**Asylum Seekers in the EU Welfare States: Obtaining Political Identities as Non-Citizens in Germany, Britain, and Greece**

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**Abstract**

The formation of the European Union (EU), through the 1992 Treat of Maastricht, created economic cooperation between most European countries. Economic and monetary pillars have been the main forces towards integration amongst the participating states in the EU. However, the impact of globalization has forced this supranational entity to assess whether it is capable of expanding its social policies, which has been an area that has been overshadowed by the economic and monetary pillars. This paper responds to that notion by examining the EU policy reactions to the influx of asylum seekers. Are member states placing strong restrictive policies to deter asylum seekers from entering their borders? If so, are these policies justified based on the assumption that the flux of immigrants places a strain on welfare resources? The EU states have adopted a give-and-take practice. More specifically, the EU lacks in a strong and fair integration process for non-EU citizens. The EU and its member states have created an exclusionary club in which non-citizens, such as asylum seekers, are not given the same rights as other migrants. Ultimately, how do non-citizens achieve the same statuses as recognized citizens if they are deterred from gaining access even before they enter the host country? Previous literature and studies on migration have focused primarily on the asylum application process and on the unfair treatment of asylum seekers entering member state borders. This paper seeks to add to the current literature by examining the weak governing force of the EU to provide a unilateral policy on asylum. At this point, the lack of a EU policy results in a chaotic basket of varying member state policies. An examination is made to investigate whether three member states—Germany, the United Kingdom, and Greece—increase or decrease political access to asylum seekers. This is operationalized in terms of the level of social welfare programs provided to asylum seekers as opposed to national citizens. In addition, the paper applies on the theoretical framework provided by cosmopolitan democracy to explain whether there is justification for asylum seekers to be given rights as citizens even though they lack the political identification of full citizenship.

**Introduction**

The European Union (EU) was created in 1993, under the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, for the purposes of enhancing political and legal relationships between member states and their citizens. In doing so member states sought to unify economic, social, and monetary policies amongst the signatories of the treaty (Maastricht Treaty 1992, Article B). Essentially, the Maastricht Treaty initiated the steps to politically legitimizing a supranational entity, whose authority theoretically extends beyond the powers of nation states in the EU. One of the benefits of being a participating member is having the capability to substantially expand social and economic presence in the international arena. Also, smaller countries would now have an opportunity to compete in the global market. Thus assuming, the whole is stronger than its individual parts. Ideologically, the EU promotes the active political involvement of citizens in each state. Practically, though, enforcement of EU policies still remains relatively weak, thus, asking whether this integration is successful in expanding the notion of liberal democracy.

Expanding authority from a nation state to a supranational entity provides webs of complexities for implementing policies and for enforcing regulations. Although the EU has created legal agreements, there is a degree of uncertainty in the efficacy of universalizing policies at the member state level. The Maastricht treaty, the 1985 Schengen Accords, the 1990 Dublin Convention, the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam and the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon leave gapping holes in how and to what degree each member state is to adhere to the rules set by the EU. This research paper is not directly concerned with the discussion on the process of creating and enforcing policies in the European Union. Instead, the paper will reframe the issue of the lax authority of the EU over its members around the movement of asylum seekers. By doing so, the framework of analysis allows this paper to respond to the lack of research on the effects of migrating asylum seekers on national social welfare programs, citizenship statuses, and political participation.

Since the EU sets limiting and ambiguous instructions for member states to deal with asylum policies, this paper plans on discussing the complicated issue of asylum seekers. Ultimately, the decentralized structure of the EU forces participating countries to determine what happens once seekers enter their borders. Due to the fact that some nation states have stronger influence over those policies, they make it more difficult for asylum seekers to obtain refugee status. Eiko Thielemann and Nadine El-Enany (2010) posit whether member states are building a “Fortress Europe” to place strong restrictive policies to deter migration from their borders. In that, member states make it difficult for non-EU citizens to be granted citizenship because the countries have to balance the strain of additional migrants on welfare service resources. Although, in comparison to recognized citizens, asylum seekers are not given a full package of social programs. The costs attached to expanding welfare benefits might be enough to deter states from accepting more migrants. Based on the assumptions of global democracy, the members of the European Union strive to lower the barriers for individuals to obtain political and social rights. However, access to such rights is limited to citizens and certain types of migrants. The paper asks, “under what conditions should the European Union or member states continue to provide welfare program assistance to asylum seekers, even though asylum seekers are non-citizens who hold no political status or the right to receive social protection from host countries?”

