

**Holding the World Accountable: A Philosophical
Analysis of the Refugee Crisis and the Moral Obligations of
the Global Community**

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Abstract

At present there is a record number of refugees seeking asylum worldwide. In recent years the world has witnessed the desperate attempts of families to cross the Mediterranean in search of safe refuge in Europe. In other parts of the world disparate refugee camps span thousands of miles. While the situation continues to worsen, still no consensus has been reached as to how the global community should respond. While some countries have welcomed in refugees by the thousands, others have closed their borders to them entirely. In this thesis I attempt to determine what moral obligations the global community has to these displaced peoples. My analysis focuses largely on the philosophical arguments of Thomas Pogge and Peter Singer, and works to refute Garrett Hardin's argument for closed borders. Ultimately, I conclude that the combination of Singer's utilitarian theory and Pogge's global justice theory convincingly illustrate that the global community, and developed nations in particular, have considerable moral duties to the refugee population. These duties include providing refugees with aid and safe opportunities for resettlement, as well as addressing the global systems that perpetuate the conflicts and poverty that force refugees to flee their home countries.

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Introduction

In the wake of the war in Syria, which began in 2011 and continues to date, increasing numbers of people are seeking asylum abroad to escape war and persecution in their own countries. According to the UN Refugee Agency, “we are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record” (UNHCR). 4.5 million refugees have fled Syria alone, while Afghanistan and Somalia rank close behind at 2.7 million and 1.1 million respectively (UNHCR). The UNHCR defines a refugee as “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence” and due to a “well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group...cannot return home or are afraid to do so” (UNHCR). Currently there are a staggering 21.3 million refugees seeking asylum worldwide (UNHCR).

Each year this population of displaced peoples grows, and thus far no consensus has been reached as to how the global community should respond to the growing humanitarian crisis. In this thesis I will apply prominent philosophical theories in an attempt to determine what moral obligations the global community has to the refugee population. Once I have contextualised the issue, my analysis will begin with Garrett Hardin’s argument that in fact the global community has no moral obligations at all to refugees. From there I will analyse and apply Thomas Pogge’s global justice theory and Peter Singer’s utilitarian theory in an attempt to demonstrate that developed countries in particular have considerable moral duties to aid the world’s displaced populations.

Context

The global community's current position on the matter of refugees and their resettlement is far from a consensus. While many countries have contributed towards the establishment of international laws protecting the rights of refugees and aiding their safe resettlement, others have been noticeably uninvolved in such proceedings. In recent years, the vast majority of the legislation regarding refugees has been agreed upon and established by the UN. On the 3rd December 1949, in the wake of WWII and in response to growing numbers of refugees worldwide, the UN founded the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Office is "located at Geneva, Switzerland, and is represented in over 100 different countries" (OHCHR). Article 1 of the Statute of the Office describes its purpose as being:

"To provide international protection to refugees and to seek durable solutions for refugees by assisting Governments to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees, or their integration within new national communities" (OHCHR).

The ways in which the Office fulfills its protection policies in particular are described as follows:

- "(a) Promoting the conclusion and ratification of international conventions for the protection of refugees, supervising their application and proposing amendments;
- (b) Promoting measures to improve the situation of refugees and to reduce the number requiring protection;
- (c) Assisting efforts to promote voluntary repatriation or assimilation within new national communities;
- (d) Promoting the admission of refugees to the territories of States;

- (e) Facilitating the transfer of the assets of refugees; obtaining from Governments information concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories, and the relevant laws and regulations;
- (f) Keeping in close touch with Governments and intergovernmental organizations;
- (g) Establishing contact with private organizations dealing with refugee questions;
- (i) Facilitating the coordination of private efforts” (OHCHR).

In addition to the establishment of this Office, the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes specific reference to refugees in article 14 on the right to seek asylum, along with the United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees (1954), and the 1967 amendment to this convention. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: “1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. 2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from 42 non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations” (United Nations General Assembly, art. 14). This has: “been subject to only one amendment in the form of a 1967 Protocol, which removed the geographic and temporal limits of the 1951 Convention.(2) The 1951 Convention, as a post-Second World War instrument, was originally limited in scope to persons fleeing events occurring before 1 January 1951 and within Europe. The 1967 Protocol removed these limitations and thus gave the Convention universal coverage” (UNHCR, 2010).

Despite the UN’s international membership and the extensiveness of its legislation on the matter, only 142 of the 196 member states of the UN participated in both the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Indeed, only 148 states went to “one or both of these instruments” (UNHCR). Of these 148 states, the majority has agreed to accept at least some refugees from the

recent conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, with only a few notable exceptions. The United States, for example, recently blocked entry “of refugees from Syria indefinitely, and bars entry into the United States for 90 days from seven predominantly Muslim countries linked to concerns about terrorism” (Shear and Cooper). Austria, like the United States, has failed to adhere to the agreements it made at the UN. In 2016, Austria implemented laws that were “among the toughest European responses to the migrant crisis” and built “further fences along its borders,” in addition to ones already in place (Hume, Shubert, Veselinovic).

In contrast to this, countries like Canada and Germany have surpassed the actions necessary to satisfy these agreements, having accepted an astonishing number of refugees over a very short period of time. Between the 4th November 2015 and the 2nd January 2017, Canada has accepted 39, 671 Syrian refugees. On a yet larger scale, Germany received “442,000 asylum applications in 2015 alone,” (Connor) making it the most welcoming destination to refugees within the EU. I should note that the leaders of Canada and Germany’s responses to the migrant crisis have not been wholly supported by their respective populations. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, has received significant criticism for her generosity regarding the refugee crisis, and her popularity suffered shortly after the largest admissions of refugees took place. On the 20th December 2016, Kim Hjelmgaard reported for USA Today, “opposition is rising over [Merkel’s] open-door policy for migrants” and he was far from alone in this observation. Others similarly noted in 2016 that Merkel’s being the “first EU leader to welcome migrants escaping the war-torn Middle East and Africa...has not been well-received in her own country” with “approval ratings...at a five year low as a result” (Amaro). Interestingly, now that the rates of migration have slowed and those who settled in Germany last year have integrated to

an extent, Merkel's popularity is on the rise once again and she is predicted to win the upcoming German election.

Evidently we are far from an international consensus in regards to how this humanitarian crisis should be addressed by the international community. While some have completely closed their borders to refugees, some welcome resettlement to the best of their ability. Indeed, as we have seen, there is rarely consensus on this issue even on a national level.

Garrett Hardin and the Case for Closed Borders

A common argument in favour of closed-borders and strict immigration policy is the view that the country in question does not have the means to house and employ a large influx of foreigners. In the wake of the British vote to leave the European Union, many who voted in the majority cited current rates of immigration placing "unacceptable strains on housing, welfare and education" (Debating Europe) as one of their foremost reasons for 'voting leave.' Those who voted for President Donald Trump in the 2016 US election gave similar explanations for their vote, as his conservative approach to immigration, and promise of a wall on the US-Mexican border, appealed to these concerns.

