
A SECURITY PERSPECTIVE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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With the end of the Cold War, the notion of "security" has taken on an entirely new dimension. Both states and regimes can be made insecure by factors other than the threat of armed attack, and among these is clearly an unwanted population influx.

Migration and refugee issues, no longer the sole concern of ministries of labor or immigration, are now matters of high international politics, engaging the attention of heads of state, cabinets, and key ministries involved in defense, internal security, and external relations. In recent years, one of the most dramatic high-politics event involving international migration was the exodus of East Germans to Austria through Czechoslovakia and Hungary in July and August of 1989. This exodus precipitated the decision of the German Democratic Republic to open its western borders, a massive migration westward followed by the fall of the East German government, and the absorption of East Germany by the Federal Republic of Germany. It was flight, not invasion, that ultimately destroyed the East German state.

The hopes of millions of migrants and refugees for a better life and freedom from violence and repression are matched by the fears of many governments and their citizens that a massive influx of newcomers will impose strains on the economy, upset a precarious ethnic balance, weaken the national identity, and threaten political upheaval.

This essay provides an overview of the variety of ways in which migrants and refugees are perceived as potential threats to the security of states or regimes. Examples abound of migration flows that have generated conflicts within and between states and have therefore risen to the top of the political agenda. One may draw examples from the daily press to make three points.

First, international migration shows no sign of abating. Indeed, with the

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end of the Cold War there has been a resurgence of violent secessionist movements creating refugee flows, while barriers to exit from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have been lifted. The breakup of empires and countries into smaller units has created minorities who now feel insecure. Vast differentials in income and employment opportunities among countries persist, providing the push and pull that motivate economic migrants. Environmental degradation, droughts, floods, famines, and civil conflicts compel people to flee across international borders. And new global networks of communication and transportation provide individuals with information and opportunities for migration.

Second, more people want to leave their countries than other countries are willing or capable of accepting. The reluctance of states to open their borders to all who wish to enter is only partly a concern over economic effects. The constraints are as likely to be political, resulting from concern that an influx of people belonging to another ethnic community may generate xenophobic sentiments, incite conflicts between natives and migrants, and spur the growth of antimigrant right-wing parties.

Third, it is necessary to note that only a fraction of the world's 17 million refugees are in the advanced industrial countries and only a small portion of global migration has flowed to Western Europe (where migrants total 5 percent of the population) or to the United States. Most of the movement has been from one developing country to another; the world's largest refugee flows have been in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and most recently in the Persian Gulf.

Attention has been given by economists to the ways in which economic differentials between countries influence migration, and by some political scientists to the ways in which conflicts within countries lead to refugee flows. But little systematic comparative attention has been given to the ways in which international population movements create conflicts within and between states, that is, to population flows as an independent rather than dependent variable. A study of these effects is necessary to understand why states and their citizens often have an aversion to international migration even when it is accompanied by economic benefits.

Much of the contemporary literature on international migration focuses on global economic conditions as the key determinants of population movements. According to economic theories of migration, individuals will emigrate if the expected benefits exceed the costs, with the result that the propensity to migrate from one region or country to another is viewed as being determined by average wages, the cost of travel, and labor market conditions. Accordingly, it is argued, changes in the global economy, such as an increase in the world price of oil or shifts in terms of trade and international flows of capital, will increase the demand for labor in some countries and decrease it in others. Moreover, the development strategies pursued by individual countries may lead to high growth rates in some and low growth rates and stagnation in others. Uneven economic development among states and a severe maldistribution of income within states may induce individuals and families to move

across international boundaries to take advantage of greater opportunities.

These economic factors go a long way toward explaining a great many international population movements, but they neglect two critical political elements. The first is that international population movements are often impelled, encouraged, or prevented by governments or political forces for reasons that may have little to do with economic conditions. Indeed, many international population flows, especially within Africa and South Asia, are only marginally, if at all, determined by changes in the global or regional political economy. And secondly, even when economic conditions create inducements for people to leave one country for another, it is governments that decide whether their citizens should be allowed to leave and governments that decide whether immigrants should be allowed to enter, and these governmental decisions are frequently based on noneconomic considerations. Moreover, governments vary in their capacity to control entry. States that are capable of defending themselves against missile, tank, and infantry attacks are often unable to defend themselves against the intrusion of thousands of illegal immigrants crossing a border in search of employment or safety. Governments want to control the entry of people and regard their inability to do so as a threat to sovereignty. Any effort, therefore, to develop a framework for the analysis of transnational flows of people must also take into account the political determinants and constraints upon these flows.