Has the unification of member states in the European Union implied a conception of universal citizenship to all individuals in Europe? Premised around the notion of citizenship, part of this paper seeks to study whether there are limitations to current democratic theories that do not consider the situation of asylum. Asylum seekers, who differ from refugees, are in the nomadic stage of citizenship. When waiting for their applications to process, asylum seekers are neither recognized as citizens of the host country nor do they wish to be identified as citizens of their country of origin. Asylum seekers do not have any ties to any national government. Individuals applying for refugee status are not yet authorized citizens and as such are not given the same access to social benefits. Seeking refugee into host countries, these individuals have little option but to wait while a country decides to grant or reject asylum. Theoretically, as countries practicing liberalism and democracy, the EU member states should be open to provide ease of access to citizenship for all types of migrants. In contrast, national citizens believe there are justifiable reasons to place restrictive limitations on awarding political and social aid to asylum seekers, such as resource allocation and nationalistic identity (Boswell 2000, 538). The first section of the paper examines the decentralized structure of EU policies on asylum. The second section examines the contention between member states to take responsibility of asylum policy. The third section measures whether Germany, the United Kingdom, and Greece caters its asylum policies to the level of social spending on welfare benefits. Finally, the last section questions whether the current democratic theory is adequate in dealing with asylum seekers.

*Key Definitions*

The paper has three important components: the institutions of the EU, the asylum seekers, and the social welfare state. In answering the research question, specific definitions must be provided in order to accurately understand the purpose of this paper.

First, the reason why the EU structure is complex is because many institutional bodies have to respond to not only member states but the citizens of those states as well. The levels of distributive authority are vast and complicated. The European Council, with the president of the Council and Commission and the heads of national governments, is the entity that sets the agenda for the EU. The three bodies that hold the power to create and change legislation are: (1) the European Parliament, whose members, or MEPs, are elected by citizens and which passes European laws and works with the other legislative bodies; (2) the Council of the European Union, which signs treaties with non-EU countries and deals with economic, foreign and defense policies; and (3) the European Commission, which proposes new laws and regulates EU legislation. Often working with the European Commission, the Court of Justice interprets EU law and resolves conflicts between members and institutions involving EU legislation (Europa 2011).

Second, a clarification between refugees and asylum seekers is needed to better understand the reason as to why both groups are given different supplements of aid by host countries. Although similar, both types of groups are distinguished by the recognition of political status. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is an individual “owing 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 to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”, and an asylum seeker is an individual who claims, but who has not been determined by the host country as a refugee (the Refugee Convention 1951, Article I and Protocol 1967). Host countries acknowledge refugees based upon political status in their country of origin and thus provide refugees with the similar rights as national citizens—status is the opposite for asylum seekers.

Third, a “welfare state” is partially distinguished in terms of programs provided by the national government to promote social protection for citizens in forms of social assistance and services such as education, housing, insurance (i.e. health care, unemployment, etc.), and financial support (i.e. low-income vouchers) (Pestieau 2006, 4). That is, a goal of the welfare state is to decrease levels of poverty and income inequality by aiding citizens in need through the distribution of social benefits. A problem with this definition is that the types of welfare programs vary from state to state. Thus, a closer examination of particular welfare states can narrow the definition. This paper uses an analysis of three countries based on three levels of welfare spending: high—Germany, medium—the United Kingdom, and low—Greece (Pestieau 2006, 25). Further discussion on the importance of these three countries will be explained in the “methodology” section.

