

# *International Journal on Responsibility*

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The *International Journal on Responsibility (IJR)* is an international, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary forum for theoretical, practical, and methodological explorations into the various and complex issues of responsibility, animated by the question, “Who or what is responsible to do what for whom?” *IJR* is a broad-ranging journal that incorporates insights from the full range of academic and practical inquiry from the humanities and the social and natural sciences related to addressing the diverse aspects of responsibility.

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The journal accepts submissions on the full range of topics related to responsibility as well as special editions dedicated to one topic. Manuscript submission guidelines for authors appear on the final page of each issue.

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***IJR 5.1 Migration, Community, and Environment During a Pandemic***

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## **Geopolitics of International Migration and evolving complexities due to COVID 19 Pandemic**

**Pooja Sharma<sup>[1]</sup> and Shahab Enam Khan<sup>[2]</sup>**

International Migration has been an evolving phenomenon of economic development of the human race. It has both a cause-and-effect relationship with the process of development since it plays a critical role in economic development. 'It is a global phenomenon that is growing in scope, complexity and impact' (United Nations)<sup>[3]</sup>. The human rights law advocates freedom of movement within the territory of a country and to choose one's residence, the right to leave any country, and the right to return to one's own country (Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted 10 December 1948) UNGA Res 217(A), Art. 13)<sup>[4]</sup>. In addition, several bilateral labor migration agreements ensure state-led cooperation and agreements that are legally binding.

Despite being recognized as a critical aspect of economic development and human rights, international migration has been witnessed as a geopolitical instrument, reflecting many times the preponderance of power, subjugation, or sometimes a repercussion of religious unrest. There are geopolitical implications and questions related to mobility, citizenship, and the nation-state (Allen et al. 2018). The most interesting aspect of the geopolitics of migration is the nature of complexities associated differs across the regions of the world (Collyer, 2016). The formation of the Euro-Mediterranean area is an outcome of migration management strategies. The European policy frameworks have strategically excluded the countries to the South which later evolved and developed into a discourse of partnership emphasizing Euro-Mediterranean character (Collyer, 2016).

The geopolitics of asylum-related migrants either keep these alien asylum populations alive or let them die during the asylum-related journeys (Foucault, 2003). Such asylum-related migrants are highly vulnerable to illness and lack of attention to their illness results in deaths. The influx of people in Turkey before joining the passage to Greece has led to overcrowding. Moreover, the philosophy of othering and not letting these migrants share the same space as EU citizens ultimately witnessed migrants that were alive but not in liveable conditions (Jauhiainen, 2020). Thus, the critical questions related to who is

responsible for the miserable conditions of migrants and the ethical judgment that who should take responsibility are some emerging concerns. Several state and non-state actors have extended their concerns but all the stakeholders responded as passive observers and witnesses. No legal or formal institution has been developed to address the concerns of their deteriorating situation.

With the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, the prevailing economic inequalities have been aggravated (Buffel et al., 2021). Several people have become jobless leading to a detrimental impact on all sectors owing to vulnerabilities in governance and economies (Yong, 2020). In addition, democratic rights are extremely compromised and damaged, restricting mobility to reduce the spread of the disease (Cheibub and Przeworski, 2020). Given such a situation, the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic can be viewed as an unexpected external agent or a factor that can determine the management and regulation of the state of migrants belonging to the borders of the European Union. The situation could have served as a great opportunity to strengthen the people who do not belong to the state and are neglected and utilized to foster one's state and threaten the states of others (Jauhiainen, 2020).

Another interesting impact of the COVID 19 pandemic was that it exposed several prevailing issues between Romania and European Union (Cretan and Light, 2020). A large number of transnational migrant workers had returned to Romania at the beginning of the pandemic while at the same time another set of people migrated from Romania to European countries owing to increasing demand for low-paid agriculture and social care work in western European countries. Further, the internal tensions related to the marginalized Roma community fuelled the emerging crises of migrants (Cretan and Light, 2020). Consequently, Romania will suffer long term serious consequences in the context of the state of migration and the associated vulnerabilities due to geopolitics of migrants between Romania and the European union

The pandemic has exposed the health vulnerabilities of the community, emphasizing the extent of health inequalities and economic vulnerabilities (Thandi, 2021). Such health vulnerabilities during COVID 19 pandemic have brought out ill-being, leading to a disproportionate number of deaths among the Indian diaspora in the USA and UK. This is specifically when the USA is the hardest-hit country globally and the UK at number two and worst affected country in Europe.

Another significant movement referred to as 'Asian -phobia' in Italy and Jiang's silent protest were geopolitical gestures to challenge the racist notion of Asian-ness as a signifier for disease and contagion

(Mostafanezhad and Sin, 2020). Such events signify the emerging geopolitical anxieties related to geopolitical narratives and practices. The historically rooted and place-based geopolitical narratives have taken a centre stage during the COVID 19 pandemic. In the context of Southeast Asia, the prevailing political and economic linkages have determined the response of the COVID 19 pandemic, specifically in the case of Cambodia and Myanmar and in turn their relations with China (Grundy-Warr and Lin, 2020).

Khan and Sharma (2020) contended that misinformation and fake news related to COVID 19 became a critical factor in responding to the crises of health catastrophe in the region of South Asia. The COVID 19 pandemic has placed human security at the center stage of all political, economic, and international agendas. It has challenged institutional and political regimes, threatening multilateral and bilateral cooperation at various levels such as trade, investment, and migration (Khan and Sharma, 2020). Bangladesh is expected to remain as a centerpiece of US engagement in the Indo-Pacific, the post-COVID 19 Bangladesh will require the US and its other allies to do more to advance the common interests of peace and stability in the Bay of Bengal region (Khan, 2020).

In addition to the geopolitical impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, the genesis of the COVID 19 pandemic pertains to the heart of globalization, embarking on free mobility of people across countries. It is this essence of free mobility that leads to the evolution of the community and environment. However, the COVID-19 health catastrophe has exposed all the countries to altogether new challenges. Firstly, the spread of the disease itself was immensely guided by the high frequency of mobility across nations. Secondly, the world experienced substantially diverse repercussions not only across countries but also within the region. These two testimonies administer the bottom line of the ongoing transformation and challenges related to migration, community, and environment. Such evolving dynamics between migration, community, and environment demands immediate attention. Against this backdrop, the issue of responsibility needs to be addressed to ensure equality, justice, and human rights. Consequently, the entire discourse of ethical issues of responsibility is provoked. It ranges from an academic and practical inquiry from humanities, social, and natural science, addressing diverse aspects of responsibility. It is imperative to explore some of the critical questions such as who or what is responsible for doing what for whom?

The present outbreak of pandemic has further affirmed health security as a fundamental cause of internal migration, referred to as the “severe crisis of mobility” of migrant laborers. This unique challenge of Internal labor migration was observed mainly in developing countries of South Asia. A substantial

proportion of such migrant workers are seasonal migrants (Keshri and Bhagat, 2013). The prevailing inequality across the regions coupled with political economy remains the driving force for spurring informal sector migration. Like any other migration, there exists an inherent interlinkage between the phenomena of migration, community, and environment.

Apart from typical causes of migration such as economic crises, political oppression, violence, internal conflicts, etc., globalization has emerged as a phenomenal cause for increased mobility of people across the globe (Akokpari, 2000). Migrants are not only the product of globalization but also the key drivers or instruments of international relations and geopolitics. Collyer (2006) develops a critical security approach that combines the security with the constructivist approach to unfold the recent developments in the attitudes to migrants and migration in Europe.

One can view the migration process as an outcome of the unequal endowment of natural resources as well as the socio-political environment. Environmental sustainability entails a world that is devoid of war, insecurity, and unrest. Besides, it implies less pollution, fewer emissions, and waste accumulation. Several state and non-state actors such as civil society, local representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have contributed immensely in resolving issues related to internal migration, migration laws, human rights, etc. An intervention of the constructive programs initiated by such actors holds significant influence on migration policies, human rights, and governance. It is these constructive programs that unfold all challenges and advocate responsibility in the processes related to governance.

Against this backdrop, this special issue is dedicated to appraising not only the causes of migration but also delving into the implicit interlinkages between migration, community, and environment. This special issue will explore the underlying objective of exploring the implicit impact of migration on the community and environment. The submissions (empirical, conceptual, case studies-based research, review articles) concerning the various multidisciplinary domain of migration are invited for contribution to this special issue. All research articles presenting the upcoming discourse on the responsibility dimension, emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic are invited. The discourse on responsibility can revolve around the following sub-themes.

Beginning from the Geopolitical complexities of migration aggravated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the special issue continues the discussion on the historical and political perspective of migration with special reference to India and Bangladesh political framework and its evolution. Maintaining the

continuity of discussion, the political and geopolitical underpinnings in European regions are discussed in the next articles. Critically examining the COVID 19 policies and their impact on the European region, the articles emphasize the role of Civil society in the European region. Evolving the discourse on migration to the next level of analysis related to the psychological impact of migration, the articles address the psychological well-being of migrants and trauma-related challenges. The strategies for mitigating the psychological impact of migration and the role of culture and traditions in the phenomenon are emphasized in the articles. Finally, the articles take forward the much-needed discussion on development discourse, interlinking the internal migration, economic inequality, and COVID-19 pandemic. In the end, a most sustainable Gandhian model is proposed that mitigates the ecological footprint associated with migration by adopting resilience, tolerance, and non-violence.

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[4] <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

## **Contextualizing Migration: An Historical and Political Perspectives of the India-Bangladesh Land Swap Deal of 2015**

**Mohammad Golam Rabbani**<sup>[\*]</sup>

### **Abstract**

The land swap deal between India and Bangladesh was, indeed, a great deal concerning land boundary management in particular and bilateral relations in general. India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km land boundary; and disputes over this long boundary, namely un-demarcated boundary, adverse possessions and enclaves started from the very beginning which Bangladesh had inherited from Pakistan. However, to resolve the land boundary disputes, the governments of India and Bangladesh signed the Land Boundary Agreement in 1974. Subsequently, Bangladesh had ratified the agreement and carried out its task within a few months. In contrast, the agreement was remained unimplemented by India for 41 years (1974-2015). Eventually, after a lot of bilateral deliberations, India found a way to implement the agreement in 2015. It is remarkable that the resolution of the land boundary conflicts, as well as the territorial readjustments through practical, give and take (i.e. exchange of enclaves and adverse possessions) has created more unified territories both for India and Bangladesh. Against this backdrop, the present article sheds light on the historical and political perspectives of the Indo-Bangladesh land swap deal and, thereby, underscores the key factors behind this final deal. Finally, it discusses the repercussions of migration and the issue of individuals trapped in enclaves. It is the responsibility of both governments to resolve the issue urgently amid the COVID 19 pandemic attack.

