

# An Overview of the Middle East Immigrants in the EU: Origin, Status Quo and Challenges\*

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## Abstract

EU has the most inhabited immigrant population; it has up to a population of 56 million foreign-born people. And due to the perennial war and chaos in the Middle East, the amount of relocated population in the region, especially the number of refugees, ranks the No.1 all over the world. Therefore, to clarify the main patterns of the movement of people in EU and the Middle East is of great significance in terms of the research on the issues of international migration. There are a large number of refugees and asylum seekers heading to EU countries; it can be divided into four stages. Since the Arab Spring, especially after the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011, and the rise of the "Islamic State" in 2013, the whole EU area have experienced the biggest wave of refugees since World War II.

**Keywords:** EU, Middle East, Immigrant, Refugee, Syria

## AB'deki Orta Doğulu Göçmenlere Genel Bakış: Köken, Mevcut Durum ve Zorluklar

## Öz

AB yerleşik göçmen sayısının en fazla olduğu yerdir; Avrupa dışında doğan insanların nüfuzu 56 milyonu bulmaktadır. Orta Doğu'daki bitmek bilmez savaşlar ve kargaşa yüzünden, bölgeye yerleşen insanların, özellikle de sığınmacıların sayısı AB'yi

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bu açıdan dünyanın bir numaralı göçmen bölgesine dönüştürmüştür. Dolayısıyla AB ve Orta Doğu'daki nüfuz hareketlerine dair temel hatları açığa çıkarmak, uluslararası göç meseleleriyle ilgili araştırmalar bakımından büyük önem taşımaktadır. AB ülkelerine giden çok sayıda sığınmacı ve mülteci vardır. Bu süreç dört aşamaya ayrılabilir. Arap Baharı'ndan bu yana, özellikle de 2011'de Suriye'de patlak veren iç savaş ve 2013 yılında "İslami Devletin" yükselişiyle birlikte, tüm AB bölgesi II. Dünya Savaşı'ndan bu yana gerçekleşmiş en büyük göç dalgasıyla karşılaşmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** AB, Orta Doğu, Göçmen, Sığınmacı, Suriye

## Introduction

Along with the continuous expansion of globalization, the movement of people has already become "the third wave of globalization" besides the movement of goods (trade) and the movement of money (finance)<sup>1</sup>, which profoundly affects the development process of the world history, and thus receives the global attention. From the global point of view, the EU has the most inhabited immigrant population, although the proportion of the foreign population in the total population is less than the United States and Australia and other countries of immigration, it has up to a population of 56 million foreign-born people. And due to the perennial war and chaos in the Middle East, the amount of relocated population in the region, especially the number of refugees, ranks the No.1 all over the world. Therefore, as the EU and Middle East are two areas that are geographical neighbors and with the frequent movement of people, to clarify their main patterns of the movement of people, namely the concept, origin and current situation of the Middle East immigrants, is of great significance in terms of the research on the issues of international migration. In particular, in view of the current refugee flow, which is the largest one between the two regions after World War II, its practical significance is self-evident.

## I. Concept and Causes of the Middle East Immigrants in the European Union

As the research object of this paper, the concept of "the Middle East immigrants in the EU" needs to be based on the understanding and clarification of the two concepts: the EU and the Middle East. From the

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<sup>1</sup> Jason DeParle, "Global Migration: A World Ever More on the Move", *The New York Times*, June 26, 2010.

perspective of historical geography, the development of the European Union itself has experienced a gradual evolution. On the one hand, in the course of development of the EU itself, the process of European integration is gradually realized in the specific fields: since 1950s, when the European Coal and Steel Community was first established, the scope had been limited to the management rights in coal and steel sector; in 1957, when the “Treaty of Rome” was signed, it was extended to the economic community with the common customs policy and common agricultural policy, as well as the European Atomic Energy Community; after 1980s, it finally became an “unified internal market” confirmed by a single European document to further open the market and to achieve the complete free flow of personnel, goods, capital and labor within the region; then in 1990s, the European Economic and Monetary Union that achieved monetary integration was established, which completed the unified currency: the Euro. With a brief review of the European integration process, it is not difficult to find that the origin of the EU is actually from the beginning of 1950s. On the other hand, the existing 28 member states of the EU themselves are gradually added to the group. France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium, and Luxemburg formed the alliance in 1951 as a founding member of the European Union. After that, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom (1973), Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986), Austria, Finland, and Sweden (1995) became members of the European Union. In 2004, the EU had realized the largest expansion in the history, ten countries including Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia also joined the European Union, and then Bulgaria and Romania (2007) and Croatia (2013) joined the EU. Therefore, in this paper, the study on the history of the Middle East immigrants in the EU mainly covers the time period of 1950s to present, which is also in accordance of the historical development process of the European Union. Of course, when it comes to a variety of specific issues, we will review the relevant history.

