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BALKAN HUMAN CORRIDOR

Essays on the Refugee and Migrant Crisis from

Scholars and Opinion Leaders in Southeast Europe

BALKAN HUMAN CORRIDOR

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Foreword

David L. Phillips

The refugee and migrant crisis is a huge challenge. It demands the United Nations and international organizations uphold international humanitarian law, while providing protection and assistance. The crisis divides Europe, fueling Islamophobia, xenophobic views, and undermining European values. It has also exacerbated bilateral tensions between countries, namely Athens and Skopje, over transit arrangements and reciprocal responsibility.

This publication - The Balkan Human Corridor - is a collection of essays from scholars and opinion makers in Southeast Europe. Contributing authors explore some of the thorniest issues concerning national capacity and security. Our publication is offered to policy-makers in concerned countries, as well as leaders in Northern and Western Europe who are

grappling with the national and collective response to the crisis. The publication is part of a broader project undertaken by the Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights. The "Southeast Europe Dialogue Project" fosters contact, communication, and cooperation between officials, politicians, journalists, and civil society in Athens and Skopje. The Project seeks to derive practical benefits for civil society. It also tries to create an improved climate conducive to resolution of bilateral issue.

I commend the authors for their quality contributions. I also want to express appreciation to the Foundation Alliance of Civilizations in Skopje, the Institute for Political Research Skopje, and Institute of International Relations at Panteion University in Athens for acting as co-publishers. I would also like to express special appreciation for editing and production assistance to Jelena Dzombic and Ivana Popchev.

The refugee and migrant crisis casts a long shadow over Europe and has muddled regional issues. It is both a serious problem and an important opportunity to find ways of working together in service of those fleeing conflict.

We hope this publication advances the common goals of humanity.

Sincerely,

David L. Phillips

Director, Program on Peace-building and Rights Institute for the Study of Human Rights Columbia University

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The surge of migrants and refugees: cause, origins, and data

Dimitris Keridis

There was a dramatic increase in the number of illegal crossings into the European Union during 2015. While there were 72,500 crossings in 2012 and 283,500 thousand in 2014, the number exploded to 1.8 million crossings in 2015, reports Frontex Risk Analysis Network.[1] According to UNHCR, the majority of these crossings, around one million, took place through the Mediterranean Sea routes, and, more specifically, from Turkey into Greece, through the eastern Aegean Sea.[2] The total number of arrivals in Greece increased from 77,000 in 2014 to 911,000 in 2015. Whereas in the past, prior to 2014, most arrivals involved land crossings, mainly over the river border between Greece and Turkey in Thrace, in 2015 more than 90 percent of arrivals were by sea, with the Greek island of Lesbos being the primary destination

followed by the islands of Chios and Samos. From these and the other Greek islands across from the Turkish coast, refugees and migrants were transferred to the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on their way to Central Europe, in what became known as the Balkan corridor.

Greek Police statistics indicate that the number of sea crossings increased 1,905 percent between 2014 and 2015, from 43,500 to 872,500, of which half a million came from Syria, 213,000 from Afghanistan, 92,000 from Iraq followed by citizens of Pakistan and Iran.[3] Among Syrians there were many women, children and older people. However, incoming Afghanis were mostly young men. The crisis peaked in October 2015 with 218,000 sea crossings into Greece but the number remained substantial until March 2016, when, following the signing of the EU-Turkey agreement, the influx started receding. However, according to the *Financial Times*, "…some worry the problem is merely being moved elsewhere." In April the numbers of migrants reaching

Italy exceeded the total for Greece for the first time since June 2015, according to Frontex, the EU border agency. Some 8,300 migrants were detected on the central Mediterranean route compared with 2,700 on the Turkey-Greece crossing."[4]

According to UNHCR, there are around 15 million refugees in the world today, excluding the internally displaced people and the 5.1 million Palestinian refugees, registered with UNRWA since 1949. Syrians constitute the largest group, followed by Afghanis and Somalis. Due to the Syrian civil war, Turkey became the largest refugee-hosting country worldwide in total numbers, for the first time ever, but Lebanon remained the country with the highest concentration of refugees in per capita terms.[5] Today, it is estimated that some 3.1 million Syrians are in Turkey alone,[6] with only 10 percent in refugee camps and the rest in various Turkish cities, according to a Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations' report.[7] It is important to keep this broader

picture in mind because while the increase in refugees and illegal migrants heading to Europe in 2015 was dramatic, the actual number reaching the European Union, which comprises 28 Member States, with a population of around 510 million people, remained relatively small, especially when compared with the number of refugees reaching some smaller and much poorer countries outside Europe.

Why the surge? The answer to this question is not so straight forward. There is the obvious reason of the Syrian civil war. Indeed, while violence in Syria erupted in 2011 and intensified after 2012, the summer of 2015 was a turning point. The reversal of Assad's fortunes, with the help of Russia, meant the indefinite prolongation of the war and persuaded many Syrians to leave and seek permanent resettlement elsewhere, preferably in Europe. The Islamic State's reach from Syria's eastern wastelands into its Kurdish and Arabic heartland, in the north and the west, together with the intensification of the fight around Syria's main city, Aleppo, further contributed to

the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Syrians.

However, there is no consensus that the objective realities on the ground in Syria alone caused the surge. Far from it, the cause of the surge is hotly debated in Europe, as the refugee crisis became highly politicized and polarized between two opposite visions. One is best represented by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and the other Hungary's Prime Minister Victor Orban. For Orban, there was no influx of refugees but an "invasion" of illegal immigrants, as even Syrians came to Europe not directly from war-torn Syria but through safe Turkey. Furthermore, the flow included many non-Syrians, coming from poor third-world nations. According to Orban, this "invasion" took place because of the misguided perceptions and the policy mistakes of the passive liberal elites of Europe who espouse multi-culturalism at the expense of Europe's Christian identity. Critics of Merkel, both inside and outside Germany, pointed to her statements, welcoming the Syrian refugees

stranded in Hungary in September 2015, as a main reason for turning the refugee wave into a tsunami.[8] Similarly, the newly elected Greek government of Alexis Tsipras, a radical leftist, has been accused of foolishly abolishing all border controls and doing away with the detention of all illegal entrants, as applied by the previous Greek administration, led by Antonis Samaras, a conservative.

Critics claim that when it comes to influxes of such magnitude, being "humane" has the unintended consequence of acting as a magnet, attracting more people and complicating, rather than resolving, the refugee problem. They point to the fact that whereas, in the past, Italy was the preferred gate of entry into Europe, after the election of Tsipras to the Greek premiership, in January 2015, Greece became, by far, the most heavily trafficked entrance into Europe. Furthermore, the influx receded when the "inhumane" closing of the border by the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took place, effectively blocking the Balkan corridor.

It is true that the Greek government included many activists and supporters of migrant and refugee rights. But even Greeks who did not belong to the Left showed a certain understanding for the government's argument. Faced with Turkey's intransigence, boats entering the Greek territorial waters could only be escorted to the nearest Greek port and not be pushed back towards Turkish waters, since this could easily have caused their sinking and the loss of human lives. However, when the pressure from Europe to do something and start controlling the flows mounted, Tsipras, quite realistically, subscribed to Merkel's plans for a deal with Turkey, that involved the return to Turkey of all people coming to Greece after March 20, 2016.

Apart from the "pushing" and "pulling" factors described above that directly contributed to the surge there has been a third set of indirect factors. These factors concerned the policies of other countries in Europe's borderlands. Italy, under the leadership of Matteo Renzi, abandoned the policy of "mare nostrum" and intensified

the patrolling of its sea borders during 2015. Morocco successfully cooperated with Spanish authorities to effectively control the land and sea border between the two countries. On the contrary, Turkey, faced with a humanitarian crisis within its borders, a failed policy in Syria and Europe's indifference, did not do much to stop or, even limit, the smuggling of hundreds of thousands of people from its coasts.

The refugee crisis afflicting Europe in 2015 was the result of many factors, with each factor pointing to a different culprit and requiring a course for future action. While there has been a certain rise in the "demand" for crossing illegally into Europe, the incoherent and ineffective border controlling and refugee/immigration policy on the part of the EU as a whole exacerbated the problem. The increased "supply" of illegal, uncontrolled, undocumented and, often, chaotic crossings further stimulated the demand to migrate in the first place. As a consequence, during 2015, there was a continuing shift in the flows of people coming out of Syria from Lebanon

and Jordan towards Turkey, as the easiest conduit into Europe. Similarly, Turkey attracted many economic immigrants from Africa and Asia who wanted to cross into Europe. These events affirmed Europe's need for both an effective border control mechanism and a legal and organized way for immigration, grounded in the protection of refugees according to international law.

Discussion

Germany took a leading role defining Europe's initial response to the refugee and migrant crisis. Why did Germany throw open its doors? What caused Germany to shift its approach? Were domestic politics the only reason or were there other factors? As one of the leading countries in the EU, Member States followed Germany's lead at different stages of the crisis in 2015 and 2016.

Sotiris Serbos

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The impact of the migrant crisis on the complex bilateral relations between Greece and Macedonia

Ivan Damjanovski

The influx of more than a million refugees and economic migrants in 2015 and 2016 represents the biggest humanitarian crisis in recent European history. The crisis has damaged political cohesion and solidarity in the European Union (EU) and across Europe. The EU`s institutional and legislative response mechanisms proved inadequate to deal with the overwhelming population flow, prompting some states to take unilateral decisions which often "occurred with little prior coordination, resulting in tensions."[9]

German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated that the refugee and migrant flow could cause violent conflicts in the Balkans.[10] Concerns arise in the context of the

region`s recent history of ethnic conflict, poor economic output, and weak institutional capacities. The European Parliament recently warned that the pressures stemming from the migrant influx have already activated dormant political conflicts in the Western Balkans and risk turning into a major destabilizing factor.[11] The susceptibility of the region to political disputes in the wake of the migrant crisis was vividly displayed by the rapid escalation of a border dispute between Croatia and Serbia, which turned into a small "trade war" in September 2015. The dispute risked undermining a long and painful process of reconciliation between Croatia and Serbia.

The dispute started when Hungary decided to shut its border. When refugees and migrants warmed the Croatian border, Croatia accused Serbia of orchestrating the large influx of migrants and closed its border with Serbia. In response, Serbia banned all Croatian freight traffic and goods. Croatia responded with a similar ban on all Serbian vehicles and passengers.[12] Although the dispute was quickly resolved as a result of heavy

international pressure, it served as a stark remainder of lingering tensions in the region.

Other bilateral disputes involve Macedonia and Greece.

The countries are deadlocked in a long lasting dispute over the name "Macedonia" that negatively affects overall bilateral cooperation between the two neighbors. Although an UN sponsored Interim Accord signed between the two parties in 1995 provided a negotiating framework for overcoming differences, the process has so far failed to produce a mutually accepted solution. Furthermore, bilateral relations were further strained in 2008 when Greece blocked Macedonia`s entry into NATO. In 2009, Greece ratcheted up tensions by blocking Macedonia`s accession negotiations with the EU. Greece continues to obstruct Macedonia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The ascent of a new Greek government led by Syriza in 2015 marked a positive shift in the bilateral relations between the two states. In June 2015 Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias payed an official visit to Skopje.

It was the first visit from a senior Greek official in over a decade. His counterpart, Nikola Popovski, responded with an official visit to Athens in December 2015. It was the first visit by a senior Macedonian official since 2000. During the Kotzias trip to Skopje, confidence-building measures (CBMs) were initiated by the two governments. A set of 11 CBMs encompassed a number of topics such as education, culture, energy, infrastructure, healthcare, trade and diplomatic relations.[13] The process was further strengthened by the agreement for regular consultative meetings between the two Ministries for Foreign Affairs. So far, the Ministries have organized two rounds of talks on CBMs: the first held in Athens (October 2015) and the second in Skopje (April 2016). A round of political consultations was also held in Skopje (December 2015). A third round of talks on CBMs is planned for Athens (June 2016). The incremental enhancement of bilateral cooperation was potentially part of a process leading to eventual resolution of the name dispute.

However, the divergent responses of both countries

regarding the acceptance of refugees and migrants and the eruption of several border incidents revealed the fragile nature of Greece – Macedonia cooperation. The disagreements intensified towards the end of 2015. In November, Macedonia responded to the decision of Slovenia – followed by Croatia and Serbia – to limit the entry of refugees and migrants to nationals from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The decision was accompanied by the construction of a razor-wired fence on the Macedonia-Greece border. The border closure created a bottleneck near the Greek town of Idomeni where a large number of migrants found themselves stranded. The pile up of migrants intensified in February 2016 when Macedonia decided to further tighten the entry procedures and to exclude Afghan nationals. Macedonia's decision mirrored the decision of other countries on the Balkan route. The decision drew strong criticism from the Greek government, which accused Macedonia of evading its obligations to refugees.[14] The tensions continued to intensify in March 2016;

Macedonia responded to a domino effect of border closures along the Balkan route by completely shutting down its border with Greece. Foreign Minister Popovski accused the Greek government of deliberately funneling thousands refugees to the border "as a way of applying pressure to re-establish the illegal flow."[15] In addition, Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov publicly accused Greece of "insufficiently controlling the refugees."[16] He pointed out the unsatisfactory border cooperation and accused Greece of encouraging refugees and migrants to use illegal crossings. President Ivanov characterized these measures as a direct threat to Macedonia's national security.[17] These accusations instigated a reaction from the Greek Foreign Ministry, which stated that the President was misinformed.[18] This war of words reached its climax in April when many migrants and several police officers were injured after Macedonian police used tear gas and stun grenades to prevent an organized migrant attempt to tear down the border fence near Idomeni.[19] The incident triggered a fierce response from

the Greek Government, which issued two demarches to the Macedonian government condemning violence at the border.[20] Greece's President Prokopis Pavlopoulos stated that the incomprehensible behavior of Macedonian authorities showed there is no place for Macedonia in the EU and NATO. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said that Macedonia shamed Europe with its actions.[21]

These developments worsened the refugee and migrant crisis, while adversely affecting the already fragile bilateral relations between Macedonia and Greece. In addition to the recent demands from the EU for further strengthening of border cooperation between Greece and Macedonia[22], the sequence of border incidents in 2015 and 2016 showed that border administration in both countries would benefit from greater cooperation.[23] Improved working relations between the border management agencies on an operational level, more streamlined "on the spot" communications, and collaborative security screening should be prioritized. Cooperation should include concrete joint efforts to

prevent human trafficking across the Greek-Macedonia border. Multilateral frameworks of border management should be further enhanced. The recent meeting of Ministers of Foreign and Internal Affairs of Greece, Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria on the migration crisis held in Thessaloniki was a positive step.[24]

Officials will be judged by what they do, not what they say. More structured and committed diplomacy is needed from both Greece and Macedonia. Political elites should refrain from using the refugee and migrant crisis for domestic political purposes. Although opportunities for political cooperation have been affected by the political crisis in Macedonia, the CBM framework could have practical benefits, improving cooperation on refugee and migrant issues, as well as broader bilateral issues.

