhelming border guards, effectively opening the Berlin Wall.
content of the tweet suggest that it was posted based on technocratic considerations concerning the fast and efficient registration and processing of asylum applications.

The substantial backlog of pending asylum decisions had reached untenable levels and processing applications was being hindered further by the requirement to complete an initial assessment on whether an applicant qualified for a ‘Dublin return’ or not (Thränhardt 2019). By the end of 2015, there were 364,664 pending asylum applications in Germany (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016), and an estimated 500,000 further applicants from 2015, which were not registered until 2016 (de Freitas et al. 2021). As the Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maizière, explained in a subsequent interview with the German public-service broadcaster, ZDF:

“This tweet was a mistake. It was not coordinated/agreed upon with the [Interior] Ministry or me. It was meant to support the staff members at the BAMF and it came about as a result of the express wish of the federal states. The states were saying that the asylum procedure was taking too long. The public were saying the asylum procedure was taking too long. And it was taking too long because they still had to determine whether actually Greece or someone else was responsible [for processing a claim]” (de Maizière 2019) (author’s translation, emphasis in original).

The wider political and foreign policy ramifications – that suspending the Dublin regulation could act as a ‘pull factor’ or be perceived as one by neighbouring states along the Balkan migrant route (Dostal 2017) – were not taken into consideration. Germany’s top immigration official and President of the BAMF, Manfred Schmidt, resigned as a result of this error in judgement (Charter 2015b). He was succeeded by Frank-Jürgen Weise, the Chairman of the Executive Board of the Federal Employment Agency (BA), effectively combining the two roles.

In contrast to other readings of Germany’s response to the crisis, this suggests that Merkel’s initial “we can do this” statement at the summer press conferences a few days later was, at least in part, a reaction to a technocratic decision that had been made at the BAMF. This also suggests that the defender of human rights national role conception expressed in the summer press conference was strategically deployed a posteriori to garner support and legitimise a policy decision that had already being initiated by officials at a bureaucratic level and was already being implemented on the Bavarian border with Austria.
The most salient event associated with Merkel’s ‘open door’ approach during the European ‘migration crisis’ relates to the decision to welcome thousands of migrants that were stuck in Hungary at the beginning of September 2015 to Germany. Despite the debate in the German context around whether the Chancellor ‘opened’ the borders to migrants or not, the narrative of ‘open borders’ is in fact a misnomer that has frequently facilitated an inaccurate analysis of policy decisions made in early September 2015 (supported by interviewees. 2019). As discussed in Chapter II, under the Schengen agreement, Germany’s borders were already open. Therefore, the decision on 4th September 2015, was not regarding borders but rather whether to welcome the large group of migrants in Hungary heading towards Germany, and to send trains to pick them up. As one interviewee put it, in contrast to media reports, in actuality “Merkel avoided the extraordinary situation of closing the borders”, as opposed to opening borders (Interview, 2019). Moreover, the decision to confirm that Germany would receive the migrants from Hungary was not based on any systemic or regulatory framework that was prepared for this kind of scenario.

In addition to the internal pressure of bureaucratic politics and technocratic considerations to deal with the high influx of migrants at the German/Austrian border, Germany’s neighbours and fellow EU member states were also exerting pressure. At a small press conference after a meeting with the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, on 3rd September 2015, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán made it clear that he was not planning on taking any responsibility for migrants or asylum seekers entering the EU, following Merkel’s announcement at the end of August. He declared:

“The [refugee] problem is not a European problem. The problem is a German problem. Nobody would like to stay in Hungary. So, we don’t have difficulties with those who want to stay in Hungary. Nobody wants to stay in Hungary, neither in Slovakia, nor Poland, nor Estonia. All of them would like to go to Germany." (Euronews 2015).

That evening, Austrian Chancellor, Werner Faymann, took the initiative to contact his Germany allies and counterpart to coordinate a policy response to defuse growing tensions with Orbán over the migrants trapped in Hungary and on their way to the Austria border. Recounting how events unfolded from 3rd-4th September 2015 in an interview with the ZDF, Austrian Minister of Economy (2008-2017) and Vice Chancellor of Austria, later shared:

“Werner Faymann informed me that the situation would come to a head at the Austrian-Hungarian border, at Nickelsdorf to be exact, particularly because the refugees that
were at Keleti station were now on the way to the border. The signal from Hungary was that should the refugees be stopped...which implicitly would have been accompanied with violence, which we did not discuss in detail. It was clear to both of us that this would have resulted in violence" (Mitterlehner 2019, author's translation)

The concern that the situation would escalate and result in violence was reiterated by multiple interviewees, who described the situation in Hungary as ‘untenable’ and recalled:

“The situation in Hungary was very important, also in relation to what followed. It is possibly a misunderstanding or has been presented as this or that depending on political interests, but for me in the Chancellery at the time, it was clear that the crisis came to a head, and everyone expected chaos to break out and it to even result in deaths. [The migrants] were hemmed in, couldn’t go anywhere, the situation was extremely dramatic and volatile. The Chancellor then said, ‘Germany started two world wars, Germany carries a lot of blame, so now we will be the first who will contribute to establishing peace and the first that will take in refugees’.” (Interview, 2019)

These recollections of events as they happened suggest a level of crisis management and urgency that is frequently lost in narratives of ‘open doors’ and Willkommenskultur, when analysing Germany’s response to the ‘migration crisis’. It suggests that Merkel and Faymann deployed extraordinary measures in a time of crisis to stabilise the EU whilst multilateral solutions to the migrant flows could be found (Benner 2016, and interviews, 2019). One interviewee concluded that, “it was a heated discussion also at cabinet level, not all the ministers were in agreement, but ultimately I think it was based on humanitarian considerations in an emergency.” (Interview, 2019)

This illustration of how events unfolded suggests that both migrant flows and Orbán’s response to the developing situation played a significant role in Austria and Germany’s decision to welcome the migrants from Hungary on 4th September 2015. Moreover, it could be argued that by singling out Germany and Merkel’s policy approach, Orbán explicitly cast Germany as a destination state for the migrants stuck in Hungary. This worked in Hungary’s favour as migrants were put on buses and trains to the Austrian border, thereby shifting responsibility for the registration and processing of claims for asylum to Austria and Germany.

Although the extent to which Merkel’s summer press conference announcement on the suspicion of ‘Dublin transfers’ acted as a ‘pull factor’ is contested, since migrants would have already been enroute for weeks before reaching the Hungarian/Austrian or Austrian/German border, it is safe to say that the announcement solidified Germany as a destination for migrants
already trapped in Hungary. Recalling the dramatic images at Budapest station, an interviewee explained,

“These people clearly couldn’t stay in Hungary at the time and had already professed that they wanted to come to Germany, so it wasn’t even an issue of allowing them to move on to Austria. It was clear that this large group of people would move on [to Germany].”

This account of events, highlights the agency of migrants to choose a destination country during the crisis. Although an under researched area of migration studies, studies have shown that migrants had some agency over their destination, and were well-informed through diaspora networks and social media, avoiding registration and fingerprinting until they had reached their preferred destination country (see, for instance, Denaro 2016). Moreover, there were recorded instances of authorities in countries experiencing high pressures waving migrants through without registering them to avoid processing claims for protection, notably in Italy and Hungary. Therefore, it could be argued that migrants on the Balkan route became a ‘significant other’ by trying to reach Germany, thereby contributing to casting Germany in its role as a receiving/destination state.

This suggests that the external pressure of migrant flows and the expectations of other EU member states significantly influenced the initial decision to adopt an ‘open door’ policy approach in early September 2015. Germany’s role as a receiving state/destination state for asylum seekers emerged in response to the role expectations of others, in particular the expectations of Austria and Hungary, and migrants who had chosen not to register in the first country through which they entered the EU, in this case Hungary, and were instead headed to Germany.

