

EU REFUGEE CRISIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CHINA

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Executive Summary

1. The European continent received an unprecedented exodus of refugees in 2015, an influx that had outworn its border security system. It has yet to reach a common understanding on these refugees despite Germany's call for more responsibilities sharing.
2. China is hesitant about responding to the refugee issue. Rather it emphasises that the root cause—political turmoil in Syria and the Middle East—should be tackled.
3. China's concern, on the surface, is strategic, yet evidently it is to avoid further involvement in the conundrum in Syria and the Middle East.
4. The refugee crisis reflects inadequacies in the definitions of “refugee” and “economic migrant” as migration patterns have evolved and become more complicated.
5. Refugee outflows had been linked to a series of terrorist attacks in Europe in 2015. While the huge exodus of refugee may wear out border security control, blocking refugee flows from entering the European continent may not be the answer to alleviating terrorist threats.
6. China's hesitation in rendering refugee assistance is attributed to first, suspicion of western interventions into affairs in Syria and the Middle East, and second, the complex US (along with a group of European countries)-Russia confrontation in the Syrian issue.
7. Third, with the lack of institution protection of refugees within China, it connotes a lack of experience of “incorporating” a refugee in Chinese society.
8. The refugee issue has been much politicised when it should be evaluated based on humanitarian grounds.

9. The Chinese authority may want to re-examine if its adherence to the non-interference principle in its foreign policy applies to the accommodation of refugees.
10. China faces potential refugee crisis in the northeast and relevant issues of human trafficking in the northwest and southwest. In the northeast, the grave human trafficking problem with North Korea may need a readjustment in its policy.