CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Issue

At the same year when the Syrian civil war escalated for the first time in 2011, thousands of people from Syria have been fleeing to various states located nearby and faraway. As the conflict which continues up to the date still cannot be resolved, the ironic fact occurs that the number of Syrian refugees does not actually decrease but it goes the other way around. For the record, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that Turkey is currently the country within the region that hosts the biggest number of Syrian refugees up to 2.503.549 (UNHCR, 2015).

Going along with the same issue, various debates around the topic of the significance of Syrian refugee crisis towards the potential security threat are happening all around the world. The fear was becoming even more real as it was intensified by the terrorist attack that happened in Paris, and Brussels. This, in the other hand, complicates the way for Syrian refugees to find a safe haven for them to live in. At least until the conflict is completely resolved.

The proof of such fear can be seen from the lack of acceptance of Syrian refugee in several countries located in the western hemisphere. Speaking about the United States in particular, from 10.000 Syrian refugees targeted to be resettled by the President Barack Obama, only 1.300 (equivalent of 13 percent) have been admitted until today (Koran, 2016).

Located next to the U.S, Canada has shown a contrast and yet positive trend in responding the issue of Syrian refugee crisis. Under the new elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canada promises to resettle 25.000 Syrian refugees by bringing them into the Canadian soil by 2015 (Susana Mas, 2015). Although the target to complete all the resettlement processes failed to be completed by the end 2015, Canada still continues the effort to contribute in helping the refugee crisis until the target to resettle 25.000 Syrian refugee was successfully completed by the early of 2016. December 10th 2015 was marked as the day when the first 150 Syrian refugees arrived in Pearson International Airport, Canada (Zorthian, 2015).

The fact that Canada seems to be so "open" with the wave of Syrian refugees directly corresponds to numbers of reasons and arguments which justify the voices that support the government of Canada (among all other countries in the world) to see Syrian refugee crisis as one of the priorities to be taken care of.

As quoted by *Los Angeles Times*, Tarah Demant, a senior director of the Identity and Discrimination Unit at Amnesty International USA, emphasizes a point of problem which lies in the lack of responsibility taken by the wealthy countries in handling the incoming refugees. She said, *"Wealthier countries are not doing their fair share,"* to the extent of her discovery which shows that the burden of responsibility *"...is falling on countries that don't have the resources"* despite the effect of this global crisis is actually affecting every countries (Simmons A. M., 2016).

The urgency to open the border for Syrian refugees is also being emphasized by the European migration commissioner, Dimitris Avramopoulos. In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal,* he directly addresses the U.S and Canada to give more

help on the refugees as he concerns about the Europe which is currently facing the growing issue of xenophobia and populism. In the other hand, he also appreciates Canada for already showing the positive response and, at the same time, realizes that migration recently becomes a hot issue in the U.S. However, he looks forward to settle the cooperation with the U.S government after the election has been done (Pop, 2016).

In the government's perspective, the response of Canada in accepting the wave of Syrian refugees can be tracked back into several motivations. One of the most underlying fundamental motivations is that such policy is included as one of the liberal party's pledges (where the current Prime Minister is from) in the campaign that is driven by the suffering of many Syrians as well as other surrounding countries. As reported by Sonja Puzic for *CTV News* in October 2015, Justin Trudeau promised to *"... bring 25,000 refugees to Canada by the end of 2015* (Puzic, 2015; Liberal Party, 2016)."

Speaking in the present context, what Canada has been doing in regards to Syrian refugees has turned into a form of continuation on their commitment in establishing resettlement for the refugees (Government of Canada, 2016). This form of continuation is displayed through quantitative measure by increasing the target number to 50.000 Syrian refugees (Associated Press in Toronto, 2016) and qualitatively by keeping the refugee resettlement program revised and added by various new systems.

In the other hand, the two different sectors that are involved in the refugee resettlement program (namely government and private sector) have also created a certain urgency to Canada as a whole nation to keep receiving more of Syrian

refugees. John McCallum, Canada's Minister of Immigration, said to *The Guardian* that Canada will take *"...in an additional 10.000 Syrian refugees"* from the remaining initial target, as he was also responding to the complaints from Canadian groups whose sponsorship applications still have not been processed (Reuters in Toronto, 2016).

Taking it into the scholar's point of view, there are also several arguments that can reveal the urgency of accepting refugees for Canada in particular. One of the arguments that may add a reason to the notion of Canada to take part in handling Syrian refugees is indirectly strengthened by Philippe Fargues, Director of the Migration Policy Centre.

