

**JAMES MARTIN MEMORIAL LECTURE 2017
THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT**

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I am honoured to be here today to deliver the 2017 Martin Lecture. James Martin was clearly a remarkable man, combining vision, insight and curiosity. The Martin School is an extraordinary living legacy, born from two impulses: a cold recognition that global problems would be created—not just solved—by globalization, and an idealistic vision of how sharing of knowledge and ideas across traditional lines could generate new solutions for the 21st century. That combination could hardly be more needed than today.

We are a few weeks away from the notification of the UK's determination to leave the EU. We are a month into the Trump Presidency. Both promise fundamental change in the architecture and assumptions that have underpinned international relations for my lifetime. They are part of a wider syndrome of fragmentation and upheaval in global politics. The situation is so fraught that the Eurasia Group annual survey forecasts a “geopolitical recession”...with a warning of a “geopolitical depression”.¹

It is clearly the case that globalization over the last decade has been too unequal, too insecure and too unstable for its own good. But there is more to it than that. What I see is the politics and economics of global integration, for a long time in harmony, now in conflict:

- The global economy is boosted by migration; the politics of migration is tearing western societies apart.
- Global economics is stabilized by international economic cooperation and mutual support, including of creditors to debtors. Local politics is, as the Euro crisis shows, resistant to this bargain.
- Global economics is boosted by open trade. Local politics is in revolt.
- Global economics demands investment in the the young and the retraining of the middle aged. Local politics is driven by the high voting rates of the old.
- Global economics leads to a gradual reduction in global economic inequalities. 72 per cent of the world's population were in extreme poverty in 1950 compared to ten per cent today. But local politics is more concerned with inequality within nations than between people across the world.

¹ Eurasia Group, *Top Risks 2017: The Geopolitical Recession* (January 2017)
https://www.eurasiagroup.net/files/upload/Top_Risks_2017_Report.pdf

This lecture is not dedicated to the political and economic convulsions now pulling against each other. But it cannot ignore them. They frame everything, including my focus on the global refugee crisis, which is both symptom and to some extent cause of the juddering changes underway.

The Brexit, Trump, Le Pen and Wilders campaigns describe themselves as a challenge to the globalized status quo epitomized by Davos - the Swiss town that hosts the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum.

Where Davos sells itself as a cosmopolitan melting pot of rationalist argument and win-win solutions, the protest movements reject all that. They are nationalist or localist in culture; they frame their arguments in terms of threats and villains, usually from abroad; they are about winning and losing, not sharing; they speak from the gut not from the PowerPoint; and are skeptical of the expert view not enamored of it.

Their central claim is simple: it is that the rise of Davos world explains the decline of Flint, Michigan; Sunderland, England; Lyon, France; and many other places. To this point, President Trump did not only win the non college educated white vote by 39 points;² the more than 2400 counties that voted for him (out of a total of 3000) account for 36 per cent of US economic activity, while those counties (obviously far fewer in number) which voted for candidate Clinton account for 64 per cent.³ The economic dynamism of globalization has become divorced from a sustainable base of political support.

This is what leads FT columnist Martin Wolf to write that “We are at the end of both an economic period – that of Western-led globalization—and a geopolitical one—the post-cold war “unipolar moment” – of a US-led global order. The question is whether what follows will be an unraveling of the post-second World War era into de-globalization and conflict...or a new period in which non-Western powers play a bigger role in sustaining a cooperative global order”.⁴

I want to highlight the reference to “post second World War era”. The movements of protest across western politics are a challenge to a vision stretching back beyond the last 25 years. They have in fact pitted themselves against both the politics and the economics of the last 75 years. Their target is the vision set out in the 1941 Atlantic Charter not just the Washington Consensus of the 2000s.

