The Global Migration Crisis

Overview:
Since 2015, migration into Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean region has reached unprecedented levels. Spurred on by the rise of violence across the globe, and increasing destitute economic conditions, the migration crisis stresses both the refugees and the countries who receive them. Countries and international organizations around the world have recognized this challenge and responded with a series of conferences and changes in legislation at the state level. Recently, the United Nations ratified the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, And Regular Migration on July 11th, 2018, but the United States, Hungary, and Australia have refused to ratify this agreement. Clearly, the issue has not been resolved. In addition, migration is not limited to only Europe, as The United States has struggled recently with its Mexican border and changing immigration policies. Migration is also an issue in large nations such as China which undergoes massive internal migration each year with hundreds of million of people travelling from the cities back to their villages in rural China. Migration is a multifaceted issue that influences states across the world.

Historical Context
The history of migration is the history of the world. As societies developed and expanded, people have always moved to new areas and left behind locations that no longer fulfilled their needs. The modern crisis however is not derived from the desire to explore new lands and expand an empire, but rather from the social and political upheaval that was the Arab Spring.

Arab Spring
The Arab Spring started in the Spring of 2011 following a vegetable merchant in Tunisina who set himself aflame after the government arbitrarily seized his vegetable stand. From this, the flames of rebellion spread across the Middle East to Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Syria, and Libya which all saw massive changes in their government and social organization.
In Tunisia the revolution was known as the Jasmine Revolution and ended with some of the most positive change in the region. Protests erupted in the capital, Tunis, and the upheaval led to the ousting of 20 year strongman, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The removal of this dictator inspired other nations to attempt the same, but not all were successful in their protests.

In Egypt President Hosni Mubarak was removed from power, freeing Egyptian from authoritarian rule. In his place, Mohamed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood party took control of the country. Morsi ruled the country only from June 20th, 2012- July 3rd, 2013 when he was ousted in a military coup by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Morsi was criticized by the Egyptian people, and the military due to a declaration that allowed him unlimited powers and the power to create laws without Judicial review. The Egyptian people were concerned that Morsi was become just another dictator and took to the streets to protest, eventually leading to the military coup. Morsi, and his Muslim Brotherhood party was charged with numerous crimes and many even tried to sentence him to death. The death penalty charge was rescinded but he still remains in prison as of today. Sisi remains in power in Egypt despite international criticisms that stemmed from the 2013 Rabaa Massacre in which hundreds of civilians were killed and thousands more wounded under Sisi’s orders to crack down on Muslim Brotherhood members.

In Libya, longtime dictator Colonel Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown, tortured, and executed in the streets. His demise was televised around the world and was noted for its brutality and the clarity of the video. Since the Colonel’s fall however, Libya has plunged into civil war between The Council of Deputies in Tobruk and the 2014 General National Congress. Despite a peace talk in 2015, there are still numerous areas throughout Libya that are hotbeds for fighting and violence. The government’s inability to curb the conflict has led to tribal rule in some areas, and there are ongoing talks to end the divide of institutions such as the Libyan National Army and the Central Bank of Libya. Libya’s population is small, with only 6 million citizens, but thousands have fled the country for Europe and the UN Human Rights Council estimates that there are 1.3 million people in need of humanitarian aid within the country\(^1\), or one in six.

Perhaps the greatest humanitarian challenge has arisen from the Arab Spring’s influence in Syria. Several rebel groups rose up against President Bashar al Assad who has brutally ruled the nation since 2000 after taking over from his father. Assad had no intentions of following in his father’s footsteps and instead attended medical school to become an ophthalmologist. However, after his brother who was being groomed to become president was killed in a car crash 1994, Assad was pushed into military service to begin training for his role as President of Syria. When the protests of the Arab Spring reached his doorstep he struck back hard, ordering the Syrian

Army to clear the streets and the Air Force to bomb his own cities to take down rebels. The fighting in the region left a vacuum throughout Syria, allowing ISIS to take over vast territories in both Syria and Iraq. Although ISIS has been largely pushed out of Syria, the conflict between the Western-backed rebels and the Syrian government continues. Violence from the civil war and the rise and fall of ISIS has resulted in more than 5 million fleeing Syria with another 13.1 million needing assistance in the country\(^2\). This has led to the largest refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) of this time.

These main events of the Arab Spring have in part contributed to the current migration crisis that Europe is taking the brunt of. However, there are other factors driving the huge amount of migration that is occurring all over the world.

**Immigration at the US Border**

The United States may have been a nation that was founded by immigrants and built through the hard work of people of all cultures, but recently the country has cracked down on illegal immigration and undocumented immigrants living in the US. The media reported heavily on the controversial decision to separate families who were apprehended at the border, separating mothers and fathers from their children. This led to a strong backlash on both sides of the US political world that resulted in the ending of the policy.

President Donald Trump campaigned and won on a promise to build a complete and comprehensive border wall on the US-Mexico border to deter further illegal border crossings. While the funding for this wall has been questioned, with Trump promising that Mexico will pay for it, and Mexico denying this as a possibility, the plan has gone ahead and several prototypes for a possible border wall have been constructed. The United States has always faced

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immigration issues with its southern border, as violence in states throughout South America has driven people to flee, seeking a better life. There are an estimated 12.1 million illegal immigrants living in the US.

