

GLOBAL SECURITY ISSUES: TACKLING MIGRATION AND REFUGEE CRISES

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Abstract: Global security and migration are closely related to each other and mutually influence the situation in the world. Migration can be both a cause and a consequence of threats to global security. One of the main reasons for migration is instability and conflict in countries, which can lead to security threats both within and outside the country. Armed conflicts, terrorism, human rights violations, deteriorating economic situation and environmental disasters can force people to leave their homes and seek a better life in other countries. On the other hand, mass migration can cause tension in receiving countries, which can lead to social and economic problems, as well as security threats. Illegal and uncontrolled migration can contribute to crime, human trafficking and in some cases terrorist attacks. From an economic perspective, migration may potentially lead to significant negative effects such as increased unemployment among natives, increased shadow economy and may put upward pressure on housing costs. To ensure global security, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive approach to migration management that will consider the interests of all parties. This includes strengthening international cooperation, tackling the root causes of migration and ensuring sustainable development in source countries. Thus, the connection between global security and migration highlights the need for joint efforts by countries and international organizations to address the complex challenges posed by these phenomena.

Keywords: Global Security, Migration, Economy, Terrorism.

Introduction

In an era marked by profound geopolitical shifts and escalating tensions, the global security landscape has become increasingly unpredictable. The resurgence of armed conflicts around the world has not only destabilized regions but has also raised alarm bells about the potential for wider confrontations among major powers. Undoubtedly, armed conflicts and general instability trigger massive flows of refugees and economic migrants which can undermine national and global security efforts given that uncontrolled migration can generate new threats such as violence, terrorism and negative economic effects. There are many multilateral regional and global initiatives and platforms (including the UN) trying to address the issue of forced migration, including its impact on the security sphere. However,

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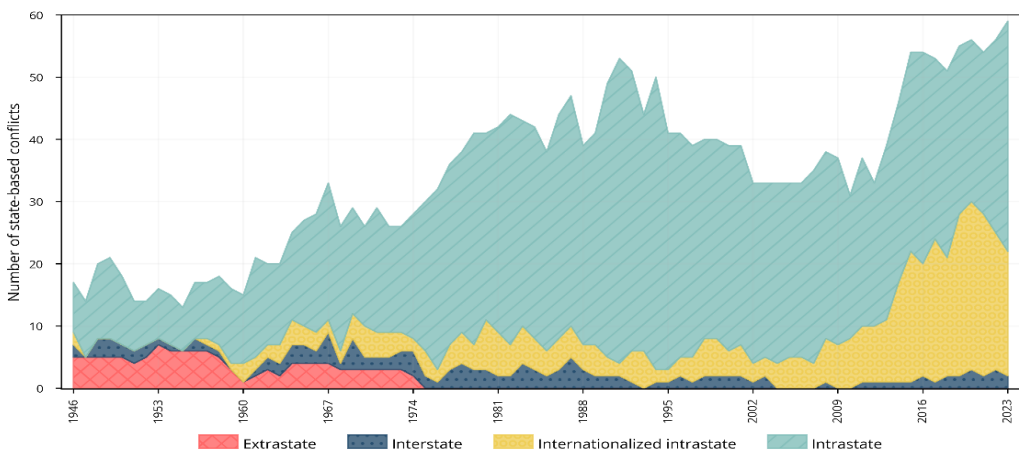
many questions are still not resolved. Is there a tangible progress in reducing forced migration flows? Are the existing migration management policies effective? Is migration really a security threat that can undermine the general national and economic security or is just an argument for nationalist to promote its policies? Namely, the absence of consensus on how to address and answer these questions dictates the necessity for their deeper analysis through the prism of the current geopolitical and security landscape.

