In: Power and the maritime domain: a global dialogue, Routledge, London, October 2022, pp. 129-143
DOI: 10.4324/9781003298984-12

The Weaponisation of the Eastern Mediterranean: refugees as the Trojan horse for diplomatic bargaining

Dr Anastasia Filippidou, Cranfield Forensic Institute, Cranfield University

…We sail on a storm-tossed sea, and in a yellow lightning flash, we feel we've entrusted our wealth, our children, and our gods to an eggshell.
Gaze on the dark sea without staggering, confront the abyss every moment without illusion or impudence or fear.
Without illusion, impudence, or fear. But this is not enough; take a further step: battle to give meaning to the confused struggles of man.

Nikos Kazantzakis, Ασκητική, 1922-1923[1]

Abstract:
By focusing on the eastern Mediterranean the proposed chapter examines how states use forced seaborne population movement to enhance the states' diplomatic approaches and bargaining methods. To this end the chapter explores how people interact with nature and territory in pursuit of security and the relationship between politics, location, and material things. The chapter highlights the need for a critical analysis of the effects of securitization and weaponisation approaches towards refugees, and the need for a reconceptualization of the refugees not as products of push and pull-mechanisms, but as human beings seeking better lives.

Introduction

States may want their borders to be inflexible and secure, but reality makes borders flexible and fluid. The protracted turmoil in the eastern Mediterranean in general and the conflict in Syria in particular has led to a significant rise of forced seaborne population movement. Still, despite this rise, less attention has been paid to the specific ways in which population mobility is impacting the conduct of interstate diplomacy. The maritime space and especially the Mediterranean sea, the inland sea, has the dual role of a barrier or a passage and a security bridge depending on the intentions and capabilities of those who would use it and try to cross it. By focusing on the eastern Mediterranean the proposed chapter examines how states use forced seaborne population movement to enhance the states' diplomatic approaches and bargaining methods. To this end the chapter explores how people interact with nature and territory in pursuit of security and the relationship between politics, location, and material things (adapted from Black 2009, 1).

[1] Kazantzakis, N. (2017) Ασκητική: The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises (Athens: ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ KAZANTZAKH), pp.143-149

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The chapter merges theoretical approaches with empirical case study evidence, and it examines the relationship and link between a state's diplomatic approaches and the crisis cross-border mass population movement, with special focus on sea crossing. The chapter focuses on the concept of refugee diplomacy which incorporates the calculated use of refugee flows as a means to achieve other aims, but also the use of diplomatic methods to obtain objectives related to refugees. Expanding the work of Thiollet (2011) and Greenhill (2010), whose work focuses on the relationship between migration and various forms of state diplomacy, refugee diplomacy refers to a state's use of diplomatic means, tools, and procedures towards cross-border mass population movement. A state's ability and will to use diplomatic means and procedures in a refugee crisis is contextual and situational, and it will be dependent on factors such as its real and relative power, influence, available resources, and its overall mind set. Within this context the chapter discusses, how state interests are used and are adapted reflecting which of the categories adopted by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM, 2021) a state comes under: the refugee-sending, refugee-receiving, or a transit state. That is for refugee diplomacy states predominantly obtain their interests and bargaining position towards other states partially based on whether their main concerns are with respect to immigration, emigration, or transit migration. As we operate in a complex and non-linear world, the above qualification is necessary as more often than not there is overlap and a state is at the same time a refugee-receiving state in some relationships and also refugee-sending or transit state in others.

The chapter uses the term refugees not in its strictly legal meaning but in its etymological meaning from the French *refugié* referring to the person who in times of disorder and persecution flees to a foreign country for safety. The thesis of the chapter is that refugees are chronically and systematically sacrificed at the altar of diplomatic realpolitik and political transactions, and it introduces a further category to the above three, but this time from the perspective of the refugees. This categorisation is the creation of a *utopia* for the refugees, only the word here is meant in its literal meaning and etymology of *οὐ τόπος* – no place. That is, the world chooses not to have a place for refugees. The examples upon which these concepts are tested are mainly from the Eastern Mediterranean. In consideration of the geographic and thematic breadth of the region, the chapter will make use of illustrative examples from different Mediterranean countries rather than treating the refugee crises in the Mediterranean as homogenous, which would lead to inaccurate conclusions.