A security/stability framework complements rather than replaces an economic analysis by focusing upon the role of states in both creating and responding to international migration. I construct this framework in three ways: first by identifying types of international movements generated by considerations of state security and stability, as distinct from those flows largely shaped by the regional or international political economy. I provide a brief description of forced and induced emigrations as examples of politically driven population movements with international repercussions. Second, I identify those circumstances in which international migration is regarded as a threat to a country's security and stability. This leads us to consider how and when refugees and economic migrants come to be regarded as threatening by receiving and sending countries. Finally, I consider the various ways states react when faced with population movements they regard as a threat to their international security and internal stability.

Forced and Induced Emigration: A Global Perspective

It would be inaccurate to assume that much of the world's population flows merely happen; more often they are made to happen. There are three distinct types of forced and induced emigrations in the contemporary world.

First, governments may force emigration as a means of achieving cultural homogeneity or asserting the dominance of one ethnic community over another. Such flows have a long and sordid history. Accompanying the rise of nationalism in Europe were state actions to eject religious communities that did not subscribe to the established religion and ethnic minorities that did not

belong to the dominant ethnic community. In the fifteenth century the Spanish crown expelled the Jews. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the British crown induced Protestant dissenters to settle in the American colonies. And in the early decades of the twentieth century, minorities throughout Eastern Europe—Bulgarians, Greeks, Jews, Turks, Hungarians, Serbs, and Macedonians—were put to flight.¹

Contemporary population movements in postcolonial Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia are similarly linked to the rise of nationalism and the emergence of new states. The boundaries of many of the new postcolonial regimes divided linguistic, religious, and tribal communities, with the result that minorities, fearful for their future and often faced with discrimination and violence, migrated to join their ethnic brethren in a neighboring country. Many Third World countries also expelled their ethnic minorities, especially when the minorities constituted an industrious class of migrant origin in competition with a middle-class ethnic majority. Governments facing unemployment within the majority community and conflicts among ethnic groups over language and educational opportunities often regarded the expulsion of a prosperous, well-placed minority as a politically popular policy. Economically successful minorities have often been told that others would be given preference in employment, a policy of discrimination which effectively makes it difficult for minorities to compete on the basis of merit. The list of expulsions is long, with notable examples including Indians and Pakistanis from Uganda, Kurds from Turkey, and Tutsis from Rwanda. To this list from the Third World, we must now add the minorities in each of the successor states of Yugoslavia.

Secondly, governments have forced emigration as a means of dealing with political dissidents and class enemies. The ancient Greeks were among the earliest to strip dissidents of citizenship and cast them into exile. Socrates himself was offered the option of going into exile rather than being executed. Contemporary authoritarian governments have expelled dissidents or allowed them to go into exile as an alternative to imprisonment. Exiles from the Third World have largely replaced exiles from Europe in the United States.

Governments may expel not just a handful of dissidents, but a substantial portion of the population hostile to the regime. Revolutionary regimes often see large-scale emigration of a social class as a way of transforming the country's social structure. The exodus of more than a half million members of the Cuban middle class was regarded by the Castro regime as a way of disposing of a social class hostile to socialism.

A third type of forced migration can be described as part of a strategy to achieve a foreign policy objective. Although they may deny such an intent, governments may, for example, force emigration as a way of putting pressure on neighboring states. The refugee-receiving country often understands that a halt to unwanted migration is not likely to take place unless it yields on a demand made by the country from which the refugees come. In 1981, for example, the U.S. government believed that the government of Haiti was encouraging its citizens to flee by boat to Florida to press the United States to

substantially increase its economic aid. Whether it was Haitian policy or not, the United States did increase aid to Haiti.

Colonization has served as a means for imperial powers to extend their political or economic dominance, while decolonization has provided an opportunity for successor regimes to consolidate the power and position of their own ethnic groups. During the colonial expansions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the imperial powers also moved populations from one territory to another in pursuit of their own economic interests. Slaves were transported from Africa to the Caribbean and to North America. After the abolition of slavery, the British established a system of indentured labor that enabled them to satisfy the labor needs in their colonies (especially on British-owned plantations) by moving Indians to East Africa, Mauritius, the Caribbean, and Fiji. The colonial powers also encouraged the migration of entrepreneurial communities, traders, and money lenders whom they regarded as politically pliable, for example, Indians to the Gulf, Lebanese to West Africa, and Chinese to Southeast Asia.

While the colonization of distant territories rarely led to enduring political or economic control, the colonization of nearby territories has almost always had permanent consequences. Americans moved westward into Mexican and American Indian territories. The Chinese colonized non-Han areas. These flows displaced the local populations and transformed the politics of the areas that were colonized.

