

Connecticut Debate Association
State Finals, April 2, 2016
Wilton High School

Resolved: The US should resettle a significant share of Mideast refugees.

Yearning to breathe free

The Economist, Oct 17th 2015

America should reclaim its role as a beacon for those fleeing persecution and war

JOSEPH, an Egyptian Copt who now lives in Chicago, fled for his life when his apartment in Egypt was vandalised and his car set on fire. Three years ago he travelled to America with his family under the pretext of a business trip and applied for asylum. His hearing at the Chicago Immigration Court, which was supposed to take place this month, has been postponed until February 2017. Joseph, who asked for his surname to remain anonymous in case he is sent back to Egypt, would like to go to university but cannot apply for financial aid as long as his case is pending; so he makes do by working as a cashier at a petrol station and as a taxi driver at night. His case is not unusual: some asylum-seekers in Chicago have hearings scheduled for 2020. Half of them will be turned down.

For much of its history, America has been generous to refugees and asylum-seekers from all over the world. After the second world war the country took in more than 650,000 displaced Europeans. After the fall of Saigon in 1975 it welcomed hundreds of thousands of Indo-Chinese refugees. Since the passage of the Refugee Act in 1980 America has taken in another 3m refugees, more than any other country. It is the biggest contributor to both the World Food Programme and the UNHCR.

In the current refugee crisis, though, America is on the sidelines (see chart). In recent years it has taken in just under 70,000 refugees a year on average (would-be refugees apply while in other countries; asylum-seekers once they are in America). The number of asylum applications approved tends to be less than half that figure. This pales in comparison with the 1.5m asylum-seekers, many of them Syrian, expected in Germany this year. The White House recently promised to increase the intake of refugees to 85,000 in the next fiscal year (10,000 will be from Syria) and to 100,000 in the one after that. Even this modest increase has been contested: Michael McCaul, a Republican from Texas who chairs the House Homeland Security Committee, has introduced a bill to “rein in” the administration’s plan to admit more Syrian refugees.

Two factors are responsible for the change of heart. Refugees and asylum-seekers have become ensnared in a partisan fight in Congress over immigration. And the 9/11 terrorist attacks have changed the perception of refugees from vulnerable to threatening, which has in turn had a deadening effect on the bureaucracies that process their claims.

Refugees apply for resettlement at American embassies or through the United Nations. If they pass that first hurdle, they are screened by outposts of the Department of State all over the world. They undergo investigations of their biography and identity; FBI biometric checks of their fingerprints and photographs; in-person interviews by Department of Homeland Security officers; medical screenings as well as investigations by the National Counter-terrorism Centre and by American and international intelligence agencies. The process may take as long as three years, sometimes longer. No other person entering America is subjected to such a level of scrutiny.

Refugee resettlement is the least likely route for potential terrorists, says Kathleen Newland at the Migration Policy Institute, a think-tank. Of the 745,000 refugees resettled since September 11th, only two Iraqis in Kentucky have been arrested on terrorist charges, for aiding al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Asylum-seekers have to navigate through a similar bureaucratic tangle. The decision to grant asylum is made by a Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer. If that officer finds that the applicant did not make his case convincingly, he receives a “Notice of Intent to Deny” (NOID) as long as his immigration status as, say, a tourist or student is still valid. He is then allowed to submit further evidence to bolster his case, though such decisions are rarely reversed. If the applicant’s immigration status is no longer valid, he is placed in deportation proceedings before an immigration court. The applicant then has a second chance to make his case in court while a government lawyer argues that he should be deported. In March this year, USCIS had 82,175 asylum cases pending. Last year each immigration judge handled, on average, 1,500 cases a year, double or even triple the caseload of other judges.

Kludged to death

The decisions that this system churns out often have little to do with the merit of individual cases. Joseph was unlucky because after his arrival in America he fell into the hands of a fraudulent translator pretending to be a lawyer, to whom

he paid thousands of dollars for help with the asylum interview. As Joseph's case was so badly presented, the officer denied his request and referred him to an immigration court for deportation.

In theory, as a signatory of the UN convention of 1951, America has a legal obligation to protect refugees. In practice the public is not willing to accept the boundless consequences of this commitment, so the federal government limits the overall number by presenting refugees and asylum-seekers with an overwhelming show of bureaucratic kludge. One idea to ease the worry about the cost of refugees is to adopt private sponsorship of them, as Canada does. Since 1979 Canada's privately financed programme has resettled more than 200,000 refugees. Community organisations, churches and members of ethnic minorities pool funds to pay for refugees to come to Canada and to help them settle and find work. A study of the Canadian programme in 2007 suggests that privately sponsored refugees become self-sufficient more quickly than those supported by Canada's government.

"We have a history of openness to immigrants and refugees, which has been good for us, and made the DNA of our country" says Richard Haass, head of the Council on Foreign Relations, a think-tank. Mr Haass argues that it is in America's interest to help Germany, one of its staunchest allies, with the seemingly never-ending stream of asylum-seekers pouring into the country. Unfortunately, most contenders for the presidency do not agree. Only Martin O'Malley, the former governor of Maryland and one of the least likely winners of the Democratic Party's nomination, has unequivocally said that America should do more for Syrian refugees.

With No Unified Refugee Strategy, Europeans Fall Back on Old Alliances

The New York Times, By JIM YARDLEY, FEB. 25, 2016

ROME — Roughly five weeks ago, Donald Tusk, one of the European Union's most powerful political figures, issued a blunt warning to its 28 countries: Come up with a coherent plan to tackle the refugee crisis within two months, or risk chaos.

Surprisingly, given the plodding pace of European Union policy making, many of Europe's national leaders are now moving swiftly, announcing tough new border policies and guidelines on asylum — even with three weeks remaining on the deadline set by Mr. Tusk, president of the European Council.

The problem is that the leaders are not always adhering to European rules, possibly not sticking to international law and not acting with the unity envisioned by Mr. Tusk. In some cases, they instead seem to be reverting to historical alliances rather than maintaining the European Union's mantra of solidarity.