Examples of Refugee Diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean

Refugee diplomacy has to do with how states are deriving their interests and bargaining position against other states and how their interests are adapted based in part on whether they are refugee-sending, refugee-receiving, or a transit state. It is noteworthy that a state may hold the position of refugee-receiving in some bilateral relationships, while at the same time it may hold the position of refugee-sending or transit state in others. Greenhill advocates that it is predominantly weak actors that manipulate migration and refugee flows for the purposes of projecting power. Greenhill (2003) makes a persuasive argument of how states can use threats of forced displacement as a form of coercive diplomacy in an effort to achieve their security aims and protect their interests. Specifically, states that lack capacities in other areas, argues Greenhill (2010, 23ff), often attempt to leverage the issue of migration and refugees to enhance their bargaining position against more powerful states and organisations. The contribution to and control to an extent of a crisis gives a state power and a better negotiating card. In this sense states use threats of forced displacement within the context of coercive refugee diplomacy in an effort to better achieve their aims and interests.

The regional crises have led to unprecedented refugee mobility in the Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. Indicatively, at the pick of the refugee crisis in 2015 Mediterranean countries were confronted with a rapid and high influx of refugees and there were 1,032,408 arrivals and close to 4,000 dead or missing, while by June 2021 there were 30,258 just sea arrivals and just over 800 dead or missing(UNHCR, 2021). The truth is that the exact number of refugees that have died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean is not known. However, the images of seaborne refugees in leaky boats desperately attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea are often accompanied by warnings of ‘waves’ of refugees ‘invading’ Europe. However, such rhetoric is not only dehumanising, it also ignores the fact that unauthorized sea-crossings represent only a small fraction of the numerous population movements of the transnational space that stretches across and beyond the Mediterranean Basin (UNHCR, 2021).

Within the field of refugee studies, research has focused on the exploitation of refugees by host states in cross-border conflicts and the motivations of states for processing and hosting refugees

(Salehyan, 2007; Jacobsen 1996), and the use of suasion in North-South bargaining over refugee situation (Betts, 2009). Yet, refugee diplomacy is neither new nor novel. States purposefully calculate their national interests based on their relative position and real or perceived strength towards their target states. Refugee diplomacy requires a combination of geopolitics, national interests, power, and a refugee influx. This adds complexity as it entails subjective elements, open to interpretation. The combination of receiving a high influx of refugees along with the perception of domestic elites of their country's increased geopolitical importance, they are more likely to engage in refugee diplomacy and political blackmailing, as the cases below highlight.

For instance since 1948 Jordan has become a destination for Palestinian refugees who settled in the country over the years. This, later allowed Jordan to engage in negotiations with Israel from a refugee diplomacy perspective (Lukacs, 1999). Since the beginning of the war in 2011, Syrians fled into Jordan, giving her a negotiating card for refugee diplomacy. Jordan agreed to host Syrian refugees in exchange for significant international aid formalised in the 2016 Jordan Compact, an agreement drafted within the context of the London Pledging Summit (Mellinger and van Berlo 2016). In point of fact, part of the reason why Jordan built camps for Syrians is that it used encampment strategically to enable it to raise the profile of, and receive funds for, Syrian refugees on its territory, argues Turner (2015, 393). The Jordanian security official in charge of the Azraq refugee camp confirms this by stating that 'if we hadn't built the camps, then the world would not understand that we were going through a crisis' (Betts at. Al. 2017, 9).

A characteristic example of refugee diplomacy is the 2016 agreement between Turkey and the European Union (EU). For the Turkish President Erdoğan Turkey's unique position and ability to control the flow of refugees and migrants into the European Union constituted a key bargaining chip in Turkish migration diplomacy (İçduygu and Üstübici 2014, Greenhill 2016). According to the 2016 agreement the EU would provide Turkey with 6 billion euros, accelerate its membership application, and provide visa-free access for Turkish citizens to the Schengen area that is the twenty six European countries with no internal passport controls. In return, Turkey would strengthen its external borders and accept the return of irregular migrants from Greece. Moreover, for every Syrian refugee returned to Turkey, the European Union would resettle another in Europe, up to a cap of seventy-two thousand (EU-Turkey Statement and

Action Plan, 2016). This, according to the International Organisation of Migration categorisation, renders Turkey a refugee-sending and a transit state at the same time.

