Chapter 8

Refugee Crisis in Mediterranean

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the effects of Syrian refugee crisis on neighbouring countries; Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt where afterwards discusses concept of security and European Union approach to the crisis. The Syrian refugee crisis affected major countries both around it and also European countries as well where it led to questioning of security among the academia. Aim of the article is to question how major actors such as states and International Organizations' have undermined the importance of human lives during the conflict for their own interests'. The article argues that state-centric security concept has furthermore deepened the crisis where the concept of human security has been neglected by major actors and stresses out that state-centric approach has dominated the political arena during the crisis. The article indicates that the Syrian refugee crisis had been an important case which should be taken into a consideration when discussing the concept of security.

Keywords: Syria, Refugees, European Union, Security

8.1. Introduction

...International humanitarian law provides that victims of armed conflict, whether displaced or not, should be respected, protected against the effects of war, and provided with impartial assistance (UNHCR; guide to International Refugee Law).

The World have had faced with another atrocity which initially started in the Middle East and then spread to whole of Europe. A wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in Middle East and North Africa in the beginning of 2010 which challenged authoritarian regimes. These protests that took place in the MENA region have been called the Arab Spring.

However, one specific case among those uprisings has affected policies of European and Middle Eastern countries for a long time span. In March 2011, Syria's government led by Bashar al Assad faced a challenge to its authority when pro-democracy protests erupted in the country where protesters have demanded an end to the authoritarian practices of the Assad regime. The turning point was when the opposition militias began to form where the conflict had expanded into a full-fledged civil war. In June 2011, when government responded heavily with armed forces in northern town of Jisr al-Shugur, it was the beginning of mass flux of Syrian refugees to various countries starting with Turkey. At the end of 2011, many international organizations tried to bring conflict to an end however when civil war has turned into a proxy war for major countries in Syria, it was clear that the conflict will continue for a while. This conflict in Syria has directly affected many people living in the country where they had to leave their houses for pursuing a secure life. Main issue that the article will take a look at is; how traditional-security approach affected the crisis and the importance of new security approach which focuses on humanitarian security.

This article initially will mention how international community, especially the main refugee taker countries, responded to the crisis. Countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt were major refugee takers in the region where in fact their domestic politics have been affected due to the major refugee influx. Issues such as housing, xenophobia and employment of refugees have surfaced. On the other hand, major nations like USA and Russia have indirectly affected the civil war in Syria where their foreign policies evolved regarding the issue. Afterwards,

the article will discuss the response of International Organizations involvement, United Nations, and European Union, to the Syrian civil war.

Second part will take a deeper look to the concept of security in the global world. Initially, mentioning on the UN Security Council and the concept of security, we will take a look at the classic nation-based security then to new understanding of securitization; traditional state-centric argument of security will be mentioned, and the Welsh School understanding of security will be mentioned. The article argues that traditional security approach is not able to respond to new crises such as the Syrian conflict where it leaves out the importance of humanitarian approach and the article demonstrates how states and International Organizations' followed the traditional security approach which cost many peoples' lives. Article stresses out that the humanitarian approach of the Welsh school should be adapted in political arena where it can protect civilian lives in the future.

In the final part, the article will take a look at European Union's approach to the refugee crisis. How has European Union acted on the crisis, is there a common EU approach or is it fragmented? How the policies reflected on the crisis will be discussed. The article demonstrates that humanitarian security approach is a must in the future as current traditional approach left many civilians to face humanitarian issues. It should be stressed out that the article will contribute to the literature that maintains a change in the security discourse both in academia and in political arena by demonstrating humanitarian issues which Syrian refugees has faced.

