Federal University of Pernambuco

Political Science Department

Masters Degree in Political Science

**Is welfare state the priority? Refugees flow through Europe and their target countries**

Stephanie Moura de Oliveira

Recife

2018

Stéphanie Moura de Oliveira

Political Science Masters Degree Student

**Is welfare state the priority? Refugees flow through Europe and their target countries**

Paper for the discipline of data analysis

Professor Davi Moreira

Political Science Department

Federal University of Pernambuco

Recife

2018

**Introduction/Theory**

Countries with higher rates of Welfare State lead to more syrian asylum applications? With the advance of the refugee crisis and a consequent increase on the number of people in need of a new homeland to call its own, European countries have reshaped their immigration policies in order to accommodate (or not) the growing number of refugee requests.

The country whose internal conflict has caused more nationals to leave its territory was Syria, since after the start of the Arab Spring in 2010 and a series of popular protests in the country, that progressed to a violent armed revolt, influenced by other protests in the Arab world.

The conflict shows itself in two fronts: one compound by oppositors of the President Bashar Al-Assad, that claim to be struggling to oust his power and then later install a more democratic leadership in the country; and the other composed by the Assad and its government, who claims to be only fighting armed terrorists aimed at destabilizing the country. Over the years, this war with an initial political cause, turned itself into a "power struggle", also embracing aspects, with sectarian and religious nature, and many factions emerged fighting against each other and the government.

In the middle of this conflict, many civilians found themselves in the middle of bombings and more than five million Syrians would have sought refuge abroad to escape the fighting, most of them seeking refuge abroad. The conflict generated a huge migratory wave of Syrians and Arabs towards Europe. It is the largest migratory wave and consequent humanitarian crisis faced by Europe since World War II. According to the Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, it is a "world crisis that needs a European answer".

This migratory flow reached critical levels throughout 2015, with an exponential increase (hundreds of thousands of people) trying to enter Europe and applying for asylum, fleeing their countries due to wars, conflicts, hunger, religious intolerance, terrible climate change, human rights violations, hopelessness and others, and adding to all this, a massive action of intimidation, violence and oppression carried out by groups that control illegal trafficking and exploit these totally vulnerable migrants (LENEIDE, 2015).

But why did so many migrants seek Europe to take refuge instead of seeking asylum in other Middle Eastern or Asian countries closer to their country of origin? The answer to this can maybe be found on a definition of Welfare State:

“A welfare state is a state in which organized power is deliberately used (through politics and administration) in an effort to modify the play of the market forces in at least three directions

- first, by guaranteeing individuals and families a minimum income irrespective of the market value of their work or their property;

- second, by narrowing the extent of insecurity by enabling individuals and families to meet certain “social contingencies” (for example, sickness, old age and unemployment) which lead otherwise to individual and family crisis; and

- third, by ensuring that all citizens without distinction of status or class are offered the best standards available in relation to a certain agreed range of social services.” (Briggs, 1961)

The sociologist T. H. Marshall  described the modern welfare state as a distinctive combination of democracy, welfare and capitalism. As a type of mixed economy, the welfare state funds the governmental institutions for healthcare and education along with direct benefits paid to individual citizens.Modern welfare states include Germany and France, Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as the Nordic countries, which employ a system known as the Nordic Model. The various implementations of the welfare state fall into three categories: (i) social democratic, (ii) conservative, and (iii) liberal.

That said, this paper tries to enlight if countries with a higher Welfare State attract more requests for refuge, these being preferred by refugees from Syria. This analysis is important to help the understanding of the movement trends of refugees if they are looking for countries with a higher quality of life or just a country where they can allocate themselves to escape the conflicts. This may also lead to explanations about the preference of refugees to remain in the place of refuge after the conflict ends or to return to their homeland.

The hypothesis that this paper seeks to prove or falsify is that with the refugee crisis in Syria, the number of requests for refuge was higher in European countries with a higher quality of life.

**Methodology**

This paper will use as methodology for data analysis the R software, with which a linear regression will be performed in order to evaluate by country the number of requests for refuge by Syrian citizens. The years to be analyzed are 2011 and 2015, with the aim of analyzing before and after the refugee crisis, after the beginning of the Arab Spring. The objective was to analyze the situation of refugees in a more recent scenario after the onset of the crisis, but because of the lack of data available from more recent years.

For the analysis, two databases will be used, the UNHCR Population Statistics Database, which contains data on asylum and refuge applications for several countries in the world over several years by citizens from different countries. From this database will be taken the variable dependent on the number of asylum requests from Syrians in European countries. In addition to this, the standard Quality of Government (QOG) database for January 2018, the most complete and up-to-date. From this database will be taken the independent variables that characterize the welfare state. Variables with greater data availability were searched for the largest number of countries in the analyzed years. Thus, the variables chosen were Health, equitable education and Public Service. Besides these, the variable of Political rights is used as control because it is an indicator of democracy and of the country's development then it wants to see the effect of public services controlling for this variable of political development of the country. The effect of not including it can be an overestimation of the effect of the other variable.