Colonization as a means of international conquest and annexation can in fact be the deliberate intent of a state. The government of Morocco, for example, moved 350,000 civilians into Western Sahara in an effort to claim and occupy disputed territory. The Israeli government has provided housing subsidies to its citizens to settle in the West Bank. Since the annexation of the Turkic regions of Central Asia in the nineteenth century, the czarist and Soviet regimes encouraged Russian settlement, while a similar policy of settling Han people has been pursued by the Chinese government in Sinkiang province and Tibet.

Upon independence from European colonialism, many newly established regimes sought to "decolonize" themselves by pressing for the exodus of populations they regarded as imposed upon them by the imperial power. With few exceptions, white settlers were pressed to return home. French settlers vacated Algeria; most Portuguese left Angola and Mozambique; many British left Zimbabwe. The new regimes often pressed for the exodus of those who had been brought in by the imperial rulers as indentured servants, although they were now free laborers and many had become prosperous businessmen and members of the middle class. Sri Lanka pressed for the departure of Tamil

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tea estate workers. A similar process of rejection may soon be at work in the former Soviet republics, where millions of Russian "colons" are regarded as illegitimate settlers imposed by the Soviet regime.²

Forced emigration can be an instrument by which one state seeks to destabilize another, force recognition, stop a neighboring state from interfering in its internal affairs, prod a neighboring state to provide aid or credit in return for stopping the flow, or extend its own political and economic interests or those of a dominant ethnic group through colonization or decolonization. An examination of both historical and contemporary population movements thus demonstrates that countries of emigration have more control over international population flows than is usually accounted for by political analysts, and that what often appear to be spontaneous emigration and refugee movements may represent deliberate emigration policies on the part of sending countries. To view refugee flows as simply the unintended consequences of internal upheavals or economic crises is to ignore the eagerness of some governments to reduce or eliminate from within their own borders selected social classes and ethnic groups and to affect the politics and policies of their neighbors.

Migration as a Threat to Security and Stability

Migration can be perceived as threatening by governments of either population-sending or population-receiving communities. Armed refugees may pose the threat of attack; migrants can be a threat to either country's political stability; or migrants may be perceived as a threat to the major societal values of the receiving country.

"Security" is a social construct with different meanings in different societies. An ethnically homogeneous society, for example, may place higher value on preserving its ethnic character than does a heterogeneous society and may, therefore, regard a population influx as a threat to its security. Providing a haven for those who share one's values (political freedom, for example) is important in some countries, but not in others. In some countries, therefore, an influx of "freedom fighters" may not be regarded as a security threat. Moreover, even in a given country, what is highly valued may not be shared by elites and counterelites. The influx of migrants regarded as radicals may be feared by a monarch, but welcomed by the opposition. One ethnic group may welcome migrants, while another is vehemently opposed to them. The business community may be more willing than the general public to import migrant workers.

Similarly, countries differ in whether or not they regard the mistreatment of their citizens abroad as a threat that calls for state action. While some countries are prepared to take armed action in defense of their overseas citizens, others prefer not to antagonize a government that has enabled its citizens to find employment and earn much-needed remittances.

One can identify five broad situational categories in which refugees or migrants may be perceived as a threat to the country that produces the emigrants, to the country that receives them, or to relations between sending and

receiving countries. The first is when refugees and migrants are regarded as a threat—or at least a thorn—in relations between sending and receiving countries, a situation that often arises when refugees and migrants are opposed to the regime of their home country. The second is when migrants or refugees are perceived as a political threat or security risk to the regime of the host country. The third is when immigrants are seen as a cultural threat or, fourth, as a social and economic problem for the host society. And the fifth—a new element growing out of developments in the Persian Gulf—is when the host society uses immigrants as an instrument of threat against the country of origin.

I. Refugees and Immigrants as Opponents of Their Home Regime

Conflicts create refugees, but refugees can also create conflicts. Such an international conflict arises when a country classifies individuals as refugees with a well-founded fear of persecution, thereby accusing and condemning the country of origin for engaging in persecution. The mere granting of asylum can create an antagonistic relationship. Thus, the January 1990 debate in Congress over whether Chinese students should be permitted to remain in the United States because of persecution in China was regarded by the People's Republic of China as "interference" in its internal affairs. President Bush was prepared to permit graduating students and other Chinese in the United States to remain by extending their visas, but not to grant asylum, while many in Congress wanted to grant formal asylum status in order to condemn China. To the chagrin of migrant-producing countries, democratic regimes generally allow refugees to speak out against the regime of their country of origin, allow them access to the media, and permit them to send information and money back home in support of the opposition. The host country's decision to grant refugee status thus often creates an adversarial relationship with the country that produces the refugees. The receiving country may have no such intent, but even when its motives are humanitarian, the mere granting of asylum can be sufficient to create an antagonistic relationship. In the most famous asylum episode in this century, Iranian revolutionaries took violent exception to the U.S. decision to permit the shah of Iran to enter the United States for medical reasons; many Iranians regarded this as a form of asylum, and some used it as an occasion for taking American hostages.

