

POLITICAL REFLECTION

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Reflections on the Turkey Syria Conundrum

by Assoc. Prof. Mark Meirowitz

**The Era of Coercive
Diplomacy in Iranian
Nuclear Deal**
by Rahimullah Kakar

**International Solidarity
and Burden-Sharing:
The Case of Syrian Refugees**
by Emrah Atar

**Shall the Court Subject
Counter-Terrorism Law
to Judicial Review?
National Security vs
Human Rights**
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**The Twilight Zone of
Political Transition:
Between Revolution
and Democratic Change**
by Dr Marco Marsili

**Rural Afghan Women
as Agents for Change
and the Failure of
Liberal Peacebuilding**
by Sarah Edgcumbe



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Interview Editor: *Emrah Atar*

Research Assistant: *Furkan Sahin*

Submissions:

To submit articles or opinion, please email:

Rahman.dag@cesran.org

or

editors@cesran.org

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International Solidarity and Burden-Sharing: The Case of Syrian Refugees

Emrah Atar*

emrah.atar@manchester.ac.uk

Syrian Refugee Crisis

The world is currently witnessing a period of unprecedented human movement, which represents one of the most significant problems worldwide in recent times. According to a report by the United Nations (2019), the upsurge of international migrants worldwide has been phenomenal; exceeding 250 million currently, thus, having recorded over 45 million displaced persons in a decade between the years 2000 to 2010. In recent years, refugee crises have been increasing in many countries. Syria, Rohingya, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Venezuela are the most refugee-giving countries (Global Trends- UNHCR, 2019).

Additionally, The Syrian Refugee Crisis is one of the most heart-breaking turmoil in human history. The onset of war and unrest in Syria has resulted in over: 6 million people internally displaced; sadly, it has been estimated that slightly over 6 million escaped the war and are now refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (UNHCR, 2019). Observers believe that the high death toll is a consequence of the bombings by the government in a bid to control the frequent protests by the civilian population in the nation. The rate of deaths and the number of displaced individuals are reported to have increased at the time foreign powers or the outside parties decided to engage in the protracted crisis situation. The Syrian refugee crisis, however, has a closer relationship with countries and international organisations. The crisis as well influences the level of the international cooperation, and the policies put in place to share the burdens resulting from the situation of the war at the moment. Therefore, the Syrian Civil War that began in 2011 came at an enormous human cost.

** Interview
Editor of the
Political
Reflection
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It has been about eight years since the war broke out in Syria, and Turkey continues to host the largest number of refugees worldwide since that date. More than three and a half million Syrians have fled their country and sought refuge in Turkey since spring 2011 (UNHCR, 2019; Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey, 2019). Syrians have come to Turkey for asylum; as an emergency measure due to the civil war in their country. Turkey, on the other hand, has taken the necessary emergency measures for this temporary situation, which in the first place is expected to be short-term, and these people have been described as “guests” at first hand in Turkey. However, Syrians in Turkey cannot be identified as refugees, asylum seekers, migrants or guests under asylum law. Syrians in Turkey can be described as a new concept of “temporary protection” status (Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey, 2019). The temporary protection regime has three main elements for those people: an open-door policy for all Syrians; no forced returns to Syria; unlimited duration of stay in Turkey.

International Cooperation and Burden Sharing

Managing such a massive humanitarian problem is complicated; the hosting country governments are trying to mitigate the problems by cooperating with the branches of government. However, new bodies are needed, and in this context, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have played a significant role in the crisis. The financial support of international institutions on this issue is deficient. It is also clear that there is a need to improve cooperation, which is as important as a financial contribution. In this context, the role and cooperation of local governments and national and international organisations ought to be taken seriously. There are three main goals to attain while addressing the tools of international responsibility-sharing (Martin et al., 2018); to prevent the situations that cause people to be displaced; to maintain adequate protection for refugees and displaced persons while addressing undue costs for host countries and communities; and to promote solutions, including local integration, return, and resettlement. Hence, international cooperation stakeholders in this area aim to accommodate refugees on their territory, as well as to provide a more rational distribution of responsibilities among states involving costs and disadvantages.

The Syrian refugee crisis has not just affected Turkey and the Middle East: it has also affected the UN, EU and other countries. The number of refugees is increasing every day in the world, and the burden of hosting countries and supporting refugees needs to be shared more equitably. Countries that receive and host refugees make an immense contribution from their limited resources for the collective good, and indeed to the cause of humanity (Global Compact on Refugees, 2018). To address burden-sharing and provide better response to the changing and growing needs of people on the move, the United National General Assembly (UNGA) has unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants

on 19 September 2016 (Global Compact on Refugees, 2018). In the New York Declaration, 193 States committed to a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees.

The 1951 Convention to which the Republic of Turkey is a party including the 1967 Protocol, relating to the Status of Refugees recognises that a satisfactory solution to refugee situation cannot be achieved without international cooperation, as the grant of asylum may place heavy burdens on specific countries unduly (Global Compact on Refugees, 2018). Responsibility sharing is a fundamental principle of international responses to refugee crises. Burden-sharing contributions could take many forms like the provision of materials, technical or financial aid as well as physical relocation of people through humanitarian evacuation or resettlement (Ineli-Ciger, 2019). The United Nations has taken a primary role in providing and coordinating support for refugees through UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies. Nonetheless, it can be said that the United Nations support has been inadequate in this regard and that the necessary steps have been delayed until today.