Another geographical concept is the so-called Middle East. In terms of the concept or composition of the Middle East countries, there are different opinions. In the eyes of Europeans, and from the point of view of geographical location, the Middle East involves four geographical regions: the first is the Maghreb, which means “land of the sunset”, composed of the small Maghreb including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, plus the large Maghreb including Mauritania and Libya. The second is the Mashrek, meaning the “place of the sun rise”, the region is also called the Near East, including Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and Cyprus. The third is the Persian Gulf region, which mainly refers to the Persian Gulf countries, including Iran,

Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen. The fourth is the Central Asian region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In conclusion, the Middle East, this paper refers to is closer to the definition by the academia in the United States, i.e., the concept of a “Greater Middle East”, which includes 25 countries.<sup>2</sup> In particular, Cyprus has a dual identity, a Middle East country and an EU Member State at the same time, and we categorize Cyprus as an EU country.

In addition, the definition of the “immigration” is still confusing; there are still a number of different definitions and standards for the concept. The United Nations and other relevant international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), have defined the concept. Overall, the definition of the immigration involves two criteria: first, it is an action across the boundary of national sovereignty; second, the time span living in another country (including Citizenship and non-citizenship). First, immigration is an activity that crosses borders, and will inevitably involve two or more sovereign states, including the immigrating country and emigrating country, so between the two sovereign countries, there are two different directions--emigration and immigration; that is, to further extend to the regional level, which direction the population flows between the two sovereignties in two regions. According to the statistical data in 2007, a total of 18 million people living overseas are emigrants from countries in the Middle East, among which 710 million belongs to population flow within the Middle East region, 740 million in the European Union, and 330 million in other areas of the world.<sup>3</sup> As the scale of immigrating population from the Middle East to the EU is much larger than the number of reverse direction, this paper will only examine the specifics of one migration direction, that is, the destinations of the immigrants are the EU Member States, and the origins are countries in the Middle East. In other words, this article does not consider the immigrants from the EU countries to the Middle East, and also does not specifically discuss the immigration status within the EU countries, or immigration flows in the Middle East region. Second, another criterion of immigration is the time span of residence in another country. Generally

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<sup>2</sup> In terms of the concept of the Middle East, this paper refers to the following documents: Bo Wang, *Research on the EU's Foreign Policy to the Middle East*, Beijing: Current Affairs Press, 2010; Lian Wang, *Middle Eastern Politics and Society*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Bommers, Heinz Fassmann & Wiebke Sievers, eds., *Migration from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe: Past Developments, Current Status and Future Potentials*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014, p. 216.

speaking, the United Nations defines the immigration standard as living in another country for more than a year, and the time span standard in many European countries is 3 months or more than six. Most European countries usually only allow foreigners to get residence of 3-6 months; living without a visa or residence permit over this period will be considered as settlement, and needs to apply for a residence permit from the relevant departments. Therefore, in the view of the famous immigration expert Thomas Hammar, foreign citizens who stay in a country for more than 3 months can be considered as immigrants; the immigration includes both foreign citizens who obtain residence permit and foreigners without a certificate of residence permit and illegal immigrants.

To sum up, the research object of this paper is “Middle East immigrants in the EU”, which refers to the immigrant groups from the Middle East countries to the EU member countries after 1950s. To clarify the definition of the EU’s Middle East immigrants, we come to its classification. There are various types of immigration; it can be divided from the perspective of the legitimacy of the immigrants, and in accordance with the purpose of migration. In this paper, according to the EU’s national immigration policy and immigration practice, the immigrants in EU countries from the Middle East are divided into the following four categories:

First, the working immigrants, who also known as labor immigration. During the social economy recovery period of Western Europe after World War II, Germany, France, Britain, Austria and other European countries recruit a large number of foreign workers from the great Middle East region. This type of international labor mainly includes contract service workers, trainees, seasonal workers and border workers. Second, family reunion immigration. Most of the EU member states in principle recognize the rights of reunion of legal immigrants and family members. Some Western European countries have clearly defined the rights of immigrant workers who are recruited in accordance with the agreement and the recruitment contract to have a family reunion. Due to this reason, there are many foreign immigrants who came to countries in Western Europe because of their family members. This category is called “family reunion”. Third, refugees and asylum seekers. In accordance with the provisions of the Refugee Convention of the United Nations in 1951, refugees refer to those living abroad and are unable or unwilling to return home due to the fear of “being persecuted because of their racial, religious, and ethnic identity, or membership in a particular social group, or their political opinion”. Asylum seeker refers to those who cross the border to

seek for protection, but may not be strictly in accordance with the standards in the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees in 1967 and “the refugee status protocol” in 1951 and other relevant provisions. At the end of the 1980s, an important feature of the change of the international immigration, including European immigrants, was the rapid increase in the number of asylum seekers, especially those who sought refuge from the Middle East. According to the practice of immigration policy and asylum policy in EU Member States, the boundary between refugees and asylum seekers is not easy to distinguish. Fourth, illegal immigrants, who may also be referred to as non-conventional immigrants, can be divided into overdue immigrants, illegal immigrants, fake asylum seekers, those holding fake documents, etc. The typical way is that the human smugglers conduct labor speculation by the transfer of illegal immigrants. Human smugglers, desperate Middle East immigrants and the EU employers who need cheap labor have formed a solid triangle alliance.

