

**The Perils of Population Movements in International Relations:
new directions for rethinking the migration-conflict nexus**

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Abstract

For most of the twentieth century, the literature in International Relations (IR) largely ignored population movements. Only recently has the relationship between migration and security captured the attention of IR scholars, especially since the attacks on September 11, 2001. Consequently, a burgeoning literature has emerged that explores the security implications of migration, arguing that migration may indeed be a matter of 'high politics'. Yet most of these works tend to focus more broadly on the issue of 'security' without fleshing out the conditions that might lead to 'violent conflict.' They also examine *national* security, *international* migration, and *forced* migration without exploring *internal* conflict, *internal* migration, and *voluntary* migration. Finally, the vast majority of this literature analyzes *developed* countries and thus fails to recognize the unique security agendas in *developing* countries. In short, our understanding of the migration-conflict nexus is overly state-centric and narrow in scope. This paper provides a comprehensive survey of the literature on migration in IR. The paper introduces the emerging migration-related themes in the field, and identifies and outlines the major gaps that remain. In order to understand the complex role of migration in international politics, the paper argues for a new approach to the study of migration in IR that considers the following dimensions and dynamics in the migration-conflict nexus: *internal* conflict, *internal* migration, *voluntary* migration, and *developing* countries.

INTRODUCTION

Up until the end of the Cold War, most scholars in International Relations (IR) had largely ignored the issue of migration. Given the ontological primacy of the state as a unit of analysis in IR and the failure of migration theory to seriously consider the state's role in migration processes, migration failed to capture the attention of most IR scholars. During the post-Cold War period, however, a number of new themes and previously ignored issues emerged in the study of world politics. In an influential article, Weiner argued that "Migration and refugee issues, no longer the sole concern of ministries of labor or of immigration, are now matters of high international politics, engaging the attention of heads of states, cabinets, and key ministries involved in defense, internal security, and external relations."¹ This claim has indeed stood the test of time as migration has arguably become a matter of *high politics* in the new security agenda. In recent years, and most notably since the attacks of September 11, 2001, migration has increasingly garnered the attention of IR scholars.² A burgeoning literature now addresses a broad range of issues such as the impacts of international migration flows on state capacity, the challenges facing immigration and border control, the relationship between migration and 'societal security', and the links between migration and terrorism, refugees and asylum seekers, environmental conflict and 'diaspora politics'.

Notwithstanding the important contribution of this literature, a number of gaps remain. Although these works provide insights into key migration-related issues in global politics, the primary focus is on *national security*, *international migration*, *forced migration* and *developed countries*. To be sure, these dimensions and dynamics represent valid areas of concern for

¹ Myron Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," *International Security* 17, no. 3 (1992/93): 91. Massey and colleagues argued a similar point at this time, stating that "given the size and scale of contemporary migration flows, and given the potential for misunderstanding and conflict inherent in the emergence of diverse, multi-ethnic societies around the world, political decisions about international migration will be among the most important made over the next two decades." See Douglas S. Massey et al., "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal," *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 3 (1993): 463.

² For example, see Fiona B. Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006). Didier Bigo, "Migration and Security," in *Controlling a New Migration World*, ed. Virginie Guiraudon and Christian Joppke (New York: Routledge, 2001). Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, "Migration and Security," in *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009). Nazli Choucri, "Migration and Security: Some Key Linkages," *Journal of International Affairs* 56, no. 1 (2002). Roland Dannreuther, "People on the Move: Migration as a Security Issue," in *International Security: The Contemporary Agenda* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2007). Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Immigration and the Politics of Security," *Security Studies* 8, no. 2 (1998). Elspeth Guild, *Security and Migration in the 21st Century* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2009). Harald Kleinschmidt, "Migration, Regional Integration and Human Security: An Overview of Research Developments," in *Migration, Regional Integration and Human Security: The Formation and Maintenance of Transnational Spaces*, ed. Harald Kleinschmidt (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). Christopher Rudolph, "Security and the Political Economy of International Migration," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003). Christopher Rudolph, "Globalization and Security: Migration and Evolving Conceptions of Security in Statecraft and Scholarship," *Security Studies* 13, no. 1 (2003). Christopher Rudolph, *National Security and Immigration: Policy Development in the United States and Western Europe since 1945* (Stanford:CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). Brandon Valeriano, "The Migration-Conflict Story: What Direction Causality?," in *International Studies Association Annual Meeting* (New York 2009). Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration."

research agendas in IR. However, this narrow focus has important implications as scholars have failed to systematically examine *internal* conflict, *internal* migration, *voluntary* migration, and *developing* countries. A recent article by Fiona Adamson titled “Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security” in one of the leading IR journals is a perfect illustration of the narrow scope of the dominant research on migration in IR. In summarizing the article, the author states that “This article provides a framework for thinking about the relationship between international migration and national security by surveying how cross-border migration flows affect state interests in three core areas of national security concern: state sovereignty, or the overall capacity and autonomy of state actors; the balance of power among states; and the nature of violent conflict in the international system.”³ The point here is not to critique Adamson’s work – as the article in fact provides an important contribution to the field – but rather to highlight a major gap in the literature on migration in IR. In short, scholars have failed to systematically analyze how voluntary and internal migration processes in developing countries can be a source of internal conflict. When considering that the vast majority of migration and conflict occurs in the developing world, it is clear that these dynamics warrant much more investigation.

This paper ultimately provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on migration in IR. In so doing, it examines a number of important migration-related themes that have emerged in the literature, and identifies and outlines the main gaps that remain. In the wake of the Cold War, many of the leading migration scholars argued that the theoretical base for understanding the *causal* forces of international migration remains weak.⁴ In the same vein, I argue that the theoretical base for understanding the complex and varied *consequences* of migration is equally weak. As most scholars now agree, the field of IR was mired in rigid, universal and parsimonious theorizing about international politics throughout most of the twentieth century. Interestingly, while IR has recently embraced more diverse approaches to studying a wide range of new issues in world politics, it has failed to examine and theorize the complex role and implications of migration in global politics. Consequently, this paper aims to identify and introduce a number of important dynamics and dimensions that have been largely neglected thus far in the literature. The objective here is ultimately therefore to shed light on a number of issue areas that necessitate further attention while providing a foundation for rethinking the complex role of migration in IR. While I do not intend to develop a theoretical framework of the migration-conflict nexus, the paper nevertheless identifies future directions for improving our theoretical understanding of the relationship between migration and conflict.

MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Despite the upsurge in interest in the issue of migration, IR scholars have historically ignored population movements in international politics. The discipline’s failure to systematically examine migration flows is somewhat of a mystery given the fact that migration – often defined

³ Adamson, “Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security,” 167.

⁴ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal.”

as the movement of people across national boundaries – is an *international* phenomenon. Thus while on the surface one might consider migration to be a natural and logical research topic in IR, it has ultimately failed to emerge as a core issue area. This is perhaps best illustrated by “the absence of migration as a topic in graduate courses in the field and its practical non-existence in the textbooks.”⁵ As one scholar notes, the vast majority of ‘classic works’ in IR from the 1980s and 1990s fail to even mention migration in their indexes.⁶ Moreover, as another leading expert argues, “when migration is recognized, it is almost always in idiosyncratic terms—a case analysis—not in terms of generic theoretical underpinnings or attendant processes.”⁷ Given the longstanding marginalization of population movements in IR, a number of important migration-related questions have been overlooked. Despite Weiner’s urging more than twenty-five years ago, the following questions and critiques have not yet been fully addressed: “How do state actions shape population movements, when do such movements lead to conflict and when to cooperation, and what do governments do in their domestic policies to adjust to or influence population flows are questions that have received far too little attention.”⁸

Given the seemingly important implications for international politics, why has IR failed to embrace the study of migration? The answer to this question is rooted in the important distinction between *high* and *low* politics that has characterized much thinking in IR. In discussing the relative absence of research on migration in IR, Hollifield provides a compelling explanation while highlighting this critical distinction:

The period from 1945 to 1990 was dominated by the Cold War and international relations theorists tended to divide politics into two categories: high and low. In the realist formulation, high politics – the paramount subject of international relations – is concerned with national security, foreign policy, and issues of war and peace, whereas low politics is concerned with domestic issues relating to social and economic policy. In this framework, international migration, like any economic or social issue, belongs in the realm of low politics and therefore was not a subject of analyses by scholars of international relations, especially national security and foreign-policy analysts.⁹

Since the ‘realist paradigm’ was the dominant approach during this period, the topic of migration was largely sidelined throughout the Cold War. To put it simply, as “migration did not directly affect the balance of power, the East-West struggle, or the nature of the international system, with the exception of refugees,” it did not warrant serious attention by IR scholars.¹⁰ While some scholars have argued that international population movements have had obvious

⁵ Choucri, "Migration and Security: Some Key Linkages," 114.