Unpredictable global security landscape: rising number of conflicts

The Russia-Ukraine conflict - the largest armed conflict on European soil since WW2 is still raging; Israel entered Gaza as a response to the Hamas-led attack on October 7th 2023; fears of a wider Middle East war due to Israel-Hezbollah conflict are growing; tensions in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Trait are getting higher; the civil wars in Syria (since 2011), Yemen (since 2014), Myanmar (since 2021), Sudan (since 2023) and the Ethiopian civil conflict (since 2018) are still ongoing.

As we can see, over the past decade the geopolitical and economic landscape has experienced some major changes mainly due to the appearance of new global and regional security challenges and the inability to effectively resolve ongoing conflicts. According to the data collected by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), every year since 2015 the total number of state-based conflicts is constantly above 50, figures that have not been registered since the early 90s. In 2023 the number of active armed state-based conflicts reached 59 – an all-time high (See Figure 1). For comparison, the number of state-based conflicts between 2000 and 2013 never exceeded 39. This escalation of conflicts has basically crippled the global security architecture (creating the, so called, crisis of global security architecture) and has led to a higher level of global uncertainty.

State-based conflicts by type of conflict (1946-2023)



Based on UCDP 24.1 data

Figure 1. Number of state-based conflicts, World

Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2023)

It must be noted that in recent years, there has been a notable shift in the nature of conflicts, with internal, civil and bilateral wars gaining international significance. Up

until 2013 the number of internationalized intrastate conflicts never exceeded 9, but today exceeds 20 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2023). This is due to the involvement of regional and global powers, who support opposing factions and actively contribute resources and sometimes even troops. This trend marks a departure from the previous era of relatively fewer interstate conflicts. Furthermore, these conflicts may escalate into more direct, large-scale confrontations involving major powers.

An example of this worrying trend is the Russia-Ukraine conflict which probably is one of the most internationalized recent conflicts. On the one hand, we have Ukraine and NATO. Since 2022 billions of dollars in military assistance and financial aid were provided to Ukraine to support its military efforts and devastated economy by NATO members. Despite repeated statements that the Alliance does not want an escalation of this devastating conflict on European soil, Russia has perceived this as NATO's direct participation in a hybrid (proxy) war against itself. On the other hand, we have Russia and some powerful Global South countries such as China, Iran and North Korea. Iran has been supplying large number of Shahed 136 drones and has been accused by the UK of supplying ballistic missiles to Russia. North Korea has also been accused of supplying weapons and military equipment in exchange for energy and food shipments. Moreover, in June 2024 Russia and North Korea signed an agreement on a comprehensive strategic partnership including mutual defense. Being one of the main economic partners of Russia, China has also been accused of helping Russia by supplying precision manufacturing equipment for critical hardware, micro-electronics and nitrocellulose which has helped Russia expand its military industrial base and thus accelerate defense production cycle.

As a result, the world has seen the creation of two opposing factions, both having immense military capacities and nuclear weapons, fighting for global dominance. This geopolitical polarization like never witnessed before can endanger global security for decades to come and push the world into a WW3.

High fatality rates

Between 2014 and 2019, a decreasing trend of fatalities from organized violence was observed. However, inevitably, the increase in state-based armed conflicts since then has led to an increase in mortality. In 2021 the number of fatalities from organized violence (state-based, non-state and one-sided violence all together) experienced a twofold increase, jumping from 106,000 to 237,000. Out of these, 200,000 can be attributed to state-based violence. For comparison, the number of fatalities from state-based violence in 2019 and 2020 was 53,000 and 73,000 respectively. The surge was primarily fueled by the intensifying conflicts in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Yemen.

2022 witnessed a 32% rise in fatalities resulting from state-based armed conflicts compared to the previous year. The number of deaths jumped from 237,000 in 2021 to 311,000 in 2022 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2023), making it the deadliest year since 1994 when the Rwandan genocide occurred. The number of fatalities from state-based violence reached 277,000. This increase was a direct consequence of the two deadliest state-based armed conflicts since the 1990s: the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the war in Ethiopia against the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

In 2023, fatalities from organized violence decreased for the first time since in 2020, dropping to 154,000 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2023), mainly due to the end of the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region. The number of fatalities from state-based violence dropped to 123,000. However, these figures still represent some of the highest fatality rates recorded since the Rwandan genocide. Furthermore, having into consideration that there are almost sixty ongoing armed conflicts and data access is somewhat limited, these figures might be even higher.