1.3 Willkommenskultur and the ‘organised public’

The relevance of analysing the impact of the ‘organised public’ on the decision-making processes is particularly pertinent to the German case. As mentioned in Chapter II, due to Germany’s corporatist system a strong pro-immigration coalition that spanned economic actors, rights-based actors and church organisations also influence immigration policy (Ilgit and Klotz 2018). In 2015/16, this included the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), Confederation of German Employers’ Associations (BDA), Confederation of German Industries (BDI), and the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), who have been involved
in debates and discussions on immigration policy since the 1960 (Ilgit and Klotz 2018). These economic actors not only contributed to public debate but also negotiated with the federal government at regular meetings during the height of the ‘migration crisis’, for instance, lobbying to give refugees faster access to the German labour market (Dettmer, Katschak, and Ruppert 2015, Interviews, 2019). Recalling the autumn of 2015, one interviewee stated:

“Supporting legislative processes was a large part of our job…we would receive draft legislation, with a very short deadline, because everything needed to happen very quickly, we would receive a draft for consultation with a 24-hour deadline for comments.” (Interview, 2019)

Moreover, national companies such as Deutsche Bahn, Deutsche Post and Deutsche Telekom announced that they would hire refugees (Prodhan and Rinke 2016). According to an OECD/DIHK survey of German employers on refugees conducted in early 2017, 59% of companies said that they hoped to counter labour shortages by employing refugees (OECD 2017, 35). In sum, these pro-market actors represented a strong pro-immigration lobby in 2015/16.

In addition to industry and business actors, rights-based NGOs, charitable and civil society organisations, and churches were significant actors supporting German’s ‘welcome culture’ during the height of the ‘migration crisis’. Among the most influential of these rights advocates, ProAsyl formed as a non-governmental organisation in 1986 to help individual asylum seekers through the legal system and to campaign for the protection of refugee rights both nationally and at the European level (Ilgit and Klotz 2018). Charitable organisations active in health and social services, including Diakonie Deutschland and the German Caritas Association, the charitable organisations of the German protestant and catholic churches, respectively, were invited to regular meetings with the German Chancellor and members of the cabinet to discuss policy interventions to address supporting asylum seekers during the ‘migration crisis’ in 2015-16 (Interview, 2019).

The ‘migration crisis’ instigated a huge ‘welcome culture’ movement in civil society across Germany. Community initiatives run by charities and civils society groups sprung up across the country to support and assist newly arrived migrants, initially offering food, shelter, clothing and medical care, and then support in the form of integration programmes and free language classes (for an overview of local and regional initiatives see for example PRO ASYL n. d.; HelpTo n. d.). A study conducted by the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD) found that one in ten respondents had engaged in some form of refugee assistance in 2015 (Ahrens 2015).
Moreover, the strong grassroots and pro-rights movement resulted in the implementation of community sponsorship programmes:

“Germany has a very strong civil society. So, you have NGOs, you have advocacy groups, you have outfits like amnesty, you have national outfits like ProAsyl but also very vocal individuals, including for instance now the NGOs that support rescue at sea in the Mediterranean. They in turn become lobbyist and advocates for refugee admission. You also have cities and municipalities taking on a stronger voice. And at times an independent voice. So, that just shows you that there is still, although the welcome culture as such has subsided somewhat, but there is still very strong impetus for engagement.” (Interview, 2019)

Interestingly in the case of the European ‘migration crisis’, pro-market actors, including the unions, industry and trade associations, and pro-rights actors, including NGOs, civil society organisations and the churches, agreed that it was a humanitarian crisis and that Germany needed to welcome asylum seekers and refugees (confirmed by multiple interviews, 2019). This suggests an incredibly strong and influential coalition of pro-immigration actors (‘organised public’) advocating for Germany to accept migrants during the peak of the European ‘migration crisis’.

2. Coalition politics and intraparty contestation

Nevertheless, Merkel’s initial policy approach, and the developing situation at Germany’s south border created divisions within the coalition government (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2016). Whilst the main parties of the coalition government (CDU and SPD) supported finding European solutions to the ‘crisis’, the junior coalition partner in Merkel’s third cabinet, and conservative sister party in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union (CSU), advocated for making border control a national competence once again. This contestation was most visible in debates on an upper limit to the number of refugees Germany should admit.

2.1 Refugee cap

One of the main areas of contention between the CDU and CSU was regarding whether Germany should set a national limit for newly arriving migrants. Chancellor Angela Merkel and
Bavarian Minister President and leader of the CSU, Horst Seehofer, represented diametrically opposed positions on the response to the ‘migration crisis’ from the beginning. In an interview with the Bild newspaper, when asked about Merkel’s opposition to an upper limit on refugees, Seehofer responded:

"It is a fact! Without a limit on migration, it won't work. To simply say, we have people migrating, and we will manage it - doesn't suffice. Not with this number of refugees and the speed with which they are arriving" (Seehofer 2015, author's translation)

Advocating for the implementation of more restrictive policies, Seehofer invited Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to a meeting in Munich to discuss the ‘crisis’ on 24 September 2015. The invitation was widely criticised as a provocation that pandered to right-wing populism, given Orbán’s anti-immigration stance and controversial response to asylum and refugee provision (EuroActiv 2015).

By early October 2015, Seehofer was calling for an act of "effective self-defence" and emergency measures (Hengst et al. 2015). He threatened to file a complaint against Merkel's refugee policies at Germany's Federal Constitutional Court, stating that Merkel's refusal to set a cap on the number of refugees Germany would admit was violating the constitutional right to independence of Germany's federal states. This conflict between the sister parties and coalition partners came to a head at the CSU’s annual conference on 20th November 2015 in Munich. Following Merkel's opening address to the conference in which she categorically stated that Germany would not be setting an upper limit on the number of migrants entering the county, the Minister President of Bavaria Horst Seehofer openly and emphatically challenged Merkel's position in a strongly worded rebuke. Reiterating points set out in a proposal by the CSU titled ‘Germany needs a strong Bavaria: Migration, Defining Culture, Integration’ published at the conference (CSU 2015), Seehofer stated,

“We are of the strong opinion that this great historical endeavour to integrate refugees in our country will not be supported by the public indefinitely if we do not set an upper limit for newly arriving refugees” (CSU-Parteitag 2015) (author’s translation)

The media picked up on the conflict, noting how Merkel stood next to Seehofer “like a berated school girl” (‘Schulmädchen’) for the duration of his 13-minute-long speech, and cited the incident as the start of a dispute between the two politicians over Germany’s response to the ‘migration crisis’ (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2018), which would continue until June 2018.51

51 For an overview of how the dispute over migration policy between Merkel and the new Minister of the Interior at the time, Horst Seehofer, came to a head in June 2018 see Smellie (2018).
Nevertheless, it was not until October 2017 that Merkel conceded to the CSU on the implementation of a cap on the number of refugees, and agreed to an upper limit of 200,000 per annum, as part of the initial coalition negotiations following the federal elections in September 2017 (Connolly 2017).

However, in the autumn of 2015, the cap on refugees was not only a point of contention for Merkel’s sister party and junior coalition partner, the CSU. Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel, of the centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), stated in an interview with the Spiegel on 2nd October that "we in Germany are rapidly approaching the limits of our possibilities…although (Germany’s) asylum law does not have an upper ceiling, there are real limits to how much pressure we can put on our cities and towns." (Gabriel 2015, author's translation). Even the German President Joachim Gauck issued a stark warning at the end of September 2015:

“Our hearts are big, but our possibilities are finite. Although our asylum and refugee laws are not based on numbers, we know that our reception capacity is limited, even if we are not yet sure where that limit lies" (Gauck 2015, author's translation)

Merkel was also receiving pressure from within her own party, the CDU. This tension was primarily between the Chancellor and the Interior Minister and stemmed from a lack of trust due to Merkel's perceived lack of consultation with the Ministry of the Interior before making significant decisions in August 2015 and again in mid-September (Interview, 2019). Originally, de Maizière had planned to close the German/Austrian border on 13th September. However, a last-minute decision was made by the Chancellery to reintroduce border controls instead.

Moreover, according to Sigmar Gabriel, Leader of the SPD (2009 – 2017) and Vice-Chancellor of Germany (2013-2018), “Merkel, as Leader of the CDU, challenged the liberality of her party to the extreme” (Gabriel 2019, author's translation). Interior Minister Thomas de Maizi ère (2013-2018) and close ally Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble (2009-2017) were becoming increasingly vocal on limiting the influx of refugees and other migrants to the country. Schäuble controversially compared Merkel's approach to the 'migrant crisis' to a "careless skier" who set off an avalanche (Charter 2015a). The growing division within the CDU was particularly evident in a letter to the Chancellor from 34 local and state CDU politicians, dated 4th October, which stated:

"This 'policy of open borders,' which is currently practiced, is neither in accordance with European or German law, nor is it in line with the party programme of the CDU" (Focus 2015, author's translation).
However, Merkel refused to budge on the issue. In a rare appearance on the political talk show, Anne Will, on 7th October 2015, Merkel doubled down on her commitment to the ‘Wir schaffen das’ (‘we can do it’) narrative and stated, "It is not in my power to determine how many come to Germany" (Merkel 2015, author’s translation). That same day, Merkel’s chief of staff and Minister for Special Affairs at the Chancellery, Peter Altmaier, was instated as the political coordinator of Germany’s response to the ‘migration crisis’, thereby transferring decision making authority from the Ministry of the Interior to the Chancellery.