⁶ Gary Freeman, "Political Science and Comparative Immigration Politics," in *International Migration Research: Constructions, Omissions and the Promises of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Michael Bommes and Ewa Morawska (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 112.

⁷ Choucri, "Migration and Security: Some Key Linkages," 114.

⁸ Myron Weiner, "On International Migration and International Relations," *Population and Development Review* 11, no. 3 (1985): 441.

⁹ James F. Hollifield, "The Politics of International Migration: How can we “Bring the State Back In”?," in *Migration Theories: Talking across Disciplines*, ed. Caroline B. Bretell and James F. Hollifield (New York: Routledge, 2008), 199.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

implications for questions of peace and war long before the end of the Cold War,¹¹ migration failed to gain any traction as a legitimate security concern until this historical juncture. However, with the dawn of a 'new world order' many IR scholars recognized the fundamentally important role of a variety of new (mostly non-state) actors and previously ignored issues in international politics. According to Miller, "the proliferation of diplomatic activity on international migration-related questions, the progress of regional socioeconomic integration and the liberalization of trade, which is partially designed to reduce migratory pressures over the long-term, and the adoption of new laws and regulations concerning aliens" all signalled the increased awareness of the linkages between international migration and security.¹²

Yet notwithstanding the growing recognition of the importance of migration in international politics, migration only became a notable research topic in IR following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.¹³ Despite the fact that migration is still somewhat marginalized in the field, there is much evidence to suggest that IR has finally come to appreciate population movements as a legitimate area of research. Many of the leading journals in IR have recently published articles related to migration.¹⁴ Moreover, a cursory examination of new textbooks on international security and international politics include chapters on migration.¹⁵ Thus while IR has a long way to go in examining the complex ways in which migration affects international politics, new developments suggest that it has begun to explore population flows as not only a valid topic of inquiry but one that cannot be ignored. In the following sections, I provide an overview of the major themes and issues that have emerged in the study of migration in IR. Although this is by no means an exhaustive list of the contemporary research on migration in IR, it nevertheless highlights major issue areas with direct links to migration that have gained prominence in the literature. These issues include 'security', immigration and border control, terrorism, refugees and asylum seekers, the environment-conflict nexus, and the role of 'diaspora politics' in international affairs.¹⁶

¹¹ Mark J. Miller, "International Migration and Global Security," in *Redefining Security: Population Movements and National Security*, ed. Nana Poku and David T. Graham (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998).

¹² *Ibid.*, 24-25.

¹³ This is obviously due to the fact that all of the alleged terrorists were immigrants that had recently moved to the United States.

¹⁴ See, for example, Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security." Doty, "Immigration and the Politics of Security." Rudolph, "Security and the Political Economy of International Migration." Rudolph, "Globalization and Security: Migration and Evolving Conceptions of Security in Statecraft and Scholarship."; Idean Salehyan and Kristian Gleditsch, "Refugees and the Spread of Civil War," *International Organization* 60, no. 2 (2006). Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 57, no. Summer (2003).

¹⁵ See, for example, Dannreuther, "People on the Move: Migration as a Security Issue." Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon Pevehouse, *International Relations (10th Edition)* (Old Tappan, NJ: Pearson, 2011). An interesting example of the growing recognition of the migration-security nexus appears in the most recent publication of the now classic work on migration, *The Age of Migration*. See Castles and Miller, "Migration and Security." While the first three editions ignored the issue of security (including the 3rd edition published in 2003), the 4th edition has an entire chapter devoted to 'migration and security'.

¹⁶ For a brief overview of the major schools of thought in IR on migration, see Guild, *Security and Migration in the 21st Century*: 2-5. and Hollifield, "The Politics of International Migration: How can we "Bring the State Back In?," 200-01.

‘Security’

Much of the recent focus on migration in IR revolves around the issue of ‘security’. Is migration a security issue? How does migration affect security? Whose security is affected by migration? As Dannreuther notes, “International migration is probably one of the most cited, yet also most contested, areas of the new security agenda.”¹⁷ The debate over the relationship between migration and security is fundamentally influenced by the diverging perceptions and misperceptions related to migration flows. This point is captured by Weiner who rightly points out that “Any attempt to classify types of threats from immigration quickly runs into distinctions between ‘real’ and ‘perceived’ threats, or into absurdly paranoid notions of threat or mass anxieties that can best be described as xenophobic and racist.”¹⁸ As Cornelius and Rosenblum add, “Even if the actual effects of immigration on receiving countries are typically modest, many citizens of migrant-receiving states *perceive* negative consequences— economic and noneconomic—that lead them to prefer more restrictive immigration policies.”¹⁹ The challenge in establishing a causal relationship between ‘migration’ and ‘security’ is further compounded by the inherently subjective nature of these concepts. The definition of *both* concepts is arguably “dependent on who is defining the terms and who benefits by defining the terms in a given way.”²⁰ Interestingly, both realists and social constructivists (most notably from the Copenhagen School) are often reluctant to consider migration as a legitimate security threat, albeit for different reasons. While in principle social constructivists support the widening of the security agenda, “in practice, their main claim is that the ‘securitization’ of immigration should be understood as a retrogressive and illiberal move, which shifts migration from its proper realm of politics to the less accountable and exceptional realm of security.”²¹

Putting these debates aside, we can examine how migration might affect security. In reflecting upon this question, it is worth considering Miller’s rather intuitive assertion that “The scale, nature, and duration of a particular migration would result in it having greater or fewer security implications.”²² Despite the simplistic nature of this statement, it is indeed a compelling list of variables for explaining a basic relationship between migration and security. In recent years, however, a number of works have developed more nuanced frameworks for analyzing the relationship between migration and security. For example, Rudolph argues as follows:

Migration now rests at the nexus of three essential elements of the contemporary security dilemma: (1) the production and accumulation of economic power; (2) the changing nature of war, especially between combatants with highly disproportionate power and resources; and (3) growing concerns regarding social

¹⁷ Dannreuther, "People on the Move: Migration as a Security Issue," 100.

¹⁸ Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," 104.

¹⁹ Wayne A. Cornelius and Marc R. Rosenblum, "Immigration and Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8(2005): 104.

²⁰ Choucri, "Migration and Security: Some Key Linkages," 98. Bigo, for instance, argues that the ‘securitization’ of migration is largely determined by the ‘political games’ of Western democracies, the ‘media games’ that influence politicians, and the ‘bureaucratic games’ that construct fear over migration in order to swell government budgets. See Bigo, "Migration and Security," 121-27.

²¹ Dannreuther, "People on the Move: Migration as a Security Issue," 101.