**Keywords:** Land swap deal, land boundary disputes, land boundary agreement, India-Bangladesh border, borderland people, enclaves, Indo-Bangladesh relationship

### **Introduction**

India and Bangladesh are in a close tie, based on geographical vicinity, common natural resources, socio-economic structure as well as shared history and culture. In the first place, Bangladesh and the adjacent states of India (West Bengal, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Tripura, Assam and Mizoram) have developed 'as one economy' from time immemorial, which was ridiculously divided during the partition of 1947, leaving

them mutually dependent. For all these reasons, the 'linguistic and cultural affinity and sense of oneness' (Mohammed, 2005, p. 3) between the Indian states mentioned above and Bangladesh continue till today. However, India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km land boundary, out of which 180 km is riverine, and 6.1 km was un-demarcated till 2015. The waterways across the 180 km border often with multiple branches have resorted this border to a complex and sensitive one. Since rivers change their course frequently, this border, in some locations, is highly floating and volatile. These unpredictable bordering rivers between India and Bangladesh very often, by altering their directions or by corroding land on one side, push the peripheral lands across the border. The Muhuri river, for instance, has created a tiny *char* land by corroding land which has been the bone of contention between India and Bangladesh for so many years.

The land boundary conflicts between India and Bangladesh were indeed inborn which Bangladesh had inherited from Pakistan with root causes in the Award of the Boundary Commission headed by Cyril Radcliffe (1947). Thereupon, disputes arose between India and Pakistan regarding some areas, some of which were the subject of the Bagge Awards of 1950. The rest of the disputes were resolved in the so-called Nehru-Noon Agreement of 1958. For the execution of the Nehru-Noon Agreement, the Constitution Ninth Amendment Act and Acquired Territories (Merger) Act were also adopted by the Indian Government in 1960. Despite that, the West Bengal Legislative Assembly (*Vidhan Sabha*) was firmly opposed to the agreement. The Agreement was also challenged in the court by several writ petitions. Therefore, the Indian government could not initiate the implementation process of the agreement. Eventually, the Supreme Court of India came up with a decision on 29 March 1971 which had cleared the way for the implementation of the agreement. Even so, the agreement could not be implemented evidently because of the ongoing Liberation War of Bangladesh. Subsequently, the unaccomplished Nehru-Noon Agreement was replaced by the Land Boundary Agreement of 1974 (henceforth LBA) between India and Bangladesh. Ironically, this agreement was also hanged for 41 years (1974-2015).

The hang-up of the LBA had been the source of escalating tension between India and Bangladesh for all the years. Though the governments of these two countries frequently described their relations as of great companionship, in reality, the lack of confidence in each other has been manifested at least in the case of border management. Schendel (2005, p. 297) remarked: 'Even though heads of government, in public statements, could grow lyrical about the warm relations and eternal friendship between their country and its neighbours, realities at the border told a very different story. The borderland fluctuated between tension and outright confrontation, and interstate relations at the border have always been marked by strain, suspicion and suspense. It is to be noted that, the adverse possessions had been flashpoints between India and Bangladesh intensifying the tensions along the border (Ministry of External Affairs [MEA], Government of India 2015, p. 16). Eventually, after a lot of bilateral deliberations, vis-à-vis political

confrontations at national levels in both countries the governments of India and Bangladesh found a way to implement the LBA in 2015.

### **India-Pakistan Land Boundary Disputes, 1947-71**

Borrowing from Benedict Anderson's (2006) idea, as he writes in *Imagined Communities*, it could be surmised that the emergence of the India-Pakistan border in 1947 was though de-colonial the border was colonially determined, and the outstanding disputes over this border were rooted into the award of the Boundary Commission. However, in the process of partition in 1947, the then Governor-General of India, Mountbatten's formula was to divide India but retain maximum unity. It was a huge task and was assigned to the Boundary Commission, headed by Sir Cyril Radcliffe.<sup>[2]</sup> It is pertinent to note that the Radcliffe Commission determined the boundary only based on old district maps without any field survey. Moreover, the guide maps at Radcliffe's hand were 'imperfect and out-of-date' and never situated in the greater, stable geographic contest (Rashid, 2002). Thus, in the end, his award pleased no one entirely. Therefore, the premiers of both East and West Bengal immediately issued a joint statement envisaging readjustments of the boundary (Spate, 1948).

Consequently, the determination of the land boundary ran into many difficulties right from the beginning. In this regard, in reply to a question in the *Lok Sabha* (House of the People) on 9 December 1958, the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru said,

When the internal administrative boundaries also become international frontiers, it makes a difference. One side of a river is sometimes described as the other side. Maps are attached to the description, but they do not tally. Sometimes a river is named, and there is doubt as to which river is mean (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting [MIB], 1964, p. 285).

It is beyond doubt that in the tripartite (Congress, League and the British rulers) politics of the partition, Jinnah's 'two nations theory' had tentatively won the match. But the sub-continental historiography attests that 'despite achieving his dream' Jinnah himself was not pleased with what he had achieved as Pakistan. When the award was made public, Jinnah commented in a radio broadcast:

It is an unjust, incomprehensible and even perverse award. It may be wrong, unjust and perverse; and it may not be judicial but a political award, but we have agreed to abide by it, and it is binding upon us (as quoted in Schendel, 2005, p. 88).

History attests that if common interests and traits are divided into two by nations or states, their commonness creates more competition if not conflict. A similar thing happened to the two parts of Bengal after the partition of 1947. The two governments have forcefully inscribed the unnatural borderline into the landscape. Jones (2011) argued that, perhaps, because of the linguistic, cultural and historical

connections between Bangladesh (erstwhile East Bengal) and the West Bengal, the political border has been substantially strengthened and securitised. Besides, two different nationalisms on two sides of the border were discursively defined by the state elites. In doing so, state elites have been in the continuous practice of making 'self' and 'other' across the India-Bangladesh border. However, in institutionalizing the entirely new land boundary, the governments had adopted some new tools of territorial control, such as border guarding, customs and passport-visa system, and homogenizing the borderland population by ethnic cleansing or removing the minorities from the borderlands. As a whole, both India and Pakistan employed precisely the same strategy (Schendel, 2005). Thus, in the initial stage, the land boundary between India and then East Pakistan was institutionalized through communal violence which victimised those who were fallen on the wrong side of the border and suddenly got the status of 'religious minority'. Subsequently, there were violent expulsions of Hindus from the East Pakistan borderland and Muslims from the Indian borderland.

### **Indira-Mujib Initiatives about the Land Boundary Disputes, 1971-75**

The unsettled border between India and erstwhile East Pakistan became the border between India and Bangladesh. Thus, Bangladesh inherited all the disputes (with India) from Pakistan namely undemarcated land boundary, adverse possessions and enclaves. It is on-topic that a warm relation was built between Bangladesh and India at the outset owing to the generous support from both the government and the people of India towards its Liberation War in 1971. At the government level, the tune of the bilateral relations was set by the two great leaders –Indian Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi and Bangladesh Prime Minister, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Remarkably, Indira Gandhi had played a unique role in drawing the attention of the world leaders to the Pakistan army's onslaught and, thereby, the human tragedy over the then East Pakistan. She had also conveyed worldwide the message of the Bangladesh people's determined struggle for freedom. It is widely held that if one single person other than Bangladeshi had the most significant contribution to the liberation of Bangladesh, it was indisputably Indira Gandhi.

The gratitude of Bangladesh might have been materialised in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace (referred to as Friendship Treaty), signed on 19 March 1972. The treaty was signed in Dhaka during the visit of Indira Gandhi to Bangladesh during 17-19 March 1972. This ever first visit of an Indian Prime Minister to Bangladesh, as well as the ever first visit to Bangladesh by any Head of Government, took place just after three months of the liberation of Bangladesh. Subsequently, the outstanding land boundary issues between these two countries warranted the attention of both governments.

The most arresting part of the Bengal border (Indo-Pakistan border 1947-71 and after that India-Bangladesh border) is that it runs through densely populated agrarian areas and that the borderland

people of both countries cultivate lands till the zero line. But during the Pakistan period, tensions and conflicts prevailed in the India-East Pakistan border which had devastated the lives and livelihoods of the borderland people. Against this backdrop, the governments of Bangladesh and India were prompted to normalise the life and livelihood of the borderland people. Consequently, cross-border trade and economic linkages among the borderland people were restored under the Trade Agreement of 1972.<sup>[9]</sup>

Later, Agreements such as Land Boundary Agreement, 1974, Joint India-Bangladesh Guidelines for Border Authorities, 1975 were critical in shaping the independence of two borders. Though the India-Bangladesh borderlands at the beginning were to be that of interdependent borderlands<sup>[1]</sup>, the border security forces of India and Bangladesh maintained relations of mutual understanding and cooperation, and nothing happened in the border of 'a serious nature' (*The Bangladesh Observer*, 25 April 1975). Nevertheless, a few border incidents of a minor nature have occurred, but the rapid understanding was reached by coordination and combined effort. Against this backdrop, the need was felt for further vigilance and action to wipe out the illegal flow of arms, ammunition and explosives, movement of extremists, smuggling and similar border crimes.

However, it was realised in the Border Guidelines that no separate action by anyone government would produce the desired result unless there are ample understanding and coordination between the border guarding agencies of the two countries. These guidelines were comprehensive do's and don'ts for the Border Security Forces of India (BSF) and the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) with provisions for urgent flag meetings for dealing with isolated infringements (Mohammed 2005). No matter how, the guidelines seemed very pragmatic, humanistic, and dynamic.