8.2. Syrian refugees and neighbouring countries: challenges for Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt during times of mass influx

8.2.1. Jordan and Syrian refugees

Neighbouring countries of Syria have had an influx of refugees when civil war broke in Syria. Among those countries Jordan has received nearly around 700,000 refugees whereas before the crisis took place there were already 1, 5 million Syrians living in Jordan. The beginning of the Syrian civil war for Jordan implicated an open door policy for the Syrian refugees in order to strategically maintain its position as neutral along the government forces and the opposition groups

(Beaujouan & Rasheed, 2020). Currently Syrian refugees constitute more than 20% of Jordan's population. Escalation of the conflict led Jordan to securitise the issue by creating Syrian Refugee Camp Directorate that aimed to monitor the refugees' which after a year replaced by Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate. One of the main issues that Jordanian governments are facing regarding the refugee crisis is that the border of Jordan started to present a serious threat where transformation of the Jordanian border into a war zone increased the chance of infiltration of dangerous elements (Hawamdeh & Al-Qteishat, 2018). Between 2014 and 2017 ISIS released 16 videos threatening Jordanian government where in some videos the King was threatened by Jordanian Member of Parliament relatives. These threats have drastically changed the perception of Jordanian citizens towards Syrian refugees where some polls identified that major part of Jordanian population were opposed to accepting new refugees. Apart from security issues, Jordan and its citizens are facing severe economic issues in relation to mass influx of Syrian refugees to country. Government has faced an impact on its' economy as it has seen pressure on the country's resources and infrastructure which maximized the budget deficit, causing rent and food prices to rise, and as the civil war continued all trade activities between Jordan and Syria nearly came to an end which affected Jordan's Syria market. In addition to these, large number of Jordanians looking for jobs is increasing where the employment situation created a job deficit leading to a wage reduction. These effects' can be noted by the example of health sector of Jordanian government. Initially, when the first wave of Syrian refugees arrived at Jordan; the government had allowed free access to health facilities for Syrian refugees. However, Jordanian people were not able to use free health care because of the overcrowded medical centres which created tensions among Jordanians' and Syrian refugees' which also affected Jordan economically. As a matter, Jordanian authorities took the decision in 2015 that Syrians were not to be allowed to entitle free medical services.

8.2.2. Turkey and Syrian refugees

Turkey has implemented an open door for displaced Syrians and the total number of people who entered the country was more than 3 million where it is one of the countries that have accepted major numbers of Syrian refugees during the period. Along with the large numbers of Syrian refugees entering to Turkey, the

perception of Turkish citizens against Syrians are increasingly getting worse and they feel that Syrians are changing the culture of Turkey whereas they also believe that Syrians' are taking jobs from the hands of Turkish people. As a result of these perceptions of Turkish communities, intercommunal violence increased in 2017, where at least 35 people died where 24 of them were Syrians. Since the beginning of Syrian civil war, Turkey has adopted many policies in order to regulate refugee influx which had many various outcomes. The government have given autonomy to local authorities in order to deal with the refugee issue where treasury allocated to municipalities for refugee needs. These funds, as mentioned above, paved the way for increased tensions among Turkish and Syrians'.

Among those policies one of the important aspects is to provide education for refugee children where 370,000 of nearly one million school-age Syrian children are not enrolled and another 230,000 still attend the temporary education centres being phased out as Syrian children transition into the public-school system (Turkey's Syrian Refugees, 2018). Providing education for Syrian children is still one of the biggest challenges for Turkish government for dealing with the refugee crisis. Another important aspect is one that is similar to what Jordanian government faced with; Syrian refugees who have remained in Turkey instead of moving to Europe tend to have little education and few skills where most of them do not speak Turkish. According to the International Crisis Group (2018), nearly a million Syrian refugees work in the informal sector where only 15, 000 have only obtained the permits needed for formal employment. In order to be able to overcome this challenge Turkish authorities have to give vocational trainings and Turkish language courses to the Syrian refugees to achieve successful integration of Syrian refugees.

On the other hand, in order to tackle many issues of irregular migration of Syrian refugees to Turkey, in 2016 European Union and Turkey had agreed on refugee deal. The deal included five important issues which had to be applied by both sides;

a. Irregular Syrian migrants crossing from Turkey to Greece had to be sent back to Turkey,

b. For each Syrian refugee that settled in Greece and taken by Turkey, one Syrian refugee will be settled by authorities to Greece especially whom not have tried illegal ways of migration,

c. European Union to apply no-visa requirements for Turkish nationals,

d. EU to grant financial aid to Turkey for the settlement and refugee camps of Turkey- around 3 billion euros,

e. Turkey's application to the European Union to be re-energised by each side.

