Forced Migration: Local Conflicts and International Dilemmas

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Refugees are forced to flee. Immigrants are supposed to have a degree of choice, but when their livelihood is so miserable, I don't know what the level of choice is. It may be that they too should then be looked at as people forced to flee by poverty, but then it becomes very difficult. What kinds of freedom do you allow? What kinds of regulations do you put in place? (Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in a Speech to the Trilateral Commission, 1992)

The dismantling of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 symbolized for many a new era of democratic principles and freedom of movement. The image of East Berliners passing through breaches in the wall into once forbidden sectors of their divided city also underscored the ultimate futility of physical and political barriers to human migration. Most current migrations, though, are less dramatic than those through the Berlin Wall, and most migrants have much grimmer prospects than the East Germans who moved westward. The destination options of most potential migrants in developing countries are severely curtailed by governmental policies and widespread poverty, while the number of migrants who have been forcibly uprooted—by a wide range of political, socioeconomic, and ecological factors—is growing. Their plight poses difficult challenges for the governments of wealthy and poor countries.

Forcibly displaced groups vary greatly—some flee systematic persecution while others flee life-threatening natural disasters—but most are influenced by several underlying causal factors. In this paper, I attempt to provide a global overview of forced migrations and to link these with key subnational causal conditions. The paper then presents a descriptive model of forced migration in which the overlapping causal factors operating within national borders are juxtaposed against international attempts to differentiate legally between refugees and economic migrants. The dissonance between *de facto* subnational causes and proposed *de jure* national and international solutions demonstrates the international community's dilemma over coping with the complexities of and the sharp increases in forced migration within and across international borders.

Forced Migration in Theoretical Context

Although most migrations occur within a context of socioeconomic and political forces that severely constrain options, the number of forced migrations has increased. This trend is not only the result of ephemeral geopolitical changes, but also a systemic reaction to a wide range of enduring socioeconomic conditions that Castles and Miller have called the globalization, acceleration, differentiation, and feminization of migration (1993:8). The extent of forced migration is underestimated, however, because the conventional definition of refugees as victims of coercive government policies or war who cross an international boundary fails to account for the many others uprooted by communal ethnic conflict, life-threatening environmental and economic conditions, and mandatory repatriations.

Migration is defined as a permanent or semipermanent change of residence, usually across some type of administrative boundary. Unlike the singular demographic events of birth and death, a person can migrate many times, for varied durations, and across numerous territorial divisions. The inherent complexity of most migrations—especially those within and between poor countries—hinders our understanding of the ways migration affects and is affected by economic development and international relations. Similarly, the preoccupation

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of the media, academics, and political leaders on the minority of migrants who cross an international boundary, particularly those in Europe and North America, slights the much larger numbers who never make it out of their country. Refugees and asylum seekers represent only a small fraction of those persons who flee their communities because of violent discrimination, civil unrest, and other life-threatening economic and ecological conditions. This paper attempts to clarify the causes and consequences of these non-voluntary migrations.

In the large, migration studies range from microscale psychological analyses of migrant decision-making to macroscale economic models of labor flows between the periphery and the core of the world economy. Although most migration theories accent economic factors at the expense of coercive elements, some theorists are taking into account cultural, ethnic, and political influences. At the international level, for example, migration research is increasingly conceptualized within an interdependent but unequal world economic system (Zolberg 1981; Mitchell 1989; Castles and Miller 1993).

Of the many who have limited opportunities or who are oppressed in their home communities, only a fraction will actually decide to relocate, and an even smaller fraction will have the means to do so (Gardner 1981). Accordingly, individual migrations—whether "forced," "strongly encouraged," or "voluntary"—must be viewed as collective processes that include key groups (such as prospective employers) and institutions (such as immigration agencies) that profoundly affect relocation options (Snowden 1990). Migrations might also be conceptualized as sets of multiscalar linkages that range from micro family relationships to macro government policies; these linkages, in turn, are activated through the mass media, income remittances, labor recruiting agencies, and laws affecting migration (Fawcett 1989). As forcibly displaced migrants attempt to turn fears into action, they must weave through a maze of socioeconomic and political structures and their agents.

A comprehensive refugee theory is difficult to formulate because involuntary migrations are based on complex decision-making processes and diverse causal factors. Kunz (1973) simplified the process by placing many historical refugee flows within a "kinetic" model in which "outside forces" act to "push" refugees out of an unstable area. He identifies two types of "pushed" refugee migrations: *anticipatory* flows in which refugees, individually or in small groups, flee deteriorating conditions before actually being forced out; and *acute* flows in which large numbers flee from imminent danger to the safety of a neighboring country (1973:131–136). Kunz acknowledges that some refugees fall between these two types and that anticipatory refugees are often mistaken for voluntary, economic migrants. He further (1981) divides refugee groups according to their intentions: *reactive fate-groups* flee reluctantly from an intolerable situation "without a solution in sight"; and *purpose groups* (such as political activists) leave to regroup and organize resistance against the regimes that forced them out. Kunz admits that these classifications have problems as "the borderline between political refugees and those dissatisfied economically can indeed be blurred when displacement occurs in reaction to events" (1981:44). His model also underestimates somewhat the push of internal forces such as ethnic tensions.

While each refugee flow is unique, the underlying economic and political dilemmas are often quite similar (Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989). Forcibly uprooted migrants are often affected by the same factors that affect most other types of migrants. These include: declining real incomes and large personal investments in the migration process; disparities of incomes and opportunities between the place of origin and potential destinations; kinship networks that provide critical information and support; new experiences of ethnic tension and discrimination as an "outsider"; loss of traditional social status; new educational and language barriers; and weakening of traditional values in the face of powerful, foreign cultural forces. But insofar as policymakers take the narrow view that forced migrations are problems of "humanitarian relief" that are separable from their political-economic contexts—at local, national, and international levels—their efforts will amount to little more than reactions to the latest "refugee crisis."

Under Peterson's typology (1975:321), many of the coercive push factors noted above are classified as "impelled" rather than "forced"; in the former migrants have some choice over

destinations, while in the latter no options are permitted. This hard distinction blurs, however, when applied to current Third World situations, where coercion ranges from explicit governmental actions against an individual to life-threatening socioeconomic or environmental conditions experienced by the entire population of an area. Although these types of coercion resist precise definition, they may lead to brutal dislocations. In any case, the key factor is not the type of coercion applied, but the potential migrants' belief that they must flee to survive.

Huyck and Bouvier (1983:41) cut through this ambiguity by noting a key criterion for coercion, namely that a "failure to migrate would likely result in destructive consequences including imprisonment and even death for the potential refugee." They lament that most refugee studies focus on political persecution and ignore environmental and economic motivations. Huyck and Bouvier limit *environmentally motivated refugees* to victims of natural disasters and *economically motivated refugees* to those who are unable in their own country "to locate any kind of employment or to grow sufficient agricultural products to feed and house oneself and one's immediate family. Starvation in this case becomes the likely alternative to emigration" (1983:41). For many forced migrants, such motivating factors can be clearly differentiated, but for many others they are murky. This murkiness complicates migrants' destination choices—if they have any—and also the decisions over their lives made by officials responsible for refugee and immigrant admissions.

Mass Forced Migrations and Their Conditions: Numbers and Causes

Although forced migrations may profoundly affect regional histories (Central Europe in the 1940s, for example, when tens of millions were uprooted), these migrations are poorly documented (Stola 1992). Any attempt to describe patterns, magnitudes, and trends confronts the problem that almost all published data on forced migration, including those generated by official refugee agencies, are rough estimates at best. We do know that overall the number of forced migrants is increasing sharply, from over 32 million in 1987 to over 42 million in 1993 (Cernea 1990; U.S. Committee for Refugees 1993). This overview of mass forced migrations examines this trend and offers a rough sketch of regional flows. Irrespective of data quality, however, one pattern is clear: forced migration occurs disproportionately in the countries with the most miserable living standards. Equally disturbing is that most forced migrations are rooted, at least partially, in ethnic conflict.

With such a poor database to work from, definitions of mass forced migration are somewhat arbitrary. In this paper, a *mass* forced migration must meet two quantitative conditions: The numbers of forcibly uprooted persons must exceed 100,000; and this group must comprise one percent or more of its country's total population (Table 1). A group of forced migrants would include, among others, residents of refugee camps outside of their country; recent repatriates; displaced persons (those who never left their country); and, in some cases, besieged populations dependent on international relief agencies. Because Table 1 relies on published data compiled by the Office of the Geographer and the Refugee Programs Bureau of the U.S. Department of State (current as of December 1993), these estimates undercount the actual numbers of forced migrants. Table 1 also excludes some countries with large numbers of displaced persons who are largely unassisted by United Nations (U.N.) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in refugee and relief work.