²² Miller, "International Migration and Global Security," 19.

identities and the potential effect that threats to national identity have on governmental legitimacy in a system of nation-states.²³

Meanwhile, Adamson argues that migration influences three core areas of state power: economic, military, and diplomatic.²⁴ On the economic front, she cites the critical role of a number of migrants – such as labour migrants and students – and important issues – including the brain drain and remittances. On the military front, Adamson points to the instrumental role of migrants in providing technical and intelligence expertise, while also citing the large number of soldiers that are migrants. Finally, she highlights their important diplomatic role as migrants can serve as ambassadors, lobby groups and as key links with other states through the diaspora. Furthermore, Adamson also argues that migration flows can interact with other factors in contributing to the outbreak of violent conflict in the international system “by providing resources that help to fuel internal conflicts; by providing opportunities for networks of organized crime; and by providing conduits for international terrorism.”²⁵

Notwithstanding the important economic, military and diplomatic variables in the migration-security-nexus, it is arguably ‘cultural’ factors that have garnered the most attention. As Rudolph notes in his third point, there is general agreement that migration flows can pose a veritable threat to ‘social identities’. Once again, Adamson echoes this concern as she states that “International migration processes call into question the cultural basis of a state’s identity.”²⁶ Thus while migration can arguably lead to more liberal and expansive national identities it can also provoke profound insecurities, undermining the ‘societal security’ of a given host population. The notion of ‘societal security’ – predominantly espoused by the ‘Copenhagen School’ and other critical theorists and constructivists – has ultimately gained traction as an inseparable element of ‘national security’.²⁷ Yet despite the focus on how host populations are impacted by migration flows, there has been very little discussion about the security of migrant populations. For example, Miller notes that there has been little interest surrounding the backlash against migrant populations and instances of widespread anti-immigrant violence and discrimination.²⁸ This ultimately raises concerns since as Castles and Miller remind us, “Where states are unable to create legal migration systems for necessary labour, many migrants are also forced to move under conditions of considerable insecurity. Smuggling, trafficking, bonded labour and lack of human and worker rights are the fate of

²³ Rudolph, "Globalization and Security: Migration and Evolving Conceptions of Security in Statecraft and Scholarship," 2.

²⁴ Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security," 185-89.

²⁵ Ibid., 191.

²⁶ Ibid., 181.

²⁷ Reinhard Drifte, "Migrants, Human Security and Military Security," in *Migration, Regional Integration and Human Security: The Formation and Maintenance of Transnational Spaces*, ed. Harald Kleinschmidt (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). There is a vast literature on the concept of ‘societal security’. For the classic works, see Barry Buzan, Wæver Ole, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998). Ole Wæver et al., *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1993). For a critique of the ‘Copenhagen School’, see Bill McSweeney, "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School," *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996).

²⁸ Miller, "International Migration and Global Security," 26.

millions of migrants.”²⁹ Given the widespread discrimination and insecurity that many migrants endure, the security of migrants undoubtedly warrants much more attention in IR.

Immigration and Border Control

The issue of immigration and border control is inextricably linked to the above discussion on security. The centrality of borders in global politics cannot be underestimated as borders constitute a hallmark feature of the international system. A state’s right to control movements across its borders is a fundamental element of state sovereignty.³⁰ The importance of borders is not only confined to political, economic and security realms, as borders serve an intrinsic role in defining the state itself. As Rudolph writes, borders “remain significant because they provide social closure and symbolic separation between peoples and cultures” and “together with the institution of citizenship, designate both inclusion and exclusion and define the sociopolitical community.”³¹ In other words, borders serve a dual function of defining and sustaining identities. This function has clear implications in the security realm. As Adamson argues, “The ability of states to maintain control over their borders and to formulate a coherent national identity are arguably necessary preconditions for the maintenance of state security in other areas.”³² The failure to control immigration and one’s territorial borders can ultimately precipitate formidable security challenges, such as an onslaught of refugee flows, the destabilizing presence of ‘refugee warriors’ and political enemies, and the rise of criminal networks.³³

In order to avoid the perils often associated with uncontrolled immigration, governments have responded with a variety of policy measures to strengthen controls over migration flows across their borders. When governments face unwanted or uncontrollable immigration flows, some countries have taken dramatic steps to halt emigration, such as (1) paying the home country of the migrants to prevent emigration; (2) employing a variety of threats to the sending country to prevent the exodus of their populations; and (3) using armed intervention to change the political conditions in the sending country.³⁴ Despite the occasional adoption of such measures, most countries must balance their security concerns with their need for large numbers of labour migrants. Thus while the issue of immigration and border control is obviously an important element in the broader considerations of states’ security calculus, so too is the need to adopt policies that are not overly restrictive towards immigration.³⁵ At a practical level, this is indeed a challenge that many policymakers must face as this requires a fine balancing act

²⁹ Castles and Miller, "Migration and Security," 212.

³⁰ For an interesting analysis on the various meanings and importance of ‘borders’ in IR, see Mathias Albert, David Jacobson, and Yosef Lapid, eds., *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

³¹ Rudolph, *National Security and Immigration: Policy Development in the United States and Western Europe since 1945*: 207.

³² Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security," 176.

³³ *Ibid.*, 176-79.

³⁴ Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," 123.

³⁵ Weiner provides a good overview of the differing ‘rules of entry’ and ‘rules of exit’ that states adopt, often depending upon their unique security needs. See Weiner, "On International Migration and International Relations."

between economic needs and security concerns. At a theoretical level, how states negotiate these often contradictory forces is an important question that remains underexplored in the literature in IR. However, one thing is certain; both scholars and policymakers need “to move beyond the rather simplistic framework which views immigration policy as a choice between a security-driven ‘fortress’ and an uncontrolled ‘opening of the floodgates’.”³⁶ Those states that succeed in finding the right balance will undoubtedly reap the tremendous benefits while avoiding the heavy costs associated with immigration.

Terrorism

Although the link between migration and terrorism had been made long before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001,³⁷ these events generated a tsunami of scholarly interest regarding the migration-terrorism nexus. As Rudolph argues, the relationship between migration and terrorism was made patently clear on September 11, 2001 as all of the alleged terrorists had “exploited loopholes in existing laws to infiltrate the United States.”³⁸ Moreover, this relationship would be once again highlighted by the successive bombings in Madrid and London. While many students of IR had largely ignored the relationship between migration and security before these high profile terrorist attacks, “The attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent bombings in Madrid, London and elsewhere greatly altered that state of affairs, resulting in the increased relevance of the security dimension of international migration.”³⁹ If there was any doubt surrounding the connections between migration and security before these events, the bombings in Europe undoubtedly cemented the relationship between migration and terrorism. In short, since both of these attacks were allegedly carried out by immigrants with ties to al-Qaeda, no one could henceforth refute the link between migration and terrorist activities.⁴⁰

Whereas in many Western liberal states the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ principle had helped to ease societal insecurities over immigration throughout the 1990s, this is no longer the case. In the post-9/11 world, it is now “the very *invisibility* of the undocumented or out-of-status migrant population that generates vulnerability in terms of potential terrorist activity.”⁴¹ Consequently, many governments have stepped up surveillance of their own migrant populations. Moreover, concerns over the relationship between migration and terrorism have taken on yet another dimension with the development of new forms of weapons of mass destruction. This new dimension is highlighted by Rudolph who argues that “because migration represents the most likely vehicle by which weapons of mass destruction can be delivered by

³⁶ Dannreuther, "People on the Move: Migration as a Security Issue," 116.

³⁷ Miller, for example, noted in 1998 that “There has been a disturbing tendency to conflate immigration and terrorism.” See Miller, "International Migration and Global Security," 26. However, this ‘tendency’ obviously pales in comparison with the new focus on terrorism in the post 9/11 world.

³⁸ Rudolph, "Security and the Political Economy of International Migration," 603.

³⁹ Castles and Miller, "Migration and Security," 207.

⁴⁰ While the ‘links’ between immigration and terrorism may have been strengthened due to these attacks, three of the four culprits in the London bombings were actually born in the United Kingdom (UK) to immigrant parents, whereas the fourth migrated to the UK with his family at the age of five. Moreover, the putative connections between those involved in committing these attacks and al-Qaeda are somewhat questionable. Thus the ‘obvious’ link between migration and terrorism is not in fact so clear.