Discussion

The EU was completely unprepared for the refugee and migrant crisis, which was predictable. During the past

several years, the war in Syria precipitated an influx of two million refugees to the EU's borders. The countries on the main migrant route were, more or less, left on their own to deal with the difficulties posed by mass immigration. This situation created confusion in mutual relations. Instead of fostering cooperation towards common solution to the crisis, it increases pressure on already strained bilateral disputes between counties on the so called Eastern Mediterranean route.

Vladimir Bozinovski

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Effective protection of refugees under international law and European and national asylum norms and regulations: the case of Macedonia

Sašo Georgievski

In a climate of unstable Macedonian Government strategies and policies in response to the unprecedented influx of migrants heading north on the Balkan route, the Macedonian Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection[25] must be aligned with the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and to the complex set of directives and regulations comprising the new EU's Asylum package.[26] Overall, as it currently stands, the Asylum Law is largely aligned with international rules and standards, including the CEAS's legislation. Bearing that in mind, this paper will consider some aspects of the Law that have or may raise

difficulties when it comes to practical implementation amidst the ongoing refugee and migration crisis.

The Asylum Law offers two types of international protection[27], a concept devised by the ECtHR and first codified by the EU's Qualification Directive. Added to these protections, there is temporary protection in case of mass influx of refugees.[28] The first two concepts are developed in the Asylum Law according to the standard definitions provided by the Geneva Convention and/or the EU's asylum directives. Given that *mutatis mutandis,* in regards to their practical implementation, the same warning should be made as the one that has been put forward in the context of the later directives.[29] However, the Asylum Law correctly implies that granting of asylum merely recognizes the status that a refugee and/or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection already possess as from the moment of leaving his country of origin.[30] Nevertheless, it limits the enjoyment of that status and the internationally protected rights[31] only to those persons who have reported intention (or applied)

for asylum at the border or inside the territory of Macedonia.[32] The latter may open up a latent danger of excluding *de facto* from international protection (most notably from *non-refoulement*) those persons who, because of their own mistake or, more probably because of not being properly informed on their rights by the border (or other) authorities (*ibid.*), have failed to apply for recognition of their refugee or subsidiary protection status, and who would then be treated as aliens subjected to the regular procedures of treatment as aliens under the Macedonian Aliens Law.[33]

In view of the above, Article 16 of the Asylum Law provides asylum seekers with the possibility to declare (at the border or inside the territory) their intention to submit an application for asylum before a police officer, who then has to register them, issue a certificate, and direct them to lodge their asylum application with 72 hours at the office of the Asylum Sector of the Ministry of the Interior at the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers. Failing to do so would result in the person being

treated as an alien and subjected to procedures of the Aliens Law. Article 17 of the Asylum Law, in turn, guarantees that illegal entrance and/or stay of an asylum seeker coming directly from the state of origin would not be punishable (e.g. by detention),[34] provided that he/she immediately applies for asylum, or presents himself/herself at the nearest police station providing valid reasons for his illegal entry or stay. In fact, there are some unofficial reports from the field of certain malpractices by police authorities regarding the procedures of Articles 16 and 17, resulting in the placement of many asylum seekers in Macedonian asylum transit centers without any regulated legal status. The second concern relates to the potential misuse of the fast track procedure for deciding on asylum applications that may lead to an outright rejection of their applications as 'manifestly unfounded'. Firstly, it should be noted that the Asylum Law does not guarantee asylum seekers their important right to a personal interview when a fast track ('accelerated') procedure is

being used by the asylum authorities pursuant to Articles 34-37 of the Asylum Law (that do not conform to Article 32 of the procedures Directive, referring to Article 31(8), and Article 33). The same right is being secured only when an asylum application is assessed in a 'regular procedure'[35], although it seems that for the moment personal interview has been *de facto* applied by the asylum authorities both in the fast track procedure. On the other hand, like in the EU's context,[36] one particularly sensitive provision is the one providing the option to rejected an asylum application in the fast track procedure if he or she has arrived from a 'safe' country (be it the country of origin or a 'safe' third country), enshrined in the first paragraph (indents 3-6) of Article 35 of the Asylum Law.

Another sensitive aspect of the Asylum Law and the related implementing practice concerns the concept of a 'safe' country. The Asylum Law distinguishes between three categories of 'safe' countries: (i) 'safe country of origin' (Article 9); (ii) 'safe third country' (Article 10),

and, somewhat oddly phrased in the Law, (iii) 'safe third country, member state of the European Union, of NATO, or an EFTA member state' (Article 10a). It also adopts the mere transit (a 'delayed stay') of the asylum seeker through the territory of a third country as sufficient for rejecting an asylum application and for returning the applicant to the third country that has been found to be 'safe' (Article 10). As to the third category of a 'safe' country, however, Article 10a provides a list of countries. The list creates a strong presumption in favor of being treated as 'safe third countries,' although it formally provides for an individualized assessment of the 'safety' of the particular enlisted country according to specified criteria, and for a remedy so that the applicant can rebut that presumption. However, there is no specified remedy. Adopted just few months ago, Article 10a has been most probably designed to provide additional legal basis for the enforcement of the latest government policy of controlled transfer of migrants through Macedonia that eventually lead to the closure of its southern and

northern borders on March 7, 2016. That policy became inaugurated as part of the agreement reached among five countries, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia, at the Meeting in Zagreb on February 18, 2016,[37] which was endorsed by the EU.[38] It should be seen in the wider context of the EU policy of closing the Balkan corridor, which was achieved by the EU-Turkey deal (March 2016).[39] However, the agreement of the five countries and their ensuing policy have been heavily criticized by many high UN officials as being contrary to International human rights and refugee law, since it leads *inter alia* towards discrimination among asylum seekers (favoring Iraqis and Syrians, while excluding Afghans), conditioned entry with possession of travel documents or visas, profiling people and limiting entry on humanitarian grounds. It was also criticized for enabling collective expulsion that "particularly troubled" the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.[40] One should also note sensitivities attached to the unfettered use of the 'public security' exemption from granting

asylum to an asylum seeker (and from *non refoulement*) that seems to have been present in the current asylum authorities' and Macedonian administrative courts' practice.[41]

As often happens with legislation, Macedonia's Asylum Law provided for a fairly satisfactory legal framework for the treatment of asylum seekers, mostly aligned to regulations of the EU. There are still places where the Asylum Law could not produce the desired effects, to the detriment of the asylum seekers. The shortfall rests in the proper implementation, especially, in a crisis situation such as the huge magnitude of migration through the Balkan route. In this paper we have just briefly outlined some of those, while ignoring many others in the Asylum Law. We await the further harmonization of Macedonia's asylum legislation with the international standards and the EUs (recast) legislative asylum package. It is important not to let pragmatic policy concerns, such as policy concerns of Macedonia and the EU, prevail over the respect of law

and wider humanitarian principles and values regarding refugees and migrants.

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[25] The 'Asylum Law,' Official Gazette of RM no. 49/03; 66/07; 142/08; 146/09; 166/12; 101/15; 152/15; 55/16

[26] Recast: Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU; Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU; Reception Directive 2013/33/EU; Dublin III Regulation No.604/2013; Eurodac Regulation No.603/2013. Also: Return Directive 2008/115/EC; Family Unification Directive 2003/86/EC; Directive 2003/109/EC, amended by Directive 2011/51/EC.

[27] The 'Asylum Law', Article 2 provides (i) protection to refugees (including refugees *sur place*, Article 4b), and (ii) subsidiary protection to persons who would face a real risk of suffering serious harm if returned to their country of origin (including beneficiaries of subsidiary protection *sur place)*

[28] The 'Asylum Law', Articles 62-66

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[32] The Asylum Law, Articles 1, 3 and 4

[33] The Asylum Law, Article 19

[34] In the context of Article 3 of the Geneva Convention, corresponding to Article 17 of the Asylum Law, the requirement that refugees should come 'directly' from the country of origin should not exclude refuges that have merely transited through other countries. See Peers, *Asylum Law in the European Union*.

[35] The Asylum Law, Article 28

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[39] See the EU Turkey Statement of March 18, 2016. On legal aspect raised by that Statement See Peers, S., 'The final EU/Turkey refugee deal: a legal assessment,' criticizing the deal.

[40] UN News Service, 'UN rights chief warns police agreement by five European countries will worsen refugee crisis.' Also See the statement of UN SG Ban Ki-moon reported in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 'Balkan nations put daily caps on migrants despite UN protests.'

[41] The 'threat to the security' of the country is set out in Article 6 of the Asylum Law as one of the permitted exemptions from granting asylum, then in Article 7 as an exemption from *non-refoulement*, and in Article 29 as one of the reasons for rejection of the asylum application in a regular asylum procedure. As to the later, it seems that the asylum authorities have developed a predominant practice of unquestionably following the (usually positive) finding of the Directorate for Public Security at the Ministry of the Interior on the existence of a security threat from particular applicants leading to a rejection of their asylum applications, which can be also said for to the two Administrative courts when deciding in administrative dispute proceedings against asylum decisions.

Effective protection of asylum seekers and refugees under International Law and European and national asylum norms and regulations: the case of Greece

Miltiadis Sarigiannidis

European history includes a constant demographic osmosis between the populations of well-defined territories, which they claim to be their homelands, and migration flows of people in search of a better life of dignity and prosperity. Europe has always been a destination both for peaceful and warlike populations. The reasons lying behind the movement of populations have been the same over the centuries: resource scarcity, climate change, poverty, flight from oppressive regimes and conflicts. During the 20th century, the bloodiest century in Europe's history, many fled for sanctuary due to the fear of persecution and the violation of their fundamental human rights. Thus, refugee status was

conceived as a privileged legal status granted to people who fled to a foreign country because they had no other option. On the contrary, migrants have the option to remain in their homelands, since they do not face any danger or threat to their life and liberty because of persecution. The migrant's motive is to seek a better life away from his country. The refugee is the victim of necessity, while the migrant moves on the grounds of preference.

Since the end of World War II, countries bound by relevant international legal instruments undertake to fulfill their obligation to receive and protect refugees. They do not have any obligation to receive foreigners (i.e. migrants) and provide for them an enhanced status of protection, unless there is a bilateral or multilateral agreement such as provisions for the freedom of movement and residence in the EU member states. It should be mentioned that the distinction between refugees and migrants does not imply any qualitative determination about their level of distress, but refers

solely to its root causes. Human suffering caused by poverty and degraded living conditions is of no less importance than the dangers facing a refugee. The critical difference is that the refugee has no control over their circumstances.

The international protection of refugees

The 1951 Geneva Convention (GC) relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (GCP) were established in support of Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The effective protection of refugees is based upon the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. Greece has signed (April 10, 1952) and ratified (April 5, 1960) the GC, reserving the right to derogate from Article 26 relating to the freedom of movement in cases or circumstances that justify exceptional procedure for reasons of national security or public order. Greece has also acceded to the GCP (August 7, 1968), thus abrogating the time and geographical limitations introduced by the 1951 GC (then

applied to persons under persecution until January 1, 1951 in Europe, or elsewhere), and effectively rendering the protection of refugees a universal and timeless issue.

The GC provides the definition of a refugee, other important principles and also obligations of states. Yet it should be underlined that it is in the discretion of the states to take all these measures they consider appropriate in order to comply with the obligations of the GC and GCP. The main principles and obligations deriving from these instruments are: (i) the principle of non-refoulement, which secures the refugees against their forcible return or expulsion to the frontiers of territories where their life or freedom is under threat on grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (Article 33 para.1 GC), (ii) the obligation to co-operate with the UNHCR (Article 35 GC), (iii) the non-application of the principle of reciprocity on refugees, (iv) the principle of non-discrimination (Article 3 GC), (v) the obligation not to press charges for the commission of criminal offences

such as the violation of national immigration laws, (vi) the provision of travel documents to the refugees (Article 28 GC), and (vii) the duty to inform the UN Secretary-General about the national laws and regulations reinforced for the application of the GC and the GCR (Article 36 GC).

The major principle is the one of non-refoulement, also grounded in Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and recognized in customary international law, and not susceptible to any derogations or reservations. Its corollary importance is explained by the fact that the forcible return of a refugee might put his rights to life and freedom from torture under threat. These rights are inextricably tied to the principle of non-refoulement, as already proclaimed by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the *case of M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* (Judgment of January 1, 2011).

More recently (May 19, 2016), an Appeals Committee in

the island of Lesbos refused the deportation of a Syrian asylum seeker to Turkey according to the relevant EU-Turkey Agreement of March 19, 2016, on the grounds that Turkey does not offer temporary protection and rights equivalent to the requirements of the 1951 GC. Therefore, the Greek Appeals Committee, an independent quasi-judicial organ, has set a powerful precedent against the application of the EU-Turkey Agreement, which considers Turkey a safe third country, invoking and prioritizing the obligation of the Greek state authorities to comply with the GC requirements relevant to the effective protection of the refugees' fundamental rights. Taking into consideration that (i) more than 800.000 people fled to the Greek islands during 2015, ii) the March 19 agreement concluded in Brussels is not entirely compatible with the GC standards of protection, and (iii) Turkey is unwilling to address effectively the requirements of the agreement, it is most likely that asylum seekers will continue to seek transit via the Balkan corridor.

<u>The European regime for the protection of the refugees</u>

Although the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) does not directly deal with the rights of refugees, contracting states bear the obligation to guarantee the fundamental rights and freedoms of asylum seekers and refugees, since this instrument applies to everyone without exception. In the *case of M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* (Judgment of January 1, 2011) the ECtHR found that the conditions of detention and the living conditions for the applicant in Greece constituted a violation of Article 3 of the ECHR. At the same time there was also a risk for the expulsion of the applicant back to Afghanistan due to the deficiencies in the asylum procedure in his case, since at that time there was no serious examination of the merits and no access to an effective remedy, amounting to a violation of Article 13 of the ECHR. Therefore, Belgium was barred from returning the Afghan asylum seeker to Greece. Similarly, Greece violated Articles 3 and 13 of the ECHR given the lack of material resources of the Greek asylum procedure

in the case of *Sharifi and Others v. Italy and Greece* (Judgment of October 21, 2014). In that case, Italy was ordered by the ECtHR not to risk the indirect refoulement of the asylum seeker to Afghanistan because of the Greek systemic asylum deficiencies.

Mistreatment and violation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (Article 4) was also the finding shared by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in the case C-4/11 (Judgment of November 14, 2013) in order to prohibit the transfer of an Iranian asylum seeker from Germany to the EU member state (i.e. Greece) initially identified as competent to adjudicate the application.

In all these cases, the EU regime relating to the determination of the state responsible to examine the application for asylum (i.e. Article 10 para.1, Dublin II/Regulation 343/2003) yielded to the supremacy of the international rule of law as formed by the GC, the CAT and customary international law, manifested serious shortcomings. These shortcomings incentivized EU

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authorities to establish a more effective asylum system.