In November 2016, as the European Parliament voted to suspend EU membership talks with Turkey, the Turkish president Erdoğan threatened to renege on the agreement warning that 'if you go any further, these border gates will be opened. Neither I nor my people will be affected by these dry threats' (Mortimer, 2016). Erdoğan asked Donald Tusk, the European Council President, 'so how will you deal with refugees if you don't get a deal? Kill the refugees?' (Reuters, 2016). Again in 2020 Turkey's president stated that 'after we opened the doors, there were multiple calls saying "close the doors"...and he threatened 'I told them "it's done. It's finished. The doors are now open. Now, you will have to take your share of the burden"' (France 24, 2020). In this case, the Turkish elite's perceptions of the country's geopolitical importance, especially vis-à-vis to its proximity to Greece, the Eastern border of the European Union, emboldened the Turkish government's blackmailing approach. The number and scale of refugees into an already impoverished Greece and the burden of their settlement augmented the crisis and the country had to be funded by the EU to help deal with the refugee crises.

In Greece the enormous influx of refugees evoked international and domestic concern, while initially the hosts expressed sympathy. However, within the context of Greece's political and economic disarray this soon changed into hostility, which unfortunately is not an uncommon reaction in similar situations. As a predominantly refugee transit state with weak finances, during the negotiations to find a way out of the Greek economic crisis, Kammenos the Greek Minister of Defence at the time adopted a relative gains argument. More precisely, Kammenos claimed that unless the EU would provide a satisfactory solution, the Greek state would allow transit migrants to reach Berlin (Athens-Macedonian News Agency 2015). Interestingly, since the signing of the EU-Turkey deal there has been an impressive decrease in crossings across the Aegean Sea, and clearly as soon as the Turkish government had the incentive, it has been able and willing to secure its European borders.

In his dealings with the European Union Libya's Gaddafi also often resorted to coercive migration diplomacy (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019; Crawley and Jones 2020). Under the threat of 'flooding' Europe with African migrants, Gaddafi would demand funding either from the European Union or from individual member-states such as France or Italy. More precisely, in the EU-Africa summit in 2010, Gaddafi declared that the cost of noncompliance, would be

that ‘Europe will turn black’ (Squires, 2010). In another African Union meeting Gaddafi threatened that ‘we will ask Europe to pay 10 billion euros per year if it really wants to stop migration toward Europe . . . Europeans who do not want to take the immigrants should either emigrate to America or pay Libya to keep its borders closed’ (Greenhill, 2010, 331). Still, the EU’s policy towards Libya is not something new. Since 2004 the European Union had placed Libya at the forefront of its policy to detain and deport people trying to reach Europe across the Mediterranean, and in this way to export the management of EU’s borders (Hamood, 2008). Despite the political chaos and the evidence of abuse against refugees in Libya (Human Rights Watch, 2019), considerable additional funding has been allocated by the EU Trust Fund for Africa and specific European countries, such as Italy, to train and build the capacity of the Libyan coastguard to intercept and return boats off the Libyan coast (EUTF-Factsheet, 2020). In Tunisia under Ben Ali’s rule, in an effort to manipulate European fears, the Tunisian state habitually aimed to obtain political and economic benefits from EU states by threatening to relax border controls and allow local terrorist or Islamist elements into Europe (Natter, 2015).

The different cases emphasise that refugee diplomacy has been conceptualised as contributing to absolute gains, in the sense that it produced key political and economic benefits for the sending states, and it also generated important gains for host and transit states at the same time. Evidently, states have at their disposal and are willing to use a variety of approaches to engage in refugee diplomacy, depending on each state’s national and foreign policy interests, the nature of the interstate relationship, and each state’s bargaining power.

Space and Fluidity: Mediterranean - a security bridge or a barrier?

