

Inquiring Minds topic - 20 May 2022

Ed Thomson, Moderator

Refugees and Immigration

On February 18 I presented a paper on immigration and emigration which looked to displacement of people due in large part to natural disasters such as caused by global warming. The war in Ukraine has displaced over 10,000,000 people about a third of whom have moved to adjoining countries. Those adjoining countries are at risk because of the numbers of people coming to them.

What is the obligation of those countries? What is the obligation of other countries? Is this crisis different from that arising from a natural disaster? Is there an obligation for individuals? What should be done?

What should the United States do? The United States is providing humanitarian aid. Should we take in some of the people? (March 24 President Biden announced that the United States would take 100,000 refugees.)

Some of the displaced people from Ukraine are previously displaced people from other parts of the world. Some are students from lots of other places. Some are not being welcomed in countries adjoining the Ukraine. (N.B. Belarus shipped people into Poland - it advertised they could go to Europe via Poland.) Does that or should that make a difference? If the displaced are from the war in Syria does that make a difference? What about the wars in Africa?

When the Soviet Union dissolved Ukraine had many atomic weapons. Russia and the United States entered into a treaty that they would protect the sovereignty and borders of Ukraine for the transfer of the atomic weapons to

Russia and Ukraine declaring to be a non nuclear state. Russia has repeatedly violated the treaty. What is the obligation of the United States? How does this impact responsibility toward war displaced persons?

These questions seem appropriate because at our February 18 discussion I have no recollection of people addressing what displaced persons should do and where they might go. This issue has been made unavoidable by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Ukrainians fleeing to neighbouring countries



Source: UNHCR, 17 March

