

Summery of the Article "'We will Manage It' - Did Chancellor Merkel's Dictum Increase or Even Cause the Refugee Movement in 2015?" By Ludger Pries

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In "'We will Manage It", Ludger Pries challenges the "pull-factor" narrative, i.e. the idea that Angela Merkel's statement of "Wir schaffen das" (August 2015), served as a primary catalyst for the European refugee crisis. Pries argues that this claim, popularized by right-wing politicians and echoed by scholars such as Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, lacks empirical grounding.

Pries first debunks the notion of a German EU legal violation. He demonstrates that the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) was already failing due to "organized non-responsibility," where member states ignored Dublin III obligations long before 2015. Legally, Germany's actions fell under the "sovereignty clause" (Article 17), allowing any state to process applications regardless of the first point of entry.

The most compelling evidence comes from Pries's analysis of refugee decision-making. Utilizing a 2016 survey of 4,500 refugees, he shows that the primary reasons for choosing German, for instance human rights, education and family ties, remained remarkably stable before and after the statement. Furthermore, arrival data reveals that hundreds of thousands were already on the Balkan route weeks before Merkel spoke, driven by the escalating violence in Syria and Iraq, so the statement couldn't have been there reason.

Pries concludes that while Merkel's words offered hope, they neither created nor intensified the movement. He suggests that blaming the dictum is an oversimplification that ignores structural failures and the desperate reality of forced migration. By centering the "invitation" narrative, critics obscure the fact that Germany simply assumed responsibility for addressing a humanitarian bottleneck that the rest of the EU had refused to manage.