Despite the commitment towards the creation of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), as a consequence of the suppression of the internal borders according to the Schengen Agreement, there is a myriad of different national asylum systems that complicate the harmonization of standards and procedures in assessing the asylum applications and the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. Moreover, the "Dublin System" relieves the north European countries that are the destination of the asylum seekers and refugees, while putting upon the states at the external borders of the EU (e.g. Greece, Hungary, Italy etc.) the burden of managing these groups of people. Finally, apart from the revised Dublin Regulation, the legal regime governing the status of asylum seekers in EU Member States includes the EURODAC Regulation, the Reception Conditions Directive, the Asylum Procedures Directive, the Qualification Directive, and the Long-Term

Residents Directive. These measures all intended to establish a more effective system for the protection and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees.

Asylum seekers and refugees protection in Greece

The negative impact of the ECtHR and the ECJ judgments led the Greek governments to make significant reforms affecting refugees and asylum seekers. The recent legislative initiative entered into force on April 3, 2016 under Law 4375/2016, which is called "Organization and Function of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the Establishment of a General Secretariat for Reception, adaptation of the Greek Legislation to the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council 'on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection', provisions for the employment of those who are granted international protection, and other

provisions." This legislation is the latest effort to institutionalize the reception and protection of asylum seekers and refugees according to European and international standards. The relevant Greek legislation includes additional Laws, Presidential Decrees, Ministerial Decisions and Circular Instructions, thus forming a detailed framework for the management of asylum seekers and refugees.

Abuse by undocumented economic migrants to apply for asylum challenged the Greek asylum system, testing the material resources of Greece. As a result, the competent authorities became unwilling to grant asylum, limiting the number of beneficiaries who could lodge an admissible and valid application. The recent Law 4375/2016 strengthens the independence of the Asylum Service, expands its network around the country (Article 20), sets up a Social Integration Office to work with the refugees who are granted asylum in Greece (Article 31), and brings significant changes as far as asylum seekers and refugees are concerned. More specifically, the new

applications for asylum are lodged at the borders and in camps. Their review and processing have to be concluded within 7 days (Article 60). In case of negative decision, the newly established Appeals Committees should issue a decision within 7 days as well, even absent the presence of the asylum seekers (Articles 60 & 62). Unaccompanied children and other vulnerable asylum seekers are excluded from this accelerated process (Article 45). Finally, other categories, such as persons under subsidiary protection, or holders of residence permission for humanitarian reasons are given the right to work (Article 69).

Despite these arrangements, the examination and processing of the asylum applications by personnel other than that of the Asylum Service in exceptional cases, such as police and military personnel has been criticized (Article 60), since they do not have training and relevant expertise. Moreover, this fast track procedure of 14 days might not guarantee the effective exercise of the rights of the asylum seekers according to

the international standards, while the need for an interview with the asylum seeker rests within the discretion of the Appeals Committees. Apparently, these observations are tied to the critical situation in the Aegean and the recent March EU-Turkey Agreement, revealing the urgent nature of the new law. Furthermore, people arriving at a hotspot may suffer a three-day limitation of free movement, while their identification is authenticated. This measure can be prolonged for up to 25 days from the date of arrival at the hotspot. There is a right of appeal to the regional administrative court (Article 14). The detention of unaccompanied and separated children is not addressed by the new law.

Overall, the normative framework governing the status of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece has undergone significant changes and improvements. It provides adequate protection and contributes to the effectiveness of the EU relocation programme. At the same time, Greek legislation concerning asylum and the status of refugees is also a means of pressure to remedy the

imbalances of the "Dublin System", and to normalize politics among countries in the Balkan corridor, which are subject to xenophobic and Eurosceptic tendencies.

Discussion

As an immediate reaction to the ECtHR's decision on the M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece case, Greece, in an effort to deal with the country's tremendous influx of asylum seekers and the socio-economic and human rights issues, adopted Law 3907/2011 on Establishing a New Asylum Service and a Service of First Reception, in order to transpose into the Greek national legal order Directive 2008/115/EC on Common Standards and Procedures in Member States for Returning Illegally Staying Third Country Nationals. This Law removed the asylum procedure from control by the police and assigned it to a new independent authority called the Asylum Service, under the Ministry for the Protection of Citizens. The Asylum Service became responsible for the application and implementation of asylum procedures and other

forms of international protection for foreigners and stateless persons, and it also created a new Appeals Authority to examine appeals against rejections of asylum applications by the Service. There were considerable delays in establishing the first regional Asylum Office of the new Asylum Service, which finally opened in Athens on June 7, 2013, almost two and a half years after the adoption of Law 3907/2011.

Anna-Maria Konsta

EU perceptions of the crisis and their impact on relations between Greece, Macedonia and other Balkan states

Zoran Ilievski and Sotiris Serbos

The refugee crisis compels Europeans to face a number of inconvenient truths and misguided perceptions. In an era of lacking leadership in Europe, Europe must face "its inability to influence geopolitical developments in and around Syria, the prospect of greater migration flows and the EU's limited capacity or willingness for absorption, and the EU's inadequate ability to efficiently protect its external borders."[42] When it comes to Balkan countries, they have managed the current refugee wave to advance their own national interest, as defined by their respective governments. Numerous EU Commission and German-backed "comprehensive EU solutions," which included the reallocation of varying numbers of refugees, have failed. Dublin II is not

functioning.[43]

Labels from the Iraq War have been revived. The division between "Old Europe," with its traditional values, and East or "new Europe" suggest why one in every seven every seven German citizen was involved in a personal capacity in some kind of assistance to refugees and migrants. Meanwhile, Eastern European societies uniformly viewed refugees as a threat.[44] The tension between the "securitysized" and "de-securitysized" discourse was further exacerbated by terror attacks in Paris and Brussels.

At the same time, the leading Balkan states, Turkey and Greece, negotiated with Germany and the EU regarding the migrants and refugees on their territory. Turkey did not control refugee flows to the Greek islands and mainland, while seeking visa liberalization and financial compensation.[45] Greece used the crisis as leverage. According to Greek Minister of Defense Kamenos[46] and Minister of Foreign Affairs Kotzias, "If the country fails financially it will send migrants and possible jihadists to

the EU." [47]

The Vishegrad Group countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) joined by Austria and Slovenia decided to close the Balkans human corridor, which prompted Macedonia to close its border with Greece. The subsequent closure of the borders along the Balkan route gave Chancellor Angela Merkel a political exit strategy, in light of her isolated political position at home and abroad.[48] Anti-immigrant and Islamophobic groups mirrored the rise of the popular right in Germany, Austria and Hungary. The latter two, joined by Slovenia and Macedonia, erected fences on key stretches of their borders. Austria announced plans to build a fence, even at the Brenner pass, the symbol of European integration and reconciliation between Austria and Italy.[49] Scenes of injured demonstrators and police officers, stone-throwing and teargas at Brenner/Brennero resembled the scenes at the Idomeni border crossing between Greece and Macedonia. In both cases violent clashes with the police were reportedly supported by

radical anarchist groups. However, these groups, at least in the Greek case, have also helped and organized reception camps, according to the strict anarchistic principles of equal division of labor.[50]

Three points of bilateral tensions are evident: Turkish-Greek, Greek-Macedonian and Serbian-Croatian relations. All three sets of bilateral relations reflect divisions between the "Merkel" *vs* "Orban" doctrines. Causing a diplomatic dispute, Greek President Pavlopoulos accused the Macedonian authorities of ill treatment of refugees while they were attempting to cut the fence and cross over through the illegal crossing near Idomeni. [51] Macedonian President Ivanov accused Greece of irresponsibly channeling more than a million people, including "jihadists" to Western and Northern Europe.[52] From the Greek side, "refugee treatment" was added to the long list of conditions for lifting Greece's veto on Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration. These conditions include the name, language, nationality and the Constitution of Macedonia, to name just a few. The

leadership of Macedonia hoped to leverage the country's territorial importance during the refugee and migrant crisis. However, its leverage was undermined by domestic political crisis.

Greece and the Visegrad group, plus Austria and Slovenia, conflicted over Greece's role in the crisis, culminating in the exclusion of Greece from certain informal coordination fora and the recalling of the Greek Ambassador from Vienna. The Greek government's former row with Chancellor Merkel on the financial bailout steadily turned into an alliance on the issue of the migrants and refugees. Although all EU governments voted to close the Balkan corridor on Macedonia's border in 2016, Germany and Greece publically condemned the closure while expressing skepticism about the measure's effectiveness.[53]

As a result of conflicting national interests and relevant narrow minded state-centric perspectives, EU initiatives continue to display a lack of political commitment. Intergovernmental competitive bargaining, resulting in

collective decisions reflecting the lowest common denominator, prevails. A good example is the EU-Turkey agreement in March 2016, where the EU made major concessions to Turkey. Although the agreement has shown results in the drastic reduction of refugees arriving to the Greek islands, still, at least from a legal point of view, the agreement remains rather *constructively ambiguous*, "undermining the rights of asylum seekers and the duty to offer international protection; and hard to execute, as it gives Greece herculean burdens to screen asylum requests and relies on Turkey to respect international law […] The closure of the Eastern Mediterranean route has re-opened other, more dangerous routes, which resulted in at least 500 victims one month ago – nearly half the death toll of 2016."[54] What is more, the EU – Turkey deal delivered minimal results on the issue of returnees to Turkey. As of this writing, about 1,200 persons returned, including a dozen Syrians.[55] In addition, the ousting of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's

subsequent statements undermined the "one- for-one" refugee exchange system and cast doubt over the entire Agreement. [56] EU policy makers familiar with the Roman law and tradition should also be familiar with the Byzantine tradition of "policymaking." In short, the migrant crisis will not end. It will be an everyday part of Europe's life for decades to come.[57] People on the move, coming to Europe, will be in the range of hundreds of thousands, even a million people each year.[58] The EU's southern security challenges are extraordinary complex in both form and force, with external and internal dimensions for the EU of utmost importance. Taking into account the linkage between the multi-level management of migration and refugee flows, the rising movement of jihadist fighters, and the alarming threat of radicalization, the EU needs to a sound and comprehensive long-term approach to deal with these challenges, including an alignment of its internal and external policies. The authors note that, "no common European asylum and refugee policy can be

expected until Europe's borders are adequately managed and the number of migrants reaching its shores falls. Europe's borders can be secured only through an approach that includes concentric security circles outside Europe, at Europe's borders, and within Europe's borders"[59].

For this to happen, the EU will have to behave like the entity it was intended to be. In 2017, it should establish the long needed basic framework for kicking-off a thorough and meaningful common asylum and refugee policy. It must reach a political agreement to use its resources in order to effectively protect its external borders. This will require provisions for a brand new European Border and Coast Guard, as well as creative burden sharing with NATO.[60] In this respect, the EU will have to redirect its financial, organizational and political support to the countries which are the first to be exposed, namely Greece and Italy. Simultaneously, when it comes to relocations, the European Commission should direct its resources to develop a medium-term funding

mechanism for Member States that are willing to offer sanctuary. Significantly, the entire asylum system needs a full-fledged mechanism to return admitted as well as inadmissible asylum applicants to be returned to their respected destinations directly from "Schengen soil." These developments would introduce true partnership and risk-sharing. It is the most feasible way to reverse the damaging effects of rising Euro- skepticism, autocratic populism, and poisonous nationalism that will irrevocably shape the course of European integration. It will lessen human suffering and strengthen the EU's positive outlook. Then, Balkan states can return to "business as usual."

Discussion

This article effectively highlights the row between the Vishegrad Group of countries and Greece over the refugee crisis and a certain wider division between old Europe, led by Germany, and new Europe, led by Austria and Hungary. However, the analysis could be

enhanced if it elaborated the reasons that make the former East European member-states of the EU hostile to immigrants and refugees alike, and how the crisis has shaken and presents a new challenge to the tired and often paralyzed old political establishment. It seems that European liberalism, upon which the European integration project rests, is in crisis, making it harder for the EU to export and impose its liberal reformism on its neighbors, including the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which aspires to join Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Dimitris Keridis

The escalation of the migrant crisis has had a detrimental effect on popular perceptions on immigration in the EU. The latest Eurobarometer survey conducted in November 2015 revealed that 58 percent of EU citizens believe that immigration is one of the two most important issues facing the EU, even topping some long

lasting and reoccurring issues such as terrorism, unemployment and the economic situation. The crisis induced a sharp rise of negative perceptions since only two years earlier, in November 2013, immigration was a major concern for only 16 percent of the population in the EU.[61]

Ivan Damjanovski

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[42] All of the above shortcomings coincided with strong Euro skeptic, xenophobic, and Islam phobic sentiments in several of the EU's member-states. See Dempsey J. (2016), Is Europe Turning its Back on Refugees?, Carnegie Europe - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 6, 2016

[43] Cienski, J. and Surk, B. (2016) Price for rejecting refugees: €250,000 per head. Politico, May 4, 2016

[44] Andreev, A. (2016) Refugee crisis: 'Not the same values in East and West'. Deutsche Welle, March 8, 2016

[45] Kambas, M., Coscun, O. and Baczynska, G. (2016) Turkey's

Erdogan threatened to flood Europe with migrants: Greek website. Reuters, February 8 2016

[46] "If they deal a blow to Greece, then they should know the migrants will get papers to go to Berlin," he said. "If Europe leaves us in the crisis, we will flood it with migrants, and it will be even worse for Berlin if in that wave of millions of economic migrants there will be some jihadists of the Islamic State too." "If they strike us, we will strike them. We will give to migrants from everywhere the documents they need to travel in the Schengen area, so that the human wave could go straight to Berlin. Waterfield, B. (2015) Greece's Defense minister Kamenos threatens to send migrants including jihadists to Western Europe. The Telegraph, March 9, 2015

[47] Foreign Minister Kotzias was the first to publically acknowledge the link between the negotiations between Greece and the EU around an agreement for resolving the financial crisis. As he stated on March 7, 2015 in Riga, "Europe will be overwhelmed with migrants-jihadists if an agreement is not concluded and Greece fails financially." Anon (2015) The Greek foreign minister threatens Europe with refugees and jihadists if Greece goes bankrupt. Greek Reporter, March 7, 2015

[48] Karnitschnig, M. (2016) Austria does Angela Merkel's dirty work. Politico, January 21, 2016

[49] Neghaiwi, B. H., Aloisi, S. and Ebenbichler, D. (2016) Italian police, demonstrators clash in protest against Austrian fence. Reuters, May 7, 2016

[50] Anon (2016) Austria, Italy: Protests Against Brenner Pass Fence Set To Begin. Stratfor, May 7, 2016; Strickland, P. (2016) Greek anarchists organize for refugees as 'state fails'. Aljazeera, January 19, 2016

[51] Sinanidis, M. (2016) President Pavlopoulos: Greek Veto on FYROM's EU-NATO Bid is Non-Negotiable. Greek Reporter, May 8, 2016

[52] Diekmann, K., Ronzheimer, P. and Biskup, D. (2016) Macedonian president settles a score here. Bild, May 10, 2016

[53] Agence France Presse (2016) Europe migrant crisis: Germany, Greece blast Balkan route closure as EU divisions deepen. ABC News 24, May 10, 2016

[54] Balfour, R. (2016), Making the Best of the Bad EU-Turkey Deal, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, May 3, 2016

[55] Carassava, A. (2016) Brexit 'a serious setback' for handling migrant crisis, Greek minister says. Deutsche Welle, May 9, 2016

[56] THE ASSOCIATED PRESS (2016) Turkish President Accuses Europe of 'Dictatorship,' Cruelty'. The New York Times, May 8, 2016

[57] Blair, D. (2016) The migrant crisis will never end. It is part of the modern world. The Telegraph, May 8, 2016

[58] Fuchs, R. (2016) Austria ups pressure on Italy with Brenner Pass threat, April 30, 2016

[59] Garavoglia, M. (2016), Securing Europe's Borders: The First Step to a Comprehensive Asylum Policy, Foreign Affairs, May 2016.

