



2016-2017 Research Package

Topic 2

THBT states should be allowed to pay other states to relocate and settle refugees



Overview

The UN estimates that there are currently 65.3 million refugees, more than at any other point in history, including after the Second World War. In addition to the millions displaced by violence in Syria and Iraq, there are active refugee crises in East Africa, Afghanistan, and Southeast Asia. The incredible number of refugees has strained the capacity and will of developed countries to provide asylum.

The topic for debate proposes a new system for providing sanctuary, wherein developed countries pay less developed countries to resettle and naturalize refugees. Debaters should discuss whether this will benefit refugees, their new countries, and the developed countries who are subsidizing their resettlement.

Model

As part of defining what exactly is meant by this motion, debaters are highly encouraged to provide a model, or plan, for how they would implement the proposed policy. The model should accomplish two things: first, it should clarify how paying countries to resettle refugees would work in practice; and second, it should provide mechanisms by which to mitigate possible abuses of the policy.

Note that the wording of this resolution heavily implies that payments to countries who take in refugees will be more than merely compensatory. Proposition teams are expected to construct a model that provides some additional profit incentive for developing countries to resettle refugees.

Questions to consider for the model:

- Which countries would be doing the paying?
- Which countries would be eligible to receive payment?
- Who would be eligible for resettlement?
- How much money would countries make for receiving refugees?
- Over what period of time would the money be paid?
- How can we ensure that refugees will be treated well in their new countries?



Key Issues

1) Who counts as a refugee? Why are there so many?

- a. The term refugee is applied to those who leave their country of origin primarily due to concerns about political violence. Most commonly, the violence is related to a civil war or to the active persecution of a minority group to which the refugee belongs.
- b. Refugee status is determined by individual countries and by the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). [UNHCR Status Determination](#)
- c. The record high number of refugees currently is related to civil war in Syria, political unrest in East Africa, the aftermath of war in Afghanistan, and the persecution of ethnic minorities in Burma/Myanmar, among other causes.



2) Do countries have a moral obligation to help refugees?

- a. The principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits countries from sending refugees back to their countries of origin, is considered a bedrock of international law. Non-refoulement is considered a peremptory norm, which means its prohibition is considered on par with the prohibitions of genocide, piracy, slavery, torture, and wars of aggression.
- b. Developed countries have responded to their moral obligation to refugees by providing asylum to some and providing aid to those who live in temporary refugee camps.
- c. There are interesting arguments about how discharging a moral duty through money changes perceptions of the moral duty itself, which may in the long run reduce the imperative to act.

[The Moral Limits of Markets by Michael J Sandel](#)



3) Would paying countries to resettle refugees improve the lives of refugees?

- a. It is much cheaper to resettle a refugee in a developing country than in a developed one, largely due to the comparative costs of providing minimum social services.
- b. Refugees may be resettled in developing countries with more cultural, religious, and linguistic similarities to the refugees' home countries. (e.g. resettling people from Syria in Jordan)
- c. In the absence of permanent resettlement, many refugees live in large refugee camps under abhorrent conditions and with few legal protections. Being resettled would likely include the ability to work legally, access social services, and have greater access to the justice system.
- d. Large immigrant populations tend to experience discrimination and ostracism in their new countries, whether those countries are developed or developing. Developed countries tend to have greater legal protections for new migrants and stronger social prohibitions against racism and xenophobia.
- e. Most refugees would like to return home once it is safe to do so. It is unclear how able they would be to repatriate after they have been resettled in a new country.



4) What might go wrong?

- a. Providing a profit incentive to resettle refugees may cause developing countries to overstate their ability to house, care for, and integrate migrants in the hopes of receiving more money.
- b. Developing countries frequently have greater problems with corruption in government than developed countries.
- c. Large influxes of migrants can strain the provision of social services, like education, healthcare, sanitation, and justice. This effect is increased in countries that already struggle to provide those services.

Key Examples:

- 1) [Syrian Civil War & European Migrant Crisis](#)
- 2) [Rohingya](#)
- 3) [Sudan & Eritrea](#)
- 4) [Cuba \(1980\)](#)
- 5) [Vietnam \(1975\)](#)
- 6) [Jewish \(1933-1972\)](#)

This topic was used for the Grand Finals of the 2016 World Schools Debating Championship, in which Canada lost to England. Debaters are encouraged to watch the round, but should take care to do their own research and create their own arguments: [YouTube Video of Grand Finals](#)