Garrett Hardin, an American philosopher and ecologist whose work focuses heavily on the dangers of overpopulation and environmental destruction, articulates this position in his controversial article, 'Lifeboat Ethics: the Case Against Helping the Poor.' Like those who voted to leave the EU in Britain and those who voted for stricter immigration laws in the US, Hardin argues that lenient immigration laws, particularly regarding movement from developing to developed nations, puts an unacceptable and ultimately fatal strain on the resources of the host country. He begins by presenting the metaphor of a lifeboat, which represents any given

developed country, with “50 people” inside and “room for 10 more, making a total capacity of 60.” He asks us to imagine that “the 50 of us in the lifeboat see 100 others swimming in the water outside, begging for admission to our boat or for handouts” (Hardin). He argues that our options here are rather limited. We could admit all of them, regardless of the boat’s capacity. In which case, he notes dramatically, “the boat swamps, everyone drowns. Complete justice. Complete catastrophe.” Alternatively, we could admit only 10 people and thus remain within the boat’s safety limit. But Hardin asks us to consider who we should admit if we choose to take only 10. “Do we pick the best 10, ‘first come, first served’? And what do we say to the 90 we exclude?” (Hardin). In addition to the question of fairness, Hardin notes that we must consider whether taking the boat to capacity at all is advisable. He cites the idea of “a safety factor, an engineering principle of critical importance” stating that leaving room for excess passengers accommodates potential resource shortages. Surely, he argues, choosing to “preserve our small safety factor and admit no more to the lifeboat...offers the only means of our survival, [though] it is morally abhorrent to many people” (Hardin).

Just what constitutes a nation’s “capacity” for Hardin is somewhat unclear, though knowing this is critically important if we are to understand the nature of his concerns. Hardin defines capacity, to a degree, multiple times in his essay, though the definition is far from comprehensive. In one form of explanation Hardin gives the example of the Hawaiian islands, noting, “There is only so much room on the islands, and the islanders know it. To Hawaiians, immigrants from the other 49 states present as great a threat as those from other nations” (Hardin). The implication here is that his concern, or at least part of it, relates to a nation’s spatial capacity. It would seem that Hardin believes there might literally not be enough space for

expected population growths and the overcrowding it causes. In addition to this, Hardin cites the availability and usage of natural resources as part of his definition. He notes:

“The air and water have become polluted because they are treated as commons. Further growth in the population or per-capita conversion of natural resources into pollutants will only make the problem worse. The same holds true for the fish of the oceans. Fishing fleets have nearly disappeared in many parts of the world.”

He expands on these observations, noting the implications they may have for wealthy countries that take in poorer migrants, stating, “Unrestricted immigration...moves people to the food, thus speeding up the destruction of the environment of the rich countries. We can easily understand why poor people should want to make this latter transfer, but why should rich hosts encourage it?” (Hardin)

In his demonstration of this imminent threat to developed nations’ environment and natural resources, Hardin provides statistics regarding their population sizes and growth rates, and compares them to those of developing nations. Through the use of such statistics, Hardin attempts to demonstrate just how many people wealthy countries would be taking on, if they were to open their borders. He writes:

“As of 1973, the U.S. had a population of 210 million people, who were increasing at a rate of 0.8 percent per year. Outside our lifeboat, let us imagine another 210 million people (say the combined populations of Columbia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Morocco, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines) who are increasing at a rate of 3.3 percent per year. Put differently, the doubling time for this aggregate population is 21 years, compared to 87 years for the U.S.” (Hardin).

While Hardin does not explicitly mention the intake of refugees here, the focus of his argument is impoverished nations, whose people are looking elsewhere for jobs or political stability.

Certainly, given these criteria, refugees would fall into the categories that Hardin focuses on, since famine, war, and political oppression are the main reasons behind refugees' decision to flee their countries of origin. Refugees also fit Hardin's definition based on their numbers alone. There are, as I noted earlier, 21.3 million refugees worldwide, a number that would no doubt worry Hardin. The countries that the majority of these people come from are Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia. The recorded population growth of these countries is 2.0%, 2.4%, and 2.9% respectively (World Bank).

Hardin's position on immigration is unflinchingly strong and argues in no uncertain terms that the answer is to close the borders of developed nations completely. Indeed, he takes this view a step further and goes on to address the issue of giving aid to impoverished and war-torn nations. While this section of Hardin's essay does not relate to the admission of refugees, it does address another form of potential moral obligation. If Hardin is right in his assessment and we should not allow entry to the millions of transient refugees worldwide, there still remains the question of whether we have other moral obligations, such as sending them food and medical supplies. In his analysis of this issue, Hardin reaches similar conclusions to those he reached regarding immigration. In essence, he argues that sending aid to these countries is largely unjustified. This is an unusually extreme view and, unlike his position on immigration, one that few political figures would openly endorse.

Hardin begins his analysis by considering the idea of a World Food Bank, what he calls "a new commons." He describes it as an "international depository of food reserves to which nations would contribute according to their abilities and from which they would draw according to their needs" (Hardin). This form of aid is more designed for populations suffering from crop shortages and famines than it is for refugees fleeing war-torn nations, however the concept of aid

applies. Indeed, one of Hardin's major concerns regarding the World Food bank is that economic costs will fall on only a few affluent nations, with the U.S. "taxpayers" having "spent a total of \$7.9 billion on the Food for Peace program" (Hardin). In the case of sending aid to refugee populations either in camps or displaced within their own countries, this concern holds for Hardin as, in 2015, the U.S. committed to giving "\$419 million more in humanitarian aid to assist Syrian refugees and the countries that are hosting them" (Morello). Another, far more controversial, concern of Hardin's is the problem of global overpopulation. He entitles the section in which he explores this, "Population Control the Crude Way." Here he argues, "If poor countries received no food from the outside, the rate of their population growth would be periodically checked by crop failures and famines." Presumably wars would qualify as a 'population check' for Hardin, and thus the victims and displaced populations resulting from conflicts would help to control rates of overpopulation on Hardin's view. He argues that if we allow for aid and a World Food Bank:

"People will have more motivation to draw from it than to add to any common store. The less provident and less able will multiply at the expense of the abler and more provident, bringing eventual ruin upon all who share in the commons" (Hardin).

It is on this basis that Hardin refuses to endorse either mass immigration or international aid, either in the case of famines abroad or, presumably, in the case of conflicts between or within nations.