**The Institutional Problem**

*The EU, Member States, and Citizenship*

Why have EU member states not granted asylum seekers similar citizenship statuses and rights as recognized refugees? The literature maps out three factors in examining the relationship between welfare states, asylum seekers, the European Union and barriers to democratic citizenship: (1) conflicting interpretation of decentralized asylum legislation between the EU and nation states, (2) burden-sharing responsibilities in response to the flow of asylum seekers amongst the member states, and (3) varying country policies on welfare services provided to asylum applicants. These three points suggest the reasons why there are deficiencies in EU legislation in protecting asylum seekers. In the push-and-pull struggle for political power between the EU and its members, an amalgamation of asylum policies has become second priority. The question is, should they become more of a priority? In some instances, the EU relies on non-EU international organizations, such as the United Nation (UN), to establish basic foundations in acknowledging the movement of refugees and asylum seekers. One example is the non-refoulement clause, which protects asylum seekers from being deported and put back in harms way in their country of origin (Boswell 2000, 539). However, countries could pass along migrants to another member states because the non-refoulement clause does not state if particular host countries need to keep the asylum seekers. Nevertheless, the EU has made attempts to address the topic of migration of asylum seekers in several agreements with member states. For instance, Article 63 of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) lies out minimum requirements and criteria from which member states are to base their decisions regarding asylum applicants (Gilbert 2004, 969). Although this is a primary step in establishing EU related initiatives, decision-making still lies in the hands of the state. This example is one the problems facing EU treaties—the presence of a strong supranational power appears to be quite invisible and powerless.

*Inconsistencies in EU Legislation*

The EU has attempted to democratize countries throughout Europe by uniting nation states under a political, economic, and legal umbrella. Unfortunately, the expanding concern over migration policies has put a strain on that umbrella. If the EU and its members do not act diligently, then the EU might lose its already decentralized authoritative powers. The complexity in achieving cohesion between the states and the EU explains why the EU zone has not been able to reach a consensus on unifying political rights to asylum seekers. Alice Bloch and Carl Levy (1999) point to the four EU treaties, which shed light on partial failures of the EU to successfully integrate policies: the Schengen Agreement, the Dublin Convention, Maastricht Treaty, and the Treaty of Amsterdam. Bloch and Levy state that the Schengen Accord essentially shifts power to the nation state in determining issues of refugee status, rights and the free movement of individuals. Throughout the EU, refugees were able to move within the territories defined in the Schengen Accord just as long as they notified authorities in the state. But Schengen did not provide the same freedom of movement to asylum seekers (Bloch and Levy 24).

A general consent between scholars is that the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam pushed the Schengen Accords one step forward in transferring some policies over immigration, refugees, and asylum from member states to the institutions of the EU. Article 63 of the treaty provides a harmonization of EU-wide standards for all nation states to follow; as opposed to the decision-making authority held by varying states (Gilbert 2004, 969). Although Channe Lindstrom (2005) adds that the Amsterdam treaty was an important stepping stone, Lindstrom does not forget that many other directives have been formed with no strong supranational policy to protect asylum seekers (599). Will the centralization of migrant policies force nation states to provide more protection to asylum applicants? Eiko Thielemann and Nadine El-Enany (2010) believe that the opposite holds some weight. The scholars suggest the more the member states debate on asylum refugee policies, the higher likelihood that the support towards “Fortress Europe” will gain strength (209). In fact, Willem Maas (2008) points to the fact that while the Amsterdam Treaty extended citizenship to EU citizens, it also decreased the chances for non-EU citizens to become citizens. This makes it more difficult for asylum seekers to gain access to citizenship and to achieve political power (589). The EU and its member states will build higher walls of restriction. One reason for this blockade is due to nation states wanting to shift the burden of asylum.

