The Impact of International Migration on Security: Terrorism and Refugee in Perspective

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Abstract: *The aim of this research is to explore the consequential effect of refugees as it relates to terrorism, with the proposed causal links between terrorism on the one hand and (forced and irregular) migration on the other. It examines migration and terrorism as an in-depth intersection and phenomenon, through the lens and analysis of Alex P. Schmid, Egan, Liam and Choi and Piazza. Counter-terrorism operations have also led to forced migration and vice versa. The author concludes that international migration or refugee is not only a consequential effect but has made some migrants to become terrorists and also terrorists as migrants to other nations. Submitting that the increase in the incidence and magnitude of terrorism from refugees is inescapable and inseparably.*

Keywords: Terrorism, Refugee, Counter-terrorism, Migration, International Security

1. Introduction

The study of terrorism and the study of migration have been two separate fields. While there is a huge literature on both, migration and on terrorism, there are no in-depth studies on the intersection of the two phenomena. International migration is driven not just by political violence, armed conflict and state repression but just as much by economic and environmental factors. As the International Rescue Committee estimates that as many as 1,000 refugees a week are into crossing the Nigeria-Niger-Chad-Cameroon border into these countries. Four out of five of these refugees are women and girls, who feel helpless in the face of Boko Haram's violent attacks. There are multiple causal relations between (forced/irregular) migration and terrorism, but these are generally complex.

Migration management had always been among the most complex, politicized, and least integrated policies. The post 9/11 period has seen an increase in academic literature analyzing the relationship between migration and security. Forced migration of refugees and its links to violence and extremism has been studied, but not extensively like other subject. Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006)[1] examined the relationship between refugees from neighboring countries and civil war, where they find "refugee flows are one of the mechanisms driving the observed diffusion or spillover of civil conflict." (p. 360). The ongoing migrant and refugee crisis has effectively marked a gradual but inescapable link with terrorism, particularly in the field of security policy [2]. Migration is the epitome of a highly sensitive issue that is threaded carefully initially at the domestic level [3], but it has now become an international enigma. Migration management had always been among the most complex, politicized, and least integrated policies.

The loudly immigration ban intended to reduce terrorist threat by President Trump with the tag "Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States", according to Scott Shane (2017)[2] has brought many experts and analysts to believe the order's unintended consequences will make the threat worse. He stressed that, the president's order appears to address not a rational calculation of risks but the visceral fears that terrorists set out to inflame. President Trump order on ban appears to address not a rational calculation of risks but the visceral fears that terrorists set out to inflame.

Choi and Piazza, (2016) [4] on "Internally Displaced Populations and Suicide Terrorism" argue in analysis that there's positive and significant relationships between IDPs and terrorism. Why Egan, Liam (2017) [5] states that, war, conflict, and state failure create spillover effects including generating refugee and IDP populations. The 2015 Paris attacks, amongst other terrorist activities and attacks, have sparked debate about the security of borders and whether or not these large refugee populations give rise to terrorism (Bigo et al, 2015)[6]. The theory by Sude et al, 2015; [7] Post and Sheffer, 2007 [8] argues that culture clash can result in refugee populations feeling alienated and their way of life challenged resulting in disdain for the host country. This in turn results in the radicalization of individuals who then commit terrorist attacks [7][8].

This paper aims to help provide a clearer picture into what may or may not influence the number of terrorism incidents as it relates to forced migration. However, it holds that, this is a complex, regional and global issue that requires an extensive amount of research to be done in order to better understand this relationship.

2. Theoretical Background

The theory that terrorist groups uses large migrations as opportunities to slip through the cracks and enter countries with the intent of committing terrorist acts within the host countries was analyzed by Adamson, (2009). With such large movements of people, many coming from war torn regions, entering a country, it may be difficult for the appropriate agencies to perform thorough and complete background checks on individuals and to monitor their activities within

the country. On the one hand, Choi and Salehyan [9] argues that the presence of refugee populations, and the aid workers they draw, provide "militant groups with opportunities for looting and for attacking foreign targets" stating that "aid supplies have often been subject to looting by militant actors" and "foreign aid workers provide easy targets for terrorists …." (pp. 53, 68). Bove and Böhmelt (2016) [10] also examine the relationship between immigration and terrorism and find "immigrants are an important vehicle for the diffusion of terrorism from one country to another. While Egan, Liam in his work "Forced Migration Populations and Terrorism" analyzes the relationship between refugee populations per capita and terrorism incidents per capita by conducting cross-national time series poisson and OLS analyses for 164 countries during the years 1992-2013 to explain their relationship. With analyzing additional variables, including internally displaced persons (IDP) populations to determine the question of refugee populations more likely to influence terrorism and the effects of refugee populations [5]. Alex P. Schmid (2016)[11] in his theoretical and cross referencing materials submitted that, migrants and refugees have occasionally been instrumentalised by governments. Migrants can be terrorists and terrorists can be migrants in a number of ways. This paper looks to expand upon previous studies analyzing the relationship between refugees and terrorism.