Table 1 divides forced migrants into two groups: 1) refugees who have left their country; and 2) "internally" displaced persons who remain within their country. The table also provides a sense of the magnitude and impact of these forced migration streams on their respective countries by calculating the share of a country's total population that has been displaced. In at least 33 countries (about 18 percent of the 184 United Nations' member countries), more than one percent of their population has been forcibly displaced. With over half their populations forcibly displaced, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Liberia stand out as particularly tragic cases of national rupture. But in five other countries, no fewer than one in five citizens have been forcibly uprooted. And in eighteen countries, more than one in ten citi-

Table 1. Countries with Very High Levels of Forced Migration[a]

Rank	Country	Refugees	Displaced Persons[b]	Total Forced Migrants[c]	Population 1993[d]	Forced Migrants as Percentage of Population[e]
		in millions				
1	Bosnia	1.2	1.3	2.5	4.4	57
2	Liberia	0.7	0.7	1.4	2.8	50
3	Israel/Occupied Territories	2.7	—	2.7	8.0	33
4	Burundi	0.6	1.0	1.6	5.8	28
5	Mozambique	1.3	2.5	3.8	15.3	25
6	Eritrea	0.4	0.2	0.6	2.6	23
7	Afghanistan	3.8	0.2	4.0	17.4	23
8	Sierra Leone	0.3	0.4	0.7	4.5	16
9	Angola	0.4	1.0	1.4	9.5	15
10	Somalia	0.7	0.6	1.3	9.5	14
11	Azerbaijan	0.3	0.7	1.0	7.2	14
12	Croatia	0.3	0.3	0.6	4.4	14
13	Rwanda	0.6	0.4	1.0	7.4	14
14	Sudan	0.4	3.5	3.9	27.4	14
15	Bhutan	0.1	—	0.1	0.8	13
16	Togo	0.3	0.2	0.5	4.1	12
17	Lebanon	—	0.4	0.4	3.6	11
18	South Africa/Homelands	—	4.0	4.0	39.0	10
19	Georgia	0.2	0.3	0.5	5.5	09
20	Armenia	0.3	—	0.3	3.6	08
21	Iraq	1.2	0.4	1.6	19.2	08
22	Tajikistan	0.1	0.2	0.3	5.7	05
23	Mauritania	0.1	—	0.1	2.2	05
24	Sri Lanka	0.2	0.6	0.8	17.8	04
25	Cambodia	—	0.3	0.3	9.0	03
26	Peru	—	0.6	0.6	22.9	03
27	Ethiopia	0.7	0.4	1.1	54.1	02
28	Zaire	0.1	0.8	0.9	41.2	02
29	Guatemala	0.1	0.1	0.2	10.0	02
30	El Salvador	—	0.1	0.1	5.2	02
31	Chad	0.1	—	0.1	5.4	02
32	Burma	0.3	0.2	0.5	43.5	01
33	Mali	0.1	—	0.1	8.9	01
	Total	17.6	20.9	38.5	427.9	09

[a]This list includes countries in which over 100,000 people have been forcibly displaced and in which these numbers exceed one percent of the country's total population as of December 1993. Some countries with potentially large numbers of displaced are not shown because of poor or incomplete data; others may have generated several hundred thousand displaced people, but current estimates fall below the one percent threshold. These data on refugees and displaced persons were compiled by the Office of the Geographer and the Refugee Programs Bureau, U.S. Department of State.

[b]Estimates of displaced persons—those who have been uprooted but remain within their country—are very rough estimates and come primarily from the U.S. Committee for Refugees, press, and U.S. embassy reports on recent displacements.

[c]The sum of refugee and displaced persons estimates gives the numbers for "total forced migrants."

[d]Population estimates are from the Population Reference Bureau's *1993 World Population Data Sheet.*

[e]My calculation of the percentage of forced migrants in a country's total population assumes that the population denominator (often a projected estimate) includes those who are now refugees. In the case of Israel/Occupied Territories (O.T.), I include Palestinian refugees living in neighboring countries; the proportion of forced migrants to the population is based on the population of Israel and the O.T., as well as Palestinian refugees in the region. With respect to South Africa/Homelands (H), I include the black "homeland" areas and the people who have been forced to relocate there over the past several decades.

zens are direct victims of forced migration. In the aggregate, these 33 countries account for over 38 million forced displacees and in excess of nine percent of the total population of these countries. These figures, of course, overlook the indirect victims that this tragedy leaves behind.

Table 2 offers some clues on the causal factors underlying forced migration in each of these countries. These include direct causes such as violence and threats and indirect causes such as population growth, per capita incomes (where available), and an index of human suffering. The overview of the varied causes behind current forced migrations afforded by these two tables requires several caveats, however. First, the use of country-level statistics obscures the complex histories of mass forced migration. Second, these raw numbers provide meager insights into the disparities and the tensions among groups and areas within individual countries that are critical for understanding both causes and potential conflict-mediation solutions.

With these caveats in mind, Table 2 invites several generalizations about countries with high levels of mass forced migration. First, two-thirds of them have per capita GNPs under $420 per year (one-tenth of the world's average) and rates of annual population increase in excess of 2.5 percent (thereby ensuring a doubling time of less than 28 years). Second, these countries account for about 90 percent of all refugees registered by the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Third, forcibly displaced persons in these 33 countries constitute nine percent of their populations. And fourth, almost all of these forced migrations are rooted more or less in ethnic, religious, or tribal conflict.

Although forced migrants comprise about one percent of the world's population—not an alarming figure in the aggregate—this percentage rises rapidly in several key regions. Forced migrants make up a significant minority in Sub-Saharan-Africa, the Caucasus, the Balkans, the Middle East, Central America, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia (Figure 1; also see ensuing regional maps). Sub-Saharan Africa stands out with about half the countries in Table 1. With many major conflicts unresolved and with rising demographic and economic pressures, this region is likely to remain on this unenviable list for some time into the future. Forced migration in other areas is more likely to fluctuate. With the exception of Burma and with improving stability in Vietnam and Cambodia, Southeast Asia has less forced migration than a decade ago; conversely, in the Balkans and the Caucasus, which were relatively stable a decade ago, we now find some of the highest proportions of forced migration. In Central Asia, only a few years ago prospects appeared relatively good that forced migration would decline with the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the beginning of repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran (Wood 1989b); tragically, renewed civil war in that country and its northern neighbor Tajikistan have led to a surge in forced migration. In South Asia, religious, ethnic, and even caste conflicts continue to make it a relatively high-risk region for ethnic hostility and forced migration. South America, by contrast, has relatively low levels of documented mass forced migrations, save for Peru and the small states of Central America.

Before putting too much weight on these regional patterns, it is worth underlining that many forced migrations remain hidden from the view of international observers. Millions of forcibly displaced people move at the mercy of governments, local militias, landowners, and, to a lesser extent, relief agencies. Paradoxically, some countries that have generated hundreds of thousands of refugees have also accepted large numbers of refugees from neighboring countries. These refugee flows and others underscore the failure of international boundaries to contain forced migrations and the causal factors underlying them. A regional overview thus seems indispensable for understanding of the ways in which ethnic, economic, ecological, and political processes reach across international boundaries and affect forced migrations.

Insight into the causes of forced migration is not enhanced by simplistic correlations with aggregate measures of national economic development. Formal economic measures are not very reliable indicators in poor countries or those ravaged by civil war. In most cases, reasonable per capita GNP estimates are unavailable; they are used here as a crude indicator at best of relative poverty. Indeed, the absence of World Bank data for so many of these countries may be the best indicator of their economic development dilemmas.

Table 2. Underlying Factors Contributing to Mass Forced Migration.

Rank[a]	Country	Direct Causes[b]	Natural Increase (percent/year)[c]	GNP Per Capita (in dollars)[d]	HSI[e] (0–100)
1	Bosnia	ET/I	0.8	3,060	44
2	Liberia	ET/I	3.2	—	76
3	Israel/Occupied Territories	ET	1.5/4.5	10,920/?	21
4	Burundi	ET/I	3.2	210	75
5	Mozambique	I/EC	2.7	80	93
6	Eritrea	ET/I/EC	2.8	120	85
7	Afghanistan	ET/I	2.8	—	89
8	Sierra Leone	ET/I	2.6	240	84
9	Angola	I/EC	3.1	—	86
10	Somalia	ET/I/EC	3.1	120	92
11	Azerbaijan	ET/I	2.1	—	—
12	Croatia	ET/I	1.0	3,060	44
13	Rwanda	ET	2.3	310	76
14	Sudan	ET/I/EC	3.1	—	89
15	Bhutan	ET	2.3	190	73
16	Togo	ET	3.6	410	71
17	Lebanon	ET/I	2.1	—	61
18	South Africa/Homelands	ET	2.6	2,530/?	61
19	Georgia	ET/I	0.7	—	—
20	Armenia	ET/I	1.6	—	—
21	Iraq	ET/I	3.7	—	65
22	Tajikistan	ET/I	3.4	—	—
23	Mauritania	ET	2.8	510	77
24	Sri Lanka	ET/I	1.4	470	58
25	Cambodia	I	2.5	—	84
26	Peru	ET/I	2.0	1,160	63
27	Ethiopia	ET/I	2.8	120	85
28	Zaire	ET/EC	3.3	220	88
29	Guatemala	ET/I	3.1	900	69
30	El Salvador	I	2.6	1,100	64
31	Chad	ET/I	2.5	220	82
32	Burma	ET/I	1.9	—	81
33	Mali	ET	3.0	270	70

