

Exam assignment

RSOS 4958 Fall 2023 Exam Question

The following concerns the fictional country of Rohan.

Rohan has a long coast and shares land borders with three countries. It has historically received a small number of asylum seekers and processed those applications in line with its international legal obligations. Rohan is a state party to most major international human rights instruments and other key conventions relevant for migration and refugees.

Starting in early 2023, Rohan sees a sharp increase in irregular arrivals through its mountainous and long land border with Country X. X borders Country Y where a civil war has been going on since 2020. This war has resulted in nearly one million Y-nationals fleeing to and seeking safety in X, and as the war drags on, it is becoming unlikely that these people will return to Y any time soon. Some of them now look to travel on from X to other countries where they hope to receive more secure statuses and rights. Many use smugglers to cross the mountainous border area to Rohan, and X authorities do not interfere with these departures. Meanwhile, there has also been a sharp increase in irregular boat arrivals to Rohan. The boats carry people originating from several different countries with different political, social and economic problems. News of people drowning on this dangerous route to Rohan is no longer a rare occurrence.

The initially welcoming public opinion in Rohan about the increased irregular arrivals quickly wanes, and migration becomes the main issue in the latest general elections. The new prime minister states:

“We have a proud history of protecting refugees. Did we not open our hearts and doors to all the brave dissidents as our neighbor was going through one military coup after the other? Do we not support refugees around the world? We are one of the biggest donors to this cause. But this ongoing wave... these people are not refugees. The civil war in Country Y is heartbreaking and we should continue to do all we can to support a peaceful solution there. But the Y-nationals who are now storming our borders, they are not after safety; they were already safe in X! And the boats... It is heartbreaking to see how all those poor people are tricked into their deaths with hollow promises of a rich life! We need to break the business model of these criminal networks. And remember, we are not talking only about economic migrants here, terrorists are also using the same smugglers to get here!”

The new Rohanese government is currently working on a law proposal under which Rohanese civilians towing in or otherwise assisting migrant boats and housing the arriving migrants can be punished for smuggling. Also, a new simplified asylum border procedure is to be set up to deal with applications of Y-nationals arriving through X. X will be considered a safe country for asylum seekers from Y and applications from Y-nationals arriving through X will be rejected if the applicant cannot prove that X is unsafe for them. While Rohan plans to return these would-be rejected asylum seekers back to X, the latter does not seem amenable to this; however, the negotiations between the two countries are ongoing. Meanwhile, a group of Rohanese fishermen

start a protest, saying that they have a moral and religious duty to help fellow humans in need and that they cannot follow a law that orders them otherwise, even if this means going to jail.

Question: Write an essay discussing the developments concerning Rohan with reference to *three* of the debates, themes or concepts we covered in RSOS 4958, drawing from and making meaningful use of the relevant literature in the syllabus.

Note: Each of the eight lectures dealt with at least one such debate, theme and/or concept. In some lectures, we focused mainly on one debate/theme/concept (e.g., lecture 1) and in some others we covered several at the same time (e.g., lecture 2). The titles for the lectures can serve as a helpful reminder in most instances. Also, a couple of the themes were more overarching and came up more than once. The above text includes various elements touching upon many of these debates/themes/concepts and the idea is not to try to address every issue you identify. Please choose three to focus on and make your choice clear to the reader. There is no single right or best answer here but many relevant discussions to be had. Remember the word limit. Best of luck!