3. Consequential Effect of Terrorism: A Narrative

Historically, the connection of mass migration movement with terrorists and criminals has been low, but it's imperative to note that terrorists often have a criminal background to begin with. Not only terrorism can cause refugee flows and internal displacement but also counter-terrorist operations can cause large displacements of people. Linking displacement with violent extremism may be of great concern to security analysts and researchers in finding solutions to the former, hence this analysis. According to "The Independent", The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said: "Refugees are people who are fleeing conflict, persecution and/or abuses of their human rights and they have a right under international law to seek asylum in other countries. The aforesaid has being put through security lens in so many countries and regions. On the other hand, majority of Europeans believe that the influx of refugees across the continent has led to an increase in the likelihood of terrorism. According to Pew Research Centre survey, in eight of the ten European countries analyzed at least half are concerned about the terror threat. It is to this end the growing and misguided focus on the threat from refugees and asylum-seekers has enormous and damaging repercussions.
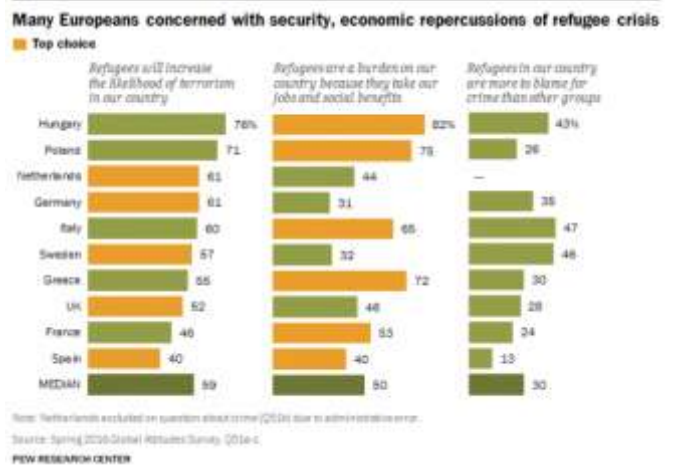

Figure 1

The refugee nature and its relationship with security and stability have birthed deep ideological divides over views of terrorism.

While it is, in concrete situations, difficult to isolate specific factors as being responsible for migration, a major driver of forced migration is severe state repression involving attacks on civilian populations that, in cases of (civil) war, often also amount to war crimes or war-time terrorism. The forced migration by State either by marginalization or repression has led many to take up arms to fight for liberation, self-determination and carryout terror attacks on states and government properties. A very good example is the Tuarege ethnic group in Mali, which ultimately contributed to the ousting of the government in 2012.

Also the Assad regime in Syria had deliberately targeted civilians as an instrument of warfare in order to deprive the insurgents of a supportive environment. This action alone propels targeted persons to take up arms to join other groups in the fight against the State. More internal and external displacement has been caused by the regime than by the IS. In the same vein as the case of the Boko Haram insurgence group, the government crackdown of the group and the killing of its former leader Mohammed Yusuf in 2009 led to the increase in the radicalization of the group (Anti-Defamation League , 2014).

Ekey (2008) analyzed the effect of refugee populations and the number of terrorism incidents committed by terrorist groups originating within the host country. She found "an increase in the number of refugees a country hosts leads to an increase in the activities of terrorist groups based in that country." (p. 27). Milton et al (2013)[12] find that refugees increases transnational terrorism arguing that refugees often find themselves living in poor conditions and treated poorly within host countries. These conditions can lead to increases in transnational terrorism in host countries.