### **The assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Military Rule in Bangladesh: LBA was Pushed to the Backburner**

The political landscape in Bangladesh was drastically changed after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15 August 1975. Subsequently, a military regime started for quite a long period (1975-1990), and there was a total and complete change' in the political scenario of Bangladesh during this period (Bhasin, 1996). It is widely held that the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was part of a long-term plan of the pro-Pakistan elements to make Bangladesh a pro-Islamic and anti-Indian country. Consequently, while attempts were made by the regimes during 1975-1996<sup>[2]</sup> to resolve some of the outstanding problems, the atmosphere of negotiations mostly tended to be conflictual. Sobhan (2011) argued that the assassin's bullets transformed what promised to be an amicable relationship into an essentially adversarial one. However, after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Friendship Treaty came to be viewed negatively and was found to be counter-productive in the altered political situation of Bangladesh. It was 'allowed to be atrophied and eventually did die unceremoniously at the end of its term in 1997' (Rashid, 2002, p. 26). Apparently, in response to this, LBA was embroiled in India.

Under these circumstances, India's project for erecting a border fence in the 1980s led both countries to rhetoric. It was also held by many that during the military rule, Bangladesh became a 'security concern' for India. For all these reasons, the mobilisation of border guarding forces on both sides of the border and cross-border firing became a common phenomenon during this time.

### **Triggering off the LBA by Sheikh Hasina**

The relations between India and Bangladesh began to improve when Awami League came to power in 1996 for the first time since the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Notably, a significant policy shift underwent in Bangladesh on the India issue during the tenure of Sheikh Hasina's government. In reciprocity, India also changed its position as far as the bilateral relationship is concerned. In this changed political scenario, during Indian Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda's visit to Bangladesh on 6-7 January 1997, both governments decided to form Joint Working Groups to discuss border-related issues. Subsequently, the work of settling the land boundary disputes had started after the formation of the Joint Boundary Working Groups (JBWG) in June 2001. The mandate of JBWG was to evolve a comprehensive package proposal to resolve the outstanding land boundary disputes (MEA, 2015).

The ice of the LBA started melting during Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina's visit to New Delhi on 10-13 January 2010. A wide range of issues was featured in the summit, and several accords were signed which as a whole, provided a mutually beneficial and productive relationship. Both countries agreed to comprehensively address all the land boundary conflicts keeping in view the spirit of the LBA and the Indian government was seemingly willing to 'travel the extra mile by taking some non-reciprocal steps in various fields (Karim, 2010). India-Bangladesh Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) and the signing of border strip maps led the surveyors of India and Bangladesh to prepare the border strip maps, based on the ground realities.<sup>[6]</sup> However, through the signing of strip maps, the long-standing border conflict between India and Bangladesh eventually came to an end on the ground.

### **Manmohan Sing's Visit to Bangladesh and the Protocol of 2011**

It was the first bilateral summit held in Dhaka since the historic first summit meeting between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1972. Several other Prime Ministers of India since then had visited Dhaka but not for a bilateral summit (Sobhan 2011). Interestingly, because of Mamata Banerjee's withdrawal, no agreement was concluded in the Dhaka summit saving the Protocol to the LBA. However, the focus of the protocol was to complete the demarcation of the land boundary in light of the LBA. In a true sense, the protocol was the details of the execution of the LBA on the ground and, therefore, it was a significant development in the way of implementation of the LBA. The most significant event that took place at the summit was a declaration for facilitating 24-hour unfettered access to the Tin Bigha corridor

for Bangladesh. It is memorable that India had opened the Tin Bigha corridor for Bangladesh for the first time on 26 June 1992, following the second 'Lease in Perpetuity' (signed on 26 March 1992). Initially, the corridor was remained open for six hours in the daytime only (in alternative hours). In 1996, the opening time was extended for unconstrained 12 hours from 6.30 am to 6.30 pm. Finally, the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh declared in the Dhaka summit that Bangladesh would get 24-hour unfettered access to the Tin Bigha corridor which was instantly executed on 8 September 2011 (*The Daily Star*, 9 September 2011).

### **Narendra Modi's Regional Vision and BJP's U-turn about the LBA**

It was widely held that a feeling of alienation and a degree of discontent had set in India's relations with the neighbours during the last years of the Manmohan Singh regime. Even where the government wanted to barge, like in the case of Bangladesh, it was constrained by coalition politics (Muni, 2015). However, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) had a surprisingly good start in this regard by pursuing 'both bilateral and regional tracks with equal vigour' (Sidhu and Godbole, 2015). The strong push toward reviving bilateral ties was evident in Modi's first foreign visit to Bhutan and then to Nepal and his Foreign Minister, Sushma Swaraj to Bangladesh within the first 100 days in office. In the general debate of the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Narendra Modi remarked, 'A nation's destiny is linked to its neighbourhood. That is why my government has placed the highest priority on advancing friendship and cooperation with its neighbours (as quoted in Chaturvedy, 2014).

#### *'Neighbourhood First' Foreign Policy and 'Cooperative Federalism'*

The experts of India-Bangladesh relations argue that the implementation of the long-delayed LBA became possible in 2015 mainly because of Narendra Modi's 'neighbourhood first' foreign policy. It is pertinent to note that BJP used to oppose the LBA throughout history until Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India. It was Modi's 'neighbourhood first' foreign policy which had changed the mindset of BJP and its government towards the LBA. It is of note that Modi was relatively much stronger than any other Prime Ministers of India in recent memory. His growing position and his 'personality cult' (Aiyar, 2018) coupled with the 'neighbourhood first' foreign policy and 'cooperative federalism' paradigm in policy-making and policy implementation has brought massive success in operationalizing the long-pending LBA.

To be mindful that though the foreign policy and international agreements of India are under the prerogative of the central government, the cooperation and support of the border state governments are all-important in the implementation of any agreements with its neighbours like Bangladesh. It is remarkable that because of the non-cooperation from the West Bengal government the LBA was not

implemented in 2011. Also, it is because of the lack of consent of the West Bengal government that the Teesta water-sharing treaty once again was not concluded during Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh in 2015 although the stage looked well set for a breakthrough by both India and Bangladesh. Sikri (2015) remarked, 'Modi's Team India approach, which includes the Chief Ministers of state government as part of policy-making and policy implementation structure, has brought in a breath of fresh air, yielding rich dividends in operationalizing the long-pending LBA between India and Bangladesh. PM Modi's new paradigm, his concept of "cooperative federalism" is an essential and dispensable component of his "neighbourhood first" foreign policy.

It is argued that the real benefit of the 'neighbourhood first' foreign policy is, Bangladesh has provided a great strategic opportunity to India from regional perspectives. Bangladesh is now at the frontline of India's counter-terrorism strategy. Moreover, Bangladesh has emerged as a key gateway for India's sub-regional initiatives such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Initiative (BBIN) showcasing bonds with Bangladesh as proof of Modi's 'neighbourhood first' policy (Kaura, 2018). India's Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar remarked, 'if there is one example where the "neighbourhood first" foreign policy has yielded good result, it is in the case of Bangladesh' (as quoted in Kaura 2018).

### **Dhaka Summit of 2015 and the Land Swap Deal: Impact on Migration**

Back to back summit-level visits by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to New Delhi in 2010 and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Dhaka in 2011 had laid down the way for the implementation of the LBA. There was an expectation that the LBA and Teesta water sharing would be concluded during Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh. But being hostage to coalition politics in India nothing happened except for signing the Protocol to the LBA. However, Manmohan Singh's government did the most preparatory work about the implementation of the LBA. Under these circumstances, after four years, with Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India (through the landslide victory in the election of 2014) another summit was set for in Dhaka in June 2015. The year 2014 also witnessed Sheikh Hasina assuming the office of Prime Minister for a consecutive second term in Bangladesh (ever first for any government in Bangladesh). However, it is Hasina's bold leadership<sup>[7]</sup> that steered Bangladesh to stand by India in addressing its security concerns in north-eastern regions. However, in the meantime, Hasina and Modi had two rounds of meetings in New York (September 2014) and Kathmandu (November 2014) on the sidelines of the UNGA and the SAARC summit. In such an atmosphere, Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh 'with a sense of enthusiasm and delight' (*The Daily Star*, 6 June 2015). On his arrival in Dhaka, Modi tweeted, 'Hello Bangladesh. I bring with me the affection & goodwill of the people of India' (as quoted in Karim, 2015).

Eventually, the Instruments of Ratification of the LBA was exchanged in the Dhaka Summit (6-7 June 2015). The Protocol of 2011 and the 'Letters on Modalities for Implementation of the LBA and the Protocol of 2011' were also exchanged between the two governments. It is to be noted that the Protocol of 2011 and the Letters on Modalities constituted an Agreement between India and Bangladesh. Consequently, the LBA was implemented and thus the land swap deal including the exchange of enclaves were eventually made. It is worth mentioning that the resolution of land boundary conflicts and the territorial readjustments with practical give and take (in cases of enclaves and adverse possessions) have created more unified territories both for India and Bangladesh.

Consequently, around 38,000 Indians in Bangladesh and 15,000 Bangladeshis in India are trapped in the vicious catch. (Hosna J. Shewly, March 9, 2016)<sup>[4]</sup>. It has eventually led to an enclave conundrum. The challenges of people trapped under this enclave conundrum are the issues related to their identity, lack of documents, basic educational, administrative and health security. Amid COVID -19 pandemic, the issues of individuals trapped in enclave got highlighted as they could not avail any of the benefits, social security, health security etc.

The historical and political exchanges and agreements do explain the prevailing enclave of immigration in both countries. However, the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic conveys the urgent need to resolve the crises of human life, ensuring the health security of each individual.

## **Conclusion**

The foresightedness of Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had led India and Bangladesh to sign the LBA which provided meticulous guidelines for an early and amicable resolution to the outstanding land boundary issues. Both governments as well as people, in general, were delighted about the agreement. But the political landscape in Bangladesh was drastically changed after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. During the period between 1975-1996 'Bangladesh's approach was derived, in part, from the nature of its adversarial domestic politics where confrontation with India was seen as a point of differentiation with the political forces who were seen as 'Pro-Indian' (Sobhan, 2011). This incursion of India-Bangladesh relation into the fault lines of domestic politics had made the resolution of outstanding problems with India difficult. Because of the failure to negotiate such agreements for fear of being accused of selling out the country to India, few problems were satisfactorily resolved over the years. However, a significant policy shift was undergone in both Bangladesh and India regarding the bilateral relationship during Sheikh Hasina's regimes in Bangladesh.

