NATIONAL ARMED CONFLICTS AND MANAGEMENT OF MASSIVE INFLUX OF REFUGEES IN EUROPEAN UNION (EU): 2012-2016

Victor C. Obikaeze
Department of Political Science
Rhema University, Nigeria
&
Manasseh E. Bassey
Department of Political Science/Public Administration
University of Uyo, Uyo

Abstract

It is a commonplace fact that due to fear and displacement of people either as a result of conflicts, physical violence, political persecution, war or other life threatening events in their home countries there has been an influx of refugees in European Union today. Starting from 1920's after the First World War till date, effective management of massive influx of refugees has remained a tough issue in the international community. In search of safety and better living standard a great number of refugees have made perilous and life threatening journeys that have cost many their lives. Consequently, the study explored how massive influx of refugees from armed conflict states impinged on the ability of European Union to effectively facilitate the safety, resettlement and relocation of refugees in the region. To achieve this, Ex-post Facto research design was employed and qualitative-descriptive method of analysis was adapted. Push-pull theory, was used as a theoretical framework of analysis. Based on the findings, the lives and property of a great number of refugees have been lost due to massive influx of refugees as well as poor management of the group by European Union member states. The study therefore recommended that EU should be highly committed to building a single asylum system on acceptance, resettlement and integration of refugees, and also establishes safe and legal means of migration.

Key Words: National Armed Conflict, Refugees, European Union, Safety, Resettlement

Introduction

The conflict in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria and others has continued unabated to generate high levels of human displacement. According to UNHCR (2015), in 2015 more than 80% of people arriving in Europe by sea are from the world's ten top refugee-producing countries. Over 50% arc from Syria, 15% from Afghanistan, 6% from Eritrea and 4% from Iraq – all countries in conflict or crisis (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015). From the start of the civil war in 2011 to September 2015, half of Syria's population of 23 million has been displaced, with at least 7.6 million displaced internally and 4 million refugees (UNHCR in Culbertson & Louay, 2015). According to United Nations (UN), over 12 million people inside Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance and over four million have fled the country. In a similar condition, Iraqis too are facing a resurgence of violence and conflict, including in relation to so-called Islamic State: over four million Iraqis are currently displaced within and outside the country (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015). In Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali, Nigeria and Eritrea, protracted conflicts and crises have threatened the lives of millions of civilians, forcing many to leave their home country in search of better living standards, safety and security in Europe and elsewhere.

Regrettably, a great number of refugees have made the perilous journey across the Mediterranean into Europe. As reported by UNHCR (2015), by 2015, 850,000 migrants crossed from Turkey to Greece through the Aegean and Dodecanese seas. The current surge in migration to the European Union (EU) rapidly became the largest and most complex facing Europe since the Second World War (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015). In 2011, there were 290,905 asylum seekers, in 2012, 313, 265, in 2013 there were 403,600, 595,530 were recorded in 2014 and 1,324,175 were reported in 2015 (British Refugee Council, 2016). Apparently, management of large inflows of refugees has remained a tough issue confronting Europe Union. Faced with domestic pressures, several states have taken unilateral national policy actions to control their borders, either by erecting fences or other physical obstacles or by reinforcing strict border control checks as well as anti-refugees laws. The trend has been on how to protect their borders instead of protecting refugees who are seeking international protection.

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2015), over 3,100 people have died en route to Europe so far in 2015, the vast majority on the perilous sea journey across the Mediterranean from North Africa or Turkey. Their journey to EU is often characterized with danger. At least 23,000 people are estimated to have lost their lives trying to reach Europe since 2000 (Amnesty International, 2014). Ironically, those who make it to the borders of the European Union (EU) find that safety remains beyond their grasp as they are caught in the state of limbo due to further hindrances they continue to face in the migration process. This ugly situation spurred Sutherland (2015) to lament succinctly that there is no reason to require people seeking asylum to run a gamut of desert crossings, abuse by smugglers, beatings, extortion, rape and exploitation – or to have them experience the trauma of watching their friends and family die along the way.

Based on the situation, the study intends to explore how massive influx of refugees from armed conflict states impinged on the ability of EU to effectively facilitate the safety, resettlement and relocation of refugees in the region.

Conceptual Clarification/Review of Related Literature

Refugee

According to Article 1 (A), Paragraph 2 of United Nations Convention of 1951, which reads thus: As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is out-side the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (United Nations Convention, 1951). In the same manner, Amnesty International (2014) submitted that a refugee is a person who has fled from their own country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution and their government cannot or will not protect them. As articulated by UNHCR, whole groups may be considered as 'prima facie' refugees if situations have arisen in which entire groups have been displaced under circumstances indicating that members of the group could be considered individually as refugees.