[60] In particular, regarding Standing NATO Maritime Group2 which has been deployed to the Aegean Sea, "its assets should be returned to NATO's "core business" - namely, Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean Sea and Operation Ocean Shield off the Horn of Africa- as soon as the surge in arrivals on Greek shores abates. Then, the navy component of a European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) should take over its duties. Although deploying such missions to the central Mediterranean and eastern Mediterranean is a matter for the European Council to take up, their operationalization should be left to the EBCG, which should control its own resources independently from the member states". Ibid.

[61] European Commission, Eurobarometer 11/2015. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/31/groupKy/188

Elite and popular perception in Macedonia of the refugee and migrant crisis

Vladimir Bozinovski

Europe has always been a destination for refugees fleeing violence and persecution. It is also a desired destination for economic migrants. During the last several decades, there has been a constant flow of refugees and migrants to European Union (EU) Member States and other developed countries in Northern Europe.

The number of immigrants originating from non-EU Member States was 1.7 million in 2013.[62] Apart from legal immigration, the EU also receives high numbers of illegal immigrants. Although the "irregular migration to the EU decreased significantly between 2008 and 2011, then stabilized over the next two years, in 2014 there was an increase in the number non-EU citizens apprehended due to illegal stay… [The number of people] found to be

illegally present in the EU-28, peaked at around 626,000."[63]

One of the main corridors for illegal immigration is the Western Balkans route. Extending from the Eastern Mediterranean from Turkey to Greece, it continues through the Western Balkans countries. This route is used by displaced persons originating from the Middle East and Asia. But there is also a growing number of refugees and migrants originating from Africa. Due to the Syrian crisis, the route was extensively used in 2014-15. According to the European agency for external border management (Frontex): "In all of 2015, the region recorded 764 000 detections of illegal border crossings by migrants, a 16-fold rise from 2014 [43360 crossings]".[64] The Republic of Macedonia is not just a country on the corridor. It is the main entry point for the migrants on their way from Greece towards the western parts of the EU. As indicated by Frontex, the Syrian refugee crisis caused a spike in the flow of migrants from Greece into

Macedonia. There were also large numbers of economic migrants[65] who almost exclusively used this route to travel from Turkey on their way to Germany, Austria, and Sweden.

Like the rest of the Europe, Macedonia was not prepared for such a massive influx of people, which challenged its capacity to respond. During the peak of the migrant crisis in the summer and autumn of 2015, between 3,000 and 7,000 people crossed the Greek-Macedonian border each day. During this period, the numbers went as high as 10,000 people each day.[66] In order to cope with the situation, in August 2015 Macedonia declared state of emergency and deployed special police forces to its southern and northern borders.[67] Previously, in June 2015, the Macedonian Parliament amended the Law on Asylum, allowing migrants to register with the authorities and then either seek asylum or leave Macedonia within 72 hours.[68] They were allowed to use public transport, leading to the provision of regular

daily transportation for migrants who wanted to pass through Macedonia. In autumn 2015, Macedonia built a fence on the border with Greece in order to control the migrant flow.[69] During the winter 2016, the Western Balkan countries, backed by Slovenia, Austria and the Visegrad group (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) decided to limit the entry of refugees and migrants. The Western Balkan route was closed entirely in March 2016.[70] The EU and Turkey agreed on a plan that would send back all migrants and refugees coming to Greece from Turkey.[71] Under the plan, Turkey would receive EU funding to provide conditions for the displaced persons on its territory, as well as political concessions from the EU in the form of visa liberalization and fast-track candidacy. When this plan went into effect, arrivals to Greece dropped by 90 percent in April 2016.[72]

The migrant crisis is far from over. There are still several thousand migrants close to Macedonia's southern border, although the Idomeni camp was recently closed

and relocation has started. The pressure from the refugee and migrant crisis, which Macedonia experienced during the last year, has eased considerably. Although important, the refugee and migrant crisis was not the key political issue in Macedonia during the past 18 months. It was used to distract attention from Macedonia's serious internal political crisis.

The political crisis started at the beginning of 2015 with a wiretapping scandal, when the opposition leader publicly released a large number of secretly recorded phone conversations, which he claimed involved the highest-ranking Macedonian Government officials, including the Prime Minister. There ensued a flurry of mutual accusations from the both sides. With help from the EU and US representatives and special envoys, the so-called *Przino Agreement* was established to overcome the crisis.[73] The crisis was calmed temporarily, but it is still far from over.

Regarding the refugee and migrant crisis, the perception

of Macedonian political elites has three distinctive features or characteristics. First, the refugee and migrant crisis was used as a distraction from the internal political issues. Second, the refugee and migrant crisis was widely reported but remained a secondary political issue. And third, it was used by political opponents to attack one another. This was more an attempt to gain popular support, rather than a manifestation of real differences between the political parties. The opposition parties opposed some actions simply because the governing party – VMRO-DPMNE (conservatives) – supported it. For example, the main opposition party – SDSM (Social-democrats) – criticized amending the Law on Asylum, claiming it would not solve the problem of abysmal conditions in the refugee centers.[74] However, the opposition did not oppose amending the Law on Asylum. They criticized the decision to build a border fence in November-December 2015, arguing that it will not solve the problem.[75] However, the opposition did not actually oppose building the fence once construction

started. Nor did the opposition oppose the decision to build another parallel fence in February 2016. Furthermore, when several NGO's were signing a petition demanding that the fence be removed in March 2016[76], the conservative media accused SDSM of being behind the initiative in order to inflict political damage on the governing party.[77]

The main reason the opposition was posturing, rather than actively opposing government decisions, was because public opinion strongly supported security measures. In the survey conducted by the Institute for Political Research - Skopje (IPRS) in October 2015, the majority of respondents supported building a fence on the south border. The survey found that 66.2 percent supported it, while 25.4 percent were opposed.[78]

Macedonia's President Gorge Ivanov was deeply involved in the refugee and migrant crisis. His involvement took into consideration humanitarian, political, and security concerns. There are several

reasons for his actions. First, presidential prerogatives are mainly in defense and foreign affairs. Second, he was more or less detached from the internal political crisis. And third, after the implementation of Przino Agreement, which included establishment of a technical Government for the purpose of organizing early parliamentary elections, he was the only political actor in Macedonia with sufficient legitimacy and political powers to negotiate and make decisions with international representatives about the refugee and migrant crisis. His attitudes and political positions on this issue were viewed favorably by the general public. He gained considerable popularity among citizens. In an IPRS public opinion poll (April 2016), 66.4 percent of the respondents supported Ivanov's actions, while 29 percent opposed them.[79]

In his interview in the German Magazine, *Bild,* Ivanov supported the decision to build a fence in order to protect Macedonia's borders. He openly criticized the

EU for its diffuse and confused behavior, and for not helping Macedonia. He criticized Europe for protecting its borders from refugees and migrants, while neglecting Macedonia as the primary transit country for refugees and migrants, coming from Greece, an EU Member State. It was ironic that Macedonia, a non-EU Member state whose membership is obstructed by Greece, became the front line in the EU's efforts to manage population flows from Greece to other countries in the EU.[80]

The refugee and migrant crisis posed as a stress test for the Macedonian state. Despite the deep internal political difficulties, which caused the migrant crisis to be perceived as a secondary political and security issue, the political elites were more or less aligned to face the challenge. At least for now, their approach enjoys broad public support. The bitter experiences from the previous refugee crisis in the 1990s, stemming from conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo underscores the importance of finding a viable and durable solution. It also highlighted

the need for a swift response. The role of the President was crucial in this case.

Discussion

The refugee crisis occurred at a time when both Greece and Macedonia were facing complicated internal domestic political crises. Political elites used the refugee crisis to gain financial aid from Western European countries, and for leverage in negotiations with the EU institutions. Countries were rewarded for their tolerance towards refugees. They were also rewarded with reduced pressure concerning domestic political and economic issues.

Veton Latifi

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Infiltration of terrorists in mixed migration flows in Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans

Ioannis Armakolas and Triantafyllos Karatrantos

The threat of terrorist activities and their connection with migration, especially the methods of entry into the EU, have been scrutinized due to several incidents, which occurred in EU Member States during 2014 and 2015. Greece being at the edge of EU's external borders and serving as the main entry point for migrant population in the Eastern Mediterranean, and also a first-line entry point for the migrants using the Western Balkans Route is central to this question. Greece's centrality is reinforced by the general concern about the risk of foreign fighters going to Europe by 'mixing' with the refugee population, as well as regular or irregular migrants traveling to Europe via the Mediterranean and Balkan routes.

The massive migration inflow and the escalation of the refugee crisis in 2015 raised many questions related to the identity of those arriving. The coordinated attacks in Paris fanned fears that terrorists were infiltrating the population flow. The case of Ahmed Almuhamed, whose Syrian passport was found on the body of the Bataclan concert hall suicide bomber, gave a face to these fears. According to the French and the Greek Law Enforcement Agencies, Ahmed Almuhamed sneaked into France by posing as a refugee after being rescued from a sinking migrant boat on the Greek island of Leros on October 3, 2015. He was allegedly accompanied by another one of the Paris bombers. It is believed that they continued their travel to France through the Balkan route.[81]

These and other incidents demonstrate that it is crucial to include the threat of infiltration from terrorists in national and European risk assessments and security policies, which is the general policy of FRONTEX. At the

same time, European states need to be particularly cautious so that they avoid confusing refugee populations with terrorists, which could lead to the stereotyping of refugees and migrants as threats to national and European security.

Mixed migration flows and extreme pressures

Mixed migration is a complex and relatively new term that is defined slightly differently by various entities. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), "the principal characteristics of mixed migration flows include the irregular nature of and the multiplicity of factors driving such movements, and the differentiated needs and profiles of the persons involved. Mixed flows have been defined as 'complex population movements including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other migrants".[82] Furthermore, mixed migration flows may also include, among others, unaccompanied minors, environmental migrants, smuggled persons, victims of trafficking and

stranded migrants.[83]

While migrants are fundamentally different from refugees and, thus, are treated differently under international law, both groups "increasingly make use of the same routes and means of transport to get to an overseas destination. If people composing these mixed flows are unable to enter a particular state legally, they often employ the services of human smugglers and embark on dangerous sea or land voyages, which many do not survive."[84]

In 2015, EU Member States reported more than 1,820,000 illegal border crossings along their external borders. According to FRONTEX, it is not possible to establish the precise number of persons who have illegally crossed two external borders of the EU. Migrants first detected irregularly crossing in Greece were then detected for a second time re-entering the EU from the Western Balkans.[85] Still, the number of irregular entries into the EU in 2015 was unprecedented. It amounted to six times the number in 2014, which was itself a record year. Most

detections – more than 885,000 – were reported at the Eastern Mediterranean route, between Turkey and the Greek Eastern Aegean Sea islands. Although the main landing areas continued to be three major Greek islands (Lesbos, Chios and Samos), smugglers have spread their activities to more Greek islands, from south to north, thus pushing Greece's surveillance capacities to their limits.[86]

In these conditions, it is difficult for EU member states to ensure an efficient, high and uniform level of control at their external borders, as stipulated by the Schengen Border Code. According to FRONTEX, it was not possible to detect many migrants during their crossing. Not all migrants got in contact with authorities upon arriving on the islands. In these circumstances, "It is likely that an unknown proportion actually crossed and continued their journey without being detected by any law-enforcement authorities".[87]

Furthermore, FRONTEX estimates that during the period starting from August 2015, the month when the

'big bang' of 100,000 monthly arrivals started, some may have been registered using forged documents or as imposters using some other person's documents.[88] This problem is compounded by the low level of security for Syrian identity and other supporting documents. Criminal organizations were also able to acquire a large number of blank Syrian passports.

Based to FRONTEX and European Asylum Support Office (EASO) risk and situational analysis for 2015 and 2016 the main reasons for this difficult to address situation are:

- The engagement of border-control authorities in search and rescue operations, covering vast areas.
- The sharp increase in the number of persons presenting themselves at the EU borders requesting asylum. There were 459,975 asylum applications during the third quarter alone of 2015;
- Registration was defective, due to the large number of asylum seekers and the time pressure. The lack

of local reception facilities the shortage of adequate equipment for electronic checks and data interconnections compounded the problem. Syrian travel documents lack biometrics and other anti-fraud characteristics that are now standard practice in European travel documents.

- Many of the migrants are undocumented. Therefore, registration was based on their own declarations of nationality.

The question of infiltration of terrorists in mixed migration flows

As reported to the European media, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) planned to infiltrate Western countries. Much of the information comes from a former ISIL operative from Syria who claimed that more than 4,000 covert ISIL fighters had been smuggled into Western countries, posing as refugees. The same source claimed that the terrorists followed the same route taken by refugees and migrants, travelling across the border of

Turkey then on boats to Greece and onward to Europe. The source claimed that the undercover infiltration was the beginning of a larger plot to carry out revenge attacks in the West in retaliation for the US-led coalition airstrikes.[89] While these and other claims cannot be verified, they were enough to cause great concern in Western capitals. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters in May 2015 that, "Of course, one of the problems is that there might be foreign fighters. There might be terrorists also trying to hide… to blend in among the migrants."[90]

According to European Agencies, such as FRONTEX and Europol, the U.S. Homeland Security Committee and the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), infiltration is a security risk to be considered in the risk assessment procedure, even though such agencies do not have verifiable information to confirm assertions of the ISIL operative. According to FRONTEX, two bombers participating in last year's terror attacks in Paris arrived in the EU on a smuggler boat from Turkey

through the Greek island of Leros. They were then registered by the Greek authorities, on the basis of fraudulent Syrian IDs. This is a proof that, *"There is a risk that some persons representing a security threat to the EU may be taking advantage of this situation,"* and that *"Paris attacks in November 2015 clearly demonstrated that irregular migratory flows could be used by terrorists to enter the EU."*[91] *Moreover, TRAC has* warned that there were already a number of reported cases of ISIL infiltration of refugee routes.[92] In addition, the U.S. Homeland Security Committee maintained that *Islamist* terrorists are determined to infiltrate refugee flows to enter the West, and appear to have succeeded in this aim.[93] *Contrary, EUROPOL has different estimations about the risk of infiltration. It* reported that, "There is no concrete evidence that terrorist travelers systematically use the flow of refugees to enter Europe unnoticed and the real and imminent danger, however, is the possibility of elements of the (Sunni Muslim) Syrian refugee diaspora becoming vulnerable to radicalization once in Europe

and being specifically targeted by Islamic extremist recruiters."[94] All the above information point to the fact that, while the general concern about terrorist infiltration into mixed migration flows is present, there are varied assessments as to the actual threat by Western agencies and institutions.