In politics they oppose the global order marked by Western-led burden-sharing in multilateral institutions – the EU, the UN, the World Bank, the IMF. In economics they oppose the

² Pew Research Center, *Behind Trump's victory: Divisions by race, gender, education* (November 2016) <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions-by-race-gender-education/>

³ Brookings Institution, *Another Clinton-Trump divide: High-output America vs low-output America* (November 2016) <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/11/29/another-clinton-trump-divide-high-output-america-vs-low-output-america/>

⁴ Financial Times, *Martin Wolf: The long and painful journey to world disorder* (January 2017) <https://www.ft.com/content/ef13e61a-cc0c-11e6-b8ce-b9c03770f8b1>

progressively more open movement of capital, labor, goods and services that is overseen by these institutions.

As such we are at a moment of significance beyond one generation. The Cold War was fought to break down walls. The West after World War 2 stood for a declaration not of independence but interdependence; asserted universal values not just western ones; and argued that injustice or oppression anywhere was a threat to justice and freedom everywhere. That is what is now at issue.

The danger is clear: that Nationalist Walls define the first half of the 21st century in the way that the Iron Curtain defined the second half of the 20th century. The danger is doubled because the biggest problems in the world – climate change, nuclear proliferation, refugee flows – are never going to be solved by a retreat to tribalism. Far from remedying the vagaries of globalization that will compound them.

The alternative to this retreat requires not just new political messaging – different threats, different villains, different heroes - but also a new policy agenda. It needs to recognize where the global order has become a victim of its own success, for example in expanding markets; and where it has been a victim of its own failures, in economic policy in curbing inequality, in foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, and across the policy board in addressing the climate crisis. And it needs to square the circle between satisfying a sense of identity and belonging, without offering the alternative (and unrealizable) fact of a return to a better yesterday.

Refugees are a good test. They are caught between forces of global interconnectedness and political retrenchment. They are one reason that walls are being built. And my claim is that the costs of keeping refugees out are greater than the costs of addressing their plight.

Today I want to try to untangle the policy from the politics. My argument is this:

- First, the mismatch between need and provision for refugees and displaced people has never been greater. And I should emphasize my focus is on the forcibly displaced, not the 250 million economic migrants around the world. The division is not always stark, but it seems to me important.
- Second, we need to break with the fictions that underpin the current humanitarian system. Displacement is here to stay; it is long term; it is urban. We also need to take on the myths. “Refugee” is not another word for “terrorist”. Aid spending is not sinking the economy.
- Third, refugee resettlement in rich countries needs to be part of the solution to this global protection crisis. The security arguments against this do not stack up.
- Fourth, we need to reform the humanitarian aid system to make it more impactful and more cost-effective. We need to build a model of economic as well as social support for refugees in the countries to which they flow. British aid policy, in or out of Europe, can exemplify these qualities.

- And finally, if we do these things we will rescue important values of our own societies as well as help people whose names we do not know and whose lives we can only imagine. The work of rescue is not only about ‘them’; it is also about us.

Refugee Crisis

When I first took the job at the IRC, three years ago, 50 million people were displaced around the world.⁵ Today there are more than 65 million.⁶ That is greater than the population of the UK, greater than the population of Spain and Portugal combined and almost twice the size of Canada. One more person was added to the total every 24 seconds last year.⁷

If the number of displaced were a country, it would be the 21st largest country in the world. The majority of citizens in this hypothetical country are internally displaced people (commonly referred to as IDPs). They are those who are displaced by conflict and disaster, but are unable to cross a border to find safety. Iraq, for example, is home to 3 million IDPs, Syria 6.3 million, Nigeria 1.9 million.⁸ But the refugee number of 25 million – refugees and asylum seekers to be precise - is itself a record (since records began in the 1950s).