This week, Austria joined with many of the Balkan countries to approve a tough border policy in what some are wryly calling the return of the Hapsburg Empire. Four former Soviet satellites, led by Poland and Hungary, have become another opposition power bloc.

All the while, a call for unity by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany is increasingly being ignored, even as she struggles to tamp down on a political revolt at home while searching for a formula to reduce the number of refugees still trying to reach Germany.

"We are now entering a situation in which everybody is trying to stop the refugees before they reach their borders," said Ivan Krastev, chairman of the Center for Liberal Strategies, a research institute in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Mr. Krastev added, "The basic question is, which country turns into a parking lot for refugees?"

For many months, European Union officials, joined by Ms. Merkel, have tried to share the burden by distributing quotas of the refugees already in Greece and Italy to different member states. Many states have balked, and the program is largely paralyzed.

European Union leaders also agreed to pay 3 billion euros, roughly \$3.3 billion, to aid organizations in Turkey to help stanch the flow of migrants departing the Turkish coast for the Greek islands. But record numbers of migrants keep coming.

Without an effective Europe-wide policy response, and facing growing public anger in many countries, Europe's national leaders have splintered, searching for allies.

Only months ago, Austria, like Germany, symbolized Europe's welcoming embrace to Syrians and other refugees fleeing war and poverty. Now, Austria is defying European Union officials — and frustrating Ms. Merkel — by placing a cap on refugees.

Austria also convened a meeting on Wednesday in Vienna with many of the Balkan states that last year had allowed migrants to cross their borders while traveling north toward Germany and Sweden.

The group in Vienna agreed to tighten limits on the number of migrants allowed to travel north, and pledged to help Macedonia clamp down on its southern border with Greece.

Poland and Hungary are also providing help to Macedonia. Earlier, police chiefs in Austria, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia

and Slovenia established tighter rules for screening migrants.

Taken together, these moves threaten to turn Greece into the so-called refugee parking lot. Already, the Greek police have had to relocate several thousand migrants from the border checkpoint with Macedonia to refugee centers on the outskirts of Athens.

The Greek prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, is incensed and Greece on Thursday recalled its ambassador to Austria. Greece's Foreign Ministry issued a statement warning against the re-emergence of Europe's ancient rivalries.

"It is clear that the major problems of the European Union cannot be confronted via thoughts, attitudes and extra-institutional initiatives that have their roots in the 19th century," the statement said.

Greece is now the primary entry point for Syrians and other refugees trying to reach Europe. Already this year, more than 100,000 migrants have landed on Greek islands, the International Organization for Migration has reported, a number that could ultimately top one million or more. Greek officials warn that the country — still reeling from the economic crisis — could be thrown into civil conflict if it becomes a dumping ground for migrants trying to reach the rest of Europe.

"This is not a Greek problem," said Megan E. Greene, chief economist for Manulife Asset Management and a longtime analyst of Europe.

"It is a European problem, and it needs a European solution. We are seeing 'solidarity' go out the window."

Analysts say that if the deal struck this week in Austria becomes integrated into a broader European Union policy, with Macedonia effectively becoming the bloc's outer edge, it would redraw the external borders of the group. Greece would be left outside the bloc's de facto borders, despite being a European Union member. Yet Macedonia and Serbia, neither of which are members, would be inside.

The European Union will hold a pivotal March 7 meeting with Turkey to discuss the flow of refugees. European leaders will then gather in Brussels on March 17-18 for a summit meeting intended to achieve a unified migration policy — the session that represents Mr. Tusk's deadline.

Leaders like Ms. Merkel have long argued that migration demands a Europe-wide solution and is too big for any single country to adequately address. Yet it will not be easy.

Hungary is now planning to hold a public referendum on whether to accept or reject refugees. Italy — which has been dealing with migration for years — is calling for the creation of so-called Eurobonds to finance the response to the migration crisis — even as Germany and other countries remain wary.

In Germany, the political pressure on Ms. Merkel is only growing, and some predict that the anti-immigrant Alternative für Deutschland party could make serious inroads in three important upcoming state elections.

Moreover, Ms. Merkel's own re-election campaign next year could be in doubt. She has criticized Austria and the other countries for acting outside European Union parameters, and for potentially isolating Greece. Yet a policy to tighten borders and stem the refugee flow could likely help her politically.

"For Germany, it is vital to bring the numbers down," said Almut Möller, head of the Berlin office of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

U.S. Record on Refugees Reflects Domestic and Global Challenges

The New York Times, By SOMINI SENGUPTA, JAN. 13, 2016

UNITED NATIONS — Among the Obamas' guests at the State of the Union address on Tuesday was Refaai Hamo, a middle-aged widower with sunken eyes, a side-swept mop of silver hair and a harrowing account of losing his wife and his daughter in an air raid over his home in Syria.

His presence in the gallery was meant to send a signal to the world that the United States — or at least this administration, in its last year in the White House — believes that people like Mr. Hamo deserve a chance to restart their lives in this country.

"The world respects us not just for our arsenal," President Obama said in his address. "It respects us for our diversity and our openness."

The gesture raised an obvious question: Has the United States lived up to its idea of itself as a haven for those fleeing war and persecution?

The numbers offer a partial answer, and they reflect the acute dilemmas that confront countries worldwide amid a historic global crisis.

The United Nations says that an estimated 20 million people around the world, half of them children, have fled their home countries because of conflict or persecution. The war in Syria is now the single largest source of new refugees,

casting about 4.4 million Syrians out of their country since the conflict began nearly five years ago.

But unlike in 1951 — when the international refugee convention was forged in the aftermath of World War II, requiring countries to offer protection to those scattered by war and persecution — the political calculus for world leaders has sharply shifted. The costs of taking in refugees have grown and the payoffs, many feel, have diminished.

First, the numbers.

The United States has taken in around 2,500 Syrian refugees since 2012, shortly after the war began.

Canada took in more than that in the last two months of 2015 alone.

Brazil has offered what it calls “humanitarian visas” to three times as many Syrian refugees as the United States has accepted — 7,380 at last count by the United Nations refugee agency.

Switzerland has issued 4,700 special-category visas for Syrians who have family in the country. And Australia, which has come under international criticism for turning away boats of potential refugees from South and Southeast Asia, has said it will take 12,000 from Syria and Iraq.