**Classes of Immigration**

There are many different types of immigrants in the world who choose to travel to another country for various reasons. The reason for immigration is very important, as countries will only grant so many visas for one type of immigration as opposed to another. The various types are derived from the US immigration policy.

**Refugees**: These are people who are admitted to the US due to an inability to return to their home countries due to “a well-founded fear of persecution”, due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin. Refugees apply for admittance to the US from another country that they have left their home country for. The amount of refugees that the US decides to take in each year depends on the President, with consultation of Congress, who sets a specific number from each region of the world. The world is divided between Africa, East Asia, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America/ Caribbean, Near East/ South Asia, and an unallocated reserve.

**Asylum**: Asylum is granted to people who have already made it to the US. They apply based on the same criteria that refugees apply for, however there are no limitations on the number of asylum applications that are granted. Both refugees and asylum seekers may apply for a green card after living in the US for 1 continuous year\(^3\).

**Temporary Protected Status**: Granted to people who are already in the US but cannot return to their home country because of natural disaster, extraordinary temporary conditions, or ongoing armed conflict. These are granted on a 6, 12, or 18 month lengths can be extended if the unsafe conditions prevail in the origin country. This does not usually lead to a green card nor any other immigration status.

**Deferred Enforcement Departure**: Provides protection for individuals whose home countries are unstable, therefore making returns dangerous. This is authorized solely by statute and is at the command of the executive branch (president).

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\(^3\) [https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works)
Although the peak of the migration crisis was in 2015, mounting tensions around the world and the situations which cause migration still persist. Although less people are attempting to migrate into Europe than in 2015, the conditions which cause migration such as poverty, war, and lack of opportunities still persist. The decrease in the number of migrants is attributed to several new policies within the EU and its bordering states.

The first main deal that was made was an EU-Turkey deal that would exchange on Syrian refugee on the Greek Islands that will be returned to Turkey, in exchange a Syrian Asylum seeker in Turkey will be given a home in Europe. Although this deal has some issues, such as the provisions only applying Syrian nationals, not Afghans, Pakistanis, or any other people's. Observers were also concerned that it would violate the 1951 refugee convention that stated refugees would be dealt with on an individual basis rather than following a blanket policy. However, despite these concerns, the deal has positively contributed to declining refugees.

The second policy that has been successful in deterring migrants is simply stopping them from reaching mainland Europe. Often times the intended destination of these migrants is a high-performing European nation like France or Germany. However, in order to slow down the amount of migrants, border countries like Serbia have begin erecting walls to block entrance to the rest of Europe. There are an estimated 7,600 migrants in Serbia who originally set out for a different nation. The fact that migrants can’t get to their intended destination is stopping many from even attempting the trip.

Lastly, a bilateral arrangement between Italy and Libya has reduced the amount of immigrants entering Europe. The small island of Lampedusa has become a major hub for migrants attempting to reach Europe, and Italy is struggling to cope with the influx. Italy, already struggling with a slumping economy and a massive brain drain of their youngest and most talented workers, cannot handle the enormous social and economic pressures that migration is putting on Italy. A deal that was made by previous government officials in Italy with militias in Libya to stop human trafficking in the country has worked to stop migration in some degree.

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4 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/08/eu-turkey-refugee-deal-qa
5 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/08/eu-refugees-serbia-afghanistan-taliban
Although these policies have temporarily reduced migration at the moment, they will not hold back the tide forever. The only way to prevent another catastrophic year like 2015, is to overhaul the EU’s migration system to better protect both nations and migrants. This is needed to both reduce the strain on struggling European economies, to deter migration, and to protect the lives of migrants who seek asylum in foreign lands.

**Greece** and **Italy** take most of the strain of migration due to their geographic proximity to the countries that migrants are fleeing from. Under current EU law, asylum seekers must submit their application in the first EU country they enter, rather than their intended country of destination. There are some countries in the EU who are calling for tougher border control in the form of walls and more border protection officers. There are some that want a fairer distribution of migrants who are arriving, to spread out the stress caused by their presence. Still others want to take an even more extreme measure by deporting all migrants in their nations and forcibly stopping any more from entering at all.

**Involved Actors**

*European Union*- The EU is at the forefront of the migration crisis. Due to their proximity to areas where migrants are coming from, the EU has seen a mass influx of migrants over the past few years. Border nations are frustrated with Brussels as they are left to deal with crisis while Northern States continue to prosper.

*Italy*- On the tiny island of Lampedusa, migrants arrive daily seeking asylum from their home nations. Italy is already struggling economically with massive youth unemployment and a brain drain of their best and brightest seeking employment elsewhere. The migrants have triggered a far right government to take power that some fear is reminiscent of the darkest period in Italian history, the era of *fascismo* and Mussolini.

*Germany*- As the unofficial leader of the EU, Germany’s words and actions carry weight throughout the EU. PM Merkel’s policy of open doors to migrants has diversified the once

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stringently Germany culture. However, not everyone in Germany, and certainly not everyone in the EU agrees with her policies.