**The Blame Game – How Member States Fail to Take Responsibility**

*Disputes Between the Member States*

Burden sharing occurs when heavily populated states, to which refugees flock, demand that the cost associated with providing services for migrants be proportionately distributed between all members of the EU. Burdening sharing is allowed since nation states have more authority over its own policies than does the EU over the states. Burden sharing not only diminishes consensus towards EU harmonization, but the dilemma also places the desire of applicants to reach political status as a secondary priority. Some EU countries have higher concentrations of asylum seekers because of a variety of reasons such as location and costs. The denser countries, where a majority of asylum seekers apply for refugee status, most likely seek to redirect the path of migrants to other countries by enforcing stronger policies restricting the acceptance of asylum applications. Member states want to limit the number of applicants because of the capacity of national social policies. Simply put, many high burden countries believe that the cost of providing for asylum seekers decreases the effectiveness of social welfare program for their citizens. The governments of member states decide the path of its social policies and, as such, define who can become citizens and which protections are granted to such citizens. Asylum seekers, unlike refugees, are not given citizenship during the application process, so nation states are not necessarily forced to provide entitlements to welfare assistance (Kettunen and Wolff 2011, 152). Furthermore, Stein Kuhnle (2010) believes that not only will national institutions and governments be opposed to increased political rights for asylum seekers but not all citizens of member states will support EU integration strategies if national interests are not first recognized. For example, citizens might agree with the state to provide additional assistance to asylum seekers only if the needs and expectations of citizens are first met. Using a comparative approach to analyze the varying national welfare programs will allow the reader to better see the complexities of integrating a regional policy (101).

Thielemann develops three classifications leading to burden sharing in the EU over the past 15 years: (1) access control policy, (2) determination procedures, and (3) integration policy. Under all three categories, Thielemann demonstrates that countries are changing the rules for asylum by implementing strict requirements, which make it more difficult for applicants to be treated fairly. For example, one area under “access control policy” adds to the provisions of “safe third country”. This means, if an individual seeking asylum wants to relocate to country A, but passes through another safe country B, then country A might not have to be required to grant asylum since the individual could have sought asylum in the previous safe country (Thielemann 55). As a result of the safe third country rule, the decision of where to live and travel is taken directly out of the hands of asylum seekers. Burden sharing places heavily emphasis on states to weigh the costs and benefits of accepting asylum seekers. That is, countries have to determine whether countries with higher applicants should have to sacrifice their resources for the entire EU. Nadine El-Enany (2010) joins Thielemann by suggesting as separate entities, the member states do practice strong restrictive policies on asylum. But as a whole, the EU has been more positive towards asylum migrants (216). El-Enany focuses on the entirety of the EU, but the fact remains that member states hold the authority to regulate asylum policy. Even in the political sphere of the entire EU, asylum seekers are not given the opportunity to find citizenship. How are refugees who want asylum supposed to gain access to national rights if member states are preconditioned to exclude them even prior to entering the host country?

*Varying Member State Citizenship Policies to Asylum Seekers*

Finally, decentralization within the EU has given rise to the deterioration of policy cohesion on the issue of asylum seeking. As stated previously, national policies decide the processes of applicants well before they enter borders. The reason for this inconsistence and lack of supranational regulation is because each state stands to gain or lose from the flow of migrants. Whether there are high or low numbers of asylum seekers, member states have to calculate the effects those numbers will have on social welfare programs on existing citizens. If citizens are dissatisfied with the way in which the national government is handling programs then that could send a ripple effect extending to the EU institutions. The point to make here is that only legitimate citizens are able to actively participate in political agendas. The right to citizenship is exclusive and not universal (Mass 584). Categorization of migrants is interesting because whichever status is given to an individual establishes the level of rights provided by national governments (Geddes 2003, 153). In this form, membership in the EU becomes analogous to political access. Refugees are essentially given the same status as citizens. However, asylum seekers are not given the right to citizenship during the application process and as such are not provided with equal social protections. The degree to which welfare benefits are given varies state by state in accordance to their national legislations. As such, the study seeks to examine individual states to analyze how some member states respond to asylum policies. The case studies of EU states will demonstrate the conflict between the distribution of welfare programs and the process of handling non-citizens.