[a]Country ranking is based on Table 1.
[b]Direct Causes are generalized assessments, which are based on press reports, UNHCR (1993), and the Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights for 1992* (1993) and *World Refugee Report* (1993). Abbreviations are as follows: ET—ethnic/religious/tribal conflict; I—well-organized insurgency, governmental persecution, and/or invasion by a foreign army; EC—life-threatening economic/ecological crisis.
[c]Rates of Natural Increase are from the Population Reference Bureau's *1993 World Population Data Sheet.*
[d]GNP per capita figures are from the World Bank's *World Development Report 1992,* Table 1.
[e]HSI, the Human Suffering Index, compiled by the Population Crisis Committee (now renamed Population Action International) offers a composite measure of ten key indicators of public health, education, economic conditions, and human rights in 1992. Note that HSI and GNP data for newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union are not given (as a projection of USSR figures) because of the wide disparity in living conditions. In contrast, HSI and GNP data for the newly independent countries of Eritrea, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia are given and are based on data from the countries they were once a part of, Ethiopia and Yugoslavia, respectively.

A more useful measure is the Human Suffering Index (HSI) which summarizes ten indicators of economic development, education, nutrition and health, and human rights (Population Crisis Committee 1992). Of the five countries that rank at the top of the Human Suffering Index (Mozambique, Somalia, Afghanistan, Haiti, and Sudan), four have fourteen percent or more of their populations uprooted. And in the case of the one exception, Haiti, exclusion is more nearly an indication of poor documentation than the absence of major population displacement. Of the twelve countries on the list with an HSI of over 80, nine are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Conversely, some countries with relatively low levels of "human suffering" only a few years ago, such as the former republics of Yugoslavia, have erupted subsequently in civil war. This suggests that while miserable living conditions are conducive to forced migra-

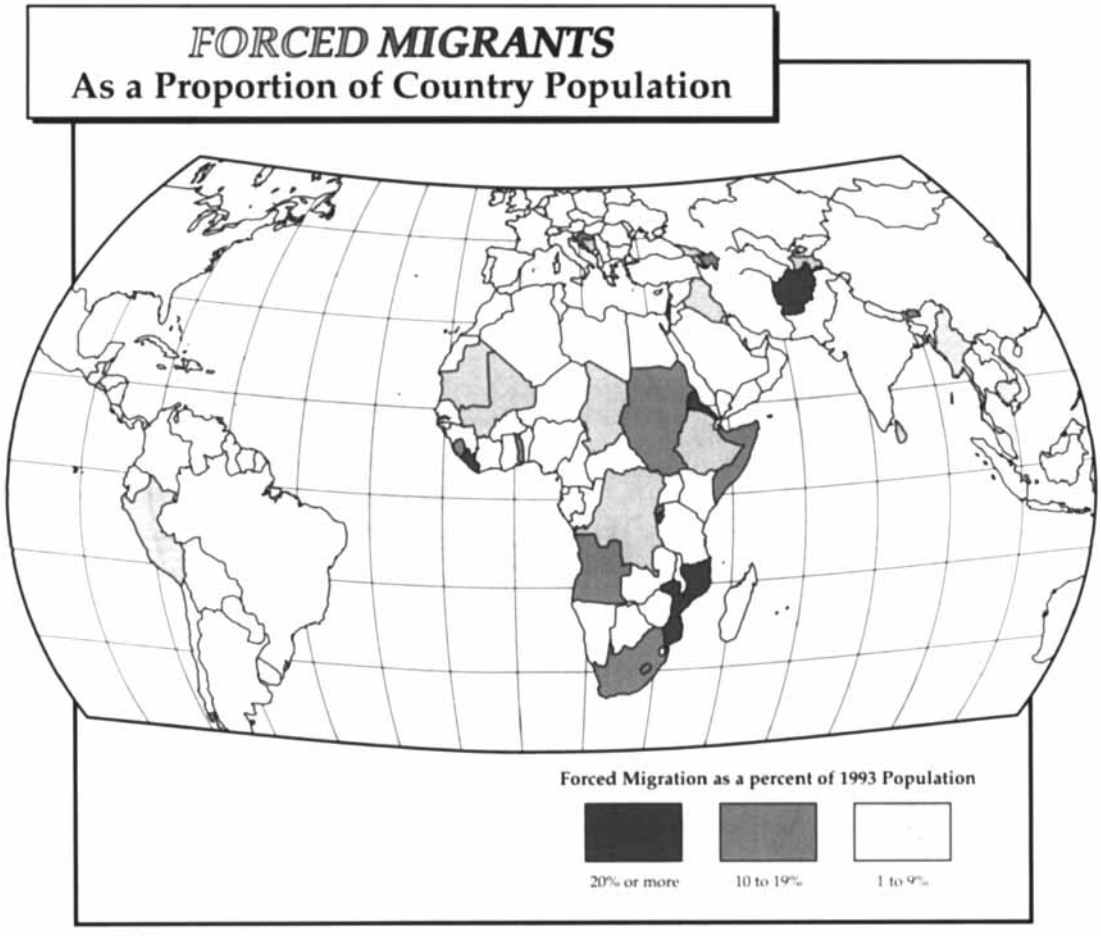

Figure 1. Global forced migration, expressed as a percentage of country population. Source: Table 1.

tion, other factors also play important push roles.

Beyond the indirect influences of poor living conditions and brutal civil wars—many derived from deeply rooted ethnic conflicts—are the more immediate pushes behind most large refugee flows. The linkage between ethnic-based warfare and forced displacement is obvious, but it sheds little light on such underlying factors as disputes over land and other resources, systematic acts of discrimination, and attempts by stateless nations to press for their political independence. Many ethnic conflicts have proven largely resistant to lasting, peaceful resolutions because the groups involved believe they are fighting for their nation's survival; powerful ethnocentric emotions tend to overwhelm calls by outside mediators for power sharing and rational dialogue (Levinson 1993).

A Provisional Model of Forced Migration

The model of forced migration flows presented in the next few pages attempts to juxtapose the complex, overlapping factors that generate forced migrants within countries and the often simplistic legal categories which are applied to them once they cross an international boundary (Figure 2). The several push factors that drive forced migration may be grouped within three overlapping domains:

