

## The European Refugee Crisis: forecasting for 2018

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The refugee crisis in Europe, and more generally, the movement of people throughout the world, is becoming one of the century's main questions. It will not be resolved if deciders, public opinion and NGOs do not project themselves to anticipate the developments to come. Michel Maietta attempts to forecast these developments in the following article, reporting on research from IARAN, a new network of analysts working from Yangon to Dakar and covering five major regions of the globe.

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Wondering about the issues linked to the refugee crisis by 2018 is obviously not a divinatory exercise. Starting from the premise that the future is not measurable, and that we cannot predict it with accuracy, the Inter-Agency Regional Analysts Network (IARAN)'s process consists of preparing for it through the exploration of possible scenarios. Such an approach consists in understanding what might *occur* in order to preempt the impact. It is a matter, in a way, of confiscating the future to better anticipate it and to bring to it a pro-active and adapted response.

### A Pre-Emptive Vision of the Future

This vision is at the centre of the IARAN method. Carried by the Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS) and Action Contre la Faim (ACF), the initiative aims to accompany changes in the humanitarian sector by contributing to help decision makers evolve from tactical to strategic positions. This approach may seem ambitious, but its only objective is to move humanitarian action away from simple reaction, and to enable professionals to become real architects of change, capable of bringing a pro-active response to crises that are still evolving. To operate this shift, IARAN came up with a tool to investigate the future, adapted to the specificities of the sector<sup>1</sup>. Applied to a concrete issue, this method becomes a powerful tool for strategic program-ming, to overcome the URD continuum<sup>2</sup> contradictions, and to reinforce the resilience of people in situations of potential vulnerability through anticipation. The present summary of the IARAN study<sup>3</sup>, dedicated to a search for the response to the European refugee crisis by 2018, provides an overview of the products of that network and the potential of this method to feed the strategic programming for humanitarian NGOs.

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<sup>1</sup> IARAN's specific method was elaborated using different approaches from the strategic perspective, from futurology and from structural analysis techniques. It is in the same line as work carried out by Michel Godet (*Prospective et planification stratégique*, Economica, 1985 and *Manuel de prospective stratégique* (2 tomes), Tome 1 *L'indiscipline intellectuelle*, Tome 2 *L'art et la méthode*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Dunod, 2007), and by the Futuribles cabinet.

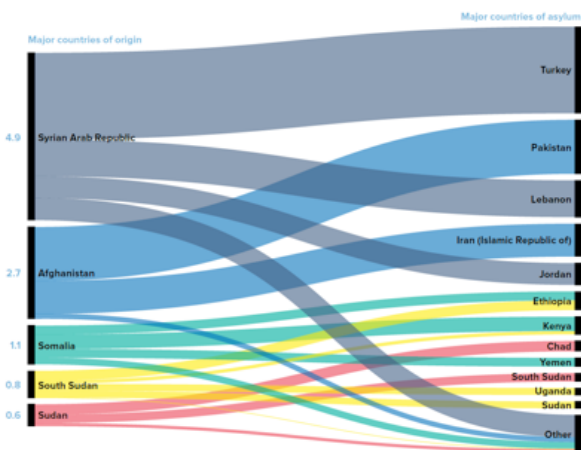
<sup>2</sup> Urgency-Rehabilitation-Development. The relationship between relief and development regularly gives rise to methodological problems, which integrated approaches are not necessarily equipped to resolve. The nature of humanitarian and development cooperation programmes have outcomes which differ from their objectives. Nevertheless, the two approaches must coexist in many areas of intervention, particularly in the case of protracted conflicts. The complexification of crises also requires actors to develop new methodological frameworks which can reconcile these two approaches.

<sup>3</sup> Inter-Agency Regional Analysts Network, *Responding to the Migrants Crisis. Europe at a juncture*, IARAN/ACF/IRIS, Global Report, June 2016, <http://www.iris-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/RAN-Responding-to-the-Migrant-Crisis-FINAL.pdf>

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### June 2016: the state of the European refugee crisis

On June 20<sup>th</sup> 2016, World Refugee Day, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) published its yearly report on global trends recorded in 2015. It emphasised that population displacements have reached a record high. At the end of 2015, displaced people throughout the world numbered 65.3 million, which represents a 50% increase compared to 2011, and 41% of these were in situations of protracted displacement, the average length of which was 26 years<sup>4</sup>.