The scale of displacement reflects the breakdown of order, sometimes escalating to full scale civil war, in a growing number of nations around the world. Refugees are no longer fleeing the effects of wars between states. They instead are fleeing the effects of wars within their own states. The Uppsala Conflict Database estimated that in 2015 there were 49 intrastate wars. That is more than a 500% increase since the post war period. It is almost double the number that existed 20 years ago.⁹

The effects of global tumult are primarily felt in developing regions across the world. Eighty six per cent of refugees live in these countries. Ten countries, which account for less than 2.5 per cent of the world’s total GDP, hold 56 per cent of the world’s refugees.¹⁰

⁵ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015* (June 2016) <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

⁶ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2013* (June 2014) <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html>

⁷ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015* (June 2016) <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

⁸ Relief Web Crises, Accessed 17 February 2017

⁹ Uppsala Conflict Database (UCDP) <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/year/2015>

¹⁰ Amnesty International, *Tackling the Global Refugee Crisis: From Shirking to Sharing Responsibility* (October 2016) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol40/4905/2016/en/>

While needs are growing, funding has not kept pace. Last year, the funding shortfall for the humanitarian aid was 12 billion pounds (\$15bn).¹¹ But I am convinced that more money on its own is not enough to address this crisis.

Fictions, Facts, Myths and Stories

I have always believed facts are potent; I never realized they could be so dangerous. Recently, a sheet entitled “Myths and Facts on Refugees, Migration, and Humanitarian Assistance”, which contained accurate information about the refugee resettlement process, including vetting, was taken down from the US State Department website. The attack on facts deserves a Martin School study series. But there are a number of fictions that need to be rebuked:

- It is a fiction that wealthy nations in Europe or the United States host the majority of refugees. The fact is the majority of refugees come from Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia and live in Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Kenya¹²
- It is a fiction that the displacement crisis is a blip or that it will solve itself. By all accounts the global refugee crisis is a trend, not a blip. Once someone has been displaced for five years or more, the average length of displacement is as high as 26 years.¹³ In 2014, only one in 300 displaced found a durable solution—a home. At this rate, if as of today there were no new displacements, it would still take 200 years for the current caseload to find a home.¹⁴
- It is a fiction that refugees are provided for in camps. The majority of refugees, 59 per cent, reside in urban areas, often without services or support.¹⁵
- It is a reprehensible myth that refugees are undercover terrorists. In the United States, refugees are the most vetted population. The process can take up to 36 months and involves screening by up to 15 government agencies including the CIA and the Department of Homeland Security. Those who end up resettled are the most vulnerable.

¹¹ High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, *Too important to fail: addressing the humanitarian financing gap* (Jan 2016)

https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_finance/hlphumanitarianfinancing

¹² UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015* (June 2016).

<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

¹³ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015* (June 2016).

<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

¹⁴ Centre for Global Development, *What’s So Hard about a Refugee Crisis? Making Displacement a Development Problem* (November 2016) <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/whats-so-hard-about-refugee-crisis-making-displacement-development-problem>

¹⁵ Overseas Development Institute (ODI), *Protracted displacement: uncertain paths to self-reliance in exile* (September 2015) <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9851.pdf>

Forty seven per cent of the Syrian refugees who have been resettled to the United States are children under 14.¹⁶ Displacement is not an act of choice—it is an act of survival.

- It is a myth that aid spending in the UK and elsewhere is out of control. The truth is, aid spending works out to be £290 per person in the UK between the ages of 16 and 64 per year.¹⁷ That is less than the average citizen spends on food they never eat.¹⁸

It is true that the harsh politics of handling refugees is not new. The US, even under FDR, refused to allow significant numbers of European Jews to enter the country until 1944 – well after the Holocaust had done its murderous worst.

But what is new, because refugees are fleeing long wars within states, is the policy agenda to address the refugee crisis. Logically there are only three sustainable solutions: peace making and peace keeping, to allow people to return to their homes; resettlement, in other words the organized transfer of refugees from their first country of refuge (usually a country neighboring their own) to a permanent home in a third country; and integration, the bargain that allows people to stay in the countries to which they have fled.

The first needs a different lecture, focused on the drivers of conflict, the incentives for peacemaking, and the obligations and capacities of the so-called international community. The evidence, from the Balkans to East Timor, shows how hard it is. Here, however, in keeping with my responsibilities at IRC, I want to talk about resettlement and then about humanitarian aid to allow people to find a sustainable future in the countries to which they have fled.