Objections to Hardin's 'Lifeboat Ethics'

There are a few notable problems with the arguments that Hardin makes here. First, the lifeboat that Hardin describes does not seem to be analogous to the majority of countries that would be taking in refugees. In fact, Hardin's worries regarding capacity, roughly defined as

space and resource availability, seem to be true more of the global human population than it is of individual countries. Hardin's key concern is that peoples from underdeveloped countries moving to developed ones will bring the receiving countries to capacity. However, research suggests that in the majority of cases this would just not be true. The scientific definition of overpopulation is "the condition of having a population so dense as to cause environmental deterioration, and impaired quality of life, or a population crash" (Merriam-Webster). This definition is very similar to Hardin's implied definition of reaching capacity. At present, the world as a whole is considered to be overpopulated, however not every individual country is. In fact, according to the Population Research Institute, "About 48% of all people live in a country with below-replacement fertility" (Morse and Mosher). In other words, 48% of the world's population lives in a country where the fertility rates are such that future generations will be smaller than the ones before them. Furthermore, despite Hardin's concerns, Morse and Mosher note that the human population is actually not growing exponentially, "in fact, our *rates of growth* are declining. Between 1950 and 2000, the world population grew at a rate of 1.76%. Between 2000 and 2050, it is expected to grow by 0.77 percent." Of course, while growth might not be exponential, the overall population is still growing to a degree. Notably however, this is not the case in every country. As Hardin correctly notes, the birth rates in developing nations are higher than those in developed ones. In fact, while some developing countries, like India, are experiencing increasing problems due to overcrowding, other countries are facing an opposite dilemma. Countries in the European Union are an example:

"If European fertility rates don't rise above current levels: "The European Union, which has recently expanded to encompass 452-455 million people (according to 2000-2005 figures) would fall by 2300 to only 59 million. About half the countries of Europe would lose 95 per cent or

more of their population, and such countries as the Russian Federation and Italy would have only 1 per cent of their population left” (Morse and Mosher).

Evidently, while Hardin’s fear regarding overpopulation may be correct on a global scale, it certainly isn’t where individual nations and their immigration rates are concerned. Indeed, European countries may find that welcoming in refugees and other migrants will prove beneficial in future years. In turn, Europe taking in larger numbers of refugees and migrants would arguably redistribute the population in such a way that overcrowding lessens and natural resources become less strained. Ultimately, by focusing on the larger issue of overpopulation Hardin makes the mistake of attempting to solve a global, ecological problem through the politics of immigration and border control.

He applies this same logic to the question of whether or not we should give aid to refugee populations, assuming we accept the conclusion that they should not be allowed to resettle in wealthy countries. His argument that we have no moral obligation to give aid centres on the idea that wars and famines serve as population checks and ease overpopulation. On this basis it could be argued, in a utilitarian-style argument, that it is beneficial to the larger human population to allow for population checks. However, this is similarly flawed. If it were the case that the only way of ensuring the survival of humanity at large, and the wellbeing of the environment, would be to deny aid to 21.3 million refugees, not to mention 3 billion people currently living in poverty worldwide (DoSomething.org), then a utilitarian-style argument could be made for doing so. However, there is no indication that this is the only way that we could bring about such a result. Indeed, according to population experts it would be one of the least successful means of controlling population rates and, from a moral standpoint, it is certainly one of the most abhorrent options available to us. In *State of the World 2012: Moving Toward Sustainable*

Prosperity, Robert Engelman, the president of Worldwatch Institute, provides specific initiatives that would “all but guarantee declines in birthrates...[and] would end population growth before mid-century at fewer than 9 billion people,” he argues, “Unsustainable population growth can only be effectively and ethically addressed by empowering women to become pregnant only when they themselves choose to do so” (Worldwatch Institute). Some examples of the initiatives that Engelman suggests are:

“Provide universal access to safe and effective contraceptive options for both sexes. With nearly two in five pregnancies reported as mistimed or never wanted, lack of access to good family planning services is among the biggest gaps in assuring that each baby will be wanted and welcomed in advance by its parents.

Guarantee education through secondary school for all, especially girls. In every culture surveyed to date, women who have completed at least some secondary school have fewer children on average, and have children later in life, than do women who have less education...

End all policies that reward parents financially based on the number of children they have. Governments can preserve and even increase tax and other financial benefits aimed at helping parents by linking these not to the number of children they have, but to parenthood status itself.

Integrate lessons on population, environment, and development into school curricula at multiple levels. Refraining from advocacy or propaganda, schools should educate students to make well-informed choices about the impacts of their behavior, including childbearing, on the environment” (Worldwatch Institute).

This emphasis on education and healthcare has shown enormous success rates in developed countries, where overpopulation is now less of a concern. Evidently, if policies like this were

expanded further, Hardin's concerns regarding overpopulation and the resulting environmental destruction may well be addressed to a large extent. From an ethical standpoint, achieving this end through education and birth rate controls is highly preferable to leaving large populations to die, when we have the means to prevent such catastrophic suffering and loss of life.

Interestingly, there is another definition for 'reaching capacity,' other than exhausting space and natural resources, that Hardin does not consider and that may be more problematic for those in favour of welcoming refugees into developed nations. Indeed, it is the one that was cited in defence of Britain's leaving the European Union, namely that further migrants would put "unacceptable strains on housing, welfare and education" (Debating Europe). If space and natural resources will not in fact be a problem in developed countries, it is worth considering whether or not the infrastructure of these countries can support a large influx of migrants. The United States is currently refusing to open their borders to any refugees. A major concern, besides national security (which I will address at a later stage), is job opportunity. The worry is that the US would be unable to provide employment for the number of people that wish to resettle here. According to the Migration Institute the US has seen a steady rate of immigration over the last few decades, with the immigrant population increasing from 4.7% of the total US population in 1970, to 13.5% in 2015 (Zong and Batelova). Despite this, "the U.S. economy added 156,000 new jobs in December, the Labor Department reported Friday...[and] wages rose 2.9 percent from last December, the strongest increase in more than seven years" (Swanson). Indeed, research conducted by Pew Research Center indicates:

As "the U.S. Baby Boom generation...heads into retirement, the increase in the potential labor force will slow markedly, and immigrants will play the primary role in the future growth of the working-age population (though they will remain a minority of it)" (Passel and Con).

That immigrants will become an integral part of the workforce in future years suggests that they will be an asset to the US economy rather than a drain. The study notes that trends thus far show immigrants entering the US on average are at prime working ages, “defined as ages 25 to 64.” Thus, their projections rely on these trends continuing. Of course, the majority of the immigrant populations this study has tracked have not been refugees. However, according to the Foundation for Economic Education, refugees similarly average at young ages. Indeed, “43 percent of all Syrian refugees are children under the age of 14” and males aged 14-30 make up 13 percent of Syrian refugees, so that over 56% of all Syrian refugees are under the age of 30 (Nowrasteh). The significance of this is that an enormous amount of the refugees that would relocate to the US would do so to contribute to the economy, either by paying for education and then entering the workforce, or by entering the workforce on arrival.