A refugee-receiving country may actively support refugees in their quest to change the regime of their country of origin. Refugees are potentially a tool in interstate conflict. Examples abound: the United States armed contra exiles from Nicaragua; the Indian government armed Bengali "freedom fighters" against the Pakistani military; the Chinese provided arms to the Khmer Rouge refugees to help overthrow the Vietnamese-backed regime in Cambodia; and Palestinian refugees received Arab support against Israel. Therefore, refugee-producing countries may have good reason for fearing an alliance between their adversaries and their expatriots.

Nonrefugee immigrants can also be a source of conflict between receiving and sending countries. A diaspora made up primarily of refugees is, of course, likely to be hostile to the regime of the country from which they fled. But

even economic migrants may become hostile, especially if they live in democratic countries while the government of their homeland is repressive. Thus, many Chinese lost their sympathy for China's government in 1989, when the regime became repressive at Tiananmen Square. Thereafter, many overseas Chinese supported dissidents within China and pressed their host governments to withdraw support for China. The Beijing government came to regard many overseas Chinese as a source of support for dissidents.

The home country may take a dim view of the activities of its citizens abroad and hold the host country responsible for their activities. But host countries, especially if they are democratic, are loath to restrict migrants engaged in lawful activities, especially since some of the migrants have already become citizens. Thus, struggles that might otherwise take place only within a country become internationalized if the country has a significant overseas population.

II. Refugees and Immigrants as a Political Risk to the Host Country

Governments are often concerned that refugees to whom they give protection may turn against them if they are unwilling to assist the refugees in their opposition to the government of their country of origin. Paradoxically, the risk may be particularly high if the host country has gone so far as to arm the refugees against their country of origin. Guns can be pointed in both directions, and the receiving country takes the risk that refugees will seek to dictate the host country's policies toward the sending country. For example, the decision by Arab countries to provide political support and arms to Palestinian refugees from Israel created a population within the Arab states capable of influencing their own foreign policies and internal politics. Palestinians became a political and security problem for Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, France, and the United States. The support of Iraqi invaders by Palestinians in Kuwait was an asset to Iraq, since some of the 400,000 Palestinians in Kuwait held important positions in the Kuwaiti administration. The Kuwaiti government's decision to expel most Palestinians after the Gulf War reflected its view that this guest population had become a security threat. Throughout the Middle East, governments have had to consider the capacity of resident Palestinians to undermine their regimes should they adopt policies unacceptable to the Palestinians.

Refugees have launched terrorist attacks within their host countries, illegally smuggled arms, allied with the domestic opposition against the host-government policies, participated in drug trafficking, and in other ways eroded governments' willingness to admit refugees. Armenians, Croats, Kurds, Northern Irish, Palestinians, Sikhs, and Sri Lankan Tamils, among others, have been regarded with suspicion by intelligence and police authorities of other countries; their requests for asylum have been scrutinized not only for whether they have a well-founded fear of persecution, but for whether their presence might constitute a threat to the host country.

These fears, it should be noted, are sometimes exaggerated. Governments have often gone to extreme lengths to protect themselves against low-level

threats, but these fears are not always unfounded, especially in the context of an increase in international terrorism.

III. Migrants Perceived as a Threat to Cultural Identity

How and why some migrant communities are perceived as cultural threats is a complicated issue, initially involving how the host community defines itself. Cultures differ with respect to how they define who belongs or who can be admitted into their community. Varying norms govern who is admitted, what rights and privileges are given to those who are permitted to enter, and whether the host culture regards a migrant community as potential citizens. A violation of these norms (by unwanted immigrants, for example) is often regarded as a threat to basic values and in that sense is perceived as a threat to national security.