Conflicts and worsening socio-economic situation generate migration flows

Armed conflicts and instability (both political and economic) have always been one of the main drivers of forced migration/displacement and migration even after their resolution given that mitigation of the negative consequences, especially the economic ones (damaged infrastructure, shortages, disruption of value chains, inflation, rise in national debt etc.) can take quite some time. Hence, armed conflicts can generate not only massive flows of refugees, but an international migration flows of people that want a better future for themselves and their families even after the conflict is long resolved.

Currently there are approximately 281 million international migrants which accounts for roughly 3.6% of the world's population (World Migration Report, IOM, 2024). While the majority of individuals depart their home nations in pursuit of employment opportunities, a significant number have been compelled to leave as a result of conflict, violence, and environmental changes. According to the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide reached 117.3m at the end of 2023, almost a twofold increase since 2014. Out of them, 43.4m are refugees. Over the past decade the total number of refugees has tripled. The UNHCR estimates that by the end of April 2024 the number of forcibly displaced people has exceeded 120 million. Approximately 73% of the refugees come from just five countries: Afghanistan (6.4m), Syria (6.4m), Venezuela (6.1m), Ukraine (6.0m) and South Sudan (2.3m). Although, in the case of Venezuela the massive flow of refugees and asylum seekers can be contributed to the ongoing economic/political crisis and the subsequent rise of crime rates, we can observe that the main reason is internationalized state-based armed conflict.

We must not forget the spillover effect, which means that the conflict's consequences are not necessarily limited only to the country of their occurrence. Internationalized interstate conflicts tend to severely impact the economy of the whole region where they occur and sometimes even the global economy, especially if the parties involved are major players in key economic areas. For instance, the Russia-Ukraine conflict impacted not only the European economy, but the entire global economy, especially in terms of energy and food security given that Russia is one of the key producers and exporters of oil, gas, fertilizers and the both countries together supply roughly 30% of the world's wheat exports (Financial Times, 2022). Unprecedented number of sanctions and restrictions imposed on Russia, including on its oil and gas industry, accelerated the already existing global energy crisis, caused mostly by the rapid post-pandemic recovery which significantly exceeded the energy supply. Furthermore, the conflict disrupted global wheat and fertilizers supply chains leading to a sharp increase in food prices which were already reaching record heights during COVID-19. The massive

increase in energy and food prices severely affected vulnerable population across the globe putting under immense pressure their economic and food security.

African countries were especially affected by the food crisis given their dependency on Russian and Ukrainian wheat supplies. For instance, Eritrea, Somalia and Democratic Republic of the Congo's, all of which are listed as least developed countries by the UN, combined dependency on Russian and Ukrainian wheat supplies exceeds 85% (Information note, FAO, 2022). This situation occurred in a time when the African continent was experiencing the economic repercussions of COVID-19. The continent has already witnessed a surge in poverty, with an additional 18 million people joining the existing 546 million Africans living in poverty. Furthermore, 22% of the African population now confronts alarming levels of food insecurity (ODI Global Advisory, 2024). Globally, around 12% of the population experience food insecurity at severe levels (UN Report, WHO, 2022). Further worsening of the socioeconomic situation will probably trigger a new flow of economic migrants wishing to escape poverty and food insecurity from less developed to more developed countries.

Migration can generate security threats

Although migration is usually a result of security issues and instability, at the same time it might be the cause of new security threats, especially in the case of illegal migrants pouring into the receiving country via smuggling and human trafficking. Moreover, illegal migration can contribute to crime given that illegal migrants cannot be legally and fully integrated into the official labor market but instead have to resort to illicit ways of earning money.