In addition to Hardin’s mistaken worries regarding ‘capacity,’ is the issue that he incorrectly determines that the countries that the global community would be assisting, by sending aid or taking in refugees, are to blame for the situations they are in. Hardin writes, “If each country is solely responsible for its own well-being, poorly managed ones will suffer. But they can learn from experience.” He warns that if we do not leave “the poor countries” to solve their own problems, “[they] will not learn to mend their ways, and will suffer progressively greater emergencies as their populations grow” (Hardin). The conclusions that Hardin reaches here show a shocking amnesia regarding the historic relations between these developing countries and the West. The colonial history of Europe’s dealings with the Middle East and Africa, for example, undeniably affected the countries’ ability to develop economically. In ‘The Effects of Colonialism on African Economic Development,’ Alexandra Hrituleac notes, “colonization obstructed the internal process of state formation and the development in Africa

and left scars of corruption and political instability” (Hrituleac, pg. 1). Hrituleac gives some examples of the effects that “between sixty and eighty years” of colonial rule had on African nations. Among these are, “The exploitative connection between Africa and a global economy” and the way this changed the world’s perception of African peoples “into an inferior race. Colonial conquest was just a means of showing racial arrogance, humiliating African leaders and their people” (Toyin, 2005). Colonialism also “encouraged competition and conflicts between ethnic groups,” something we continue to see today (Hrituleac, pg. 14), a recent example being the Rwandan genocide.

The wars that we are now witnessing in the Middle East, which are responsible for a substantial number of the displaced peoples worldwide, are an ongoing example of this phenomenon. These wars can similarly be traced, at least in part, to Western (namely British and American) involvement in the region, which continues to date. A complex combination of US intelligence efforts, British colonialism, and Western economic pursuits has contributed heavily towards much of the current instability within the Middle East.

For example, a large percentage of current refugees are Palestinian and this has been the case since shortly after WWII, when years of British colonial activities in the region culminated in catastrophic conflicts between native Arab populations and the Jewish populations, to whom Britain gifted Palestinian land. This had been put in motion years earlier when, “In 1917, the British foreign minister, Lord Arthur Balfour, issued a declaration...announcing his government’s support for the establishment of ‘a Jewish national home in Palestine.’” In addition to this “the Sykes-Picot Agreement” was made “between Britain and France to carve up the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire and divide control of the region” (Middle East Research and Information Project). This resulted in a number of artificial states for which England and France

designated leaders who, in theory, would serve their political and economic interests in the region. In the years following this, as Jewish populations moved into Palestinian territory “clashes broke out between Arabs and Jews.” The natures of these conflicts varied between territorial and religious, and in the early years “roughly equal numbers from both communities were killed.” Tensions only increased as Hitler rose to power in Germany and increasing numbers of Jews immigrated to the newly formed Israel (Middle East Research and Information Project). Today Israeli-Palestinian relations remain tense and often violent due to this history. Human Rights Watch notes:

“In 2016, a new escalation of violence that began in October 2015 continued, characterized by demonstrations, some violent, in the West Bank and at the Gaza border with Israel that Israeli forces have suppressed, often using live fire. There was a wave of stabbings and attempted stabbings by Palestinians against Israeli passersby and security forces, both in the West Bank and Israel...Israeli security forces used lethal force against suspected attackers in more than 150 cases, including in circumstances that suggest excessive force and at times extrajudicial executions” (Human Rights Watch).

A similar colonial record is evident in Syria’s history. Britain and the US have long since had interests in ensuring that Syria be run in accordance with Western ideals. While the Assad regime in Syria is undoubtedly corrupt and shows an appalling human rights record, it is important to note that, “Long before any outrage was generated at Assad’s crackdown of protesters...it was already decided that the US would attack and topple the Syrian government, going at least as far back as 1991” (Chovenac). Britain was similarly involved and, according to the testimony of former French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, leading up to 2011 was “preparing the invasion of the rebels in Syria...in the simple purpose of removing the Syrian

government, because, in the region, it is important to know that this Syrian regime has anti-Israel remarks” (Dumas qtd. by Chovenac). At present Russia, to a large extent, is funding and arming Assad’s forces in an attempt to retain control in Syria, while the US have been arming the rebel groups who are resisting Assad’s forces. As violence has continued to escalate, the numbers of refugees who have had to flee the country has steadily risen to 4.5 million (UNHCR).

I would like to clarify that my claim here is not that the developed West and their history of colonialism are wholly to blame for all aspects of instability and poverty throughout Africa and the Middle East. However, the histories of these developed and developing nations are undeniably connected and the consequences of their historic and current relationships cannot be ignored if one is to properly analyse the instability in these regions. Hardin’s determination that if we do not leave “the poor countries” to solve their own problems, “[they] will not learn to mend their ways” (Hardin) grossly simplifies the problems that these countries are experiencing and what caused them to begin with. Throughout his essay, he strongly implies that countries like Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia find themselves in their current situations because of poor management or corrupt leadership. Indeed, one paragraph of his argument is entitled “Learning the Hard Way” and states, “the great majority of the governments in the world today do not...budget for accidents.” He puts this down to the fact that “they lack either the wisdom or the competence, or both” (Hardin). It is on this basis that he suggests leaving them to “learn from experience” (Hardin), implying that this approach would benefit them most. However, as we have seen, it is simply not the case that the entirety of these countries’ problems can be boiled down to bad management. In an interdependent world, where the majority of countries’ histories are intimately connected to one another, Hardin’s individualistic approach is both unrealistic and

unjust, given the fact that many poorer countries' struggles can be tied to the actions of wealthy nations.

Moral Obligation Stemming from Responsibility: Thomas Pogge

Part I: Imminent obligations

While Hardin makes the mistake of overlooking historical and political context, these issues form the crux of Thomas Pogge's arguments that wealthy nations have significant moral obligations to the refugee population, and the world's poor at large. Unlike Hardin, Pogge argues that we owe both aid and the opportunity for resettlement to the world's growing refugee population. In fact, on his view our obligations extend further than this and require us to prevent such crises from occurring again. In 2015, Pogge and a number of other academics signed an open letter from 'Academics Stand Against Poverty' addressing the issue directly to this effect. After first expressing collective concern regarding the refugee crisis, the letter states, "We face two urgent moral tasks: (1) to ensure the safety and well-being of those who have been forced to move; and (2) to address the systemic problems that are forcing people to migrate in the first place, so that migration will always be a choice and not a necessity. The first is most immediate, but ultimately the second is most important" (Academics Stand Against Poverty, 2015).

Indeed, Pogge fervently defends these assertions in two of his own most prominent essays. He articulates the first, immediate obligations we have to those living in poverty in his 2003 essay, "Assisting' the Global Poor.' Here Pogge looks in depth at historical factors, similar to ones I briefly noted above, and at current international systems which seem to have played an extensive role in causing global poverty and which continue to perpetuate it today. His overarching

argument is that our moral obligations to the poor and displaced populations worldwide stem from the extensive part we have played in causing and prolonging these issues. Pogge claims that the idea that “world poverty concerns us citizens of the rich countries mainly as potential helpers” is false (Pogge, pg. 3, 2003). In order to uphold moral justice, Pogge believes that we owe these peoples whatever aid and safe shelter we can provide, not as charity but rather as a duty demanded by justice.

