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**Refugee Crisis in Europe, an Identification Identity Crisis of a Divided
Europe in Political Unity**

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Abstract: Cosmopolitan Europe', the normative commitment that is widely understood to undergird the project of the European Union, is under threat as never before. The number of refugees across Europe is at an alarming high and is expected to continue to rise for the foreseeable future. As a result, finding durable solutions for refugees has become a major challenge worldwide.

Keywords: Refugee; Crisis; European Union; Asylum

Introduction

Europe is facing its most significant refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War. Over 4 million refugees have been displaced by fighting in Syria, joining millions more fleeing war, terrorism, oppression, and poverty in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Eritrea. The vast majority of these refugees are being hosted in neighbouring countries, but some are making the dangerous journey to Europe.

How should European governments respond to the influx? Should more money be invested in securing Europe's common borders? Or is tackling the root causes of the refugee crisis in countries like Syria a more sustainable solution than building walls and fences to keep people out? Is the crisis putting an unbearable strain on the Schengen agreement of passport free travel in the EU?

Practical Content

Europe tore down borders after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Then a flood of refugees fleeing wars on its doorstep put some of those fences back up. In 2015, Europe's biggest wave of displaced people since World War II created scenes of desperate families stuck in barbed-wire camps and children drowned trying to reach its shores. The crisis abated after Turkey agreed to block the flow of people. But it exposed deep divisions within the 28-member European Union over how to handle asylum-seekers escaping conflict and poverty in the Middle East and Africa. The drama has also raised questions about the EU's commitment to its passport-free zone — one of the bloc's crowning achievements — as leaders squabbled over balancing moral and legal obligations with anti-immigrant sentiment. (Stearns, Europe's Refugee)

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Since the beginning of 2015, an unprecedented number of people from Middle Eastern and African countries—many of them fleeing war, persecution, and unrelenting poverty—have been crossing borders into and within Europe, traversing the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and the English Channel. This “refugee crisis”—and we use scare quotes deliberately—has turned immigration, asylum, border control, and state sovereignty into interconnected problems, making migration not only a political event but also a media spectacle. In so doing, it has brought certain issues to the fore, from refugee quotas and the moral imperatives that ostensibly ground European humanism to the impossibility of European unity (witness the Brexit referendum), even as it has simultaneously rendered others invisible, including older patterns of migration, border control, and state violence.¹

This Hot Spots series therefore takes as its starting point an interrogation of the spectacle of crisis, of crisis as spectacle. How, we ask, ought we interpret the media focus on Syrian refugees, and how might this focus reinscribe a (racialized) distinction between “deserving” or “real” refugees and so-called economic migrants? How do we locate the migration crisis within an ongoing alternation on the part of the European Union and its member states between humanitarianism and border control, between a Liberal Europe committed to moral humanism and a Fortress Europe committed to expelling undesirables? How do the strategies of, on the one hand, custody and control (of foreign bodies and borders) and, on the other, rescue and care (of victims of human trafficking, asylum seekers, and refugees) reflect and refract the nature of power and sovereignty in Europe today?

The images of dead bodies at sea, of drenched refugees on overloaded, rickety boats, and of families climbing frantically through border fences made of barbed wire have become iconic in our collective imagination. No image is as iconic as the figure of Aylan Kurdi, whose tiny body washed ashore on a Turkish beach in September 2015. He and his family, fleeing the civil war in Syria, had boarded a boat bound for Greece that capsized soon after departing Turkey. The figure of Aylan became the emblem of innocence and injustice, mobilizing an international public outcry about the destruction wrought by the Syrian civil war, the cruel forms of trafficking it has produced, and the ineffective European response to that humanitarian crisis. The affective reactions generated by the image of Aylan seemed to have an effect on the decisions of European nation-states: German Chancellor Angela Merkel opted for open borders, and the Refugees Welcome movement gathered momentum across the continent, (Migration, 2016) invoking the argument of Globalization.

Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world.

If refugees are defined as “displaced peoples seeking protection”, then most estimates of the numbers involved lie currently between 15-20 million. This total is not simply composed of heroic individuals experiencing personal political persecution, but involves large groups, often including political and cultural minorities. (Ostrand, 2017)

All of the world’s continents are heavily involved, whether as sources of refugees, or in the process of resettlement.

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34>.