Migrants

A migrant, on the other hand, is someone who makes a conscious choice to leave his or her home country for a better quality of life or for economic gain. It is a choice rather than a matter of life and death. An irregular migrant is someone who lacks legal status in a transit or host country because of unauthorized entry, breach of a condition of entry or an expired visa. The word "migrant" describes

a person who leaves home to seek a new life in another region or country (Open Society Foundation, 2015). According to the society, the word is used broadly. It includes those who move through legal channels—to take a job in another country or region, for instance, or to rejoin family members—as well as those who move across borders without a visa or government approval. (The latter is often called irregular or undocumented migration.

Resettlement of Refugees

Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement. In other words, resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state which has agreed to admit them, as refugees. The status provided ensures protection against *refoulement* and provides the resettled refugee, and his/her family or dependants, access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also includes the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country (UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, 2011). In EU, resettlement means the movement of refugees from a country outside of the EU to an EU Member State (European Resettlement Network, 2016). Resettlement forms a core part of the external dimension of European Union asylum policy, and a way of demonstrating EU solidarity with third countries.

Relocation of Refugees

According to European Resettlement Network (2015), relocation refers to *the movement of refugees from one EU Member State to another*. It is an *intra-EU* process, in which Member States help another Member State to cope with the pressure of hosting a relatively large refugee population by agreeing to receive a number of them. Relocation is an expression of internal EU solidarity and burden-sharing, particularly with those countries at the borders of Europe that receive a high number of refugees.

Causes of Global Refugee Inflows

Displacement is at an all-time high, with nearly 60 million people displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or human rights violations (Danish Refugee Council, 2015). The world grapples with the current refugee and migrant crisis in Europe –in which over 900,000 refugees and migrants have made perilous journeys over sea and across land. National conflict and civil war usually produce large population displacement and its attendant refugee flows across national boundaries. Mass refugee flows frequently have adverse consequences in the international community. Moreover, civil violence frequently extends across national boundaries as 'internal' conflicts are not constrained by borders.

There are, at present, several ways to describe refugee causes; they include three models which, if integrated, summarize the causes of refugee-producing problems (Druke, 1987). Suhrke's model of conflict situations pinpoints the following types of conflicts that may produce refugees. She notes that protracted warfare, international wars and certain kinds of ethnic tension tend to produce major outflows, whereas conflicts such as elite rivalry, coups, and governmental suppression of critics lead to a trickle of a few, highly politicized individuals (Suhrke, 1983). Beyer proposes the following categories of people of potential humanitarian concern: Convention refugees, victims of civil strife, conscientious objectors, self-exiles, victims of natural disasters, migrants and perhaps persons belonging to governments in exile or liberation movements (Beyer, 1987).

National Armed Conflicts and Refugee Crisis

The armed insurgency against the Asad regime features a complex mix of militant groups bound by geographic proximity, ideological affinity, kinship-tribal ties, or religious sentiment (Sharp & Blanchard, 2013). According to them, there are hundreds and perhaps over a thousand different brigades or militias, and as the Syrian civil war has dragged on, many of the most religiously extreme groups have received increasing foreign attention. With preliminary events related to the Arab Spring as a background, in Syria, the first protests start in March, 2011, in areas around Damask, the capital city, and in Dar'a, a town situated in the southern part of the country, near the border with Jordan. The protesters are demanding the release of the political prisoners and the reformation of the political system (Henri, 2016). He stresses that despite the peaceful nature of the protests, the governmental forces resort to harsh methods and used real ammunition to suppress the demonstrations which have already spread to other parts of the country. The Syrian conflict, which began with protests on January 26th 2011 and escalated into a consolidated uprising on March 15th, has become the bloodiest conflict of the Arab Spring (Khashan, 2011). Military and opposition forces have suffered over since the beginning of protests, violence, and army involvement.

According to Humud, Blanchard and Nikitin (2017), since March 2011, the conflict in Syria has driven more than 4.8 million Syrians into neighboring countries as refugees (out of a total population of more than 22 million). More than 6.3million other Syrians are internally displaced and are among more than 13.5 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance. In Syria conflict, systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) have been widespread by all parties, including the Islamic State (The *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (UNOCHA), 2016). Accordingly, civilian protection concerns include mass executions, systematic rape and sexual violence, torture, and appalling treatment of those in detention. Lack of access, food insecurity, health concerns (injuries, disease outbreaks, serious medical conditions and disabilities), inadequate shelter, and an economic recession coupled with growing poverty contribute to the vulnerability of millions of civilians. As of December 2016, an estimated 13.5 million people inside Syria, more than half the population, were in need of humanitarian and protection assistance, including 6 million children (UNOCHA, 2016). In addition, more than 4.8 million Syrians have registered as refugees abroad, with most fleeing to countries in the immediate surrounding region as well as Europe.

