

FORUM: Economic and Financial

TOPIC: The Issue of Migrant Redistribution

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I. Introduction

One key facet of globalisation has been a vast increase in international inequality. Whether escaping natural disasters or war-torn areas or seeking liberation from political, religious or economic oppression, millions each year have sought to migrate in search of new opportunities in developed nations. Whilst undergoing long and dangerous journeys, the exploitation of migrants who are forced to resort to human trafficking continues to result in thousands of deaths. And even after reaching safety, migrants have been met by increased anti-immigration sentiment within ill-equipped and unprepared nations.

One potential solution is migrant redistribution. Assuming collective responsibility to share the burden to provide for refugees and creating quotas for migrant resettlement has been implemented with support from UNHCR and the European Union in recent years with some success. Therefore, the challenge of this issue is to craft an effective solution that not only provides structural systems to provide safety and shelter, but also must navigate the political ramifications of immigration.

II. Definition of Key Terms

Migrant

While there is no formal legal definition of an international migrant, most experts agree that an international migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status.

Refugee

Refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection.

Economic Migrant

Economic migrants emigrate from one region to another to seek an improvement in living standards because the living conditions or job opportunities in the migrant's own region are not sufficient.

Asylum

The process by which a person persecuted by one's own country may be protected by another sovereign state. Asylum seekers are migrants that can be refugees but are not usually economic migrants.

Refugee Camp

are temporary settlements built - usually by host nations - to receive refugees.

Globalisation

The integration of economies, industries, markets, cultures and policy-making around the world.

Freedom of Movement

encompasses the right of individuals to travel from place to place within the territory of a country, and to leave the country and return to it.

National Sovereignty

is the idea that independent nations have an organized government, are self-contained and have a right to exist without other nations interfering.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Non-profit, usually voluntary citizen's groups or institutions which can be organised on a local, national or international level.

Third Country Resettlement

Is the assisted transfer of refugees from the country in which they have sought asylum to a safe third country that has agreed to admit them as refugees, on a temporary or permanent basis.

Voluntary Repatriation

is the agreement of migrants unwilling or unable to stay in their host country to volunteer to return to their country of origin.

III. General Overview

A. What are the Challenges Current Facing Migrants and Refugees within host nations?

Whilst refugees are in theory afforded international protections according to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the reality is they face stark conditions even within host nations. This is because migration levels are currently higher than ever previously recorded – with an estimated 259 million people living outside their country of birth, of whom 66 million have been forcibly displaced. For the most impacted host nations, there are quite simply, too many migrants to effectively provide for. The result has been the creation of refugee camps in which a quarter of estimated migrants reside, and whilst aid organisations have been delivering targeted improvements, conditions continue to be poor. For example, the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan housing over 100,000

Syrian refugees initially struggled to provide basic necessities such as running water, electricity and law enforcement despite the Jordanian government spending \$870 million each year to uphold its commitments to refugees. It is with this context that migrant redistribution should be considered as a potential solution – the nations which have been hardest hit by migration are those usually by geographical happenstance are near areas of conflict or economic deprivation. Unable to cope and taking on a far greater proportion of a global obligation to refugee protection, redistribution could ease these burdens and deliver better outcomes for refugees.

B. What are the causes of migration?

The reasons that cause migrants to leave their home country usually fall into one of two categories. The first and most pertinent is due to fear of persecution. Oppressed minority groups such as the Rohingya in Myanmar or those fleeing religious discrimination have a right under international law to seek asylum in other nations. The second category are those seeking to find better economic opportunities. Whilst this usually means that there is a basic standard of living in their countries of origin, an increase in global inequality has resulted in western nations being a vastly more appealing destination for potential migrants, where even the lowest paid jobs earn substantially more than the median wages in the developing world. Both these broad causes have caused a vast increase in global migration – with an estimated 405 million international migrants projected by 2050.

C. How effective have redistribution efforts been thus far?

In 2018, 70,000 refugees were resettled through UNHCR in 28 states, with the majority going to the United States, Canada, UK, Sweden and France. This first has provided both severely needed relief for overburdened host nations, with the majority of refugees being resettled from Turkey, Lebanon (of whom approximately a third of its total population are refugees) and Tanzania. It also has given many of these refugees a much greater degree of comfort and safety than previously possible. UNHCR actively works with NGOs and Governments to ensure refugees can access essential services and can integrate with their local communities and sends out deployment teams and core contact groups to assist refugees in their resettled locations.