Refugee Policy: Resettlement

Resettlement provides one safe and orderly route for those fleeing conflict in search of security. Different but complementary to asylum, which involves people claiming refugee status once they arrive in country, it allows the most vulnerable refugees to apply directly from the countries where they are displaced.

The numbers that are resettled are scandalously low. The UN estimates that 1.19 million of the global refugee population of 21 million—only the most vulnerable—are in need of resettlement

¹⁶ Migration Policy Institute, *Syrian Refugees in the United States* (January 2017)
<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/syrian-refugees-united-states>

¹⁷ Department for International Development (DFID), *Statistics on International Development*
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572063/statistics-on-international-development-2016a.pdf

¹⁸ Waste and Resources Programme (WRAP UK), *Estimates of Food Surplus and Waste Arisings in the UK* http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Estimates_%20in_the_UK_Jan17.pdf

to industrialized countries.¹⁹ Available figures tell us the reality is less than 0.5 per cent were resettled last year.²⁰

This is partially why last month's Executive Order—which suspended the US refugee programme for 120 days, shuts out and leaves in limbo 60,000 refugees who were planned to be admitted this year, and bans indefinitely the arrival of Syrian refugees—is so pernicious. It sent a smoke signal to the world: humanitarian values are on fire.

This matters a lot to the IRC since our heritage is as a refugee resettlement agency, and we continue to welcome refugees in 29 cities across the United States. We have done this successfully for 370,000 people over the past four decades. From our experience in the United States we know that:

- It is the right thing to do. Offering a route to safety for some of the most vulnerable refugees is core to the American ideal.
- It is the practical thing to do. Current numbers are well below the number resettled under the Carter and Reagan Administrations. In the IRC's experience in the US, four in five refugees who enroll in our employment programs become economically self-sufficient within six months. These refugees integrate and become productive members of communities.
- It is the smart thing to do. The last thing that ISIS and other hate-mongers want is for the US and Europe to be a beacon of tolerance and compassion in the world. The US refugee ban for Syrians has been a propaganda windfall for ISIS.

But there is a further concern. The United States has effectively foregone its moral authority to call upon other countries doing the bulk of refugee hosting – Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Pakistan, and Kenya –to keep their borders open and provide shelter. If these countries close their borders or force returns to countries in conflict, the regional instability and insecurity that results will have global consequences, including for Europe. Europe has 16.5 per cent of the world's GDP and yet only hosts 8 per cent of the world's refugees.²¹

It is deeply shaming that at the same time the UK Government has decided to relocate only 150 more unaccompanied children under the Dubs amendment. The expectation was that 3,000

¹⁹ UNHCR, *Projected Resettlement Needs 2017* (June 2016)

<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html>

²⁰ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015* (June 2016).

<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

²¹ World Bank (2015) <http://data.worldbank.org/region/european-union>; UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015* (June 2016).

<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

children stranded elsewhere in Europe would be helped, and the Government seems set to stop after little over a tenth of that number have arrived in the UK. Our country is more than capable of helping these children, who are desperate and vulnerable.

At a time when the US is questioning its historic role as a leader in refugee resettlement, the EU should lead in shoring up the foundations of the global humanitarian regime. 60,000 refugees shut out of American resettlement have been left in limbo. The EU should not be adding to that pool of misery; it should be cutting into it.

Humanitarian Reform

No matter how high the refugee resettlement numbers go, it will only represent a small fraction of the total refugee population. Until there are other safe and legal routes to protection, many will continue to feel there is no option but to put themselves in the hands of smugglers. But, the majority of those who are displaced will stay in the regions they come from. This brings me to humanitarian reform – because the work of rescue itself needs to be rescued, from inertia, from outdated assumptions, from absence of imagination.

Over the years, there has been much discussion over whether the aid system is “broke” or “broken”. Recently, Kristalina Georgieva, now the CEO of the World Bank, has argued that the system is not only broken, but it is “broken quite a bit”.²² I agree.