Also, India's policy towards Bangladesh in 2015 was motivated by some regional perspectives as far as India is concerned. On the other hand, Bangladesh is central to India's 'Act East policy. All these prompted

Narendra Modi's Government to resolve the long-pending land boundary disputes with Bangladesh. The fine-tuning between the bold leadership of Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi contributed the most to the historic land swap deal between India and Bangladesh in 2015. The issue of a vicious enclave of individuals must be resolved urgently as the COVID -19 pandemic has raised serious issues regarding health security. Both countries must implement policies and strategically streamline the issues across borders.

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📄 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/india-and-bangladesh-swap-territory-citizens-landmark-enclave-exchange>

📄 Fifty-four of the rivers of Bangladesh, including the major ones, out of a total of over 230, flown in from India, i.e they either originate in India and/or flow within India before entering into Bangladesh. Bangladesh is thus the lower riparian for all these rivers (Mohammed, 2005, p. 3).

📄 For many reasons, the Boundary Commission was not in a position to ensure righteousness in its work. Firstly, Radcliffe, being a British as well as a first-comer to India, neither was well-known to the geography and history of the so vast and diverse land which he had divided nor he knew the conditions on the ground. Secondly, he did it so hastily within a short span of 34 days (from the day of his arrival to India on 8 July to 13 August 1947). Thirdly, as the chairman of both Bengal and Punjab boundary commissions Radcliffe was under the double burden and had no free time for scrutiny. Fourthly, the members of the Boundary Commission (two Hindu judges and two Muslim judges) 'on all material points' divided two and two, 'leaving Cyril Radcliffe the invidious task of making the actual decisions' (Spate, 1948).

📄 The Trade Agreement provided that in order to meet the day to day requirements of the people living within a sixteen-kilometre belt of the border, border trade shall be allowed in specified commodities.

📄 In the *interdependent borderlands*, the societies on both sides of the border are symbolically linked leading to a considerable flow of economic and human resources across the border (see for details Martinez, 1994).

📄 Though democracy was restored in Bangladesh in 1991 the first BNP Government (1991-1996), as viewed by many scholars, was also of anti-Indian spirit.

📄 A strip map is a simple un-scaled drawing of a route including critical points along the border. It usually incorporates distances, roadside features and town facilities on a simple flip-over style map. However, a total of 628 strip maps were drawn for 2,262 km border with West Bengal, 93 strip maps for 264 km border with Assam, 20 strip maps for 320 km border with Mizoram, 269 strip maps for 874 km border with Tripura and 139 strip maps for 436 km border with Meghalaya.

📄 A bold leader is someone who is courageous. They are prepared to go against the tide of popular thinking. They often see problems and challenges as opportunities. They are committed to their vision. They are bold enough to see their vision, work towards it, shape it and gather others to it (see for details Keep Thinking Big [KTB], n.d., retrieved from <https://keepthinkingbig.com/bold>)

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# Migration and Terrorism in Europe: A Nexus of Two Crises

Shreya Sinha

## Abstract

The migration surge into the borders of the European Union has become a major problem in Europe as it has led to several challenges to societal integration and political legitimacy. It is also a danger to cultural identity, domestic and labour market stability as well as internal security, such that a migrant is often perceived as a threat to European society. The first part of the paper attempts to throw light on this migration-security nexus in Europe and how migration has developed into a security issue. The second part discusses how the two crises of migration and terrorism have come to be intrinsically associated with each other. The refugee crisis and the terrorism threat are related in the minds of many Europeans as they believe incoming refugees increase the likelihood of terrorism in their country. The paper argues that the political process of the securitization of migration and its association to terrorism abuse takes place within a wider politicization in which immigrants are a security threat. The concluding part of the paper examines the evolution of the European migration policy from the terrorist attacks of 9/11 up to the surge of the pandemic Covid-19 with an institutional perspective.

## Keywords

*Migration, Terrorism, Securitization, European Union, Non-Traditional Security, COVID-19*

## Introduction

Europe's migrant crisis of 2015 has fundamentally been perceived as a humanitarian disaster. There are several reasons as to why people flee from their country of origin and migrate to different locations, that range from violence at home, war, hunger, extreme poverty, issues arising from their sexual or gender orientation and even climate change. The primary cause of millions of people seeking a safer as well as prosperous life in Europe has been marked with tragedy. It was due to falling victim to diseases, robbery and assault, facing death at sea and confronting great hardship, suffering and danger as challenges, that people were pushed to take upon this cross-continental journey (Collett 2017).

This migrant influx manifested into a political and intercultural crisis with security as well as financial aspects and is ultimately derived from the fact that security at the international level is complicated where different stakeholders with varied interests desire distinct outcomes. The migration surge into the borders of the European Union rapidly became one of the largest and most critical problems that Europe is confronting. Migration in Europe has led to several challenges to societal integration and political

legitimacy and has been increasingly presented as a danger to cultural identity, domestic and labour market stability as well as internal security, such that a migrant is now often perceived as a threat to European society (Deliso 2017).

There is significant anxiety amongst the public about migration in Europe. During 2012, an estimated 1.7 million immigrants came legally to the EU-27 from countries outside Europe. Further, 40,000 asylum seekers arrived from North Africa in all of 2013, and in the first quarter of 2014, the total number of asylum applications in the EU had reached 110,000. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has estimated that more than 3,000 migrants had died in 2014 trying to reach Europe's shores by crossing the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa— which is quadruple of the estimated deaths in all of 2013. In the first quarter of 2015, the death toll went beyond 1,500, compared to 96 during the first four months of 2014 (Open Society Foundations 2015). Irregular migrants, including those who travel across Europe's land borders, also face the risk of violence and exploitation by human traffickers.

Given the civil war in Syria and the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, the crisis was a long-time coming. However, the chaotic and desperate arrival of so many had caught the European policymakers off-guard to such an extent that the collective and cohesive solidarity project of the European Union began to crumble. While the national governments of some member-states constructed makeshift centres with an intent to accommodate, there were several who treated the issue with indifference and still more did so with alarm (Quinn 2016). In many ways, the European governments have failed to rise to the challenge. On every issue, the Union has to reach a consensus among more than two dozen national governments with divergent priorities and differing domestic political constraints. Given the multitude of critical parameters, several challenges within Europe are directly and indirectly impacted by the refugee crisis, of which security remains foremost.

### **Securitization of the Issue of Migration**

The linkage between migration and security is a stable and enduring feature of contemporary society and politics. The concept of securitization, which was first brought into the agenda of security studies by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, has become a major topic of discussion; in the context of the implicative dynamics of securitization. The Copenhagen School is represented in the writings of Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde who responded to the Post-Cold War call to reframe security and examine its dynamics and distinctive character. In contrast to traditional understandings of security, the Copenhagen School suggests that the state is not the only referent object for security. The book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* sets about broadening the subject of security to include, not just the military sector, but five categories: military, economic, environmental, societal, and political. It is in this context that the notion of security is expanded away from the narrow military focus generated during the Cold War, to include other aspects of security that were not considered significant enough previously.

Within the debate of the implications for securitization of migration, politics and fear have played an important role in the process of categorizing migrants as a potential security threat. Securitization of migration is seen to reinforce a politics of fear. The correlation between the politics of fear and the securitization of migration generates another important dimension in the process of categorizing migrants as a potential security threat, namely racism. Importance of racism in the process of securitizing migrants and how the securitization of migration reinforces a racist discourse.

Since the 1980s, Europe as a continent has been marked by dramatic changes led by the development of globalization, the fragmentation of major states such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and the construction of the European Union as well as the Schengen area. As the geopolitical context has changed, migration has become increasingly politicized at the European Union level. Such a political construction of migration has increasingly referred to the destabilizing effects of migration and to the dangers it has implied for the public order.

It has been observed that the securitization of migration emerged first and foremost within the context of the European Union, and they should have a greater understanding of the complexities and all it entails (Huysmans 2000; Ceyhan & Tsoukala 2002; Karyotis 2007). However, the United States of America has also always been viewed as a country of immigrants, thus the issue of migration was never deemed or constructed as a threat to national identity, as in the case of the European Union. Yet in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 at the Pentagon, the concept of migration as a security threat in the United States became of prime importance.

American political theorist John Tirman describes how the conception of migration has changed since 9/11 by examining that before the 9/11 attacks, there had always been a correlation between migration and security in the United States. However, it was mainly considered to be a threat to social security, such as jobs and general welfare. It was in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, terrorism has relatively become the basis for framing the groundwork for discourse and practices relative to migration.

In the case of the Union, the discourse that links migration to security has been reinforced in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11, where migration appeared in the discussion of the campaign in combatting terrorism (Karyotis 2007). However, the main driving factor for securitizing migrants within the borders of the Union was the protection of European identity and culture, by the conception of “Fortress Europe”, which is based on the one hand on free mobility and open borders and the elimination of internal borders and, on the other hand, on restrictive external borders, focusing on exclusion as well as border management. Many scholars are of the view that immigrants also have the potential to threaten the Union’s economy, served as a legitimizing factor for the development of a restrictive migration policy which has further led to migrants being seen as a security issue. Huysmans has described this development

as a transformation of an “economic project of the internal market into an internal security project” (Huysmans 2000).

The rise of irregular migration in the context of a new security threat, where countering threats such as terrorism and organized crime was a top priority, has led to stricter public policies, new and enhanced surveillance and control devices, and tighter external border controls despite discourses about globalization, porous borders and open markets. Political theorist John Tirman points out that the securitization of migration makes it “much more difficult for migrants to cross borders, even as the world economy demands such movement” (Tirman 2006). The politics of fear which developed specifically in the context of the European Union led to the production of a discourse of fear and proliferation of dangers concerning the scenarios of chaos and disorder and can also become a governmental instrument that can be used to regulate perceptions, attitudes as well as actions of citizens towards migrants.

Viewing migration as a security threat, its political construction is likely to be embedded in the politics of belonging. To provide and ensure security for their citizens, nations develop a system of rights, justice and rule of law. Immigrants from different cultural backgrounds are often seen as an imbalance to the nation and subsequently as a security threat. It is thus viewed as a rationale to preserve their own culture through the exclusion of the other cultural groups, further perpetuating xenophobic tendencies towards the migrants (Ibrahim 2005).

### **Nexus of Migration and Terrorism**

The causal connection between illegal migration and terrorism has been in the focal point of security dilemmas since the beginning of the flow of migration and has come to the forefront since the terrorist attacks in Paris in particular. Although Europe has been confronted with terrorism since the early 1970s, the growing terrorist attacks on European soil in the past two decades has raised several questions and have transformed Europe’s migration crisis into a security debate. This has further accentuated the calls on a clamp-down on free movement across borders and has put the proponents of an open door for refugees on the defensive (Nussio and Bove 2019).