In a same vein, Jenkins (2015) posited that the conflict in Syria has produced millions of refugees on a scale close to that of Europe during World War II. As long as the fighting continues, as it seems likely to, these refugees will not be able to go home, nor can so many be absorbed by the surrounding countries. They will remain an international burden and a source of regional instability. To summarize, the conflicts in Syria and Iraq are at a stalemate, and sectarian and ethnic divisions are increasingly driving them (Jenkins, 2015).

> By January 2014, open fighting had broken out between the
> forces of Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN), al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria,
> and those of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),
> al Qaeda's former affiliate in Iraq. ISIL is also called the
> Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or Daesh (its acronym
> in Arabic, in which Syria is referred to as "al-Sham"—
> simply, "the North"). This group, which had already
> demonstrated that it was clearly a rising star in the jihadist
> firmament and a growing power on the field in Syria, defied
> al Qaeda's leadership; brutally killed Sunnis who refused to

> *bow to its interpretation of Islam, innocent Shias whom it*
> *viewed as apostate, and any non-Muslims who rejected its*
> *version of Sharia law; and carried out indiscriminate*
> *bombings in Iraq that resulted in thousands of deaths. As its*
> *acronym indicates, ISIL intended to dominate the region and*
> *impose its self-proclaimed caliphate over the territories of*
> *Iraq and throughout the Levant. Despite its battles with JAN*
> *and other rebel formations in Syria, ISIL was able to escalate*
> *its operations in Iraq. Terrorist and insurgent attacks there,*
> *which had steadily declined since 2008, began to rise in the*
> *summer of 2011 as U.S. forces began to leave the country*
> *(Jenkins, 2015).*

The eruption of armed conflict in Iraq in January 2014, and subsequent large-scale territorial seizures by the Islamist militant group calling itself Islamic State (IS), has displaced more than three million Iraqis in the space of 18 months (Svoboda, Fenton & Foley, 2015). According to them, the UN and International NGOs, already in Iraq in significant numbers supporting some 220,000 Syrian refugees, have struggled to cope with the speed and scale of the displacement. Nearly two years into the crisis there is little sign of the displacement caseload reducing, and with more military offensives on IS territory planned the number of people needing humanitarian assistance – currently estimated to be as many as eight million (Svoboda et al, 2015). The situation has continued unabated despite humanitarian crisis associated with whole scenario. The fighting in Syria and Iraq have continued on multiple fronts, and the conflicts are essentially at a stalemate.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in dire humanitarian situation as evident in human casualties, human right abuses, population displacement and refugee debacle, livelihood crisis, and public insecurity (Okoli, & Iortyer, 2014). Since its advent, the sectarian insurgency has wrecked immense havoc in the country, especially by "using explosives and firearms with gruesome, fatal" consequences. They observed that available information suggests that the number of internally displaced persons and refugees associated with the insurgency has been enormous. Based on a recent United Nations Humanitarian Commission on Refugee (UNHCR) report, no fewer than 5,000 people have been displaced in the North East region of Nigeria as a result of the raging insurgency (Adebowale, cited in Okoli, & Iortyer, 2014). Nigeria has as a result of Boko Haram insurgency contributed to escalation of number of refugees. Today, it is on record that internal crisis in the country has not only lead to the internal displacement of people but has forcefully pushed Nigerians especially those in north out of the borders of the country.

Afghanistan in a similar manner has been subjected to a protracted and complex crisis for over 35 years with great humanitarian distress as a direct consequence. The conflict has its historical roots in the war against the Soviet Union since late 1970s during which time Islamic extremism was not only tolerated but promoted in Afghanistan and the region. Soviet withdrawal was followed by devastating civil war (1992-96) which eventually gave way to Taliban's appearance and rule over most of the country until 2001. Current insurgency against the government of Afghanistan is largely seen as fight for political power with some religious colouring. Khalid (2014) therefore averred that mobility has been a fundamental coping and survival strategy for Afghans over the last 35 years. He maintained that perhaps 10 million Afghans –or about one in three of the population –has been a refugee at least once during this period. Further, Khalid asserted that more than one in eight Afghans still lives outside the country, as refugees, undocumented migrants, or as part of the wider diaspora.

Within Afghanistan, an estimated 20 per cent of the population comprises returned refugees, while perhaps one in thirty is internally displaced.