With regard to the cause of the formation of the Middle East immigrants in the EU, this article will discuss under the “push/pull model framework” proposed by the British scholar E. G. Ravenstein after the study on the laws of migration. Ravenstein holds the view that the motivations of population migration are the push and pull factors; the push factor refers to all kinds of repulsive forces in the original place of residence which are not conducive to survival and development, such as wars, riots, disaster, and deterioration of ecological environment—factors that have a general impact, or that a region or a small group encounters an accident or misfortune; on the other hand, pull factor refers to the attraction of the destination places. They can not only be a lot of new opportunities, but also special opportunities only for a small group.<sup>4</sup> The Classic push and pull theory about immigration emphasizes the demand - supply factors in the labor market between the labor importing countries and labor exporting countries. Based on the theory and combined it with historical factors, political factors, social and environmental factors, this article shows a Middle East immigration chain in the European Union. In EU countries and the Middle East countries there is a magnetic field, that is, the EU countries have a strong appeal to the Middle East, while the Middle East countries can make up for the lack of labor force in the EU countries. First, the two sides have structural complementarity in the labor market. Because of the low birth rate of EU countries in recent decades, there has been a lack of labor force, and the

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<sup>4</sup> E. G. Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration”, *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol.48, No.2, June 1885, pp. 167-235.

Middle East countries generally have labor surplus and low employment rate, in particular there was a lack of suitable jobs for educated young people. Therefore, the EU countries need the Middle East immigrants to ease the problem of the aging, and the shortage in labor market. Under the “pull factors” effect, between EU countries and the Middle East, there forms a wave of immigration inertia on the history of traditional migration chain. For example: from Pakistan to the United Kingdom, from Algeria to France, from Turkey to Germany, from Morocco to Italy; in addition, the developed market economy in EU countries, good social welfare, and higher level of education are a huge attraction for Middle Eastern immigrants. Under the influence of “push factors”, perennial political unrest and social instability, growing population and a weak economic capacity, as well as the harsh environmental factors in some countries in the Middle East region promote the region to migrate to the more prosperous and peaceful places in the EU.

## **II. The Historical Process of the Middle East Immigration in EU**

Viewing the development process of the Middle East immigrants in the EU, the immigration from the Middle East to the Europe officially started from the post-colonial era, followed by the wave of the labor migration after the World War II, and ended in the 1973 oil crisis, and then EU countries tightened their immigration policies in general. The family reunion immigration due to a large number of previous labor immigration has become the mainstream; in the post-Cold War era, due to the unrest in the Middle East, there were a large number of refugees and asylum seekers heading to EU countries. Specifically, it can be divided into the following four stages:

### **(i) From 1950s to 1960s: Migration from the former colonies in the post-colonial era to the suzerain states**

The first batch of the European Union’s Middle East immigrants came from the former European colonies. After the end of the Second World War, along with the collapse of the colonial system and the upsurge of movement for national independence, the former colonial people could choose to reside either in the former suzerain states or the newly independent nation states, there were a number of local intellectuals, the former government or military officials and employees chose suzerain nationality and moved to those countries. In the Middle East, for countries like Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and other Maghreb countries, which were originally French colonies, as well as Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq, which once under the rule of the UK, based on the

special historical origin between former suzerain states and the former colonies, immigrants from these countries or regions could easily have access to Europe.

During the World War II, Britain had recruited labor in the colonies to work in the military industrial enterprises, factories, and the service industry. Since 1955, Pakistani immigrants had begun to enter the UK as workers and soldiers in wartime needs; this is a typical “war labor migration”.<sup>5</sup> After the World War II, the British government was still subject to ideas left over from the British Empire, that people from former British colonies were people of the British Empire and had the right to settle in the United Kingdom; although Britain’s power declined, they hoped the British Commonwealth of Nations could serve as the inheritance of British Empire, in order to maintain Britain’s great power status and international influence. Therefore, in the view of UK, to gain the support of these Asian and African nations and regions, which were in succession to the independence, was very important to the consolidation and development of the Commonwealth. Thus, to attract former colonial countries to join the Commonwealth and maintain the special relationship with them became the main means to realize its Commonwealth dream. In order to strengthen the cohesion of the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom in 1948 promulgated the nationality law, pointing out that the citizens of the Independent States of the Commonwealth, and citizens of the United Kingdom and its colonial were fully entitled to the rights of becoming British citizens. After the World War II, the Britain experienced a shortage of labor force, and thus forcing the Britain to recruit foreign workers. In the post-war era, the Britain took an open policy on labor migration, which opened a door for the pre-colonial immigrants to go into Britain conveniently. According to statistics, from 1956 to 1962, the total number of Pakistanis that entered the United Kingdom reached 65,400.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, France had a similar immigration system with Britain. France as a former suzerain also naturally accepted a large number of immigrants from the former colonies, such as the three countries of the Maghreb in North Africa-- Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. They became independent one by one in the 1950s and 1960s, but as citizens of former colonies of France, people in these countries still had free access to their former suzerain. According to statistics, in 1946, among the foreign immigrants in France, there were more than 20,000 people from the Maghreb

<sup>5</sup> Eytan Meyers, *International Immigration Policy: A Theoretical and Comparative Analysis*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 63-68.

<sup>6</sup> David Butler, Gareth Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts 1900-2000*, London: Macmillan, 2000, p. 352.

region. Therefore, in this stage, Britain and France, as the representatives of the old colonial empires, were the two main countries to absorb immigrants from the former colonies in the Middle East.