The Paris attacks led France’s firm believers to agree upon that the Islamic State militants planned the attacks with the possibility that one of the terrorists could be of Syrian refugee origin. This propelled the debate within policymakers on whether Europe is doing enough to protect itself from terrorists who might infiltrate the thousands of migrants arriving daily from the Middle East and elsewhere. The evidence that some of the attackers have crossed internal European Union boundaries to get to Paris has also brought about more demands from the EU-skeptic politicians to alter and even abolish the continent’s system of open and porous borders. Free movement of people and resources within the Union has always made Europe more susceptible to terrorism and other security threats, traditional as well as non-

traditional. To those in favour of European integration, the attacks highlight the need for more EU cooperation on security and better joint protection by the member states of the EU's external frontier.

However, the direct connection between illegal migration and terrorism has often been critically analysed as a strategic mistake. Neither the refugees nor those who are seeking a better life are terrorists. The refugees tend to look for protection against persecution which is often perpetrated by terrorists. At the same time, it should be taken into consideration that the terrorist organizations have access to use illegal migration to send operatives into the target countries. Contemporary terrorist organizations seek for finding assailants in the Western countries having citizenship, with no connection to a religious organization, possibly without name or file by the security services of the host country (Kis-Benedek 2016).

The experiences of terrorist attacks in London, Madrid and other locations on European soil have shown this assertion. However, the risk that the Islamic State or other terrorist organizations could smuggle militants into Europe under the cover of a huge wave of migrants is much smaller than what various policymakers and stakeholders may suggest. Another reason why Islamic State does not necessarily require to care about smuggling people into Europe follows from the fact that there is no shortage of 'lone wolf' militants already in place within the continent. From Brussels and Paris to Copenhagen, deadly attacks have been committed for a few years now by people already residing in Europe from before the migrant refugee crisis and those who can travel freely across the continent due to the Schengen borders (Nail 2016).

At this point, it is interesting to note that there is a vast difference between the European and American refugee's admission systems. On one hand, the EU member states took a major step in 2015 in letting enter thousands of illegal migrants without much control, on the other hand, their defence of external Schengen borders regulation was not taken very seriously by most of the national governments. This resulted in great difficulty in maintaining a system of checks and balances concerning the refugees after entering the respective countries. A basic difference between the European and American practices is that the Europeans first let the foreigners enter and thereafter try to check them.

The American method is to check first and let them enter after a comprehensive control. In this context, the European authorities have often not been able to stop them. Many migrants were refused the registration as they wanted to be registered in Germany or later in Sweden. Many of them were even exempted from having to present their passport or other paper for identification. In many cases, they refused to take photos or fingerprints as well. Terrorist organizations would have certainly realized this loophole and profited from this great possibility to send their people to the continent (Nails 2016).

It is worth seeing the American method of admitting refugees and the connection between terrorism and refugees. “From the 859,629 refugees admitted in the USA from 2001 onwards, only three have been convicted of planning terrorist attacks on targets outside of the United States and none was successfully carried out” (Nowrasteh 2015). That is one terrorism-planning conviction for every 286, 543 refugees that have been admitted. Further, the terrorist threat from Syrian refugees in the United States is exaggerated and they have very little to fear from them because the refugee vetting system is so thorough. There is a major difference between Europe’s vetting of asylum seekers from Syria and how the United States screens refugees. Another major factor in play is the geographic distance between the United States and Syria, which allows the US government to better control the migrants, while large numbers of Syrian who try to go to Europe are less carefully checked.

It is important to note the difference between refugees and asylum seekers as well. On one hand, the asylum seekers show up at national borders and ask to stay and they must show they have a well-founded fear of persecution due to their nationality, religion, race, membership in any particular social group, or their political opinion if they return to their country of origin. There is an active application and investigation process, and governments often detain the asylum seeker during that process. But the investigation and vetting of the asylum seeker usually take place while the seeker is allowed inside the host country. Many of the Syrians and others who have entered Europe are asylum seekers who are vetted through similar, less stringent security screens, but due to the huge number of refugees and the unpreparedness of the authorities, it is likely many times that unregistered, unknown people from different crisis areas moved across countries.

On the other hand, in the US a refugee is somebody who is identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in a refugee camp. In the United States, UNHCR is designated to do the first round of security checks on the refugee according to internationally agreed treaties to which the United States of America is a party, and refers some of those who pass the initial checks to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). The referrals are then interviewed by a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer abroad. “The refugee must be outside of the United States, be of special humanitarian concern to the government, demonstrate persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and must not be firmly resettled in another country. Refugees are processed from a great distance away and more thoroughly vetted than asylum seekers as a result. Because the refugee is abroad while the U.S. government checks their background, potential terrorist links, and their claims to refugee status, the vetting is a lot more thorough and can take up to two years for non-Syrians. The vetting can take about three years for Syrians because of the heightened concerns over security” (Nails 2016).

Asylum seekers, on the contrary face rigorous checks, but they are conducted while the asylum seeker is inside the United States and not always while he is in a detention centre. Syrians that arrive in the United States as a result of fleeing from violence are usually considered refugees, whereas many of those getting into Europe are asylum seekers. This distinction shows very well that the United States is in a far better security situation vis-a-vis Europe on any potential terrorist threat from Syria. In Europe, not only are the refugees considered as a security threat but all those who have travelled to crisis areas mainly to Syria and Iraq and have entered the ranks of ISIS or other terrorist organizations. Their return to Europe means a significant non-traditional security threat.

It was in the aftermath of the Paris attacks that a proposal to the EU to screen every single EU passport holder entering the European continent was introduced to screen the fighters returning from the Middle East. “Europol admitted that only 2,000 of the estimated 5,000 extremists who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to make jihad have been logged on an EU-wide intelligence sharing database used by Britain to disrupt plots. This implied that Britain has no way of checking the background of 3,000 suspected terrorists, even if their own country has identified them as a threat” (Besenyo 2015). One French official said that the EU’s borders were “like a sieve” such that every single migrant is checked against a terror watch list by the authorities (Holehouse 2015). According to Rob Wainwright, the director of Europol and a former intelligence officer in MI5 “the majority of the data is supplied by just a handful of states. It is a fact that the majority of the perpetrators of the Paris attacks are not refugees and have a European passport. Some were born and raised in France and Belgium before being radicalized”.

The uncontrolled flow of refugees has several other threats as well- those who cannot be integrated into the societies can be later radicalized and this radicalization further leads to terrorism. It is in this context that Samuel P. Huntington in his book *Clash of Civilisations* analyses that the “religious revival has in part involved expansion by some religions, which gained recruits in societies where they had previously not existed. To a much larger extent, however, the religious resurgence involved people returning to, reinvigorating and giving new meaning to the traditional religions of their communities” (Huntington 1997).

A direct and causal relationship cannot be drawn between the extent to which illegal migration has been connected to terrorism. After the Paris attacks of 2015, the connection has however come to the forefront. It would still be critically wrong to make an equal- mark between them. Although the EU countries may have been at fault in allowing the refugees to flow without checking people, however, finding the right balance between liberty and security has always been a challenge. Prevention, prosecution and protection must be the cornerstones of any new immigration policies adopted to combat terrorism. Immigration policies and procedures should also seek to identify, deter the entry of, and, to the extent possible, apprehend terrorists for a criminal prosecution, by the internationally recognized standards of protection

of liberties, civil and human rights. Immigration policy reforms cannot in and of themselves prevent terrorism, but they must be a key part of any comprehensive approach to combat terrorism. The activities of the Western national security services are important but not enough in finding the terrorism and preventing illegal migration.

### **Migration and Security in Europe: Impact of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on all areas related to asylum and migration throughout 2020. The impact was felt particularly in terms of travel restrictions, closures on the borders and the dire need to introduce sanitary measures to try to bring the virus under control. The EU and non-EU OECD countries have adopted various contingency measures to keep systems operational and to mitigate the impacts on migrants and citizens to the extent possible.

The pandemic has emerged in a world tightly connected by local and international population movements in an era of extensive globalisation, with more people moving for education, work, tourism, and survival than ever in the past (Skeldon 2018). Although the pandemic cannot as such be attributed to migration alone, intense population movements, in particular of tourists and business workers, has played a role of being the key facilitator of the global spread of the outbreak.

As in many other crises, migrants may be particularly vulnerable to the direct as well as indirect impacts of the pandemic. "Their ability to avoid the infection, receive adequate health care and cope with the economic, social and psychological impacts of the pandemic can be affected by a variety of factors, including their living and working conditions, lack of consideration of their cultural and linguistic diversity in service provision, xenophobia, their limited local knowledge and networks, and their access to rights and level of inclusion in host communities, often related to their migration status" (Skeldon 2018).

According to Frontex, January through August 2021 saw a 64% increase in irregular migration to the EU over the previous year. Traffic over the western Balkan route — which runs via Turkey through Balkan countries such as Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia — and in the central Mediterranean route nearly doubled. "It is safe to say that COVID has increased and will increase push and pull factors that drive irregular migration towards Europe," said Martin Hofmann, a senior adviser at the [International Center for Migration Policy Development](#) (ICMPD). Thus it is evident that while COVID-19 closures [significantly reduced flows of illegal immigration to Europe in 2020](#), those numbers are now increasing as 2021 progresses, re-emphasising it as a security concern. And not only are migrants making up for a lost time — it seems the coronavirus pandemic may become a significant factor in increasing migration within the European borders.

### **Conclusion**

At the European Union level, migration has become increasingly securitized since the 1980s and was seen first and foremost as a threat to national identity. This securitization of migration is closely linked with the construction of the European Union and subsequently the Schengen area, as well as with the emergence of new economic agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), etc. Particular case studies along the Euro-Mediterranean border have showcased how the rise of irregular immigration in the context of a new security era, where countering organized crime and terrorism was a top priority, leads to stricter public policies, new surveillance and control devices, and tighter external border controls despite discourses about globalization and open markets.