4. Forced Migration and Recruitment for Terrorist Activities: An Analysis

Refugee populations have become a widely-discussed topic in today's Geo-political climate. According to the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there were 65.1 million forcibly displaced people, with 21.3 million refugees, worldwide (UNHCR). This have brought the consequences of refugee and internally displaced populations to the forefront of the political atmosphere (UNHCR cited in Egan, Liam, 2017). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in its 2014 report, [9] there has been steady rise in internally displaced persons from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. From 2009 to 2010 IDP's rose to 100,000 and from 2010 to 2011 it increased to 130,000. From 2011 to 2012, the number of IDP's rose to 200,000. From 2012 to 2013 IDP's grew to 290,000 and from May 2013 to March 2014 it decreased slightly to 250,000. From May-June 2014, it rose again to 436,608 and from August to December IDP's drastically rose to over 600,000 persons (UN OCHA, 2014). Consequently, the number of refugees in the world reached the highest level ever recorded in 2015, according to figures published by the United Nations (UN), at an estimated 65.3 million [11]. The analysis above depict the increased in activities of the Boko Haram and how it has led to the increased in the influx of Nigerian refugees over the years.

Khalid Koser (2015) argues that, "Concerns are being expressed that internally displaced person (IDP) and refugee camps may become fertile recruitment grounds for violent extremism. Radicalization leading to violence within refugee camps has been evidence in countries like Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen. If the current Syrian crisis and the Boko Haram insurgency remain unresolved, there is the risk of a similar process unfolding too. Indeed, there are signs that it may already be occurring in Jordan's Zaatari camp".

Data from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria – and to a lesser extent Pakistan shows that the number of first-time asylum seekers in Europe is correlated to the number of deaths from terrorism in the countries of origin. While in Boko Haram affected countries the number of displaced persons in the region and ultimately the death coursed by the group is disproportional. Boko Haram have been estimated to have displaced 1.5 million people both internally and across international borders. While understanding the link between displacement and violent extremism may reinforce efforts to finding solutions for refugees. IDPs and refugees being found in protracted situations such as being marginalized, disenfranchised, and excluded, eventually heightened the high risk radicalization. There are indications that IS uses the refugee stream for the infiltration of (returning) foreign fighters into Europe, as they might be spreading like fire among the refugees.

Asylum centres and refugee camps have become targets of terrorist attacks both in developing countries and in Europe. The arson attacks we have seen on asylum centers, for instance in Germany or Sweden, clearly serve a communicative purpose and there is no good reason not to call such attacks also acts of terrorism. Countries with Diasporas of people experiencing repression, civil war or terrorism at their home countries can also become acts of conspiracy and plotting of terrorist attacks. In the 1990s, London became a crucial hub for jihadist terrorists which made some French security officials to call it "Londonistan"

for its terrorist plotting. More recently, Molenbeek in Belgium serves as such a hub for ISIS.

From security concerns to humanitarian efforts, the implications of refugee crises are significant. As host countries must take the social, economic, and political impacts into consideration when deciding how to deal with a large influx of refugees.
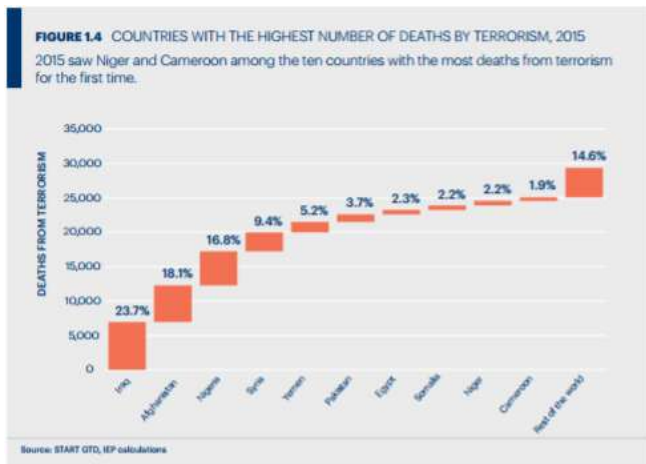
5. Migrants to Terrorists and Terrorists as Migrants

The large majority of refugees in the world – 86 percent are to be found in developing countries. Refugee camps are sometimes used by terrorists for radicalization and recruitment and as bases from which to launch attacks. This has been true for Palestinian terrorism as well as for attacks emanating from refugee camps in places like Pakistan. Another very good example is the Boko Haram, it has been estimated that more than 1.5 million people have been displaced both internally and across international borders by the Islamist insurgency in north-east Nigeria. The five bombings staged by Boko Haram attackers were near the refugee camp (two), near the Dar-es-Salam refugee camp in Chad, killing at least 36 people and wounding about 50 others in what appeared to be coordinated attacks (The Guardian). In another incident in Nigeria over 100 Boko Haram extremists launched an attack against a refugee camp in Nigeria with reports suggesting the death toll could be as high as 170.