### **(ii) From 1960s to 1970s: Labor migration from the Middle East after World War II**

Since 1960s, Europe entered the peak period of economic development, at that time the Middle East countries became a stable source of labor for Europe. Rapid economic growth in Europe after the war needs a large number of primary labor to involve in industrial, mineral, housing construction and agricultural production activities, which triggered an unprecedented wave of labor migration from the middle east.

Among them, the most representative is the “guest workers” from Turkey to the West Germany. In October 1961, Turkey and West Germany signed the first labor export agreement, starting the recruitment of guest workers, and then hundreds of thousands of Turkish immigrants entered the German industrial and mining enterprises; they had become the most important force in the economic development of West Germany. Since then, Turkey signed similar labor export agreements in 1964 with Holland, Belgium and Austria, with France in 1965, and with Sweden in 1967. During the golden decade from 1961 to 1973 of the labor exports, the labor immigration to Europe was composed by male workers in general, which resulted in a large number of family reunion immigrants in the next decade. In addition, another major source of the growth of labor immigration in Western Europe is Morocco. Morocco also signed the labor recruitment protocols with relevant countries, mainly including the agreements with West Germany in 1963, with France in 1963, with Belgium in 1964, and with Netherlands in 1969. This move also diversified the geographical destination of European immigrants from Morocco, rather than only having the France a destination. At the same time, when the labor demands of French business community were not met, a large number of Maghreb people became a new source. According to statistics, in the 1980s, the proportion of Maghreb immigrants in French population increased to 39%, among which only Algeria immigrants amounted to more than 800,000, and became France’s biggest foreign immigrant groups.<sup>7</sup> In addition, there are a large number of “guest workers” from the poor countries

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<sup>7</sup> Minghuan Li, Karina Qahasimov, “Paradoxes of Republican Model: A Study of French Immigration Policy”, *European Studies*, No.4, 2003.

along the Mediterranean coast in the Middle East recruited to the southern European countries.

The Labor immigration wave from Turkey and Morocco reached its peak in early 1970s. At the same time, in addition to the regular labor immigration, a large number of families immigrated to the Europe. In addition, the illegal immigrant network also gradually rose; they avoided the official restrictions by means of bribery, and usually first entered the European countries as tourists, and finally became overdue immigrants.

### **(iii) The family reunion immigration from the oil crisis in 1973 to the mid of 1980s**

The outbreak of the oil crisis in 1973 is a watershed for the European immigration policy. Since the oil crisis, the tightening of European immigration policies towards the Middle East immigrants has continued to date. However, it is ironic that is the continuously tightening immigration policies in Europe, especially restrictions on visa application, instead has promoted the wave of permanent residence of immigrants—many immigrants who originally planned a short-term residence decide to permanently settle down because of fears on visa restrictions. This phenomenon partly explains why from 1970s to 1980s, the population of immigrants from Morocco and Turkey continued to increase.

At the same time, as the joint effects of the first phase labor immigration, a large number of family reunion immigrants became the representatives of immigration at this stage. As mentioned earlier, labor immigration brought male workforce and their families moved to Europe through the application of family reunion immigration. Single Turkish immigrants rarely did cross-ethnic marriages, so through marriage, they brought new immigrants increments, and so that the ratio of male to female was in balance among the Turkish immigrants. Similarly, in addition to Germany, Turkey immigrants in other region had experienced such a process. According to the 1985 statistics, the amount of Turkey immigrants in Europe was close to 2 million, becoming the dominate labor immigrants in Western Europe. By 1996, the Turkish immigrants in the European Union reached nearly 3 million, of which 2/3 of Turkey immigrants were living in Germany.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ural Manco, "Turks in Western Europe", <http://www.cie.ugent.be/umanco/umanco3.htm>

In the 1970s, after the Arab oil embargo and subsequent European economic downturn, most European countries shut the door for the immigrant workers. But there were still nearly 500,000 family reunion immigrants and 400,000 asylum seekers coming to Western Europe every year' most of them were from Algeria, Morocco and Turkey.<sup>9</sup>

#### **(iv) Post-Cold War refugees from the Middle East**

With the collapse of the Berlin wall, the unification of the East and West Germany marked the end of the cold war, which had a profound impact on Europe's internal affairs. After the end of the cold war, the priority of European countries was to deal with their immigration issue in the region, especially immigrants from Eastern European countries. During this period, that is, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, as asylum seekers, Turkey's Kurdish accounted for a considerable part of the immigrant population. According to the statistics from 1983 to 2003, there were about one million Turks seeking asylum from Western European countries, and they mainly concentrated in Germany. Besides France, places that Moroccan immigrants settled in were relative diversified; they lived almost all over the western and southern Europe, in particular, the southern Europe had become the destination of new Moroccan immigrants. From the 1990s to the early 21st century, a new large-scale Moroccan immigration wave began to hit the southern European countries, and the main reason was the demand for large amount of cheap labor forces in southern European countries such as Spain and Italy. Although most of these immigrants entered these countries through illegal or unconventional means, eventually a lot of illegal immigrants gained access to the resident identities. According to statistics from 1980 to 2004, the population of Morocco living in Spain and Italy increased from 20,000 to 65,000. A large number of illegal immigrants forced Spain and Italy to increase the control over the southern land border, but this had made illegal immigrants start to try the maritime route.