In a part of the policy brief entitled *"Europe Must Take on its Share of the Syrian Refugee Burden, but How?"* he wrote that there is an increase of obstacles for Syrian refugee. What he actually tried to explain is that although there were 86.7 percent of Syrian asylum seekers being granted for refugee or temporary protection status, the sign of closure from the EU is still very visible. This is because the soaring number of Syrian refugees who turn to smugglers does not stop since the very beginning of the crisis. As a fact, within only 2 years (from 2011 to 2013) there is 30 percent increase of Syrian who smuggled through Greece or Italy (Fargues, Europe Must Take on its Share of the Syrian Refugee Burden, but How?, 2014). This fact supports the argument that it supposed to be enough to create an urgency for humanitarian response.

The other argument comes from the article entitled *"Can refugees benefit the state? Refugee resources and African state building."* In this article, Karen Jacobsen introduces a term called 'Refuge Resources' in order to explain the potential

resources in which a state can retrieve by becoming a host country. When she talked about the resources, she to refer it to material, social and political resources that can foster the state building process (Jacobsen, 2002).

However, her case study took place in the African states such as Ethiopia, Guinea, and Namibia wherein, she observed, the state authority in these border areas are considered weak and often being contested by rebel groups. That condition creates a counterproductive result to her thesis which mentions that those potential resources can only be utilized when a state can access and control these resources (Jacobsen, 2002).

This somehow becomes very distinctive to the condition that happens in Canada where the government control upon the border area is exercised better than that in the mentioned African states. That being said, with such a longstanding humanitarian activism which has been lasting for more than 60 years even before Canada eventually signed the UN Convention and Protocol for refugee in 1966 (Bissett, 1986), it is believed that Canada is more than capable to translate the flow of Syrian refugees into a kind of new resource that can be used to foster the nation building.

B. Research Question

With the explanation above, the author would propose a research question as followed;

Why did Canadian government build such a positive humanitarian response towards Syrian refugee crisis?

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C. Purpose of the Research

This research is conducted with a certain expectation that it would be able to identify some key factors that influence the decision making process of the Canadian government, particularly in the context of resettlement of Syrian refugees. In the other hand, this undergraduate thesis is also hoped to be an addition to the Canadian studies.

D. Theoretical Framework

In analyzing the problem contained within this particular research, the author utilizes the basic framework from constructivism theory of international relations as well as decision making process model in order to answer the research question.

1. Constructivism Theory

Constructivism is one of the most significant theories known within the realm of international relations studies. Compared to other theories (primarily to the positivist theories such as realism and idealism) constructivism is considered relatively new to be used as one of academic tools in explaining the phenomena in international relations. The significance of this theory is seen from the alternative view and a framework for the study of IR. Popularly emerged in the era of 1940's, constructivism is also believed to be accountable in explaining the demise of Cold War (Lui, 2012).

This theory works with a fundamental assumption that international politics is actually the result of "social construction." Therefore, rather than emphasizing the idea of state as the sole actor in the dynamics of international politics, this theory emphasizes the presence of micro agent (in

this sense is the society) as the starting point of analysis and state as the top end point of analysis. Alexander Wendt in his book entitled *Social Theory of International Politics* explains in retrospect that constructivism adapts two basic tenets which are,

> *"(1) That the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature."* (Wendt, 1999)

Although there might be various forms and interpretations about constructivism theory in IR, for the purpose of writing this research the author would try to focus on the one that is stated by Wendt. The version of constructivism theory which Wendt articulates is believed to be moderate constructivism in which it provides the interaction of structural and symbolical sociology.