Pogge begins his argument by making similar observations to Hrituleac and Toyin. He notes, “existing peoples have arrived at their present levels of social, economic and cultural development through an historical process that was pervaded by enslavement, colonialism, even genocide” (Pogge, pg. 3, 2003). While many make the criticism that these events are historic and cannot be used to justify the current international wealth distributions, Pogge shows this belief to be mistaken. He notes, the legacy of this history is such that:

“Even if, starting in 1960, African annual growth in per capita income had been a full percentage point above ours each and every year, the ratio would still be 20:1 today and would not be fully erased until early in the 24th century” (Pogge, pg. 3-4, 2003).

Pogge also addresses a similar argument to Hardin’s; that a number of countries that were once colonised now thrive, Australia and America being notable examples. The argument states that if this is the case then “such strongly divergent national trajectories must be due to differing domestic causal factors in the countries concerned” and so severe poverty must largely be due to “local causes.” While this seems compelling *prima facie*, Pogge exposes the flaw in this reasoning through the use of a parallel example. He states their argument: “There are great international variations in the evolution of severe poverty. These variations must be caused by local (country-specific) factors. These factors, together, fully explain the overall evolution of

severe poverty worldwide.” Then provides the parallel example of this reasoning: “There are great variations in the performance of my students. These variations must be caused by local (student-specific) factors. These factors, together, fully explain the overall performance of my class” (Pogge, pg. 4, 2003). He observes that this is evidently fallacious. While “local factors” may affect the performance of his students to some extent, his teaching will obviously also impact their performance, as will other “global factors.” (Pogge, pg. 4, 2003). Of course, the same is true for poverty. In our current interdependent and complex global system, it is unrealistic to say that countries are wholly responsible for their global standing and economic position. It is a fact that:

“There is considerable international economic interaction regulated by an elaborate system of treaties and conventions about trade, investments, loans, patents, copyrights, trademarks, double taxation, labor standards, environmental protection, use of seabed resources and much else” (Pogge, pg. 4, 2003).

Critically, these regulations are designed in such a way that they benefit certain countries and, in doing so, work to the detriment of others. Pogge makes the claim here that they are impactful enough that, “Had...[they] been shaped to be more favorable to the poor societies, much of the great poverty in them today would have been avoided” (Pogge, pg. 4, 2003).

In addition to these regulations is the history of leaders of wealthy countries bribing those of poor countries. Pogge notes, until 1999, most developed states legally authorized “their firms to bribe foreign officials...[and] even allowed them to deduct such bribes from their taxable revenues.” Through excessive use of these practices, developed nations have gained a long standing “resource privilege” (Pogge, pg. 10, 2003) and have reduced resource-rich nations to some of the world’s poorest and most unstable countries (Pogge, pg. 12, 2003). It is based on

these facts and our governments' continuance to shape and uphold this order, "in our name," that Pogge determines our moral obligations to not only be "positive duties to assist but also more stringent negative duties not to harm" (Pogge, pg. 6, 2003).

Throughout his analysis Pogge focuses on the global poor and our moral obligations to alleviate their suffering. As a result I would like to take the minor added step of applying his arguments specifically to the world's refugee population. Somalis currently make up 1.1 million of the total population of displaced peoples and are fleeing conflict, genocide, and famine. One of the major famines to hit Somalia in recent years did so in 1992, not as a result of weather but rather as a result of "sectarian politics" (Samatar). The conflicts that have taken place in Somalia on and off since 1991 (Hogg) have been the result of the extensive colonial history Pogge describes and, in part, the recent "US "War on Terror" (Samatar). Similar international interventions, as we have seen, are responsible for the ongoing conflict in Syria, which has displaced 3.5 million people. Afghanistan's ongoing conflict, which has displaced 2.7 million people, is no different. Indeed, Afghanistan's history of Western colonisation began when it was invaded and occupied by Britain in 1839. This started the First Afghan War, which lasted from 1839-1842 (Luscomb). The more recent conflicts were due to international pressures on Afghan leaders to find Osama Bin Laden and hand him over to the US after the September 11th attacks. Ultimately, when they failed to do this, the "US began bombing Afghanistan" in October, 2001 (CBBC Newsround, 2012).

It is important to clarify that, while much of America's activity in the Middle East since 9/11 has been justified by 'the war on terror,' their presence in the region dates back much further than this. Jones notes that America's "romance" with the region began as early as the 1930's, when Standard Oil discovered large quantities of oil off the coast of Saudi Arabia. He

writes, “over the course of the 20th century, preserving the security not just of Saudi Arabia but of the entire Persian Gulf region and the flow of Middle Eastern oil were among the United States’ chief political-economic concerns.” Ultimately, America’s interest in the Middle East’s oil reserves has resulted in “regional confrontation for almost four decades” (Jones, pg. 208).

As we have seen, there is substantial evidence to suggest that if it were not for the historic and recent activities of developed nations, like Britain and the US, the majority of the current refugee population would not now be displaced. Much of the wars and colonial activities of developed nations in Africa and the Middle East can be explained by the “international resource privilege” that Pogge describes. He notes:

“Whoever can take power in...a country [rich in resources] by whatever means can maintain his rule, even against widespread popular opposition, by buying the arms and soldiers he needs with revenues from the export of natural resources and with funds borrowed against future resource sales” (Pogge, pg. 12, 2003).

It is this demand for control over the world’s natural resources that has caused constant conflict within resource-rich nations. As colonial powers shift, leaders are overthrown and conflicts break out, making it impossible for these countries to thrive economically. This becomes a self-perpetuating cycle, as the countries that gain control over natural resources become more powerful and their governments are able to be “prominently involved in shaping and upholding this order” so that it continues to work in their favour (Pogge, pg. 6, 2003).

The combination of colonial history and our current global systems, which developed nations are responsible for, have resulted in catastrophic effects on developing nations and their populations. Pogge argues that it is this complicity that morally demands that we “offer

sanctuary to those who need it...[and] swift access to humanitarian protection” (Academics Stand Against Poverty, 2015).

Moral Obligation Stemming from Responsibility: Thomas Pogge

Part II: Long term obligations

Since the wrongdoing of developed nations has not merely been historic, but continues today on a systemic level, Pogge argues that our moral obligations extend beyond just offering immediate aid and resettlement. In his 1994 essay, ‘An Egalitarian Law of Peoples,’ he addresses the importance of establishing, and then maintaining, an egalitarian system. He argues that any global justice theory “must be sensitive to international social and economic inequalities.” Indeed, throughout this essay he criticises John Rawls’ *Law of Peoples* for failing to include an “egalitarian distributive principle of any sort” (Pogge, pg. 195-196, 1994).