© UNHCR Report, Global trends 2015, p. 21

Since 2014, the “European refugee crisis” has been at the centre of public attention and has become a priority in the political agendas of all member States. It is not a question here of discussing the will and means put in place to manage it. Whilst the Eurocentrism of the question does mask the real magnitude of the migratory phenomenon on a global scale, and principally the fact that the majority of flows take place between developing countries, it cannot be denied that the pressure of migration on the European continent is without precedent today - as evidenced by Turkey, which became the leading host

country for refugees, a title held for over a decade by Pakistan. The number of displaced persons in Europe is at its highest since the Second World War. Since 2015, more than 1,224,000 migrants have arrived in Europe, the majority of them fleeing conflicts in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan. Yet the underlying causes of their displacements do not differ from those of other migrants and refer to four main factors:

- the insecurity induced and multiplied by the armed intervention of non-state actors;
- the incapacity of governments to ensure economic development and satisfy fundamental needs;
- natural disasters whose effects are exacerbated by a lack of resilience;
- political repression and authoritarianism.

To get to Europe, people essentially take three transit routes, each dangerous in varying degrees according to the nationality of the migrants<sup>5</sup>:

- the eastern Mediterranean: from the Turkish coast to Germany via Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia and Austria;
- the western Balkan route: from the Turkish-Bulgarian or Greek-Turkish border to Hungary *via* the western Balkan countries;
- the central Mediterranean: from Libya to Italy or Malta by sea.

These transit routes lead to complex issues in the management of the stream of migrants for the countries which they cross through. States like Italy, Macedonia or Hungary are confronted with

<sup>4</sup> UNCHR *Global Trends Report. Forced Displacement in 2015*, UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/country/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

<sup>5</sup> See the map reproduced in Barbara Tasch and Mike Nudelman, “This map shows how much the refugee crisis is dividing Europe”, *Business Insider UK*, March 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, <http://uk.businessinsider.com/map-refugees-europe-migrants-2016-2>

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the management of overwhelmed, ill-adapted reception centres and the proliferation of mafia networks specialised in human trafficking. On a European-wide scale, lack of coordination in the response worsens security conditions and reduces access for potential beneficiaries of aid, at the level of the riskiest border-crossings. These phenomena were amplified following the land and sea border reinforcement decreed after the suspension of the Schengen agreement<sup>6</sup>.

### **The main factors powering the refugee crisis in Europe**

In an unfavourable socio-economic context, the refugee crisis currently affecting Europe is reinforced by political, legal and cultural dynamics which accentuate the problematic aspects inherent to the migratory phenomenon.

Since 2010, extreme-right parties from EU member countries have progressed, drawing on nationalist and Euro-phobic rhetoric and stigmatising immigration policy and austerity measures<sup>7</sup>. This progression is even more pronounced in countries hosting a significant contingent of asylum seekers, such as Austria, Germany or Sweden. In the extremist rhetoric, the migratory phenomenon is stigmatised as a direct security threat, and fighting against it gives rise to the dual imperative aiming to preserve national interests (economic concerns) and national integrity (concern for identity). The resonance of this racist rhetoric will have a strong influence on the future management of the EU.

The lack of coordination in border management offers an appearance of anarchy. In response, affected countries seek to regain control, heavy security measures having been put in place along the borders of the Balkan countries. Yet the creation of these new obstacles does nothing to reduce the flow, it only redirects it towards new, more dangerous routes.

From a legal point of view, the EU is struggling to put in place the reception centres for asylum seekers which are required by international law. In 2015, it also established an open list of “safe” countries of origin, allowing for facilitated expulsion of refugees in the case of excess pressure from migratory influxes.

Iniquity in the distribution of migrants amongst European countries also acted as a catalyst for the crisis. In 2015, the EU was faced with more than 2 million asylum seekers. In the same year, it agreed to reassign 160,000 refugees between different states over a period of two years. In June, there had only been 1,500 relocations, barely 1% of the initial goal. Faced with these significant imbalances, the logic of quotas remains very controversial, and quite easily, in countries such as Poland, Slovakia or Spain, which specifically refuse to accept refugees.