Since the end of the cold war, the EU countries began to express concerns over the illegal immigrants and refugees from the great Middle East, and they began to seek cooperation with labor exporting countries and transit countries in the Middle East to jointly participate in controlling the problem of

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<sup>9</sup> International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2000*, Geneva: IOM, 2000, p.195.

illegal immigration. The Barcelona Declaration in 1995 launched the Barcelona dialogue process among the 17 member states of the European Union and 14 countries in Middle East. Subsequently in 1999, in the EU Tampere conference, European countries further identified the main goal of the common development of the refugee policies, including the strengthening of cooperation with emigration countries; concern about the political issues, human rights and social development problems in the emigration countries and transit countries; to implement effective management on immigration; the establishment of a common asylum system.

Entering the 21st century, since the events of 9/11, the United States launched two wars on terrorism -- the war in Afghanistan (2001) and the Iraq War (2003), which further deteriorated the grim Middle East refugee situation. After the wars, Afghanistan and Iraq, the two nations have been occupying the first and second position on the UNHCR refugee list. With the advent of the Arab Spring in 2010, the Middle East has experienced Tunisia's Jasmine revolution, the revolution in Egypt, Libya's civil war, uprising in Yemen, Bahrain demonstrations, the Syrian crisis, and the rise of Islamic State; a large number of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya applied for asylum in EU countries. At the same time, the number of illegal immigrants also rose sharply. These have brought huge pressure on refugee issues to the EU and its Member States.

To sum up, it is not difficult to find that Middle East immigration system is in fact a hybrid system in all stages, that is, former colonial immigrants, immigrant workers, family reunion immigrants, and refugees and illegal immigrants coexist. The difference is that each stage has a mainstream immigration type to represent the characteristics of the EU's Middle East immigrants. Overall, in the history of Middle Eastern immigrants in EU, the structure has changed from social elites as the majority at early stage to skilled labor's dominance, and then turned into the dominance of refugees and illegal immigrants; along with this change, the attitude of European Union countries towards the Middle Eastern immigrants also experienced a shift from the active absorption to passive acceptance and then even resistance.

### **III. Current Situation and Routes Selection for the Middle East Refugees**

Since the Arab Spring, especially after the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011, and the rise of the "Islamic State" in 2013, the whole EU area

have experienced the biggest wave of refugees since World War II. The immigrants are mainly composed by war refugees from the Middle East, especially Syria refugees, bringing unprecedented challenges to the EU countries. Since the Syrian crisis begun in 2011 till now, there are about 6.5 million internally displaced persons, 4.4 million registered refugees, and 1.5 million illegal immigrants. The total number of these refugees accounts for half of the number of Syrian population. Globally, Syria has become the world's largest source of refugees, as of the end of 2015 there were 4.2 million Syrian refugees wandering to the surrounding countries and regions, followed by 2.59 million Afghanistan and 1.1 million Somalia.<sup>10</sup>

Specifically, Middle East countries transporting immigrants to the EU countries can be divided into country of origin and transit: The former are mainly Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and the latter are mainly Turkey, Libya, and Morocco. The Syrian refugee crisis has brought great pressure of refugee asylum for the neighboring countries. At present, the total number of Syrian refugees registered in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon is 2.1 million, in Turkey is 2.2 million, and in North Africa is 0.26 million. Turkey has become the world's largest refugee asylum.

At the same time, from April 2011 to March 2016, as the immigrant destination of the Middle East refugees, the EU countries have received 0.68 million copies of asylum applications, of which Germany and Sweden account for 60%, Hungary, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark and Bulgaria account for 26%, and other countries accounts for 13%. Germany and Sweden became the two EU countries that received the largest number of asylum and refugee applications. According to UNHCR statistics, the number of refugees flew into European Union area soared from about 60,000 in 2013, to 218,000 in 2014, in 2015, this figure was doubled to 500,000, in the next two years it is expected that at least 850,000 refugees will come to the EU countries through the Mediterranean, coupled with the refugees from land, the total amount will be more than one million.<sup>11</sup>

The Continued unrest and war in the Middle East have forced a large number of refugees in the Middle East to leave their home. They tried various methods to flee to Europe for asylum. Overall, they go to Europe by sea and

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<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, *Global Report 2014*, <http://www.unhcr.org/gr14/index.xml>.

<sup>11</sup> Zhiming Sun, "European Refugee Tide in the Perspective of Crisis Research", *Beijing Times*, September 14, 2015.

land, and their routes can be divided into three directions, East, Central and West. According to the EU border authority-- Frontex, there are eight entrance route to EU countries: Western African Route, Western Mediterranean Route, Central Mediterranean Route, Apulia and Calabria Route, Circular Route from Albania to Greece, the Western Balkan Route, Eastern Mediterranean Route, and the Eastern Boarder Route.<sup>12</sup>

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#### MIGRATORY ROUTES MAP

One of the biggest entry routes for migrants into the EU is via international airports: most of those who currently reside in the EU illegally, originally entered in possession of valid travel documents and a visa whose validity period they have since overstayed.