For more than a year and half, since the U.S. and NATO handed fighting over to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), the Taliban has mounted and sustained its toughest military campaign in years, and the war has become bloodier than ever (Felbab, 2016). Despite the Taliban's internal difficulties, its military energy shows no signs of fizzling out. It has been scoring important tactical and even strategic victories. Felbab (2016) posits that nsecurity has increased significantly throughout the country, civilian deaths have shot up, and the Afghan security forces are taking large, and potentially unsustainable, casualties, while other ANSF deficiencies, including retention and support functions persist. He further stated that significant portions of Afghanistan's territory, including the provincial capital of Kunduz or multiple districts of Helmand, have fallen (at least temporarily) to the Taliban over the past year and half. The conflicts contributed to increase of internally displaced persons and refugees in the world today particularly in the European Union.

On 26 March 2015, an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia launched airstrikes against the Houthi armed group who had taken over the capital Sana'a and forced the Yemeni Government into exile. What was meant to be a short, sharp campaign to stop the advance of the Houthis, and restore President Al-Hadi to power, escalated rapidly into a full-blown armed conflict. Out of Yemen's 26 million people: 21.2 million are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, including 14.4 million people struggling to find enough food, of whom 7.6 million are severely food insecure. 19.4 million people lack access to clean water and sanitation, 14.1 million lack adequate healthcare, and at least 2.7 million are displaced within Yemen or have fled to neighbouring countries.

According to Jongberg (2016), the UN estimates that more than 10 000 people have been killed in the conflict, 4 000 of them civilians. The majority of deaths have been caused by air strikes led by Saudi Arabia. According to the latest statistics issued by the European Commission's DG ECHO, the humanitarian situation is critical:

- 21.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance – that represents 82 % of the population of Yemen;
- 14.1 million people need basic health care;
- 14.1 million people are in need of food aid;
- 7 million face emergency level food insecurity (famine);
- 2 million people have been internally displaced because of the conflict.

In a the same armed conflicts situation, the Somalia crisis should be understood as a complex and protracted crisis which includes corruption, hunger, conflict and cyclical natural disasters which impact tend to become aggravated due to difficult access for humanitarian actors. Somalia suffers from a chronic fragility of state institutions as a result of two decades of civil war and large parts of the south-central areas are controlled by the Islamist Al-Shabaab group further complicating humanitarian access.

Somalia is ranked first in the 2016 fragile states index. According to the UN, out of 12 million inhabitants, five million are food insecure and in need of humanitarian assistance. 300, 000 children are acutely undernourished and 1.1 million Somalis are internally displaced, under constant threat of insecurity and armed conflict. Basic public services such as health care and education are practically non-existent. Poor access to health services, water and sanitation constitutes a public health threat. Only 45% of children attend primary school. (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. (*ECHO*), 2016).

The implication of this ugly situation is that people are most likely to migrate from their homes to other parts of the world for survival, and this has been the case in the Somali armed conflict and protracted hunger. The situation has therefore added to global refugees since the beginning of crisis in the country.

Literature reviewed show that there are existing and protracted conflicts in various countries particularly in the Middle East and Africa respectively. The study concur with the observation and position of the existing literature, but questions the inability of the literature to systematically provide a direct linkage between the discussed national armed conflicts and current refugee crisis in European Union. This could be as a result of oversight or a deliberate neglect of the spill-overs of the conflicts. This study therefore poised to close the gap.

Theoretical Analysis

"Push-pull theory" was adopted in the study. Push-pull theory propounded by Lee divides factors causing migration into two groups of factors: Push and pull factors. According to Lee, push factors are those factors which 'forcefully' push people into migration such as unemployment, natural calamities, death threat, fear of political persecution, desertification, famine or drought, poverty, inequality, conflicts etc. According to Lee's theory these factors constitute the push factors that make people migrate. According to him, the reason why people migrate is due to relationship between push and pull factors. Push and pull factors are forces that can either induce people to move to a new location or oblige them to leave old residence. The pull factors include real and perceived economic, social and educational opportunities in the intending place to be migrated. Lee argued that pull factors as mentioned above make people to migrate from one country to another.

Conflicts, physical violence, crisis etc (push factors) in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other nations in the third world have forced many out of their countries of origin and pushing them to Europe Union countries where the refugees believe to be provided with refuge or sanctuary (pull factors). Or where they can enjoy better living standards, socially and economically.