These norms are often embedded in the law of citizenship that determines who, by virtue of birth, is entitled as a matter of right to be a citizen and who is permitted to become a naturalized citizen. The main distinction is between citizenship laws based on *jus sanguinis*—whereby a person wherever born is a citizen of the state of his parents—and those based on *jus soli*—the rule that a child receives his nationality from the soil or place of birth. The ties of blood descent are broader than merely parentage, for they suggest a broader *völk*, or people, to whom one belongs in a fictive relationship. The Federal Republic of Germany, for example, has such a legal norm. Under a law passed in 1913—and still valid—German citizenship at birth is based exclusively on descent (*jus sanguinis*); thus the children of migrants born in Germany are not thereby automatically entitled to citizenship (no *jus soli*). The Basic Law (Germany's postwar "constitution") also accords citizenship to those Germans who no longer live in Germany and who may no longer speak German but came (or are descended from those who came) from Germany and the territories from which Germans were expelled after the war.³ Thus, thousands of immigrants who entered the Federal Republic from East Germany or from Poland after the Second World War were regarded as German citizens returning "home." Other countries share a similar concept. Israel, for example, has a Law of Return under which all Jews, irrespective of where they presently live, are entitled to "return" home to reclaim, as it were, their citizenship. Nepal also has a law that entitles those who are of Nepali "origin," though they have lived in India, Singapore, Hong Kong, or elsewhere for several generations, to reclaim their citizenship by returning home.

Where such notions of consanguinity dominate citizenship law, the political system is capable of distinguishing between an acceptable and unacceptable influx, without regard either to the number of immigrants or to the condition of the economy into which the immigrants move. In general, countries with norms of consanguinity find it difficult to incorporate ethnically alien migrants, including refugees, into citizenship. These countries are also likely to have political groups that advocate sending immigrants home even though expulsion may impose severe economic consequences for the host as well as home countries.

A norm of indigenousness may also be widely shared by a section of a country's population and even incorporated into its legal system. This norm prescribes different rights for those who are classified as indigenous and those who, irrespective of the length of time they or their ancestors resided in the country, are not so classified. An indigenous people asserts a superior claim to land, employment, education, political power, and central national symbols that is not accorded to others who live within the country. The indigenous may assert exclusive rights denied to others, often resting on the notion that they as a people exist only within one country, while others have other homes to which they can return. Thus, the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, the Malays (the *bhoomiputras*) in Malaysia, the Assamese in Assam, and the Melanesians

in Fiji, among others, subscribe to an ideology of indigenousness that has, in various guises, been enshrined in the legal system and that shapes the response of these societies to immigrants.

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refugees entered each year, with nearly half the immigrants coming from Asia.

Citizenship in the United States is acquired by birth or by naturalization. Originally, American law permitted naturalization only to "free white persons," but subsequent acts permitted naturalization without regard to race. Apart from the usual residence requirements, U.S. naturalization law requires applicants to demonstrate their knowledge of the American Constitution and form of government and to swear allegiance to the principles of the Constitution. Political knowledge and loyalty, not consanguinity, are thus the norms for membership. It is in part because the United States has political rather than ethnic criteria for naturalization that the United States has been more supportive of immigrants than most other countries.

For much of France's history, a low-level threat perception has characterized its response to immigration. While a concern for cultural unity is a central element in the French conception of nationhood, the French have also had

a political conception of citizenship derived from the revolutionary origins of the notion of citizenship. The French, as Rogers Brubaker has written, are universalist and assimilationist, in contrast with the *volk*-centered Germans.⁴ The result is that the French have been more willing to naturalize immigrants than have the Germans and have been more open to political refugees than most other West European countries. Even so, France has a strong antimigrant movement, the National Front, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, a North African-born Frenchman who has won considerable support for his position that guest workers from North Africa and their French-born children should "return home" to North Africa.

IV. Migrants Perceived as a Social or Economic Burden

Societies may react to immigrants because of the economic costs they impose or because of purported social behavior such as criminality, welfare dependency, and delinquency. Societies may be concerned because the people entering are so numerous or so poor that they create a substantial economic burden by straining housing, education, and transportation facilities. In advanced industrial societies, services provided by the welfare state may generate local resentment. In less developed countries, refugees may illegally occupy private or government lands; their goats, sheep, and cattle may decimate forests and grazing land; they may use firewood, consume water, produce waste, and in other ways come to be regarded as an ecological threat. The willingness to bear these costs is likely to be low if the host government believes that the government of the sending country is engaged in a policy of population "dumping," by exporting its criminals, unwanted ethnic minorities, and "surplus" population at the cost of the receiving country. The United States, for example, welcomed those Cubans who fled the communist regime in the 1960s but not Cuban convicts removed from prisons and placed on boats bound for the United States in the 1970s. Governments also distinguish between situations in which ethnic minorities are permitted to leave (e.g., Jews from the Soviet Union) and those in which minorities are forced to flee (e.g., Bulgarian Turks or Sri Lankan Tamils) and are, therefore, more likely to accept the former than the latter.

