

Senior Project Proposal  
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September 15, 2016

**Title of Project:**

The Refugees of Serbia: How the Government & Independent Organizations Are Working to Aide the Recent Migrant Influx



**Statement of Purpose:**

The goal of my project is to explore through which avenues and to what extent the Serbian government is working to aid the refugees in their efforts along with independent organizations that specialize in migrant affairs. I intend to address the impacts that civilians and aid groups provide to said refugees currently in Serbia, in particular the lives of the women and youths.

**Background:**

At the age of five, I struggled to adapt to American life as an immigrant. Speaking a different language in public would elicit looks of disgust, crude comments about my accent, and hushed remarks, all the while reminding me that somehow, in their eyes, I was a lesser being than the greying lady who stood, scolding at my pigtails, in the checkout line of Fry's Grocery Store, as I clung to my mother. For me this exclusion was monumental and traumatizing, but in relation to the struggles of children at the same age who have traveled on foot from the war-torn land that represents everything that they have lost and may never repossess, it is minute. My awkward inaugural plane ride to America was a luxury in comparison to the life-threatening routes of smugglers where death ravages at the cost of a life's savings.

Furthermore, since I began taking the AP courses of Human Geography and Comparative Government, previously "standard" ideas of separation between humans seemed to break down even more in my eyes. A person may change their religion, their name, the location of their home, but they can't change their ancestry. It is the suffering and sacrifice of those predecessors that defines us today, and I cannot stand idly as these intricate individual human lives simply becoming a forgotten and nameless statistic that was on the news for ten minutes. Especially the children whose childhoods were stripped away by the masks of hatred and war.

**Significance:**

Migration is an aspect of humanity that has always been present, long before borders were drawn up and tensions heightened. Throughout the crisis of the Syrian Civil War, refugees have fled their homeland in drastic numbers, many risking their lives for nothing more than the very prospect of survival. As of February 2016, the United Nations (UN) has recognized 13.5 million Syrians requiring humanitarian assistance. Women and children make up three-quarters of the refugee population. The majority of all the immigrants have been funneling into the Eastern European country of Serbia, without any initial intent to remain there. Altogether, there has been a recent surge in asylum applications in Europe, 64% of which were made to Germany and Serbia in specific.

The country's prime minister, Aleksandar Vučić, drew a comparison between the people of Serbia "who also had to leave their homes 20 years ago" and the current refugees, citing that because they have also suffered, they understand the problems the refugees face. For this reason I believe that Serbia is a crucial point on the migratory map of these asylum seeking refugees as it has figuratively and literally represented the convergence and clash of east and west for centuries, all while striving to maintain a sense of cultural identity that inevitably continues to change, much like that of its newly displaced foreign inhabitants.

### **Methodology:**

I will assess the extent of cooperation between a governmental agency, specifically the Serbian Ministry of Defense (Srpsko Ministarstvo Odbrane), and independent organizations, such as the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), through supervised field work as to best assess the organization's impact on target populous. Furthermore, I will aid with in-office work in hopes to best understand the daily labours of the workers and officers employed in these sectors.

### **Problems:**

With people in such traumatic circumstances, their responses can be unpredictable. This can be potentially very drastic when my project is based on understand how they were impacted, a qualitative unit which cannot be done in a wholly unbiased manner without direct communication.

### **Bibliography:**

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