The appointment of Altmeier was widely reported in the media as the result of widening divisions within the CDU over the response to the crisis. Despite reassurances from Merkel that the move did not constitute a demotion of the Interior Minister, de Maizière; that she required his assistance "now more than ever" (Merkel 2015a), and that relations between the Ministry of the Interior and the Chancellery remained strong (de Maizière 2015b), commentators linked the move to dwindling trust in the Interior Minister’s ability to handle the crisis. He was criticised for "reacting passively" to the emergency (Chambers and Barkin 2015) and the resignation of the BAMF President (Barkin 2015). Maizière’s support for an upper limit on the number of refugees entering the country and public comments, which were criticised for recalling negative stereotypes of asylum seekers, were also named as possible reasons for Merkel’s decision (Hengst et al. 2015).

Nevertheless, following the terror attacks in Paris in November 2015, and growing concerns regarding the number of migrants entering the country both within the coalition government, within the CDU and among the public, de Maizière and Schäuble began to set the tone of Germany’s asylum policy and publicly called for a cap on the entry of refugees and asylum seekers to the EU, as opposed to Germany (Reuters 2015b). In summation, by early October there was building pressure from both with the coalition government and within the CDU to amend the policy approach, and a visible shift in public opinion.

2.2 Public opinion and the radical right

Kaarbo (1996, 2012) identifies three conditions under which a junior coalition partner can ‘highjack’ foreign policy decision-making, despite their junior status: the junior coalition partner must control key ministries in cabinet, their goals must align with public opinion, and the policy they aim to influence must be highly salient at the time. Two out of three of these conditions
were met by the Christian Social Union (CSU) in relation to managing Germany’s southern border in October 2015.

In addition to growing pressure from within the coalition government, opinion polling by Infratest Dimap for German public broadcaster ARD and the newspaper Die Welt shows that the percentage of Germans "scared" about the number of refugees entering the country increased from 38% in September to 51% in October 2015. At the same time Merkel’s approval rating dropped to its lowest levels since December 2011, from 63% to 54% (Infratest Dimap 2015). As Figure 7 illustrates, whilst Merkel’s approval ratings waned, Seehofer’s approval ratings grew by 11% to 39% in October 2015. This suggests that Merkel was being punished by parts of the electorate for the role conception she advocated, whilst Seehofer’s opposition to Merkel’s policy approach resonated with growing public concern over the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees entering Germany.

Figure 7. Approval ratings of key politicians, April 2015-December 2016

Moreover, the introduction of border checks in mid-September gave the impression that Merkel did not have a plan, especially once it came out that the Interior Ministry had planned to close the border entirely, a decision that was changed at the last minute (Amann, Gude, et al. 2015). Seehofer’s narrative - that the government did not have the situation under control
– started to resonate with the public. Moreover, Seehofer’s move to the right on immigration was not only in response to high numbers of migrants but also the threat of the populist radical right. Regional elections across the border in Upper Austria on 27th September 2015, saw the Austria’s far-right and anti-immigration Freedom Party (FPÖ), double its support from the previous elections and receive 30.4% of the vote (Reuters 2015a).

This shift in public opinion was also reflected in the results of regional elections in Germany in early 2016. A significant increase in support for the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party resulted in the party entering three regional parliaments following state elections on 13 March 2016. The AfD had previously campaigned against the euro and the bailout for Greece but refocused its attentions to campaign on an anti-refugee platform following the summer of 2015 (Thraenhardt 2019). In Saxony-Anhalt, the AfD won 24.2% of the vote, making it the second largest party after the CDU. The AfD won 15.1% of the vote in Baden-Wuerttemberg, and 12.6% in Rhineland-Palatinate. The success of the AfD in Saxony-Anhalt, Baden-Wuerttemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate suggested a public backlash against Merkel’s asylum and refugee policies (Deutsche Welle 2016). In Baden-Wuerttemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, the CDU experienced significant losses (11% and 3%, respectively), which some commentators also attributed to Merkel’s refugee policies.

The assaults in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015 against German women changed public sentiment (Thränhardt 2019). Xenophobic and anti-immigration movements, such as Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) gained traction with regular demonstrations taking place in cities such as Dresden. Moreover, attacks on migrants and refugee shelters increased significantly (Blickle et al. 2015). According to Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 177 violent crimes and 1027 offenses against refugee accommodation were recorded in 2015; quadruple the number of crimes compared with the previous year (Bundeskriminalamt 2016).

To alleviate growing public concern, and resolve the dispute between Merkel and Seehofer, the federal coalition government introduced two new pieces of significant asylum legislation in quick succession, which entered into force in November 2015 and March 2016.

2.3 Asylum Packages I and II

The government introduced new legislation to increase the efficacy of asylum procedures and make it easier to deport failed asylum seekers. The asylum bill was pushed through the
Bundestag quickly for implementation before 1 November. It also aimed to reduced incentives for asylum seekers to travel to Germany. The Act on the Acceleration of Asylum Procedures (Asylum Package I) entered into force on 24 October 2015. It included safe third country provisions, declaring Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo as safe countries of origin, raised the maximum time migrants had to spend in reception facilities from three to six months, introduced new provisions for food and care in the shelters and opened integration and work promotion offered to persons who have a good chance of remaining in Germany, essentially providing access to the labour market for asylum seekers from the Balkans states (Bundesgesetzblatt 2015).

The second asylum package introduced even more restrictive policies including simplifying and introducing an expedited deportation procedure, restricting family reunion rights, and expanding the safe countries of origin list to include Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In Berlin the Bundestag voted by an overwhelming majority of 429 votes to 147 for the Act on the Introduction of Fast-Track Asylum Procedures (Asylum Package II) on 29th January 2016 (Charter and Waterfield 2016).

Commentators have suggested that the changes set out in the bill would have been impossible to get through parliament just months earlier and that the new measures would neither speed up processes or disincentivise migrants from seeking protection in Germany (Amann, Gude, et al. 2015). However, more far-reaching measures would require amendments to the constitution, which is a complex process that requires a two-thirds majority in both the Bundestag and the Bundesrat two houses of parliament.

These two pieces of legislation were premised on the gradual tightening of and progressively restrictive legislation. One interviewee claimed:

“No matter how individual parties involved in the deliberations may have sold it, it was all part of the repositioning for all mainstream parties out of the 2015/2016 experience, basically saying we lost control here and have to be sure that we are sending signals that make it less likely for this to reoccur.” (Interview, 2019)

This is based on the implicit assumption that through deterrence measures, you can send a signal that leads to lower numbers of arrivals.
3. Two-level games and ‘LEGOS’\textsuperscript{52}

By October 2015, Merkel had become increasingly isolated within the coalition government and in her own party. In response to intra-party contestation and growing unease from the public over the number of asylum seekers arriving in Germany, Merkel sought to initiate policy solutions at the EU level that could reduce the numbers of asylum-seekers reaching Germany. As previously discussed, the strategy of shifting decision making to the EU as an institutional venue for pursuing domestic policy objectives on migration policy was not a new strategy for the German government (Geddes and Scholten 2016, 75).

Rather than reversing her position on an upper limit on refugees in Germany, Merkel pursued the enactment of the \textit{Europe as an agent of security} role conception at the EU level. By November 2015, even Merkel, who had strongly opposed quotas, yielded to a ‘fixed number of refugees’ for Europe at the G-20 meeting in Turkey (Amann, Knaup, et al. 2015). SPD leader Gabriel Sigmar had previously claimed that within the German context setting an upper limit on refugees would be unconstitutional (Amann, Knaup, et al. 2015). This suggests that by changing policy venue to the EU governance level Merkel circumvented the potential controversy at the domestic level and institutional constraints imposed by German constitution law (for a discussion of vertical ‘venue-shopping’ in the EU see Guiraudon 2000).