He begins his critique by highlighting “three components of Rawls’s conception of domestic justice.” In Rawls’ view, the US does not satisfy these components and so “can be criticized for producing excessive inequalities” (Pogge, pg. 196, 1994). Pogge writes:

“(i) His first principle of justice requires that institutions maintain the fair value of the political liberties, so that persons similarly motivated and endowed have, irrespective of their economic and social class, roughly equal chances to gain political office and to influence the political decisions that shape their lives (cf. TJ, p. 225).

(2) His second principle of justice requires that institutions maintain fair equality of opportunity, so that equally talented and motivated persons have roughly equal chances to obtain a good education and professional position irrespective of their initial social class (cp. TJ, pp. 73, 301).

(3) His second principle also requires that, insofar as they generate social or economic

inequalities, social institutions must be designed to the maximum benefit of those at the bottom of these inequalities (the difference principle-cf. TJ, pp. 76f)” (Pogge, pg. 195-196, 1994).

Pogge argues that America’s failure to adhere to these principles is analogous to “our current world order” and its shortcomings. In other words, that our current world order:

“(i) ...Fails to give members of different peoples roughly equal chances to influence the transnational political decisions that shape their lives.

(2) It fails to give equally talented and motivated persons roughly equal chances to obtain a good education and professional position irrespective of the society into which they were born.

(3) It also generates international social and economic inequalities that are not to the maximum benefit of the world's worst-off persons” (Pogge, pg. 196, 1994).

According to Pogge, by including no egalitarian distributive principle in *Law of Peoples*, Rawls is committed to saying that none of these analogous criticisms are valid (Pogge, pg. 196, 1994).

Pogge believes that in fact all three are valid, but focuses his essay only on the third.

He begins by addressing Rawls’ pragmatic reasons for not incorporating an egalitarian principle into his theory of justice. Pogge notes that these mainly concern “inadequate administrative capabilities and the dangers of a world government” (Pogge, pg. 199, 1994). He attempts to simplify the discussion of these worries by introducing “a specific institutional proposal that virtually any plausible egalitarian conception of global justice” would accept. The proposal that Pogge suggests is “a global resources tax, or GRT.” It is essentially “a tax on consumption” that accepts that various populations have ownership of and control over all resources in their national territories, but that if they choose to use those resources they must pay tax. Pogge gives the example of Saudi Arabia and the oil deposits located there. He writes, if the Saudi people chose to “extract crude oil or allow others to do so...they would be required to pay

a proportional tax on any crude extracted, whether it be for their own use or for sale abroad.”

This tax could also be applied to reusable resources, “to land used in agriculture and ranching and, especially, to air and water used for the discharging of pollutants” (Pogge, pg. 200, 1994).

In regards to its application, the tax would fall “on goods and services roughly in proportion to their resource content: in proportion to how much value each takes from our planet.” National governments would be responsible for paying these taxes and each society would be free “to raise the requisite funds in any way it likes, no new administrative capabilities would need to be developed.” The critical point to note about Pogge’s GRT is that all proceeds from it would go directly to “the global poor: toward assuring that all have access to education, health care, means of production (land) and/or jobs to a sufficient extent to be able to meet their own basic needs with dignity” (Pogge, pg. 201, 1994). In order to achieve this Pogge notes that paying funds to the governments of the world’s poorest societies would be ideal. However, in our “nonideal world... corrupt governments in the poorer states pose a significant problem.” Pogge states that governments found to be corrupt can be “cut off from GRT funds... In such cases it may still be possible to administer meaningful development programs through existing UN agencies” or through non-profit organisations (Pogge, pg. 202, 1994). Pogge notes, if, for whatever reason, GRT funds can not be successfully used to aid the poor in a given country, “then there is no reason to spend them there.” Instead they should be “spent where they can make more of a difference in reducing poverty and disadvantage” (Pogge, pg. 202, 1994).

Having established exactly how the GRT would function, Pogge addresses the question of what the tax rates would be. He concedes that setting them too high could be problematic as it “may dampen economic activity - in extreme cases so much that revenues overall would decline.” He therefore, “somewhat arbitrarily, settle[s] for a GRT of up to 1 percent of world

product,” or less than 1%, if this would benefit the global poor more. If put into practice, a GRT of 1% would “raise revenues of roughly \$270 billion per annum.” This is a good amount because it is both “quite large relative to the total income of the world's poorest one billion persons” but also “rather small for the rest of us” amounting to “less than the annual defense budget of the U.S. alone” (Pogge, pg. 204, 1994).

While Pogge’s proposal of a global resources tax is an interesting one, for the purposes of this paper I will not attempt to determine its feasibility. For now let it serve as an example of the kind of adaptation that Pogge expects us to make to our failing global system. His objection to Rawls and his institutional proposal of the GRT convincingly show that if these issues of poverty and displacement are to be permanently resolved, they must be addressed systemically. More important, however, to our question of moral obligation, is that Pogge’s argument establishes that it is our moral duty to address these issues. Ultimately, on his view, we are morally obligated not only to help the current victims of poverty and displacement, but also to stop participating in our flawed international system and work to change it in such a way that these issues will be largely eradicated in the future.

Critique

Pogge’s arguments in “‘Assisting’ the Global Poor and An Egalitarian Law of Peoples” are compelling for two notable reasons. The first is the strength of his justification for developed nations’ moral obligations to refugees and the global poor. The wealth of evidence supporting Pogge’s claim that the poverty and instability in developing nations is largely due to historic injustice, and is perpetuated by an unjust world order, is difficult to deny. Certainly the fact that past colonialism and international slave trades once existed is not a claim that anyone would

refute, nor would anyone refute the fact that these institutions greatly impacted the countries where they were practiced, at least at one point in time. That the effects of these historic atrocities are still felt today has been contested. However, as we have seen, this objection is adequately answered by Pogge's student analogy, and the statistical evidence showing the effects of colonisation on Africa's "annual growth in per capita income" (Pogge, pg. 3, 2003). Similarly, the unjustness of international regulations, Western foreign policy, and international resource privilege is undeniable, given the overwhelming evidence of their effects on developing nations. By establishing these facts, Pogge leaves little doubt that developing nations are at least partially to blame for the war and poverty that refugees are currently fleeing. Once we accept this, it is natural to conclude that those who are complicit in the current crisis are morally obligated to attempt to rectify it, especially if they have the means to do so. After all, it is generally agreed upon that if you harm someone, even accidentally, then you are responsible for whatever damage you have caused and should provide the necessary reparations. If, for example, I were to hit a child with my car, most people would consider it morally wrong for me to keep driving and not help the child that I had just injured. In much the same way, if we accept (as surely we must) that developed nations are at least partially responsible for poverty in developing nations and the 21.3 million refugees around the world, then we must similarly conclude that for them to do nothing to improve these peoples' situation would be morally wrong.