**Comparative Case Studies**

*Units of Analysis*

Thus far, the paper has described the failure of both the EU institutions and the member states to create a regional policy on dealing with asylum seekers. The lack of a strong enforcement mechanism has allowed the member states to pick and choose their own policies on how to handle asylum applications. Also, member states dictate the types of social benefits provided for asylum seekers and refugees—the former usually not given equal protection. The paper has not yet discussed the importance of analyzing welfare states. More so, why have asylum seekers chosen to apply to those states in large numbers? Welfare states, as stated earlier, provide benefits and protections for citizens who are economically, socially, or politically marginalized. Measuring the conditions under which an asylum seeker would choose a particular country to enter would require an extensive amount of work beyond what this paper seeks to explain. For that reason, welfare state and asylum seekers will be operationalized into analyzing specific member state asylum policies and laws and data on the expenditures of social benefits and protections, the number of asylum applicants (total and acceptance). The three member states—Germany, the United Kingdom, and Greece—are randomly chosen based on their level of expenditure of social benefits.

*Expenditures on Social Benefits (%GDP) and the Number of Asylum Applicants (Total and Positive Decisions)*

Appendix A provides data from 2000 to 2009 on the total expenditure spent on social benefits. Social benefits are composed of protection for family and children, unemployment, old age, retirement, disability, and housing (Eurostat). According to the 2009 data on expenditures, in terms of Euro per inhabitant and % of GDP), Germany (high level) spent the most on social benefits, followed by the UK (medium level), and then Greece (low level), which statistically supports the reason why the member states are chosen as case studies. Appendix B provides data from 2009 on the total number of asylum application, including positive decisions, in Germany, the UK, and Greece. In terms of percentages, Germany had the highest number of positive decisions at 35.97%, followed by the UK at 27.86%, and then Greece at 1.27%. Once again, the percentage of positive decisions, in terms of total asylum application, relatively parallels the percentage of expenditures on social benefits. Purely based on the data, it appears that high spending on social benefits does not directly correlate to a reduction of approved applications. On the contrary, the data purposes that high spending is associated to high positive decisions on applications. Unfortunately, the acceptance of applications does not explain how or why asylum seekers are treated unfairly in host countries. The following sections will discuss the legislation and treatment of asylum seekers in the various countries.

*Centers and Accommodations for Asylum Seekers*

According to Matthia Liedtke (2002), once refugees land in Germany they must follow procedural instructions on formal applications and go through a variety of police checks, which are delegated to the Federal Offices in the German States called Landers. Only once the background is confirmed will applicants be transferred to a detention living space, which asylum seekers do not choose, made by the availability of space in Landers. Once established, applicants have limited sources in welfare payments (486). Local authorities and agencies in limiting areas manage housing for asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. Even then, Sales notes that housing conditions and location create a hostile environment from which asylum seekers return to detention centers (465). A 1991 Greek Law 1975 promises the creation of centers for asylum seekers and refugees. However, the Health and Social Welfare Ministry had only one center until 1997, which meant that the center could not possibly accommodate for the increase in asylum applications (Sitaropoulos 442). It was only when Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) stepped in were there additional centers (Sitaropoulos 450).

*Legislation*

Most pieces of legislation or policy passed in these countries have caused more harm than good for asylum seekers. Similar to Germany, the United Kingdom (UK) has created a social exclusionary environment for asylum seekers. The Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996 removes responsibility and authority at the national government to local officials in determining how to house and distribute vouchers. The 1996 law also took away important benefits to asylum seekers (Sales 2002, 462). UK Continuing national legislation in 1999 seek to substantially decrease the rights of asylum seekers such as the elimination of the voucher program. A Greek Presidential Decree 189 in 1998 states that an asylum seeker, who is under current residence of a center, cannot work since the state is under the assumption that the asylum seeker is provided with necessary assistance in the center.

*Social Benefits, or Lack Thereof*

Germany holds a strong dependency between the state and its citizens. As such, asylum seekers have little means to achieve social or labor rights (Liedtke 480). Individuals are given enough for subsistence but not accounted for other supplementary needs. The Asylum Seekers Benefits Act of 1993 further reduces the amount of financial benefits of asylum seekers to 20% less than a needy citizen (Liedtke 486). Payments, in forms of vouchers, are also given to asylum seekers but are specified to a limited number of available locations. So, applicants are allotted a certain area in which they can use their vouchers. Even with vouchers, asylum seekers, who arrived after May 15, 1997, are only allowed to work one year after they first apply for refugee status. Those who are able to find jobs often work at low-skilled and low-paying occupations (Liedtke 491).