There is a number of studies to substantiate these claims. For instance, Aoki and Todo in their study about immigration in France find that "unemployed immigrants tend to commit more crimes than unemployed non-immigrants" (Aoki & Todo, 2009). A 2018 study by Zurich University of Applied Sciences linked a sharp increase in violent crime in Lower Saxony, Germany, primarily to the influx of refugees. The study, commissioned by the German government, found that refugees were responsible for over 90% of the 10% overall rise in such crime between 2015 and 2016. A study by Bianchi, Buonanno & Pinotti examining immigration to Italy from 1990 to 2003 found that a larger immigrant population coincided with higher crime rates across many categories (Bianchi et al., 2012). While this correlation was especially strong for violent crimes such as murder and robbery, the study could not definitively establish a causal relationship for most types of crime. Similar data is observed in Russia. According to the data provided by the Investigative Committee of Russia in 2023 there was an increase in violent crimes committed by foreign citizens - by 32% and extremely violent crimes - by 26%. In the area of drug trafficking, migrants broke the law 27% more than before. The greatest increase is observed in the area of crimes of an extremist nature - 147% (Parliamentary Gazette, 2024). In some more extreme cases, migration can lead to terrorist attacks. Leiken & Brooke in their 2006 article "The Quantitative Analysis of Terrorism and Immigration: An Initial Exploration." found that most global jihadist terrorists are immigrants.

We must also underline the negative economic effects of migration. In some cases, uncontrolled migration and refugee influx can undermine national economic security by putting upward pressure on housing prices, increasing the shadow economy and increasing unemployment among natives in some economic areas. Numerous studies support this claim.

For instance, a study by Trojanek & Gluszak found that as a result of the massive influx of Ukrainian refugees in 2022, average rents in Warsaw and Krakow increased by 15% and 23% respectively (Trojanek, Gluszak, 2022). Similarly, Syrian refugee inflows generated an increase in housing rents in the parts of Turkey and Jordan that hosted the majority of them. In terms of increasing unemployment among natives, in their 2017 study on the impact of Syrian refugees on natives' labor market, Ceritoglu et al. conclude that natives have experienced an increase in unemployment, along with a decrease in labor force participation, informal employment, and job finding rates (Ceritoglu et al., 2017).

The economic implications of these effects can be worrying. Upward pressure on housing prices against the backdrop of limited housing supply and slow growth rates of wages can severely constrain housing affordability. In turn, lower housing affordability can reduce quality of life and constrain consumer spending. This situation especially affects low-income households and fixed-income citizens who are extremely vulnerable to a rising cost of living. As a consequence, unaffordable housing can potentially result in social division and heightened community conflicts.

Migration in some cases could also potentially put a downward pressure on wages in certain economic areas such as construction, hospitality, tourism and manufacturing among others. Importing labor from other countries with lower wages can increase the supply of workers in a particular industry or region leading to lower wages or their limited growth for domestic workers and hence provoke social division. For instance, in order to close the labor deficit in specific economic sectors, North Macedonia started the process of labor imports liberalization. However, this has provoked a somewhat negative reaction from domestic workers, especially in the textile industry. Many domestic textile workers have stated that they are feeling offended and revolted by this situation. Moreover, as previously said, this trend will have a negative effect on wages' growth rates given that imported labor will be more cost-effective for the employers which might result in an additional outflow of workers from the country.

Migration and refugee crises management: A comprehensive approach needed

Why countries and multilateral international organizations such as the UN, despite having the needed resources, do not appropriately address migration and refugee crises? It is obvious that existing migration and refugee crises management policies have to be revised and adapted to today's challenges. Emphasis should be put on three key elements: tackling the root causes of forced migration and refugee crises, ensuring sustainable economic development and strengthening international cooperation.