3.1 EU relocation scheme

Germany also put a great deal of political pressure on EU member states to accept an EU quota scheme, based on Germany’s federal quota system (the ‘Königstein key’), for the redistribution of asylum seekers from Greece, Italy and Hungary, among EU member states. Merkel’s aim was to reduce Germany’s share of asylum applications, which in 2016 reached 60\% of the total number of claims made in the EU (Eurostat 2017), by promoting the redistribution of asylum seekers at the EU level (Zaun 2017).

However, it was not well received by other EU member states, who refused to follow Germany’s lead on asylum and refugee provision. The Visegrad states in particular opposed the proposal, and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán accused Merkel of “moral imperialism”, during a visit to Bavaria (Waterfield 2015). As one interviewee claimed, “when

\textsuperscript{52} ‘LEGOS’ is a concept first coined by Kaarbo and Cantir (2016, 184) to refer to the subnational and supranational levels of national role conceptions implying “layered egos” or ‘LEGOS’. See also, Chapter III, section 4.3 for more details.
Germany, a state that has for many years benefitted from the Dublin regulation, is then the leading light to advocate for solidarity and burden-sharing it becomes not credible” (Interview, 2019). Foreign policy scholars have described Germany’s more recent attempts to export or superimpose the German model of governance onto the European ‘organised other’ as evidence that “the Merkel government has left traditional self-restraint behind” (Beneš and Harnisch 2015, 155). The danger became that instead of being viewed as pursuing European interests, other member states viewed Germany as pursuing their own national interests.

3.2 EU-Turkey agreement

On 22 January 2016, the first joint cabinet meeting of the governments of Germany and Turkey took place in Berlin (Bundesregeirung 2016). The negotiations of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan (European Commission 2015c) and a subsequent agreement struck in March 2016 (European Council 2016) were driven by Germany (Slominski and Trauner 2018). The agreement stipulated that all irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving from Turkey to the Greek islands whose applications for protection were deemed inadmissible were returned to Turkey. Following a series of negotiations in November 2015, the EU agreed that for every Syrian national returned, another Syrian refugee would be resettled to the EU; visa requirements for Turkish citizens would be lifted by June 2016; the EU would allocate €3 billion to Turkey under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, with a further €3 billion to follow (Commission Decision of 24 November 2015); a Voluntary Readmission Scheme would be launched (European Commission 2015b), and the EU accession process for Turkey would be reinvigorated. The German Federal Government made a significant contribution of 21% of the initial €3 billion (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2017, 47). Explaining the motivation for driving the EU-Turkey agreement, Merkel stated:

“I have stressed our three essential objectives from the outset: we want to reduce the number of refugees, noticeably and permanently; we want to replace illegal migration with legal migration and remove the foundation for the people smugglers’ inhuman business; and we want to create a shared solution. The EU-Turkey Agreement meets

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53 ‘Irregular migration’ refers to the “[m]ovement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination” (IOM n.d.).
these requirements. Since its implementation, far fewer refugees have been undertaking the dangerous journey across the Aegean.” (Merkel 2016b)

This is a concrete example of Germany driving the effective ‘outsourcing’ of migration control to a third country and illustrates how asylum policy can be utilised as a foreign policy tool.

Although de facto on hold following the attempted coup in Turkey in July 2016, this agreement was highly criticised for being based on the assumption that Turkey was a ‘safe third country’ (Amnesty International 2017). It sparked controversy as critiques questioned the ethical and moral implications of returning asylum seekers to a state with a questionable human rights record (UNHCR 2016). There were also suggestions that the arrangement made the EU dependent on the ‘goodwill’ of a third country, and open to ‘blackmailing’; a not wholly unfounded concern when considering that Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has, since the coup, warned that he will “let hundreds of thousands of migrants travel on to Europe if pushed by the EU” (BBC 2016b). This highlights the extent to which asylum policy can become contentious on the international stage and the normative dimension of the policy area.

Nevertheless, Merkel’s strategy to placate domestic audiences and members of her own party and sister-party by seeking European solutions appeared successful. By March 2016, Merkel’s popularity had once again exceeded that of Seehofer (see Figure 7.). This was arguably the result of various factors, including the introduction of restrictive migration measures through the first and second asylum packages (Zaun 2018). However, I would argue that the EU-Turkey agreement of March 2016 was a significant contributing factor, given that 46% of the electorate supported the measure (Infratest Dimap 2016). Moreover, 77% of the electorate preferred a European solution to the ‘migration crisis’ to a national one (Infratest Dimap, 2016d).

By promoting a quota for refugees in EU and initiating the EU-Turkey deal, Merkel was able to claim that German asylum law was not being compromised, whilst driving a significantly restrictive policy approach, including the externalisation of migration policy to third countries and sealing off the EU’s external border, at the EU level. As described in Chapter II, since the 1990s Germany has tended to try to ‘upload’ migration policy preferences to the EU level. From a role theory perspective, this could be interpreted as an attempt to impose Germany’s self-conception onto the organised other, the EU, in order to reduce conflict between domestic and international role expectations (Beneš and Harnisch 2015).
4. Conclusion

This chapter interrogated key events and debates, tracing the temporal and spatial context of the contestation identified in the last chapter, how it unfolded in domestic political processes, and chronologically mapping it against policy developments. It determined that Merkel's initial decisions in the summer of 2015 were mainly in response to technocratic decision-making in the BAMP on the one hand, and a real time emergency in Hungary at the beginning of September 2015 on the other. I argue that Merkel deployed the defender of human rights and responsible leader role conceptions strategically to garner support and legitimise decisions that were not directly within her control. In this sense, the analysis suggests that external expectations and altercasting by migrant groups travelling to Germany influenced the policy options that were available to the German government during the so-called 'march of hope' in early September 2015.

This chapter has also shown how significant intraparty role contestation, bolstered by a shift in public sentiment, firstly following the terror attacks in Paris in early November and again following the New Year's Eve incidents in Cologne, instigated a change in policy approach and the introduction of more restrictive asylum policies in November 2015 and March 2016, through the ratification of the first and second asylum packages. Although the CSU had limited institutional power to influence asylum and refugee policy, as it did not hold authority in any of the key ministries (interior, foreign, finance), growing public concern and a lack of consensus among EU member states increased the salience of calls for an upper limit to refugees. Moreover, calls for more restrictive measures from powerful allies, including the Interior Minister and the Finance Minister, resulted in an apparent shift in policy approach.

Finally, the analysis also reveals a two-levelled strategy adopted by the Federal government to address the 'migration crisis'. This is illustrated by Merkel's opposition of setting an annual upper limit for refugees in Germany but strongly promoting of an EU-wide quota system based on Germany's national asylum dispersal system. Moreover, whilst adopting a humanitarian approach at home, Merkel was also driving the outsourcing and externalisation of asylum provision to third countries at the EU level. This suggests that Merkel circumvented national constraints by using the EU as an alternative policy making 'venue', with the aim to reduce and restrict migration flows to Germany through the introduction of restrictive mechanisms decided at the intergovernmental level of EU asylum and refugee governance. As Lavenex (2006) illustrates, the venue-shopping strategy is shifted from internal migration policy to the external foreign policy dimension, which is still firmly in the hands of member states. This
represents a trend that others have remarked upon as the increasing use of foreign policy instruments in justice and home affairs (Pawlak 2008).

Therefore, whilst advocating a humanitarian role conception, based on human rights and the rule of law, at the domestic level, Merkel actively pursued a restrictive and securitised role for the EU on migration policy at the intergovernmental level. This strategy of layered ‘egos’, had the benefit of placating coalition partners and reassuring domestic audiences that the government had the situation under control by pursuing European solutions, whilst being able to claim that Germany had upheld its humanitarian responsibilities and had not compromised its asylum law set out in the constitution.
Chapter IX

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to contribute to the understanding of asylum and refugee policy decision making during the European ‘migration crisis’. The underlying assumption was that the influence of domestic and international expectations and pressures, institutional and situational context, material capacities, and ideational factors as mediated through decision makers influenced policy behaviour during the crisis. To investigate these factors, I posited that role theory offered a promising analytical framework to understand and explain the phenomena of variation in national approaches to forced migration and international cooperation among EU member states. In addition, the study aimed to contribute to role theory by applying the framework to a new policy area. The following chapter assesses the key findings from the UK and German case studies and presents the main contributions of the overall research. It also details some challenges and limitations of the study, before outlining four areas for further research.

