

Globalization: The Diplomatic Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Violence, hostilities, human rights violations, political persecution, physical harm, religious and cultural divides forced over 1.3 million families and children to flee their homes in the Middle East to emigrate to Europe in 2015. “Many came seeking safety for themselves and their families, risking their lives and facing a treacherous journey. Half of those crossing the Mediterranean in 2015 were Syrians escaping the war at home” (Europe Situation). “The conflict in Syria is by far the most significant reason to seek asylum, with 1,321,560 seeking asylum in European Union (EU) countries in 2015, with the highest concentration of asylum applications in Germany at 476,000” (BBC News). Although “1.1 million asylum seekers entered Germany” as many sought never to return to their country of origin, as many migrants did not seek asylum for fear of retribution (Germany’s Response). “Since the Syrian Civil War began in March 2011, over 6.3 million Syrians have been displaced” (Mercy Corps). “Acceptance of refugees and the question of which states must bear the costs is a collective goods problem” (Goldstein, 435). This collective goods problem is central to globalization where international relations and governments, their respective communications, technology, economics, investments and trade, migration policies, and human rights actions are integrated requiring a global effort. Here countries cannot act in isolation, rather nations need to relinquish individual interests and take action for the common good by adhering to “... the three basic principles of dominance, reciprocity, and identity which offer possible solutions to the core problem of getting individuals (governments) to cooperate for the common good without a central authority to make them do so” (Goldstein 5). “One popular conception of globalization is “the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life. . . .” (Goldstein 19). Globalization advances countries – shared interests, shared ideologies, shared

social media, and shared political policies – to integrate in a fast-paced international arena where progress is inevitable that demand democratic values, mandating a humanitarian open stance for refugees emigrating to Europe.

The collective interest of European countries to provide a safe haven for immigrants fleeing the Middle East has a direct impact on sharing the burdens and costs of migrant resettlement, their assimilation, societal destination issues, and pure capacity. Simply opening doors to migrants does not fully address the myriad of challenges facing them as arrival is often conflicted with: language needs, employment, education, health services, and more; families often arrive separated from loved ones, with many children arriving unaccompanied. The international migrant population residing in Germany in 2015 totaled over 12 million individuals, representing 15% of their total population (Migration Policy Institute - Top 25 Destinations). In 2015, “Germany has taken in far more asylum seekers than its European neighbors, and that gap is widening, with the United Kingdom, France and Italy only taking in a small proportion of the total number seeking asylum in Europe. By late summer 2015, the number of refugees fleeing to Central and Western Europe had increased significantly. The situation in Hungary escalated, as thousands of refugees left camps in a dangerous attempt to reach Austria by foot on public roads. On the night of September 4, 2015, Germany and Austria decided to open their borders for these refugees in order to avoid a humanitarian disaster” (Germany’s Response). “International norms obligate countries to accept refugees who arrive at their borders” (Goldstein 435). “In 2015, European Union member states received in total approximately 1.3 million asylum claims. Fairly distributed, this is a manageable figure. However, Germany, Hungary and Sweden alone received 62 percent of claims, and their share of the actual inflow of asylum seekers is even higher” (Germany’s Response). “...half of refugees

in 2015 trace their origins to just three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Some have been displaced within their homelands; others have sought refuge in neighboring countries of Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon; and still others have made the often-perilous journey to Europe (and elsewhere) to seek asylum. Refugees did not disperse equally across Europe, with some countries taking in more asylum seekers than the European average” (Pew Research).