The second is his extensive focus on preventative measures against future poverty and crises of displacement. Numerous philosophers and political figures have accepted that we do at least have moral obligations to send aid to displaced peoples and to assist them in safe relocations. However, the UNHCR estimates that "34,000 people are forcibly displaced every day as a result of conflict or persecution." This indicates that this problem is an ongoing one and

is neither short term, nor likely to resolve itself. The strength of Pogge's argument is in his recognition of the implications of estimates like these, and his acknowledgment that levels of displacement will likely only increase until we address their causes directly. In response to this, Pogge rightfully extends our moral obligations by demanding systemic change on top of immediate aid relief, and proposing a potential adaptation to our current world order. In doing so, he establishes two significant observations, one practical and the other ethical. The first, practical, observation is that providing immediate aid to refugees is essential to resolving the crisis, but it is not enough by itself. In order to fully resolve it in the long term, the causes of this population's displacement must be directly addressed. Ultimately, the international cycle of oppression that results in poverty and conflict in developing nations must be broken if we are to ensure that these crises do not recur in the future. The second, ethical, observation is that, due to our complicities in these crises and our continued participation in the institutions that perpetuate them, we, in developed nations, now have a moral duty to bring about this long term systemic change.

While Pogge offers a strong practical moral theory for addressing world poverty and displacement, there is a notable theoretical gap that leaves him vulnerable to damaging objections. While Pogge's justification for our having considerable moral obligations to refugees seems comprehensive in our current global circumstances, it is in fact highly context-specific. It would seem that, for Pogge, the entirety of our moral obligations stem from our complicities in the systems that have lead to the world's poverty and displacement. The implication therefore is that we would not have moral obligations to suffering populations if we had no hand in their misfortunes.

This becomes morally problematic when we consider cases in which responsibility does not play a part in humanitarian crises. Theoretically, we can imagine a world in which there is no history of colonialism, slavery, or oppression and where no global system exists such that it oppresses some countries to the benefit of others. In this world, every country is entirely independent and entirely responsible for their economic and political circumstances. However, we can imagine that one of the countries in this world suffers crippling famines due to extreme droughts and brutal conflicts, stemming from these hardships. Due to threats of persecution and starvation, 2 million members of this country's population are forced to flee and look to surrounding countries for aid and refuge, without which they will certainly die. The surrounding countries have the means both to send aid and to provide safe refuge to these people. In this situation it seems as though the ethical response from these countries would be to help these people to the full extent of their ability. However, these peoples' circumstance can in no way be attributed to the actions of these surrounding nations. Thus, given Pogge's complete reliance on complicity to justify moral obligation, it seems as though his theory would not support the claim that these countries have a moral duty to provide aid for the refugees. Intuitively, this does not seem to be a morally sound conclusion. It would seem then that Pogge's theory, though compelling, does not provide a fully comprehensive theory of political moral obligation in its current form.

Peter Singer: A Utilitarian Contribution

An alternative ethical theory, that also defends the view that developed nations have a moral obligation to aid refugees, is Peter Singer's utilitarian theory, outlined in 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality.' The nature of Singer's argument is such that, if combined with

Pogge's global justice theory, it may provide us with the comprehensive moral theory that we are in need of.

Utilitarianism is a popular consequentialist ethical theory. It considers the morality of an act to be entirely based on the consequences that it brings about. The overarching view is that we have a moral obligation to act in such a way that more good things will come about than bad things. On this view we must work to promote happiness and pleasure in the world and to reduce the amount of pain and suffering in the world. It is on this basis that Singer argues that we have a moral obligation to ease the suffering of displaced peoples, by providing them with aid and the opportunity for safe resettlement.

Singer addresses this issue through the discussion of the 1971 crisis in East Bengal, which resulted in the displacement of over nine million people. He notes that, despite the severity of the crisis and the extreme suffering it caused, very few individuals have attempted to help the Bengali refugees in any way. While they could have "written to their parliamentary representatives demanding increased government assistance; they have not," nor have they demonstrated in the streets, [or] held symbolic fasts" (Singer). Similarly, governments have done little in response to the tragedy. Britain, the largest contributor to aid in Bengal sent "£14,750,000" which amounts to thirty times less than the "development costs of the Anglo-French Concorde." Singer argues that "the way people in relatively affluent countries react to a situation like that in Bengal cannot be justified" (Singer). He proceeds with his argument by establishing the almost wholly accepted assumption that "suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad" (Singer). He takes this to be non-controversial, and so uses it as the premise to his argument that, if we have the ability to limit the amount of suffering in the

world “without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance then we have a moral obligation to do so” (Singer). In demonstration of this he provides a compelling example: “If I am walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it, I ought to wade in and pull the child out. This will mean getting my clothes muddy, but this is insignificant, while the death of the child would presumably be a very bad thing” (Singer).

Similarly to his opening premise, it is unlikely that many people would argue against this claim. If someone were to see a drowning child and keep walking, most of us would intuitively view that as morally wrong.

Singer notes, however, that this is “deceptive” in its simplicity. In order to adhere to the principle that this example endorses, we would have to accept that “proximity or distance” have no moral bearing where our duties to others are concerned. While this initial example is such that you would have to see the child in front of you and still do nothing to help him, international poverty does not appeal to your emotions and psychology quite so directly. Singer argues, however, that little defence is necessary for proximity’s lack of moral weight. It seems obvious that “if we accept any principle of impartiality, universalizability, [or] equality” then we must consider those who are far away from us to be just as morally important as we do our neighbours. One might argue that proximity to those we are helping allows us to be more effective in our efforts, as we can better understand problems that we are close to. However, Singer argues that, while this once may have been true this objection no longer stands, due to the technological advances that we have seen in recent years. He notes, “instant communication and swift transportation have changed the situation” in such a way that we are now capable of aiding others, regardless of their distance from us (Singer). If we accept that proximity does not weaken Singer’s claim, then it would seem that his principle has been successfully established. It seems

to be true that “if it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything else morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it” regardless of its situation in the world (Singer).

Having asserted the truth of this claim, Singer addresses the question of whether or not we actually have the means to aid those suffering from conflict or famine. His analysis of this question is conducted predominantly on an individual level, rather than a governmental one. He observes that, when donating money to crises abroad, we think of this as an optional “act of charity.” Singer notes, “The charitable man may be praised, but the man who is not charitable is not condemned.” However, given our means to buy expensive cars or unnecessary new clothes, this does not seem right (Singer). With enough resources available to us that we can indulge in personal luxuries, we could contribute a significant amount to saving fellow human lives and easing immense suffering globally. It seems clear then that, contrary to our beliefs about charity, “we ought to give the money away, and it is wrong not to do so” (Singer). The same logic can, and should, be applied to governments. It seems wrong that Australia’s total donations to the Bengali crisis “amounts to less than one-twelfth of the cost of Sydney’s...opera house” (Singer), just as it seems wrong that countries like the US and Austria, which are able to provide refuge to a portion of the world’s displaced peoples, have closed their borders to them.