1. Tackling the root causes of forced migration and refugee crises. The approach to refugee crises and forced migration should be based not on managing the consequences of this phenomena, but instead on tackling its root causes, i.e. armed conflicts and instability both political and economic. The current security landscape and the observed geopolitical fragmentation of a magnitude never seen before have proven that existing conflict resolution and prevention multilateral mechanisms are not efficient enough. In this context, emphasis should be put on diplomatic dialogue that will take into consideration the opinions of all concerned parties and will come up with a compromise solution that is acceptable for everyone. Moreover, in order to reduce the level of internationalization of intra and interstate

conflicts, that as previously suggested may provoke a wider and more direct confrontation, major players should refrain from providing direct military support to opposing factions, which leads to a prolongation of the conflicts.

2. Ensuring sustainable development in source countries. To simply resolve ongoing and prevent future challenges will not be enough given that economic instability and regional disparity is also a significant driver of migration flows. Perhaps, the most effective way to address this issue is ensuring sustainable development in source countries. International development organizations and more developed countries should step up and help less developed countries address key economic challenges by transferring accumulated knowledge, developing human capital and mobilizing finance through development and economic assistance funds. However, the allocation of funds should be closely monitored in order to avoid misuse which is not rare in less developed countries. Overall, development-oriented approach could potentially lower the level of regional economic disparity and hence lower stimulus for labor migrants to leave their country.

3. Strengthening international cooperation. Internationalized armed conflicts, migration and the need to accelerate sustainable development in source countries are global challenges and should not be addressed unilaterally or even bilaterally, but multilaterally. This signifies that the world is in need for a stronger, inclusive and effective international cooperation which will put global interests above the countries' individual ones. However, in order to set the basis for this cooperation, a reform of the existing multilateral platforms is much needed given that confidence in it has been severely undermined by the increasing levels of geopolitical fragmentation. The existing platforms have become the battleground for superpowers to exert influence and assert their positions. Therefore, the only way to address these challenges swiftly and effectively is to extensively reform multilateral platforms considering the current geopolitical and economic landscape while putting the emphasis on cooperation instead of confrontation.

We must note that these three elements are not supplementary, but complementary which suggests that they should be combined and simultaneously pursued in order to enhance the end result and get the upper hand over migration. To summarize, global security and migration are closely related terms. To ensure global security, a comprehensive approach to migration and refugee crises management is needed. This involves international cooperation, addressing the root causes of migration, and promoting sustainable development in source countries. Joint efforts by countries and international organizations are necessary to tackle the complex challenges posed by the connection between global security and migration

Conclusion

The current geopolitical landscape is marked by an unprecedented escalation of armed conflicts, each contributing to a complex web of instability that threatens both regional and global security. As nations align themselves into opposing factions, the potential for miscalculation and direct confrontation increases, raising fears of a broader conflict that could have catastrophic consequences. This polarization underscores the urgent need for effective diplomatic engagement and conflict resolution strategies to prevent further deterioration of global security and to foster a more stable international order.

The interplay between armed conflicts and migration underscores a critical global challenge that demands urgent attention. The staggering numbers of forcibly displaced individuals highlight the humanitarian crisis that extends far beyond the immediate conflict zones, affecting regional stability and global economies. Addressing the root causes of conflict and implementing comprehensive strategies for recovery and support is essential not only for the displaced populations but also for the resilience of affected nations and the international community as a whole. As studies have shown, the influx of migrants can lead to higher instances of violent crime, strain housing markets, and negatively impact employment opportunities for native populations. These dynamics necessitate a nuanced understanding of migration.

The persistent failure to adequately address global migration and refugee crises, despite ample resources, necessitates a fundamental shift in policy. Successfully managing these challenges requires a three-pronged, complementary approach: addressing the root causes of forced migration, fostering sustainable economic development in source countries and strengthening international cooperation through substantial reform of existing multilateral platforms.

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