In this research, this theory will be utilized as the tool to explain the influence of Canadian society towards its government's decision making process related to the policy of resettling Syrian refugees. That being said, this theory could be implemented to explain the possibility of occurrence of social construction within Canadian society that fosters its identity as an "open for refugee" society.
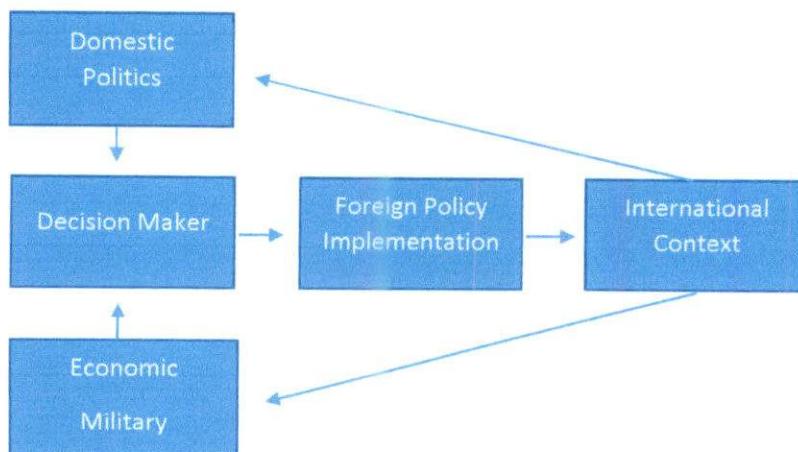
2. Decision Making Process

Foreign policy can be acknowledged as the outcome national interest of a certain country. Given that statement, the existence of national interest would, by nature, bring a specific approach to the decision maker that further actions taken under the same notion has to be based on rational consideration.

William D. Coplin (2003) in the book entitled *Introduction to International Politics* introduces a model in which he explains how a decision within the government's framework is made. In retrospect, Coplin explains that to analyze the process of decision making we should not exclude the other factors to be considered. There are three things that Coplin believes contributing to the final output of a foreign policy's decision making process.

First, Domestic politics is believed as one of the influencing factors in the decision making process. This may include some factors such as cultural influence that may set certain set of political decisions. *Second*, military and economic condition will also be essential for the purpose of measuring the capacity of a state. *Third*, International context is included as it determines how a state will have to contextualize their policy based on their geographical, economical, and political condition. The process of decision making according to Coplin is described as follows;

Table 1. Decision Making Process

Source: Coplin, 2003

a. Pluralist Model

The type of decision making process into three models namely; Democratic model; Pluralist model; and Ruling Elite model. For this particular research, the author would like to utilize the pluralist model of decision making process in order to explain the later findings.

As a basic understanding, pluralist model of decision making works differently with the democratic model whereas people are more well-informed and more directly involved in an individual manner. In the pluralist model, people tend to be committed to give the autonomy to certain representative groups (or as in the book is referred to organizations) that then will act as the policy influencers.

But also in the other hand, this model tries to display an equilibrium in the decision making process that no actor is holding the dominance over others. With the characteristic of authority that is more decentralized, this very model also tends to use more bargaining and compromise principle in running the decision making process (Coplin, 2003).

Based on the explanation above, this theory will later be used to explain the decision making process of the Canadian government and to find the influencing factors outside the Canadian government itself.

E. Hypothesis

With the basic ideas that have been described previously, the author stipulates two hypothesis:

1. There is a push from Canadian historical value that can eventually shape Canada's identity as a country that opens to the refugee.

2. The decision making process towards the acceptance of Syrian refugees in Canada is influenced by the three factors (domestic politics, military/economic condition, and international context) as well as Civil Society/NGO that lies outside of the government.

F. Method of Research

In writing this research the author uses descriptive method. To support such method, the author also uses data gathering techniques in which the author would collect the secondary data such as books, journals, news, websites as well as other electronic data which related to the discussed topic.

G. Scope of Research

To set the focus of this research, the author would need to obtain the data from 1947 which happened to be the year when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted also in which Canada, said the Ministry of Global Affair has been *"...a consistently strong voice for the protection of human rights and the advancement of democratic values, from our central role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1947-1948"* (Global Affairs Canada, n.d.) However, the research will be focused on between 2010 and 2015 when the actual policy towards the resettlement of Syrian refugee crisis was implemented.

H. Structure of Writing

This research would use the outline as follows:

Chapter 1

This chapter describes background of the issue, research question, purpose of research, theoretical framework, hypothesis, method of research, range of research and system of writing.

Chapter 2

This chapter explains about the origin of Syrian civil war which becomes the starting point of Syrian refugee crisis featured with certain supporting statistics that will show the significance of such crisis to the entire world's political constellation.

Chapter 3

This chapter explains about the approach that is taken by Canadian government in shaping its identity as a country that opens to refugees.

Chapter 4

This chapter explains about the process of Canadian foreign policy towards Syrian refugee crisis being formulated. This chapter will specifically attempt to identify the other actors involved in the process along with their influence towards it.

Chapter 5

This chapter concludes the entire research and explanations that have been discussed in the previous chapters.