However, this deal has had failed in many ways regarding assistance of settlement of Syrian refugees successfully in Turkey. Cultural conflicts among Turkish and Syrian refugees are continuing, many Syrian refugees are still unemployed, and many Syrian children are not able to continue their education. On the other side, Turkey's financial situation has taken a great hit as a result of Syrian refugee crisis.

8.2.3. Lebanon and Syrian refugees

Lebanon is one of the highest Syrian refugee taker countries as well where according to the UNHCR around 1, 2 million refugees have fled from Syria to Lebanon. One of the main problems that Lebanon has faced is nothing like abovementioned countries. Large influx of Syrian refugees to the Lebanon has put a pressure on demographic structure. Just under a year, nearly a million Syrian refugees have fled to Lebanon which in turn destabilized the country and paved the way for more issues. Before the Syrian civil war broke out, one of the major trading partners for Lebanon was Syria where the war affected trading routes in the region. Lebanese exports had to shift to more expensive sea shipments which put a more economic burden on the country (Beaujouan & Rasheed 2020). In addition to economic impacts of this refugee crisis in Lebanon, education sector has also taken a hit whereas Lebanese government provided costs of education and it deeply affected the state. Teachers have had to do double shifts as a result of increase in students after the refugee influx. In health sector, as many sought healthcare, the government announced high deficits as well. Like other cases Jordan and Turkey, Lebanese labour market mobility has taken a great hit as well. Statistics identified that unemployment rates reached to 10% where labour force hiked by 50%. Not only jobs that require qualification become more competitive, even to get a low paid jobs became challenging as a result of unregistered work force which employers exploited in order to pay lesser salaries through Syrian refugees. Researches indicate that the refugees in the country receive average of

277 USD per month which is 40% lower than the minimum monthly average (Beaujouan & Rasheed 2020).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports indicate that there are more than a million registered refugees in Lebanon whereas the government indicates that the true number is 1.5 million. As Human Rights Watch (2018) reports indicate, Lebanon's residency policy makes it difficult for Syrians to maintain legal status which heightens risks of exploitation and abuse, and it also restricts refugees' access to work, education and healthcare. Since 2019 there are Syrian refugees returning to Syria under localized agreements and they are indicating the cause of returning as of harsh policies and deteriorating conditions in Lebanon.

8.2.4. Egypt and Syrian Refugees

Egypt hosts various refugees with various backgrounds. There are at least 254.726 refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt where despite the absence of a land border with Syria, there are around 129.210 Syrian refugees living in Egypt. The government of Egypt has been allowing Syrian refugees to enter its borders and grants them six-month renewable residence permits. As abovementioned countries, Egypt as well faces difficulties while trying to host Syrian refugees and vice versa refugees are facing many challenges in Egypt. Continued price hikes of regulated goods and services are affecting vulnerable groups in Egypt and therefore many refugees are not able to meet their basic needs and are increasingly dependent on humanitarian assistance. The government of Egypt has granted Syrian refugee children full access to public education equal as Egyptian nationals where the access is extended to all stages of the education cycle. However, as a result of refugee influx classrooms are overcrowded, there are depleted resources and long distances to schools are still affecting both the government and the refugee children. On the other hand, Syrian refugees have access to health care system in Egypt. However, still as affected by large numbers of refugees, many patients have to pay 70 percent of the services. As same as mentioned three countries, Egypt and Syrian refugees in Egypt face labour related, economical issues. One- third of Egyptians are living below the poverty rates which require government to take drastic measures. Currently many refugees are working as informal employers in which they require durable solutions for their

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employment. In short, rising costs and long waiting times to obtain the necessary documentation and residence permit leave Syrians in Egypt in precarious situation where both host communities and Syrian refugees have difficulties in accessing formal employment with their livelihoods at stake.