Conclusions

The border authorities of EU Member States and EU agencies, such as FRONTEX and EUROPOL, have been under intense pressure since 2011. The large and growing annual number of detections of illegal border-crossings in the last couple of years has exposed difficulties with border control. In addressing the problem of external border security, the EU faces two major challenges.[95] First, the unprecedented increase of migratory pressure. Second, an increased terrorist threat. European countries have, thus, to deal with a twin policy task. They must extend help and grant international protection to those in need, while weeding

out cases that represent a threat to internal security. In that context, FRONTEX stresses that border management becomes an important security component and border authorities can play an important role in the area of counter-terrorism.

EUROPOL believes there are only just individual cases, rather than a major plot targeting Europe. In its view, claims of massive infiltration are not only misleading, but dangerous and counter-productive. They misrepresent threats and compromise efforts to response to real risks. With appreciation to EUROPOL's view, it is important to be aware of the terrorist threat to Europe and of concerns that organized crime groups facilitating irregular migration might potentially contribute, directly or indirectly, to the smuggling of terrorist operatives into the EU. Confusion or equation of terrorism with irregular migration should be avoided. Moreover, freedom of movement is among the fundamental EU freedoms. Border management should increasingly be risk-based, to ensure that interventions

are focused on high-risk movements of people, such as identification of terrorists within the migration flows. At the same time, low-risk movements must continue unhindered. Protection cannot be undermined by imaginary concerns.

Policy Proposals

The imperative of managing the above-analyzed complex security situation leads to a set of policy recommendations:

1. Place more emphasis on second-line checks on arrivals, which are critical to the identification process, especially in situations of migration influx, when the first line check is under extreme time and people pressure.

2. Expand the use of information for intelligence and risk analysis purposes as well as development of common risk profiles and identification indicators, under the coordination of EUROPOL and FRONTEX, for early and proper identification of

terrorists and radicals.

3. Improve intelligence and analytical capacities of national and European agencies, upgrading of cooperation between EU member states intelligence agencies and European Agencies, especially in emergency situations.

4. Develop and deploy Joint Investigation Teams, under the operational coordination of EUROPOL, especially on the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as the Greek-Bulgarian and Greek-Turkish borders. Emphasize training programs and awareness raising activities for first line practitioners and, especially, border guards.

Discussion

Taking into consideration Europe's geography and the free-movement of people inside the Schengen Area, terrorists can move freely across Europe's open borders.

However, the security forces of EU Member States cannot. Terror networks are transnational; national security forces are not. At the same time, the performance of European security forces remains quite uneven. For example, Belgium has a smaller and less professional security apparatus than its neighbor. In light of the above, the EU should introduce a pan-European anti-terrorism framework that will adequately address disparities between security services in countries of the Schengen Area.

Sotiris Serbos

If the pressure of migration is not alleviated in the source countries, namely Syria, the EU will face a continuing refugee influx. The Schengen Area must upgrade its external border security. However, there is a greater threat for Europe. "Foreign fighters' carrying EU passports are returning to their countries with their radical agendas and battlefield skills. ISIS fighters

are already using migrant routes from Turkey. Libya may follow suit. Secondly, a part of the Muslim refugee diaspora already established in Europe may become vulnerable to radicalization. Research indicates that second and third-generation immigrants are most prone to radicalization. Radicalization of the European Muslim community must be closely monitored and prevented.

Dogu Ergil

Absence of a proper registration system is the major cause of terrorist infiltration. Coordination between countries comprising the human corridor is needed. The EU can assist build the national capacity when it comes to asylum processing, especially in Balkan countries. This could include more comprehensive registration procedures, such as finger printing, which would help reduce the infiltration of refugee populations by terrorists. Governments lack both vision and capacity.

They need help with policy making as well a technical assistance.

Veton Latifi

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Treatment of asylum seekers by transit and destination countries: the Turkish case

Dogu Ergil

Syrian migration to Turkey started in March 2011 when the civil war broke out. Of the 4.3 million displaced Syrians who have been registered by the UNHCR as of 2016, 2.2 million currently reside in Turkey. There is roughly another half a million people who have made it to Turkey legally and are living in cities, drawing on their own savings. The 2.7 million Syrian asylum seekers presently in Turkey is greater than the entire population of six European Union (EU) 28 member states.[96]

Turkey was one of the few countries that adopted and maintained an open door policy. It committed $9 billion to accommodate displaced Syrians. This policy was not only based on humanitarian concerns. The Justice and Development Party (AKP)-led Government adopted an

ambitious regional approach based on the idea of a Sunni alliance under Turkish leadership. It sought regime change in Syria by replacing the minority Alawi government of the Assad family with a Sunni government led by a Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Forces opposing the Assad regime would be supported in every respect. This meant both intervening in the internal affairs of a neighboring country and developing an affiliation with dangerous radical organizations that have torn apart both Syria and Iraq.[97]

This short-sighted policy was aimed at reviving Ottoman grandeur. Sunni Syrians supported by Turkey would advocate for the regional leadership of Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan thought supporting jihadists was a clever plan. However, his expectations were not realized. Turkey got caught in a proxy war involving violent extremists with their own political agenda, which included a caliphate independent of Turkey's control. Assad survived. Turkey's support for

Assad's opponents resulted in millions of refugees seeking sanctuary in Turkey for the indefinite future.

A permanent waiting room?

Ankara does not grant refugee status to Syrians. In view of their expected early return, displaced Syrians were "guests." Official arrangements for their stay were only short term.

Despite being one of the drafters and original signatories of the 1951 Geneva Convention, Turkey only offers protection to refugees who come from within the territory of Council of Europe members. People applying for asylum in Turkey have no status or right to residence or work. For Syrians and other asylum seekers from outside Europe, Turkey sees itself as a temporary destination as they search for a third country where their refugee status would be legally recognized.

However, the Turkish government's approach to

dealing with Syrian immigrants has evolved over the last four years. As waves of asylum seekers continued to arrive, they were reclassified. The principles of temporary protection are: (i) An open border policy; (ii) No forcible returns (non- refoulement); and (iii) Registration with the Turkish authorities and support in camps, which fall within Turkey's borders.

Currently there are 27 camps in Turkey. Conditions are far better than most camps for displaced persons elsewhere in the world. According to Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmu, only 300,000 Syrian refugees were living in camps close to the border in 2015. The remaining 1.7 million were living in cities.[98] Not being granted refugee status increased the vulnerability of Syrians who fled their country for political and humanitarian reasons.

Ankara was under pressure from the international community and adopted a legislation to provide greater protection to Syrian refugees. New regulations also

allowed Syrians to work and initiate small private enterprises. Still, processing asylum applications is slow and there is a big backlog. As a result:

- Turkey has become a permanent waiting room for displaced people who fail to resettle in a third country.
- Syrian refugees are subject to fluctuations in Turkey's domestic economy. They are subject to capricious public opinion, which increasingly sees them as harmful aliens.
- Asylum seekers fall into the hands of human smugglers who promise them a path to Europe.
- Women and youth fall prey to organized crime gangs or prostitution rings.[99]

Syrians have to cope with Turkish public opinion, which is turning against them as their numbers increase. Although none of the political parties represented in the Turkish Parliament advocates an

anti-immigrant platform, polls show Turkish citizens are increasingly concerned about the economic competition and crime resulting from Syrian refugees. One tweet on social media says: "Unemployment is the biggest problems of Turkey. The shepherd in Ardahan (Northeast) is from Azerbaijan. The shepherd in Giresun (Black Sea) is from Afghanistan. In Bitlis (South East) he is from Syria". (Hakan Batirhan Karahakanbatirhan).

The local Alawi population in the Sivrece Höyük village strongly opposes the refugee camp in Mara. They are "concerned that jihadist will settle and breed in the camp." Tolerance is limited: 85% of Turks oppose granting citizenship to displaced Syrians.

Hacettepe University's research indicates:

- 31 percent of respondents want Syrians sent back to their country even though the war is ongoing.

- 49.8 percent stated, "Being a neighbor with a Syrian bothers them."

- 62.3 percent believe that Syrians are a security risk (i.e. theft and prostitution).
- 56 percent believe that Syrians will take away their jobs.
- 70.6 percent feel that Syrians are culturally different.
- 84.5 percent are opposed to granting citizenship to Syrians.[100]

Given these public attitudes, Syrians do not feel safe in Turkey. The Syrian refugee crisis is occurring at a time when Turkish politics is under the influence of illiberal tendencies due to efforts to transform the parliamentary system into an authoritarian presidential one. Attitudes are also affected by the rising violence between the Turkish security forces and the PKK, whose indiscreet bombings are used by the government to justify more oppressive measures. In this atmosphere, refugees are increasingly marginalized. With marginalization, they are subject to panhandling, homelessness, economic

exploitation, child labor, forced marriage, prostitution, and even indentured servitude.[101]

Can an increasingly authoritarian Turkey be a suitable partner for the EU? Can the opportunism of European leaders set a moral example when they pursue expedient transactional relations with Turkey at the expense of values-based policies that they claim as the essence of the EU? For sure, there is a democracy deficit on the Turkish side. There is also a moral deficit in European countries that violate the freedom of movement established through the Schengen agreement. Hungary has fenced its borders with Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Amnesty International condemned the situation as "morally bankrupt".[102] Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and France have also imposed border controls. The Dublin regulation, under which refugees are required to claim asylum in the state where they first arrive, is ignored. Countries are no longer sending back migrants to their first point of entry to the EU. Furthermore, according to

international law, the country of first sanctuary, in this case Turkey, should be a safe place. However, only one EU Member State considers Turkey "safe."[103]

Enhancing Turkey's stability needs to be one of the major foreign policy priorities of the EU. The EU must also avoid making Europe an impregnable fortress that would transform Turkey into a mass prison.[104] Closing the borders also contradicts with the cherished "European values."

Discussion

The prohibition of forcible return or non-refoulement is part of customary international law and the 1951 Refugee Convention. Turkey's practice to let Syrians and other immigrants cross the Aegean Sea under deplorable and life- threatening conditions is equivalent to a "passive refoulement". The EU-Turkey Deal of March 2016, which states that all "new irregular migrants" crossing the EU border from Turkey to Greece will be sent back to Turkey, violates both international and EU

law. Turkey is not considered a "safe third country." Its leadership is increasingly authoritarian. This deal also marks EU's conceptual transformation from a civil/normative power, which actively supports international human rights protection, to a more *real politic* player in international relations, which abandons idealism to protect its own self-interest.

Anna-Maria Konsta

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The concept of human dignity and the European Courts' decisions on asylum seekers entering the EU through Greece

Anna-Maria Konsta

Treatment of refugees and migrants violates principles of human dignity that have evolved over centuries. Sending persons from Greece back to Turkey is also an affront to human dignity, and a violation of international humanitarian law.

<u>The concept of human dignity</u>

In Western thought, the Roman concept of *dignitas hominis* was linked to a superior hierarchical status in society which essentially implied some sort of nobility.[105] So, appointment to a distinguished public office in Ancient Rome entailed *dignitas* (honor) to the person awarded with it.[106] In a similar manner, the English Bill of Rights of 1689 refers to the "Crown and Royal

Dignity." Nevertheless, Cicero referred to *dignitas* as a characteristic which is intrinsic to human beings, is connected to reason and is the core characteristic of humans, which differentiates them from animals.[107] Cicero's conception of dignity combined with the Judeo-Christian tradition influenced the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, which connected dignity to the idea that Man is made in the image of God, and thus Man is distinguished from other species.[108] In 1486, Picco de la Mirandola argued in his work "On the Dignity of Man" that Man's dignity is the ability to choose to be who he wants to be and that is a gift given to him by God.[109]

The modern concept of human dignity, which is disconnected from religious elements has its roots mainly in the Enlightenment, which brought a culture of individual rights, liberalism, equality, religious tolerance, and the development of science through reason.[110] Man's autonomy, the central existential claim of modernity[111] formed the basis of Immanuel Kant's use of the concept of human dignity.[112] According to Kant,

dignity is above all a value and cannot be treated as an exchangeable good, since it is connected to the autonomy of the individual. Thus, dignity as autonomy is connected to the idea that people are treated with dignity, when they are considered as autonomous individuals who are able to choose their destiny.

In the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) 'dignities', in the sense of aristocratic privileges, were extended to every citizen. Article 6 of the Declaration states: "*All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction, except that of their virtues and talents*". Furthermore, Mary Wollstonecraft in both the "Vindication of the Rights of Man" (1790), and "Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1796) used the concept of human dignity, in order to describe the appropriate state of women and men in her preferred political system.[113] Dignity was more closely related with republicanism in the late 18th and 19th centuries in

France. In contrast with the United States, where more emphasis was given in the concept of liberty, the philosophy of Jean Jacques Rousseau exerted greater influence in continental European and Latin American countries, which adopted a more communitarian approach towards human rights, being committed more to the importance of equality and fraternity (solidarity) than liberty.[114]

The concept of human dignity was closely associated with the abolition of slavery in Europe. One of the decrees of the French Republic established as a result of the revolution of 1848 abolished slavery as "an affront to human dignity" (Decree of April 27, 1848, preamble). Also, the idea of "dignity of labor" was prevalent in the growing Labor Movement in Europe, and socialist political thought of the times, which sought to mobilize the working class and argue for the state to provide social welfare.[115] Nevertheless, Karl Marx in 1847, denounced the use of "dignity" as "a refuge from history in morality", and Friedrich Nietzsche in 1872 railed

against the ideas of 'dignity of a man' and the 'dignity of labor', judging them to be merely concepts that characterize a useless sentimental egalitarianism.[116]

In addition to these historical, religious and philosophical landmarks, the event in the 20th century that contributed most to the contemporary conception of human dignity is the Second World War. Human dignity has been since conceived as a reaction to the horrors of National Socialism and Nazism in Europe, namely the Holocaust.[117] Protection of human dignity has been incorporated, since WWII, in several international human rights treaties and documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention of Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, as well as in many national constitutions. It was also a key concept driving the US civil rights movement in the 1960s, playing a significant role in movements, which opposed discrimination on the grounds of race and/or gender.

Dignity is 'not a value to be traded off against other

values'[118] and constitutes the moral substance of human rights.[119] The idea of dignity refers both to the individual right to personality[120] and to the importance of others' lives.[121] Dignity is thus defined in terms of singularity and universality.[122] Violation of dignity is an affront to the individual and, at the same time, as an affront to humanity as a whole. Thus, the concept is also currently used as a moral basis for addressing global problems, such as environmental pollution or poverty, and more recently issues related to refugee and asylum seekers in Europe.