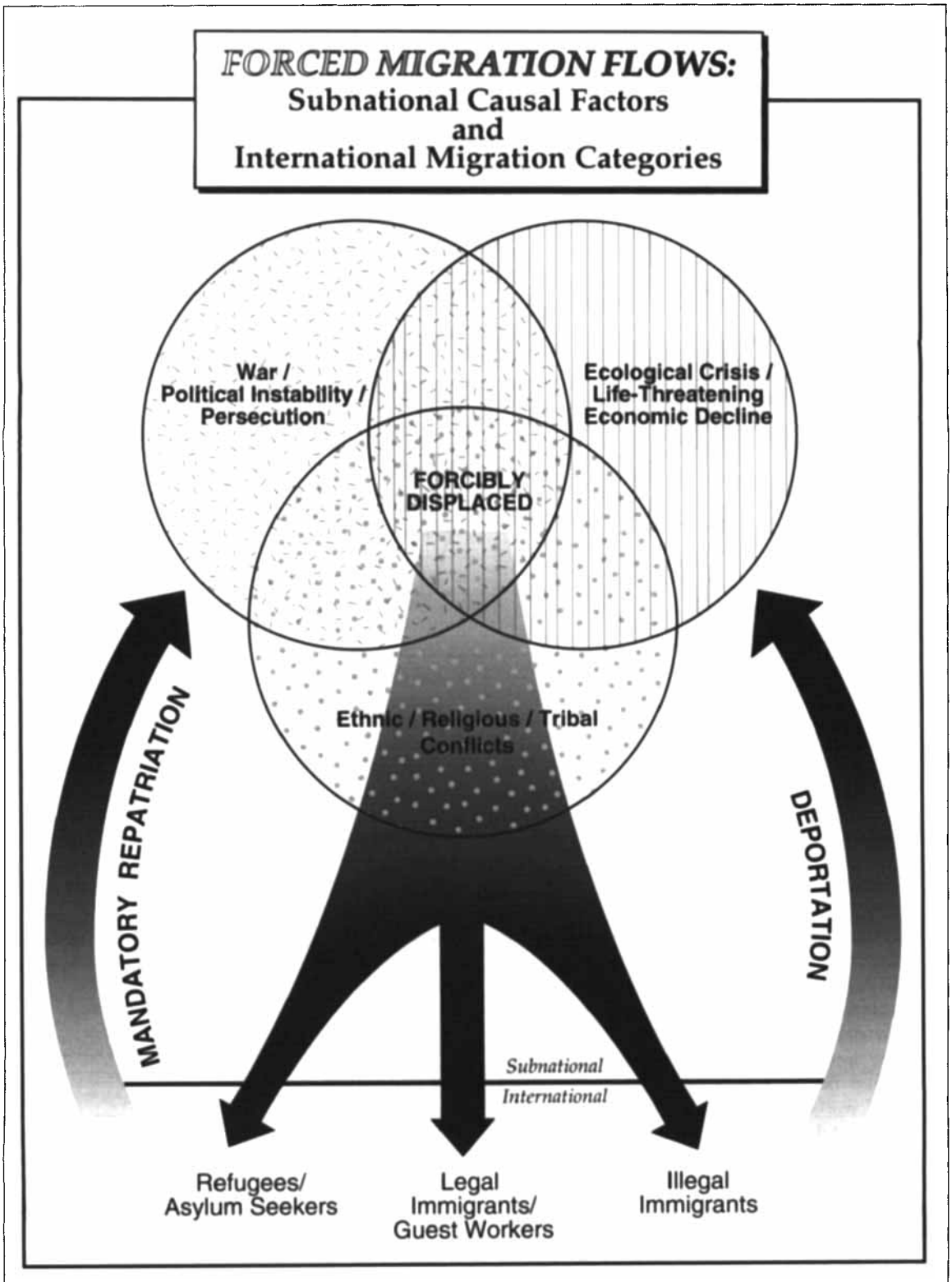

Figure 2. Model of forced migration.

1) political instability, war, and persecution—the conditions usually blamed for causing refugees; 2) life-threatening economic decline and ecological crisis—the conditions usually blamed for causing international "economic" migrants (for example "guest workers," "illegal" migrants, and the inaptly named "environmental refugees"); and 3) ethnic, religious, and tribal conflicts—the conditions that give rise to intense territorial and nationalistic emotions, intolerance of "foreigners," and "ethnic cleansing."

Neat analytical distinctions between push factors are obscured when attention is focused on a particular mass forced migration; dilemmas in one arena invariably spill over into the other two. As the model implies, distinctions among causal factors are less important than the cumulative effects of two or more causal factors. And, with respect to the international community's reaction to the plight of a forcibly displaced person, that person's ability to cross an international boundary is more relevant than the extent or kinds of human rights' abuses in his or her home country.

This tension between complex, volatile subnational causal factors and legalistic international responses thus provides a framework for discussing two very different circuits of forced migration: the subnational and the international. For the forcibly uprooted who are unable or unwilling to leave their country, survival frequently depends on their capacity to cope with political instability, ethnic discrimination, and economic and ecological degradation. But for those who have left their countries, including refugees and "illegals," survival depends more often on host governments and international relief agencies. Although both subnational and international forced migrants share many of the same fears and needs, the former are at greater risk of further oppression and are shorn of the institutional support that is provided to legal refugees (Cernea 1990).

The wrenching experience of forced migration is less an ephemeral event than a drama etched into the culture of affected groups. The collective displacement of a community, though often viewed by outsiders as a singular event, is in reality an evolving process that permanently alters the composition of a community and the relations among its members (Shami 1993:12). Moreover, a group's adaptability to resettlement programs or government-sponsored development projects depends on the strength of its cultural and ecological foundations. Although the model presented here conveys perhaps too static an image of these adaptations, it is a point of departure so long as we realize that forced migrant groups (including some stuck in refugee camps) are highly dynamic and that their experiences involve a constantly shifting set of migration streams, created, diverted, and absorbed among places and across boundaries by various coercive factors.

Subnational Forced Migration

Forced migrations have their origins in particular places and countries. Over 80 percent of the world's population increase in the next decade will take place in the world's poorest countries, many of which have already experienced high rates of mass forced migration. Demographic pressures, in conjunction with other socioeconomic problems, suggest that these countries will continue to share generally weak prospects for achieving steady economic growth and stable democratic regimes (Population Crisis Committee 1989). In these countries, forced migrants move in response to one or more interrelated actions: tribal, religious, and ethnic conflicts that all too often erupt into violent civil unrest; foreign military invasion; coercive government policies on mobility and government-sponsored development schemes that require relocation of indigenous populations; and collapsing economic and ecological systems that lead to widespread malnutrition and, in some regions, famine.

In the language of Lee's (1966) "push-pull" migration model, the "push" of unrelenting rural poverty is driving unprecedented numbers from many poor regions, more than compensating for the weakening "pull" of traditional urban destinations. Most Third-World city authorities—grappling with labor surpluses, housing shortages, rising food costs, worsening air and water quality, and increasing violence—fear they cannot accommodate more rural migrants. Despite these trends, the wide disparity in economic and cultural opportunities between rural and urban areas will likely result in continued rural-to-urban migration. With these conditions as a baseline for routine, voluntary migrations, the recent proliferation of

cheap, automatic weapons—which help ignite latent feuds into highly lethal communal conflicts—is leading to extraordinary forced migrations.

Whether voluntary or forced, migrants are often mislocated by governmental agencies which find it easier to place them at outdated *de jure* rather than current *de facto* addresses (Skeldon 1990:19). Migrants lacking permits to reside where they are—for example, "illegal" immigrants and rural peasants who lack urban residency permits—usually avoid contact with officials (Balan 1988). Thus, the most reliable source of information on subnational migrants, in general, and forced migrants, in particular, may not be the government census office, but rather surveys and interviews conducted in illegal squatter settlements that flourish in and around every large Third-World city (Goldstein 1981).

Political Instability, War, and Persecution. Subnational forced migrations are prompted by three general sets of causes (Figure 2). The first of these is political instability, war, and persecution. The popular perception associates refugee flows with the warfare that ensues when one country invades another—and causes civilians in the path of the invading army to flee to a third country—or when a war-ravaged country is occupied by an oppressive foreign power. These preconceptions about refugee flows and their causes stem, in large measure, from Europe's experience during World War II, but these notions do not apply very well to the majority of current refugee flows (see Table 2). The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in the late 1970s, for example, created several million Afghan refugees to be sure, but ethnic and ideological conflicts within the country predated the Soviet occupation and persisted after it (Wood 1989b). In general, then, interethnic conflict, political instability, and governmental persecution at the subnational scale are more likely causes of current forced migrations than is warfare between states.

For hundreds of millions of people in the world's poorest countries, migration is part of a daily struggle against debilitating poverty; for tens of millions of these, it is also a struggle against explicit and implicit forms of political repression. These migrants share little of the neo-classical economist's roseate view of migration as a rational calculation to maximize expected future income (weighed against the cost of moving) by overcoming "the tyranny of space" which, collectively, corrects the labor supply imbalances between places of origin and destination (Spengler and Myers 1977). In many poor countries, large rural-to-urban migration flows have not appreciably affected the inequities among places and socioeconomic classes while political instability, institutionalized corruption, and human rights' abuses persist. Under these conditions, forced migrations represent more accurately an attempt to overcome the tyranny of ruling elites rather than of "space." For the forcibly displaced, the range of choices over potential destinations may be inversely correlated with their level of suffering. Those fleeing the severest oppression often confront the greatest obstacles to reaching a "safe haven."

Migration within poor countries encompasses a wide variety of spatial patterns and durations; each variant imposes difficult challenges for governments lacking established and workable national migration policies (Skeldon 1990:213). Governmental efforts to redistribute populations are often rationalized by regional development theories, but underlying these is "the fear of political, social, or ethnic instability that may result from major shifts in populations and rapid growth of large cities" (Fuchs 1984:129). Ambitious official attempts to "close" cities for certain groups and to forcibly redirect migrants elsewhere—such as in Khartoum, Phnom Penh, and Rangoon—have often been costly and tragic failures.

Coercive governmental actions designed to control subnational migration may involve a variety of sanctions and disincentives ranging from heavy financial penalties to death threats. Local officials, with or without the complicity of those at provincial or national levels, may quietly "encourage" the departure of those they want to leave without raising the attention of international human rights' groups. Whatever the coercive means, forced migrants share a common sense that their lives are somehow imperiled and that they have little control over where they can go. China is the most notable example of a government's attempt to explicitly control population distribution. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the government "rusticated" ten to fifteen million Chinese high school graduates to rural communes, a strategy designed to satisfy ideologi-

cal dogma and also ease pressures of urban unemployment (Simmons 1981). During the 1980s, China's coercive relocation efforts gave way to market forces, which have generated a "floating population" of well over 70 million, many of whom do not have official permission to reside or to work in the rapidly growing cities. Confronted by a projected influx of 200 million rural peasants into China's cities by the year 2000, the government now fears that future urban employment may lead to political instability (*FBIS Trends* 1992).