Germany is in a category of its own, with Syrians making up the largest single group (428,500) of the 1.1 million people who were registered as refugees and asylum seekers there in 2015.

For the United States, as for much of the Western world, the political costs of accepting refugees are high.

Many people in the United States are worried about terrorists sneaking in through refugee programs. Crimes like the sexual assaults of women in Germany on New Year’s Eve, in which the authorities said asylum seekers were involved, led Chancellor Angela Merkel to propose tougher laws regulating asylum seekers.

Political figures on both continents have also become openly opposed to accepting Muslims in particular. Donald J. Trump, the Republican presidential candidate, proposed a moratorium on the admission of Muslims to the United States, just as Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary has warned about the need to “keep Europe Christian.”

Perhaps as important, the political rewards for taking in refugees have diminished.

During the Cold War, the West scored political points by welcoming people from the Eastern bloc. It was a way to convey that the Western way of life was better and more attractive than life behind the Iron Curtain. It was one reason, historians say, that in 1980, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the United States took in as many as 207,000 refugees, many from Vietnam. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the United States welcomed tens of thousands of people as the Soviet Union was dissolving.

But America’s admission of refugees from around the world virtually ground to a halt after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The numbers have slowly crept back up in recent years, to about 70,000 in 2015. The Obama administration has set a target of 85,000 this year and of 100,000 in 2017, which as American officials point out makes this country one of the most welcoming in the developed world.

But the goal of accepting 10,000 Syrians this year, as Mr. Obama has said he wants to do, is likely to be difficult. It takes an average of two years for those candidates to be screened and vetted by American officials.

Most of the Syrian refugees are cramped into three neighboring countries — Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. But they are not allowed to work in some of those countries, or go to school in some places. And with donor money drying up, United Nations agencies have repeatedly slashed food rations, plunging hundreds of thousands of refugees into deep poverty. In Jordan and Lebanon, a vast majority of Syrian refugees live below the national poverty line.

Last week, the new United Nations high commissioner for refugees, Filippo Grandi, described his agency as “navigating extraordinarily difficult waters.”

“The combination of multiple conflicts and resulting mass displacement, fresh challenges to asylum, the funding gap between humanitarian needs and resources, and growing xenophobia is very dangerous,” he said.

Mr. Grandi, an Italian, called on Europe to share the numbers of asylum seekers pouring onto the Continent in a fair and equitable way. The plea seemed to fall on deaf ears.

Germany and Sweden, overwhelmed by the numbers seeking to get into their countries, tightened border controls, leaving thousands of migrants and asylum seekers stranded along the migrant trail.

On Monday, a vice president of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, leaned on Turkey to do more to stem the flow of people across the Aegean Sea. By law, Europe cannot send back people who are fleeing war and persecution. Instead, it has pressed its neighbor, Turkey, to stop people from trying to reach European shores, in exchange for billions of euros in development aid.

All the while, many more Syrians are trying to flee, with Jordan reporting this week that 16,000 Syrians are in a no-man’s land in the wide-open desert along the Jordan-Syria border. Jordan is letting in fewer than 100 of them a day, mainly, Jordanian officials say, out of concern for its security.

Similar concerns affect the resettlement of Syrians in the United States. Many of the Syrian refugees hoping to be admitted to the United States are waiting in Lebanon. But American officials stopped interviewing them over a year ago, out of concern for the safety of its own Homeland Security personnel, making it unclear how long it will take to screen applicants.

The Immigration Dividend

The New York Times, By TED WIDMER, OCT. 6, 2015

IMMIGRATION is not the easiest issue to debate. It stokes emotions about “homelands” and invasions, as we have seen all summer, both in the Republican presidential contest and in the tragic situation in Europe. These arguments tend to produce more heat than light, making objective analysis difficult. Many politicians find that their poll numbers rise the further from reality they stray — as the Donald J. Trump playbook continues to prove. A recent Pew report confirms that the parties remain far apart, with Republicans far more certain than Democrats (53 percent versus 24 percent) that immigration is making our society worse.

But history provides some clarity about the relative costs and benefits of immigration over time. Fifty years ago this month, Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 at the foot of the Statue of Liberty. By any standard, it made the United States a stronger nation. The act was endorsed by Republicans and Democrats in an era when cooperation was still possible. Indeed, the most serious opposition came from Southern Democrats and an ambivalent secretary of state, Dean Rusk. But it passed the Senate easily (76-18), with skillful leadership from its floor manager, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, and Johnson himself.

Since 1924, United States immigration policy had been based on a formula, derived from the 1890 census, that made it relatively easy for Northern Europeans to immigrate. But the formula set strict limits for everyone else. That seemed ridiculous to John F. Kennedy, who was trying to win hearts and minds in the Cold War, and it seemed even more so to his successor in 1965, as Johnson was escalating the war in Vietnam. The act’s passage was one of the few positive legacies of that complex moment in American foreign policy.

Johnson promised his opponents that the act would “not reshape the structure of our daily lives.” But that prediction proved utterly untrue. By destroying the old national-origins system, the act opened the floodgates to the parts of the world that had been excluded in the past.

What ensued was arguably the most significant period of immigration in American history. Nearly 59 million people have come to the United States since 1965, and three-quarters of them came from Latin America and Asia. It was not unrestrained immigration — the act created preferences for those with technical training, or family members in the United States. But it was vastly more open than what had come before.

There is little doubt that the act succeeded in the ways that its progressive supporters hoped — it made America a genuinely New Frontier, younger and more diverse, truer to its ideals. But it also was a success when measured by a more conservative calculus of hard power. It certainly increased American security. Significant numbers of immigrants and their children joined the United States military after 1965, and in every category the armed forces became more ethnically diverse.

The flood of new immigrants also promoted prosperity in ways that few could have imagined in 1965. Between 1990 and 2005, as the digital age took off, 25 percent of the fastest-growing American companies were founded by people born in foreign countries.