Within the debate of the implications of securitization of the issue of migration, the role of a politics of fear in the process of categorizing migrants as a potential security threat is also noteworthy. A politics of fear which can be considered as a major factor leading to the issue of securitization of migrants can lead to a dangerous generalization, namely the determination of all migrants as a whole with extremely negative implications, often leading to their perception as a terrorist. In terms of real politics, each migrant that is “different” to the culture and identity of the host country constitutes a potential security threat with a negative perception in the mind of the host country citizens. Therefore, the main problem attributed to the process of securitization is the inability of the securitizing actor to see migrants as individual humans. Rather migrants are being merged into a general category.

The correlation between the politics of fear and the securitization of migration generates another important dimension in the process of categorizing migrants as a potential security threat; that is racism. By examining the shift in racism, from notions of biological superiority to exclusion based on cultural difference, it is possible to understand that the categorization of a migrant as a security threat reflects a racist discourse that is reinforced through the securitization of migration. The use of such categories in official discourses does have an impact not only on public perceptions of migratory phenomena but also on the real lives of migrants through the enforcement of state policies. However, the complexity, diversity and fluidity of migration make it difficult to lump into one single category, and one should be aware that categorization of migrants often symbolizes discredited top-down approaches, which fix dynamic social processes into rigid structures.

Hence, although migration is defined as an international security issue but not one that should be protected against as a threat to “socio-political cohesion” and “cultural homogeneity”. Rather migration is a security issue, because of the vulnerability of migrants and their susceptibility to exploitation and discrimination. With the rise of terrorist attacks on European soil, weak border security and migrant flooding are blamed for the attacks and there is a sharp relief deep ideological divide overviews of minority and diversity. This political process of the securitization of migration and its association to criminal and terrorist abuse does not happen in isolation but in concordance with a wider politicization and xenophobic

tendencies in which immigrants and asylum seekers are portrayed as a challenge to the protection of national identity.

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## **The COVID-19 Pandemic and Immigration- A Case Study of Sweden**

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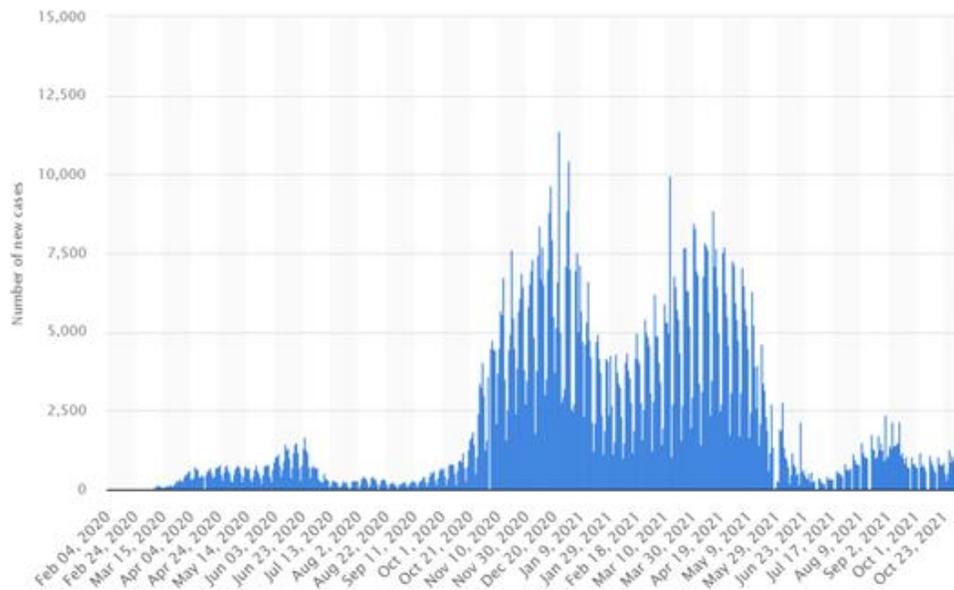
## Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought challenges to the trend of immigration, rules of immigration, and immigrants in the state. For those Swedish employers who employ non-EU citizens, the outbreak has created several business immigration-related issues. In addition to this, refugees are also a vulnerable group in society who face several challenges ranging from asylum to integration. Compromised living conditions and health facilities put them at greater health risks if infected with the virus. The long-term consequences of this pandemic in the case of refugees may also take the form of unemployment and social isolation. The paper focuses on labour immigrants and refugees in Sweden during the tenure of the pandemic. It focuses on the various challenges faced by the immigrants due to the pandemic. It will look into the role played by the state to ensure its responsibility towards its immigrants during this time and the bottlenecks faced by the state organizations while doing so. The study refers to primary sources such as the data produced by official statistical agencies organizations and secondary sources like journal articles, reports, and newspapers. The state should also have been aware of the cultural distinctiveness of its immigrant population and should have designed efficient ways to reach out to them and educate them about the situation.

**Keywords:** *COVID-19 Pandemic, Immigration, Sweden, refugees, employment*

### 1. Introduction

The first case of Covid-19 was detected in January 2020 in Sweden. The patient was identified to be a woman from Southern Sweden hailing from the Jonkoping region. It was reported that she had paid a visit to Wuhan in China where she got infected with the virus. She was provided with medical attention as soon as she arrived in Sweden on 24<sup>th</sup> January (Bloomberg 2020). A total of 1209935 cases have been confirmed in the state from January 2020 to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021. 15164 deaths have been recorded during this period and 15438757 vaccine doses have been administered during the above period (World Health Organization 2021). According to Stewart (2021), the country saw a massive rise in the number of covid cases between December 2020 and March 2021. The figure below shows the trend of Covid-19 cases in the state from February 2020 to October 2021.



Source: Statista 2021

In addition, it has been observed that refugee immigrants from low or middle-income countries have a higher risk of death from the Covid-19 virus. The virus has been said to create a burden on the most disadvantaged groups in society (Drefahl *et al.*) It has been observed that immigrants from Iraq and Somalia were particularly hard hit. By April 2020 Somali Swedes represented around 5 per cent of the state's covid cases (Keyton 2020). Some factors responsible for the above situation have been identified as inaccessible information and poor housing facilities (European Commission 2020). It has also been noted that compared to the rest of the population this group has a higher proportion of smokers and obese people (Elisabeth 2020). Also, the pandemic has hit hard the labour immigrants in the country. Unemployment among foreign-born workers rose and was observed to be around 18 per cent (it rose by 3.5 percentage points from the previous year) in the fourth quarter of 2020 (Johnson 2021). The following sections in the paper focus on the challenges presented by the pandemic to the immigrants; both labour immigrants and refugees. It focuses on the reasons behind them being severely hit by the pandemic. The last section focuses on the role played by the state agencies to combat such challenges.

## 2. Covid -19 and Labour Immigrants

The country's foreign-born population was vulnerable to the consequences of the pandemic. With businesses and demand being stalled, there were noted job losses. Without any fault of theirs, many people have been asked to lay off (Edwards 2020). The job losses have been said to exceed the rate of job losses that had occurred during the financial crisis. Tourism, hospitality industry, airlines and other transportation providers, business services, manufacturing, parts of retailing, etc. have been exposed to a great number of furloughs and notices. The tourism and hospitality industries alone accounted for 31 per cent of the termination notices (Lerpold and Sjöberg 2021). The majority of them did not have access to the requisite social support network, housing and may also lose their right to live in Sweden if their work permits are not extended (Edwards 2020). Work Permits extensions are subject to various rules and regulations. There are problems faced in cases of work permit extensions if salary or working hours are reduced, significant changes in job duties, unpaid leave, delay in the work start date for new work permit holders, absence of the work permit holder from work due to travel restrictions. For work permits to be extended, the conditions of work permits are needed to be met during the previous validity period for one's work permit. In case of a job loss incurred by a work permit holder, then he/she has to find a new job within three months to apply for a new work permit. The above circumstances put the foreign workers in a vulnerable position in Sweden, also with the migration agency not specifying any rules because of the pandemic situation in the country (Onwuta 2020). Also, The Swedish Migration Agency's four-month deadline to start work after one's work permit has been granted was a difficult issue in light of the travel ban. However, the extensions on the travel ban announced on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020 till 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 brought some good news for work and residence permit holders. The migration agency announced that all residence and work permit holders will also be allowed in addition to the exemptions that have been made for residents from additional countries (KPMG AB 2020 a).

### 3. Covid-19 and Refugees

It has also been observed that newly arrived immigrants and refugees have been the most exposed to risks owing to the pandemic (Lerpold and Sjöberg 2021). It was recorded that several Iraqi, Somali and Eritrean immigrants were among the covid cases registered in the hospitals. A survey done by the health authorities in Stockholm further showed that the capital's suburbs with dense immigrant populations were the most severely hit by the virus. A district called Rinkeby-Kitsa in the north was the worst hit and was recorded to have 238 confirmed covid cases on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020. This translated to around 47 cases per 10000 residents while the regional average was 13 cases per 10000 residents. Sweden's Civil Contingencies Agency has acknowledged the fact that time was lost while translating details about the virus in different immigrant languages (Rothschild 2020).

According to Elisabeth *et al.* (2020) refugees are often found in vulnerable positions and stress due to challenges arising out of the unpredictability of the asylum process and the process of integration. In addition, they are also exposed to poor living conditions and face difficulties while accessing healthcare as well. Also, with no vaccine, proper line of treatment and uncertain immunity levels of the population the country's healthcare system was already under tremendous pressure. Refugees in Sweden have also been reported to have higher levels of obesity and smoking rates in comparison to the native Swedes. In Sweden, around 65 per cent of the refugees were reported to be overweight and 35 per cent of the refugees have also been noted to be smokers. They also face challenges while accessing healthcare needs and have been reported to have low health literacy. A high number of deaths have been reported in the case of Somalian and Eritrean refugees due to the pandemic. Most of them dwelled in the overcrowded and socially deprived areas of the capital. This has been mainly because most of them do not have access to stable employment which deprives them of having proper accommodation. Thus, the act of self-isolating one's self in those overcrowded suburbs if infected with the virus had difficulties of its own. They further stress that linguistic barriers also added to the existing problems created by the pandemic. They argue that there was indeed a need for better communication of pandemic related information translated into the language of the country's migrant communities.