**United States**—The US has traditionally been the nation of refugees and immigrants, taking in the huddled masses of the world seeking a better life. While immigration continues to occur, the Trump presidency continues to advocate for the building of a border wall with Mexico and tougher laws. This is countered by Democrats in the House and Senate who want more open borders, with some going as far as calling for the abolishment of ICE (immigration and customs enforcement) all together.

**UN Resolutions and Activities**

22 JAN 2018, GA 72/244 - Modalities for the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
Source: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/72/244%20(may need to download to view resolution)

21 DEC 2016, A/RES/71/1 - International Migration and Development

03 OCT 2016, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants - A resolution adopted by the GA to address the challenges migrants and refugees face

30 JUN 2016, A/RES/70/290 - High-plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants

03 SEP 2016, GA 11820 - A declaration for refugees and migrants as agreed upon by the General assembly.

**First Person Account**

Another day in the "Jungle", another tear-gassing for the children of Calais.

As a convoy is diverted too close to the migrant camp, shouts go up, gangs of young men and boys charge through the underpass which forms the entrance to the camp, desperate to board the trucks.

French police are quick to respond, and soon CS canisters are exploding among the migrants, forcing them back into the camp.
Among them is Mohammed, 16. His lungs and eyes are full of the choking gas. He has no-one here to look after him, and he desperately wants to get to Britain.

The Calais conversation that left Lily Allen in tears

'Robust plans' called for to resettle Calais migrant children

Dreams and desperation

He's far from the only child - or "unaccompanied minor" as the jargon has it - in the camp.

Brothers Jamshed and Ahjamal, aged 14 and 16, are from Afghanistan. They left their home country six months ago, and are trying to join family in London.

"This is obviously not a place where you can feel happy," they tell me. "We are sad and want to be with our brother, father and cousin and want help with the transfer because we are young and don't know how to go about it.

"Tell them to move us from here!"

Estimates vary, but charities put the numbers of unaccompanied minors in the camp at about 1,000. The British government wants to move those who have families in the UK to Britain before the camp is demolished in the next few weeks.

Other children who are on their own and who arrived before 20 March may qualify to move to Britain as well, although some will be resettled in France.

Hasan is 13, also from Afghanistan. He wants to be an engineer, but it is a year since he last attended school. He talks nervously, afraid of who might be listening as he tells us.

"I don't have family here - just me," he tells me.

"I have family in the UK. Just help me to go to England."

Cricket in the filth
Hasan is young for the Jungle - most children here are older teenagers - but some are younger still.

Bilal is just 11 and comes from Afghanistan. His skill with bat and ball makes him a prized player in the informal cricket matches which take place just outside the main camp once the clouds of tear gas have cleared.

The scene could be a village cricket match anywhere in South Asia, but look around and the razorwire fences; the filthy, leaking shacks; and the piles of human waste tell a different story. This is no place for anyone to live, let alone a child.

There is no doubt the Jungle is an unsafe place for anybody, especially children. Because it is an unofficial camp, there is no central organising authority and, aside from the odd raid, no police presence to keep order or report crime to.

A recent Red Cross report highlighted dangers to children in the camp including sexual exploitation, forced labour, trafficking gangs and smugglers. The roads where children try to get on trucks present a constant danger of being killed or injured, and the camp has unsafe food, poor sanitation and inadequate healthcare - perfect conditions for spreading disease.

Soon the camp itself will be erased as French police and bulldozers move in.


**Questions to Consider:**
What is your country’s perspective on refugees? Do you host refugees or are you a producer of refugees or neither? How are refugee rights treated in the EU? Which parts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights apply to refugees? What can be done to aid refugees? Is it the responsibility of the UN to deal with refugees? Should the EU be forced to accept these people? Should border European states be the ones who bear the responsibility of refugees? Do EU member states have to obey Brussels in their policies on refugees? Are more refugees camps the solution to overcrowding? How can a safer way of migration be achieved? Should migration be regulated? How would this relate to national sovereignty?

**Highlighted Timeline**
Spring 2011 - The Arab Spring kicks off around the Middle East, laying the foundation for the looming migration crisis
April 2015- Over 1000 migrants drown trying to reach Europe prompting the EU to promise the tripling funding for rescue operations

May 2015- The EU suggests a quota system for accepting refugees. Italy, France, Germany, and Malta support the idea while Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Estonia reject it.

August 2015- Chancellor Merkel of Germany announces an open doors policy for Germany which prompts thousands of migrants to head to Germany.

September 2015- 120,000 asylum seekers in Greece and Italy are redistributed to other EU nations.

March 2016- The EU-Turkey deal is brokered allowing Syrians who migrate to Greece from Turkey to be sent back and that Syrian refugees in Turkey will be distributed throughout the EU.

May 2016- The EU drafts a proposal to fine countries who do not take in their quote of immigrants.

September 2016- An Egyptian ship with 500 migrants bound for Europe sinks.

November 2016- 240 are killed after two boats capsize off the coast of Libya.