#### Main migratory routes into the EU / land & sea

- ▶ Western African route
- ▶ Western Mediterranean route
- ▶ Central Mediterranean route
- ▶ Apulia and Calabria route
- ▶ Circular route from Albania to Greece
- ▶ Western Balkan route
- ▶ Eastern Mediterranean route
- ▶ Eastern Borders route

■ Schengen area

■ Schengen associate countries



First of all, the western route includes the West African route and the Western Mediterranean Route. These two are the maritime routes. The West Africa Route is from Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco to Spain's Canary Islands; this path is located in the west, and is the main route for Africans to go into Europe, so there are very few Syrian refugees coming into Europe through this path. Another is the western Mediterranean route, from Morocco to the port of Melilla to Spain. This is the main route for South Sahara African immigrants and people from Maghreb countries. According to the monitoring of Frontex and relevant statistics, since the Middle East upheavals in 2011, the

<sup>12</sup> Frontex, *Trends and Routes*, <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/migratory-routes-map/>

number of illegal immigrants that entered the European Union through the path has increased significantly, with the average annual amount reached about 7,000 to 8,000 people, including refugees from Syria. Overall, although the West route is under the increasing pressure of refugees, it is still the route under the smallest pressure in the three directions.

Secondly, the central path includes four routes: the Central Mediterranean Route, Apulia and Calabria Route, Circular Route from Albania to Greece, and the Western Balkan Route. Among them, the first two routes are maritime routes, and the latter two are land routes. Central Mediterranean route is a maritime route from Libya to Italy, but due to the dilapidated, simple and unsafe sea transport equipment, most are from Tunisia, Nigeria and Somalia and Eritrea and landing through the Italian island of Lampedusa and Malta. This line was well controlled after Libya and Italy signed a bilateral agreement in 2009, but experienced great changes after the Arabia spring in 2011. From January to March 2011, nearly 23,000 Tunisians migrated to the island of Lampedusa; they were eager to apply for economic immigrating identity in order to work in France. From March to August, more than 40,000 South Sahara Africans arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa, among which a few went to Sicily and Malta. Most of these people are expelled by the Gaddafi regime, and wanted to apply for asylum in the Italian. In August 2011, Gaddafi regime collapsed, and this part of the refugees were under control. But in 2013, due to the unrest and violence in Libya, there were many illegal immigrants fleeing to the Europe again. The Apulia and Calabria route is through the high seas to reach the southern Italy as well, from Turkey or Egypt to Calabria region; many are the Syrians, Pakistanis, Afghans and the Egyptians. Some may also enter the European Union member states through Greece. After the spring of Arabia, the number of people using this route began to increase, and later declined as more chose the land routes through the western Balkans. At first, the route was from Egypt to the coastal cities of Italy. After 2014, smugglers followed this route and most of them departed from the port of Mersin in Turkey. According to statistics from 2014 to 2015, about 330,000 illegal immigrants went to Europe from the central Mediterranean route and Apulia and Calabria route. The other two land routes are relatively safe, including a land loop line for immigration to link between Greece and Albania, which is the most important route across the European Union's external borders. This path is driven primarily by economic factors; a lot of seasonal labor forces immigrate through this route to Greece to carry out agricultural work and construction. Another western route is the western Balkans Route. This route is through Macedonia and Serbia to Hungary after

arriving in Greece. Among the four routes, the western Balkans route bears the second largest pressure of refugees, with a large number of refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. At present, the number of refugees taking this route increased from 43,000 in 2014 to more than 760,000 people in 2015. Therefore, the four routes in central path are under tremendous pressure, and are the disaster areas of the refugee crisis.

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Finally, the eastern route includes the eastern Mediterranean route and the Eastern Boarder Route. The Eastern Mediterranean route is the north passage into Western Europe through Greece. Most of the refugees choose to land on some of the islands of Greece, mostly in Lesbos; upon arrival in Greece and across the border, they can arrive in Macedonia. From the sea route, they mostly arrive at the islands of Aegean Sea, and there is a small amount of people arrive in Cyprus. By flight, you can fly directly from Istanbul to the European cities. Of course, you can also go through the land border from Turkey into Greece, or to bypass Turkey directly into the southern part of Bulgaria. According to statistics, in 2015 there were more than 885,000 refugees into the EU region through this route; the figure is 17 times than that in 2014. The eastern border line is mainly the long border line between European Union and the East and Central Europe and Russia, there are few immigrants from the Middle East. So, all the pressure on the eastern route is on the eastern Mediterranean route, and it is the most important route for the refugees.

Since March 2011, about 4.2 million people have fled abroad from Syria, while a large number of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries were forced to flee away. From the point of view of the above immigration routes, the first direct impact of the refugee force will be imposed on the countries around the Syria. According to statistics, in 2014 there were 1.59 million refugees fled to Turkey, and 1.15 million fled to Lebanon, which will be the outpost for Middle East refugees to go into the European area, and have been overwhelmed at present. And as refugees' gateway to Europe countries -- Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Spain are also saddled with huge pressure. Among the Middle East refugees that fled to Europe in 2015, about 213,000 people are in Greece at present, 145,000 people in Hungary, and 115,000 people in Italy. It goes without saying that the Syrian refugee crisis is bound to have a huge and far-reaching political, economic and social impact on its neighboring countries and the EU countries.