The above situation exposed the refugees to an atmosphere of vulnerability and risk. In addition, due to recommendations on physical distancing and fewer gatherings, most of the businesses like travel, hotels, restaurants were closed down. As discussed in the previous sections this situation led to many people being laid off from their jobs and employment. The situation took a severe toll on the economic plight of the people, especially the refugees (Elisabeth *et al.* 2020). Refugees, in general, face difficulties entering the high skilled Swedish labour market. The difficulties are generally in the form of low skills, language difficulties, health problems and lack of access to networks. The Act on the Responsibility for Settlement Measures for Recent Immigrants is the legal basis for the Swedish Labour Market Integration. As per the Act, the refugees are given protection by being granted a residence permit. They are received by a municipality and are made a part of a two-year settlement programme organized by the Swedish Public Employment Service (SPES). Under this programme, the refugees are assisted by organizations run by the public, private and community. Assistance is provided in the form of vocational training, subsidized employment, language training, education, skill assessment, matching activities, etc. to ensure that they are well integrated with the labour market. The country's digital maturity also influenced the above programmes. Even before the arrival of the pandemic digital communication tools had been sought as a replacement for face-to-face communication with job seekers. However, the onslaught of the pandemic had its effect on the economic atmosphere of the nation. Higher unemployment levels meant fewer chances for refugees to get employed. Also, other job seekers were competing with them. Summer jobs which were considered to be an ideal stepping stone for the refugees to enter the labour market had disappeared.

There was a major shortfall of opportunities in the entry-level jobs. While some employers were stalling their projects which were designed to support the refugees, some small companies started hiring a large number of refugees on short term state-subsidised contracts. It has been noted that the pandemic affects not only the refugees' position in the job market but also the support activities run by the labour market integration programmes. The pandemic had made it difficult to find volunteers and other staff to run such activities. Volunteers who previously had secure jobs did not have that anymore (Bešić *et al.* 2021).

The pandemic also ushered in a change in the mode of the existing business. Work started being done from home by employees with physical meetings and exchanges taking a backseat. Digital communication became the preferred mode of communication. Digital literacy started being stressed upon by the public agencies. There were information campaigns administered by the SPES to highlight the advantages of digital communication to job seekers. Refugees who were less digitally literate than others were informed as to how to report compulsory activities to the organizations using their phones or computers. Efforts to digitalize the refugees in the country accelerated during the pandemic. The state officials took the opportunity of this pandemic to further promote digitalization among the masses of refugees. This was a major push to the government's initiative to move towards e-Governance. However, some specialized or target activities for refugees which require physical meetings started getting affected as social distancing norms were recommended to be followed (Bešić *et al.* 2021).

#### 4. Government Response

Safeguarding people's health and lives became the primary goal of the Swedish government during the pandemic. A variety of measures were taken to contain the spread of the virus. The focus was put on limiting the impact of the virus on critical services and making sure that health care resources are available to all. Stress was put on providing correct information to its people so that the right measures could be undertaken at the right time (Government Offices of Sweden 2021). The government also imposed restrictions on the entry of foreign nationals from outside the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland given the pandemic<sup>2</sup>. The government was of the view that extensive remote working was the best option in the case of globally mobile employees to ensure maximum safety given the pandemic (KPMG AB 2020 b). There has also been a temporary ban put on travel from the EU/EEA countries to Sweden. A vaccination certificate, a test certificate or an equivalent document certifying recovery from Covid-19 is required to enter Sweden. The government has planned on implementing this restriction till 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. There has been a temporary ban put on non-essential travels from outside the EU/EEA to the country from March 2020. However, since February 2021 a certificate stating a negative Covid-19 result or providing a vaccination certificate from an approved country is being accepted for being allowed entry to Sweden. The travel ban has been decided

to be extended till 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 (Ministry of Justice 2021). In the case of people who were already in Sweden and who were born before 2005 the health care region stands responsible for a free vaccination. One does not have to be a Swedish citizen to get a vaccine (Migrationsverket 2021). In addition, a campaign was also designed by Sweden's Civil Contingencies Agency to inform the refugees about the virus on a larger scale. Stress was laid on communicating and conveying the information and also on the translation of the data. However, it was noticed that public seminars arranged at the community centre on the above topic mostly remained empty despite there being written advertisements of the same. It was only on a personal invitation that seminars started seeing a reasonable amount of the refugee population attending them. This was because mainly the refugees had little experience in dealing with public agencies in their native country and trusted information from known people. This has been identified to be quite distinct from the nature of the Swedish people who trust and follow written official information. Most of the refugees also do not and are not able to follow Swedish media where a large amount of information was telecasted. It is believed by the authorities that a large part of guidance information about this pandemic could not filter through a large proportion of refugees (Rothschild 2020).

##### 5. Criticisms

There have also been sharp criticisms made towards how the pandemic was handled by Sweden. Until January 2021 the government followed non-mandatory hygiene and recommended social/physical distancing. The non-obligatory recommendations were seen in the light of the trust the people had in the government and the public institutions. Initially many hotels, restaurants had remained open during the pandemic (Bešić *et al.* 2021). The Public Health Agency (Folkhälsomyndigheten) believed in adopting a herd immunity approach and letting transmissions occur unchecked. Testing, tracking contacts, identification of sources remained inadequate as per the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. There were no compulsory restrictions on limiting crowds in public places. Norms on compulsory face masks in public transport, health care facilities and care homes were also introduced at a later stage. All these compiled together led to the state's failure in flattening the infection curve and avoidance of deaths, hospitalizations. The government's appointed Corona Commission which was drawn to review the national response to Covid-19 also concluded that the overall spread of the virus in society has been a major factor behind a large number of deaths in residential cares. It was not until December 2020 that directives were given by the government to put WHO's recommendations into actual practice in society including the use of compulsory face masks. The decentralization and fragmentation of health and social services also created further difficulties in effectively containing the spread of the virus in society. The pandemic has brought into forefront failures in the state's coordination across multiple sectors, accountability among authorities sharing responsibilities and rigidities in the decision-making process.

Limited participation, engagement among stakeholders, scientists and civil society organizations have also been noted during the pandemic (Claeson and Hanson 2021).

## 6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the distinct herd immunity approach followed by the Swedish government led to an unchecked spread of the virus in society. As the transmission started gaining pace the state witnessed an increase in hospitalizations and deaths. The pandemic also exerted its pressure on the economy of the nation with many businesses being halted and devoid of demand. Unemployment started rising in the country and impacted everyone. However, it was the foreign workers and the refugees that were the worst hit. Foreign workers mainly from the non-EU/EEA countries were left in a vulnerable state with many of them being laid off and not being able to find new jobs. Apprehension crept in about the status of their work permits if they were unable to find a job in three months. Refugees living in crowded, dense suburban areas also found themselves in a sorry plight with limited to no jobs and limited language skills to interpret essential information about the virus. This along with their pre-existing health conditions made them more prone to infection. The government in response relaxed travel restrictions for work permit holders and also did its best to provide more information about the virus to the refugees in their languages. But there was a significant amount of time lost in this process of translation and reaching out to them. The state also took steps to improve the amount of digital literacy among the refugees. However, an ambit of targetted and specialized activities could not be performed effectively through digital communication and required necessary physical meetings. Such activities suffered during the pandemic along with general budget cuts for support activities and an insufficient number of volunteers being available for running integration programmes. To conclude, the Public Health Agency (Folkhälsomyndigheten) should have been more proactive from the onset of the pandemic. Time was lost in the herd immunity approach which had led to a vast spread of the virus in society, severely affecting the immigrant population. Instead of passive recommendations, the state should have made mandatory obligations that needed to be followed by everyone in the society. The state should also have been aware of the cultural distinctiveness of its immigrant population and should have designed efficient ways to reach out to them and educate them about the situation.

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## **Role of Civil Society Organisations in Sweden for the Immigrants**

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## Abstract

Various factors like globalisation and conflicts in many countries have led to a dramatic increase of immigrants in Sweden. Since the year 2000, fewer seekers have arrived in other Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, and Norway) compared to Sweden which has experienced a significantly higher number of asylum seekers. The number of asylum seekers in Sweden is highest after Germany in all of Europe. The influx of migrants has put significant pressure on the country's social services. Civil society is an important institution that plays a major role in the successful integration of migrants in the labour market and society with the help of municipalities in Sweden. Thus it becomes crucial to study the role of civil society organisations with regards to growing immigration to Sweden. This paper will try to analyse what different methods are being adopted for the integration of immigrants in Sweden. The paper will also focus on the involvement of civil society organisations broadly in two activities. First, immediate help is being given to seekers who arrived at train stations, ferry terminals and transit accommodations. Second, the engagement of the civil society organisation in the facilitation of integration in the labour market and society.

**Keywords:** *Immigrants, Civil Society Organisations, Municipalities, Integration, Labour market.*

## Introduction

The period of globalization of the economy and movement of people, along with the chaotic situation in many countries led to the dramatic increase in the migration of people from one country to another. This means people are forced to leave their countries due to wars, conflict, and many other factors. This also implies they have to face many difficulties while moving between terrestrial spaces as the borders between the nations are controlled (Djampour, 2018).

According to Balibar (2002), while explaining the meaning of border he defines that border not only demarcates geographical spaces but also marks the difference between human beings. He also argues how border treats differently.

“Nothing is less like a material thing than a border; even though it is officially ‘the same’ (identical to it and therefore well defined) whichever way you cross it – whether you do so as a businessman or an academic traveller to a conference, or as a young unemployed person. In this latter case, a border becomes almost two distinct entities, which have nothing in common but a name. Today's borders (though in reality, this has long been the case) are, to some extent, designed to perform precisely this task: not merely to give individuals from different social classes, different experiences of the law, the civil administration,

the police and elementary rights such as the freedom of circulation and freedom of enterprise, but actively to differentiate between individuals in terms of social class" (Balibar, 2002).

In the above quotation, he points out that the border does not have the same meaning for everyone. For example, privileged people who have passports also have surplus rights. It's just the formality at certain places. However, for the ones who do not have a valid passport borders become troublesome. These borders are monitored and surveilled by military forces to prevent illegal migrants. Therefore in this context, the study of the role of civil society organizations becomes important as they play a vital role in helping undocumented migrants.

After World War II, the majority of European countries have experienced large-scale immigration. Among all Sweden in the Nordic region have experienced tremendous waves of immigration since the 1980s. However, the year 2015 has turned out to be unique. Sweden almost received 1, 63, 000 applications from asylum seekers, which is one of the highest in all EU countries (Swedish Migration Agency, 2015). Following 2016, the number of asylum seekers has decreased due to the shutting of borders and the introduction of ID controls on the Danish-Swedish Border (Lonnaeus, 2016). Since then Sweden has minimalized its laws on asylum to the minimum level required by the European court of justice and international conventions (Fry and Islar, 2021).