Much of the growth of the last two decades has stemmed from the vast capacity that was delivered by the Internet and the personal computer, each of which was accelerated by immigrant ingenuity. Silicon Valley, especially, was transformed. In a state where Asian immigrants had once faced great hardship, they helped to transform the global economy. The 2010 census stated that more than 50 percent of technical workers in Silicon Valley are Asian-American.

Google was co-founded by Sergey Brin, who emigrated from the Soviet Union with his parents at age 6. The new C.E.O. of United Airlines is Mexican-American. And an extraordinary number of Indian-Americans have risen to become chief executives of other major American corporations, including Adobe Systems, Pepsi, Motorola and Microsoft.

In countless other ways, as well, we might measure the improvements since 1965. A prominent AIDS researcher, David Ho, came to this country as a 12-year-old from Taiwan. Immigrants helped take the space program to new places, and sometimes gave their lives in that cause (an Indian-American astronaut, Kalpana Chawla, perished in the Columbia space shuttle disaster). Almost no one would argue for a return to pre-1965 American cuisine, which became incomparably more interesting as it grew more diverse. Baseball has become a more dynamic game as it, too, has looked south and west. The list goes on and on.

There will always be debates over immigration, and it’s important to acknowledge that opponents of immigration are

usually correct when they argue that immigration brings dramatic change. But a careful consideration of the 1965 Immigration Act shows that our willingness to lower barriers made this a better country. To convey that hard-earned wisdom to other nations wrestling with the same issues, and to open our own doors more widely, would be a modest way to repay the great contributions that immigrants have made on a daily basis to the United States over the past 50 years.

Ted Widmer is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. He edited “Listening In: The Secret White House Recordings of John F. Kennedy.”

A Frontline Solution to Europe’s Refugee Crisis

The Wall Street Journal, By SOHRAB AHMARI, Sept. 24, 2015

The U.S. experience at Ellis Island a century ago offers lessons to ease Europe’s migrant chaos.

This quaint Macedonian village provides a useful vantage point for anyone hoping to grasp the scale of the current European refugee crisis. Up to 7,000 refugees have been passing through here daily before crossing the border with Serbia.

A generation ago this region escaped communism, then fought bitter ethnic and sectarian wars that lasted until 2001. Now its nations find themselves in the eye of a humanitarian storm. And Europe is no closer to a durable solution.

Short of military intervention to stabilize some of the Middle East hotspots the refugees are fleeing, the only long-term response is to develop legal, safe conduits that bring refugees to European Union-funded and operated frontline processing centers, say, on the Greek and Italian isles and Turkey’s western coast. Asylum-seekers would be offered fair, humane and expedient processing. Those relying on trafficker routes would be routed back to these centers.

Accepted refugees would be placed depending on host-country capacity, family and communal ties, and related factors.

The U.S. experience on Ellis Island at the turn of the 20th century is instructive. The island processed an astonishing 1.25 million immigrants in 1907, a banner year for U.S. immigration. In the next decade U.S. immigration authorities also mastered immigrant processing—including ultra-efficient medical checks and questioning—aboard ships.

The situations aren’t precisely analogous. At Ellis Island’s height as a processing center, America maintained a more or less open-door policy. But the main lesson for Europe today lies in the American government’s ability at that time to impose order on human chaos on a scale similar to the current refugee crisis. Central to that success was the existence of a singular executive with broad discretion to examine, process, accept and in some cases reject migrants.

Compare that achievement with Europe’s mess today. As the crisis mounted, the states on the Balkan corridor—Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey—provided refugees easy passage toward Hungary. Macedonia and Serbia especially became efficient at getting refugees in and out of their territory as quickly as possible, sometimes within a day. Balkan governments knew that most refugees were headed for Germany, Sweden and the like, and after minimal processing they granted papers allowing refugees to head north.

The result has been chaos and confusion. The EU and national governments are reacting haphazardly as migrant flows and public opinion shift. One week Germany declares open borders in response to a heart-wrenching photograph of a drowned Syrian boy. The next week Germany and Austria close their borders and suspend participation in the Schengen Treaty, which allows visa-free travel across European frontiers.

In Hungary, meanwhile, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has declared Serbia a “safe” country. This makes it virtually impossible for refugees crossing through his country’s southern border to make a prima facie case for asylum. Mr. Orbán has also given his security forces a free hand to deal brutally with “illegal immigrants”—people who have recently escaped the ravages of Bashar Assad and Islamic State.

The refugees and the frontline states will pay the price for policy incoherence at the EU center. Large numbers of refugees are now stuck in closed-border zones between Serbia and Hungary, but that will only push others to find new paths into the EU. As Vali Khougani, a 50-something Afghan, tells me, the refugees would still come if the Balkan corridor were closed. Only they would rely more on human traffickers, and “maybe 10 out of every 100 would die.”

Already refugees are pioneering new routes across Croatia and Slovenia. Fear of life under Mr. Assad’s chemical bombs and Islamic State’s hand-choppers is a great inspiration for ingenuity and endurance. And although the regions they’re leaving have long been miserable, the sense that the basic order of life in the Middle East has been shattered, and that no one can put it back together, has triggered today’s mass exodus. Seeing others successfully cross into Europe has bolstered their resolve.

This realization puts Europeans in an unenviable position. It means millions more will knock on Europe’s door. The numbers might decrease temporarily as the weather cools and Mediterranean waters turn choppy. But Europe can expect another, and perhaps larger, surge next summer. A Fortress Europe approach will create more scenes of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean, suffocating in trafficker trucks and violently clashing with border guards. But opening

the gates will only intensify the flood.

With a comprehensive frontline model, the first benefit is that it imposes order on a rapidly deteriorating situation. The Balkan region is made up of small, fragile states. If they're expected to shoulder more responsibility, then they need greater assistance from the north in counterterrorism screening, asylum processing, temporary housing and so on. Better, then, to have recipient states act in a coordinated, proactive fashion at the refugee wellspring rather than applying ad hoc policy handed down from Berlin and Brussels.

This won't be easy to implement. It will require a large upfront capacity-building investment. And it will raise the ire of those across the Continent who complain, sometimes with reason, of EU dictates overriding the will of elected governments. But if left standing, the current policy patchwork will invite still bigger calamities.