United Nations, Concept of Human Security and European Union Borders

United Nations have had been established on October 24, 1945 which was the second multipurpose international organization established in the 20th century that was worldwide in scope and membership. According to the UN Charter it aims to;

...to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights...to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

After two World Wars', atrocities against humanity and mass destruction, it was seen as a must to establish such an organization in order to protect fundamental human rights and security around the globe. Initially succeeding in maintaining the order, the organization has faced many other challenges which in fact forced it to evolve in a way that to solve newly arisen issues. The initial aim of the United Nations when it was established focused on preventing wars among states however at the beginning of 21st century it struggled to address new issues such as humanitarian crisis, new types of wars- civil wars, international terrorism, refugee flows, devastation, and global financial disruptions. In order to adopt these new challenges, initially in 1994 the concept of human security was established UNDP's Global Human Development Report (HDR) which was followed at 66th General Assembly (UNGA) in 2012. In 2016, United Nations prepared a handbook in order to guide policymakers who plan to integrate human security approach into their work. The main thing that makes this different from the orthodox definition of security is that people have 'the right to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty, despair, and fear...with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential (Koprulu, 2018). Territorial security is not as important as the human security for this approach (Intriligator, 2011). The Handbook identifies 6 important points which the General Assembly endorsed in order to create common understanding of human security within the United Nations System. Initial point that handbook underlines is that people have the right to live free from poverty and despair where everyone enjoys their rights with

equal opportunities. Secondly it supposes that people oriented policies and responses should be taken in order to empower all. Thirdly, human security should develop and adhere to human rights. Most important point is that human security does not replace State security.

Upon these principles the handbook states that governments retain the primary role and responsibility for ensuring the survival, livelihood and dignity their citizens. The role of the international community is to complement and provide the necessary support to governments, upon their request, so as to strengthen their capacity to respond to current and emerging threats. Human security requires greater collaboration and partnership among governments, international organization and civil society.

It is important that, since 1945 United Nations have started mention human security apart from state security which affected the academic papers as well. It can be identified that human security embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict which encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that everyone has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential (Koprulu, 2018). In contrast to state security, human security puts the individual at the centre of debate, analysis and policy. The state is a collective instrument to protect human life and enhance human welfare. The fundamental components of human security of people against threats to personal safety and life which can be put at risk by external aggression but also by factors within a country including 'security forces' (Spijkers, 2007). In his book, Barry Buzan (1983) divided states into two categories; maximal state and minimal state. Minimal state arises from the John Locke's concept of social contract where state should not contradict with its people as it has been founded in order to provide security for its' citizens. On the other hand, maximal state grows from the assumption that the state is or should be either considerably more than sum of its parts or something different from them and therefore it has own interests (Buzan, 1983). Therefore, taking Barry Buzan's definition on two concepts of views of states towards security, United Nations' is pursuing to make nation states' more close to 'minimal state' concept by assuming the leadership in promoting the humanitarian security concept with its' declaration's and new agenda. On the other hand, Welsh School, which is based on the pioneering work of Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones, sets out from a criticism of traditional security studies and its

state- centric nature where they focus on human emancipation while reconceptualising security studies. For Ken Booth and Wyn Jones, the realist understanding of security as 'power' and 'order' can never lead to 'true' security where true security can only be achieved by people or groups if they do not deprive others of it (Booth, 1991; Jones, 1995). Both authors indicate that sovereign states are not the main provider of security where states are actually the main causes of insecurity. It should be identified that current refugee crisis was caused by the unstable Syrian regime which caused suffering among it's' citizens where other states' one way or another involved in those atrocities. Furthermore, many states' have closed their borders for refugees where many have died and the UN, supposed promoter of the security of human lives, was not able to stop human suffering. Many states' have had choose to conceptualize their own national agenda for the crisis where many human rights and human security had been ignored and interests of states were put forward. As it will be identified below, European Union member states have also followed the UN where they chose their own interests' which deprived many civilians of their lives.

European Union borders both internally and externally has faced important challenges during mass influx of refugees. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has issued various action plans for European Union in order to be able to manage influx in a way that refugees' will not face human rights violations according to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/290 in 2012 (UNGA 2012). Initial point was to protect people's right to safety and asylum. Secondly it has identified that refugees should quickly be identified in order to provide asylum and support. Thirdly, solidarity among European Union member states to be provided in the processes of mass influx of refugees. The other points that were mentioned by the UNHCR included offering legal options to refugees in order to prevent them from taking dangerous journeys which can put their lives at risk, to save lives at sea, to welcome them to their new homes along with proper integration procedures and to assist refugees thriving in their settled location.