With a push from Germany, at the EU-Turkey Summit discussions in November 2015, the EU agreed to give 3 billion euros, about \$3.2 billion to improve the conditions for Syrian refugees, assist in travel to Europe via Turkey, and to as a side to help speed up negotiations for Turkey to join the EU (EU Offers Turkey 3 billion). “During this time, the EU came to regard Turkey – the host of some 2.5 million Syrian refugees – as central to dealing with the refugee crisis. The crisis has shifted the balance of power between the EU and Turkey and made the relationship a much more transactional one” (ECFR 85). Furthermore, the total population of migrants in Turkey grow 117% between 2010-2015 representing 3.8% of their population (Migration Policy). With regard to its policies, “Turkey takes an approach that can be described widely as peacebuilding with a broad framework that relies on integrating the tools of diplomacy, humanitarian aid and development” (Aljazeera 2016). While this compassionate policy supporting the international Rule of Law accepting refugees is applauded, steps needed to be taken to “decrease the inflow of migrants and provide the existing migrant population with education and and work permits”, as well as sustainable programs (ECFR 85).

Another Syrian neighbor, “Jordan has historically viewed refugee influxes as opportunities to advance its national development” (Jordan’s). “In Jordan, the total migrant population between 2010- 2015 of 3,112,000 represented 41% of their total population, however the percentage change to their total population in 2015 decreased by .8%” (Migration Policy).

With the concentration of refugees in Jordan and the entry of over 700,000 migrants in 2015 the “Syrian refugee crisis exacerbated Jordan’s political and economic resources challenges...mid-2013, Jordan reduced Syrian access to its territory by not admitting refugee border crossings near southwestern Syrian population centers” (Jordan’s). “Chronic underfunding of organizations such as the UN World Food Programme led to reduced food allowances for refugees in Jordan and Lebanon in early 2015. The monthly food allowance in Lebanon was \$13.50 per person in 2015, compared to \$27 in 2014. The deteriorating circumstances drove many refugees to seek better living conditions elsewhere” (Germany’s Response). Furthermore, Syrian refugees are highly concentrated in Jordan’s most vulnerable communities, and grievances brought to the fore by Syrian refugees appear to mobilize marginalized Jordanians, creating conflict and anti-immigrant sentiments.

In a speech to the German parliament on September 9, 2015, Angela Merkel stated, “If we show courage and lead the way, a common European approach is most likely.” She further stressed that the EU not only needed "binding agreements for distribution of refugees," but also rules on "how we treat refugees” and emphasized “the importance of dialog with Turkey and the transit countries to coordinate efforts in the crisis” (Germany Leads the Way). Emmanuel Macron, newly appointed President of France said, “He believes German society, led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, “saved” the collective dignity” of the European people by taking in hundreds of thousands of refugees. Chancellor Merkel and German society as a whole lived up to our shared values’ they saved our collective dignity by taking in refugees in distress, housing and educating them” (Macron). This references Angela Merkel’s public pledge that Germany would open its doors to refugees which was originally met with cheering German crowds, garnering the interest, attention, and attraction of more refugees. While “collective dignity” is admirable, a

more technical “collective goods” approach should have all European Union countries integrated in sharing the burdens by the receiving country, and not expect Germany, in isolation, to accept migrants into their country without sacrificing services to nationals. This appears to be Macron “grandstanding” and riding on the coattails of Merkel’s 67% popularity ratings in 2015 – her third highest ratings from gaining office in 2005. In 2015, “Merkel’s pronouncement has remained the cornerstone of Germany’s refugee policy—despite mounting resistance within Germany, even from within her own party, and from many other European governments. Her famous “We can do it!” (“*Wir schaffen das!*”) has become the credo of the German government’s open and humanitarian stance on the European refugee crisis of 2015-2016. Although Germany remains open to those in need of protection and the requisite programs that facilitate integration, certain aspects of German asylum legislation have been made more restrictive beginning early 2016” (Germany’s Response). This “love-affair” with refugees has cooled since the terrorist attacks in Germany in July 2016, as thirteen people died by the hands of “three of the four assaults who were refugees” (Merkel’s Approval Rating). This is indicative of the underlying concerns of Europeans as the demographic profile of asylum seekers in the European Union has become increasingly more male as Pew Research Reports, 67% in 2013, 71% in 2014, and 73% in 2015, with a steady share of men arriving under 35 years of age; further data reveals that 47% of asylum seekers were young adult males between 18 and 34 years of age. This is concerning not only because this influx of young males could have an effect on the socio-economic landscape of Europe, but rather this group is most exposed and readily radicalized by extremist, militaristic groups representing a potential security risk.