The problem is that in recent years the political appetite for refugee resettlement has significantly worsened. A rise in global nationalist and populist sentiment has resulted in increasingly hardline policies towards migrants. Australia continues to operate the offshore Nauru Regional Processing Centre which has been infamous for overcrowding and harsh conditions. The Hungarian Government has plans to pass laws that penalize agencies working with migrants and refugees in addition to refusing to allow migrants to pass through its borders. And finally, the United States Government – whilst continuing to accept resettled refugees – has passed laws to ban all migrants from some Middle Eastern Nations and plans to build a wall to deter migrants on the US-Mexico border. Given that countries have no legal obligation to resettle refugees which have not claimed

asylum within their territory, a political will within developed host nations is essential to providing the highest levels of safety for refugees and migrants.

IV. Major Parties Involved and Their Views

UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a UN program with a specific mandate to protect refugees, promote their rights and safety, and to co-ordinate international efforts to solve refugee issues. With an annual budget in excess of \$7.7 billion, its primary aim is to assist in refugee's voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country. One of its main mechanisms of action has been to create missions to distribute aid and assistance in regions with a high concentration of displaced people, such as in Lebanon and South Sudan in recent years. It maintains the ProGres database on refugee information, which holds details of 11 million refugees. It also conducts active research into the causes and responses to refugees and migration and publishes reports to advise governments.

UN DESA

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is an entity of the UN that collaborates with governments and stakeholders to help them achieve their economic, social and environmental objectives. 'From poverty reduction to governance to finance to the environment, DESA's work is about human progress for all, especially the most vulnerable.' (Quoted from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/>) DESA follows the UN's principles of equality, solidarity, tolerance and respect for nature and mutual responsibility and actively advises governments and the international community about migrant and labour issues. It publishes around 10 documents each year that include statistics, trends, foresights and solutions to problems that we face today, such as migrant distributions and resettlement successes.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The International Organization for Migration is an intergovernmental entity linked to the UN that conducts research, provides services and advises governments and NGOs on issues related to migration. With 172-member nations, it is able to gather and analyse significant volumes of data using their Migration Data Portal and publishes a large variety of documents, including legal research to promote refugee and migrant rights, and hold international conferences to co-ordinate global action.

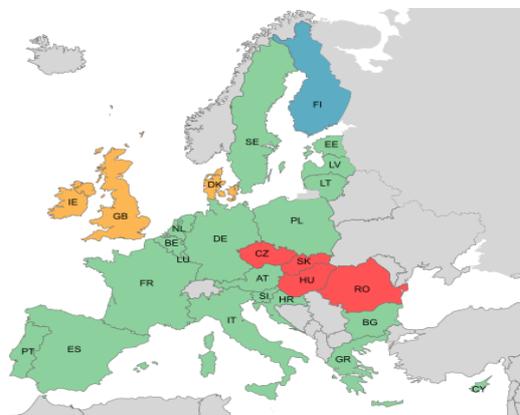
United States of America (US)

Donald Trump's presidency has led to a marked shift in US attitudes and foreign and domestic policy on the issue of migrants. His tenure has led to a number of executive actions which have curtailed the ability of undocumented workers and asylum seekers from entering the USA. In 2017, Executive Order 13769 resulted in all 134 million citizens of Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen being banned from entering the US, along with all refugees from the Syrian Civil War. After protracted legal battles, the US Supreme Court in 2018 ruled an amended form of the

executive order stood which blocked entry from those nations but allowed the entry of refugees – the result was a 40% decrease in applications for entry. In addition to migration from the Middle East, President Trump’s initiated a zero-tolerance policy against illegal immigrants on the Mexico border resulting in the separation of 3000 children from their families and an international outcry. From his plans to construct a wall along the US-Mexico border to voting against the UN Global Compact on Migration, the United States has firmly positioned itself as against continued immigration and the promotion of freedoms for refugees and migrants.

European Union (EU)

The 2014-Present European Migrant Crisis has forced the EU to implement substantial new measures to deal with the estimated 5 million migrants which have applied for asylum since 2008. In 2015, the EU proposed a 10-point plan to address the crisis, with measures including return rejected asylum seekers, deterring illegal traffickers and reforming the Common European Asylum System to be easier for refugees to access. The first response emanating from the plan has been to implement a multi-national maritime mission to help rescue struggling migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean and to deter human trafficking. Operation Triton involved 15 EU member nations and is funded through the EU budget. The second response has been to relocation and resettlement of asylum seekers to be distributed across member states. The plan had been the relocation of 120,000 refugees away from Greece and Italy - the nation’s most directly impacted by asylum application – with nations having a specific quota to admit. However, the plan stalled due to strong resistance from central European nations with nationalist and populist governments who feared security risks from admitting thousands of refugees. As a result, some EU nations voluntarily took in refugees, with Germany seeking to take in 500,000 over three years.