The English word ‘border’, in the sense of a limit, has a special equivocation. Its etymology comes from the old French *bordeure*, which in turn originates from the Frankish or similar Germanic source *bord*, which denoted the side of the ship, and therefore the boundary of the vessel with the water. That is the boundary and border between the solidity of the land and the uncertainty of the sea. The precariousness of a border is evident from the fact that it already exists, and is present in that from which it wants to break away from. In this sense, the distinction is accompanied automatically at the same time from a point of contact. Similarly, in ancient Greek the *ὅριον*, *ὅρος, ὅμορος* – border, bordering – have a similar equivocation between contiguity-proximity and separation-demarcation. From the above it could be argued

then that metaphorically, the bordering is similar but yet cannot be identified with the neighbour on the other side of the border. If the border is not just the line that separates, but also the relationship that moves between division and union, then the idea of bordering reflects exactly that point of overlap and mixing of different, diverse and maybe incompatible worlds. Thus, borders constitute places where movement is regulated within the context of asymmetric and unequal relationships of power.

Despite their fluidity, sea borders classify those who try to cross them. They classify in the sense that they define legal and informal identities, for example that of the foreign national or of the exhausted deprived respectively. Therefore, through this classification, the borders of the Northern Mediterranean constitute one of the places where the European identity is formed. This is done by contrasting the European identity to that of the refugees' identity who originate predominantly from Africa or Arab countries. Even though the increased mass refugee influx in the Mediterranean gives the impression of shortening distances, the receiving and transit counties maintain the distances by raising invisible but very strongly felt borders through their refugee policies and measures.

The continents that compose the Mediterranean Sea have an essential historical and economic relation to each other, and constitute a totality. For the Mediterranean nations the sea is not the limit, it is not just the ceasing of the land. On the contrary, they have a positive relation to it. As these continents lie around this sea they have established over the years an easy means of communication. For as Hegel (2001) argues 'rivers and seas are not to be regarded as disjoining, but as uniting'. Geographical space, argues Robert Keohane (2002, 29-43), which has been seen as a natural barrier and a locus for human barriers, now must be seen as a carrier as well. This is evident in the examples discussed in this chapter, when the people fleeing have to rely on the sea for their survival. The link between humans and their environment is often a geographical imposition, and as politics and economics constantly change, so too do the benefits and costs of location. Over the centuries, the sea has been the subject of disputes and violent conflicts among different nations. The 'stopping power' of water is a permanent obstructive force in international relations according to Mearsheimer (2001, 40-42). Although his argument implies that physical distance naturally generates the payoff of a protective ditch, he also accepts that it takes more than just water to do the stopping (Mearsheimer 2001, 265). Thus, the role and the use of the sea towards security is complicated and complex. We are accustomed to regard water as the separating element, argues Hegel (2001, 108), while adding that however

> it may be asserted as a fundamental principle that nothing unites so much as water, for countries are nothing else than districts occupied by streams. Silesia, for instance, is the valley of the Oder; Bohemia and Saxony are the valley of the Elbe; Egypt is the valley of the Nile. Only through the fact of being a sea, has the Mediterranean become a focus of national life.

Borders become points of reference, but they can also provide a distorted reflection of an environment. Human minds carry psychological maps, as they are inclined to reimagine their territory in ways that suit assumptions about their identity, and security interests. Based on the above, maps and borders can cause simultaneously excessive fear and confidence and as such they can trigger both, threat and hope. Geopolitics is where politics, geography and history merge. Geopolitics is interactive and as Hans Weigert (1942, 23) suggests 'where the forces of the earth, where the spaces of state systems have become part of an ideology for which men are dying, we are no longer confronted with "facts" alone: geopolitics does argue. It argues against us.' In this sense, sea borders provide opportunities and constraints, and it is a way of fixing a point of limitation, even if it is never final or definitive, around which to define and prioritise interests and to separate the vital from the desirable and the core from the periphery (Filippidou, 2020).

There is a distinction between physical space and psychological space. The former is measured in kilometres, while the latter refers to space, as experienced by people. This however, introduces the element of symbolism, and subjectivity, which in its turn adds to the complexity of dealing with a lasting crisis effectively. As Welwood argues, 'psychological space is not readily measurable by any of the sense data or yardsticks but nevertheless it is clearly experienceable (1977, 97). Therefore, geopolitics is as much a cultural construct, as it is a physical environment. Borders constitute manmade constructions which emphasise the 'us VS them' and make the 'other side' obscure, which, in its turn, may lead to lack of understanding, misunderstanding and fear. The proximity or distance people are from a threat, is not only measured by geography but also by all of the intervening factors and forces that expand or contract (Filippidou, 2020). Thus, distance entails a clearly physical and deeply psychological element and these are interconnected. The physical space can impose its strains on power projection but at the same time it is not always possible to separate psychologically people from land.