The case-law of the European Courts

Greece was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the case M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece (2011), where it held that Greece and Belgium violated three articles of the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms pertaining to right to life (Art. 2), prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment (Art. 3), and right

to an effective remedy (Art. 13). The applicant in the case, an Afghan national, was an interpreter for air force troops in Kabul who fled his country in 2008 and entered the EU via Greece. He later moved to Belgium, where he filed an application for asylum. Belgium, in applying the criteria established by the EC "Dublin II" Regulation No 343/2003, which requires that the first EU Member State that an asylum seeker enters becomes responsible for granting asylum, forwarded the application to the Greek authorities. The Afghan national protested, claiming that the detention facilities were appalling in Greece and that he was likely to be sent back to his country without examination of the merits of his case, where his life would be threatened. In 2009, the applicant was sent back to Greece and was immediately taken to a detention center. He was released several days later and became homeless. The applicant filed an application to the ECtHR, arguing that Belgium exposed him to the danger of inhuman and degrading treatment by sending him back to Greece,

where he faced deportation without a proper hearing of his case. The ECtHR, in finding for the Afghan national, upheld that inhuman treatment is degrading "when it humiliates or debases an individual showing a lack of respect for, or diminishes his or her human dignity…"

In the more recent case – Sharifi and Others v. Italy and Greece (2015) – the same Court considered a similar case, which concerned 32 Afghan nationals, two Sudanese nationals and one Eritrean national, who had entered Italy illegally from Greece, and had been returned back to the country of first entry into the EU. The court held that there had been a violation by Greece of Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) combined with Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights on account of the lack of access to the asylum procedure for the applicants and the risk of deportation to their country of origin, where they faced the risk of death, torture or inhuman and degrading treatment. The

ECtHR also held that no form of collective and indiscriminate returns could be justified by reference to the Dublin system, and it was for the country carrying out the return, in this case Italy, to ensure that the destination country offered sufficient guarantees in the application of its asylum policy to prevent the person concerned from being returned to his country of origin without an assessment of the risks faced.

Greece has been also convicted by the EU Court (CJEU) in the NS case (C-411/10). The case concerned an Afghan national who went to the United Kingdom from Greece. He was arrested in Greece in 2008 and was later released from detention and ordered to leave the country. He was then arrested by the police and expelled to Turkey, where he was detained for two months under appalling conditions. He escaped detention in Turkey and went to the UK, where he claimed asylum. He was subsequently placed under a Dublin II procedure and the UK issued a transfer decision with respect to Greece. The CJEU held in this case that Article 4 of the Charter of Fundamental

Rights of the European Union, which prohibits torture and inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, must be interpreted as meaning that the Member States, including the national courts, may not transfer an asylum seeker to the Member State of first entry into the EU, where systemic deficiencies in the asylum procedure and in the reception conditions of asylum seekers amount to substantial grounds for believing that the asylum seeker would face a real risk of being subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment. It is important to also note that the Dublin III Recast Regulation 604/2013 has already incorporated the NS case wording into its recast Article 3(2).

Conclusion

In the EU context, the concept of human dignity holds a prominent position in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. The preamble of the Charter states: "Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human

dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity (…)". Also, Chapter 1 of the Charter is dedicated to dignity. Art. 1 of the Charter states: "Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected". Human dignity in the Charter is not only a fundamental right, but it also constitutes the basis of all fundamental rights. Because of its inviolability none of the rights laid down in the Charter may be used to harm the dignity of another person. Moreover, a European concept of human dignity has emerged through the ECtHR the CJEU case-law, which, also, recognizes human dignity as an absolute fundamental right. Thus no other right in the EU Charter may be used to curtail someone's human dignity right under Article 1.

Nevertheless, the closing of the Balkan refugee route and the March 18-19, 2016 EU deal with Turkey stated that all "new irregular migrants" crossing from Turkey to Greece will be sent back. Appalling travel and living conditions of the refugees and migrants seeking to cross the Northern Greek border, in order to reach central

Europe, do not conform to the already existing European legal framework as provided by the case-law of both European courts.

These measures constitute an affront to the human dignity. Being confined and in practice detained in Greece under inhuman conditions and being deported back to Turkey, which is not considered to be "a safe country" according to international law standards, violates both International Law and European Union Law. More specifically, even the 2013/32/EU Asylum Procedures Directive, which requires conditions relating to safety and asylum practices in a country, is violated. The Directive provides that life and liberty are not to be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and that the principle of non-refoulement in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees is to be respected. Moreover, the prohibition of removal, in violation of the right to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading

treatment is to be respected.

The EU has been conceived since the 1950s as a united area based on economic integration through four basic freedoms: free movement of goods, services, capital and people. With the current refugee crisis, Europe conceives itself as developing borders of its own, but it has established a complex border with multiple fixed and mobile internal and external borders.[123] Europe is now a Borderland.

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The rise of extremist ideologies and right-wing political parties in transit and destination countries

Nenad Markovikj

The rise of the right-wing extremist parties in Europe does not necessarily derive from the refugee crisis. However, far-right parties seized on the crisis to mobilize their base and expand support. The rise of far right political parties in Europe is a complex process, which reflects trends over many years.

Three waves of right-wing ideology have occurred in Europe. First, the Nazi Party and their surrogates rose to power during the period of World War II. The second wave occurred in the 1980s, fueled by the influx of immigrants into Member States of the European Union (EU). This movement was defined by the slogan "anti-tax, anti-EU and wholly populist."[124] The third wave was propelled by the perceived cultural threat of Muslim

refugees and migrants to Europe. Popular reaction had a highly xenophobic tone. Some called it "anti-jihad."[125] Today, far right activists are highly networked in Europe, and globally.[126]

Ascending far-right parties in Europe include France's Front National led by Le Pen, Greece's Golden Dawn, Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD), Austria's Freedom Party, the Danish People's Party, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), and Holland's Party for Freedom of Geert Wilders.[127] Rooted in chauvinism, these stereotypical far-right parties exist in "old Europe." Popular support for right wing parties was fueled by the refugee and migrant crisis of 2015-16.

Right wing parties in so-called New Europe also used the refugee and migrant crisis to stir xenophobia and gain popular support. The JOBBIK party gained ground in Hungary. Its Prime Minister Viktor Orban, was among the most outspoken critics of Germany's open door policy to refugees and migrants. "Our Slovakia"

won 8 percent of the vote in March 2016, including 23 percent of the first time voters, or three times poll predictions.[128] Poland's Law and Justice Party, which won elections in October 2015, is also on the rise. Ataka in Bulgaria has maintained a strong presence in Bulgaria's parliament since 2005. Right-wing parties and populist movements even gained support in Scandinavia, which is known for liberalism and open-mindedness. These trends are causing concern among traditional Left-Center politicians. Across the European continent, far right parties represent a threat to traditional European values.

The full potential of the far-right political options in Europe was manifest in the Austrian Presidential elections of May 2016. Austria elected Alexander Van der Bellen, a candidate backed by the Green Party with just 50.3 percent. The losing candidate, Norbert Hofer of the far-right Freedom Party, was supported by 49.7% of voters.[129] Hofer came close to becoming the first far-right candidate to become president of an EU Member State.

Germany is a special case, having a troubled past and because it is primary destination country for refugees. These factors have strengthened the far right Alternative for Germany (AfD). According to the latest opinion polls, AfD has become the third political power in Germany with a public support of 15 percent. Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) retains 33 percent with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) slipping to 20 percent.[130] AfD's rapid rise is primarily based on its opposition to Merkel's open door policy. Its leader Frauke Petry has a clear message: "Germany has had enough"[131]. The AfD leader originates from the province of Saxony-Anhalt, where AFD enjoys 17 percent support. She advocated, as a last resort, "Shooting migrants, including refugees, attempting to illegally cross Germany."[132]

The politics of barriers and the policy of open doors for refugees are defined by diametrically opposite values.[133] Political polarization was amplified by the enormous refugee crisis, beginning in 2011. With the start of the

crisis, the political landscape changed dramatically. Far right parties, whether in transit or destination countries, used the crisis to boost their political fortunes wrapping themselves in an anti-Islam agenda and playing on the fears of their electorate.

Establishing a link between refugees and radical Islam is just one of the tactics used by Europe's far-right parties. The failure of European countries to adopt a unified position, and the clear lack of political leadership on the refugee issue, created a gap that was filled with xenophobic hate-mongering. Even the average centrist voter has shown concern and shifted support to the right. In a joint statement, four leaders of far-right political forces in Europe that are both transit and destination countries for the refugees, Salvini (Northern League – Italy), Le Pen (Front National - France), Geert Wliders (Party for Freedom – Holland) and Christian-Stache (Austrian Freedom Party) wrote an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* stating:

  "*The situation is completely out of control. Too many fortune*

seekers, too much illiteracy. Some of the migrants are refugees, but the majority comes for economic reasons. Our European economies and social-protection systems cannot cope with this. The media prefer to focus on families and children, but their images cannot conceal that the asylum seekers flocking to Europe are predominantly young men. Many are unskilled...The European Union has slowly been eroding Europe's nation-states by gradually dismantling their sovereignty. It has robbed our countries of the right to conduct our own national asylum policies"[134]

Economic concerns are manipulated by influential far-right politicians in Europe. These parties share an anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim agenda. Great Britain is not a primary destination country. However, mainstream political parties in the UK are under pressure from UKIP's leader Nigel Farage who openly advocates an anti-immigration policy. Farage's worldview mirrors his ideological counterparts on the mainland. Stirring concerns about economic, security and social cohesion, Farage states: "The majority that are coming are

economic migrants" [135] and that "ISIS is now using this route to put their jihadists on European soil."[136] He adds, "The EU must be mad to take this risk with the cohesion of our societies" [137]. The BREXIT movement is largely based on anti-immigrant fears and concerns about the EU's ability to manage the crisis.

The standard set of anti-immigrant arguments – state sovereignty, security, welfare, national culture, terrorism etc. – can also be found in academic literature of predominantly from conservative intellectuals and communitarians. These arguments, packed in radical rhetoric and colorful political display through rallies and protests, are present in all transit and destination countries, from Greece to Germany, the UK, and Denmark.

The refugee crisis was most directly felt by countries that are the primary transit countries in Europe. Greece, as the primary disembarking point for the refugees and economic migrants travelling north to Germany and Scandinavia, had to manage huge waves of migrants

coming via the East Mediterranean route. With many islands where refugees arrived, Greece's borders are hard to control. Management of the crisis has been complicated and expensive. The refugee crisis just added to Greece's existing financial crisis. Xenophobic and anti-migrant political messages are no surprise.

Greece has been experiencing strong political pressure from the radical right Golden Dawn. The combination of the economic stress and the refugee crises has created an explosive situation spurring the radical right especially on islands where refugees and migrants arrive.[138] On Kos and Lesbos, Golden Dawn has doubled its support since the onset of the refugee crisis[139]. In national elections in September 2015, Golden Dawn received 7.1 percent of the votes, which made it the third most powerful party in the country after Syriza with 35.4 percent and Nea Demokratia with 28.3 percent.[140] Support for Golden Dawn is especially high among members of the Greek police forces. It is estimated that Golden Dawn is supported by 40 percent of police in parts of the

country.[141] Golden Dawn is constantly organizing anti-migrant protests. It uses strong anti-immigrant rhetoric in both the European and Greek parliaments. One of the Golden Dawn members of parliament referred to the migrants as "these people coming here are of a different religion, race and culture. If you follow the news and the Internet, these are the people that raise their hands up in the air holding decapitated heads."[142]

Regarding domestic political turmoil, the refugee crisis in the Republic of Macedonia occurred in the midst of already troubled political circumstances. The internal political crisis, initiated by the wiretapping scandal of senior officials in the country, disrupted the Macedonian political scene leading to street protests in all of Macedonia's major cities. This led in turn to the formation of a technical government that was supposed to normalize the situation, but it did not. In parallel to this political deadlock, the refugee crisis in Macedonia, from its onset, was managed relatively successfully, with the country being only a transit corridor for the refugees

and the economic migrants, en route from Greece to Serbia. In January 2016, the situation took a turn for the worse when Austria closed its borders, causing a domino effect for the entire Balkan route. Macedonia had a very negative experience with the Kosovo refugee crisis in 1999. This time, Macedonian authorities moved quickly and closed the border in March 2016. Closing the border was done to prevent possible demographic, security and political disturbances in the country that might have been caused by the influx of refugees. Serbia and Croatia also closed their borders. The pileup on its northern border presented a huge challenge to Macedonia.

However, the refugee and migrant crisis did not spur anti-immigrant reactions by the general public, nor did it have much impact on Macedonia's domestic politics. There are several reasons for this. First, the internal political crisis, due to its severity, dominated the public discourse. The refugee crisis was second on the political agenda, with politicians focused on their internal feud.

The opposing Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) did have a subdued reaction to closing of the borders.[143] All considered, the refugee and migrant crisis was a marginal issue on the domestic political scene. Second, ever since the independence of the country, no far-right movement gained political traction. No political group existed to initiate radical anti-Islam or anti-migrant politics. Third, no meaningful anti-migrant civic movement appeared, although social networks were sometimes a platform for far-right messaging. Fourth, the closing of the borders and the prevention of a massive wave of refugees that could have been trapped on Macedonian territory was viewed as an effective policy and the right thing to do.

It was never the intention of the Macedonian government to close the borders as long as it northern neighbors kept the Balkan human corridor was open. Macedonia was strongly criticized for closing its border with Greece. Use of teargas and rubber bullets also had an adverse effect on international attitudes toward

Macedonia.[144] However, it is important to understand the context in which closing he corridor occurred.

Discussion

Populism is on the rise in Europe. Populist extremist parties (PEPs) present a formidable challenge to European democracies. They rally large and durable levels of support even among the economically secure and educated population groups of Europe. Although the bulk of the supporters of PEPs are lower middle class and economically insecure, PEPs have gained support by focusing on cultural issue. Dilution of national culture is the main rhetorical message of both right and left-wing populist parties that has gained considerable electoral success throughout Europe. Populist ideology is based on the principles of cohesion, common culture, national sovereignty and security. These are the rallying themes of illiberal democracy. They are grounded in opposition to pluralism and minority rights. Xenophobia is another quality of populism, which exploits the religion of

immigrants. Xenophobes associate terrorism with Islam and extremist organizations like ISIS. EU countries lack political leadership and a common policy in response to the refugee crisis. This gap has led to the fusion of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim agendas. The main victims are tolerance, pluralism and cohabitation – values that Europe boasts about.

Dogu Ergil

In Greece, Golden Dawn has emerged as the third most popular parliamentary political party for several reasons. The first reason is connected to the growing popular disappointment over the deep financial crisis in the country, which has led to rising poverty and raging unemployment. Another reason has been the continuing popular disapproval of the traditional ruling elites and political parties, which are considered corrupt and culpable for the current financial situation in Greece. The most important reason, however, has been an anti-

immigrant, racist campaign which has appealed to a rising post-crisis nationalism, and has been further fueled by the failure of the state to deal effectively with the huge problem of the refugee crisis and illegal immigration. Adoption by the Greek Parliament of anti-racist legislation has been delayed, despite the numerous incidents of hate-speech and hate crime in the country based on people's national, ethnic, religious, sexual and political identities. Law 4285/2014 on combating racism and xenophobia through criminal law was finally adopted in September 2014, after a long delay an controversy within the Greek Parliament.