On the other hand, this issue has created a huge and significant problem within the European Union. The migration of the people from the Aegean Sea to Europe poses a big problem for them. The European Union has displayed inadequate commitment in this regard from the very beginning; resorting to rhetoric rather than needed action. Approximately 850 thousand refugees crossed the Mediterranean from Turkey to Greece, and some have sought asylum from EU countries (Data2.unhcr.org, 2019).

EU-Turkey proposed a Joint Action Plan (JAP) to assist Turkey in the management of the migration crisis (European Union, 2015). The JAP identifies measures to be implemented by the EU and Turkey with the aim of (a) providing support to the Syrians under temporary protection and their Turkish hosting communities and (b) improving cooperation to prevent irregular migration flows to the EU. On 18 March 2016, the European Council and Turkey reached an agreement aimed at stopping the flow of irregular migration via Turkey to Europe.

Here is a summary of the salient decisions that have been made regarding this agreement (Bauböck, 2017; European Union, 2015; European Parliament, 2016).

- All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey;
- For every Syrian being returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled to the EU;
- Turkey will take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for irregular migration opening from Turkey to the EU;

- The fulfilment of the visa liberalisation roadmap will be accelerated to lift the visa requirements for Turkish citizens at the latest by the end of June 2016. Turkey will take all the necessary steps to fulfil the remaining requirements;
- The EU will, in close cooperation with Turkey, further speed up the disbursement of the initially allocated €3 billion under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

Turkey has threatened several times to terminate the agreement, because, firstly, the EU has not paid the projected amount and secondly, the EU has not implemented visa freedom, provided under the agreement, to citizens of Turkey. Under the agreement, Turkey was promised €6 billion in financial aid to be used by the Turkish government to fund projects for Syrian refugees. According to the EU Commission, 3 billion euros have flowed into Turkey to cover the costs of raising half a million Syrian children, whereas Turkey has spent more than \$40 billion (Anadolu Agency, 2019). Moreover, Turkey has been classified as the most generous country in the world once again 2019 with 8.4 billion of humanitarian aid (Development Initiatives, 2019).

Even if Turkey seems to have established good communication, which is insufficient in this regard, with the United Nations, it is challenging to say the same things for the European Union. Most of these initial tenets of the agreement have not been implemented. Although Turkey has blocked the flow of refugees to Europe, the fulfilment of the requirements of this agreement is a big question mark for the European Union because neither visa liberalisation nor most of the other promised benefits have been fulfilled since the agreement took place.

Challenges to Comprehensive Refugee Response

The UN, host countries, other humanitarian agencies and the rest of the world ought to take a primary role in delivering and coordinating support for refugees. In doing so, the world needs to act in unity and solidarity. International sharing of responsibility may promote protection for persons whose rights have been violated or infringed by states that cannot ensure their safety. Thus, organisations and states must deal with the challenges and difficulties to provide better service for those vulnerable people.

The first challenge is state sovereignty sharing (Martin et al., 2018). Almost all states want their rules to be enforced within their borders. Therefore, the government-controlled process is implemented in many scenarios. However, to respond effectively to this kind of crisis, states must go through an entirely different process of government control and forge a better partnership with UN agencies, other countries and NGOs. Sovereignty prevents governments from giving more space to other allied entities to broaden their help and services to those people.

The second challenge is the lack of having a dynamic international refugee policy (Boswell, 2003). It is tough to try to solve these kinds of crisis with old strategies and wait for it to yield results. Under the leadership of the United Nations, a platform must be established within the countries that host most refugees. Because finding effective policies to address the causes and solutions of displacement requires the participation of international organisations and national foreign ministries. In order to be more effective in the face of such an unexpected tragedy, the existing policies should be reviewed, and new steps and policies must be implemented.

Funding and other forms of support are other challenges for the international community (Türk and Garlick, 2016). Countries that host most migrants cannot be expected to be left to their own destinies, financially and morally. When it comes to a show of concern, unfortunately, everyone gets in queue well and tries to share their good wishes for those people, but when the time approaches for the action, very little is often achieved. The lack of financial resources has always been the bane of the host countries. Unfortunately, host countries are left alone in this regard by many organisations and countries.

Conclusion

The government of Turkey has provided basic needs of Syrians such as shelter, education, healthcare, food and hygiene. Despite the praiseworthy efforts of the host countries and the UN, as well as other international and local humanitarian agencies, the support does not meet the humanitarian standards set by these governments or organisations, and the situation of Syrian refugees remains unsolved and their future in limbo. In almost all host countries, there are particularly serious concerns about legal protection, integration and participation in economic activities, access to education, access to health care and livelihood opportunities.

Responsibility sharing is one of the fundamental principles of international responses to refugee crises. Often, however, it plays a significant role in responding collectively and cooperatively to large-scale movements of refugees and displaced persons. Burden-sharing is a key to the protection of refugees and the resolution of the refugee problem. The problem of heavy burdens on certain countries cannot, therefore, be achieved without international cooperation, solidarity and burden-sharing. Burden-sharing would help governments and NGOs to mitigate circumstances of refugees economically, socially, politically or environmentally, in addition, it would help governments make these people feel comfortable and safe. However, unfortunately, it has failed against the current crises. Therefore, this is a complex multidimensional problem with social and political ramifications shaking the entire region.

Wealthy and developed countries are generally silent on such incidents, not doing enough to share the cost of protecting people who have left

everything behind. Efforts should be made to reduce the negative impact of refugees on host countries. Lessons should be learned from the past; also, a similar crisis in the future ought to be prevented from being loaded into a single country. Even though the world has failed again, the greater global cooperation and responsibility-sharing for refugees is needed in a new global plan based on the rights of refugees, which requires a more predictable governance structure to manage responses to significant displacement challenges.

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