Another major form of government-imposed subnational migration is involuntary relocation programs. In South Africa, for example, apartheid policies involved forcibly moving 3.6 million blacks to government-declared "homelands" between 1960 and 1980 (Clark 1988). In Uganda and Ethiopia, population relocations of several hundred thousand people occurred in the 1980s. These forced relocations were justified on economic, military, and even humanitarian grounds, but they invariably resulted in severe repression of those unwilling to leave their homes (Refugee Policy Group 1992). In Khartoum, Sudan, government officials razed the homes of tens of thousands of southern Sudanese in the city's large squatter settlement and then transported them to a desolate site many miles from the city. Many of these "squatters" had already been forcibly displaced by civil war in the south that claimed over a million lives and uprooted several hundred thousand people (Bascom 1993a; 1993b; Parmalee 1992).

When citizens rebel against the institutions which contribute to their poverty, some end up as international refugees, but most remain within their own countries. One 1993 estimate puts the number of "internal refugees" or "displaced persons" in 1993 in excess of 24 million, most of whom are women and children (U.S. Committee for Refugees 1993:52). Under international law, these displaced persons are not accorded U.N.-sponsored protective status because they have not crossed an international boundary. Although the U.N. Secretary General in 1992 appointed a Representative for Internally Displaced Persons, this Representative lacks the institutional support and the authority to protect displaced people from human rights' abuses (Cohen 1994). The U.N.'s denial of refugee status to displaced persons reflects member-state concerns over the resource limitations of U.N. relief agencies as well as their belief that states would shirk responsibility for protecting their own citizens and that they would regard U.N. intervention as an infringement on their sovereignty (Hathaway 1991:30–31). Although international institutions have downplayed their existence and scholars have given them little attention, the flows of displaced persons within states may have far greater socioeconomic and political implications than the flows of refugees (Hugo 1987).

Forced Ecomigration. Forced migrations are also caused by increasing levels of destitution, malnutrition, and chronic health problems in many poor countries. In Africa, for example, a 1992 UNICEF study estimates that 30 percent of Africans under the age of 16 are severely malnourished and concludes that "today's generation of African children will be largely consigned to lives of poor health and arrested development" (Holman 1992). In addition, dramatic changes in agricultural economies and technologies in almost all regions have disrupted traditional rural societies. Demographic and economic pressures to increase crop production, combined with poor farming practices, have accelerated soil erosion and deforestation. Governmental neglect of rural economies and their infrastructure, in turn, has encouraged many poor peasants with little or no land to seek work in cities (Todaro and Stilkind 1981). The larger cities in poor countries, as a consequence of in-migration and high rates of natural increase, share certain common traits: sprawling squatter settlements, severe urban pollution, and widespread poverty (Gilbert and Gugler 1982).

Forced ecomigration may be defined as a type of migration that is propelled by economic decline and environmental degradation. Groups unable to sustain themselves at a minimal level face a crisis that is both ecological and economic. Forced ecomigrations result when those conditions become immediately life-threatening. The term forced ecomigration is more accurate than others such as *environmental refugee* (Jacobson 1988) for three reasons: first, many of those affected are not refugees under the most liberal usage of that word; second, the causes of those migrations are not purely environmental (Wood 1993); and third, use of envi-

ronmental refugees misleads by oversimplifying the causal relation between environmental factors and migration, e.g., inequitable access to arable land is as much a social problem as an environmental one (McGregor 1993).

While the classical migration literature generally ignores the influence of environmental change or life-threatening poverty, a recent review of case studies from around the world maintains that environmental degradation can be a proximate cause of long-term social conflict and mass population displacement (Suhrke 1992). Those groups with the least political and economic power are disproportionately susceptible to human-induced and natural disasters. When poor rural farmers face the immediate loss of their life and property, environmental and economic variables convene a force as threatening as any political or military action.

Groups fleeing ecological degradation in one area have historically attempted to establish new communities in less-inhabited regions. Today, however, these uninhabited resource-rich frontier regions are scarce and difficult to reach; the more accessible regions, meanwhile, suffer from low soil fertility, insufficient water supplies, and competition with indigenous shifting cultivators and efforts to preserve complex forest ecosystems. Many indigenous peoples, once relatively isolated in frontier regions such as the Amazon and Borneo, have been forced out by foreign incursions, usually from coastal or lowland peoples. Moreover, "modern" economic pressures and conflicts over scarce resources have often led to violent social conflicts among ecomigrant groups (Homer-Dixon 1991).

The potential for forced ecomigration rises with increasing numbers of people settling in regions at high risk of natural disaster (Burton, Kates, and White 1993). The doubling of Bangladesh's population since 1960, for example, and its concentration in floodplain areas has resulted in the loss of several hundred thousand lives in recurring floods and the displacement of millions more. Although most of these flood victims have little choice but to stay in or near their flooded villages, others have left the country for the promise of slightly better conditions in northeastern India.

Natural forces can be directly and indirectly responsible for massive population displacements. Governmental attempts to tackle problems such as flooding or to provide such basic development infrastructure as electricity and irrigation may themselves lead to mass displacement. In India, for example, floods affect some 25 million people each year, and in Bangladesh, riverbank erosion displaces or affects a million more. Another 20 million or so South Asian rural peasants have been displaced by dams and irrigation projects in the past four decades (Maloney 1990–1991a; 1990–1991b). Roughly 1.2 to 2.1 million people worldwide are displaced annually by dam projects alone (Cernea 1990:332).

Apart from research carried out by a few anthropologists, scholars have ignored people who have been forcibly displaced by government projects. Government agencies generally view these "development" refugees as a nuisance and hence resettlement assistance is grossly inadequate (Partridge 1989). Like all forced migrations, involuntary resettlement schemes can be profoundly disruptive and alienating because they involve "radical changes, in environment, in productive activities, in social organization and interaction, in leadership and political structure, in world view and ideology" (Oliver-Smith 1991:133). Organized resistance to such forced relocations, although not often successful, has caused the World Bank to demand evaluations of the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of any large development projects involving Bank funds.

Under precarious ecological conditions, civil collapse can push millions over the edge from bare subsistence to imminent starvation. In the Horn of Africa, drought combined with repressive regimes and violent local militias have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people over the past decade (Figures 3 and 4). The 1984–1985 famine in Ethiopia has been attributed to the precipitants of drought and pest infestation, but significantly also to longer-term, human-induced factors that weakened the ability of many rural Ethiopians to cope with short-term environmental changes: government confiscation of land, grain stockpiles, and livestock; coercive labor programs and mass forced resettlements; and military operations in farming areas (Clay and Holcomb 1985:191–195). More recently, in Somalia in 1992, drought combined with internecine tribal fighting forcibly displaced and killed countless

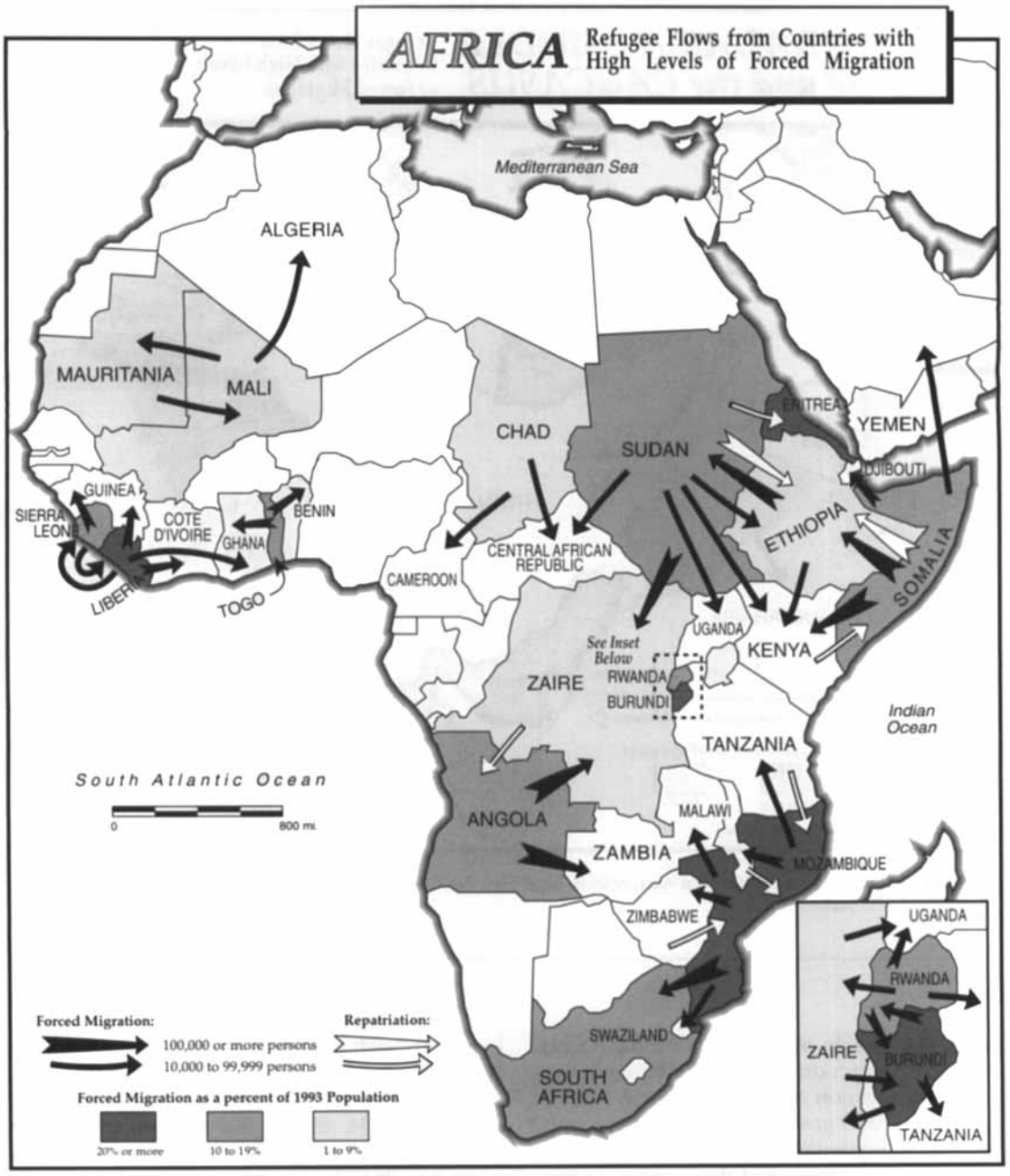

Figure 3. Refugee flows in Africa.