Anna-Maria Konsta

The current refugee and migrant crisis is merely a good argument in favor, rather than a cause of the rise and strengthening of the national right-wing extremist parties. The failure of the EU to respond, or at least to respond on time, to different threats, which endanger the societies and established ways of life in different

Member States, are the underlying cause for the rise of extremist ideologies in Europe. Each threat intensifies public support for such parties, which are rooted in the financial and debt crisis during the past decade. Extremist parties are portraying EU as dysfunctional bureaucracy, which restricts the sovereignty of the states, spends a lot of the taxpayers' money with little to show for it. Moreover, the EU's bureaucracy disempowers states to uphold their national interests. These perceptions are not very far from the truth.

Vladimir Bozinovski

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Building fences and closing borders: Experience and implications

Triantafyllos Karatrantos and Ioannis Armakolas

One of the fundamental objectives of the European Union is "to create an area without internal borders where people may move, live and work freely, knowing that their rights are fully respected and their security ensured"[145]. The connection between internal and external borders is key to the proper functioning of the Schengen area, since free movement across internal borders requires effective controls at the external borders. In the words of the European Commission, "the removal of internal borders means that the Schengen countries need to cooperate with each other to maintain a high level of security within the Schengen area. It also means that they need to share responsibility for and cooperate in managing their common external borders and should, in that context, establish good cooperation

with their non-Schengen neighbors outside the EU. Schengen cooperation entails common criteria for controlling the external borders, common rules for entering into the Schengen area, and increased police cooperation between participating countries".[146]

The Schengen acquis

The first step towards a management policy of the common external border was taken on June 14, 1985, with the Schengen Agreement, initially signed by five European Community members. The Schengen framework, which was incorporated into the EU legal order with the Treaty of Amsterdam, provides the framework until today for the EU's strategy on border management. Among them, the most important are tools are: (i) the Schengen Borders Code, (ii) EU funds to support Member States management of external borders, (iii) establishment of centralized databases (Schengen Information System (SIS), Visa Information System (VIS), European Dactyloscopy Database (Eurodac) etc.), (IV)

the so-called 'Facilitators Package' aiming to prevent and penalize unauthorized entry, transit and residence, and (v) operational cooperation with the establishment of the European Agency for Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States (FRONTEX).

The ongoing influx of refugees and migrants in the last decade led to the further Europeanization of border management. The Lisbon Treaty provided a common border management policy. The Stockholm Programme drew on the EU's priorities to elaborate a roadmap of work in the area of justice, freedom and security, which included an assessment of creating a European System of Border Guards. The call for European cooperation was reaffirmed in the European Council's conclusions of June 2014.[147]

The test of the 2015 refugee crisis

The Schengen framework and the ability of collective management of external borders were put to severe test

during the recent Syrian refugee and migrant crisis. The record number of refugees and migrants reaching the EU "has revealed serious deficiencies at parts of the Union's external borders and resulted in a wave-through approach applied by some Member States".[148] As the European Commission admits, this situation "led to the creation of a route across the Western Balkans which sees migrants travelling swiftly north. In reaction, several Member States have resorted to reintroducing temporary internal border controls, placing in question the proper functioning of the Schengen area of free movement and its benefits to European citizens and the European economy".[149] Overall, according to FRONTEX, several reasons contributed to the Member States heightened feeling of insecurity: (i) increased flows of refugees and migrants, (ii) the extended detection of irregular migrants, (iii) Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015, and (iv) the detection of a high number of persons travelling intra-Schengen with fraudulent documents. The handling of the 2015 refugee and

migrant crisis by EU Member States has jeopardized the achievements of the Schengen framework, increasing the prominence of national security concerns by Member States.

Reintroduction of controls at internal borders between Schengen member states

After September 2015, a number of Schengen zone countries chose to reintroduce temporary controls at the internal borders.[150] According to the European Commission, the reintroduction of internal borders controls from Schengen zone States was a unilateral action. "Countries have based the decision on the unilateral reintroduction of internal border controls on the provision for cases requiring immediate action (Article 25 Schengen Borders Code), which allows for reintroduced controls at internal borders for a period of up to two months. As the situation has not improved significantly, the controls have been subsequently prolonged based on Articles 23 and 24 Schengen Borders

Code, which allows for reintroduced controls at internal borders for a period of up to 6 months." [151]

Closing the Western Balkan route

The Western Balkan Route was used by a massive number of refugees and migrants arriving from Turkey to Greece on their journey to Western Europe, via Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia and Bulgaria. The massive movement of people through the Western Balkan Route during 2015 produced diverse social and policy responses, sparking unprecedented debate within European societies about the nature of the problem and adequate responses to the challenge. The Central European states, also known as Visegrad 4 (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia), challenged the Berlin-inspired prevailing mood within the EU, which favored the acceptance and integration in European societies of large numbers of Syrian refugees. Budapest led a campaign of convincing, not only European partners but also Western Balkan EU

membership aspirants of the need for sealing off borders. Eventually, Austria, which initially followed Germany in accepting thousands of refugees, took steps that encouraged Western Balkan states to seal the Western Balkan Route. A number of tighter border control initiatives and cross-border agreements, all sponsored and orchestrated by Vienna, led to the effective closing of the Western Balkan Route for non- Europeans without valid visas and passport in March 2016. While this initiative was not directly sponsored by Brussels, it clearly fit the wider EU objective to more effectively manage the large population flow. The decision to close the Western Balkan Route was announced, via twitter, by the President of the European Council Donald Tusk.

Building fences

In line with the above-mentioned effort to close the Western Balkan route, an increasing number of states responded to the refugee and migrant emergency by building fences along their borders. For example,

Hungary finished a fence along its border with Croatia, an extension of its razor-wire fence along its 110-mile border with Serbia in October 2015. Bulgaria started rebuilding the Soviet-era barbed wire fence along its border with Turkey and stated that it may erect another fence along its 500-kilometer long border with Greece. On its part, Greece erected a fence along its border with Turkey even before the recent refugee wave started. Finally, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia built two lines of barbed wire fences on its border with Greece. Border security is provided by both border police, as well as heavily armed military units.

The new border infrastructure and military presence on the borders of EU Member States contradict the vision of Europe whole and free, as well as policy priorities aimed at European integration. At the same time, the construction of fences will not ultimately deter the massive movement of people. Unilateral actions to build fences will force displaced people to adjust their travel, seeking alternative routes to destination countries. The

massive movement of refugees and migrants poses great challenges, which require longer term policy planning and coordination by the EU and its Member States.

The challenges ahead and the way forward

The European Commission estimates that the full reestablishment of border controls would cost between €5 and €18 billion annually. The problem of handling the crisis is described by the European Commission: "The reintroduction of internal border controls on a sustained basis within the EU would not solve the challenges of the migration crisis, yet it would entail huge economic, political and social costs for the EU and the individual Member States. It would also risk putting in jeopardy the judicial and police cooperation that has become one of the key elements of added-value arising from the Schengen system"[152]. The challenge for the EU has been stated by the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker: "A united refugee and asylum policy requires stronger joint efforts to secure our

external borders. Fortunately, we have given up border controls between the Member States of the Schengen area, to guarantee free movement of people, a unique symbol of European integration. But the other side of the coin to free movement is that we must work together more closely to manage our external borders"[153].

The crisis has exposed weaknesses and gaps in existing mechanisms. It has also highlighted the need for a truly integrated system of border management. According to the European Commission, "Wider structural deficiencies in the way that the Union's external borders are currently protected have become evident in the current crisis".[154] In response to these failings and in response to persistent widespread criticism, the European Commission presented the European Agenda on Migration and with the proposal for a European Boarder and Coast Guard in December 2015. The Commission proposed a European Border and Coast Guard to ensure a strong and shared management of the external borders and to introduce systematic checks of

relevant databases for all people traversing the Schengen area. The European Border and Coast Guard will bring together a European Border and Coast Guard Agency built from FRONTEX. The authorities of Member States are responsible for day-to-day border management. The Commission proposed a targeted modification of the Schengen Borders Code to introduce mandatory systematic checks of EU citizens at external land, sea, and air borders.

Furthermore, the 2013 European Commission's 'Smart Borders' package is part of the wider European response to the unprecedented movement of people. The package is designed to modernize border management by automating border checks and enhancing exit and entry information in accordance with the Entry/Exit System (EES) and a Registered Travelers Programme (RTP).

These measures aim to support the management of EU's external borders and protect freedom of movement within the Schengen area. Finally, the European Commission has adopted a Communication on Stronger

and Smarter Information Systems for Borders and Security, setting out options on how existing and future information systems could enhance both external border management and internal security within the EU. The Communication initiates a process of structurally improving the EU's data management architecture in full compliance with fundamental rights, in particular the protection of personal data and sets out actions to improve the functioning and interoperability of existing information systems and potential new systems to address information gaps.

Discussion

The paper offers an informative and useful account of the crisis in the Schengen system due to the 2015 refugee crisis. Apart from the conflict between the fence- builders, led by Hungary, and old European elites who try to salvage the Schengen acquis, there are a number of other political controversies that shape the current policy debate over Schengen's future. Such controversies include the

resistance of some countries, including Germany, to the further integration of Member States' intelligence networks. Another factor is the willingness, or lack thereof, of neighboring, non-EU states to cooperate with Schengen authorities, especially when disputed borders are involved as is the case in the Aegean between Greece and Turkey. Schengen is also debilitated by the limited administrative capacity of some EU border states, like Greece, to handle a sudden surge in the number of persons fleeing conflict or seeking economic opportunities in Europe.

Dimitris Keridis

[145] European Commission, The European Union Explained, Borders and Security, 2014, p.1

[146] Ibid. p.3

[147] European Council, EUCO 79/14, 26-27 June 2014, Conclusions.

[148] European Commission, COM (2016), Back to Schengen - A Roadmap, Brussels, March 4, 2016, p. 12.

[149] Ibid.

[150] The States that introduced controls were Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, France, Malta, Austria, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Hungary. Except Slovenia and Hungary, these countries have prolonged the controls on several occasions, in line with the Schengen Borders Code.

[151] European Commission, COM (2016). Op.cit. p. 10.

[152] European Commission, COM (2016). Op.cit. p. 3.

[153] European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, State of the Union Address, September 9, 2015

[154] European Commission, COM (2016). Op.cit. p. 5.

The international organizations role in handling the refugee crisis along the Balkan human corridor

Veton Latifi

Major specialized international organizations grew increasingly involved in providing direct assistance to refugees and migrants, as the humanitarian crisis in countries along the Balkan refugee route worsened in 2015 and the first part of 2016. Assistance also focused on building the capacity of governments in the region on the front-lines of the emergency.

Apart from direct service delivery in the form of life-saving supplies, the major intergovernmental organizations operating under the umbrella of various UN agencies were required to support local authorities in regulating the flow of migrants. The transit of many people was delayed at borders of Balkan states, often for many days. Others were refused entry altogether and

face limited options for either onward movement or return. With their limited resources rapidly depleted during delays, large numbers of migrants became increasingly reliant on humanitarian assistance from international organizations. The international community worked in support of local civil society and local government, which responded to the crisis.

Summary analysis of response of the international organizations

A flow of refugees and migrants following conflict and refugee flows in several Asian and African countries required the involvement of the specialized international organizations. The Balkan refugee route was used by the highest number of forcibly displaced people worldwide since World War II.

A panel was held at the South East European University in Tetovo on May 17, 2016. The panel, which was organized to inform this paper, included the country representatives of the United Nations Higher

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other organizations working on the field. Panelists identified several common positive contributions of international organizations, especially capacity building for local authorities and for refugees. They discussed their role monitoring the asylum system in cooperation with the governments, as well as service delivery in conjunction with local partners.

The role of international organizations during the 2015-2016 refugee crises along the Balkan human corridor far surpasses their role during the Kosovo crisis of 1999. Beyond direct delivery of supplies, the international organizations assisted with border management, capacity building and legal support for both local institutions and refugees. International organizations worked flexibly with the people and governments of the region. Their rapid intervention created time and space for state institutions to conduct assessments and improve their responses. This time countries were much

better organized compared to Kosovo crisis. They responded quickly and more effectively.

International organizations provided a broad range of services, working in tandem with directly affected communities and host governments, such as:

- Supplying food and non-food items, including water and sanitation services.

- Offering legal support to refugees concerning their asylum applications or assisted voluntary return arrangements.

- Building capacity for state institutions with a priority for ministry of interior/border authorities, ministry of labor and social issues, national centers of crisis management. Assistance took the form of trainings, donating equipment, providing and donating computers for better communications, filtering stations, etc.;

- Support for community projects such as medical centers and repairing medical clinics in small towns along the Balkan corridor.

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There are different management models for international organizations in various countries along the Balkan route. The main role of the international organizations was shaped by the need to assist governments and civil society responding to the most urgent humanitarian and protection needs of the refugees. This was complemented by efforts to strengthen asylum systems in line with applicable international standards.

The roles of the international organizations along the Balkan human corridor have many innovative dimensions. First, they provided help on legal issues. For instance, amendments to the asylum legislation were adopted by Republic of Macedonia in June 2015. The new regulation allowed refugees and migrants 72 hours to transit through the country. Many refugees and migrants whose access was blocked turned to smuggling networks. There were many reports that smugglers and gangs abused displaced persons. International organizations such as UNHCR and IOM were pro-active in preventing human trafficking.

The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, which presents a framework for an inter-agency response to the refugee and migrant flows, defined the role of international organizations:

- To design and implement a response that supports, complements and builds Governments' existing capacity to ensure effective and safe access to asylum, protection and solutions in relevant countries;

- To ensure that refugees and migrants have access to protection and assistance in a participatory manner, with particular attention to specific needs.

- To strengthen national and local capacities and protection systems.

- To strengthen partnership and coordination within the humanitarian community and with governments, both in setting common goals and in establishing national-level coordination structures and information analysis.[155]

In the period of March 27 - April 5, 2016, an Information and Communication needs assessment was conducted in Tabanovce transit center in northern Macedonia near the border with Serbia. The assessment identified the information and communication needs of refugees and migrants, as well as the most appropriate channels for information sharing. The results of the assessment indicate that 80 percent of respondents said that UN agencies and other international organizations were the most reliable source of information - UNHCR, IOM, Red Cross, etc.[156]

In line with the Refugee Coordination Model the UNHCR continued to closely support the governments of the region in its primary protection responsibility, advising capacity and coordination. Much of the humanitarian relief in these countries of the region is coordinated and channeled through the UNHCR. It assists the Government and civil society in responding to the most urgent humanitarian and protection needs of the

refugees. It also seeks to strengthen the asylum systems in the country in line with applicable international standards.[157]

IOM has been acting all the time with its partners in the international community to assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

UNICEF has been is responding to the crisis through a combination of advocacy, technical assistance to the Government, capacity building and service delivery response, and it is working to extend support to children and women throughout their journey in Greece, Austria and Italy. It is actively engaged in regular Government and UN country team coordination mechanisms on the refugee and migrant crisis.[158]

In general, the main elements of the protection response of these organizations have been in successful was

conducted so far on the ground and they include:

- Protection monitoring and advocacy

- Strengthening national asylum systems

- People with specific needs

- Child protection

- Family reunification and prevention of family separation:

- Prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence.[159]

Apart of these IOs, other partners working with the Ministries and municipalities in providing protection and assistance to refugees among others are following: Caritas, Danish Caritas, DRC, GIZ, Grain of Goodness, Habitat for Humanity, Mercy Corps, Red Cross, SOS Children's Village, UNFPA, and WHO.[160]

Partnerships with the national and local authorities

It showed to be a good practice along the Balkan human

corridor to emphasize coordination between the international organizations and all relevant actors in the process. For example, UN organizations led by the UNHCR have been coordinating with the governments on the overall refugee response. They work with the Refugee Coordination Model and closely have been supported the governments in their primary protection responsibility. For instance, the UNHCR in Skopje held regular coordination meetings that are now co-chaired with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, as well as bi-weekly coordination meetings for food and non-food assistance to identify needs and remaining gaps and ensure complementarity of response from all partners involved in the crisis.