### **Scenarios for 2018**

The four following scenarios sketch the *possible* developments of the European refugee crisis by 2018. None of them pretend to be prophetic, but each seeks to explore possible futures based on an analysis of the system’s main dynamics and key uncertainties. Despite their diversity, these factors can be organised according to a matrix which articulates levels of coordination and containment of the European States faced with the flow of migrants. This research has therefore

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<sup>6</sup> Since September 2015, a number of EU countries have reestablished border identity checks in an attempt to stem the flow of migrants (Italy, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia...).

<sup>7</sup> See Gregor Aisch, Adam Pearce and Bryant Rousseau, “How Far Is Europe Swinging to the Right?”, *The New York Times*, July 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/05/22/world/europe/europe-right-wing-austria-hungary.html?\\_r=3](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/05/22/world/europe/europe-right-wing-austria-hungary.html?_r=3)

allowed us to construct these four scenarios of possible developments in the refugee crisis by June 2018.

### **European Discord: weak coordination/strong containment**

In this first scenario, the EU has difficulties developing an integral and coordinated response, which becomes unpredictable and relatively inefficient as a result. Divided between European security concerns and the humanitarian imperative, the acceptance of migrants varies enormously, strongly affected by changes in public opinion and different elections.

#### *Defining characteristics of this scenario*

- On a global scale, the number of refugees in situations of protracted displacement remains greater than 10 million.
- A slight decrease in protracted conflicts engenders a stabilisation of the flow of migrants towards Europe.
- An increase in international funding for bilateral agreements only allows for the implementation of short-term solutions.
- Transit countries do not manage to limit passage through their borders and mafia networks continue to proliferate.
- The number of migrants under subsidiary protection<sup>8</sup> plummets in proportion to the number of accepted asylum seekers.
- Security and humanitarian concerns continue to divide states and public opinion.
- Host countries in the Global South become more vigilant: refugee camp inspections and restrictions to movements are imposed.
- In countries peripheral to the EU, migrants are received in increasingly deplorable conditions and develop frustration and violence, leading to a reinforcement of surveillance measures.
- The EU experiences weak economic growth and does not manage to produce a common asylum policy. Reform of the Dublin III Regulation<sup>9</sup> fails. Following Brexit, and encouraged by right-wing parties, other member countries consider leaving the EU. The latter closes in on itself, hoping to keep hold of its member countries.

### **European Fortress: strong coordination/strong containment**

In this second scenario, the EU develops a coordinated approach, but solely on a protectionist basis. It broaches the migratory question almost exclusively from the point of view of security, with-out addressing the underlying causes. Sustainable solutions are not explored. Rhetoric and funding remain centred on strictly European issues.

#### *Defining characteristics of this scenario*

- The majority of migrants arriving in Europe are not technically “new”. They have already been registered in camps in their country of arrival.

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<sup>8</sup> The benefits of subsidiary protection are granted to all persons whose situation does not correspond to the definition of refugee status, but for whom there is serious and recognised reason to believe that they run a real risk in their home countries of undergoing one of the following: the death penalty or execution, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, a serious and individual risk against life or person due to blind violence resulting from internal or international armed conflict (article L.712-1 of CESEDA, Code for Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum (CESEDA)).

<sup>9</sup> European regulation of June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 determining the Member state of the EU responsible for examining an application for asylum by virtue of the article 51 of the 1951 Geneva Conventions relative to the status of refugees.

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- The EU limits financing for direct response. It invests in sustainable solutions, but which are all orientated towards reinforced inspection in transit countries and a militarisation of all borders.
- The obstacles put in place to deter migrants alter their demographic composition: they are now nearly all young men.
- In Europe, the debate on migration is dominated by extreme-right security rhetoric, associating migration, crime and terrorism. In spite of the decrease in arrivals, the EU closes its borders.
- The number of first asylum applications plummets. To speed up the process of redirection, the list of “safe” countries is expanded.
- Refugee camps proliferate on the EU periphery or in countries of origin.
- Life for migrants becomes more complicated in Europe. Social benefits decrease and integration becomes more difficult. The number of voluntary returns increases.
- Clashes between European communities and migrants become more frequent and more violent.

