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Sümeýra Tahta

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Book Review

William Maley. **What is a refugee?** Oxford University Press, New York, 2016, pp. 253, \$34.08 (Paperback), ISBN 9780190652388

Sümeýra Tahta 

Department of History, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Türkiye

“God gave him a visa” (p. 197).

Recently, with the activity of refugees and asylum-seekers in Europe, there has been a conceptual or terminological confusion, both in Europe and far beyond. While the lifeless body of Alan Kurdi, photographed beside a capsized boat, and the danger of the migration journey can be understood through news stories, in the 21st century, the term “asylum seeker” has become as common as “refugee”. The book titled, *What is a refugee?* written by William Maley, clearly explains in detail the concept of refugee and offers a guide to understanding migration.

The flow of refugees remains stable and their mobility is inevitable, and this is not only because of changes in host countries. Unless new ways of protecting refugees and asylum seekers are developed, addressing the conditions that lead to refugee mobility and the way decision makers deal with them, it will remain the same. To begin with, this book is divided into eight chapters. It starts with the introduction and explanations in the first chapter (p. 1). In the second chapter, the author discusses the definition of a refugee (p. 15), both in international law matters and in casual language. In addition, it includes discussions on whether decision-making mechanisms and states can accept individuals as refugees. Chapter three (p. 43) examines the history of exile, displacement, and relocation, noting the variety of inquiry about mass displacement. Chapter four (p. 75) examines the willingness to protect refugees state to state, with the tendency of variable conditions. Chapter five (p. 101) is about the dynamics and mobility of refugees. It also is differentiates a number of factors within the globalizing world. Chapter six (p. 127) explores how modern diplomacy is used as a tool by states. Chapter seven (p. 155) considers military intervention and the term “Responsibility to Protect-R2P.” It covers how military intervention provides a solution to the problem of refugees. The book is concluded with chapter eight (p. 181) that gives some clues about free movement and border control for refugees.

The author examines why diplomacy has failed, when refugees come to enter a state. States well-protected by borders have the tendency to close the source of refugee flows, coming from places often with fewer resources. The book mentions that the modern

notion of migrant protection responsibility in circulation is limited to crimes such as genocide, which are, but by no means always, the cause of refugee flows. While states such as England and France continue to change, not only protection but also migration policies regarding refugees, the activities of R2P in Libya are clarified. This is defended by the reluctance of China and Russia to allow the UN Security Council to intervene when it comes to Syria. In addition, the reasons and consequences of military intervention have made the situation worse, and including the emergence of more refugees from Iraq. This is explained with different illustrations.


In the Kurdi case mentioned above, it was determined that the efforts of the family to be resettled in Canada were not approached with a solution-oriented approach by the authorities. This situation reveals how states approach migration and their competence on the issue. As the author states, the Minister of Immigration lost the election in the 2015 Canadian elections (p. 6). From point of this view, the issue of migration comes into focus when elections are approaching and states implement different policies for migrants. According to Lee's push-pull theory, there are some push-pull factors that can be personal and relative in the destination country (Everett S. Lee, 1966, *A Theory of Migration*". *Demography* 3(1):47-57). The conditions in destination countries are vital factors for immigrants and the push-pull theory is quite complex when considered in the 21st century. One of the paradoxes of the term *refugee* is that a person might become a refugee without the state acknowledging them as such, despite the fact that the state system was crucial in the initial genesis of the refugee phenomenon (p. 9). It is generally recognized that people want a better life, and refugees who express such hope should not be rejected on this basis and there should be real solutions. According to the author, although states express commitment to the 1951 Geneva Convention, it is interpreted by states as rigidly and narrowly as possible in a practical context. The author indicates this as an illustration of the Australian policy after 1999. Australia stated that it would provide temporary protection visas to refugees found to have arrived by boat and examples have been multiple in this regard.

In addition, the understanding of the word refugee in other languages is used in different contexts from the word refugee in English. The word *réfugié* in French differs semantically in terms of mother tongue usage. On the contrary, the equivalents of the word refugee in Russian are *bezhenets* (masculine) and *bezhenka* (feminine) and these words mean "running" (p. 38). The confusion over the word refugee, both in ordinary language and etymologically, leads to deficiencies in the semantic interpretation of countries' policies, both in the past and today. The 1951 Geneva Convention topic is covered in the book and is taken into consideration when examining the problem's resolution. The convention lacks a humanitarian category and is based on the refugee camp phenomenon, which can serve as both a shelter and a means of incarceration and control. Additionally, the history of border and passport enforcement is not related to the Treaty

of Westphalia. Although borders are mentioned, the primary emphasis is on the essence of borders, rather than border control. The right to emigrate was guaranteed by the Treaty of Münster, a continuation of the *jus emigrandi* recognized Peace of Augsburg in 1555. (p. 78). The author considers that, for a border control system, a country must at least have a physical tracking system that regulates the movement of the population across its borders and also have a citizen documentation system. The modern passport emerged as a tool that facilitates the identification and inspection of citizens, so it is ultimately the product of the development of the modern bureaucratic state. According to Torpey, the passport “has emerged from the relatively immature international system that existed in the nineteenth century” (p. 79). The problem with refugees and immigrants is not only passports, on the contrary, it has to do with the breadth of visa implementation. Visa applications were used for Jewish refugees with passports in the 1930s. In a sense, it aims to prevent refugee mobility. It is observed that visa applications are increasing, even when there is regular immigration and since the 1930s, stricter rules have been increasing day by day.

To conclude, the ambiguity of the term refugee seems to have continued from the past and will continue into the future. This book aims to clarify the subject with practices and case studies from the past. The book states that refugees will need to be seriously sophisticated, in order to survive in a globalizing world, and they will not be easily deceived by state propaganda. It also points out that the information resources available to refugees increased with mobile phones. This is another striking technology advancement in the globalizing world, and it explains how refugees are controlled in the sense of digital practices. William Maley offers a guide to give the reader an idea of the refugee issue. The book covers the definition of refugee, both as a matter of international law and in philosophical and ordinary language discussions. It also briefly covers the procedures used by states to determine whether people should be considered refugees. Maley examines the history of exile and displacement, noting the diversity of experiences of both individuals and mass displacements. Describing individuals seeking asylum, reveals the anguish, separation, and displacement they endure on their dangerous journeys. The book discusses the dynamics of refugee crises in the globalizing world and presents a number of factors that differentiate twenty-first century movements. In addition, it explores how tools of modern diplomacy are used in the management of refugee flows. It defines what barriers must be overcome in order for diplomacy to be effective in meeting the needs of refugees. Finally, it highlights how border controls impose moral and material costs on societies and peoples in ways that are often overlooked or ignored.

Orcid

Sümeýra Tahta  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5925-9891>