⁴¹ Rudolph, "Security and the Political Economy of International Migration," 615-16.

terrorists to their targets, migration and border policy must be considered integral to the contemporary security paradigm.”⁴² Yet Rudolph is careful to note the potential economic implications in revisiting immigration and border policies under the new ‘security paradigm’. As he correctly points out, “Addressing the terrorist threat without dismantling the economic gains offered by trading-state openness is a challenge that will likely dominate the construction of security policy in all advanced industrial states.”⁴³ Thus as with the issue of immigration and border control, balancing the security concerns related to migration and terrorism with the need to maintain open borders will continue to be a delicate task.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Given the clear connections between forced migration (i.e. refugees and asylum seekers) and international politics, one would expect a modicum of scholarly interest on such a topic. Yet most scholars in IR have historically ignored the profound and complex implications of forced migration in global politics. Notwithstanding the important contribution of Zolberg and colleagues in their 1989 book *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* there is very little scholarship that systematically examines the issue of forced migration.⁴⁴ This issue has partly been neglected because many simply view these migrants as but apolitical externalities of war. This is a major oversight since there are many complex political dimensions interwoven with the issue of forced migration. In fact, some of these dimensions were outlined nearly twenty years ago by Weiner who cogently argued that governments are often directly involved in influencing population movements. According to Weiner, three distinct types of forced and induced migrations can be identified: where governments expel populations (1) in order to achieve cultural homogeneity or assert the dominance of one ethnic group over another; (2) in order to deal with political dissidents and class enemies; and (3) as “part of a strategy to achieve a foreign policy objective.”⁴⁵ In recent years, a growing literature has developed around the politics of forced migration. Greenhill, for example, builds on Weiner’s third point by examining how ‘coercive engineered migration’ can be used as a foreign policy tool.⁴⁶ According to Greenhill, many states have intentionally created, or threatened to create, mass population movements as a means of pressuring and coercing other states.⁴⁷ On the ‘receiving end’ of forced migrations, Milner analyzes the

⁴² Rudolph, "Globalization and Security: Migration and Evolving Conceptions of Security in Statecraft and Scholarship," 29.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke, and Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). For a recent and comprehensive overview of the issue of refugees and international politics, see Alexander Betts and Gil Loescher, eds., *Refugees in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁵ Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," 97-100.

⁴⁶ Kelly M. Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

⁴⁷ In a similar vein, Teitelbaum argues that both “sending and receiving countries have employed mass migration movements as tools of their foreign policies.” He cites the example of “mass migration for unarmed conquest or assertion of sovereignty” where governments encourage the use of civilian rather than military means to enter “into claimed territories for the purposes of establishing effective control or sovereignty.” See Michael S. Teitelbaum, "Immigration, Refugees and Foreign Policy," *International Organization* 38, no. 3 (1984): 437.

critically important role of politics – at the local, national and international levels – in shaping asylum policies throughout Africa.⁴⁸ As he convincingly argues, state responses to refugee flows are indeed heavily influenced by political processes.

Many of the most recent works on refugees and asylum seekers in IR examine a hitherto ignored dimension of forced migration – refugees as security concerns and *causes* of conflict. Milner’s work, for example, suggests that while the language of security is often ‘abused’, as refugees are often themselves vulnerable to extreme insecurity, “the hosting of refugees may result in a number of security concerns for African host states and governing regimes.”⁴⁹ As his work reveals, these concerns can be either ‘direct’ – “resulting from the presence of armed elements within the refugee population, the spillover of violence and the proliferation of small arms within the host country”⁵⁰ – or ‘indirect’ – “resulting from increased crime and insecurity within the refugee-populated area, grievances against refugees by the local population, and changes in the domestic political opportunity structure arising from the arrival and prolonged presence of refugees.”⁵¹ There is also a growing body of literature on the relationship between forced migration and violent conflict, much of which examines the impact of refugee flows on the spread of civil war. Lischer, for example, uses a comparative analysis of cases involving Afghan, Bosnian and Rwandan refugees to argue that it is ultimately the political context of the crisis itself that best explains the spread of civil war arising from refugee flows.⁵² Meanwhile, other scholars have used large-N studies to examine the links between refugees and displaced populations and the increased risk of conflicts in both host and origin countries. In one major study, Salehyan and Gleditsch find strong evidence to suggest that the presence of refugees from neighboring countries leads to an increased probability of violence.⁵³ In a similar vein, scholars have also posited a relationship between refugee migration and outbreaks of violent conflict *between* states.⁵⁴ In sum, the burgeoning literature on forced migration in IR is a testament to the growing recognition of population movements as an important phenomenon and a valid research topic in international politics.

Environment-Conflict Nexus

In recent decades there has been a great deal of attention on the interconnections between the environment, migration and conflict. As Choucri writes, “among the most pervasive security-related implications of population movement are those that affect (and are affected by) the natural environment” as “nature itself is a player and often a critical actor mediating between migration, on the one hand, and security, on the other.”⁵⁵ Despite the obvious links between

⁴⁸ James Milner, *Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum in Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵⁰ On the issue of refugee militarization (in Africa) see Robert Muggah, ed. *No Refuge: The Crisis of Refugee Militarization in Africa* (New York: Zed Books, 2006).

⁵¹ Milner, *Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum in Africa*: 62.

⁵² Sarah Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries: Refugee Camps, Civil War, and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁵³ Salehyan and Gleditsch, "Refugees and the Spread of Civil War."

⁵⁴ Idean Salehyan, "The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict," *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 4 (2008).

⁵⁵ Choucri, "Migration and Security: Some Key Linkages," 106.

the environment and national and internal security, this relationship has historically been neglected in IR. However, during the 1990s the 'Toronto Group' – led by Thomas Homer-Dixon – provoked intense debate by positing a causal relationship between environmental degradation and violent conflict.⁵⁶ These scholars essentially argued that increased environmental scarcities could lead to large-scale migrations resulting in heightened – and often violent – competition for resources. Many scholars have recently revisited the environment-conflict nexus, focusing on the potential implications of climate change. In essence, this new scholarship examines the relationship between climate-change-induced migration and violent conflict.⁵⁷ In a recent study, for example, Reuveny concludes the following:

Environmental migration does not always lead to conflict, but when it does, the conflict intensity can be very high, including interstate and intrastate wars. In almost all the conflict cases, the receiving areas were underdeveloped and depended on the environment for livelihood. Other factors associated with conflict include resident-migrant ethno-religious tension and competition over resources and resource scarcity in the receiving areas.⁵⁸

Ultimately, Reuveny contends that "if climate change causes severe environmental degradation, many people may leave affected areas, particularly in LDCs, which may lead to conflict between migrants and residents in receiving areas."⁵⁹

Despite the renewed and widespread interest in the environment-conflict nexus, many scholars are indeed sceptical of the putative causal relationship between environmental degradation and conflict.⁶⁰ Given their leading role in provoking debates regarding this issue, the bulk of these critiques have been directed towards Homer-Dixon and colleagues. While these critiques address a wide range of factors related to the environment-conflict nexus, the general thrust can be summed up as follows: "Thomas Homer-Dixon provoked a great deal of controversy and concern with his claim that we are 'on the threshold' of an era in which armed conflicts will arise with increasing frequency as a result of environmental change. However, in the years

⁵⁶ See Thomas Homer-Dixon, "On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict," *International Security* 16, no. 2 (1991). Thomas Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994). Thomas Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁵⁷ For an interesting overview of the relationship, more broadly, between climate change and conflict, see Ragnhild Nordås and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Climate Change and Conflict," *Political Geography* 26, no. 6 (2007).

⁵⁸ Rafael Reuveny, "Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict," *Political Geography* 26(2007): 668.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 657. Reuveny suggests that Asia, Africa and Latin America will be particularly threatened by these population movements, as these regions face the most intense environmental problems, and have populations that are heavily dependent upon the environment for their livelihoods. See *ibid.*, 661.

⁶⁰ See Daniel Deudney, "The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 19, no. 3 (1990). Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 3 (1998). Wenche Hauge and Tanja Ellingsen, "Beyond Environmental Scarcity: Causal Pathways to Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 3 (1998). Alexandre S. Wilner, "The Environment-Conflict Nexus: Developing Consensus on Theory and Methodology," *International Journal* LXII, no. 1 (2006/2007).

since his warning, the search for evidence behind this claim has provided little support.”⁶¹ As Goldstone forcefully argues, detailed cross-national studies have found weak relations between environmental degradation and both international and domestic armed conflict. In short, he suggests that “long-term environmental degradation of the kind that often accompanies development (e.g., soil erosion, deforestation and air and water pollution) has little or no significant role in generating civil or international wars.”⁶² However, despite Goldstone’s contention that there is weak evidence to support the environment-conflict thesis, this issue will surely continue to provoke debate and discussion in both academic and policy circles.