National Armed Conflicts and Management of Refugees in European Union

Massive Influx of Refugees in European Union Member States

The conflicts, violence and human rights violations in countries of origin of the refugees have been a key factor responsible for the surge in irregular migration to Europe. It has been argued that there is no holistic and well-coordinated approach adopted by international community to end the Syria conflict and no clear international strategy for addressing the related conflict in Iraq as well. Stability is absent in Afghanistan despite years of international intervention. International institutions such as United Nations seem to be out of ideas on how to end the decades-long conflict virtually all the conflict-ridden and war-torn countries in the developing nations. Policy approaches adopted to address the chronic poverty, inequality, weak governance, protracted conflicts, violence and climate and environmental changes that constitute 'push' factors in many developing countries have also been inadequate. The practical challenge presented by the sheer scale of the push factors should not be underestimated. Many are undertaking hazardous journeys across the Mediterranean to reach the EU, often resorting to using smugglers. According to Metcalfe-Hough (2015), the volume of people moving, the diversity of their profiles, countries of origin and vulnerabilities and the dynamic nature of their routes of entry and the clandestine means they often use all present an incredibly complex and demanding situation. For Italy, Greece, Croatia and Hungary – the EU countries on the frontline – the volume and speed of the influx has simply overwhelmed their asylum systems at a time when their

economies are particularly weak. As above report has it that in 2015, over 1 million people – refugees, displaced persons and other migrants – have made their way to the EU, either escaping conflict in their country and in search of better economic prospects. While the numbers have shown a decreasing trend in 2016, by June around 156 000 people have reached Europe (UNHCR, 2016). The refugee inflows in EU are as a result of conflicts, generalized violence, war etc in some countries of the third world particularly in the Middle East.

Table 1: 28 EU countries that received applications from asylum seekers

S/N	State	Number of asylum applications	Percentage
1	Austria	85505	6.61%
2	Belgium	38990	3%
3	Bulgaria	20165	1.5%
4	Croatia	140	0.01%
5	Cyprus	2105	0.1%
6	Czech Republi	1235	0.09%
7	Denmark	20825	1.6%
8	Estonia	3270	0.2%
9	Finland	32150	2.4%
10	France	70570	5.4%
11	Germany	441800	34.2%
12	Greece	11370	0.8%
13	Hungary	110499	8.5%
14	Ireland	3270	0.2%
15	Italy	83245	6.4%
16	Latvia	330	0.02%
17	Lithuania	275	0.02%

18	Luxembourg	2360	0.1%
19	Malta	1695	0.1%
20	Netherlands	43035	3.3%
21	Poland	10255	0.7%
22	Portugal	830	0.06%
23	Romania	1225	0.09%
24	Slovakia	270	0.02%
25	Slovenia	260	0.02%
26	Spain	14600	1.1%
27	Sweden	156110	12.08%
28	United Kingdc	38370	2.9%
	Total	**1291709**	**100%**

Source: Constructed by the author from data derived from the Eurostat Database, 2016

In as much as many countries' nationals are involved in migration, there are 10 main countries that produced migrants, asylum seekers or refugees as indicated in the chart below. As indicated below Syria has the highest number of asylum seekers or refugees, followed by Afghanistan, and Iraq as the third producer of refugees. This status could be as a result of violent wars, political conflicts and social unrest in the first three countries shown in the chart below.

Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU

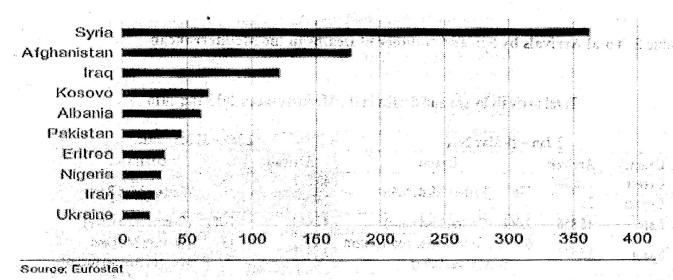First-time applications in 2015, in thousands

Source: Eurostat

Figure 1: Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU

EU Member States and the Facilitation of the Safety, Resettlement and Relocation of Refugees

Safety of Refugees in EU

The majority of migrants headed for European Union, prompting a crisis that the navy, coast guard and beleaguered immigration facilities were struggling to handle (BBC News, 2014). According to BBC, many thousands of others have risked their lives this year, fleeing conflict and instability in Africa and the Middle East, in small, often decrepit vessels in an attempt to reach European territories. Death in the Mediterranean in desperate attempts to reach safety in Europe has become a recurrent horror of our times (Guild, Costello, Garlick & Moreno-Lax, 2015). According to them, in parallel, several studies reveal that, until the 1990s, there were relatively few drowning of migrants at sea, suggesting that the introduction of mandatory visas, carrier sanctions, and other border control measures, establish the conditions under which people engage in irregular, unsafe journeys, often using the services of smugglers. It has been argued that this scenario is as a result of Dublin system which has introduced stringent procedures for refugee applications. The Dublin Regulation establishes the Member States responsible for the examination of the asylum application. The criteria for establishing responsibility run, in hierarchical order, from family considerations, to recent possession of visa or residence permit in a Member State, to whether the applicant has entered EU irregularly, or regularly (European Commission, 2016).