In terms of employment, applicants in the UK are not allowed to work for the first six months in the UK and are additionally harmed by the decrease in cash benefits and assistance. Vouchers, like in Germany, restrict where asylum seekers are able to purchase goods (Sales 464). The vouchers act like an identification card when asylum seekers pay goods; in that, citizens and grocery store owners might discriminate when they discover that individuals use vouchers as forms of payment. This form of discrimination extends to health care and educational institution when professionals are hesitant to help asylum seekers (Sales 465).

In comparison to the other two states, Greece has the least developed welfare programs for citizens and has the highest level of social inequality (Sitaropoulos 438). If Greece is reluctant to provide its own citizens with adequate programs for welfare needs, then it can be assumed that asylum seekers and refugees will be overlooked in being provided with similar benefits. Social protection mainly includes benefits for families, children, the old, and people with special needs and does not focus on providing benefits for situations of poverty (440). A majority of financial assistance is provided by the NGOs and not the state (Sitaropoulos 445). Greece has failed to take control of asylum policy. This is an example of what Sitaropoulos labels the backwardness of Greece social policies. In fact, a 1998 Greek Law 2646 established the Department for the Advancement of Volunteering, which has taking some control over social welfare development (Sitaropoulos 440).

*So What?*

Literature on specific treatment of asylum seekers is extensive. It is not the purpose of this paper to provide such a description. The previously mentioned notes on Germany, the UK, and Greece is meant be used as a reference for further research in the area of asylum policy. From the descriptions of the three countries, Greece has the appearance of lacking social benefits for both its citizens and asylum seekers. However, scholars are hard pressed to not correlate the expenditures of social benefit with the degree to which countries care for its citizens. According to Sitaropoulos, most Southern European states, such as Spain and Greece, are heavily family-oriented. In that sense, spending on social program might be low due to the fact that families take care of each other before they turn to governmental programs (439). Following that line of thought, there are many historical, cultural and social factors that account for the way in which each country has established their welfare system. That discussion is reserved for a different paper.

**Theoretical Framework – Is Liberal Universal Democracy Sufficient?**

Christina Boswell suggests the inequality of benefits provided by different states demonstrates the depreciation of what Boswell calls the “liberal universalist” model.

*A Solution: Liberal Universalist model?*

In the liberal universalist model, Boswell suggests the original plans of the European Union has its roots in liberal democracy and universal human rights. The EU was created for lowering barriers between institutions, governments, and citizens of EU member states. Boswell derives “liberal” from the non-refoulement protection of refugees not being forced back to countries that harmfully threaten basic individual liberties. And “universalist” comes from the fact that liberalism applies to any individual (539). Although this model might have been adequate in the past, the growing containment in the flow of migrant leads to question whether liberal universalism can be sustained. That is, current policies on the restrictions on asylum applications shift the notion of citizenship from all of Europe to individuals within the EU (538). There are two factors as to why the liberal universalist model might not function well in the current EU: (1) economic strength and (2) legitimacy of individuals seeking asylum.

In the face of economic strain and political imbalance, liberal democratic states wonder whether they should postpone duties to protect refugees in order to protect national citizens. More specifically, member states, under the pressure of EU legislation and institutions, must create a method of balancing economic globalization, welfare resources, and migration. Member states’ citizens could push to have the needs of their government first and the needs of the EU and migrants placed second. Some suggest that the current economic deterioration in the EU will prove to be a hindrance on continual improvements in the integration of EU social policies. Scholars note that states will also have to deal with specific national concerns, such as demographic change before it can fully agree on the incorporation of EU social policies (Kuhnle 2010, 104). The second reason for hesitation lies in the fact that some asylum seekers are not truthful on applications. If a government fears individual are abusing the welfare system, then it will cut off the programs to those abusing the system. Member states are aware of the “free-rider problem” in which some migrants, who do not fall under the criteria of a refugee, abuse the asylum system by free loading from the state’s welfare programs during the application process. By imposing strict barriers, states hope to deter the free riders, but at the same time, legitimate asylum seekers are also thrown aside as a consequence. By limiting employment and providing vouchers, member states are blatantly confining asylum seekers to particular locations in which they can live. According to Boswell, this example is a clear violation to the original intent of the liberal universalist model (553). Migrants, asylum seekers or otherwise, who are honest with their applications also suffer under the restrictions placed by nation states. In this scenario, it is a lose-lose situation for any non-citizen, regardless of whether he or she qualifies for protection as bona fide asylum seekers. These two examples reveal the inadequacies of Boswell’s model because liberal universalist does not seem feasible for universal citizenship to all individuals. Instead, there needs to be a stronger theory holds the key to granting all categories of migrant citizenship and entrance to the political system.