The influx of migrants puts significant pressure on the country's social service. In this connection, civil society organizations play an important role in maintaining coordination with public authority for the reception and integration of asylum seekers (Arora-Johnsson, 2017).

The main objective of the paper is to explore the relationship between key variants that is the state, civil society organisations and how they coordinate in handling the responsibility of integration of the immigrants. After the 2015 refugee crisis, the role of civil society organisations has increased. The paper is based on the hypothesis that national, regional and local authorities are partnering with civil society organisations to tackle the responsibility of assimilation of asylum seekers in the labour market and society. This study is qualitative which is mainly based on different government reports and research articles. These reports and research articles are based on the exploratory study on integration activities and relations between the municipality, civil society organizations, and national authority.

The paper is structured as follows: First, civil society in Sweden has been evaluated, The policy for civil society in Sweden is discussed in the second section. Thirdly, the role of civil society in the integration of refugees is highlighted. The role of different civil society organizations including churches has been discussed in fourth section. The challenges faced by the civil society organizations are presented in the fifth section and finally, the conclusion focuses on the responsibility which is divided between state and civil society organisation for the integration of immigrants.

## **Civil Society in Sweden**

The existence of a strong civil society is debated by scholars, as the state provides everything. But research in Sweden in the last 20 years has refuted this assumption (Anheier and Salamon, 1999). There is the coexistence of a strong state with a strong civil society. Boli (1992) finds Swedish civil society is less independent of the state, it is closely tied to the government. But it doesn't mean it does not have a strong impact on society. However, the Swedish civil society is less developed in the fields of health and social services and more in the field of culture, leisure, and advocacy.

The Swedish civil society traces go back to the 16th century before the Reformation began. Earlier it was in the form of charity which was being done by the church as well as by the king. But later in the 19th century, a new organization emerged for young people, orphanages, and reformatories that provide to handicapped, deprived, and delinquent children. These initiatives were taken by individuals, associations, foundations which were influenced by popular movements (Bramstang, 1964). These movements were the temperance movement, labour movement, consumer cooperatives, the sports movement, and adult education institutes (Johansson, 1993; Lundkvist, 1977). Later environmental, the women's movement also came into the picture of the 1970s and 1980s.

## **Policy for Civil Society Organization in Sweden**

In December 2009, the Swedish Government presented a bill for the policy of civil society to the Riksdag (Parliament). Its main agenda was to improve the condition of civil society for the development and welfare of society as a whole. It also focussed on making civil society the main tool for building democracy. The policy was guided by principles that were based on autonomy and independence, dialogue, quality, continuity, transparency, and diversity (Regeringskansliet, 2010).

In 2014, Sweden adopted a new strategy for special initiatives in the field of democratization and human rights amount to 120 million USD per year. Sweden is also funding the new Civic Space initiative carried out by ICNL, CIVICUS, World Movement for democracy, and Article 19 to protect and expand civic space by enabling legal environment for civil society organizations and to strengthen the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association (Regeringskansliet, 2015).

## **Role of Civil Society in the Integration of Asylum Seekers**

The role of civil society in the integration of immigrants must be understood in context to the Swedish welfare state and its political ideology (Torngren et al, 2018). Sweden is a state-centred society, where the public sector has taken on an extensive social responsibility of providing welfare services to citizens.

The reception and integration of newly arrived is the responsibility which is being divided between national, regional, and local public authorities. On the other hand, civil society is occupied in the field of culture, sports, and politics instead of the production of social services. It is being handled by the state. However, the trend has been changing since the 2015 refugee crisis. The governmental policy on integration recognized civil society as an actor, which should participate in the reception and integration programs (Torngren et al, 2018).

In 2010, the government also adopted a policy that has the objective to engage civil society organizations in the production of social services. Lately, an agreement has been established between state, civil society organizations, and the Swedish Association of Local authorities and regions (SOU, 2017). It becomes significant in the year 2015 and the civil society organizations involvement has increased and it can be broadly two categories. First relates to giving immediate help (for example offering clothes, medicines arranging transportations, and transit accommodations) to people who arrive at train stations and ferry terminals. The second task was in facilitating integration. This relates to organizing language training and study groups which link to Swedish society. For the second engagement, the government provides aid to civil society organizations (Torngren, Sayaka, and Emilsson, 2020).

However, civil societies in Sweden are dependent on the state, as they receive funding from the state on a national, regional, and local level (Amna E, 2005). The state funding directs civil society organizations in promoting the Swedish language and integration of immigrants in society, labour market, and health. Another field where civil society engagement is related deals with leisure time and adult education (SFS, 2016).

### **Current Scenario during Covid-19**

During the pandemic, immigrants being the most vulnerable community faced many problems. Civil society organisations covering wide networks came up as big rescuers from providing basic essential needs to immediate medical help. They fulfilled an essential role not by just providing basic services like food, masks, medicine but also initiated public campaigns for awareness regarding transmission (Valeriani et al, 2020).

### **Role of Different Civil Society Organisations**

### **1. Ensamkommandes Förbund (unaccompanied minors association)**

The organization was set up in 2013 by former unaccompanied minors to provide a social space and services to newly-arrived unaccompanied minors. The facility houses provide space to minors for doing homework, several game rooms, and a music room. There are no codified official rules but it is governed on the principle of the golden rule that “everyone should be treated with respect”. It is governed by its members and a day today administer supervises funding, plans, and implements activities. The organization is growing steadily in different Swedish cities but funding remains a problem as the organization's track record is not sufficient enough to pool large grants (EESC, 2019).

### **2. Yalla Trappan**

It is a social enterprise that employs migrant women who are not educated enough, have no work experience, and know limited Swedish language skills. The organization is based in Malmö. It integrates migrant women into the labour market by channelling their skills of cooking, sewing, cleaning into restaurants café. It operates with clients like IKEA and H&M. It has three sources of income, commercial activities, grant money, and subsidies from Public Employment Services.

It also faces some challenges as it is a social enterprise so neither it works on earning huge profits nor on charity so it is not able to sell its services at bargain prices (EESC, 2019).

### **3. Kontrapunkt**

Kontrapunkt's function is based on collectivism. It works on the principle of a time and money sharing system. The organization does not officially employ anyone and whoever works in the organization brings money will be shared among them. It also assists asylum seekers and refugees with shelter, medical help, language training, etc. some recognized refugees are also involved who provide their services to newly arrived refugees. After 2015 when Sweden closed its border to immigrants and the need for shelter declined, Kontrapunkt started working as a café that collects surplus food and distributes it via a food bank system.

Kontrapunkt also faces challenges in pooling funds as it has started focussing on political and social work so getting funds from public authority becomes a challenge due to a mismatch in needs for society and money available for different activities (EESC, 2019).

## **Churches**

Community building is the main theme on which churches work. They organize public worship, church choirs, and other meetings which bring the community together for the development of social cohesion (Wijkstrom et al, 2020).

In the year 2015, during the refugee crisis in Sweden, the church along with civil society organizations and national, regional, and local authorities have assisted refugees. More than 80 per cent of parishes became reception centres or were involved with other form activities which helped in the integration of asylum seekers. The parish staff members became active volunteers in the forefront of the reception at major train stations and other ports of entry. After the reception, they helped migrants in both long and short-term housing, food, language training, and counselling.

Even during the Covid19 pandemic church along with Swedish Red Cross, Swedish Sports Confederation, Save the Children have signed compact to help municipalities in assisting refugees. Municipalities needed volunteers for arranging medicine, groceries, and essentials for migrants.

### **Challenges Faced by Civil Society Organizations in Sweden**

The relation between the public sector and civil society is complex. There is always tension concerning who will provide social service and whose task will be the organization of reception and integration activity (SOU, 2017). As responsibility and roles are directly related to the organizational framework. The representatives in interviews which were conducted by the government official reports assert that there is a need for some sectors (like employment, welfare, and basic rights) should be completely handled by the state as it is the right of every individual irrespective of being native or migrant (Torngren, Sayaka, Emilsson, 2020).

The biggest challenge faced by civil society organizations is coordination between the public sector and the municipality. Some of the representatives of civil society organizations who were interviewed revealed that there is a gap between what information they get and what is needed. They do not get complete information in all areas. Therefore it hinders their capacity to work in assisting asylum seekers or refugees (SOU, 2017).

The other challenge which civil society organizations have to face is related to funding and in exact terms what type of funding. Civil society organizations can acquire funds in several ways. First, they can acquire funds through project-based. Second, through commissioned funding which is based on market bidding which is indirectly established customer-executor relations with the state. But in the real crux, all these funds are directly or indirectly related to political decision-making (Kazepov, Y., 2008). This is the reason most civil society organizations are critical of project-based and commissioned-based funding systems.

They prefer for partnership funding model (Torngren, Sayaka, Emilsson, 2020) as it will lead to equal participation with cooperation.

The other challenge is related to the integration process as civil society organizations work more comprehensively rather than dividing sectors. On the other hand, the public sector divides them based on housing, employment, and language learning, etc.

## **Conclusion**

Historically, Sweden in Europe has been a favourite destination for many migrants across the whole world. Traditionally Sweden is a welcoming society but after the 2015 refugee crisis, it has to be more careful and need assistance from different actors to manage that crisis. Statistics show that newcomers do pretty well in the domain of citizenship and long-term residence but Sweden's new policy of giving temporary residence for some time creates a problem for newcomers as well as to civil society organizations. The paper specifically tries to look into how state and civil society organisations handle the responsibility of assimilating immigrants not just for temporary residence but in other areas also, like employment, education, and poverty that create trouble for asylum seekers. In that context, the role of civil society organizations becomes very important. The study has already dealt with how the work domain of the civil society organization is evolving and now it's no more restricted to culture, sports or advocacy. Civil society has started taking part in the integration of asylum seekers and they were quite helpful too. The public authority has also realized their importance. Morgan Johansson, the Swedish Minister of Migration has said "if volunteers do not exist, everything would have crashed a long time ago" (Frykman and Makela, 2019).

Therefore, the state should treat civil society organizations as equal partners. To promote their involvement in the integration of refugees they should help them with funds and correct information and should let them work independently and comprehensively. In that circumstance, an open and constant dialogue between the public sector which includes (national, regional, and municipality) is the need of the hour.

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