1. Assessing findings

The findings from the UK case provided a plausible explanation for the UK’s response to the ‘migrant crisis’. The dominant roles invoked by the government, those of aid superpower, independent and contributor to security and defence, do appear to be largely congruent with the policies that were implemented. The most dominant role evoked by opposition parties was the desired role of European partner, calling for the UK to show greater solidarity with EU member states experiencing high migratory pressures and to participate in the EU relocation schemes. However, the influence of the opposition in the UK’s parliamentary democracy is limited to scrutiny of the governments immigration policies and strategic appeals to the electorate, who can potentially hold the parties to account for the national role conceptions they advocate at the next elections (Brummer and Thies 2015). The Dubs Amendment represents an example of where the enactment of an opposing role conception was made possible because the opposition had access to the decision-making process through the scrutiny of an Immigration Bill. However, the extent to which this initiative for the UK to perform
an alternative role when it came to provision for refugee children was largely curtailed by the executive.

The application of a role theory framework enabled the analysis of both domestic and international factors within domestic political processes, including the role of the public, the refugee sector, the expectation of foreign partners, opposition parties and individual political elites. In doing so, it enabled a fine-grained analysis of the UK case during the migration crisis and revealed a holistic picture of decision-making in times of crisis that incorporated policy traditions, new ideas, and different political actors embedded in policy processes.

Similarly, the role theory analysis of the German case revealed a nuanced picture of decision making during the ‘migration crisis’. It suggests that Merkel’s initial decisions in the summer of 2015 were mainly in response to technocratic decision-making and external expectations. It indicates that Merkel strategically deployed humanitarian role conceptions to garner support and legitimise decisions that were not within her control. The analysis also demonstrated how significant intraparty role contestation, bolstered by a shift in public sentiment, resulted in a change in policy approach. Finally, the analysis also revealed a two-levelled strategy adopted by the Federal government to address the ‘migration crisis’. Whilst advocating a humanitarian role conception based on human rights and the rule of law at the domestic level, Merkel actively pursued a restrictive and securitised role for the EU on migration policy at the intergovernmental level. This strategy of layered ‘egos’ had the benefit of placating coalition partners and reassuring domestic audiences that the government had the situation under control by pursuing European solutions whilst being able to claim that Germany had upheld its humanitarian responsibilities and had not compromised its asylum law.

2. Main contributions

This thesis shows that whilst not all domestic contestation on immigration policy during the European ‘migration crisis’ was role based, national role conceptions and their contestation were a common feature of debates on asylum and refugee provision. Consequently, a central finding of this thesis is that political elites in Germany and the United Kingdom referred to national role conceptions when shaping, formulating, and negotiating policy responses to the European ‘migration crisis’. Given the distinct intermestic nature of migration policy, and especially asylum and refugee policy, through the analysis of national role conceptions, the theoretical framework enabled the examination of the impact of domestic and international
factors, migration narratives and policy traditions on policy behaviour during the peak of the crisis.

The actor-centred, process orientated approach enabled a multi-levelled analysis that captured a more holistic picture of decision making and what influenced political elites than more traditional approaches to migration policy analysis. Indeed, the analysis captured all facets of what Hampshire and Bale (2015) suggest need to be investigated in parallel in order to gain a complete picture of domestic political processes and decision making on immigration policy, including policy traditions and path dependent processes, leadership, bureaucratic interests, potential vote ‘theft’ by the populist radical right (Odmalm and Super 2014), organised interest groups (Freeman 1995), the salience of different migrant groups, and public opinion.

As stated in the introduction, large movements of people across borders and refugee crises due to geo-political turmoil will remain at the top of political agendas of receiving states for the foreseeable future. The situation in Afghanistan and now most recently the conflict in Ukraine illustrates the importance of research into the socio-cognitive, institutional, and interactive factors that shape decision making on levels of provision and international cooperation for the protection of those fleeing persecution.

From a role theory perspective, the application of the policy narrative framework proved a useful methodological tool during data collection and to further structure the analysis of national role conceptions, their expression, selection, and enactment. Following Wehner (2020) and Wehner and Thies (2014), the narrative analysis proved particularly effective in identifying when new ideas were incorporated into existing practices and traditions, and when this resulted in reconceptualization, adaptation or change in national role conceptions. For instance, the approach highlighted the incorporation of refugee resettlement into the existing role conceptions in the British case, and the role conflict created by the promotion of an upper limit on refugees in the German case, which I argue bought about a reorientation towards the European level of migration governance and a renewed focus on finding European solutions to the ‘migration crisis’.

The concept of an ‘organised public’ also provided a valuable tool to disaggregate further the role of non-governmental organisations, interest groups and the public in vertical contestation processes over national role conceptions. In the German case, in particular, the role of a pro-immigration coalition consisting of rights-based and markets-driven actors played a significant role in Germany’s Willkommenskultur. Moreover, this analysis and the conceptualisation of an ‘organised public’ in combination with the narrative policy framework presented a new and
exciting avenue for further investigation into the influence of advocacy coalitions (see Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993 for a discussion of advocacy coalition framework) on role selection.

Finally, at the empirical level, the typology of national role conceptions in the UK and Germany in a new policy domain offers insight into the interpretation of domestic and international factors shaping migration policy decision-making. Following Breuning (1995) and Breuning and Pechenina (2020) it demonstrates the applicability of the role theory approach beyond the traditional boundaries of foreign and security policy to include intermestic public policy.

3. Challenges and limitations

The main limitations of this thesis corresponded overwhelmingly with the challenges identified and discussed in the introduction and methods chapters. Firstly, as anticipated, the theoretical framework enabled the analysis of decision-making that had international or foreign policy ramifications during the ‘migration crisis’. The focus was predominantly on the domestic sources of international action during a ‘migration crisis’. However, access policies, safe routes into protection, and humanitarian assistance only represent one aspect of provision for asylum seekers and refugees. As stated, it is through the increased salience in the ‘crisis’ context that migration policy was pushed up the political agenda and into the realm of public scrutiny and debate. Outwith the ‘crisis’ context, asylum policy is a highly technocratic policy area that overlaps with a myriad of welfare policies, integration policy, social policies, and refugee rights. Furthermore, political elites may not debate approaches and policy solutions in relation to international roles and responsibilities, nor necessarily communicate decisions to the public. From this perspective, a role theory analysis can only take us so far in understanding and explaining national asylum and refugee policy regimes.

Secondly, as envisaged, not all contestation over policy during the ‘migration crisis’ was role-based. Politicians in more senior positions were most likely to communicate their state’s policy behaviour and preferences in terms of national role conceptions and international responsibilities, whereas junior ministers tended to focus on specific policy measures and technical details. For example, the limited number of statements made in parliament by Richard Harrington, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Syrian Refugees (2015-2016), predominantly focused on responding to questions on specific aspects of the UK’s policies made by MPs during debates, such as funding for local authorities that had volunteered to participate in the resettlement programme, or housing for asylum seekers (see, for example, Hansard 2016, c. 175–177), as opposed to the UK’s role in the international crisis.
Indeed, in parliamentary debates, as soon as an exchange over asylum and refugee provision became technical or specific to an MPs constituency, the evocation of national role conceptions became infrequent, if not non-existent. Similarly, many parliamentarians remained relatively parochial and national in their concerns, concentrating on domestic issues relevant to their constituency, technical details regarding specific policy mechanisms, or highlighting the personal experiences and stories of asylum seekers in their constituency (see, for instance Kaarbo 2018 for a discussion on the parochiality of legislators). Even in cases where a policy approach would appear to have significant foreign policy ramifications, the formulation and contestation over policy was not always found to be role-based. An analysis of the Leave campaign’s treatment of immigration ahead of the Brexit referendum, in the summer of 2016, clearly illustrates this point.

Given the timing of the referendum on the UK’s membership of the European Union (Brexit referendum) and the explicit foreign policy dimension of immigration in this context, during the data collection stage of this thesis I conducted a brief analysis of the Leave campaign’s treatment of immigration issues from a role theory perspective. It is well established that EU free movement and immigration played a key role in the Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016 (see Dennison and Geddes 2018; Favell and Barbulescu 2018; Gietel-Basten 2016; Goodman and Narang 2019; Taggart and Szczersiak 2018). McCourt (2020) claims that the Brexit referendum was not about foreign policy or Britain’s role in the world but rather, that “[t]he Leave campaign was triumphant in the Brexit vote by playing on domestic issues and using the EU as a symbol of myriad – often contradictory or inaccurate – concerns, such as economic inequality and immigration” (McCourt 2020, 9). Whereas Martill and Rogstad (2019) argue that different foreign policy worldviews between the Leave and Remain campaigns formed important elements of the Brexit debate in the run-up to the referendum.