The sea constitutes a very porous border, which makes it not just an obstacle, but also a bridge and a facilitator for mass movement of people. On the one hand the sea has been used as a bridge to obliterate physical boundaries, giving a global dimension to national security, but on the other it has been used as a wall between countries. Movement of population by land is naturally accessible, while the movement by sea is impossible without technology and human-made means and enablers that operate in a multi-faceted foreign domain. Therefore, the chapter's examples highlight the greater complexity of forced cross border population movement in a maritime environment. As states above, the maritime space has the dual role of a barrier or a passage, but this depends on the intentions and capabilities of those who would cross it, the power of opposition, and the intensity of clashing wills (Filippidou, 2020). The recent crises of refugee movement in the Mediterranean proved once more that geography is a hard fact of life and not just a political state of mind that can be altered, even though it can try and alter perception and become a hopeless hope for those in an impasse. For Hegel (2001) 'the sea gives us the idea of the indefinite, the unlimited, and infinite; and in feeling his own infinite in that Infinite, man is stimulated and emboldened to stretch beyond the limited…the land attaches him to the soil; it involves him in an infinite multitude of dependencies, but the sea carries him out beyond these limited circles of thought and action'. The paradox however, as Hegel admits, is that for this idea of unlimited and infinite, humans risk both life and property to attain it. In this sense, the means are the very opposite to that which they aim for.

The constantly changing relationship between technology, territory, and human agency means that spatial barriers do not always constitute an exact match of their physical size. Distance is linked to the interaction between space, human agency and capacity. Even though the sea can act as a barrier, this is not permanently fixed as human agency intervenes to alter the spaces that divide or unite polities. Niall Ferguson (2011) argues that human agency is over structure, in the sense that political choices matter more than geography, and that polities can succeed through good political choice – and vice versa – wherever they are. Hence, barriers can be expanded or contracted depending on the role of human agency and its impact on the physical and psychological space. Although geography unleashed possibilities of development, the latter changed what geography meant (Morris, 2010, 35). The sea is an element of political time, space and energy and it is a facilitator and catalyst for the dynamic shrinking of distance on a large scale, which is linked to the four elements of range of activities, pace of interactions,

intensity of activities, and impact of events. Within this context, space can become an identifier, an opportunity and a medium. All three however, are contextual and as such can be used in an either positive or negative way.

In light of the above discussion, in refugee crises and their weaponisation the elements of scale, impact, and process have a prominent role. The first two can be more subjective and more difficult to resolve between conflicting parties. Impact for instance - perceived or real - is linked to symbolism. Territory, identity, culture and narratives are intrinsically linked and empirically it is very difficult, if not impossible to effectively deal with the symbolic dimensions of territory (Filippidou, 2020). Mass and urgent demographic changes affect the equilibrium between minority and majority populations and the balancing between territory and demography is rarely achieved without intensifying the existent crises. The third element, the process, is more tangible but still, not necessarily easier to prove, as the refugee diplomacy highlights.

Utopia: the additional category

Historically, refugees have been sacrificed at the altar of diplomatic realpolitik and political transactions. Thus, in addition to the categories of state-sending, state-receiving, and transit, the chapter introduces a further category that puts at the epicentre the refugees. This classification is the creation of a *utopia* for the refugees, but the word here is meant in its literal meaning and etymology of *οὐ τόπος*, that is no place. The sea becomes the utopia, but not the perfection but the 'no place' for the refugees either at the present time of crossing the sea or for the future. However, as the place that cannot be found anywhere it also cannot have borders and limits, and as Hegel (1975) argues 'to be aware of limitations is already to be beyond them'. Ricœur (1986, 310) advocates that the positive function of utopia consists from the exploration of the possible, while Bloch (1986, 223-249) links utopia and hope to an ontology where possibility has priority.