The humanitarian aid system is not a “system” at all. It is a sector. The players in this sector have some shared values and aspirations, but they are not bound together by the shared goals, working practices and incentives that mark out a judicial system in a country or a Human Resources system in a business. And until it becomes a system with common methods of accountability, not just voluntary methods of coordination, and a financing methodology that supports rather than subverts the outcomes that the system is trying to achieve, we will not be able to maximize the impact for the people we serve.

Accountability starts with agreement on what the system wants to accomplish. People point to the Sustainable Development Goals, or the Sphere Standards. But these goals and benchmarks are not targeted to those affected by conflict and their unique challenges. This is why we need Collective Outcomes.

The UN has defined collective outcomes as “the result that development, humanitarian and other actors want to achieve in a particular context at the end of three to five years as installments towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”²³ These need to go beyond the input or output metrics we often report on—the number of tons of food delivered, individuals

²² Politico, *Georgieva enters race to run United Nations* (September, 2016)

<http://www.politico.eu/article/kristalina-georgieva-enters-race-to-run-united-nations-bulgaria-european-commissioner/>

²³ OCHA, *World Humanitarian Data and Trends* (2016)

<http://www.unocha.org/datatrends2016/WHDT2016.pdf>

treated in clinics, or even refugees resettled. Instead, we must ask ourselves if we are increasing incomes, improving health, or increasing literacy and social-emotional skills, all of the things people need when the length of time they are likely to be displaced is measured in years not months. Without agreed displacement outcomes, we are not accountable to the people most likely to be left behind.

Once we agree on outcomes, we need to chart the most effective way to get there - the evidence of what works. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) got the top scores in the whole US federal government in 2016 for investing in what works.²⁴ But the humanitarian sector continually underinvests in generating more evidence. There have been over 2,000 rigorous evaluations of programming in stable countries over the last 10 years, yet we've seen only 100 in conflict settings. The IRC is currently conducting 66 evaluations of what works in crisis contexts and we have committed in our strategic plan to make all our programs evidence-based or evidence-generating.

We also need a dramatic shift in incentive structures—which in the aid sector, means financing. The so-called Grand Bargain proposed at the World Humanitarian Summit last year offered the prospect of reform. Donors would align their systems, lengthen their grant timelines (the average IRC government grant is 12 months, and at any one time we are managing over 650 of them)) and build in flexibility to change programs according to the context and need, to align with the long term nature of the problems we tackle, and reduce their bureaucracy in return for transparency and value for money from implementing partners. These commitments cannot be allowed to run into the sand.

There is, however, a wider point. Humanitarian programs have traditionally been social service programs - keeping people alive, healthy, protected. There is more to be done to make these programs more successful. But with long term displacement now the norm, the humanitarian sector needs to think about economics not just social services, independence not just survival. Probably the most successful such program, in Uganda, where 800 000 refugees get the right to work and plots of land to farm, shows the potential.²⁵

DFID's recent announcement in its Economic Development Strategy that it will provide £80m to create 100,000 new jobs in Ethiopia, a third of which will be made available to refugees, is another significant step in the right direction.²⁶

²⁴ Results for America, *Federal Invest in What Works Index* (2016)

<http://results4america.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-Federal-Index-FINAL.pdf>

²⁵ Thomson Reuters Foundation News, *New arrivals to Uganda are allocated a plot of land, can work, run businesses, and move freely around the country* (November 2016)

<http://news.trust.org/item/20161115140347-p7yfr/>

²⁶ DFID, *Economic Development Strategy: prosperity, poverty and meeting global challenges* (January 2017)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/587374/DFID-Economic-Development-Strategy-2017.pdf

The Jordan Compact, another example, connects development opportunities and funding streams to employment opportunities for Syrian refugees. At their heart, compacts align incentives in one systematic model with clear requirements and direct accountability. With the right leverage and focus, compacts can be game-changing in moving the humanitarian and development sectors into a system that delivers results. But they will need a massive shift in thinking about the kind of macro economic support available to countries hosting large numbers of refugees on behalf of the world community.