Critique

Singer’s grounds for determining that those with the ability to provide aid to refugees are morally obligated to do so are similarly difficult to refute. He provides a convincing argument based on the seemingly obvious true assumption that “suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad” (Singer). The truth of this claim makes the argument that we

should do what we can to prevent such suffering hard to deny, for how could it be wrong to prevent an obviously bad thing from happening? In addition to this, his established qualifications for possessing moral duties to prevent suffering are relatively undemanding. In essence, we are obliged to help those in need if we are capable of doing so. The vast majority of developed nations have more than the necessary resources to meet this qualification, as do most of their citizens. As a result, most will concede to Singer's overall conclusion: that developed nations and their citizens have strong obligations to the world's refugees and that there is no morally sound reason for refusing to carry these out.

Notably, Singer's qualifications for possessing moral obligations to refugees are such that my earlier counterexample to Pogge's argument, regarding the innocent global community and the refugee population that requires their help, is rendered ineffectual as an objection. In this theoretical world, where no country has harmed or oppressed another and no external responsibility can be determined for famines or political instability, Singer's theory would still determine that the surrounding countries have significant obligations to aid the refugee population. Ultimately, the refugee population is suffering and will die without aid, and the surrounding countries have the necessary resources to end their suffering, and to offer them safe refuge. On Singer's view, there would be no doubt in this scenario that the surrounding countries in question would be morally obligated to help the refugees.

However, Singer's argument, like Pogge's, does not seem by itself to be as comprehensive as it should be. While, on Singer's view, the majority of the first-world are obliged to aid poor and displaced peoples, he fails to make the systemic observations that Pogge does, and so only provides a framework for temporarily easing the symptoms of a larger global problem. It seems, as Pogge observes, that the only way to fully end the suffering and

displacement caused by conflict and poverty is to address the global system that causes them. Knowing this, it seems that our moral obligations must extend to at least attempting to accomplish this.

Resolution:

An adapted theory combining utilitarianism and global justice theory

Despite the individual strengths of Thomas Pogge's theory of egalitarian justice and Peter Singer's utilitarian theory, neither view provides a comprehensive enough account of moral obligation to withstand external objections. It seems that in order to comprehensively establish the global community's moral obligations to the world's refugees, we must combine these two theories and apply them in conjunction.

Pogge's attention to historical context and the failings of our current world order are essential to this issue, given the context of today's refugee crisis. It effectively shows the ways in which developed countries have caused, and continue to perpetuate, poverty and conflicts in developing nations. In doing this, it establishes that they are at least partially responsible for the current suffering of displaced peoples worldwide. This is critical as it provides undeniable evidence that developed nations owe reparations to the affected populations. It also gives a comprehensive enough explanation of the crisis that a promising course of action can be established to resolve it, both in the short and the long term. His theory then provides proof of developed nations' moral duties to developing ones and illustrates the most effective ways in which they can fulfill these obligations. While this seems to provide a complete picture within the context of our current crisis, as we have seen, it does not entirely satisfy theoretical objections. This is problematic, as a complete and successful moral theory must be able to

withstand objections such as this. As a result, I believe an amendment should be made to Pogge's argument, through the addition of Singer's theory.

We now accept that Pogge is right in his assertion that a nation's complicity in peoples' suffering results in their having moral obligations to alleviate this suffering. It seems that, while this accounts for one source of our moral obligations to suffering populations, it does not address all of them. To demonstrate this seemingly incomplete picture, let us revisit my example of the child that is hit by a car. Imagine, as we did earlier, that I am driving and hit a child with my car. In response to this, I keep driving and do not help the child that I have just injured. Likely, most people would agree that I have acted immorally in this scenario. Not only have I injured a child, but I have also failed to take responsibility for my actions, not having even attempted to repair the damage I have caused. Now consider a slightly different scenario. Imagine that I am walking along the side of the road and I witness a hit and run. A child is hit by a car and the driver continues on without stopping to help the child he has injured. I am shocked by the incident, but walk on anyway without coming to the child's aid. It would seem that my actions here are also immoral. Though I was not responsible for the child's injuries, I was in a position to help him and neglected to do so. If my assumption is right and most people would consider both of these actions immoral, then evidently Pogge's theory does not provide a comprehensive view of our moral obligation to alleviate suffering. In order to achieve this we must incorporate Singer's utilitarian theory.

This would result in something like the following account: Our moral obligations to alleviate global suffering stems from two distinct sources. The first, evidenced by Pogge's theory, comes from any responsibility we may have in causing the harm that an individual or population is experiencing. The second, evidenced by Singer's theory, comes from utilitarian

obligations to reduce the amount of suffering in the world, if you are capable of doing so. According to this revised view, the global community's moral obligations to aid refugee populations, and to address the causes of their displacement are two-fold. As we have seen, developed nations bear considerable responsibility for the situation that refugees now find themselves in. As a result, they have a moral duty to help those who have been displaced by providing them with immediate aid and refuge, and by reforming the institutions that continue to perpetuate the global refugee crisis. In addition, it is obvious that the displacement that 21.3 million people are currently experiencing results in their immense suffering. As a result, any members of the global community who are in a position to alleviate this suffering are also morally obligated, on a utilitarian basis, to do so.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of Hardin's argument in favour of closed borders I was able to establish that the justifications for such a policy cannot be morally justified. It is clear that the majority of countries worldwide, particularly developed ones, have the necessary resources to accommodate at least a portion of the refugee population. Indeed, research suggests that many societies would benefit from this influx of immigration, due to the contributions that the predominantly young refugees would make to the economy. While Hardin argued that refugees and developed nations find themselves in this position due to their governments' poor management and corruption, there is considerable evidence to suggest that a long history of colonialism has left a damaging legacy that has resulted in enormously unequal wealth distribution globally. Thomas Pogge's observations indicate that this legacy is further exacerbated by an international order that perpetuates these inequalities through "an elaborate

system of treaties and conventions about trade, investments, loans, patents, copyrights, trademarks, double taxation, labor standards, environmental protection, use of seabed resources and much else” (Pogge, pg. 4, 2003). Adding to this is the extended history of governments of developed nations bribing those of developing ones, so that there now exists notable resource privileges. These allow developed nations to profit from the natural resources found in developing nations. In light of this, Hardin’s conclusion that developing nations must be left to solve their problems independently, and thus learn from experience, is implausible and unjust.

Contrary to Hardin’s argument, the global community clearly does have moral obligations to the refugee population. Indeed, my analysis of Thomas Pogge’s global theory of justice and Peter Singer’s utilitarian theory established that there seem to be two prominent sources for such obligations. The first group of moral obligations stem from our complicity in the displacement of current refugees and our duty to make reparations for this wrongdoing. The second stems from the ethical principle that suffering in the world is bad, and thus we should do what we can to alleviate it if we are able to do so. Together these views provide a comprehensive illustration of our moral duties to refugees and indicate that our obligations to them are substantial. Developing nations, in particular, have a moral obligation to resettle and aid whatever refugees they have the resources to accommodate. In addition to this they have a further obligation to end their participation in the current global system and work to build an egalitarian one that works to the benefit of the world’s poorest populations.

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