Somalis; those who survived have suffered from the manipulation of donated food supplies by rival militias. Similarly, in the Sudanese civil war, government and rebel forces have long used donated food supplies to lure hungry, displaced people into territories under their control.

Even though victims of human-induced "natural disasters" must often make long treks in search of refugee camps and feeding sta-

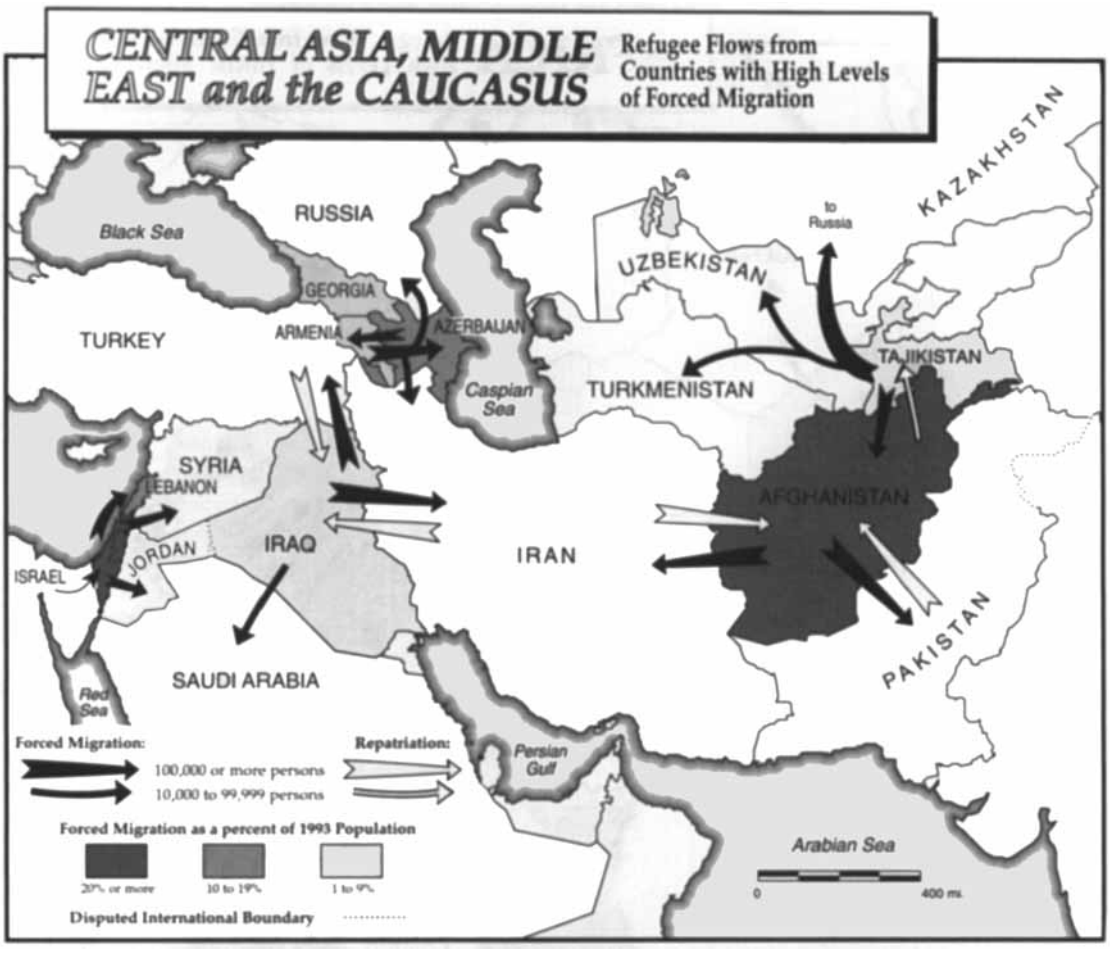

Figure 4. Refugee flows in Central Asia, Middle East, and the Caucasus. Source: Office of the Geographer, U.S. Department of State.

tions, their plight does not assure them international protection or relief. Although economic oppression and natural disasters can be devastating and governmental agencies can fail to provide minimum relief, such conditions are "non-discriminatory" and thus, under international legalities, do not entitle forced ecomigrants to refugee status in a neighboring country. Only when a government deliberately oppresses a specific group economically or manipulates relief assistance to benefit one group over another (thereby forcing the deprived group to flee across a border) does a refugee claim enjoy standing (Hathaway 1991:93–94).

Deliberate "ecocide" by oppressive regimes or insurgent groups can also generate ecomigrants. Such actions as bombardment, laying of mines, and burning of crops have been used to terrorize local populations. In southern Iraq, for example, during the summer and fall of 1993, thousands of Marsh Arabs were forced to flee their homes because of the Iraqi military's systematic program to crush their way of life by draining the vast marshes on which Marsh Arabs have depended for eons (U.N. Economic and Social Council Commission on Human Rights 1994:44–45). Victims of such ecocidal actions theoretically would qualify for traditional refugee status because the causal factor is not a natural disaster but the deliberate actions of an oppressive government. In reality, though, even if they were accorded protec-

tion, they could never return to their previous way of life because its ecological foundations had been destroyed.

Ethnic, Religious, and Tribal Conflicts. The ethnic dimension of forced migrations is receiving increased attention with the recent upsurge in civil wars that have generated hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties. Despite condemnation by the United Nations, oppressive regimes and guerrilla armies continue forced relocations of various ethnic groups as part of their military and political strategies. The impact of these forced displacements is compounded by the fact that they occur in countries that are economically devastated and politically unstable; victims almost always become dependent on massive humanitarian relief operations.

Civil wars in war-ravaged countries such as Angola, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Afghanistan, and Azerbaijan are deeply rooted in ethnic, tribal, and clan hostilities (Figure 4). In most, though not all, of these cases, conflicts stem from one ethnic group's efforts to control a defined territory which it claims as its historic homeland. Lacking adequate representation in the governments that have jurisdiction over them, these minority groups demand some form of regional autonomy for their nation and protection for their cultural values, which they believe are being eroded by discriminatory government policies and the in-migration of "foreign" ethnic groups (some of whom may have lived in the homeland for many generations). The emotional intensity of these conflicts often makes them intractable. International mediation efforts have been largely unsuccessful in resolving the most violent ethnic conflicts because the parties involved believe their cultural survival is at stake and they deeply distrust those who are responsible for the violence against them (Levinson 1993).

Bosnia and Herzegovina has become the most infamous example of "ethnic cleansing." After the toppling of authoritarian regimes in the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, calls for greater ethnic-based autonomy led to the creation of new international boundaries and increased inter-ethnic hostilities. Ethnic cleansing of Muslim communities in eastern and central Bosnia by Bosnian Serb militias in 1992 and 1993 reveals how ethnic conflict leads to forced migration, but it also demonstrates how forced migration can be used to implement a policy of ethnic intolerance. In Bosnia, murders and forced expulsions of civilians are less a byproduct of war than a goal in and of itself (Rieff 1992). As of December 1993, over 2.5 million Bosnians—57 percent of the estimated population—had been forcibly displaced by ethnic cleansing aimed at carving up the former Yugoslav republic into three ethnically homogeneous states (Figure 5). At gunpoint or under intense artillery barrages, Bosnians have been compelled to leave villages where their families have lived for centuries. In many cases, the perpetrators of violence come from the immediate vicinity, not a distant army. Vacated houses (that have not been destroyed) often have been reoccupied by those who have been forced out of other areas. Whatever state(s) that emerge from this carnage, several generations of Bosnians will be left deeply scarred by their forced displacement. Moreover, the effectiveness of ethnic cleansing as a political-military strategy has not been lost on other regimes seeking dominance over a multiethnic area.