Mr. Ahmari is a Journal editorial writer based in London.

How the U.S. Can Welcome Refugees

The New York Times, By DAVID MILIBAND, SEPT. 22, 2015

THE evidence from Europe in recent weeks is that many citizens are ahead of their governments when it comes to responding to the tide of human misery coming from the Middle East. Soccer clubs in Germany are setting up training academies. Austrians have turned out at railway stations. In Iceland, more than 15,000 people joined the "Syria is calling" Facebook page, many of whom apparently offered to house a refugee.

In the United States, the Obama administration's response has been cautious. While Turkey is hosting approximately 1.9 million refugees from Syria, Jordan has received more than 600,000, and Lebanon over one million, America has taken only just over 1,500 people during four years of the Syrian civil war.

The president first promised this month to increase the number who will be resettled to 10,000 in the fiscal year beginning in October. This was paltry.

Secretary of State John Kerry has said that the total number of refugees allowed into the country in 2017 would be increased by 30,000, to 100,000, but he didn't specify how many of those would be Syrian. The city of Munich welcomed 25,000 refugees over one weekend.

The mismatch between need and response is all the more striking since the United States has given a home to some three million refugees since 1975. In 2013, they came from 64 different countries.

The experience of the United States Refugee Admissions Program, which is a consortium of federal agencies and nonprofit organizations, offers a number of valuable lessons. The first is that successful resettlement needs more than big-hearted citizens. It needs an effective combination of resources provided by both the public and the private spheres.

Government needs to set the legislative framework, oversee security checks and provide funding for initial housing, case management and language training. Once these needs are met, resettlement agencies in the United States work within their communities to develop volunteer programs and raise funds to augment the public provision. The success of the refugee admissions program lies in this partnership between the public and the private sectors.

Second, refugees need to be seen for their potential contribution to society. The language of "burden" is mistaken. Rather, economic self-sufficiency is the central pillar in successful refugee resettlement.

Resettlement agencies work to help refugees gain employment as soon as possible after their arrival. According to the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement's annual report to Congress for 2013 (the most recent year for which figures are available), the rate of refugees' self-sufficiency at 180 days was 69 percent. A recent survey by the Washington-based Migration Policy Institute found that refugees were, in fact, more likely to be employed than the American-born population.

Third, education for the children of refugees is crucial for effective integration. Many refugee children arrive with little formal education and limited to no English skills. Yet resettlement experience in the United States shows that, with proper support, refugee children are able to thrive at school in a short time.

Data from the International Rescue Committee indicates that 95 percent of refugee students graduating out of the I.R.C.'s New York City Education and Learning program earned a diploma. This is far above the city's baseline average of about 62 percent for English-proficient students.

For many refugees, the chance for their children to get a good education means more to the parents than their own immediate prospects. It is the young who can go on to reap the full benefits of resettlement.

The final lesson is that refugees prosper most when they become citizens. Refugees need support to achieve it as soon as they become eligible. Studies show that naturalization as a United States citizen correlates with higher levels of employment and earnings.

The United Nations has called for the resettlement of 400,000 Syrian refugees over the next several years — which amounts to about 10 percent of those who have been displaced to neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Historically, the United States has taken 50 percent of the world's refugees who are eligible for resettlement; that is why the I.R.C. is appealing to America to take 100,000 Syrians next year.

That will require political will and the funding to back it up — both of which most of Europe has conspicuously lacked. European Union leaders meeting this week must put that right.

With more people fleeing conflict and disaster than at any time since World War II, renewed leadership is required. No country is better placed than the United States to offer it.

No one pretends that an enlarged program of resettling refugees will end the humanitarian crisis created by the civil war in Syria. That will require a new wave of political and diplomatic engagement at the source of the conflict. International aid organizations like the I.R.C. see every day the need to provide more help to the neighboring states of Syria that are under huge strain, but refugee resettlement is also a practical way of making a difference for the most vulnerable.

There are very many generous, civic-minded Americans who stand ready to welcome thousands more Syrian refugees to this country. So, too, should the United States government. That effort will not only save precious lives, but will also confirm the nation's commitment to its moral and international responsibilities.

David Miliband, a former British foreign secretary, is the president and chief executive of the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian aid organization.

The Roots of the Migration Crisis

The Wall Street Journal, By WALTER RUSSELL MEAD, Sept. 11, 2015

The Syrian refugee disaster is a result of the Middle East's failure to grapple with modernity and Europe's failure to defend its ideals

The migration crisis enveloping Europe and much of the Middle East today is one of the worst humanitarian disasters since the 1940s. Millions of desperate people are on the march: Sunni refugees driven out by the barbarity of the Assad regime in Syria, Christians and Yazidis fleeing the pornographic violence of Islamic State, millions more of all faiths and no faith fleeing poverty and oppression without end. Parents are entrusting their lives and the lives of their young children to rickety boats and unscrupulous criminal syndicates along the Mediterranean coast, professionals and business people are giving up their livelihoods and investments, farmers are abandoning their land, and from North Africa to Syria, the sick and the old are on the road, carrying a few treasured belongings on a new trail of tears.

It is the first migration crisis of the 21st century, but it is unlikely to be the last. The rise of identity politics across the Middle East and much of sub-Saharan Africa is setting off waves of violence like those that tore apart the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries. The hatreds and rivalries driving endangered communities to exile and destruction have a long history. They probably have a long future as well.

What we are witnessing today is a crisis of two civilizations: The Middle East and Europe are both facing deep cultural and political problems that they cannot solve. The intersection of their failures and shortcomings has made this crisis much more destructive and dangerous than it needed to be—and carries with it the risk of more instability and more war in a widening spiral.

The crisis in the Middle East has to do with much more than the breakdown of order in Syria and Libya. It runs deeper than the poisonous sectarian and ethnic hatreds behind the series of wars stretching from Pakistan to North Africa. At bottom, we are witnessing the consequences of a civilization's failure either to overcome or to accommodate the forces of modernity. One hundred years after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and 50 years after the French left Algeria, the Middle East has failed to build economies that allow ordinary people to live with dignity, has failed to build modern political institutions and has failed to carve out the place of honor and respect in world affairs that its peoples seek.