According to the IOM (2016) more than 3,770 migrants were reported to have died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2015. Most died on crossing from north Africa to Italy, and more than 800 died in the Aegean crossing from Turkey to Greece. The summer months are usually when most fatalities occur as it is the busiest time for migrants attempting to reach Europe. But in 2015, the deadliest month for migrants as shown in the chart below, was April, which saw a boat carrying about 1, 200 people capsized in the sea off Libya. Overcrowding is thought to have been one of the reasons for the disaster.

IOM (2016) reports an estimated 204,311 migrants and refugees entered Europe by sea in 2016 through 30 May, arriving in Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Spain.

Table 2: Total Arrivals by Sea and Number of Deaths in the Mediterranean

Total arrivals by sea and deaths in the Mediterranean 2015 and 2016

1 Jan – 29 May 2016			1 Jan – 31 May 2015	
Country	Arrivals	Deaths	Arrivals	Deaths
Greece	156,364	376 (Eastern Med route)	40,297	31 (Eastern Med Route)
Cyprus	28		769	
Italy	46,856	2,061 (Central Med route)	47,449	1,782 (Central Med route)
Spain	1,063*	6 (Western Med and Western African routes)	3,845*	15 (Western Med and Western African routes)
Estimated Total	204,311	2,443	91,860	1,828

*As of 31 March 2016

**Jan-Dec 2015

Source: IOM Report, 2016

According to IOM (2016), one of the reasons behind the increase in migrant deaths is linked to the exceptional flow of arrivals and the high number of migrants. Further, in that period, the shipwrecks involved bigger vessels with hundreds of people on board, unlike the usual dinghies that can carry only approximately up to a hundred. As a result those few accidents, like the shipwreck that claimed the lives of 500 migrants and a similar accident resulting in 250 victims, added to the deadly total of 3,000 being reached much earlier than in previous years. This means that for the third straight year IOM report migration fatalities of at least 3,000 men, women and children on these dangerous sea routes. Apart from death, it has been reported that more than 10,000 children – some as young as eight – have disappeared after being registered as incoming migrants or refugees in Europe. Most are never heard from again. European Union procedures which are supposed to help care for the kids might make them run (Europol, 2016). "Despite the constant and increased patrolling of the Mediterranean, it has proved extremely difficult to reduce the number of victims especially in Greece and Italy respectively.

Resettlement of Refugees in European Union

*The importance of effective resettlement of refugees is mostly imperative as to reduce the incentives for irregular migration and protecting migrants from exploitation by smuggling networks and dangerous journeys to reach Europe Union nations, and to ensure that the dignity of refugees is restored through effective international protection of their rights as contained in the 1951 convention.*Therefore, resettlement of people seeking international protection is the responsibility of international community. According to international law it is the right of refugees to be treated with dignity. EU has an obligation to ensure that the resettlement of refugees is guaranteed without attempting to shift responsibilities. However, it has been observed that many nations in EU have failed to abide by this international obligation as contained in Article 34 of 1951 Convention which states

that the Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees.

The total number of individuals that European countries have committed to resettle with UNHCR's assistance under their annual resettlement programmes in 2014 is approximately 7,525 persons. In 2013, Europe received 6,468 refugees with UNHCR's assistance. In the same year, the United States resettled 47,875 refugees, Australia 11,117 refugees and Canada 5,140 refugees. Despite the fact that an increasing number of Member States that have participated in resettlement in recent years, Europe's contribution to global resettlement has remained approximately the same - 7.9 per cent of the total number of refugees resettled in 2007 and 9 per cent in 2013. So while Europe has created more resettlement places, the rate of their creation has not kept pace with that of other resettlement countries around the world (European Resettlement Network, 2016).

Asylum seekers continue to make the risky sea journey from Turkey to the Greek Islands. It has been observed that many EU member states hardly use resettlement at all. Till date few member states have adhered to the EU resettlement and relocation mechanisms. As of April 2016, they have collectively fulfilled only 15 percent of the European Resettlement Scheme and less than 1 percent of the European Relocation Plan (News Deeply (Refugee Deeply), 2016).Based on the EU-Turkey deal of resettlements of refugees which is predicated on one in, one out agreement, 177 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey to EU countries such as Lithuania – 3, Finland -11, Netherlands – 52, Germany – 54,and Sweden – 55 (European Commission, 2016). According to the commission, another 723 people are awaiting transfer to EU countries under the scheme. The UNHCR says there are 2,748,367 registered Syrian refugees in Turkey. Fewer than 400 people have been returned to Turkey from Greece, while some 46,000 people await asylum decisions in Turkey. Based on the current scenario, in 2015, the Head of the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, has urged European leaders to set up a "massive" refugee resettlement programme (BBC News, 2015). The current global economic problems and security challenges have been attributed as major factors that constrain EU member states to really take up the challenge in terms of responsibility sharing. Katsiaficas (2015) has therefore posited that long-running economic crisis is a significant chalfenge to expanded resettlement, as the EU and member states have been facing budget cuts. State capacity to provide reception and integration services are strained. According to him, some Member States, such as the UK, have said that they are waiting for the economy to improve before increasing resettlement activities.