Population dumping has not been a significant element in the flow of migrants from developing countries to advanced industrial countries. To the extent that population dumping has occurred, it has largely been of ethnic minorities. Such flights, at least before the Yugoslav crisis, have primarily been to neighboring developing countries rather than to advanced industrial countries.

Forced population movements of ethnic minorities took place in Eastern Europe during the interwar period, placing enormous economic and social pressures upon the receiving countries, taking a heavy toll on the migrants themselves, and worsening relations among states. But because there was an element of exchange, and minorities moved to states in which their ethnic community was a majority, settlement was possible and violent international conflict was avoided. In 1922-1923 Greeks fled Turkey and Turks fled Greece.

An estimated 1.5 million people from both countries were involved. In a related population exchange, in 1923 the Greek government, in an effort to Hellenize its Macedonian region, forced the exodus of its Bulgarian population. As the Bulgarian refugees moved into Greek-speaking areas of Bulgaria, the local Greek population fled southward to Greece.⁵ The world's largest population exchange was in South Asia, where 14 million people moved between India and Pakistan between 1947 and 1950. But since both countries respected the wishes of each other's ethnic minorities to settle in the country in which they constituted a majority, the exchange itself did not cause a conflict between the two countries. Similarly, the forced exit of Jews from North Africa to Israel in the 1950s was not a source of international conflict, since the refugees were welcomed. In contrast, however, the flight of Arabs from Israel in 1948 led to an interminable conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors since the Arab states did not recognize the legitimacy of the new Israeli state.⁶

Government officials, otherwise concerned with the plight of refugees, may fear that a decision to grant refugee status to a small number of individuals might open a floodgate and lead to the entry of more immigrants than society is prepared to accept. One reason states hesitate to grant refugee and asylum status to those fleeing because of economic or even violent conditions at home—as distinct from having a personal “well-founded fear of persecution”—is the concern that the number of asylum requests would then increase. States prefer restrictive criteria in order to keep the influx small. Since laws of asylum are always imprecise and the pledge to admit refugees with a well-founded fear of persecution is subject to varied interpretations, individuals who wish to enter a country but cannot do so under existing guest-worker and migration laws may resort to claiming political asylum. West European governments are thus torn between a humanitarian sentiment toward refugees and the recognition that the more generous the law of asylum, the greater the number of applicants. As the number of asylum seekers grows, governments become more restrictive, insisting on evidence that the applicant does indeed have a well-founded fear of individual persecution, not “merely” a fear of being killed in a violent civil conflict. A large increase in asylum applications to Switzerland in 1986 and 1987, for example, led to passage of a referendum imposing a ceiling on the number of entries under the laws of asylum. In recent years Western Europe has become more restrictive as the requests for asylum have increased. Policymakers argue that to admit even a small number of refugees who enter because of political conditions or violence at home would open the door to larger numbers than their societies are prepared to admit.

V. Migrants as Hostages: Risks for the Sending Country

Recent actions of the governments of Iran, Iraq, and Libya all demonstrate how migrants can be used as an instrument of statecraft in order to impose restraints upon the actions of the home government. Following the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the government of Iraq announced a series of

measures using migrants as instruments for the achievement of political objectives. Iraq declared that Westerners living in Iraq and Kuwait would be forcibly held as a shield against armed attack, in an effort to deter the United States and its allies from launching airstrikes against military facilities where hostages might be located. The Iraqi government then indicated its willingness to treat the migrants of those countries that did not send troops to Saudi Arabia, such as India, more favorably than the migrants of those countries that did, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Iraqi government subsequently declared that food would not be provided for Asian migrants (including Indians) unless their countries sent food supplies and medicines in violation of the U.N. embargo.

While the Iraqi strategy of using its control over migrants for international bargaining is unique thus far, the mere presence of migrants in a country from which they could be expelled has been for some time an element affecting the behavior of the migrants' home countries. Since the late 1970s the countries of South Asia have been aware of their dependence upon migration to the Persian Gulf and have recognized that any sudden influx of returning migrants would create a major problem for domestic security as remittances came to an end, balance-of-payments problems were created, families dependent upon migrant income were threatened with destitution, and large numbers of people were thrown into labor markets where substantial unemployment already existed. Since the Gulf War all these fears have materialized. Sending governments aware of these potential consequences have hesitated to criticize host governments for the treatment of migrant workers. When workers have been expelled for strikes and other agitational activities, the home governments have sought to pacify their migrants as well as the host government in an effort to avoid further expulsions. Thus, the understandable reaction of some governments with migrants in Kuwait and Iraq was to see first whether it was possible for their migrants to remain and to assure the security of their citizens, rather than to support international efforts against Iraqi aggression.