The salience of the European ‘migration crisis’, at the time (see Figure 3), supported the notion that the Leave campaign might plausibly debate immigration and asylum policy with reference to the ‘crisis’, and in terms of the UK’s role in the world. UKIP’s now infamous ‘breaking point’ poster, which was unveiled a week before the referendum, showing a queue of refugees trying to cross the border between Croatia and Slovenia in the summer of 2015, would suggest that the link between the ‘crisis’ and the Brexit debate was being made (Dennison and Geddes 2018). Moreover, UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, explicitly told Leave campaigners to focus on immigration in May 2016 (Farage 2016a).

Statements, speeches, and transcripts were gathered from the Vote Leave website to investigate the proposition. However, it very quickly became apparent that the Leave campaign’s framing of immigration concerns focused exclusively on social, economic and
welfare issues. Vote Leave focused on immigration in relation to domestic issues such as schools, housing, and hospitals, and the narrative was dominated by discourse on “taking back control” of immigration and borders from EU institutions and controlling numbers (see for instance speeches by Duncan Smith 2016; Farage 2016; Johnson 2016). For example, in a Vote Leave campaign statement, Gove, Johnson, and Stuart (2016) stated that “EU membership makes it impossible to control immigration”. This suggests that immigration was framed in relation to sovereignty concerns, supporting the analysis by Beasley, Kaarbo, and Oppermann (2021). However, the Vote Leave’s campaign material makes very little reference to immigration in terms of international roles, preferring instead to focus on sovereignty and “taking back control of immigration from EU institutions”. Ultimately, the empirical data did not support the proposition that argumentation on immigration in the campaign was role-based.

4. Future research

This thesis offers a unique contribution to knowledge by bringing together scholarship from foreign policy analysis, migration studies and public policy research through the application of role theory. In doing so, it has barely scraped the surface of possibilities and opportunities for further investigation of how these bodies of research could speak to one another. I am particularly interested in continuing to pursue two lines of enquiry: firstly, how foreign policy analysis tools can be applied to the analysis of sending and receiving states’ policies in the context of mass migration movements; secondly, continuing to explore how public policy approaches can contribute to the development of role theory. In addition, this research has highlighted four additional opportunities for further investigation, which could constitute a future research agenda.

4.1 Foreign policy and asylum roles

Having identified national role conceptions related to migration policy, this thesis has opened up the opportunity for further analysis into the interplay between a country’s national role conception(s) as they relate to migration policy and broader foreign policy roles and objectives.

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54 For a comprehensive study of the Leave and Remain campaigns, see Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley (2017).
The empirical analysis of UK parliamentary debates identified links made between asylum and refugee policy and EU internal security (e.g., the flight against terrorism and tackling trafficking and smuggling gangs), military intervention in Syria, and wider foreign policy objectives to stabilise Syria and the region. In the analysis of the German case, Merkel, in particular, linked the issue of asylum and refugee provision with broader European and national foreign policy objectives. Building on role theory research on master and auxiliary roles (Breuning and Pechenina 2020; Harnisch and Maull 2001; Maull 1990, 2000; Teles Fazendeiro 2021) and secondary studies (such as Strong’s (2018) analysis of UK debates on Syrian intervention) the analysis engaged in a discussion of how national role conceptions on responses to the ‘migration crisis’ sit within a comprehensive foreign policy role-set.

The starting point of this thesis was asylum and refugee policy responses to the ‘migration crisis’. The next step would be to compare these findings with an analysis of foreign policy aims and objectives related to the Syrian civil war. This could provide insight into how foreign policy objectives in the region influenced national role conceptions, role selection and interpretations of their enactment related to the ‘migration crisis’. For instance, we know that the protection rate for asylum seekers can vary depending on countries of origin. Whilst the myriad of variables that could account for this are extensive, and cover conditions in the sending and receiving states, including bureaucratic processes, access to documentation/evidence, diaspora, and family reunion rights, how foreign policy objectives related to the country of origin influenced the selection of national role conceptions in response to the crisis (and thereby levels of provision) warrants further investigation.

4.2 Levels of analysis

In keeping with most role theory literature, this thesis concentrated on analysing national role conceptions held by national-level political elites. However, the country case studies analysed highlight an opportunity for further investigation of the importance of the substate level and the impact of regional elites’ role conceptions on contestation processes and role selection. This would reflect the 'local turn' in migration studies and contribute to a small body of scholarship that has investigated the manifestation of national role conceptions at the substate, state, and supranational levels (Beasley and Kaarbo 2017; Beasley, Kaarbo, and Solomon-Strauss 2016; Koenig 2016). The importance of federal and substate structures in migration policy has been largely neglected in migration research, with a few notable exceptions (see, for example, Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero 2014; Laubenthal 2016; Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz 2018).
The analysis of the German case highlighted the strong position of Bavaria due to the CSU’s role as the junior coalition partner, its geographical location on the ‘front line’ of the ‘crisis’ response on Germany’s border with Austria, and the Minister President of Bavaria, Horst Seehofer’s, outspoken opposition of Merkel’s ‘open door’ policies. Significant variations in refugee recognition rates between German federal states during the European ‘migration crisis’ suggests a lack of coherence in the interpretation of provisions between the federal government (the Bund) and the federal states (Länder), as well as between different federal states. Moreover, one of the main political cleavages during debates on the ‘migration crisis’ was found to be between the Bund and the Länder (also confirmed by multiple interviewees, 2019). This supports the proposition that the German federal states could impact the expression and selection of national roles (Harnisch and Maull 2001). Moreover, it suggests the possibility of a subnational, federal state level to German national role conceptions and ‘layered egos’ (or ‘LEGOS’55) (Kaarbo and Cantir 2016, 184), which in turn supports the proposition of contested role conceptions between different regions and between the regional and national levels of government.

Within the UK case, Scotland’s approach to immigration also offers an intriguing opportunity to further unpack the state to examine the role of different nations and regions from a role theory perspective. Whilst immigration is a reserved matter, meaning that the devolved administration’s area of competence is limited to integration policies, EU citizens can vote in Scottish elections56. Moreover, refugees were extended the right to vote in Scottish elections in February 2020 (Scottish Government 2020). This in turn could impact the extent to which the Scottish National Party (SNP), the third largest party in Westminster during the ‘crisis’, engaged in contestation processes on migration issues. In fact, Scotland boasts a largely pro-immigration consensus across all mainstream parties in Holyrood, due in part to Scotland’s differentiated demographics, ‘brain drain’, and labour market needs (Boswell, Kyambi, and Smellie 2017). The extent to which Scotland’s aspirations to become a sovereign European state and to be seen as an ‘open’, ‘welcoming’ and ‘global nation’57 contributed to the

55 ‘LEGOS’ is a concept first coined by Kaarbo and Cantir (2016, 184) to refer to the subnational and supranational levels of national role conceptions implying “layered egos” or “LEGOS”.
56 At the time of writing, proposed changes following the UK’s exit from the EU state that all EU citizens who have been living in the UK since before the end of the Implementation Period, which ended on 31 December 2020, retain their local voting and candidacy rights, provided they retain lawful immigration status (Home Office 2021).
57 See, for example, a recent publication by the Scottish Government on international affairs, titled ‘Scotland: A Good Global Citizen - a Scottish perspective on climate, defence, security and external affairs’ (Scottish Government 2021).
A disproportionate number of asylum-seekers accepted by Scottish local authorities, provides an intriguing area for further examination.

This research also highlighted an opportunity for further interrogation of the role of leaders and leadership style in the role selection process during a perceived crisis. Wehner and Thies (2021) outline the theoretical and methodological opportunities that leadership studies can provide for the further development of role theory. They present a range of ways to examine leaders’ beliefs and characteristics to deepen our understanding of how leaders influence the role selection process. Moreover, Kesgin and Wehner (2021) bring together leadership trait analysis and role theory to examine how leaders’ traits and styles influence how they enacted specific roles in India. The impact of leaders on migration policy is a significantly unexplored area of research. However, in an analysis of the British Conservative party’s migration policies from 1960-2010, Bale and Partos (2014) suggest that leadership both in government and opposition may be the most important driver of policy change.