Aid in the UK

While it is true that the aid sector does need to shift focus, it is equally true that aid, particularly in the UK, is more effective than it ever has been. In this context, it is disturbing to see the debate about aid spending and the role of DFID fall victim to the virus of Fake News. Sitting in the US, Britain and DFID are admired; for the size of the commitment, the clarity of purpose, the efficiency of how aid works and the ability to bring humanitarian and development programs closer together.

The attack repeats the familiar tropes of Fake News. Just as leaving the EU was trumpeted as a way to raise money for the NHS – money which is now shown to be fictitious – so a raid on the aid budget is offered as a salve for an NHS in crisis. Yet the aid budget is one tenth the NHS budget; and the problems of the NHS are not born of largesse in foreign aid.²⁷

Most British people accept that people with nothing deserve something from the world's fifth largest economy. What is right is that they won't put up with wastage. But on every measure of impact, aid money is being well spent:

- For all the talk about aid being a drop in the ocean, last year alone, 67.1 million children were immunized against preventable disease thanks to the British taxpayer.²⁸
- For all the resistance to cash as a programming tool, a recent independent evaluation of DFID's cash programming found that cash transfers have consistently increased incomes and consumption levels among some of the world's poorest people and present a strong value-for-money case. In Lebanon, every dollar provided in cash produced \$2.15 in the local economy, an outcome with benefits for both refugees and their Lebanese hosts struggling to accommodate them.²⁹
- For all the talk about aid dependency, aid dollars can contribute to stability. In 2000, 85 per cent of Rwanda's budget was made up of donor money. In this year's national

²⁷ NHS Confederation, *Key Statistics on the NHS* (November 2016)

<http://www.nhsconfed.org/resources/key-statistics-on-the-nhs>

²⁸ DFID, *Development Tracker* <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/>

²⁹ International Rescue Committee, *Emergency economies: The impact of cash assistance in Lebanon* (August 2014) <https://www.rescue.org/report/emergency-economies-impact-cash-assistance-lebanon>

budget, that figure is down to 45 per cent.³⁰ In part through DFID support to Rwanda's Revenue Authority, between 1998 and 2006, Rwanda quadrupled the amount it collected in taxes.³¹

Remember too that the UK is pledged to spend half of its aid programme in fragile states. This is a welcome recognition that the key issue in stable but developing countries is whether or not economic growth is inclusive or not. Remittances to Africa are three times the level of aid flows; economic investment many times that.³² Aid increasingly needs to be concentrated in places where the economy cannot work, not where it should be working better or more equitably.

The IRC and DFID have been proud partners for nearly twenty years in which time we have worked with seven Secretaries of State. With DFID's support, the IRC has increase immunization coverage in Uganda, with programmes reaching up to 95.5 per cent of children who defaulted on essential immunizations³³; Opened a second health clinic in Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, home to 80,000 Syrian refugees, again thanks to UK aid³⁴; and conducted the first ever prevalence study of the shocking levels of violence against women and girls in South Sudan, drawing attention to an underserved group in an underserved emergency.

I am glad that ministers have stood firm. We are ready to stand with them. But we need to do more than stand still in defensive crouch. The assault on aid represents all the worst aspects of the new populism. It is based on myth not fact. It blames others for a country's own problems. So the defence needs to be founded on a clear vision of what aid can do, and also what it says about us, the so called advanced industrialized societies of the West.

The Work of Rescue

When we discuss aid it is mainly couched in terms of the value to 'them'—refugees and displaced people themselves. This makes sense. They should be centre stage.

But there is a further argument, subsidiary but significant. It is about us, not them—what we in the western world stand for, what has made us successful, and what will make us successful in the future.