‘Diaspora Politics’

Given the unique and fundamentally important migration histories in Western ‘settler’ countries (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and United States of America), there has been a longstanding interest amongst many IR scholars in ‘diaspora politics’. However, owing to the increased level of migration towards Europe and changing migration dynamics in the above countries, the role of diaspora politics in international affairs has gained increasing prominence in recent decades. Consequently, diaspora politics has emerged as a notable area of research in the field of IR.⁶³ Interestingly, the instrumental and complex role of this migrant population was underscored by Teitelbaum nearly thirty years ago. As Teitelbaum argued, immigrant populations do not only influence a receiving country’s policies toward a sending country since the latter may even seek “to mobilize its expatriate population in support of its own positions in dealings with the receiving country.”⁶⁴ In other words, the diaspora can be a powerful interest group by acting as an important political lobby. Although many immigrants do not maintain close relations with their homelands, some diaspora can heavily influence both domestic and international policies. As Shain and Barth write, some diaspora “seek to advance their identity-based interests, both directly through lobbying and indirectly by providing information to the institutional actors. Furthermore, given their international location, they are singularly (among interest groups) important to the homeland government as tools of influence vis-à-vis foreign governments.”⁶⁵

However, the most interesting – and perhaps most important – role of the diaspora in international politics relates to their involvement in both mitigating and fuelling conflicts. To put it bluntly, are diaspora peace makers or peace wreckers?⁶⁶ There is obviously no simple answer to this loaded question as diaspora can arguably foment, help prevent, and even aid in

⁶¹ Jack Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict," *Journal of International Affairs* 56, no. 1 (2002): 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶³ For an excellent overview of the complex ways in which diasporas influence international politics, see Milton J. Esman, *Diasporas in the Contemporary World* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2009).

⁶⁴ Teitelbaum, "Immigration, Refugees and Foreign Policy," 441.

⁶⁵ Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," 462. The authors note that a number of factors may affect the efficacy of diasporic activity. More specifically, they argue that “In order for a diaspora to exert influence on a homeland’s foreign policy, there should exist motive, opportunity, and means; that is, a diaspora should both want to exert influence and have the capacity to do so” See *ibid.*

⁶⁶ See Hazel Smith and Paul Stares, eds., *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers?* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2007).

resolving conflicts. One of the most obvious examples of the complex engagement of such groups in international politics is the powerful role of the Jewish diaspora in the United States. The Jewish diaspora has historically played and continues to play an instrumental role in influencing US foreign policy in the Middle East. Whether or not this diaspora has been more peace wrecker than peace maker is obviously a contentious question. Finally, in recent years scholars have become increasingly concerned by the nefarious role of some diaspora in triggering and fuelling violent internal conflicts. Citing a recent RAND study, Shain and Barth note that “with foreign governmental support to insurgency declining, diasporas have become a key factor in sustaining insurgencies.”⁶⁷ This cursory overview of diaspora politics ultimately highlights some of the significant ways in which this category of migrants influences international politics. When considering the scope and scale of contemporary migration flows throughout the world, it is probably safe to say that diaspora politics will continue to play an increasingly important role in international affairs.

RETHINKING THE MIGRATION-CONFLICT NEXUS: IDENTIFYING GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

The above overview provides a brief survey of the main research themes in the contemporary literature on migration in IR. While far from exhaustive, I have identified the following issues that have recently emerged as major topics of interest in the field: migration and ‘security’; immigration and border control; migration and terrorism; refugees and asylum seekers; the environment-conflict nexus; and ‘diaspora politics’ in international affairs. As this list suggests, IR has made significant progress in recognizing and analyzing some of the complex links between population movements and international politics. To be sure, the growing acceptance of migration as a matter of *high* politics is indeed to be welcomed. And yet while in many respects this represents a positive development, there is also cause for concern as the emerging body of literature has adopted a narrow research agenda. Consequently, the literature has neglected to seriously consider a number of important dimensions of the migration-conflict nexus. Thus notwithstanding the welcome addition of this scholarship in IR, our understanding of the political implications of migration remains limited. I argue that the following trends help to explain the main gaps in the literature on migration in IR: (1) the focus on *national* security as opposed to *internal* conflict; (2) the emphasis on *international* migration instead of *internal* migration; (3) the preoccupation with *forced* migration and neglect of *voluntary* migration; and (4) the focus on *developed* countries and marginalization of *developing* countries. In what follows, I expand on each of these points in order to identify the existing gaps in the literature and suggest future directions for research in IR. In so doing, this analysis ultimately highlights the need to rethink the migration-conflict nexus.

National ‘Security’ vs. Internal ‘Conflict’

The dominant narrative in the literature on migration in IR perceives migration as a potential threat to *national* security. According to this perspective, a host of migration-related factors can

⁶⁷ Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," 450.

serve to undermine the *state's* security. This narrative is clearly evoked in Weiner's seminal article on migration and security. As Weiner writes, there are "five broad categories of situations 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."⁶⁸ Weiner's analysis is clearly centered upon the level of the state, as he identifies and outlines pathways through which migration undermines *national* security.⁶⁹ While these pathways undoubtedly have implications for understanding internal conflict, Weiner is primarily concerned with threats to the state's security. In the same vein, Choucri develops a model for explaining the 'security calculus' of the state and the role of migration in such a formula. According to Choucri, three factors help to explain a state's security – military security, regime security and structural security.⁷⁰ Although her framework provides insights into the relationship between migration and national security, it does not spell out the implications for internal conflicts within the state. In short, these works ultimately fail to address the following question: what role can migration flows – both international and internal – play in triggering or fuelling internal conflicts between groups within the state? Given the focus on national security, the dominant approach has overlooked the relationship between migration and internal conflicts, such as civil wars,⁷¹ rebel insurgencies, ethnic violence and conflicts over land.

In order to probe the relationship between migration and internal conflict, what insights might be gained by considering the concept of 'societal security'? According to Waever, societal security refers to "the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom."⁷² This concept is directly tied to the issue of migration, as many scholars argue that migration can undermine societal security. Rudolph, for example, states that "the most volatile threat to notions of stable identity comes with the movement of people."⁷³ Furthermore, he adds that "Mass migration is the most viable means of initiating rapid demographic and social change that can in turn create perceptions of threat and bring identity issues to the forefront of the political agenda in receiving states."⁷⁴ Yet it is critical to note that the concept of societal

⁶⁸ Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," 105.

⁶⁹ The following quote provides an excellent summary of Weiner's framework of the migration-related security implications facing states: "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 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... is when the host society uses immigrants as an instrument of threat against the country of origin." See *ibid.*, 105-06.

⁷⁰ Choucri, "Migration and Security: Some Key Linkages," 99-100.

⁷¹ For example, in his otherwise comprehensive analysis on the causes of civil war, Sambanis makes almost no mention whatsoever of the role of migration. See Nicholas Sambanis, "A review of recent advances and future directions in the quantitative literature on civil war," *Defence and Peace Economics* 13, no. 3 (2002).

⁷² Waever et al., *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*: 23.

⁷³ Rudolph, "Globalization and Security: Migration and Evolving Conceptions of Security in Statecraft and Scholarship," 21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

security is fundamentally embedded in the discourse on migration and *national* security. In short, proponents of this concept argue that the notion of societal security is deeply wedded to national security, as a threat to social cohesion and national identity is ultimately a threat to the state's security. According to this logic, migration is viewed as a threat to the state by virtue of its destabilizing impact on social cohesion and its undermining of national identity. Given the focus on national security, the societal security framework ignores the following questions: Could migration flows threaten identities at the local level within the state, thus bringing about internal conflicts? Would such a threat to social cohesion at the local level be possible without undermining national security at the state level? The answer to these questions is in all likelihood 'yes'. Yet before we can draw such conclusions, IR scholars need to systematically examine these questions.