What happens to access to citizenship once asylum seekers enter the host country. The current literature on asylum seekers seems to be lacking in explaining how and why those types of refugees cannot achieve political identities in nation states. Also, most of the literature has been focused on citizenship rights of immigration and minorities; but there has not been much written on the impact of social welfare programs on granting asylum to migrants. Therefore, the study plans to discover how the EU and member sates determine when asylum seekers are given state assisted social welfare protections, even though asylum seekers are not identified as national citizens. It is a give-and-take game in which nation states provide benefits but, at the same, do not grant complete rights. By creating a study to evaluate the dynamics of social welfare states in the EU, the proposal hopes to add to current the literature.

*A Better Solution: Cosmopolitan Democracy Model?*

Boswell has debated whether the liberal universalist model can be used in the current condition of the EU regarding asylum policies. As member states continue to build walls between non-citizens and the EU institutions, liberal universalism degrades in its effectiveness for providing all citizens basic rights. The study wishes to add a different theoretical framework in providing a different perspective on how asylum seekers can gain citizenship, not just at the member state level, but globally. Democracy, in the EU, can be viewed as being contained within the lines of state boundaries. This limits individual’s access to democracy outside the realm of the citizenship in a particular state. As such, the basic concept behind “Cosmopolitan Democracy” is to enhance democracy “within, beyond, and among” states (Archibugi 2004, 438). In that, cosmopolitan democracy diminishes national identity and integrates a transnational decision-making process. Political autonomy at the state level is weakened. The theory, thus, blurs the nation state lines to the point at which all citizens are participants in the political sphere. Individuals will no longer be seen as national citizens, but rather will be granted global citizenship. Cosmopolitan democracy inevitably allows any individual to participate in political decisions that affect individual lives. The theory is applicable in the proposed study for two reasons: (1) cosmopolitan democracy, at a regional level, is loosely applied to the case in the European Union; and (2) asylum seekers, as stated previously, are not citizens of any state. But could cosmopolitan democracy be practically implemented in a global arena? Can all citizens become global citizens of democracy and through democratization?

*The EU – An Example of Cosmopolitan Democracy?*

Pierre Hassner discusses the problems of the EU integrating refugees as citizens. Due to the complexities of self-national interests, the nations of the European Union have not adequately decided on a policy of placement for refugees. Hassner (1998) suggests that because the EU has not been solidly structured into a uniform federation, it would be difficult to determine an authority to select and distribute refugees. However, the Commission of the European Union has proposed a common immigration policy; one that would help refugees obtain permanent residency towards citizenship (284). Also, nation states that have accepted large numbers of refugees in the EU question whether there will be a system to evenly distribute refugees or costs. (Hassner 284). They have agreed on passing refugees into the safety net of third countries. But this will not produce smooth integration of refugees, for third countries have larger problems to handle. As such, the nations in the European Union prioritize their own national interests first, then that of the Union, and eventually that of other citizens and human rights (Hassner 285). Due to its complexities, cosmopolitan democracy has to proceed in steps: first at the local, second at regional and eventually at the global level.