#### **IV. The Challenges and Impact of the Middle East Refugees Crisis in the EU**

The influx of refugees from the Middle East has brought great challenges to the EU and its Member States, and it has been an unprecedented test for EU integration. In fact, the EU is not unable to absorb the refugees, as EU President Juncker admitted in the State of the European Union Address in 2015, “the number of refugees now fled to Europe is unprecedented, but they are still 0.11% of the EU’s total population.” However, EU Member States failed to reach a consensus on the responsibility to accommodate refugees and most Member States were too conservative and fearful to receive refugees, even being contrary to customary humanitarian attitude of the western countries. In response to the “non-normal response” of the European Union countries to the refugee crisis, this paper believes that this is caused by a variety of pressures behind the issue.

First, from the perspective of security, international terrorism and national security threats. The global anti-terrorism activities since 9/11 have resulted in an atmosphere of the “Islamic phobia” in the EU. From the Charlie Hebdo incident in January of last year to the serial terrorist incidents of violence in Paris in November, to a series of terrorist attacks this year in Brussels, Belgium, the entire Europe has been severely frightened by the Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. Almost all the refugees are from Muslim countries, and the identity confirmation for war refugees is extremely complex and difficult, which makes the European countries that originally have fear towards Muslims do not dare to easily accept refugees. Moreover, there are also some Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists causing a serious threat to the national security of Europe by this chance, aggregating the consciousness of prevention of the member states on refugees. As to recent European media, there are about 4,000 IS terrorists sneaked into Europe in the tide of refugees, and waiting to introduce terrorist activities into Europe. Similar news has made the EU countries extremely uneasy. The national security threat posed by the international terrorist forces, which is closely linked to the refugee crisis, and the domestic terrorist attacks are regarded as a direct consequence of the influx of Middle East refugees inside the “internal”. In November 2015, there is at least one attacker in the Paris attack was confirmed to be disguised as Syrian refugee, and this confirm that the illegal immigrants became a channel for terrorists entering the EU. Accompanied by several previous Middle East immigrants’ tides, there are profound changes in European population structure; the tendency of Islamization in Europe is very

obvious. Therefore, the “implosion” risk coefficient is rising, and the EU countries’ security is faced with severe challenges.

Second, from the perspective of economy, the huge economic cost in dealing with the refugee crisis and the old and new injuries caused by the economic downturn in the pre financial crisis. Since 2011, the EU and its Member States have spent 3.9 billion euros for humanitarian aid to Syria and neighboring countries. This is more or less a kind of pressure for the EU and Member States which just experienced the financial crisis and are still in recovery, especially for countries such as Hungary, Italy and Greece, these members have already burdened with the old economic pressure, and have not recovered from the financial crisis, and they are also at the front-line of the refugee wave, new economic pressure has already appeared. Even if Germany, the mainstay of the EU economy, is not optimistic to its future economic situation. A survey of CESifo showed that in the 220 professors majoring in economics who were questioned, there are 40% of them thought that the influx of mass immigration was a drag on German economy, nearly 40% of them had no final conclusion, and only 20% of them believed these immigrants were beneficial to German economy.<sup>13</sup> There are many obstacles for refugees to play a positive role in the labor market. For example, Germany received 1.1 million refugees in 2015, most of them fled from war-torn Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of them cannot speak German, and cannot find work in Germany due to their low education level or educational qualification certification, so they cannot provide effective labor forces and bring economic benefits.

In addition, in order to cope with the complexity of refugees’ tide, restart border controls may be an attractive short-term solution for European countries, but this measure is negative for the EU economy in the long-term. Hanna Deringer, a policy analyst of European Centre for International Political Economy, published an article “The Cost of Non-Schengen for the Single Market”. She said in the article that, if the EU cannot timely stop the Schengen border controls, then the European economy will be seriously damaged.<sup>14</sup> The author believes that the single market is the economic pillar of the EU,

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<sup>13</sup> “German Think Tank Said that Influx of Mass Immigration was a Drag on German Economy,” February 19, 2016, [http://gn.cssn.cn/hqxx/hqzhk/201602/t20160219\\_2874359.shtml](http://gn.cssn.cn/hqxx/hqzhk/201602/t20160219_2874359.shtml)

<sup>14</sup> Hanna Deringer, “The Cost of Non-Schengen for the Single Market,” May 2016, <http://ecipe.org/publications/the-cost-of-non-schengen-for-the-single-market/?chapter=all>

Schengen agreement is not only a symbol of European integration, but also creates real economic value through the promotion of cross-border trade. Schengen agreement promotes the free across-borders flow of human, goods, services and capital and reduces the unemployment rate in the EU countries. But at present the border control in the EU not only improves the transportation costs, leading to the rise of commodity prices, but also makes the production cost in the EU increase substantially, leading to the fall of products' price competitiveness. In addition, the willingness of foreign companies to invest in the EU may also be affected.

Third, from the perspective of ideology, the dual pressures of domestic politics and society. The refugee crisis has led to the rise of the internal right-wing conservative forces in the European Union, stirring domestic controversy over the issue of refugees. Europe's social tensions, panic and the rise of extreme nationalism were triggered by terrorist attacks, refugee crisis, economic downturn and regional conflicts. European extreme right-wing forces and the political parties, which were in a political marginal position for a long time, such as Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, Alternative for Germany (AfD), Front National, Sverigedemokraterna, now are entering the mainstream European politics stage. Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland warning that extreme nationalism is rising in Europe. The refugee crisis is widely believed to have provided the opportunity for the rapid rise of the right-wing European populist political parties, which has changed the direction of the European political ecology to the far right nationalism. Although current European extremist nationalism forces differentiate in organizing form, political views, and degree of extremism, they all in the name of representative of public opinions, set the national interest before the EU common interests, and oppose immigration and European integration.