Relocation of Refugees in EU

With 937 asylum applicants relocated from Greece and Italy as of 15 March, 2016, the pace of transfers is unsatisfactory, even if there are now the first signs of a more positive trend (European Commission, 2016). According to the Commission, the experience where 287 people were relocated swiftly (including 241 from Greece) shows that relocation can work faster if EU member states are truly committed. Accordingly, the lack of political will among Member States has been the most important factor in slowing down the process. This has translated into a limited number of relocation

pledges or lengthy response time – jeopardising the ability of the programme to become an alternative to dangerous and irregular routes (European Commission, 2016). Intra-EU relocation is far to be achieved consequent upon the fact that EU quota system has remained unattainable. The disproportionate refugee acceptance and protection among in EU and member states is visibly obvious from all indications. Regrettably, many nations of EU have decided to shy away from the 'public bad' which EU is currently faced with. Nations like Germany, Sweden, Austria, France, Netherlands, UK and Italy have been on the front burner with certain limitations. More needs to be done in terms of resettlement of refugee in Turkey and other North African countries as well as location of refugees in Greece and Italy respectively.

Due to lack of political will as a result of certain factors in EU member states, the number of states in the region which have taken adequate steps in taking part in the burden sharing has remained low in terms of offering refugees the assistance needed to ensure their safety, resettlement and relocation. The table below shows only 6 EU countries that have distinguished themselves out of 28 EU members in relation to accepting and granting of refugee status to asylum seekers, provision of subsidiary protection and offering humanitarian admission. This is an indication that many EU countries have really not taken adequate action to demonstrate that they have moral and legal obligation to grant protection to people who attempt to escape from war, conflict, political persecution, general violence etc. Obviously, many EU countries have engaged in certain activities that represent a humanitarian catastrophe of enormous proportions.

Conclusion

The current influx of refugees as well as refugee crisis in Europe has invariably led to humanitarian crisis in the European Union. Arguably, ineffective management of refugees in the region has called for a serious concern considering the manner in which European Union has failed to ensure fair distribution of refugees to EU member states. This is evidenced based on the manner in which EU member states have reacted negatively, and have therefore breached international refugee protection law. For instance, nations like Hungary, Bulgaria etc have not only flouted the provision of United Nations 1951 Convention but have demonstrated high level of xenophobic tendencies towards refugees. The cause of all the non-compliance of most EU members on quota system is mostly perceived to be caused by lack of common asylum system in EU as well as inability of EU to compel its members to obey asylum legislation. This has largely provided a strong leverage to most EU members that have become 'free riders' as regards to taking collective responsibility in managing refugees in the region. However, it was identified that armed conflicts that occurred in some countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia etc caused influx of refugees in the region which therefore constituted a great factor that contributed to refugee crisis as well as catastrophic humanitarian crisis. The implication of this was that the safety, relocation and resettlement of asylum seeker were jeopardized to the extent that the good number of refugees lost their lives in the process of seeking international protection.

Recommendations

EU national governments are not working together despite having already reached agreements in a number of areas, and country after country imposing new border restrictions, inconsistent practices are causing unnecessary suffering and risk being at variance with EU and international law standards.There are stark differences among member states in the regulation and level of compliance with EU Directives on asylum. As a result, people seeking asylum tend to apply to states they consider to have more favourable policies. Based on this, the European Commission has proposed an EU Resettlement Framework to establish a common European policy on resettlement to ensure orderly

and safe pathways to Europe for persons in need of international protection. Therefore the present study proposes the following recommendations:

1. There is an urgent need to adopt and implement a common asylum system on acceptance resettlement and integration of refugees to avoid reoccurrence of refugee crisis as well as humanitarian problems in future. We believe that EU should be highly committed to building a single asylum and migration system that establishes safe and legal means of migration. This requires a strong political will to recognize that existing approaches to migration have created lacunas in the system leading to failure and crisis.