Summary conclusions and recommendations

The international organizations have been the main partners supporting the governments of the Balkans in providing assistance and protection to the refugees throughout the refugee crisis. They have also focused on

strengthening the asylum system in these countries, monitoring access to the territory, and improving services and facilities for persons staying in the country for the foreseeable future.

The refugee crisis of 2015-2016 along the Balkan corridor has included an innovative role for international organizations compared to previous emergencies that mainly focused on the scope of the assistance and coordination. In both cases, the role of the intergovernmental organizations in terms of the humanitarian strategies and coordination has sought a quick response.

The Balkans corridor has been officially closed since the EU-Turkey Plan was announced on March 8, 2016. This has resulted in the emergence of new smuggling routes, through the Balkans.[161] The international organizations UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF and the others should continue to play an important role, maintaining staff and operational capacity in Balkan countries, and working closely with host governments and partner agencies. It

will be very important to strengthen protection systems.[162] IOM's engagement along the Balkan human corridor should further prioritize provision of emergency shelter materials, based on needs assessments and analysis.

As one of the largest movements of displaced people through European borders since World War II, the refugee crisis tested the capacity of both states and international organizations. The international community was caught unprepared for such large numbers of people.[163] While the overall response of several states has remained haphazard, the quick reaction of the specialized international organizations has been invaluable to governments of the region.

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[155] RRMMP, Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe: Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans Route, UN, January - December 2016

[156] Information and Communication Needs Assessment, UNHCR, Skopje, April 2016, p. 3

[157] FYR Macedonia, Inter-Agency Operational Update, UNHCR, Skopje, 4-31 March 2016, p.1

[158] Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe, Regional Humanitarian Situation Report, No. 8, UNICEF, Skopje, February 16, 2016, p. 2

[159] RRMMP, Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe: Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans Route, UN, January - December 2016

[160] FYR Macedonia, Inter-Agency Operational Update, UNHCR, Skopje, March 4-31, 2016, p.18

[161] European Migration Crisis Rapid Situation Update, REACH, April 5, 2016, pp. 5-6

[162] Europe's Refugee Emergency Response (ERER) Update, No, 24, Skopje, February 19-25, 2016

[163] RRMMP, Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe: Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans Route, UN, January - December 2016

The refugee crisis and the role of NGOs, civil society, and media in Greece

Dimitris Skleparis and Ioannis Armakolas

On May 30, 2015, the mayor of the Greek island of Lesbos called on the government for immediate support. Approximately 600 refugees were coming ashore each day and local authorities struggled to meet their needs.[164] Lesbos was, and still is, one of the several Greek islands that function as the main gateway to Europe for migrants and refugees that search for a better life. This paper presents the role of NGOs, civil society and media during the 2015 refugee crisis in Greece. The authors focus mostly on Lesbos. In 2015, about 500,000 asylum seekers entered the EU through that island alone. This represents about half the overall sea arrivals in the EU. The Lesbos case is illustrative of the humanitarian response in all affected islands.

Both the Greek state and professional NGOs' responded late to the humanitarian crisis. The political and financial constraints after five years of austerity measures had severely limited the Greek state's ability to react effectively and on time. Moreover, the new Greek government elected in January 2015 underestimated the severity of the humanitarian crisis and failed to prepare an adequate response despite the clear signs that 2015 would become a year of mass irregular movement of people into the EU. Furthermore, for a month prior to the September 20, 2015, national elections – a key period in terms of the developing situation on the islands – a caretaker government was in place, which was unable to initiate an emergency response.

On another level, international NGOs were also slow to realize that Greece was in need of humanitarian assistance, mainly due to the location of the humanitarian crisis. They assumed that an EU Member State such as Greece would be able to respond on its own. Most international NGOs were not formally

registered in Greece, which led to delays in their mobilization. When these organizations arrived on the ground, they faced severe bureaucratic obstacles, such as tight employment and visa regulations, which prevented them from deploying, experienced aid workers. Financial (capital) controls in Greece also hampered their ability initially to mobilize resources. Finally, major Greek NGOs were also slow to respond to the humanitarian crisis, mainly due to their commitments to ongoing aid programs in mainland Greece. Supporting Greek nationals affected by the economic crisis limited their capacity, both in terms of funding and staff, to scale up their operations on the islands.[165]

There were three distinct phases in the evolution of the humanitarian response to the so called refugee crisis in Greece: 1) From May to late August 2015 an ad hoc volunteer response was prevalent;[166] 2) From September 2015 to mid-January 2016 there was a gradual professionalization of the humanitarian response, characterized by the increased involvement of national

and international NGOs; 3) and from mid-January to March 2016, when the EU-Turkey agreement was concluded, the state together with major international and national NGOs took the lead in the response, as the role of minor civil society actors was curtailed.

Between May and late August 2015, it was mostly local volunteers and tourists that offered humanitarian assistance to refuges and migrants arriving on the islands, filling the void created by the absence of a national and/or EU response.[167] Much of the water, food, healthcare and transportation to registration centers (hotspots) was provided by local, independent volunteer groups that gradually started to form. However, due to national anti-smuggling laws it was illegal for volunteers, taxis, and commercial buses to transport unregistered newcomers to registration centers. This restriction forced the majority of asylum seekers on the islands to walk as much as 70 kilometers in order to be registered. The restriction was lifted in July 2015.

As word of the critical situation on the islands started to spread, international volunteers began flying in to offer assistance.[168] The role of international media was crucial in raising awareness.[169] Despite the fact that some international NGOs had started operating on the islands during these months, it was not until October that professional response began to catch up with the magnitude of asylum seekers' needs. In fact, a number of NGOs and international organizations initially deployed assessment missions to the islands, rather than actual humanitarian relief operations. This approach tracked typical operating procedures for such crises. However, it further aggravated the problem of adequate response to the humanitarian crisis. According to a French military officer-turned-volunteer, the humanitarian situation in Lesbos in mid-August was 'catastrophic'.[170]

On September 1, 2015, the number of asylum seekers in Lesbos officially exceeded the island's resident population.[171] Riots broke out as large numbers of

asylum seekers remained stranded in the port under the hot sun without access to water, food and sanitary facilities. [172] Riot police were sent by Greece's caretaker government to the island, in an attempt to regain control of the situation. These events triggered the gradual professionalization of humanitarian response on the islands, as a larger number of national and international NGOs gradually became active on the ground. In November 2015, national and international NGOs, 81 in total, were offering humanitarian assistance in Lesbos.[173] Furthermore, volunteer groups began cooperating closely with NGOs and international organizations in the provision of various humanitarian services, such as transporting asylum seekers to hotspots, conducting search and rescue operations at sea, and providing healthcare, etc. In December 2015, the International Rescue Committee expanded its Lesbos operations to the north of the island, which is closer to the point of boat arrivals. Its action marked the transition from an ad hoc, volunteer-led response to an official, professional

operation by major organizations.[174]

The professionalization of humanitarian response on the islands resulted in the increase of capacity and effectiveness addressing the needs of new arrivals. However, it also created an unintended rift between professional NGOs and volunteers. Tensions between professional humanitarians and volunteers flared occasionally, especially when professionals started offering their services in areas that heretofore had been handled by volunteers.[175] This rift was reflected in the creation of two separate 'camps' at Moria hotspot in Lesbos, with limited sharing of resources, information, and facilities. The 'internal' camp was run by state authorities and professional humanitarians, while the 'external' camp was run by independent individuals, volunteer groups, and foundations. At the same time, national and local media started profiling the absence of state supervision, which had created serious issues of coordination, accountability and effectiveness of the civil society-led response. Media also covered tensions

between humanitarians and the host community.[176] The Mayor of Lesbos stated in January 2016 "the presence of unregistered NGOs is more disruptive than useful".[177]

Media reports and the call for action by local authorities paved the way for greater state involvement in the humanitarian crisis response. Hence, in mid-January 2016, the humanitarian response entered its third phase, which was led by the state and major international and national NGOs and organizations. On January 14, two volunteers from Team Humanity Denmark and three volunteers at PROEM-AID were arrested by the Hellenic Coastguard while performing a rescue operation. They were charged with "violations of the migration and weapons' law".[178] These arrests were the first in a series of police investigations against unregistered volunteers, which took place both on the islands and in Idomeni[179], at the Greek border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).[180] On January 28, 2016, a joint Ministerial Decision banned all independent, unregistered volunteer activities conducted on the

islands, and placed NGOs and other civil society actors under state monitoring at organizational and individual levels.[181] The same Ministerial Decision provided for the establishment of a committee that would meet on a weekly basis in order to register, certify, coordinate and evaluate the work of all civil society actors operating on the islands.

These actions manifested the state's belated attempt to make its role and presence noticeable in the humanitarian response. The state's engagement was primarily guided by national/state security[182], rather than humanitarian concerns. The curtailment of the mainly volunteer-led and other minor civil society actors in the humanitarian response continued in the following months. The new Law (4368/16) that was voted by the Greek Parliament in February 2016 minimized the role of volunteers and minor civil society actors in newly established army-run refugee camps. Access to these facilities was only allowed to major national and international NGOs.

These moves by the government and state institutions signaled the belated but definite 'return' of the state. The state, combined with professional national and international humanitarian NGOs, assumed the central role in addressing the humanitarian crisis in response to the ongoing massive arrival of refugees and migrants in Greece. This paper outlines the evolution of humanitarian response, which started with various spontaneous initiatives. Loosely organized volunteer groups initially bore the primary responsibility of delivering aid and services to refugees and migrants, until relief operations were professionalized and taken over by the state.

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[165] See Skleparis, D., 2015. "Towards a hybrid 'shadow state'? The case of migrant-/refugee- serving NGOs" in Clarke, J., Huliaras, A., & Sotiropoulos, D. (eds.) *Austerity and the Third Sector in Greece: Civil Society at the European Frontline*, Farnham: Ashgate/Gower, pp. 147-165.

[166] MPI, 2016. *Refugee Flows to Lesvos: Evolution of a Humanitarian Response*, January 29, 2016. Available at:

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[167] *Ibid:* p. 2.

[168] Borton, Niland and Rantsiou, 2015. *Humanitarian Europe?: responses to the 2015 refugee and migrant movements through Lesvos, Greece*, December 9, 2015 Available at: http://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Lesvos-Roundtable-Report.pdf

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[170] MPI, 2016. *Refugee Flows to Lesvos: Evolution of a Humanitarian Response*, p. 4.

[171] Natural Hazards Center, 2016. *Timeline of refugee crisis: From May 2011 – February 2016*. If ones adds the entire refugee/migrant

population that passed through Lesvos during the entire 2015 the ratio of refugees/migrants to locals was at 585 percent. Several East Aegean Sea islands had ratios between 100 percent and 500 percent. Calculations based on UNHCR data reported in the Greek daily Kathimerini, February 3, 2016

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http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/greece/11846 923/Riot-police-clash-with-refugees-in-Lesbos.html

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175 *Ibid*: p. 8.

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Available at: http://www.statewatch.org/news/2016/apr/omct-eu-greece-civil- society-attacked.pdf

179Idomeni became the main theatre of humanitarian operations after thousands of asylum seekers became trapped there following the gradual closure of the 'Balkan route' to Germany, which was initiated after the November 2015 Paris attacks. The activities of unregistered volunteers came to the state's attention after the drowning of three asylum seekers who attempted with about a thousand others to cross irregularly the Greek-FYROM border following the instructions in a brochure distributed by activists at the Idomeni refugee camp. See Vice, 2016. *Why Activists Are Being Blamed for the Drowning of Three Refugees in Macedonia*, March 16, 2016 Available at: https://news.vice.com/article/why-activists- are-

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being-blamed-for-the-drowning-of-three-refugees-in- macedonia

[180] OMCT and FIDH, 2016. *Greece: Ongoing crackdown on civil society providing humanitarian assistance to migrants and asylum seekers*.

[181] *Ibid*; Statewatch, 2016. *NGOs and volunteers helping refugees in Greece to be placed under state control*, February 21, 2016. Available at: http://www.statewatch.org/news/2016/feb/eu-med-crisis-volunteers-state.htm

[182] These concerns were raised especially after the November 2015 Paris attacks.

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About the publishers

Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR), Columbia University, New York

Columbia University is one of the top academic and research institutions in the world, conducting path-breaking research in medicine, science, the arts, and the humanities. It includes three undergraduate schools, thirteen graduate and professional schools, and a school of continuing education. Founded in 1754, it is the oldest institution of higher learning in the state of New York and the fifth oldest in the United States.

Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) was the first academic center in the world to be founded on an interdisciplinary commitment to the study of human rights. ISHR is also renowned for bridging the study and practice of human rights on both a national and international level. ISHR seeks to promote dialogue

between scholars and practitioners through human rights research, education, lectures, conferences, and capacity-building activities.

Program on Peace-building and Human Rights is an applied research endeavor taking a comprehensive approach to peace-building through humanitarian assistance, human rights, economic development, and political participation. In addition to Macedonia, the Program operates in Myanmar, Iraq, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Sudan, the Balkans, and the Caucasus. Activities involve dialogue initiatives, educational exchanges and curriculum reforms that reduce hostile perceptions, as well as cooperative projects with practical social and economic benefits. The Program enhances preventive diplomacy by focusing on strategies to break the cycle of violence.

Institute of International Relations, Athens

The vision to create a space where students, researchers, professors, diplomats, journalists and practitioners of international relations could engage in a meaningful free exchange of ideas led to the founding of the Institute of International Relations (I.I.R.) of Panteion University in 1989. As a forum of public exchange the Institute aspires to a meaningful synthesis of academic expertise with field exposure over a wide range of issues relating to the realm of international relations. A strong commitment to the value of developing a well-informed global perspective underlies the diverse activities that the Institute has undertaken over the past twenty-seven years. The staff and the wide network of associates of the Institute share the belief that expert knowledge in our increasingly interconnected world, ought to serve the public good beyond narrow ideological and institutional confines at the local, the national and international level.

Foundation Alliance of Civilizations, Skopje

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The Institute for Political Research, Skopje

The Institute for Political Research Skopje is a research agency based in Republic of Macedonia. Its goal is to work on the improvement of the political, social and economic processes in Macedonia and on the development of the political culture of the citizens through implementation of various scientific research projects. The Institute is dedicated to research and analysis of the Macedonian society and the situation in the region, using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. This kind of approach allows IPRS to have a realistic insight into the characteristics of the current socio-economic and political situation. The Institute is focused on scientific research and policy-making.

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