On the other hand, while migrants and refugees have occasionally been instrumentalised by governments, migrants can be terrorists and terrorists can be migrants in a number of ways, some of the ways are:

- Some jihadists who cannot return to their country of origin without being arrested migrate from one jihadist theatre of war to the next (Nigeria – Niger – Mali – Cameroon – Chad –Libya);
- Some economic migrants are abducted and forced by terrorists to join their ranks, a practice they also use for captured children and women, e.g. By Boko Haram in northern Nigeria (Ruth Maclean, 2017, Drew Hinshaw and Joe Parkinson 2016);
- A few foreign fighters have engaged in acts of terrorism, including suicide terrorism, upon migrating back to their home countries as part of refugee streams (Yehudit Ronen, 2013).

Analysts have also critically argued that, the arrival of large refugee populations, when not properly handled, increases the risk of attacks in the recipient country by both domestic and transnational terrorists. For instance Niger and Cameroon became among the ten countries with the most death rate from terrorism for the first time according to Global Terrorism Index 2016.

FIGURE 1.4 COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF DEATHS BY TERRORISM, 2015
2015 saw Niger and Cameroon among the ten countries with the most deaths from terrorism for the first time.

Source: START GTD, IEP calculations

According to Patrick Kingsley, the UN Migration correspondent as cited in Refugee Crisis: Apart from Syrians, who is travelling to Europe? by Emer Halferty (2015), referring to UN figures, that 75% of the total refugees crossing the Mediterranean sea come from countries in the middle of armed conflict or humanitarian crises. Souad Mekhennet and William argue that migrants disguise themselves as other nationals to enter Europe. Adding that, Afghans – 13% fleeing from Taliban and Islamic State's, Eritreans – 8%, Nigerians – 4% from Islamist extremist group, Boko Haram, Somalians – 3% and Pakistanis – 3%, Iraqis – 3%, Sudanese – 2%, respectively. Kingsley, P (2015) argue that, there are many people camouflaged among the tens of thousands of …. refugees passing through the train stations of Europe who are neither ….. refugees, but who are desperately hoping to blend into the mass migration and find a way into the West.

Concluding that, there are well-dressed Iranians speaking Farsi who maintain the idea that they are members of the persecuted Yazidis of Iraq. There are Indians who do not know how to speak Arabic yet they say that they are from Damascus. There are Pakistanis, Albanians, Egyptians, Kosovars, Somalis and Tunisians from countries with much poverty and violence, but no war.

Migration control for the control of terrorism is a widely used instrument; it might however hurt bona fide migrants and legal foreign resident's more than mala fide terrorists. It fosters xenophobia and deprives host countries, where and when it has the effect of reducing migration and hospitality to foreigners, of the many positive contributions some migrants can make to a society. There is the additional danger that instruments of migration control for counter-terrorism also uses in controlling native citizens. It should come as no surprise that many migrants seem to be passing themselves of as war refugees. Their goal, after all, is the possibility of actualizing their intended mission either to cause harm or destruction.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the paper drew on an analysis on the link between migration flow and terrorism. The paper however concludes that, the link to displacement cannot only illustrate military, intelligence, and security interventions, but that countering violent extremism is much about human rights, development, and empowerment, stressing that focusing on displacement only as a cause or consequence of violent extremism carries higher risk, it will simply exacerbate the threat. It may become an excuse to restrict the entry of asylum-seekers, limit the rights of displaced persons, or force people back home. While on the one hand, turning attentions to solutions of a rights-based approach of displaced persons can and will on the other hand be an integral component of the global effort to counter violent extremism. The interface between terrorism and migration is a rich field for research that deserves all the attention it can get so that well- and ill-founded concerns can be separated and policies can be built on solid evidence. The urgent solutions and priority for displaced populations should both be humanitarian and security issues as well. A focus on displacement may be one way to leverage the right stakeholders in the global effort to counter violent extremism. The paper tends to conclude with the hypothesis that refugees would cause an increase in either the incidence or magnitude of terrorism.

The Research Paper concludes with few policy recommendations that can go some way towards disentangling the issues of (refugee) migration and terrorism. One of them refers to committing migrants to respect the political culture and values of host countries while the second refers to an obligation of migrants to inform the authorities on security issues related to terrorism and radicalisation. Thirdly, there are lessons to learn from decades of efforts to empower displaced populations to find solutions to their own plight. The later indicate that, people at risk of radicalization, especially women and children need attention on engaging them. Efforts to set up consultative mechanisms with IDPs and refugees offer alternative mechanisms for channeling grievances.

Therefore, as a way to counter violent extremism collaboration between development and humanitarian organizations should now become an urgent priority.

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