Individual EU member state policies towards migrant resettlement.

Red: Countries rejecting resettlement

Orange: Countries opting out

Blue: Countries Abstaining

Green: Countries participating

Source: European Union Justice and Home Affairs Council

United Kingdom (UK)

The United Kingdom, whilst not participating directly in the EU’s resettlement schemes, has its own “Gateway Protection Programme”. This offers a legal route for UNHCR identified refugees to be settled in the UK whilst enabling UK government control over the numbers ultimately allowed in. The result has been the settlement of over 8000 refugees, whilst continuing to enjoy cross party-political support amid deep social attitudes against asylum seekers.

NGOs

There are many NGOs, like Oxfam, who have conducted studious research into the issue of the treatment of migrants and refugees and frequently publish reports on the issue. They represent a voice that should, and often is, heard throughout the world, be it individuals or governments. NGOs can have a large in tackling the issue of inequality because of their impartiality and the fact they are not beholden to national governmental and political interests.

V. Timeline

1947 – 1951: The International Refugee Organisation resettled over 1 million refugees scattered throughout Europe after World War II. 80% of them were resettled outside Europe.^[2] An example for those resettled within Europe are the 150,000 Polish soldiers and their families who were resettled in the UK by 1949.

1956 - 200,000 Hungarians fled to Yugoslavia and Austria. Nearly all 180,000 Hungarians who fled to Austria were resettled to 37 third countries within three years.

1973 - Following a coup d'état in Chile, 5,000 refugees from neighbouring countries were resettled.

1997 – by this year, UNHCR had been directly involved in resettling some 47,000 refugees from former Yugoslavia.^[6]

2004 – Present: More than 100,000 refugees from Myanmar have been resettled from the refugee camps in Thailand and as many people have been resettled from Malaysia during this same period

2015- saw a marked upshift in attempted migration into the European Union, with 300,000 land and sea arrivals from the Mediterranean region, with the majority landing in Greece and Italy.

2018 – The Global Compact for Migration was endorsed by the UN General Assembly as a non-binding international agreement for a common policy of treatment towards migrants.

VI. Key Questions

- Is resettlement the most effective option to provide safety for migrants? If so, then which countries should take the highest quotas?
- What are the best means to successfully integrate migrants into local communities and empower them with tools to build their own prosperity?
- How can we reduce economic and social burdens on host nations, irrespective of redistribution?
- How can we address the root causes of migration within their countries of origin? How can we combat human trafficking yet allow refugees to safely travel to apply for asylum?
- Can we create policies that do not create divisions with host nations and do not encourage anti-refugee and anti-immigration attitudes? How do we persuade nations with active nationalist or populist movements to accept a share of migrants?

VII. Possible Solutions

1) Global Migrant Redistribution

- Expanding UNHCR's efforts and resettle a greater quantity of refugees from camps into areas in developed countries, but to do so under each nation's own terms such as the UK's Gateway Program which still enables national control and validation of quotas.

2) Settlement in local areas

- Giving greater support to host countries most burdened by migration to encourage settlement in the areas in which they are currently located. This means giving migrants the skills to acquire jobs and contribute to local communities.

3) Voluntary Repatriation

- Ultimately creating the conditions for refugees to have the confidence to return home is a goal of any potential solution. Therefore, resolutions should seek to address the problems within countries of origin and the route of migration.

VIII. Conclusion

The urgent plight of refugees and migrants requires new solutions to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Migrant redistribution offers a potential alternative when the conditions of migrant countries of origin continue to be poor. Yet policies must be careful to avoid causing an increase in anti-immigration sentiment among host nations that could detail progress towards global action promoting migrant and refugee rights. Creating an effective resolution will require balancing providing structural relief for migrant and host nations, attempting to address exploitation and improve countries of origin, whilst respecting national sovereignty to maintain support for relief efforts.

IX. Relevant United Nations Documents and Other Sources

1. UNHCR Resettlement Overview <https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html>
2. UN Global Compact on Migration: <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>
3. UNHCR 10 Point Action Plan: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59e99eb94.html>
4. UNHCR- New York Declaration on Migrants and Refugees <https://www.unhcr.org/uk//new-york-declaration-for-refugees-and-migrants.html>
5. IOM Migrant Data Portal : <https://migrationdataportal.org/>
6. IOM - All UN Documents Relating to Migration since 2014 <https://www.iom.int/un-documents>
7. UN Resolution 69/167 on the Protection of Migrants <https://www.iom.int/69th-session-2014>
8. European Commission – European Agenda on Migration https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information_en

9. Guardian Migration Article - <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/sep/10/migration-how-many-people-are-on-the-move-around-the-world>