The point here is neither to dismiss the importance of national security nor to downplay the link between migration and the security of the state. Rather, it is to emphasize the need to consider the relationship between migration and internal conflict. To be sure, the two issues arguably share some of the same causal logic, as internal conflicts (e.g. civil wars, rebel insurgencies, ethnic conflicts, etc.) and inter-state disputes share some of the same root causes. Yet it is short-sighted and counter-productive to narrow our analysis to the level of the state; especially when we consider the impact of migration processes at the local level. As Heisler reminds us, while it is the state that generally develops and manages migration-related policies, "the most important impacts of migration are local."⁷⁵ Should we not assume that migration-related conflicts would be most pronounced at the local level? If we ultimately hope to better understand the complex relationship between migration and conflict, we must begin to consider how migration processes trigger and/or exacerbate internal conflicts.⁷⁶

International Migration vs. Internal Migration

Although some academic disciplines – such as geography and anthropology – are less inclined to accept the predominant international migration vs. internal migration dichotomy in migration studies, the vast majority of scholarship on population movements adopts such an approach. As Guild notes, "The first key boundary in migration studies is that between movement within a country and movement across international borders."⁷⁷ Moreover, despite some scholarly interest on internal migration, the bulk of the contemporary work in migration studies focuses on international migration flows, often neglecting population movements within states. This is indeed the case in political science, where many scholars tend to ignore the political dimensions of internal migration. While some IR scholars recognize the importance of internal migration, they nevertheless continue to adopt narrow research agendas that

⁷⁵ Martin O. Heisler, "Now and Then, Here and There: Migration and the Transformation of Identities, Borders, and Orders," in *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory*, ed. Mathias Albert, David Jacobson and Yosef Lapid (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 243.

⁷⁶ On the flip side, scholars need to devote more attention to how migration processes mitigate conflicts at the local level. For example, migration is often seen as a 'safety valve' by reducing competition over scarce resources, yet this phenomenon is usually studied with respect to international migration rather than internal migration.

⁷⁷ Guild, *Security and Migration in the 21st Century*: 10.

neglect to consider the security implications of internal migration.⁷⁸ This is a major oversight as the huge volume of internal migrants throughout the world highlights the need to examine this form of mobility. Contrary to popular opinion, far more migrants move within their own borders than across them. As one expert notes, “while there may *globally* have been some estimated 125 million or so international, i.e. transborder migrants, in 1993, roughly 1,000 million migrants, eight times as many, were *internal* migrants.”⁷⁹ In China alone, over 100 million Chinese are estimated to have migrated from the countryside to the cities in recent years.⁸⁰ Ultimately, as Skeldon importantly notes, “the current focus on international migrants is on a tiny proportion of the world’s population and on a minority of all migrants.”⁸¹ To be sure, there is a critical difference between internal and international migration, most notably the legal distinction between the two.⁸² However, the division of migration studies into internal and international population flows is counter-productive as it fails to consider the important linkages between these movements. The unfortunate nature of this division is made further evident when we remember that “boundaries drawn between them are often artificial, bisecting integrated migration systems.”⁸³ The widespread adoption of the internal-international binary has unfortunately led very few scholars to attempt to integrate both migration dynamics in the same framework.

Much of the focus on international migration is arguably due to its putative impact on national identities. This point is highlighted by Weiner, who argues that “What is unique about international migration... is that it changes the very composition of one’s population and therefore potentially one’s domestic policies; it brings the outside in, as it were, and it involves sending a piece of one’s nation into another society.”⁸⁴ In the same vein, Rudolph notes that

⁷⁸ See Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security." Castles and Miller, "Migration and Security." Dannreuther, "People on the Move: Migration as a Security Issue." Doty, "Immigration and the Politics of Security." Rudolph, "Globalization and Security: Migration and Evolving Conceptions of Security in Statecraft and Scholarship." Rudolph, "Security and the Political Economy of International Migration." Rudolph, *National Security and Immigration: Policy Development in the United States and Western Europe since 1945*.

⁷⁹ Andreas Demuth, "Some Conceptual Thoughts on Migration Research," in *Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Migration Research: Interdisciplinary, Intergenerational and International Perspectives*, ed. Biko Agozino (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 22.

⁸⁰ The Chinese example is not only important in number terms, but also with respect to its potential implications. On this subject, Goldstone warns that “A sustained collision between diminished economic growth and the tens of millions moving to cities in search of work every year bodes ill for social and political stability.” See Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict," 16. Furthermore, Demuth cites the example of internal migration throughout the Soviet Union. Despite the mass number of migrants, tremendous distances covered, and cultural differences across these regions, these migrations largely failed to capture the attention of most scholars. See Demuth, "Some Conceptual Thoughts on Migration Research," 28.

⁸¹ Ronald Skeldon, "International Migration as a Tool in Development Policy: A Passing Phase?," *Population and Development Review* 34, no. 1 (2008): 6-7.

⁸² According to Skeldon, “The division of migration studies into internal and international movements has probably had as much to do with the sources and types of data used to measure the two movements as to any substantive or logical difference between the two.” See Ronald Skeldon, *Migration and Development: A Global Perspective* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1997). 9. While data on international migration flows is relatively good and generally readily available, it can be notoriously difficult to access reliable data on internal migration.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Weiner, "On International Migration and International Relations," 453.

“Patterns of international migration can also challenge conceptions of national identity, depending on the volume and composition of flows.”⁸⁵ These observations point to the implications for societal security, as international migration flows threaten to undermine social cohesion. However, is it also not possible for *internal* migration to destabilize *local* societal identities? Although many states share a collective national identity, we cannot ignore the existence of sub-national identities. The notion of ‘society’ is not unique to the level of the state as nearly every country in the world has multiple ethnic, cultural, and socio-linguistic groups within its borders. In many respects, internal migration flows can be as threatening to local identities as international flows.⁸⁶ This is an enduring legacy of colonialism, as many countries have been left with artificial borders that have divided pre-existing societal groups while combining others. This is nowhere more evident than in Sub-Saharan Africa. As Skeldon remarks, “what are migrations within single ethnic or cultural groups became international migration simply because of the way in which European colonial powers constructed the administrative boundaries that later gave rise to independent states.”⁸⁷

What, then, might be the causal relationship between internal migration and internal conflict? Reuveny’s analysis on climate change-induced migration and conflict provides some invaluable insights into this otherwise neglected research question.⁸⁸ Notwithstanding the obvious focus on climate change and migration, Reuveny argues that “the logic of this model applies to both climate change-induced and ordinary migration,” while noting that “What sets the former migration apart from the latter is its scope and speed.”⁸⁹ In essence, Reuveny contends that “the process leading from migration to conflict works through four channels, which may act concurrently.”⁹⁰ These ‘channels’ are as follows: (1) through competition over resources; (2) via

⁸⁵ Rudolph, *National Security and Immigration: Policy Development in the United States and Western Europe since 1945*: 202.

⁸⁶ Despite his focus on international migration, Weiner also recognized the perils of internal migration, as the following quote reveals: “Concern over colonization, it should be noted, can also be an internal affair in multi-ethnic societies. Territorially-based ethnic groups may consider an influx of people from other parts of the country as a cultural and political threat. Hence, the Moros in Mindanao revolted at the in-migration of people from other parts of the Philippines, Sri Lanka’s Tamils oppose settlement by Sinhalese in “their” region, Nicaragua Miskito Indians object to the migration of non-Miskito peoples into “their” territory on the Atlantic coast, and a variety of India’s linguistic communities regard in-migration as a form of colonization. In some cases such settlements can provoke an internal conflict between migrants and indigenes, with international consequences.” See Weiner, “Security, Stability, and International Migration,” 113. Goldstone provides additional examples: “The US Indian Wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were caused by the expansion of the United States into already-settled Native American territories. The state-assisted migration of Han Chinese into the mainly Uighur-settled region of Xinjiang and into Tibet has led to violent episodes of rebellion in both regions, as their inhabitants struggled to maintain their distinctive identities and control over their territories. The Bantu migrations into southern Africa led to wars throughout the continent, while the movement of peoples, both forced and by choice, across ethnic borders within the former Soviet Union has led to a legacy of ethnic and separatist conflicts.” See Goldstone, “Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict,” 13.