There is no point in rehearsing the multiple failures since Britain's defeat of the Ottoman Empire liberated the Arabs from hundreds of years of Turkish rule. But it is worth noting that the Arab world has tried a succession of ideologies and forms of government, and that none of them has worked. The liberal nationalism of the early 20th century failed, and so did the socialist nationalism of Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and his contemporaries. Authoritarianism failed the Arabs too: Compare what Lee Kwan Yew created in resource-free Singapore with the legacy of the Assads in Syria or of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Today we are watching the failure of Islamism. From the Muslim Brotherhood to Islamic State, Islamist movements have had no more success in curing the ills of Arab civilization than any of the secular movements of the past. Worse, the brutal fanaticism and nihilistic violence of groups like Islamic State undercuts respect for more moderate versions of Islamic spirituality and thought.

The Turks and the Iranians have had more economic and institutional success than the Arabs, but in both Turkey and Iran today, the outlook is bleak. Iran is ruled by a revolutionary alliance of reactionary clerics and hungry thugs, and it is committed to a regional policy of confrontation and sectarian war. Like the Soviet Union, Iran is an uneasy conglomeration of national and cultural groups held together by a radical but increasingly stale ideology. Turkey, too, is cursed by blind Islamist enthusiasm and unresolved ethnic and ideological chasms. Neither country is immune to the violence sweeping the region, and neither country has been able to develop policies that would calm rather than roil their turbulent surroundings.

At the same time, foreign values are challenging traditional beliefs and practices across the region. Women throughout the Islamic world are seeking to shape theological and social ideas to better reflect their own experience. Modern science and historical and textual criticism pose many of the questions for traditional Islamic piety that 19th-century science and biblical criticism posed for Christianity. Young people continue to be exposed to information, narratives and images that are difficult to reconcile with traditions they were raised to take for granted.

As hundreds of thousands of refugees stumble from the chaos of an imploding Arab world toward Europe, and as millions more seek refuge closer to home, we see a crisis of confidence in the very structures of Middle Eastern civilization, including religion. Reports that hundreds of Iranian and other refugees from the Islamic world are seeking Christian baptism in Europe can be seen as one aspect of this crisis. If people feel that the religion they were raised in and the civilization of which they are a part cannot master the problems of daily life, they will seek alternatives.

For other Muslims, this means the embrace of radical fundamentalism. Such fanaticism is a sign of crisis and not of health in religious life, and the very violence of radical Islam today points to the depth of the failure of traditional religious ideas and institutions across the Middle East.

In Europe and the West, the crisis is quieter but no less profound. Europe today often doesn't seem to know where it is going, what Western civilization is for, or even whether or how it can or should be defended. Increasingly, the contemporary version of Enlightenment liberalism sees itself as fundamentally opposed to the religious, political and economic foundations of Western society. Liberal values such as free expression, individual self-determination and a broad array of human rights have become detached in the minds of many from the institutional and civilizational context that shaped them.

Capitalism, the social engine without which neither Europe nor the U.S. would have the wealth or strength to embrace liberal values with any hope of success, is often seen as a cruel, anti-human system that is leading the world to a Malthusian climate catastrophe. Military strength, without which the liberal states would be overwhelmed, is regarded with suspicion in the U.S. and with abhorrence in much of Europe. Too many people in the West interpret pluralism and tolerance in ways that forbid or unrealistically constrain the active defense of these values against illiberal states like Russia or illiberal movements like radical Islam.

Europe's approach to the migration crisis brings these failures into sharp relief. The European Union bureaucracy in Brussels has erected a set of legal doctrines stated in terms of absolute right and has tried to build policy on this basis. Taking its cue from the U.N.'s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other ambitious declarations and treaties, the EU holds that qualified applicants have an absolute human right to asylum. European bureaucrats tend to see asylum as a legal question, not a political one, and they expect political authorities to implement the legal mandate, not quibble with it or constrain it.

This is, in many ways, a commendable and honorable approach. Europeans are rightly haunted by what happened in the 1930s when refugees from Hitler's Germany could often find no place to go. But solemn declarations to "do the right thing" do not always lead to sound policy.

Under normal circumstances, the rights-based, legalistic approach can work reasonably well. When refugee flows are slack, the political fallout from accommodating them is manageable. But when the flow of desperate people passes a certain threshold, receiving countries no longer have the will (and, in some cases, the ability) to follow through. Ten thousand refugees is one thing; 10 million is another. Somewhere between those extremes is a breaking point at which the political system will no longer carry out the legal mandate. To pretend that this isn't true is to invite trouble, and Europe is already much closer to a breaking point than Brussels or Berlin would like to admit.

In eastern and central Europe, the social and economic conditions for absorbing mass migration from the Middle East simply don't exist. The relatively homogenous ethnic nation states that now comprise the region were created through generations of warfare, often accompanied by episodes of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Most of these states enjoyed a brief period of independence between the two world wars and were then engulfed, first by the Nazis and later by the Soviet empire. Their independence and security still feel fragile, and most of their citizens still believe that the role of the state is to protect the well-being of their own ethnic group and express its cultural values.

Larger, more self-confident and richer societies in Europe's west and north are better prepared to cope with

immigration. But rules that work for Germany and Sweden can produce uncontrollable backlashes in other parts of Europe. Add to this picture the continuing budgetary and welfare crises and the mass youth unemployment in many Eurozone economies, and it is easy to envision a point at which Europe's capacity to absorb refugees reaches a ceiling.

And the flow of refugees to Europe could easily grow. The Turkish war against the Kurdistan Workers' Party could escalate. Social breakdown or the victory of radical Islamist forces in Egypt could provoke a mass flight of the Copts, the last remaining large Christian population in a region that has seen one Christian community after another exterminated or forced into exile over the last 150 years. The sectarian war in Syria could intensify and spread into Lebanon. The intensifying religious conflict across the Sahel and northern sub-Saharan Africa could create the kind of political and economic insecurity that would produce vast flows of desperate migrants and asylum seekers.