A security threat, Robert Jervis has reminded us, is often a matter of perception.⁷ What are the enemy's capabilities? What are its intentions? A government's assessment of another's intentions with respect both to economic migrants and political refugees is thus critical to how conflictual population movements may become. A government is more likely to accommodate a refugee flow from a neighboring country if it believes the flight is the unfortunate and unintended consequence of a civil conflict than if it believes the

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flight of the refugees is precisely what is intended. Similarly, a government's response to reports that its citizens abroad are maltreated will depend upon whether it believes that the host country is culpable.

But perception is not everything. As we have seen, there are genuine conflicts of interest among countries on matters of migrants and refugees. Countries quarrel over each other's entry and exit rules as some countries want those whom another will not let go, while some countries force out those whom others do not want. A state's reaction to international population flows can itself be a source of international conflict.

State Responses to Population Movements

How do states react when they are confronted with an unwanted population influx of either economic migrants or refugees? For the foreseeable future the numbers of people who wish to leave or are forced to leave their countries will continue to exceed substantially the numbers that other countries are willing to accept. What strategies are available to states confronted with a rising demand for entrance? One possible response is to increase immigration. For many industrial countries, migration is advantageous, providing more young people to offset low national birthrates, manpower for service-sector jobs that local people do not want, skilled manpower for labor-short occupations, and investment by energetic, entrepreneurial newcomers.

But even countries that are relatively open to economic migrants and to refugees will not be able to admit all who want to enter. Sealing borders is one response but is rarely wholly effective, even in the case of islands. Control is difficult for any country with large coastlines or land borders. Regulation of employers (including penalties for employing illegal immigrants) and the use of identity cards have made a difference in the countries of Western Europe but are not useful options for a country with large numbers of small firms, a poorly developed administrative structure, and officials who are easily corrupted. Moreover, however opposed the government and the majority of the population are to illegal migration, there are often elements within the society that welcome refugees and migrant workers: employers, ethnic kin-folk, political sympathizers, or officials willing to accept bribes. Finally, even if a country is able to regulate the number and characteristics of the economic migrants it admits, how can it cope with a massive influx of people in flight from a neighboring country? Faced with unwanted migrants whose entrance they cannot control, governments have increasingly turned to strategies for halting emigration from sending countries. One can identify three such strategies: providing economic assistance, applying political coercion, and using armed intervention.

It has been suggested that an infusion of aid and investment, an improvement in trade, the resolution of a debt crisis, and other measures that would improve income and unemployment in low-income countries would reduce the rate of emigration. Meritorious as these proposals are, there is no evidence that they can reduce emigration in the short run. Indeed, high rates of

emigration have often been associated with high economic growth rates. It was so for Great Britain in the nineteenth century and in recent years for South Korea, Turkey, Algeria, and Greece. Only after an extended period of economic growth and a significant rise in wages do we see a substantial reduction in pressures for emigration. Economic aid, however, may not be intended to remedy a country's high unemployment or low economic growth rate, but rather to provide payment to a government to halt a refugee flow.

Assistance can also be used by governments to persuade other countries to retain refugees. The United States and France were willing to provide economic assistance to Thailand if the Thais held Vietnamese refugees rather than permit them to seek entrance into the United States or France.⁸ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international agencies financed largely by the West and Japan provide resources to refugee-receiving countries, especially in Africa, not only as an expression of humanitarian concern, but also as a means of enabling refugees to remain in the country of first asylum rather than allowing their movement to advanced industrial countries. International financial support has also been important in inducing refugees to return home when a conflict subsides. Funds for transportation, resettlement, and mine clearance are often critical for a successful, speedy repatriation process.

Second, where generosity does not work or is not financially feasible, receiving countries may employ a variety of threats to halt emigration. Diplomatic pressures, including coercive diplomacy, may be exerted. The Indian government pressured the government of Bangladesh to halt Bangladeshi land settlement in the Chittagong Hill tracts, which had led local Chakma tribespeople to flee into India. The Indian government is in a position to damage Bangladeshi trade and to affect the flow of rivers if the Bangladeshi government is not accommodating. When Burmese Muslim refugees moved from the Arakan region of Burma into Bangladesh as a result of a Burmese policy of settling non-Muslim Burmese in Arakan, the Bangladeshi government threatened to arm the Burmese Muslim refugees if settlement was not halted. In both cases the threats worked to reduce or temporarily halt the flow.