⁸⁷ Skeldon, *Migration and Development: A Global Perspective*: 9-10.

⁸⁸ Reuveny, “Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict.” See, also, Matthew I. Mitchell, “Insights from the Cocoa Regions in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana: Rethinking the Migration-Conflict Nexus,” *African Studies Review* 54, no. 2 (2011).

⁸⁹ Reuveny, “Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict,” 660.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 657-58.

ethnic tensions; (3) owing to distrust between migrant and host populations; and (4) due to tensions at ‘fault lines’ between socio-economically distinct groups. The model ultimately posits that conflict is more likely when two or more of these channels work together facing auxiliary conditions such as underdeveloped economies, political instability, or civil strife.⁹¹ Finally, another important contribution to the literature on internal migration and conflict can be found in the scholarship on ‘sons of the soil’ conflicts. These conflicts – pitting local ‘autochthonous’ communities against migrant populations – have been increasingly observed throughout many regions in the world, most notably throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.⁹² One recent study found that nearly one-third of all ‘ethnic civil wars’ could be identified as ‘sons of the soil’ conflicts.⁹³ These internal conflicts clearly underline the importance of studying internal migration in IR, as they point to the potentially destabilizing role of this form of mobility in local, national and even international politics.

Forced Migration vs. Voluntary Migration

Much of the recent literature on population movements in IR focuses on *forced* migration. This should not come as a surprise, as many scholars in the field have tended to view migration as a *consequence* of violent conflict. In recent years, IR scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the potential threat that involuntary migrants (e.g. refugees, internally displaced peoples, asylum seekers, and environmental migrants) pose to peace and security. This literature usually views migration as an ‘undesirable’ and often involuntary process, as the underlying message is that migrants are essentially unwanted, troublesome, and illegal.⁹⁴ For example, Rudolph writes that “much of contemporary global migration is between developing countries—primarily in the form of internally displaced persons and refugees” and that “large inflows of refugees can be particularly destabilizing—both politically and economically.”⁹⁵ Rudolph is certainly right to state that forced migration can pose a threat to peace and stability in both developed and developing countries. However, there is a major gap in the literature on migration in IR as the issue of *voluntary* migration processes has been largely ignored. Once

⁹¹ Ibid., 659.

⁹² Peter Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Interestingly, one of the first works on this issue was Weiner’s analysis on ‘sons of the soil’ conflicts in India. See Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978). However, these conflicts have been particularly salient in Sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a growing body of literature on autochthony and ‘sons of the soil’ conflicts. See, for example, Morten Bøås, “‘New’ Nationalism and Autochthony – Tales of Origin as Political Cleavage,” *Africa Spectrum* 44, no. 1 (2009). Kevin C. Dunn, “‘Sons of the Soil’ and Contemporary State Making: autochthony, uncertainty and political violence in Africa,” *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2009). Peter Geschiere and Stephen Jackson, “Autochthony and the Crisis of Citizenship: Democratization, Decentralization, and the Politics of Belonging,” *African Studies Review* 49, no. 2 (2006). Mathieu Hilgers, “Autochthony as Capital in a Global Age,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 28, no. 1 (2011). Matthew I. Mitchell, “Migration, Citizenship and Autochthony: Strategies and Challenges for State-Building in Côte d’Ivoire,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30, no. 2 (2012).

⁹³ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Sons of the Soil, Migrants, and Civil War,” *World Development* 39, no. 2 (2011).

⁹⁴ This is precisely the position that Weiner adopts in his landmark article. See Weiner, “Security, Stability, and International Migration.”

⁹⁵ Rudolph, “Globalization and Security: Migration and Evolving Conceptions of Security in Statecraft and Scholarship,” 16.

again, this is a major oversight since the vast majority of migrants do not only move voluntarily, but are often even encouraged to do so by both receiving and sending countries. This same logic also applies to the millions of internal migrants that move of their own accord to other urban or rural areas. This ultimately raises the question: should we not also consider the relationship between *voluntary* migration processes and conflict and security?

Ironically, the increased attention on forced migration in IR coincides with a period of decline in overall numbers of refugees. While the number of global refugees peaked in the early 1990s, these numbers have actually been declining ever since.⁹⁶ Conversely, while the overall number of voluntary migrants has increased since the end of the Cold War, these movements have generated much less interest amongst IR scholars. What explains the focus on involuntary over voluntary migration flows? According to Kleinschmidt, this is largely the result of institutions of governance, international organizations and transnational civil society groups' concern with the former.⁹⁷ As Kleinschmidt writes, "Many of these institutions, organizations and groups have been mostly concerned with refugees and asylum-seekers and their security interests. They have often overlooked that, despite their often heart-breaking experiences, refugees and asylum-seekers represent only a small minority of the total of currently some 175 million migrants worldwide."⁹⁸ This focus is somewhat understandable, since unlike voluntary migration forced migration usually involves the movement of peoples that (1) are less likely to contribute to productive economic activity in the receiving areas; (2) are not selected for their skills; (3) are less employable as a result of having suffered war trauma; and (4) have fewer assets due to the nature of their flight from insecurity.⁹⁹

The important distinctions between voluntary and forced migrants surely suggest that the latter pose a greater threat to peace and security. Yet despite the legitimate security concerns associated with forced migrants, we cannot ignore those related to voluntary migrants. As Kleinschmidt correctly points out, "migrants other than refugees and asylum-seekers have their own human security concerns that are often sharply different from, if not directly opposed to those that institutions of governance of sovereign states, international organizations and transnational civil society groups are willing to acknowledge and place on their agendas."¹⁰⁰ Consequently, there is every reason to believe that voluntary migration can also pose a threat to peace and security at both local and national levels. Although many governments have encouraged and even embraced labour migration from neighbouring countries and other regions from within the country as a means to promote economic development, these population movements have triggered hostile reactions from local communities, sometimes

⁹⁶ Salehyan, "The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict," 788-89.

⁹⁷ Kleinschmidt, "Migration, Regional Integration and Human Security: An Overview of Research Developments," 10.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Salehyan, "The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict," 789.

¹⁰⁰ Kleinschmidt, "Migration, Regional Integration and Human Security: An Overview of Research Developments," 10-11.

resulting in violent conflict.¹⁰¹ Consequently, we must also consider the critical role of voluntary migrants when examining the relationship between migration and conflict.

Developed Countries vs. Developing Countries

Despite the recent explosion of work on migration in IR, most of the literature overlooks migration dynamics in the developing world, focusing instead on the implications of migration for Western, industrialized states.¹⁰² When scholars do consider migration in developing countries, the focus tends to be on the following phenomena: the threat of terrorism from the Global South; the refugee crises in the developing world; and the prospects of an 'invasion' of migrants from impoverished countries. Simply put, the political implications of migration in the Global South are not on the radar of IR scholars, unless these population flows pose direct threats or challenges to the developed world. In other words, IR scholars are preoccupied with migration dynamics in *developing* countries insofar as these population movements affect *developed* countries. Once again, this is a major disciplinary oversight since migration dynamics in the developing world have wide-ranging implications for peace and security in the Global South. To quote a leading migration scholar, "We ought to be encouraging the production of far more work about migrations in all the regions of the world, not just those in the West."¹⁰³

The widespread focus on migration in developed as opposed to developing countries raises an important yet uncomfortable question: why has IR focused so much on the former and neglected the latter? The answer to this question is clearly rooted in the pervasive great power bias that has plagued IR for most of its history.¹⁰⁴ Given the excessive focus on great power politics in IR theory, the developing world has been marginalized at best, and utterly disregarded at worst. Although the end of the Cold War forced the discipline to revisit its core assumptions and expand its research agenda, IR continues to favor the study of great power politics. This tendency has, rather unsurprisingly, been reproduced in the study of migration in IR. The following quote illustrates this dominant trend:

There are legitimate reasons why developed countries feel distinctly challenged and even threatened by the trends in international migration. Of the 175 million international migrants, 110 million are in the developed world, where the proportion of migrants to overall population is 8.7 per cent as against 1.3 per cent in the developing world. Almost all of the net growth of recent migration is also

¹⁰¹ This phenomenon is at the heart of many of the 'conflicts of autochthony' in Africa, especially in Côte d'Ivoire. See Mitchell, "Migration, Citizenship and Autochthony: Strategies and Challenges for State-Building in Côte d'Ivoire."