At the same time, faced with series of difficulties and challenges, such as economic downturn, refugee crisis, security threats, British departure from the EU, European people cannot find effective solutions, and feels very confused. Then they began to turn to conservatism, so as to get rid of the crisis through narrow nationalism. As the influx of refugees have brought about several domestic security incidents, citizens of the member states have begun to dislike the absorption of refugees. For example, after the large scale of sexual assault incident in Köln, Germany in January 2016, right-wing parties in Germany took advantage of this opportunity to grow; this deepened the panic of the German Society and people towards refugees, and resulted in rise of domestic xenophobia. Facing the unprecedented influx of refugees and the

deteriorating security situation, German society has changed its attitude in accepting refugees. The open door policy to refugees by Chancellor Angela Merkel was not only protested in the German cities and streets, but also opposed even by her party and the cabinet. Sergio Carrera, a scholar in the Center for European Policy Studies said, “the main inducement of the rise of European extreme nationalism is indeed the growing refugee crisis, but the deep-seated reasons are multiple crises which are intertwining and different to resolve, and a vent of the deepening defeatist mood diffuses in the minds of the European people.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, this part of European people are utilized by the right wing parties’ elites and become a solid foundation for the right-wing public opinion.

Anyway, in face of oncoming turbulent refugee crisis, the EU and its member states are facing pressure from all levels; the EU integration and its internal unity are experiencing a severe test. The outcome of the European Union for the refugee problem will not only affect the future of the refugee crisis, but will also affect the future development of the EU’s Middle East immigration system.

### Conclusion

For a long time, the European Union sees the Middle East as its “backyard”, the “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership” and the “European Neighborhood Policy” play an important role in promoting the development of bilateral relations between the EU and the Middle East. In a long period of time since the 1950s, the European Union accepted the Middle East immigrants with enthusiasm and initiative. But the EU’s current dilemma in the Middle East immigrants issue reflects the gap between the EU’s own values and practice. Being a “civil power” and “normative power”, the EU vigorously promotes its diplomacy with freedom, democracy and human rights values as kernel which is also the cornerstone for EU’s establishment and expansion. With the economic recession in Europe, the Arab Spring, and the civil war in Syria, the Middle East immigrants brought the full range of shocks in EU countries, including national security, social security and economic security. Specifically, the European Union countries spend huge amounts of money for the resettlement of the Middle East immigrants, which made its economy even worse, and many “Islamic State” terrorists entered in

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<sup>15</sup> Yan Ren, “Extreme Nationalism Threatens the Security of Europe,” *People’s Daily*, May 3, 2016.

the EU with Middle East immigrants to launch a variety of terrorist attacks. EU is in increasingly dilemma of how to balance the disputes on the absorption of Middle East immigrants between Western European and the Central and Eastern European member states, and how to balance the public and political xenophobia voices and the EU's core values, these even affects the solidarity of the EU.

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## Özet

*Avrupa Birliği ülkeleri dışarıdan gelen yerleşik göçmen nüfuzunun orantısız bakımdan en yoğun olduğu coğrafyadır. Yakın zamanda Orta Doğu coğrafyasında yaşanan savaş ve kargaşa ortamı Avrupa'ya yönelik büyük göç dalgasını daha da şiddetlendirmiştir. Eldeki makale söz konusu olguya Avrupa ve Orta Doğu coğrafyası arasındaki ilişkiselliği göç kavramı çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Avrupa Birliği'nin takip ettiği "Avro-Akdeniz Ortaklığı" ve "Avrupa Komşuları Politikası" AB ve Orta Doğu arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin temelini oluşturmuştur. Özellikle 1950'lerden sonraki ekonomik gelişme içinde Avrupa göçmen nüfuzunu kabul etme konusunda istekli olmuştur.*

*Makalede bu sürecin ötesinde, göçle bağlantılı sorunlar ve entegrasyon meselesi ele alınmaktadır. Entegrasyonla ilgili en önemli sorun makaleye göre, AB'nin değerleri ve uygulamalarıyla Orta Doğu'dan gelen göçmenler arasındaki farklılıklardır. Avrupa'daki ekonomik kriz, Arap Baharı, Suriye'de sürmekte olan iç savaş, göçmenler nezdinde AB'nin ulusal, toplumsal ve ekonomik güvenliğini riske atan unsurlar haline gelmiştir. AB göçmenlerin Orta Doğu coğrafyasındaki güvenli yerlere tekrar geri yerleştirilmesi için büyük meblağlar harcamakta ve bu ekonomisini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Diğer yanda Orta Doğu göçmenleri arasında Avrupa ülkelerine giren radikal terör örgütü üyeleri, alıcı ülkelerin güvenliğinde büyük zafiyete yol açmaktadır. Makale AB'nin göçmen krizi karşısında yaşadığı sorunları özetlemekte ve bu krizin politik yabancı düşmanlığıyla Avrupa'nın temel değerleri arasında önemli bir çatışma yarattığını vurgulamaktadır.*