The breaking point may be reached sooner rather than later. In the short term, Europe's attempts to welcome and resettle refugees will accelerate the flow. The news that rich countries like Germany are welcoming migrants will stimulate many more people to hit the road. Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, is calling on member states to accept 160,000 migrants through a quota system. What will be the response when the number of migrants shoots well past that number?

The EU has failed to see that refugee and asylum policy must have three distinct components: the compassionate embrace of those in great need, a tough-minded effort to reduce the flow at the source by correcting or preventing the problems that give rise to it, and an effective border-control regime that limits the number of refugees and migrants who reach EU soil.

When it comes to reducing the number of migrants at their source, the Europeans have gotten it partly right. The EU has been relatively generous with economic-development aid to North Africa and the Middle East. That aid often falls short of the hoped-for results, but at least the Europeans are trying.

There is a second dimension to this policy that runs into a buzz saw of European assumptions and beliefs: the security question. Poverty is one driver of migration to Europe, but what has turned a policy problem into an international crisis is the intersection of poverty and insecurity. It is the brutal war in Syria that has displaced millions of people from their homes and sent them streaming into refugee encampments from Amman to Budapest. It was the breakdown of order in post-intervention Libya that made the Libyan coast a point of embarkation for desperate refugees from Libya and farther south.

The humanitarian question of refugees and asylum seekers cannot be separated from the bankruptcy of Western security policy in Syria and Libya, and the bankruptcy of Western policy cannot be separated from the long-standing difficulties that many European states have in taking a responsible attitude toward questions of military security.

The utter failure of Western policy in both Libya and Syria has to be seen for what it is: not just a political blunder but a humanitarian crime. The feckless mix of intervention and indifference in Libya and the equally feckless failure to intervene in Syria have helped to trigger the flows of migrants that are overwhelming Europe's institutions.

It is impossible to have a humane and sustainable asylum policy without an active and engaged foreign policy that from time to time involves military action. The West's current stance on human rights and asylum is reminiscent of the liberal approach to questions of peace and war in the early 1930s. On the one hand, the West adopted a high-minded, legalistic stand that declared war illegal (the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928); on the other, we adhered to a blind commitment to disarmament. A noble ideal was separated from any serious effort to create the conditions that would make it achievable.

The dream of a liberal, humanitarian peace that both the Obama administration and the EU share may not be achievable in the wicked and complicated world in which we live. It certainly cannot be achieved with the kinds of policies now in favor in capitals on both sides of the Atlantic.

Mr. Mead is a professor of foreign affairs and humanities at Bard College, a distinguished scholar in American strategy and statesmanship at the Hudson Institute and editor at large of the American Interest.

Islamic State's Authentic-Looking Fake Passports Pose Threat

The Wall Street Journal, By MATTHEW DALTON, Dec. 23, 2015

Militants are using blank passport books and other equipment captured in territory they control

This undated photo released last month by Greece's migration policy ministry shows a registration photo from a document issued to Ahmad Almohammad. His fake Syrian passport was found at the scene of one of the Nov. 13 Paris terror attacks.

PARIS—Western security officials are struggling to respond to the threat that Islamic State can make authentic-looking Syrian and Iraqi passports, which could be used to hide operatives planning attacks in Europe or the U.S. among

refugees.

Islamic State has likely obtained equipment and blank passport books needed to make Syrian passports when the group took control of the Syrian cities of Raqqa and Deir Ezzour, those officials said. It has also gained control of materials to make Iraqi passports when it occupied the Iraqi city of Mosul, a Belgian counterterrorism official disclosed for the first time. But the near-absence of communication with the Syrian government means Western officials are lacking key information that could be used to identify the passports, according to a confidential analysis by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The Nov. 13 Paris attacks, which killed 130 people, have shown that the proliferation of Syrian passports amid the chaos of war poses a serious security threat to the West. At least one of the suicide bombers who attacked Paris had been registered as a refugee at the Greek island of Leros using a fraudulent Syrian passport.

European leaders are moving to tighten border security in the wake of the attacks. Last week, Austrian police arrested an Algerian and a Pakistani national at a refugee shelter in Salzburg, both holding forged Syrian passports. The two men had arrived in Leros on the same boat as the Paris attacker, officials said.

Frontex, the European Union's border agency, has recently sent document experts to Leros and other Greek islands to pick out fake passports. But there are now only 10 experts, and identifying a fake that has been printed on real Syrian passport books with real equipment is very difficult, a Frontex spokeswoman said.

"It's enormously difficult to figure out," said Richard Barrett, a former, senior U.K. counterterrorism official. "Maybe if you have very good local knowledge, very good Arabic language skills," he added. Islamic State "can probably make them good enough to get them past someone who has faced 10,000 refugees," Mr. Barrett said.

Identifying fake Syrian passports poses a particular challenge, Western security officials and experts say. That is because communication between the Syrian government and Western authorities is almost nonexistent, they say.

"The lack of ability to verify information with the Syrian government about how many passports may be vulnerable for exploitation in former provincial/regional government building(s) will make attempts to analyze the scale of the problem difficult," according to the confidential analysis prepared by the Department of Homeland Security, sections of which were reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Use of the passport-making equipment extends beyond Islamic State to human trafficking rings that operate in Turkey, officials say. That area serves as a way station for radicals traveling between the conflict zone and Europe.

European governments now grant asylum to almost all Syrians, creating a thriving black market for authentic-looking fake Syrian passports.

Belgian police earlier this month arrested a man in Antwerp who had entered Europe as a refugee, carrying a Syrian passport. The police acted after receiving a tip that the man, whose arrest hasn't been previously reported, was actually Egyptian.

The man, who isn't considered a terror suspect, is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose supporters have been jailed by the thousands by Egypt's government. He obtained his Syrian passport in Turkey and then crossed into Greece along with masses of refugees that are still arriving by the thousands, the Belgian counterterrorism official said. The man's passport was printed on what appeared to be an authentic Syrian passport book.

The Egyptian's presence in Antwerp worried authorities because he espouses an ultra-conservative version of Islam known as Salafism and was seeking to become an imam at a mosque in the Antwerp area, said the Belgian counterterrorism official. European authorities have become increasingly worried about the influence of more conservative, non-European clerics on local Muslim populations.