2. The UN is ideally placed to establish a mechanism for international engagement, coordination and coherence to address the root causes of crisis in the crisis ridden-states and internal problems that make people flee their countries. This is necessary at this point in order to design appropriate interventions targeted at weak and fragile states. In this regard, UN in collaboration with great powers such as United States of America, Russia, The Great Britain etc, should lay aside ideological sentiments and be more proactive and resolute on how to intervene in internal national conflict issues that can jeopardize the lives of the people and peace of international community.

References

Amnesty International, (2014). *The human cost of fortress Europe human rights violations against migrants and refugees at Europe's borders.* London: Amnesty International Ltd.

BBC News, (2014). Mapping Mediterranean migration, September, 15.

BBC News, (2015). Migrant crisis: EU needs 'massive' resettlement programme, 18 December.

Beyer, G. (1987). *Improving international response to humanitarian situations.* Washington, D.C.: Refugee Policy Group.

British Refugee Council, (2016). *Asylum seekers in Europe.* UK: Gredley House.

Culbertson, S. & Louay, C. (2015). *Education of Syrian refugee children: Managing the crisis in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.* California: RAND Corporation.

Danish Refugee Council, (2015). *Toward understanding and addressing root causes of displacement: The DRC perspective.* Copenhagen: Denmark.

Druke, L. (1987). *Causes of refugee problems and the international response published in human rights and the protection of refugees under international law.* Proceedings of a Conference Held in Montreal, November 29, December 2, 1987. Canadian Human Rights Foundation and the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

ECHO, (2016). *Greece: Refugee crisis.* Retrieved from echo-info@ec.europa.eu.

European Commission, (2016). *Relocation and resettlement: EU member states urgently need to deliver.* Press Release.

Europol, (2016). *Where are the 10,000 missing migrant kids?* Euranet Plus News Agency, April, 29.

Felbab, V. (2016). *Blood and faith in Afghanistan.* The Brookings Institution.

Guild, E., Costello, C., Garlick, M. & Moreno-Lax, V. (2015). *Enhancing the common European asylum system and alternatives to Dublin.* Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Paper in Liberty and Security in Europe No. 83.

Henri, C. (2016). *The Status of armed conflicts: Case study of the conflict in Syria.* Scientific Research and Education in the Air-Force, Air Force Academy, Braşov, Romania.

International Organization for Migration (IOM), (2015). Mediterranean Update – Migration Flows Europe: Arrivals and Fatalities. Available at http://missingmigrants.iom.int/sites.

International Organisation for Migration, (2016). Migrant deaths in the Mediterranean by Month. Press Release.

IOM, (2016). Migrant, refugee deaths at Sea Pass 3,000 as Arrivals Near 250,000. Press Release.

Jenkins, B (2015). *How the current conflicts are shaping the future of Syria and Iraq*. RAND Corporation. Retrieved from www.rand.org.

Jongberg, K. (2016). The conflict in Yemen: Latest developments, European Commission.

Katsiaficas, C. (2015). *Refugee resettlement in Europe: An important and underutilized protection tool, Bridging Europe*. Brackett Refugee Education Fund (BREF) Commentaries, No. 39.

Khalid K, (2014). *Transition, crisis and mobility in Afghanistan: Rhetoric and reality*. Report Prepared for International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Khashan, H. (2011). The view from Syria and Lebanon. *Middle East Quarterly*, 18(3)

Metcalfe-Hough, V. (2015). *The migration crisis? Facts, challenges and possible solutions*. Briefing, Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

News Deeply, (2016). *A global resettlement scheme for refugees in the E.U* New York.

Okoli, C. & Iortyer, P. (2014). Terrorism and humanitarian crisis in Nigeria: Insights from Boko Haram insurgency, *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 1(4), 39-50.

Open Society Foundation, (2015). Understanding migration and asylum in the European Union. Open Society Initiative for Europe.

Sharp, J. & Blanchard, C. (2013). Armed conflict in Syria: Background and U.S. response. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from www.crs.gov.

Suhrke, N. (1983). Global refugee movements and strategies of response. Published in U.S. Immigration and Refugee Policy: Global and Domestic Issues.

Sutherland, P. (2015). A Safer path to asylum. Project Syndicate, 17 March.

Svoboda E., Fenton W. & Foley M., (2015). The crisis in Iraq. London: Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN).

UNHCR (2014). UNHCR welcomes Germany's decision to extend humanitarian admission programme to an additional 10.000 Syrian refugees. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/539afe256.html.

UNHCR (2015). Syria regional refugee response: Registered Syrian refugees. Retrieved from http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php.

UNHCR, (2016). Europe: Syrian asylum applications. Retrieved from http://data.unhcr.org/.

United Nations Convention (1951). The status of a refugee