As far as sources are concerned, it should be emphasized that in recent years Asia and Africa have become the major theatres of refugee crisis. This in turn is a reflection of the fact that refugee displacement primarily affects the world's poor.

It is legitimate to speak of a refugee crisis, not only because of the large numbers of people involved, but also because of a detectable hardening of attitudes to refugees on the part of the major Western nation-states. With the end of the Cold War, Western states have become almost exclusively preoccupied with economic rationalism.

This has involved an increased engagement with the economic side of globalization, but an increased indifference to the global plight of refugees.

Meanwhile, the international refugee system, centred on the United Nations, has limited capacities to offset national indifference. (Holton, 1997)

Today, some 250 million migrants live and work around the world, and in the coming months and years many more will certainly join them. We must put in place policies to manage the flows of people in ways that benefit migrants' countries of origin, transit, and destination. And of course, we must ensure the wellbeing of the migrants themselves. This calls for action on four fronts, so migration became a worldwide issue that world governments have to deal with. (Weil)

The scenes of death and misery that are occurring with increasing frequency in the waters of the Mediterranean and Southeast Asia have focused renewed attention on one of mankind's oldest activities: migration. It is time to accept the reality that, like the waves on the seas that many of the migrants traverse, the ebb and flow of human movement cannot be stopped. That is why the international community must manage migration with understanding and compassion. (Migration realism, 2015)

The causes of refugee crisis are a complex issue, and I have only sketched some very general considerations here.

In the first place it may seem that refugee crises are purely national or regional in origin. The immediate cause of population displacement, of large groups and individuals may be linked to a range of endogenous national causes, such as authoritarian denial of human rights to minorities and dissidents, revolution, invasion, civil war, ethnic cleansing, or ecological crisis involving famine and an accompanying breakdown of social order.

First things first: the refugee crisis is not a recent phenomenon. It's just new to Europe and the west. By the end of 2014, just 14% of the world's displaced people lived in the developed world. Less than 6% of Syrian refugees had applied for asylum in Europe (222,156 out of a then-total of roughly 4 million). When we ask about the causes of a refugee crisis that has been so serious for so long, we're really asking why Europe has only just woken up to its existence.

Still, it's been quite a wake-up call. Last year, up to 220,000 asylum seekers arrived in Europe by boat, which was itself a record. This year, even that unprecedented figure has been dwarfed, with more than 900,000 people landing on the beaches of Greece and, to a lesser extent, Italy. Why?

The first reason is the intransigent nature of the Syrian civil war. The majority of those coming are from Syria, according to statistics compiled by the UN and the Greek and Italian governments. Even if there are questions over the precision of this data, it's clear that Syrians form the largest proportion of arrivals to Europe. And that's because they've given up hope for their country, whose war shows no

sign of ending. People have already weathered four years of brutal conflict; a fifth is too much. (Kingsley, 2015)

Secondly, there's no hope for them in the neighbouring countries of the Middle East. At this point, it is now almost impossible for Syrians to gain legal entrance to most other Arab countries. About 4 million people have already managed to get to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan – but Europe is an increasingly attractive option for them since they have no secure legal status in the countries where they now live. The vast majority do not have the right to work; none of them are formally recognised as refugees; and many of their children are not in school. Some 400,000 Syrian children currently in Turkey have fallen outside the education system, according to Turkish officials. To make matters more desperate, a huge shortfall in UN funding has led to cuts to the handouts given to refugee families every month – making the Middle East an increasingly untenable place for them to stay.

The UK trumpets its aid to refugee camps as the answer, but in reality this aid means little when only a fifth of Syrians live in camps, and most of the rest are not in education or legal employment. Unsurprisingly, hundreds of thousands are now moving to Europe to secure the rights they are entitled to under the 1951 refugee convention, but which, however generous the UK has been, they are denied in the Middle East. For four years, many were prepared to put up with this limbo, in the hope that it would only be temporary. Now that it is becoming permanent, they have decided to journey elsewhere to secure their long-term futures.

In 2015, it also became much easier to make this journey. Twelve months ago, most Syrians seemed to think the best way to get to Europe was by sailing from Libya to Italy. Several thousand went from Turkey to Greece, but the footfall was far lower – either because it was a lesser-known route, or people were deterred by the prospect of having to leave the EU again in order to get to Western Europe. Once you get to Greece, you still have to walk through the (largely non-EU) Balkans to get to Germany. But if you make it to Italy, you never need leave the EU again.