³⁰ Action Aid, *Real Aid: Ending Aid Dependency* (September 2011)

³¹ Action Aid, *Real Aid: Ending Aid Dependency* (September 2011)

³² World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016* (May 2016)
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/4549025-1450455807487/Factbookpart1.pdf>

³³ International Rescue Committee, *'Last-Mile' vaccine initiative increases immunization coverage in Uganda* (March 2016) <https://www.rescue-uk.org/article/last-mile-vaccine-initiative-increases-immunization-coverage-uganda>

³⁴ International Rescue Committee, *Inventive Syrian refugee devises new way to get around* (December 2016) <https://www.rescue-uk.org/article/inventive-syrian-refugee-devises-new-way-get-around>

My contention is that the work of rescue is about rescuing and renewing our own values, which ultimately define who we are, how strong our societies are, and what leverage they exert around the world.

The reason is that refugees pose some of the hardest tests for the values and character of any society. These are people who come from different countries, so start off as strangers, not neighbours. They often have different religion as well as ethnicity. And having been through the hell of political persecution or civil conflict, they often have very significant needs.

Partly for these reasons, for centuries refugees were not counted and did not count. They were seen as the unfortunate collateral of the competition for global power.

But slowly, culminating in the period after World War two, refugees and their rights were finally recognized in law. The current international refugee protection regime was written by the Western world after the Second World War; was underwritten by every Western democratic country; and eventually it moved from aspiration to implementation at a global level with universal standards of protection for refugees.

It is worth being clear why the treatment of refugees—whether they are welcomed in our countries or helped through aid abroad—is so revealing.

- The treatment of refugees reveals our values. Empathy for other people, because they are people, not because of their race, ethnicity or religion, is the basic building block of what makes for civilization. Just as we admire people who do great things, disdain people who do bad things, so we should empathize with people in need who are simply victims of circumstances beyond their control. And with the explosion of media and technology over the past decade, we know more about victims of war than at any time in history. Ignorance is no excuse when it comes to people fleeing from Aleppo to Jordan or Juba to Kenya. Their plight can today be seen in the palm of our hands.
- The embrace of refugees reveals our vision of the good society. It is easy to talk of refugees as a burden. But their experience has been shown to make them assets for the societies in which they live. Having fled for their lives they know the value of security and freedom. There is a double benefit: they bring extraordinary determination and learning, and they contribute to the diversity that makes for successful societies.
- The approach to refugees helps define our place in the world. Many politicians have talked about “the power of our example, not the example of our power”. For refugees fleeing for freedom, as well as immigrants seeking opportunity, Western countries have been a source of hope and a place of haven. Cubans, Russians, Iranians, Burmese, Bhutanese, Eritreans, Chinese fleeing persecution by their own governments, because of their political views, ethnicity or religion, have turned to Western countries for refuge. And by definition Western countries have helped devise their place in the world by offering haven for those fleeing societies where pluralism is seen as a threat to the country not a feature of the society.

- Refugee policy, precisely because it is a hard case, shows the capacity for leadership. The central challenge facing our interconnected world is that there is insufficient or inept management of the global commons—the parts of the world we share, and the problems that cross boundaries. Refugee policy is a classic case. The temptation for any nation to free ride on the efforts of others to address the problem is large: not only are the problems complex, and the people different, but it is easy to say that one country’s efforts are a drop in the ocean. So it is a prime case where leadership matters. Support for refugees anticipates our future in an interconnected world. Sure globalization has inequities and insecurities.

So this issue is ultimately about what we stand for. And that is why the questions now at issue go beyond short term politics or economics.

Treat refugees well and our societies are broad-minded; open; non-discriminatory. Ignore their plight and we show a closed mind as well as a hard heart. And treatment of refugees also says a lot about what we strive for: freedom of the individual, whatever his or her creed or color; and the pluralism that is the foundation of the good society.

That is why the work of rescue is about us not just them. The late President of Czechoslovakia Vaclav Havel said “conscience must catch up with reason or all is lost”. We should remember that as we seek to make globalization fairer, stabler and more secure.