*Global Citizenship*

This leads to the second argument for cosmopolitan democracy: that the European Union is already a loose example of how the theory can be applied. This study basis its framework in cosmopolitan democracy because the theory gives political authority and identity to non-citizens who do not hold such power. Since the EU is a regional expansion of cosmopolitan democracy, it has yet to be a true example of a practicality aspect of the theory. However, Baogang He (2002) points to the potential successes of the EU as a stage before reaching global democracy. He suggests in order for democracy to survive it needs to extend beyond specific communities. As example, the EU has emerged to become an entity that accepts multiple citizenships amongst its member states (He 51). The free movement of citizens in the EU allows any individual who has citizenship in any member state to travel freely within the EU. This is an example of cosmopolitan democracy because there is an overlapping of boundaries and there are no longer definitive borders between citizens (He 53). Due to the fact that the freedom of movement only applies to citizens, asylum seekers and some categories of refugees are not included. As such, cosmopolitan democracy needs to go beyond the EU into global territories. At the global level, asylum seekers will be seen as citizens and will be given rights just like any other citizens. However, an implication of cosmopolitan democracy is that the distance between political authorities and political citizens seems to increase as more individuals become members of the community. If citizenship reaches the global level, then there will be great limitations placed on political institutions to maintain such order. This is similar to the problem at the regional level—where the member states of the EU are juggling the responsibility of social program to its citizens and that of non-citizens.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate whether asylum seeker applications are influenced by the policies of EU welfare states. In effect, asylum seekers primarily desire to be granted citizenship in order to establish some degree of political identity. Prior to refugee status, asylum seekers do not wish to hold any link to the political system of their national country of origin nor have they obtained the recognition of citizenship by their host country. As a result, this paper plans to explain two concepts: (1) whether it is capable for asylum seekers to gain political power without being national citizens, through means of receiving more social protection, and (2) under what conditions might states limit access to citizenship for asylum seekers, through means of imposing restrictions to granting asylum. Further work on this paper would most likely include empirical data, in support of a more expanding theoretical framework. For example, there are cultural, social, economic, and political reasons as to why asylum seekers choose particular host countries, which are not strongly discussed in this paper. Also, data and statistics on the number of accepted applicants would also help to identify whether the hypothesis holds accuracy cross-nationally.

Overall, the paper seeks to add to the literature on asylum seekers in the EU, under a cosmopolitan democracy framework. Current scholars have only examined the restrictions of social benefits to refugees and asylum seekers, but very few have acknowledge the distinction that asylum seekers are treated as non-citizens yet gain limited political power through the distribution of limited social protections. The paper hopes to provide additional information on the impact of the level of social programs provided by EU member states to citizens in comparison to those given or taken away to asylum seekers.

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**Appendix A**. 2000 – 2009 (Expenditures on all social benefits: sickness and healthcare, family and children, unemployment, old age, retirement, disability, and housing (Eurostat)).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **All Benefits (Euro per inhabitant)** | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Germany | 7,112.29 | 7,168.94 | 7,331.66 | 7,366.88 | 7,288.13 | 7,235.66 | 7,176.23 | 7,147.88 | 7,214.80 | 7,771.20 |
| United Kingdom | 6,931.82 | 7,043.59 | 6,942.84 | 6,623.84 | 6,998.86 | 7,142.64 | 7,268.91 | 6,459.11 | 6,185.80 | 5,867.17 |
| Greece | 2,873.81 | 3,074.02 | 3,165.24 | 3,263.73 | 3,419.05 | 3,789.91 | 3,932.43 | 4,058.29 | 4,259.22 | 4,499.07 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **All Benefits (% of GDP)** | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Germany | 28.56 | 28.62 | 29.24 | 29.64 | 29.01 | 28.89 | 27.80 | 26.73 | 26.87 | 30.10 |
| United Kingdom | 25.49 | 25.85 | 24.93 | 25.28 | 25.40 | 25.77 | 25.54 | 22.30 | 25.29 | 28.16 |
| Greece | 22.74 | 23.61 | 23.38 | 22.72 | 22.88 | 24.18 | 24.07 | 24.18 | 25.42 | 27.30 |

**Appendix B:** 2009 data on Asylum Applicants (Including Total and Positive Decisions)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2009** | | | |
|  | Total | Positive Decision (also with appeals) | % Positive Decision/Total |
| Germany | 33,505 | 12,055 | 35.97% |
| United Kingdom | 44,890 | 12,510 | 27.86% |
| Greece | 16,460 | 210 | 1.27% |