Heterotopias, of other spaces, is a term developed by Foucault (2001) and which in a nutshell refers to worlds within worlds, mirroring and yet distinguishing themselves from what is outside. Heterotopias can also be linked to time. In the sense that heterotopia is also formed according to the way it contracts or expands time. In the persuasive words of Tennesee Williams (2009) 'time is the longest distance between two places'. The different management

and meaning of time leads to a further basic distinction between the permanent citizens of a place and refugees. For the permanent citizens time is defined by the time of work, relaxation and everyday life with a continuous flow. For the refugees the sea crossing and the first arriving point is a place from which they are still trying to escape, it has a temporality as it constitutes a suspended step of their voyage. Time acquires a different meaning for seaborne refugees, as every day may be seen as a new opportunity and it requires a new effort in order to reach the final destination. For refugees time is defined by ship and boat schedules and by when a new opportunity to move on may occur. Therefore, the refugees' first point of arrival becomes a space without a place. For the permanent citizens, that is those who have, they have the luxury to become 'sans papiers', and enjoy the freedom of movement from place to place and from country to country. For the refugees, the have-nots, they are also given the title of 'sans papiers', only this time with the pejorative connotation of the *οὐ τόπος* – no place for them, either to stay or to travel.

The Limits of Immediate and Short-Term Solutions

The weaponisation of refugees is facilitated and enhanced by the fact that the emphasis is on conflict termination instead of conflict resolution and reconciliation. The European Union's (EU) reaction to the refugee crises from its Operation *Mare Nostrum* which ended in November 2014, to the Frontex Operation *Triton* which ended in February 2018, to Operation *Sophia* which ended in March 2020, to the ongoing Frontex Operations *Themis*, *Poseidon*, and *Indalo* covering the central, eastern, and western Mediterranean respectively, provide continuous examples of the primarily securitization approach to seaborne refugees (Frontex, 2021). Namely, refugees are handled as a security concern which has to be countered mainly by military logic and means. Past missions stopped being supported by the EU, apparently due to the lack of resources, but more likely because these missions were considered to have created a 'pull-factor' for refugees. Clearly the navy has a significant role to play in this crisis, however on its own it is not sufficient to deal with a predominantly political and complex problem. Although control and border defence operations adopt on their websites a humanitarian rhetoric, their main function is to deter refugee flows and to search, rescue and return interdicted migrants (Bellezza and Calandrino, 2017). Thus, the reason why these operations are set up and how they are used make them part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

Moreover, the initial reaction of the EU to the influx of refugees towards Europe was for once more to act surprised. Given the context and the ongoing conflicts in the Mediterranean, the refugee influx was predictable, but the catastrophe and cost of human life was not inevitable. Chronically, the dominant approaches and policies towards refugees seem to be a repetition of Pirandello's adaptation of 'Tonight we Improvise'. It was easily predictable for instance, that Greece owing to its geography on the one hand and the lack of means and mechanisms on the other, would become an ideal bridge for the seaborne refugees coming towards Europe through Turkey and not only. By reconceptualising seaborne refugees as persons in distress, European countries in accordance with the EU, are extending their sovereignty beyond traditional territorial limits at sea using search and rescue regions (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2008). The creation of these spaces by the International Maritime Organization, requires the contracting states to organise and render assistance to ships in distress at sea (Pugh, 2004). The lack of legal consensus on terms like 'distress', 'rescue', and 'place of safety', allows the EU a wide discretion to interdict refugee boats inside these spaces. Supplements to the Schengen Borders Code, which define operational rules for Frontex during search and rescue, allow member states to board, stop, redirect or even seize ships suspected of carrying 'irregular migrants'. These same rules give priority to disembarkation of all boats in the third state from which the ship originated (The Council of the European Union, 2010, articles 2 and 2.1).

The refugees and the host communities can use their space to build a shared and an opposing identity at the same time. The shared identity is predominantly between the minority community and the Metropolis, while the divergent identity is primarily between the minority community and the host country. This makes an identity contextual, which means in times of peace the divergent identities can co-exist, while in times of crises the differences are highlighted, leading to conflict. Regarding refugee arrivals, the EU has adopted systematically the politics of externalisation of asylum to so-called safe third countries, which however are often characterized by a structural lack of protection and lack of hosting resources and systems. Within the logic of 'out of sight, out of mind', the EU chooses to reward refugee-receiving states for acting as buffer zones against refugees reaching the core of Europe. An additional aim of this externalisation process is to deter 'asylum shopping' by stopping the refugee influx in Southern European countries, which however are stressed by deep and prolonged economic crises and where the welfare state is weak. Still, as the examples discussed earlier in the chapter indicate, the receiving and sponsoring countries from their own perspective aim to turn a crisis into an opportunity to their personal benefit. The examples highlight how refugees have