However European Union Member States have securitized refugee issue where human security disregarded which caused many criticisms against the European Union. As mentioned above, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon have faced many challenges while receiving mass refugees- financially, culturally which in turn refugees have also had difficulties where they had hard times finding jobs

and also faced xenophobia. It can be argued that refugees faced the same problems in European Union Member States. Despite the fact of common act on border issue by the European Union, many EU Member States have taken arbitrary decisions which made legitimacy of European Union to be questioned. Several academics via United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) have discussed about the current refugee crisis. Laura Zanfrini argued that even though the European Union depicts itself as the cradle of human rights it is still dominated by the securitarian logic. Throughout its' history European Union have pursued a more unified approach where borders among the member countries nearly been abolished (United Nations, 2021). Until the beginning of mass influx of refugees, no border controls among Member States took place. As Zanfrini argued, Syrian refugee crisis have shown to the world that logic of human rights conflicted with nation state's exclusion of undesirables where this has shown that our 'national fences' are clearly limiting the ability to protect poor and vulnerable (United Nations, 2021).

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, refugee crisis became a phenomenon that deeply affected the borders of European Union Member States where security threats permeated political discourse focusing on border closures where centre-right political leaders often depicted refugees as criminals not to be accepted in European Union territory and adopted exclusionary policies and most of the research on EU border security has focused on securitization, conceived of as the capacity to control borders, manage threats and identify spheres of orders (Panebianco, 2021). In their paper Stefania Panebianco (2021) indicated that Central Mediterranean route between Libya and Italy represents the epicentre of the migration crisis in the Mediterranean and in 2018 when Italian Ministry of the Interior declared 'closed ports' policy which ensuing refusal to let SAR NGOs' vessels enter Italian ports, marked a peak in tense relations between the Italian government and humanitarian actors broadly involved in migration management at the peripheries. Reports from Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and SOS Mediterranee (SOS Med) have denounced at least 1,151 refugee seekers, including children, have died and more than 10,000 forcibly deported to Libya since the Italian government closed its ports to humanitarian ships arriving to Europe from across the Mediterranean Sea.

In Central Europe, Hungarian government lost three court cases regarding breaches of international obligations. Court of Justice of the European Union

(CJEU) ruled that Hungary had failed to fulfil EU law obligations by refusing to relocate asylum-seekers within the mandatory scheme set up in solidarity with Italy and Greece where a month later the Court also ruled that Hungary's automatic detention of asylum-seekers in border detention centres known as ''transit zones'' breached EU legislation as the detention measures were disproportionate, exceeded the maximum time limit, and could not be challenged in court and while initially protesting the judgement, the government vacated the transit zones the same month. On the other side currently refugees and asylum seekers at the Poland-Belarus border, the UN rights and office and UN refugee agency on Friday urged all parties to respect human rights and refrain from using them for political ends. Many refugees have been crossing Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland through Belarus where tensions arisen between Poland and Belarus which Polish government refused entrance of refugees. Humanitarian agencies have indicated that 13 people have died at the border, where many have suffered in a cold, damp forest with little food or water as frigid winter sets in.

8.3. Conclusion

Even though Syrian refugee crisis have been 10 years of issue, it is not solved yet by neither International Organizations' nor by nation states. Many of the refugees have faced human rights violations in countries that they have settled. Apart from that, many of them have died as direct actions in the Mediterranean by the policies of states' as well. Concept of security has been widely discussed in the field of International Relations recently. Many scholars have suggested that human security concept is a must and International Organizations should promote it rather than traditional understanding of 'state security' concept. United Nations have tried to promote human security concept through publishing and actions however many has failed through the Syrian refugee crisis. As of European Union, being a cradle of human rights, many Member States have ignored EU policies which paved the way for questioning the legitimacy of European Union. Syrian crisis has demonstrated that currently major actors in the political arena accepts the traditional understanding of security where states are seen as referent objects where it disregards the new challenges such as refuge crises. In order to promote the importance of human rights and human security, major actors should adapt to Welsh school of security understanding where true security can be provided if

human security shown more importance. Still, many refugees are suffering in Mediterranean area where it leaves International Organizations', regional organizations and states to decide whether they will choose human rights' over traditional understanding of the concept of security.

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