

Proposed Study Title: Legislative asymmetry between labor migration and refugee, asylum-seeker policies of oil-rich Gulf states and Central Asian countries.

Aim: The aim of the project is to analyze a legislative asymmetry between economic migrants and refugees hosted by the oil-rich Gulf states and Central Asian countries. I examine the policies of oil-rich countries towards the refugees sharing close geographical, religious, historical and cultural belongings. Specifically, the case of Syrian refugees in the Gulf and Afghan refugees in Central Asia in regard to the hosting countries' asylum-seeker policies will be highlighted.

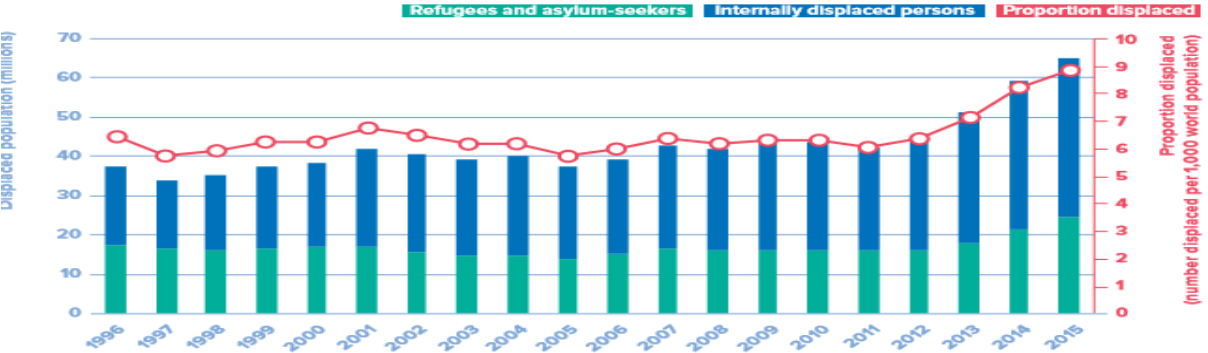
I will try question current refugee crises considering the weight of moral engagements and ethic commitments in influencing decision-making processes and national refugee regimes (Carens, 2013; Gibney, 2004; Haddad, 2008; Souter, 2016; Suhrke, 1998). Therefore, migration management system of each region with its peculiarities is studied to understand how refugees are protected within rentier states (Thiollet, 2011; Ni, 2015). I argue that besides demographic or financial obstacles related to hosting refugees, (rentier) economic models of the countries combined with their security concerns outweighs ethic commitments.

Background: Current refugee crisis occupies an important place in global politics, as since the end of the World War II, there has not been refugee crisis of such a scale (UNHCR, 2015). Although, the vast majority of the refugees are hosted in the neighboring countries the calls for the burden sharing and implication of middle income countries that are not directly influenced by refugee flows are highlighted. Within this perspective, the roles of Central Asian states neighboring with Afghanistan and Gulf countries sharing the similar cultural and linguistic belongings with Syrians are analyzed.

Few Afghan refugees were given asylum-seeker status in the northern neighboring countries (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) and Central Asian countries tried to send them to third countries by leaving little room for asylum-seeker applicants (UNHCR, 2014). In contrast, Pakistan and Iran are among the first five countries hosting Afghan refugees according to statistics which is seen as predominantly ethnic-oriented choice of refugees (Koser, 2014). Besides that, the so-called "legislative gap" between 1951 Geneva Convention and national

legislations in Central Asian countries provides the insufficiencies in dealing with refugees (Rozumek, 2012)

Table. Trend of global displacements and proportion of displaced 1996-2015 year.¹



An analogous approach is noticeable in the oil-rich Persian Gulf countries (Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Oman), notwithstanding their particularities outlined hereafter. None of the Gulf countries is officially bound by international refugee instruments, and therefore they do not recognize Syrian refugees as such. Although Gulf countries claim that they host large numbers of Syrians both on a humanitarian and an economic basis it remains difficult to cross check and state the official numbers of hosted Syrian refugees (Bel Air, 2015, Hanafi, 2017). The vast majority of the Syrian refugees are hosted by Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan that are also very dependent on foreign aid in providing basic needs for refugees.

However, in two regions of our study (Central Asia and the Gulf) Kazakhstan and the majority of Gulf countries have quite high ratios of labor migrants (Shin, 2017; Thiollet, 2011). Specifically, Qatar and the UAE host more immigrants than natives. In the case of Kazakhstan, it has rapidly been transformed from migrant-sending to migrant-receiving country (Sadovskaya, 2006, 2009, 2010). The reason for that lies on the growing economies of states based on oil revenues spending vast amounts of their incomes on imported labor.

Research questions: In my research, I try to question the economic and political rationales of the countries (Gulf and Central Asia) in their migration management. I will observe how rentier states respond to humanitarian crisis while they manage effectively vast numbers of economic migrants. How the migration policies and instruments can be measured in Gulf states and Central Asian region? Which instruments are proposed by the countries regarding refugees and displaced

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

persons when the countries are not bound by international refugee instruments? What is the scale of “legislative gap” in the countries having ratified international refugee instruments?

Significance of the study: This study does not support a binding critic towards the policies developed by the states, nor attempts to justify the refugee asylum-seeker policies developed by oil-rich Gulf and Central Asian states. This is not either an attempt to seek the responsibility of those countries towards the refugees based on common religious and ethnic grounds.

Rather, using concrete facts and data, we try to place this hot discussion in its more appropriate historical, political and economic context by explaining how economic and political models shaped differently latest developments related to the migration and asylum. It is necessary to underline that the countries of both regions are increasingly active in global politics and try to frame specific models in their external policies. A 10-Points Plan of Action focused on refugee protection and mixed migration developed by Kazakhstan (UNHCR, 2012) or UAE place among the largest ODA donors shows the increasing humanitarian concerns in agenda of emerging economies.

I will try to argue that ethical engagements of the states in the field of refugee protection can only be associated with international refugee commitments (Conventions 1951 and 1967) in order to fully enjoy reliability and cooperation with UN institutions such as UNHCR. I will also try to examine “migration models” developed by Gulf and Central Asian (rentier) states based on their economic and political concerns. That helps to understand rationale of rentier states in managing refugee flows.

Methodology: Based on the refugee studies and migration analyses focused on both regions, the data collection on macro level will be privileged. Therefore, the data provided by international organizations such as UNHCR, OECD, World Bank, IOM, as well as research centers such as Migration Oxford, IDMC, MPC (Migration Policy Center, Florence) will provide important basis for the research.

Besides that, I think that the best way to collect primary data is also conducting personal (online) interviews especially with UNHCR personnel working in Central Asia and Gulf of Aden region. Specifically, staff working in Almaty office of UNHCR is expected to be interviewed.

Research timetable: The research is planned for 12 months.

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