The United States through the World Food Program (WFP) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees Council (UNHCR), which reached an “Annual high budget of \$7.5

billion in 2016 with its top hosting countries of Jordan, Ethiopia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey” is a direct response to the displaced refugees from the Syrian Civil War (UNHCR). On the other hand, bill H.R.4038 –American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act of 2015 suspended the refugee program allowing Syrian and Iraqi to enter the United States until national security agencies certified that they did not present a risk. Regardless, according to Pew Research reports, “the U.S. received 84,995 refugees in fiscal year 2016, effectively meeting the 85,000 ceiling –with the goal set to take in 10,000 from Syria, which the U.S. exceeded taking in 12,587”. However, President Trump’s second Executive Order on March 6, 2017 interferes with the refugee resettlement plan and prohibits refugees from entering the U.S. until July 14, 2017. Under the original plan, the U.S. was to host 110,000 in 2017, which will likely decline to 50,000. President Barack Obama would have wanted to do more, and he hailed Angela Merkel for strong leadership in the refugee crisis, at the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly on September 6, 2016 expressing, “I want to personally thank Chancellor Merkel, because the politics sometimes can be hard, but it's the right thing to do. It is a crisis of our shared security”. Although the United States’ goals of settling refugees was reached in 2016, the Trump administration, dictated by fear must be convinced that the refugee resettlement plan will not endanger national security – President Trump must participate in globalization by supporting, stabilizing, and growing the EU alliance and the Middle Eastern countries of Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, and reassert the U.S. leadership role in the region. This integration will foster a collective goods approach to reward behavior of EU countries, build unity, and send a message of solidarity. Moreover, the U.S. should take action to punish extreme militant behavior, and prevent propaganda voicing anti-American messages in Western countries.

Certainly, the United States needs to seize an opportunity for leadership, however, the single consistent power keeping the refugee crisis forefront in Europe's visage is Angela Merkel. Her actions to admit over one million refugees are humanitarian, ethical, and demonstrate an increasingly dominant role in the European Union. Her actions also placed pressure on medium-size states such as Hungary, Sweden, Austria, and Norway which could barely compensate for in comparison to Germany. At the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly, Angela Merkel stated, "If I could, I would turn back time many, many years to better prepare myself, the federal government and all those in positions of responsibility for the situation we were rather unprepared for in the late summer of 2015". Because of this huge influx in 2015, Germany significantly cutback resettling a mass movement of asylum seekers in 2016, relying more on EU members and the cooperation of Turkey, Jordan, and neighboring Middle East countries to carry their share the burden - imbedding the collective goods theory. From close up, Angela Merkel's "We can do this" rally in 2015 was commendable. This was brash confidence in herself and in Germany; believing that integration merely meant to open the doors for refugees – but the infrastructure, in housing, in camps, in job training, in language, in healthcare, in supplies of food and water, in aging pipes – were not anticipated; these stressors negatively impacted German nationals. Moreover, Merkel may have wanted to avoid potential harsh rhetoric of "history repeating itself" alluding to international countries refusing and banning Jewish refugees from escaping Nazi Germany, during the Holocaust; her decision to accept the refugees becomes even more acute, as it could have been a political motive to "set the stage" for her upcoming elections in September 2017 seeking her fourth term. Regardless, her report card would clearly rate her an 8.5 as an advocate for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whereby, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are

endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood”. A world of human rights between countries is critical; this world should be without bias of race, ethnicity, color, religion, gender, birth, or disability. Gross humanitarian violations were of cultural and political warfare placing many Syrians in harm’s way – Angela Merkel came in and saved the day.

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