
FROM THE EDITORS

International migration is gaining an increasingly high profile. As demonstrated by recent state responses to massive migratory flows from Rwanda, Liberia, Cuba, and the former Yugoslavia, migration is no longer a peripheral subject of limited interest. Today, migration issues have moved to the forefront; they have become “high politics” and are often handled by heads of state. This shift has occurred because the increased number and impact of migrants today pose a fundamental challenge to modern states. In this issue, we explore the nature of that challenge and how nation-states are responding. Specifically, our articles address how state governments are coping with the increased numbers of migrants—refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, illegal migrants, and others—seeking and gaining entry. Many governments perceive this influx of foreigners as threatening their national identity, legitimacy, or prosperity. In an era when such national issues are already being questioned—and xenophobia is running high—it is not surprising that state responses to migration are becoming important instruments of national policy.

Sharon Stanton Russell presents an overview of global migratory trends, explaining why migration has been elevated to the level of “high politics.” She discusses the forces driving international migration, the challenges it poses, and the range of state responses. Governments not only respond to migratory flows; they also influence them through their actions and policies. Myron Weiner argues that rather than being spontaneous, voluntary movements based on economic considerations, migratory flows are often impelled, encouraged, or prevented by governments. He then examines the ways in which migrants and refugees are seen as threats to the stability and security of both sending and receiving states. Sarah Wayland argues that international migration also poses a challenge to the very essence of the nation-state. State policies regarding citizenship and state traditions regarding incorporation of newcomers—both of which follow from a state’s conception of its national identity—are key factors determining how well a state is able to cope with this challenge.

Government responses to migration must be rational, comprehensive, and coordinated with other states in order to be effective. Policies that are poorly conceived, shortsighted, or improperly implemented fail to address problems raised by migration and may even make them worse. Arthur Helton and Pamela Birchenough examine European migration, arguing that the perceived “asylum crisis” in Europe is really a crisis of governance. They criticize European states for violating their commitments to international refugee standards

and urge European leaders to coordinate their migration policies in order to manage the flow in a comprehensive, rational, and humane manner. In their analysis of post-NAFTA Mexican migration to the United States, Monica Hepel and Luis Torres demonstrate that U.S.-Mexican migration is dependent on economic and political factors in both countries. As a result, binational cooperation and coordination is essential for proper management of legal and illegal Mexican migration. Bill Frelick finds recent U.S. policy toward Cuban and Haitian migrants woefully biased and ineffective. Instead of the contradictory, shifting policies it employed, the United States should have adopted alternative models of refugee management that would have screened migrants individually while taking into account the various political circumstances in their countries of origin.

Our final piece on migration demonstrates how political changes can cause hundreds of thousands to flee their own country. On the 40th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution, four Hungarians who were forced to flee in 1956 recount the challenges they faced both during their escape and after crossing the border to safety. This set of interviews paints a vivid, personalized picture of how people can find themselves suddenly forced from their homeland by events beyond their control.

We encourage readers to contact *The Fletcher Forum* with comments, suggestions, and constructive criticism. We can be reached via e-mail at forum@emerald.tufts.edu. Also, visit our home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.tufts.edu/fletcher/forum/html>.

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