¹⁰² See, for example, Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security." Castles and Miller, "Migration and Security."; Dannreuther, "People on the Move: Migration as a Security Issue." Rudolph, "Security and the Political Economy of International Migration." Rudolph, *National Security and Immigration: Policy Development in the United States and Western Europe since 1945*.

¹⁰³ Adrian Favell, "Rebooting Migration Theory: Interdisciplinarity, Globality, and Postdisciplinarity in Migration Studies," in *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, ed. Caroline Bretell and James Hollifield (New York: Routledge, 2007), 276.

¹⁰⁴ Douglas Lemke, "Review Articles: African Lessons for International Relations Research," *World Politics* 56, no. 1 (2003). Stephanie G. Neuman, *International Relations Theory and the Third World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

taking place in the developed countries, with North America growing by 13 million and Europe by 8 million in the decade 1990-2000.¹⁰⁵

To what extent do these figures justify the Western-centric approach to the study of migration in IR? These numbers clearly reveal the important challenges facing developed countries given the scale of international migration flows. However, they do not justify the discipline's failure to seriously consider the movements of tens of millions of international migrants in the Global South. It is also worth noting that these figures fail to account for the much larger number of internal, as opposed to international, migrants. Finally, one could also take issue with the above-mentioned figures. As any serious migration scholar knows, the actual number of cross-border migrants in the developing world is highly contestable since immigration and border services in developing countries often lack the resources to manage and register the movements of many migrant populations (e.g. pastoralists, nomads, traders, seasonal labourers, trafficked migrants).

The above numbers are therefore somewhat misleading since most experts argue that the vast majority of population movements occur in the Global South.¹⁰⁶ For example, Weiner writes that "while the news media have focused on South/North migration and east/West migration, this focus is narrow and misleading... Most of the movement has been from one developing country to another."¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, Cornelius and Rosenblum note that "although most research has focused on developed-state immigration policies, a substantial majority of overall international migratory flows are within the global South (especially refugee movements); and many developing states have become important points of transmigration."¹⁰⁸ Finally, Demuth adds a damning critique:

In Euro-Centric views migration focuses on reaching the 'West', or the 'North' usually meaning the industrialised, rich countries in Europe, from the 'East' or 'South'... it also ignores that there is much more south-south migration than south-north: more than 90% of global migration takes place in the 'developing', non-industrialised, non-European worlds. It also stays there. By volume and relative share in European migration, arrivals from the non-European countries are a trickle compared to some movements in Africa and Asia.¹⁰⁹

Numbers aside, migration flows arguably also pose greater threats to developing countries given the more vulnerable state of their economies and political systems. As Rudolph rightly points out, "Precisely because of the weakness of the state and the economy in many developing countries, large inflows of refugees can be particularly destabilizing—both politically

¹⁰⁵ Dannreuther, "People on the Move: Migration as a Security Issue," 102.

¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the issue of 'numbers' is striking when we consider the anticipated demographic shifts in developing versus developed countries. As Dannreuther himself notes, "while in 2000 Europe and Africa had about an equal population, by 2050 Europe will have only 7 per cent as against Africa's 20 per cent share of the world's population. Much as Europe was the major source of migration in the nineteenth century, it can be expected that Africa, if history repeats itself, will be a major source of migration in the twenty-first century." See *ibid.*, 108.

¹⁰⁷ Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," 93.

¹⁰⁸ Cornelius and Rosenblum, "Immigration and Politics," 111.

¹⁰⁹ Demuth, "Some Conceptual Thoughts on Migration Research," 28.

and economically.”¹¹⁰ He later adds that “Such inflows can place an extreme burden on scarce resources, increase domestic tensions over the allocation of those resources, incite ethnic tensions, change majority-minority relationships within society, and serve as a conduit through which civil wars in one country spread to neighboring states.”¹¹¹ Interestingly, despite the focus in the above comments on refugee populations, the same dynamics can and do occur in the context of voluntary migrations in these regions. As the issues outlined suggest, it is surely high time that ‘International Relations’ lives up to its name and adopts a research agenda that examines migration dynamics in all regions of the world.

CONCLUSION

Nearly thirty years ago, Teitelbaum wrote that “those concerned about immigration and refugee policies must consider foreign policy as central to their concerns” since the “recent changes in the scale, character, and even the ‘uses’ of international migration have transformed these issues—probably irreversibly—into matters of the highest domestic and foreign concern.”¹¹² Despite Teitelbaum’s urging, many practitioners and academics continued to downplay the security implications of migration. Although the end of the Cold War generated an upsurge in interest in migration, it was not until the events of September 11, 2001 that migration came to be widely recognized in IR as a matter of high politics. As I have outlined in this paper, this growing interest has led to the development of a burgeoning literature on a wide range of migration-related themes in IR. While we ought to embrace the recognition of migration as an important research topic, this paper has nevertheless highlighted a number of and concerns regarding this literature. As the previous sections reveal, these works stress the importance of *national* security as opposed to *internal* conflict; emphasize *international* migration and neglect *internal* migration; focus on *forced* migration and overlook *voluntary* migration; and concentrate on *developed* countries while paying little attention to *developing* countries. Again, the point here is neither to downplay the contributions of these works nor to disregard the important issues they examine. Rather, as I have emphatically noted, I argue for a new approach to the study of migration in IR that considers the complex and multiple dimensions and dynamics in the migration-conflict nexus. In so doing, I have attempted to provide a foundation for rethinking the role of migration in IR. The aim here is obviously not to develop a theoretical framework of the migration-conflict nexus. However, the paper does provide new directions for improving our theoretical understanding of the relationship between migration and conflict.

If we are, however, to improve our theoretical understanding of the relationship between migration and conflict, we must avoid three interrelated pitfalls that have historically plagued IR

¹¹⁰ Rudolph, "Globalization and Security: Migration and Evolving Conceptions of Security in Statecraft and Scholarship," 16.

¹¹¹ Ibid. This point is echoed by Miller who argues that “International migration usually is much more of a fundamental security concern in developing countries, especially in those lands that periodically face food or water shortages and other critical deficiencies.” See Miller, "International Migration and Global Security," 25.

¹¹² Teitelbaum, "Immigration, Refugees and Foreign Policy," 450.

theory and that continue to do so in the study of migration. Firstly, we need to move beyond the state-centric approach to theorizing that is still deeply entrenched in the field. While the state is obviously a central actor in international politics, we must find “a way to escape the nation-state dominated conceptions that conventionally make sense of the world and the migration that takes place within it.”¹¹³ Secondly, in order to address the “more nuanced dimensions of the international security environment, security specialists must move away from grand theories that focus on unitary state actors and begin to employ more conventional forms of policy analysis and evaluation.”¹¹⁴ This critique is obviously closely related to the first as it takes aim at the dominant state-centrism found throughout the literature. More specifically, however, the point here is to move beyond grand theorizing when attempting to theorize the relationship between migration and conflict. Migration is a complex process involving a variety of actors and issues in an unimaginable number of different contexts. In short, there cannot be ‘a’ theory of migration and conflict. Finally, IR scholars must abandon the ‘Great Power’ bias that permeates theorizing in the field. The vast majority of migrants live in the Global South and cannot be ignored in international politics. Consequently, IR scholars must strive to develop models and frameworks that recognize and integrate migration dynamics in both developed and developing countries. As I have illustrated throughout this paper, the literature in IR has thus far failed to consider the critically important migration flows in the Global South. By avoiding these pitfalls and embracing a research agenda that recognizes the importance of internal conflict, internal migration, voluntary migration, and developing countries, IR may come to better understand the complex yet increasingly important relationship between migration and conflict.

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¹¹³ Favell, "Rebooting Migration Theory: Interdisciplinarity, Globality, and Postdisciplinarity in Migration Studies," 275.

¹¹⁴ Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security," 197.

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