

In This Changing World of Ours

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When you hear the word “migrants” or “refugees,” what is the first thing you picture in your mind? The photographs of the people discreetly leaving Syria on precarious little boats in the Mediterranean? The thousands fleeing from the harrowing wars in Afghanistan? While both of these terms are used interchangeably, the word “refugee” is used to specifically for people displaced because of war, persecution, or in recent years, climate change. Both are searching for one thing in common- a better life. However, they are finding it harder and harder to get in today’s society.

In the past, migration has been a defining occurrence in many of history’s most important events, discoveries, and settlements. However, in the highly populated modern society, wealthier countries are beginning to oppose this movement, complaining of wasted resources, increased crime, and a host of other reasons. In recent months, after years of ever-increasing migrant movement from countries in the Middle East towards Europe, these countries are beginning to close their borders off to these people. It has become increasingly difficult and dangerous for migrants to find a safe haven in all this opposition.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the number of international migrants has increased in every continent over the last decade. Because of an increasing inequality gap between wealthier countries, the manifesting effects of climate change, and the protective policies that countries have started to adapt (The executive order 13769 comes to mind), people attempting to move out would face a barrage of barriers, stranding them or even pushing them back.

Modern society is split between people who are tolerant of migration, and those who acutely oppose it. Some Eastern European countries and the United States are tightening their borders. As this gap between the rich and poor grows wider and wider in the future, it is unlikely that countries would be ever willing to accept migrants anymore. There are innumerable accounts of these people stranded in countries or borders,

sometimes even risking their lives to cross into countries such as the United States. While in 2017, there are countries in Europe still willing to accept migrants, and a fair amount of non-governmental organizations and individuals supporting this trend, the future holds uncertain.

As migration would bring more and more economic difficulties to wealthier countries, such as rising unemployment, and having a larger and larger proportion of government spending being diverted to refugee management, it would eventually reach a breaking point where a country would finally decide to stifle the flow of refugees into their country. This has already happened with some Scandinavian countries like Sweden, traditionally considered open countries a few years ago. Countries would also grow more and more protective as their own citizens start to confront climate change and a shrinking youth population.

It is too early, in this uncertain world, to judge how humanity would turn out by the end of the 21st century. The problems we have created in the last few centuries are taking their toll today. However, one thing is for certain. Unless humanity alters its perception and action towards migrants, the future would likely hold a lot worse for all of us.