International Forced Migrations

Perhaps the key factor that makes refugees unique is that they, unlike most other migrants, "force themselves upon the world's attention because they emerge from and provoke acute crises" (Colson 1987:4). "Refugees" are usually created when a mass forced displacement spills across an international boundary. Refugee status then is accorded to these cross-border forced migrants by host governments in accordance with the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR's mandate, under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, is to protect and assist those who have fled from persecution and crossed an international boundary (Hathaway 1991; UNHCR 1993). Under these guidelines, to which 113 countries have subscribed, criteria for refugee status is carefully defined, as are the responsibilities of subscribing states who agree not to forcibly expel or return refugees (*refoulement*).

Despite historical precedents of refuge and sanctuary for those fleeing their native lands, the question of "Who is a refugee?" remains hotly debated (Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989). Under the U.N. mandate, refugees are those people who are outside of their country

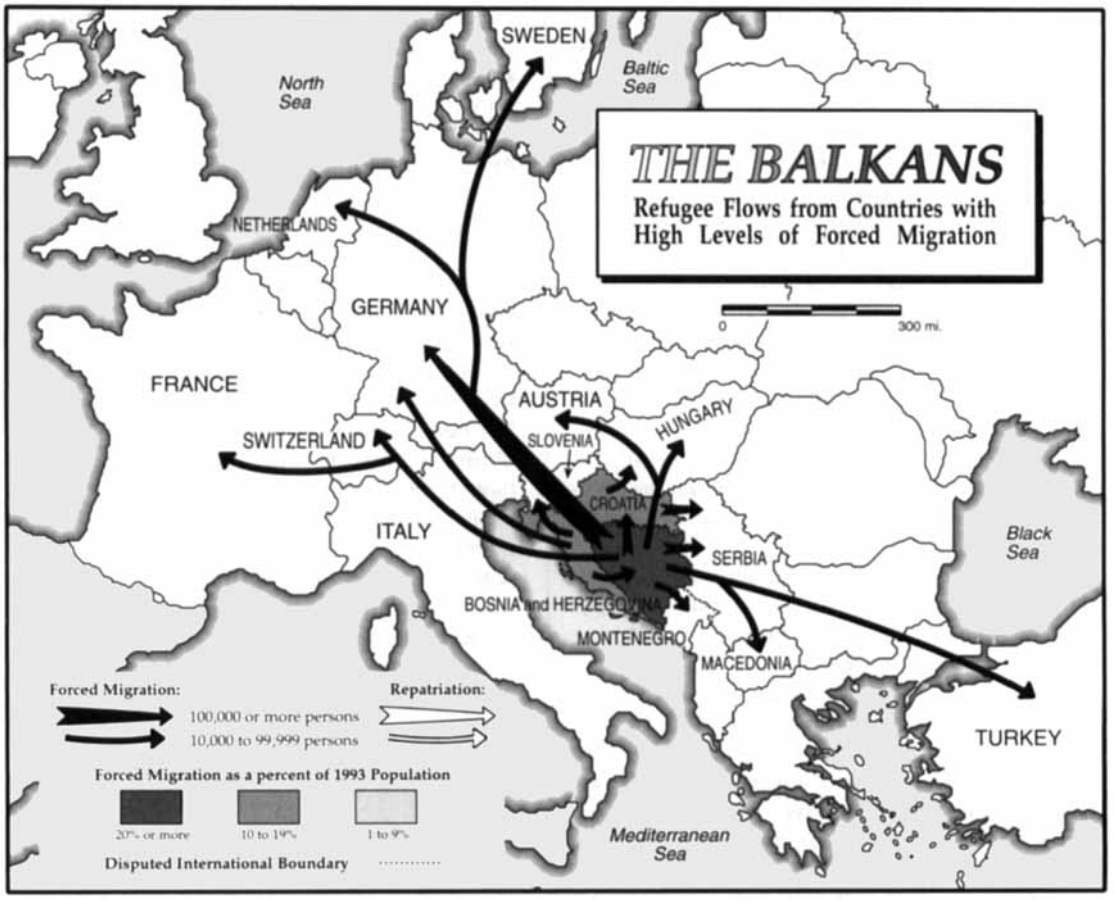

Figure 5. Refugee flows in the Balkans. Source: Office of the Geographer, U.S. Department of State.

of nationality and are unwilling to return to it because of a "well-founded fear of persecution," because of racial, religious, social, or political affiliation. In addition, the U.N. has passed numerous covenants on human rights extending these protections, including "liberty of movement," "freedom to choose his residence," and the right "to leave any country, including his own." The Organization for African Unity (OAU) has broadened the definition of refugee to include anyone "compelled" to flee his or her home for another country because of "external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order" (UNHCR 1993:163–167). National governments have further modified these refugee criteria and their application procedures to tighten their control over flows of refugees and asylum seekers.

Overlapping subnational causal factors in many countries, however, greatly complicate attempts to fairly adjudicate asylum claims by officials in destination countries. In Haiti, for example, the meshing of political, economic, and ecological instability lies behind the debate over the status of Haitian "boat people." In addition to almost two centuries of relative political instability, severe economic woes also plague Haiti's 6.5 million people. Arable land is in short supply, and ecological and economic deterioration is widespread. Many generations of Haitian subsistence farmers thus have sought menial labor in neighboring countries to help sustain their families (Marshall 1983). Sporadic

violence and coups give credence to claims of political persecution, and worsening poverty and hopes of resettlement in the United States are also powerful economic motivators for the desperate Haitians who embark on dangerous sea journeys.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers. When Ravenstein formulated his "laws of migration," he postulated that while some migrations are influenced by "bad or oppressive laws" and "compulsion," none can "compare in volume with that which arises from the desire inherent in most men to 'better' themselves in material respects" (quoted in Peters and Larkin 1983:197). A century hence, Ravenstein's claims cast a shadow over most governments who categorize immigrants as either refugees or economic migrants. The irony is that asylum seekers—those formally applying for refugee status—must deny the influence of economic conditions in order to satisfy most of the world's refugee laws (Gordenker 1987).

While the number of UNHCR-registered refugees since 1984 has risen by about a million per year, reaching 18 million by 1993, the number of migrants submitting asylum applications in 26 industrialized countries increased by eightfold over the past decade—from 102,000 in 1983 to 839,000 in 1992 (UNHCR 1993:157). Concerns over the permanency of Third-World immigrant groups and the influx of asylum seekers has forced many western European countries, faced with high unemployment levels and recession, to restrict their once liberal asylum policies (Widgren 1987; Wood 1989a). Rather than well-coordinated, long-term regional policies, European governments thus far have opted for unilateral, temporary measures aimed at determining the asylum seeker's access to jobs and social services (Black and Robinson 1993). The French National Assembly, for example, voted in June 1993 to tighten its asylum provisions by restricting the rights of foreigners (mostly from Francophone Africa) to enter the country, request asylum, and obtain residency permits. In May 1993, the German Bundestag, in response to over 438,000 registered asylum seekers in 1992 (the vast majority of whom are denied asylum but remain nonetheless), voted to amend its constitution to restrict asylum eligibility (Davidson 1993). The German Interior Ministry reported that the number of asylum applicants in 1993 had decreased by over 100,000 from the preceding year.

In Russia, a presidential decree on "measures for the introduction of migration controls" (on December 16, 1993) attempts to distinguish between refugees—those claiming asylum in Russia who do not have Russian citizenship—and displaced persons—those who are citizens or permanent residents of Russia and have been forced to leave their homes in a part of Russia or another country (*Law of the Russian Federation on Displaced Persons* and *Law of the Russian Federation on Refugees* 1993). Such legislation, a reaction to an estimated half million or more "illegals" in Russia, anticipates the potential return of several million ethnic Russians from the newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union, several of which have experienced rapid economic decline, political unrest (including civil war), and volatile tensions among ethnic groups. While Russia signed in 1993 the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and has established a Federal Migration Service, it is having difficulty providing adequate support and protection to asylum seekers (Redmond 1993). New legal distinctions between refugees and displaced persons may be lost under the massive demands that they have placed on Russia's overburdened social-service system.

Most refugees and asylum seekers, however, are not in Europe or Russia; over 80 percent flee from and seek refuge in poor countries. As repatriation programs reduce the numbers of refugees in one area, a new conflict invariably increases the numbers in another. Large refugee flows in poor regions of Africa and central Asia have created an imposed political economy that includes foreign aid-dependent host governments, international and local relief agencies, and, at the bottom, the refugees themselves (Figure 3 and Harrell-Bond 1986). Despite their other dilemmas, many impoverished and beleaguered governments, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, still maintain relatively generous policies of accepting refugees.