Coercive diplomacy to induce a country to halt actions that are forcing people to flee may be more effective in combination with collective international sanctions. But thus far it has been exceedingly difficult for countries burdened by refugee flows to persuade the international community that sanctions should be imposed on the country producing the refugees.

Third, there is the extreme sanction of armed intervention to change the political conditions within the sending country. In 1971 an estimated 10 million refugees fled from East Pakistan to India following the outbreak of a civil

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war between the eastern and western provinces of Pakistan. India regarded this refugee flow as the result of a deliberate policy by the Pakistani military to resolve its own internal political problems by forcing East Pakistan's Hindu population into India. Many Indian officials believed that the Pakistani government was seeking to change the demographic balance in favor of West Pakistan by shifting millions of East Pakistanis to India. The Indian government responded by sending its armed forces into Pakistan; its occupation of East Pakistan forced the partition of the country, and within months India sent the refugees home.

The Kurdish revolt in Iraq after the Gulf War provides another example of the use of force in dealing with an unwanted refugee flow. As Kurdish refugees entered Turkey, the government of Turkey made clear its unwillingness to add to its own Kurdish population and used its troops to seal the borders. The United States, Great Britain, and other Gulf War allies used their military power to force Iraq to place the Kurdish region under allied protection: the intervention enabled an estimated 1.5 million Kurds who had fled to Iran and Turkey to return and the Kurds to form their own government.

In each of these instances the high profile and highly conflictual nature of population movements have affected which institutions make exit and entry rules and engage in international negotiations. Decisions on such matters have come to be dealt with not by ministries of labor, border control officials, or the courts, but at the highest levels of government, in the foreign and defense ministries, the security and intelligence agencies, and by heads of government. The very form and intensity of responses to unwanted migrations are themselves indications that such population flows are regarded as threats to security or stability. These responses also suggest that states do not regard refugee flows and emigration as purely internal matters, despite the assertion of the United Nations and other international agencies that countries do not have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of states that produce refugees, even when there is a perceived threat to the security and stability of countries upon whom the burden of unwanted refugees falls.

While the notion of sovereignty is still rhetorically recognized, a variety of "internal" actions by states are increasingly regarded by other states as threats. The spewing of nuclear waste and other hazardous materials into the atmosphere and the contamination of waterways that then flow into other countries are no longer regarded as internal matters. In the same spirit, a country that forces its citizens to leave or creates conditions that induce them to leave has internationalized its internal actions.

A conundrum for Western liberal democratic regimes, however, is that they are reluctant to insist that governments restrain the exit of citizens simply because they or others are unwilling to accept them. They believe in the right of emigration by individuals but simultaneously believe that governments retain the right to determine who and how many shall be permitted to enter. Liberal regimes may encourage or even threaten countries that produce refugees and unwanted immigrants in an effort to change the conditions that induce or force people to leave, but they are often reluctant to force people to

return home against their will or to press governments to prevent people from leaving. They do not want regimes to prevent political dissidents or persecuted minorities from leaving their country; rather, they want governments to stop their repression.

Advanced industrial countries that admit immigrants prefer an immigration policy that creates the fewest domestic and international political problems. One policy option is to admit those who best satisfy the requirements of the receiving country: those who have skills needed in the labor market, capital to create new businesses, or relatives who would facilitate their integration into the society.⁹ But a limited, largely skill-based immigration policy for Western Europe or the United States would still leave large numbers of people banging on the doors, seeking to enter as refugees or, failing that, as illegal immigrants.

An alternative policy based on the needs of immigrants and refugees, though morally more attractive, is more difficult to formulate, more difficult to implement, and legally and politically more contentious. But no policy, short of the obliteration of international boundaries and sovereign states, can deal with the vast numbers of people who want to leave their country for another where opportunities are greater and life is safer. A moral case can be made for giving preference to those in flight, even at the cost of limiting the number of immigrants admitted to meet labor needs or to enable families to reunite. If countries have a ceiling on the number of people they are willing to admit, there is a strong moral argument for providing admission first to those who are persecuted or whose lives are in danger and have few places to go. But for reasons indicated above, only a narrow definition of what constitutes a refugee, with a case-by-case review, will enable states to put a cap on what they regard as potentially unlimited flows.

As a matter of political realism, then, a significant increase in the flow of refugees or of unwanted illegal economic migrants is likely to lead the governments of population-receiving countries to consider various forms of intervention to change the domestic factors that force or induce people to leave their homeland. If people violate the boundaries of a neighboring country, then they and their government should expect others to intervene in their internal affairs.

Notes

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