The analysis by the Department of Homeland Security describes another example: an acquaintance of one of the department's intelligence sources bought a fake Syrian passport in Istanbul issued by the passport office of Deir Ezzour more than a year after the city in eastern Syria fell under the control of Islamic State.

That means either the city's passport-issuing equipment has been moved or such passports are still being issued from Islamic State-controlled territory, the analysis says.

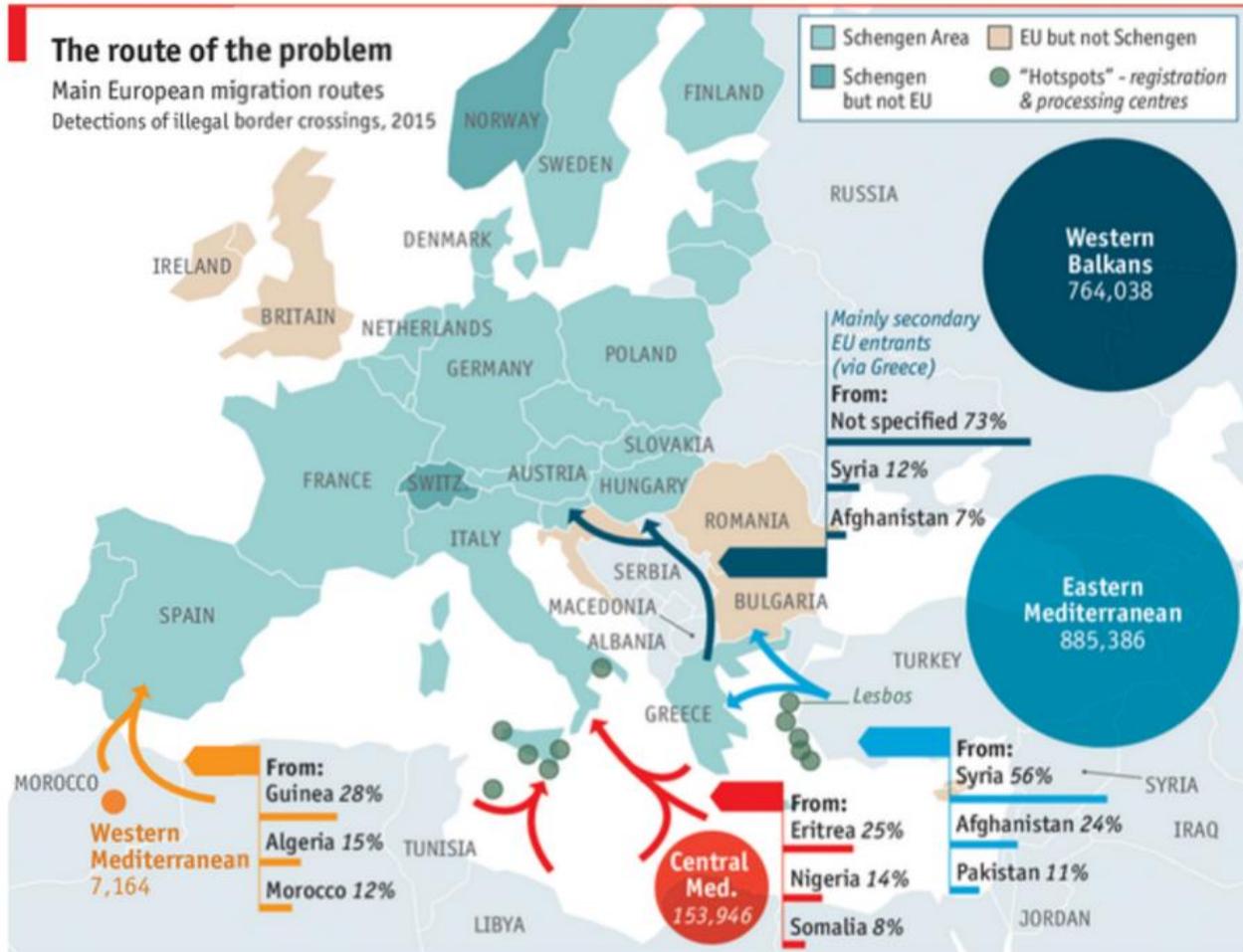
Islamic State may have also gained control of passports and equipment when it took territory near Aleppo in Syria, the Belgian counterterrorism official said.

At a summit last week, European leaders pledged to cooperate more closely on security measures and run security checks on all Europeans returning to Europe.

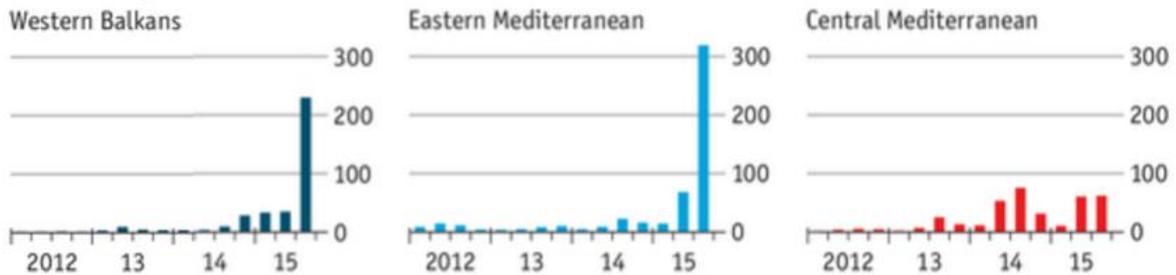
The proliferation of Syrian passports shows how even the latest measures under discussion can be circumvented. There is no record of the Paris attackers who were in Syria, at least five of whom were European citizens, returning to Europe using their own passports.

Videos have proliferated online showing people how to obtain Syrian passports and impersonate Syrians. A video shot by a Moroccan claiming to be in Germany posted on YouTube explains everything, from obtaining the passport from a cafe near the Izmir train station to the best way to get to Germany from Greece.

“You can pay the smugglers and they do the rest,” the man says. “Don’t forget to burn your Moroccan papers.”



Detections by route, '000



Sources: Frontex; The Economist