All this meant that the number of people landing in Greece rose from some 43,000 in 2014 to more than 750,000 in 2015 (the arrivals in Italy have slightly dropped from 170,000 to roughly 144,000). Not all of them were Syrians, particularly as the year wore on. In Italy, the largest group was from Eritrea, fleeing their North Korean-style dictatorship. In Greece, an increasing number are from Afghanistan and Iraq, where the respective conflicts are also getting worse. Afghans are also leaving in large numbers from Iran, where many in the large Afghan community lack legal status, and yet have little remaining connection to their motherland.

The EU's deal with Turkey in March 2016 all but halted what had been an uncontrolled flow of asylum-seekers smuggled onto Greek islands from the Turkish coast in 2015, when more than 1 million migrants arrived in Europe. In 2016 the figure fell to about one-third of that number. More than a third applied for asylum in Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel's open-door policy hurt her popularity at home and featured in talks on a coalition government for her fourth term. Turkey still shelters more refugees than any other nation. To cope with the surge in 2015, Germany, Sweden and other countries temporarily reintroduced some border controls, while Hungary, Slovenia and Macedonia erected fences along sections of their borders. Syrians fleeing a six-year civil war made up the largest group of refugees arriving in Greece, joined by Iraqis and Afghans who were also escaping violence. Terror attacks in Europe have hardened resistance to a plan to redistribute asylum-seekers across the bloc. With the eastern route at a relative standstill, attention turned to the rising number of African migrants landing in Italy. They come through a lawless Libya via human-trafficking networks,

accounting for the bulk of the 5,082 migrants who died on the Mediterranean Sea in 2016. (Stearns, Europe's Refugee)

The European Commission has taken a comprehensive approach to tackle the refugee crisis in Europe with its European Agenda for Migration, drawing on the various tools and instruments available at the EU level and in the Member States.¹

More than 3,100 migrants died making the trip in 2017, but the IOM notes the number of fatalities is likely higher due to the number of boats that sink without rescue crews knowing.

Geneva – IOM, the UN Migration Agency, reports that 10,584 migrants and refugees have entered Europe by sea through the first nine weeks of 2018, with just over 50 per cent arriving in Italy and the remainder divided between Greece (27%), Spain (22%) and Cyprus (less than 1%). This compares with 19,824 arrivals across the region through the same period last year.

In April 2016, the European Commission announced an initial €83 million worth of humanitarian funding for emergency support projects to assist refugees in Greece. The projects address the most urgent humanitarian needs of some 50 000 refugees and migrants currently hosted in over 30 sites in Greece.

The initial EU budget of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - ECHO, as programmed in the EU's Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020, amounts to approximately €1 billion per year (a total of €7.1 billion was adopted for the entire seven years of the MFF). In addition to the core humanitarian aid and civil protection activities, the 2017 budget includes support for the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) for operations inside the EU.

Although the seven year ceiling is set by the MFF profile, the precise figure is decided each year by the EU Budget Authority (European Parliament and Council), following the annual budget procedure. In addition to the initial budget, an EU Emergency Aid Reserve can be called upon to respond to unforeseen events and major crises, financing notably humanitarian, civilian crisis management and protection operations in non-EU countries. In addition, unused amounts from other EU funding programmes may be transferred to humanitarian aid during the course of the year. Additional funding could also be provided through the European Development Fund (the 11th EDF) and through direct contributions from the EU Member States

With respect to the current refugee crisis in Europe, a new EU Regulation for the ESI instrument (mentioned above) was adopted in 2016, allowing the EU to provide emergency support in response to exceptional crises or disasters within the EU which give rise to severe humanitarian consequences. The overall envelope for the period 2016-2018 amounts to €700 million (of which €200 million for 2017).

The European Commission provides humanitarian funding worldwide to over 200 partner organisations which implement relief actions on the ground. These include non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations and United Nations agencies.

The emergency support funding is made available to Member States whose own response capacities are overwhelmed by urgent and exceptional circumstances, such as the sudden influx of refugees. The assistance (Rosenthal, Refugees, infiltrators, immigrants) is complementary to Member States actions and provided in close coordination with the countries concerned, as well as the Commission

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/node/4115>.

humanitarian partner organisations such as UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and international organisations. This funding can be used for the provision of basic necessities such as food, shelter and medicine.