The data gathered on British national role conceptions evoked by the new cabinet under Prime Minister Theresa May (2016-2019) only covered a five-month period. Whilst no discernible difference in the dominant national role conceptions could be identified, the empirical data was restricted by the limited number of statements made by the new cabinet members, making a definitive analysis of the impact of individual post holders on national role conceptions, following the cabinet reshuffle, untenable. Moreover, the analysis of the German case revealed how isolated Chancellor Angela Merkel became in late 2015, in her advocacy of Germany remaining ‘open’ to asylum seekers. A Times article, in early 2015, described Theresa May as the “Angela Merkel of British politics. The daughter of a vicar, she is pragmatic, thorough, sensible and serious” (Sylvester and Thomson 2015). And yet both leaders’ approach to the ‘migration crisis’ could be interpreted as diametrically opposed. How did Merkel’s leadership style impact national role conceptions, their interpretation, and contestation processes during the European ‘migration crisis’ compared to David Cameron or Theresa May? A comparative analysis of leadership styles during the migration crisis in relation to the selection and enactment of national role conceptions could yield some intriguing insights. This represents an exciting new avenue of investigation for role theory and FPA research.

4.3 Temporal and spatial context

A logical next step following this project would be to apply the role theory framework to more case studies, both in the European context and beyond. The international response to the
Venezuelan refugee crisis since 2014 has been highly contentious. An analysis of national role conceptions expressed by political elites in neighbouring countries receiving high numbers of asylum seekers, in comparison to the United States, for example, may also provide some interesting insights. Moreover, an analysis of asylum and refugee policies from a role theoretical perspective in regions with disputed territories would tie in with the existing studies on the use of refugees as a form of foreign policy coercion and bargaining tool (see Greenhill 2010, 2016; Tsourapas 2019).

Within the European context, adopting a historical approach and comparing responses to different migration crises represents another opportunity. For example, the national role conceptions identified during the 2015/16 migrant ‘crisis’ could be compared with responses to the protection crisis in Europe in the late 1990s and early 2000s, because of the Yugoslav wars and unrest in the region. The most recent cases, which would provide highly relevant data for comparison are the refugee situations in Afghanistan and the Ukraine, and the European Union’s and/or member states’ responses within the context of the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum (proposed in 2020) and the Global Compact on Refugees framework, affirmed in December 2018.

4.4 Beyond asylum and refugee policy?

Finally, could the framework developed in this thesis be applied to other categories of migration? Using the conceptual and theoretical tools of foreign policy analysis, and role theory specifically, lent itself to the study of asylum and refugee policy during a perceived ‘migration crisis’, due to the intrinsic international relations dimension of the policy area. As outlined in Chapter I, and demonstrated throughout this research, decision-making on migration policy does not take place in a domestic vacuum but is affected, determined, and influenced (driven and constrained) by international legal norms, agreements, institutions, perceived push and pull factors, and internal and external expectations.

Globalisation and economic interdependence, which has significantly increased competition for ‘high-skilled’ migrants, suggests some scope for a role theory analysis of policy on labour migration, as well as the outsourcing of low-skilled labour to other countries. During the Brexit negotiations, for instance, we saw both ‘high-skilled’ and ‘low-skilled’ labour migration play an important role in national debates and international negotiations; international student visas, access to in-work benefits for EU nationals in the UK, as well as residency and settlement rights were utilised as bargaining instruments by both the EU and the UK. Further empirical cases that could provide interesting sites for analysis include the ongoing challenges of the
UK’s land border with an EU country - the Republic of Ireland - and representations of citizenship, borders, and responsibilities for British nationals in the Falklands, Gibraltar, and the EU, following Brexit.

These examples illustrate not only how FPA approaches could deepen our understanding of migration policies but also the need for further understanding of the role of migration and citizens in foreign policy negotiations and decision-making. This research avenue would build on the ground breaking book by Hill (2013) on foreign policy in multicultural societies, role theory scholarship on sovereignty roles (Beasley and Kaarbo 2017; Beasley, Kaarbo, and Solomon-Strauss 2016) and inter-country adoption (Breuning and Pechenina 2020), as well as research in migration studies on the use of forced migration as a foreign policy bargaining tool (Greenhill 2002, 2010) and labour migrants as political leverage (Tsourapas 2018).

Final thoughts…

In political science research, asylum and refugee policy is rarely linked with foreign policy considerations or research. This is mainly owed to the challenges of grappling with the complexities of the intermestic nature of the policy area and disciplinary boundaries between Comparative Politics, International Relations, public policy research, and empirically rich yet often theoretically poor case study research on migration policy and politics. This thesis set out to demonstrate the benefits of foreign policy analysis’ role theory for the study of asylum and refugee policy decision making during the European ‘migration crisis’. Through the application of role theory, I was able to interrogate the interplay between domestic and international ideational and structural factors as perceived by decision makers for the formulation and negotiation of policy interventions to address the ‘crisis’.

Despite identifying some limitations to the approach, as not all debates over asylum and refugee provision were found to be ‘role-based’, the analysis illustrates how vertical and horizontal contestation over the UK’s and Germany’s role in the ‘migration crisis’ influenced decision making, depending on the institutional setting. Ultimately, this thesis initiates a dialogue between foreign policy analysis (and role theory), migration studies, and public policy research, on migration policy decision-making and policy behaviour in times of crisis that considering the ongoing and developing migration and refugee crises around the world, represents an important and valuable research agenda going forward.
## Appendix

### Appendix 1. First time asylum applications in the EU (2015-2017)

First time asylum applications in the EU Member States (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of first-time applicants</th>
<th>Share in EU total (%)</th>
<th>Number of applicants per million inhabitants*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>562 680</td>
<td>1 255 640</td>
<td>+123%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>14 045</td>
<td>38 990</td>
<td>+178%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>10 805</td>
<td>20 165</td>
<td>+87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>1 235</td>
<td>+36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>14 535</td>
<td>20 825</td>
<td>+43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>173 945</td>
<td>441 800</td>
<td>+155%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>+54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1 440</td>
<td>3 270</td>
<td>+127%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>7 585</td>
<td>11 370</td>
<td>+50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>5 460</td>
<td>14 600</td>
<td>+167%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>58 845</td>
<td>70 570</td>
<td>+20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>-63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>63 655</td>
<td>83 245</td>
<td>+31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1 480</td>
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</tr>
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<td>275</td>
<td>-29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1 030</td>
<td>2 360</td>
<td>+129%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>41 215</td>
<td>174 435</td>
<td>+323%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>1 275</td>
<td>1 695</td>
<td>+33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>21 780</td>
<td>43 035</td>
<td>+98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>25 675</td>
<td>85 505</td>
<td>+233%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Poland</td>
<td>5 610</td>
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<td>+83%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>260</td>
<td>-27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>+18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>3 490</td>
<td>32 150</td>
<td>+821%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>74 980</td>
<td>156 110</td>
<td>+108%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>32 120</td>
<td>38 370</td>
<td>+19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>10 910</td>
<td>30 470</td>
<td>+179%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>21 940</td>
<td>38 060</td>
<td>+73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of first-time applicants is rounded to the nearest 5. Calculations are based on exact data.

* Inhabitants refer to the resident population at 1 January 2015.

- Not applicable

**First time asylum applications in the EU Member States (2016)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of first-time applicants</th>
<th>Share in EU total (%)</th>
<th>Number of applicants per million inhabitants*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1 204 280</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>38 990</td>
<td>14 250</td>
<td>-63%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>20 825</td>
<td>18 990</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1 235</td>
<td>1 200</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>20 825</td>
<td>6 055</td>
<td>-71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>441 800</td>
<td>722 265</td>
<td>+63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>3 270</td>
<td>2 235</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>11 370</td>
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<td>15 570</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>70 570</td>
<td>75 990</td>
<td>+8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>2 150</td>
<td>+1413%</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
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<td>Latvia</td>
<td>330</td>
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<td>410</td>
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<td>Luxembourg</td>
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<td>Hungary</td>
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<td>-84%</td>
</tr>
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<td>1 735</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>43 035</td>
<td>19 285</td>
<td>-55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>85 505</td>
<td>39 860</td>
<td>-53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>10 255</td>
<td>9 780</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>-18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1 255</td>
<td>1 855</td>
<td>+51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>1 265</td>
<td>+389%</td>
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<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>270</td>
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<td>-63%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Finland</td>
<td>32 150</td>
<td>5 275</td>
<td>-84%</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
<td>156 110</td>
<td>22 330</td>
<td>-86%</td>
</tr>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>39 720</td>
<td>38 290</td>
<td>-4%</td>
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<td>Iceland</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liechtenstein</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>30 470</td>
<td>3 240</td>
<td>-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>38 060</td>
<td>25 820</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of first-time applicants is rounded to the nearest 5. Calculations are based on exact data.