### **Uncontrolled Influx: weak coordination/weak containment**

In this third scenario, transit countries and those in proximity to crises are subjected to so much pressure that they are no longer able to contain the migratory flow. The EU response is not coordinated, which further increases the flow of vulnerable people.

#### *Defining characteristics of this scenario*

- As a result of a series of natural disasters and political problems, living conditions in countries of origin deteriorate, leading to increased displacements.
- Countries in the Global South no longer seek to stop mass departures to the EU. The phenomenon relieves their own societies and engenders human trafficking.
- In Europe, distribution through quotas is never accomplished. Pressure grows in transit countries, leading them to adopt authoritarian measures.
- The Schengen agreement is suspended. Repeated referendums putting into question EU membership weaken its authority. Nationalist parties call for more protectionism.
- NGOs managing the crisis expand thanks to funding allocated by institutional sponsors, and to the weight they carry in public opinion.
- Welfare rights and benefits allocated to migrants are reduced.
- On a global scale, population movement is unprecedented. The situation degenerates into a global crisis.

### **Unified Consensus: strong coordination/weak containment**

In this fourth and last scenario, the weight of public opinion pushes the EU towards a unified approach. A new agreement is ratified, developing sustainable solutions. A real collaboration with countries of first asylum is put in place, allowing for the appropriate management of migrants (admission and relocation).

#### *Defining characteristics of this scenario*

- The deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the death of President Bachir in South Sudan, the alliance of Daesh with armed non-state actors in West Africa, and the destabilisation of Algeria and Libya trigger new waves of migrations.

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- More and more people choose the central Mediterranean route, leading to an increase in migrant mortality.
- Daesh and affiliated groups in Africa use this route to infiltrate European territory and plan terrorist attacks.
- The scope of the problem and public opinion lead to an increase in funding allocated to the struggle against the underlying causes, and to the search for sustainable solutions.
- The United Kingdom's exit from the EU brings about a simplification of decision-making processes. Post-Brexit negotiations are protracted and dissuade other members from leaving the EU.
- The EU goes beyond common asylum policy and adopts an updated Dublin III Regulation, allowing for a fair and efficient distribution of migrants.
- The EU creates a new agreement on population movements and continues to stand by the other host countries in the Global South.
- The progress of Sustainable Development Goals is slowed down due to the global migratory crisis, which becomes the primary humanitarian problem of a whole generation.

### From Forecasting to Action

The EU is at a critical point in the management of its migratory flows. It can be an example by bringing a coordinated and open response, or weaken itself by withdrawing and closing in on itself. If it chooses the second option, it will have to suffer the induced negative consequences.

None of the three usual solutions applied to displacement<sup>10</sup> can be put into place if the flow of migrants towards the EU remains constant. We have to commit treating the deeper causes of the phenomenon. The four possible scenarios for the development of the situation by 2018, as drawn up by IARAN, do not aim to bring a definite response, but some help to deciders to imagine pro-active and efficient solutions based on a forecasting tool adapted to the specificities of the sector.

*Translated from the French by Juliet Powys*

### Biography • Michel Maietta

Head of research at IRIS (Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques), where he directs the Humanitarian and Development department. Michel Maietta is a specialist in the geopolitics of development and issues of international solidarity. He is also the supervisor of IRIS Sup's "Humanitarian Manager" diploma. Having created and developed an Analysis and Strategy unit at Save the Children International, he is at the head of the development of IARAN (Interagency Regional Analysts Network), a consortium created on the initiative of Action Contre la Faim and IRIS, dedicated to strategic intelligence in the humanitarian sector. Michel has significant experience in sectors of humanitarian action and development. He was namely head of mission for Action Contre la Faim, and then regional manager for Solidarités International. From 2008 to 2012, he also developed and ran for Sidaction an innovative programme for capacity reinforcement of organizations fighting HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

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<sup>10</sup> Refugees are generally proposed three lasting solutions: freely consented, secure and dignified repatriation devoid of physical, psychological or material pressure, local integration in the host country (a complex process which must lead to acquiring the host country's nationality), and relocation to a third country, if it is impossible for the refugee to return to his or her country of origin and equally impossible to remain in the host country.

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