become a source of revenue or political gain for certain countries, given Western states' tendency to offer funding in order to outsource refugee problems (see Loescher, 1996). However, in already financially crippled countries the idea of turning the hosting of refugees into an economic and political opportunity is based on the need for a protracted nature of the crisis, with all the dire consequences this has. In addition, the weaponisation of refugees and the exploitation of refugees as negotiating chips has also led to misplaced competition between refugee-receiving countries. Characteristically, a Jordanian official in an interview stated that 'we should have blackmailed the EU like Turkey did' (Arar, 2017).

On the whole, the different parties involved in refugee crises at the very best have focused on short term solutions, and even over the years they have emphasised conflict termination instead of conflict resolution. Within the context of urgency and high volatility the focus on conflict termination may seem more realistic, but given the impact and scale of the problem, this approach fails to even provide a viable solution in the short term let alone a lasting resolution to the crises. Last-minute short-termism in combination with realpolitik and self-interests can lead to an apparent termination of the refugee crises, which fall well short of a lasting solution and the effective tackling of the crisis. Even more, refugee diplomacy demonstrates that key national and international actors do not really care about solutions, but how to use the refugees as pawns to the service of their self-interests. For decision makers who focus on crisis termination their argument is rooted in utilitarianism; while those in opposition come from a more deontological and humanitarian approach. These two diametrically opposed philosophies have long battled for pre-eminence among policymakers. As Krauss and Lacey posit (2002, 73) 'the utilitarian views the humanitarian as intent upon shattering the national defence, while the humanitarian sees the utilitarian as unconcerned with the killing of innocent civilians.' Within this context, for utilitarians the immediate and short term approaches are a necessary evil, whereas for the humanitarians short-termism creates or perpetuates the evil. For the utilitarian approach the ultimate value and strength of crisis termination and short-termism is dependent upon its rigorous testing against reality. However, as the refugee crisis is nothing new, one way or another these approaches expose the lack of preparation and actually the lack of will to be prepared and plan to deal with seaborne refugees humanely and effectively.

Conclusion

The chapter focuses on refugee diplomacy, and has examined the relationship between space and seaborne population mobility, and the use of refugees as negotiating cards to promote national interests. The sea can be used as a barrier or a bridge between peoples and it affects the mentality, *modus operandi*, and the culture of the different people living on its coast. The refugee crises highlight that for once more state interests are prioritised over human rights and needs. Certain states may engage solely either in emigration, or immigration, or transit diplomacy policies, while others are able and prepared to employ simultaneously multiple policies towards different actors, which add to the complexity of dealing effectively and efficiently with refugee diplomacy.

The issue with refugees is not just their rising numbers, but also how they are categorised. The current perception of refugees is significantly different from what it was during the Cold War, when the political climate worked in favour of refugee resettlement, as the political context made Western governments and the people more compassionate towards refugees. The acceptance of the seaborne refugees as a shared problem which necessitates shared responsibilities and solutions and a shift towards positive-sum perspectives would provide long-sighted and viable solutions. Linking issues can help balance the asymmetry between receiving and sponsoring countries. In Betts' words 'in the absence of altruistic commitment by Northern states to support refugees in the South, issue-linkage has been integral in achieving international cooperation on refugees' (Betts, 2009). Universally, a robust and consistent national and international seaborne refugee policy remains either under the limited category of the intended or under the limitless category of the unsought. Seaborne refugees are portrayed either with low agency, as victims of trafficking and war, or with high agency, capable of threatening social stability and the security of states. The chapter highlights the need for a critical analysis of the effects of securitization and weaponisation approaches towards refugees, and the need for a reconceptualization of the refugees not as products of push and pull-mechanisms, but as human beings seeking better lives.

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The weaponisation of the Eastern Mediterranean: refugees as the Trojan horse for diplomatic bargaining

Filippidou, Anastasia

2022-10-28
Taylor & Francis
https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003298984-12
Filippidou A (2022) Chapter 9: the weaponisation of the Eastern Mediterranean: refugees as the Trojan horse for diplomatic bargaining. In: Power and the maritime domain: a global dialogue, London: Routledge, October 2022, pp 129-143

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