On the other hand, by comparing with other countries facing this phenomenon, we can observe the difference in mentality and management of the authorities, so that, Israel's handling of the issue of asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea is unsuccessful and immoral. (Maanit, 2017)

On 31 of January 2018, the “removal of infiltrators” procedure began in its tainted name or “deportation procedure” in its “dirty” name. The state is beginning to issue deportation orders to Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers who are not staying at the Holot facility in the south. In order to carry out the deportation, the Population and Immigration Authority is recruiting hundreds of new inspectors to its ranks.

The High Court of Justice rejected a petition filed against the deportation of “infiltrators” by agreement to a third state, and ruled that the state was entitled to expel them, but ruled that an “infiltrator” who refused to be evacuated would not be imprisoned for an extended period of time, more than 60 days.¹

Also, status in Israel does not meet the legal definition of a “resident” and certainly not a “citizen” were in Israel. 218,919 citizens of foreign countries are subject to the care and supervision of the Population and Immigration Authority of the Ministry of the Interior. The public and the media tend to call this population different names: infiltrators, asylum seekers, foreign workers, migrant workers, refugees, Africans and others, mixing them as if they were all one piece. But in practice it is a population composed of various groups that came to Israel from different places and for different purposes. (Levy, 2017) There are certainly those who fled from hell. The data of the Population and Immigration Authority shed very little light on the proportion of those in the population who are entitled to be defined as refugees, out of all foreigners. Infiltrators, immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers?²

In Israel there are those who call all those who are “asylum seekers” under the pretext that they fled from Africa and came directly to Israel to seek shelter there. The data of the Population and Immigration Authority completely contradict this claim and show that only 24,784 foreigners submitted asylum applications in Israel, of which at most 11,986 are citizens of African countries (the rest are from Russia, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine). In other words, about 70% of the infiltrators never submitted asylum applications, although most of them have been staying here for more than four years, and the procedure for submitting asylum applications is simple and accessible in different languages. In short, 40,274 infiltrators from Africa with few rights, who take up much more headlines than the other 178,645.³

Conclusions

There is little doubt that the issue of refugees is a global problem. While it most immediately affects developing nations, there is a strong argument that industrialised countries should help by allowing higher levels of immigration. This is certainly not an easy issue though, because historically immigration has caused as many problems as it solves. (Ager, 1999)

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32001R0045>.

² <http://intelligence.sri.ro/awareness-in-securitatea-online/>.

³ https://www.gov.il/he/Departments/population_and_immigration_authority.

The principal reason why developed nations should help (Danieli, Rodley & Weisaeth, 1996) is that we now live in a global village and it is no longer possible to ignore what happens on the other side of the world. This is partly a moral issue and partly because it is in the economic self-interest of industrialised nations to ensure that developing nations continue to progress. A practical way of achieving this would be to accept more immigration, particularly when it is caused by natural disasters or civil war.

I would argue, however, that this is not an open and shut case, as there is a negative side to mass immigration. The multi-cultural experiments in Europe have not always succeeded and immigrants have often suffered badly from racism and other prejudices.

There is a conscious effort to protect rights of these individuals but the difficulty arises where this has to be balanced with the right to protect its territory.

Measures have been introduced which arguably encourage xenophobia and hostility to these refugees. Poorer neighbouring states, which were initially quite welcoming of refugees, are now being squeezed beyond capacity and their citizens are becoming increasingly xenophobic. National states and governments including international communities that aim to address the current trend of refugee crises are drawing up measures that are innovative

On a practical level, refugees are sometimes better off receiving aid in their native land than begging on the streets in a country where they cannot speak the language. Many so-called economic migrants end up returning to the country of their birth.

It has now been recognised that root causes such as poverty and global inequalities should be identified and corrected where possible prior to escalation to emergency situations leading to people fleeing their countries. Richer Countries in the West are seeking to address poverty in third world countries and summits on the topic are being held in order to come up with a long standing solution that will fundamentally serve to potentially benefit all nations as a whole.

In conclusion, the trend for refugees seeking protection away from their homes is seen as a dilemma of topicality in a European Union that is in the process of identifying itself in a Europe under the tide of ultra nationalism, feeling the economic effects of Brexit and threatening a Grexit and the desires of independence of some historical regions like Lombardy and Veneto in Italy or Catalonia and Bastia in Spain.

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