* Inhabitants refer to the resident population at 1 January 2016.
* : Data not available
  - Not applicable

### First time asylum applications in the EU Member States (2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of first-time applicants</th>
<th>Share in EU total (%)</th>
<th>Number of applicants per million inhabitants*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU</strong></td>
<td>1 206 120</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>1270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>14 250</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>18 990</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1 200</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>6 055</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>722 265</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>2402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2 315</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>49 875</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>5295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>15 570</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>76 790</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>1359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>2 150</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>121 185</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>2089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>2 840</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>5235</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>182</td>
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<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>415</td>
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<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>2 065</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>3931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>28 215</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>1 735</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>19 285</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>39 875</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2526</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>9 780</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
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<td>Romania</td>
<td>1 855</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>239</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1 265</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>696</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>5 275</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>22 330</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>38 290</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>1 100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liechtenstein</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>3 240</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>25 820</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of first-time applicants is rounded to the nearest 5. Calculations are based on exact data.
* Refers to the resident population on 1 January 2017.
: Data not available
- Not applicable
Source & dataset: Eurostat 2018 (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8754388/3-20032018-AP-EN.pdf/50c2b5a5-3e6a-4732-82d0-1caf244549e3)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Dates</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Supra-, trans-, international</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 Nov</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Italy’s Operation Mare Nostrum is replaced by Operation Triton conducted by Frontex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An estimated 650 migrants drown off the coast of Lampedusa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UK general election won by the Conservative party with a small majority (12 seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>European Agenda on Migration published by the European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EU Operation Sophia commences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Calais crisis’ worsens as estimated 2000 migrants try to enter Channel Tunnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 Aug</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Aug.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joint ministerial declaration on UK/French co-operation on managing migratory flows in Calais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Aug.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Aug.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Austrian authorities discover bodies of 71 migrants in truck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Aug.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Sept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chaotic scenes at Keleti station in Budapest, Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Sept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bulgarian police start arresting migrants in Sofia for illegally entering the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 – 03 Sept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image of drowned Syrian boy Alan Kurdi goes viral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-05 Sept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An estimated 1000 migrants depart Budapest on foot towards Austrian border and Germany (‘the March of Hope’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Sept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 Sept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>European Commission proposes emergency relocation mechanism for 120,000 refugees from Greece &amp; Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 Sept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Sept.</td>
<td>Germany reintroduces temporary border controls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Sept.</td>
<td>Austria reintroduces temporary border controls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Sept.</td>
<td>Hungary closes border with Serbia and erects 175 km barbwire fence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Sept.</td>
<td>European Parliament votes in support of Commission's proposal to relocate 120,000 refugees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Sept.</td>
<td>UNGA adopts New York Declaration at UN high-level summit on refugees and migrants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 Oct.</td>
<td>Informal emergency meeting of EU heads of state or government on migration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>Italy opens first hotspot on Lampedusa (11 across Greece &amp; Italy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Oct.</td>
<td>Sweden agrees stricter asylum laws &amp; informs European Commission it cannot fulfil relocation commitments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Oct.</td>
<td>Publication of first EU-Turkey joint action plan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Oct.</td>
<td>European Parliament votes in support of the Commission's proposal to relocate 120,000 refugees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Oct.</td>
<td>Slovak officials file lawsuit at ECJ against EU redistribution of 160,000 refugees from Italy &amp; Greece</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13–14 Nov</td>
<td>Paris terror attacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Nov.</td>
<td>Dubs Amendment debates</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Nov.</td>
<td>Sweden tightens rules for Syrian asylum seekers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec</td>
<td>Sweden tightens rules for Syrian asylum seekers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>European Council refugee summit in Brussels</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Feb.</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Feb.</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 March</td>
<td>Slovakia &amp; Hungary file lawsuit at ECJ against EU redistribution of 160,000 refugees from Italy &amp; Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 March</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
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<td>17 March</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
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<td>16 June</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
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<td>23 June</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 July</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16 July</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
<td></td>
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<td>19 July</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
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<td>22 July</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
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<td>24 July</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
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<td>21 Oct.</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
<td></td>
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<td>24 Oct.</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19 Dec.</td>
<td>Leaders’ meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: common press conference by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, and Antonio Guterres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3. Interviews

Thangam Debbonaire MP

Lord Alfred Dubs

Don Flynn
Former Director of the Migration Rights Network (MRN). Interviewed on 20th February 2019. London.

Maurice Wren

Official

Official

Dominik Bartsch
Director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in Germany. Interviewed on 22nd October 2019. Berlin.

Ulla Jelpke MdB
Member of the Left Party (Die Linke) and speaker on domestic policy for the Left Party’s parliamentary faction. Interviewed on 24th October 2019. Berlin.

Ulrich Lilie
President of Diakonie Germany, the charitable organization of the protestant churches in Germany. Interviewed on 22nd October 2019. Berlin.

Aydan Özoğuz MdB
Member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Minister of State for Migration, Refugees, and Integration (2013-2018). Interviewed on 24th October 2019. Berlin.

Filiz Polat MdB
Member of the Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and speaker on migration policy for the Green Party’s parliamentary faction. Interviewed on 24th October 2019. Berlin.

Representative
German Red Cross. Interviewed on 24th October 2019. Berlin.

Representative

Representative
Appendix 4. Sample of Indicative Interview Questions

The following offers an example of the indicative questions provided in advance of interviews. Questions were informed by an extensive reading of the secondary literature and role theory and designed to gather additional data on key events to provide further contextual data to the documentary and content analysis. The aim was to ascertain the interviewee’s recollection, perception, and interpretation of policy developments during the timeframe under investigation. The questions were grouped to address three main areas: 1) key determinants of policy decision-making; 2) policy responses to the European migrant crisis and refugee crisis; 3) the states’ role in the international asylum and refugee system. Given the semi-structured format of the interviews, these questions were not asked in order and in most instances not all questions were explicitly posed. They purely provided a guide for both the interviewer and interview partners. This notwithstanding, in all cases all three areas were discussed as and when key events were recalled by the interviewee.

Indicative Questions

My research investigates the variation in provision for asylum seekers and refugees among European countries. Utilising the UK and Germany as case studies, it examines policy responses to the Syrian refugee crisis. The analysis focuses on decision makers’ perceptions of domestic and international pressures, and the perceived role their countries ‘should’ play, as a means to understand and explain variations in policy. The research is largely qualitative, so I am keen to gain insight from experts and policy makers involved in the decision-making process.

1. How would you describe the UK’s asylum and refugee regime (relative ‘openness’ and ‘restrictiveness’), compared with other European countries?
2. Which factors are most significant in shaping the UK’s asylum and refugee policies?
3. Who are the key actors effecting policy decision-making?
4. What are the main constraints on asylum and refugee policy decision-making?
5. What role does the APPG for Refugees play?
6. Are there areas of cross-party consensus regarding asylum and refugee policy? Are their areas of disagreement?
7. To what extent was there a change in asylum and refugee policy approach in 2015? If we can observe a shift in approach, what were the main changes?
8. Have these measures been rolled-back since or can we observe a lasting policy legacy?
9. What effects asylum and refugee policy change?
10. During Parliamentary debates in 2015/16 both the Government and the Opposition made frequent reference to British values, responsibilities, identity and history (such as the UK’s role in the Kindertransport). To what extent does rhetoric on British identity and history influence policy decision-making?
11. How would you describe the UK’s role in the international refugee protection system?
12. Is asylum and refugee policy a domestic issue or does it overlap with foreign policy interests?
13. Does the UK’s relationship with its neighbours (such as France), the EU or third countries, effect the UK’s asylum policies or policy responses to the ‘crisis’?
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