Refugee assistance has become a mainstay of some local economies in poverty-stricken, isolated border regions where refugees pass back and forth. Sudan is a microcosm of all the tragedies of Africa's massive flows of refugees who move against a backdrop of civil war and

famine (Rogge 1985). Despite Sudan's own civil war and several million displaced people, it has hosted over 750,000 refugees from neighboring countries. Not all, however, are in UNHCR-managed border camps. Many Eritrean refugees, for example, have been incorporated into eastern Sudan's rural economy as low-wage agricultural laborers and have little hope of improving their living conditions (Bascom 1993a).

Several "long staying" refugee groups have lived for more than a decade outside of their homelands: Tibetans, Palestinians, Vietnamese, Ethiopians, Cambodians, Guatemalans, and Afghans. Recent and current voluntary repatriations have created new sets of problems for international relief and development agencies responsible for the peaceful and economically viable reintegration of refugees in their war-ravaged places of origin (Wood 1989b). In some well-established refugee camps, children under 15 comprise as much as half the population, which further hinders efforts to wean them from dependency on relief agencies. Of those refugees who do return to their home country, many end up in urban squatter settlements rather than in their home villages. If returnees are unable to reintegrate in their "war-torn and poverty-stricken" countries, many will become refugees again (Ogata 1992).

The Palestinians are perhaps the best known of the multi-generation refugee groups. Their camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and the Occupied Territories have been administered by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) since 1948 and 1967 (Figure 4). Camp populations have grown rapidly as a result of high fertility rates (Samha 1987). Some Palestinians, opting for Jordanian citizenship, have left UNRWA camps for jobs in cities and, until August 1990, jobs in Persian Gulf states. Recent Middle East peace talks have rekindled hopes for the return of many Palestinians to Gaza and parts of the West Bank, but at the same time, the economic problems of exiled Palestinian communities have been exacerbated by the expulsion of several hundred thousand Palestinian guest workers from Persian Gulf states.

"Illegal" and "Guestworker" Migrations. Refugee policies are often framed within broader efforts to control immigration (Robinson 1993). In the century prior to World War I, over 60 million Europeans and others migrated to the Americas, Oceania, and Africa and helped to transform the cultural landscape of almost every populated world region (Ogden 1984). This emigration—part of a several centuries-long colonization process that included mass forced migrations of slaves, prisoners, indentured servants, and conscripts—helped cement close socioeconomic linkages between Europe and Third-World regions. Since World War II, the tide of migration turned as people moved from labor-surplus ex-colonies on the periphery of the world economy to the labor-importing former colonizers at or near the center of the world economy (Petras 1980; Peach 1987). Wide income and population growth differentials between labor-exporting and labor-importing countries has reinforced demands to emigrate, legally or illegally, from the former to the latter (Hamilton and Holder 1991).

While most international economic migrants are compelled to flee their homes, many are constrained by tightened legal restrictions on their mobility. Over the past three decades, governments of industrialized countries have implemented immigration policies that—although no longer based on racial quotas—regulate the supply of labor in accordance with expanding or contracting economic sectors. In these recipient nations, reductions in the number of "legal" jobs for migrant workers and rising fears of increased illegal immigration have led to tougher immigration policies, beefed up border patrols, and more expeditious deportations. Despite the European Community's establishment of common guidelines to combat illegal immigration, individual governments still act unilaterally or bilaterally, e.g., Germany's deportation agreement with Romania (Davidson 1993). The effectiveness of these laws has been mixed. The 1986 U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), for example, enabled over 2.5 million Mexican and Central American migrants (Figure 6) to be processed for citizenship, but large numbers of "illegal aliens" continue to be apprehended along the United States/Mexico border (Bean, Vernez, and Keely 1989).

In addition to illegal immigrants, legally approved guest workers—persons who are invited to work in a foreign country but are not granted citizenship—are also vulnerable to mobility restrictions and relocations by host gov-

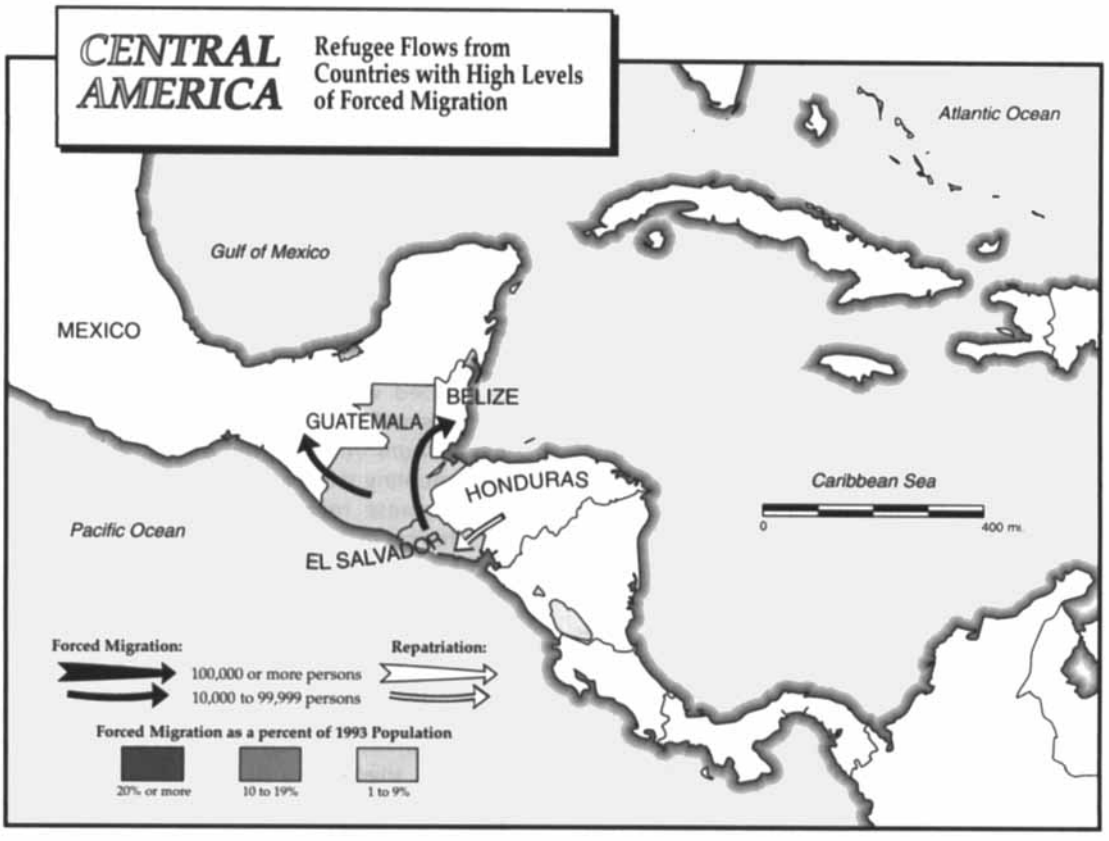

Figure 6. Refugee flows in Central America. Source: Office of the Geographer, U.S. Department of State.

ernments reacting to political and economic changes (Brubaker 1989). Over 15 million foreigners are legally employed in Europe, the United States, and, until August 1990, the Gulf States; their worldwide remittances were estimated to exceed $28 billion a year in the 1980s (Keely and Tran 1989). When competition for jobs and social problems increases, guest workers become tempting scapegoats for alienated citizens. In Germany, for example, acts of violence against 1.5 million Turkish and several million other guest workers intensified following the unification of East and West Germany and the subsequent rise in unemployment. Blaming these ethno-nationalistic attacks solely on a nativist reaction to the influx of immigrants and asylum seekers in Germany, however, ignores the many underlying tensions within a rapidly changing German society (Fijalkowski 1993).

Although many oppressed migrant workers are not politically persecuted, they are often forced to move within and among countries and they are denied their fundamental human rights (U.S. Department of State 1993). Nor can they respond effectively to crimes against them because they lack political influence and legal recourse. Hundreds of thousands of young women, for example, are taken or "bought" from their impoverished families and end up trapped in brothels located in distant cities or foreign countries (Hornblower 1993). Migrants smuggled into a country by an organized gang may also find themselves confined to cramped dormitories and working under a form of indentured servitude that entails long hours,

unsafe conditions, and less-than-minimum wages.

The exodus of over a million foreign workers from Iraq and Kuwait beginning in August 1990 focused world attention on the fragile economic security of foreign workers (Van Hear 1993). Although not classified as refugees, many of these guest workers became, in effect, forced migrants. They hastily left jobs that provided much-needed remittances and endured long journeys, weeks of deprivation and uncertainty in border camps, and eventually, in many cases, returned to impoverished, labor surplus countries. Although the Gulf States are currently reevaluating the economic role of foreign workers, the future of guest workers may hinge on the political relations between their home governments and the states in which they wish to work.

Mandatory Repatriation and Deportation. The deportation of illegal economic immigrants and unwanted guest workers and the mandatory repatriation of refugees and rejected asylum seekers, though based on two different legal processes, have the same result: a government forces international migrants to leave the country in which they wish to reside, usually to return to their country of origin. The impacts of a mandatory repatriation or deportation on migrants vary greatly. Deported Salvadorans, for example, face much greater difficulty than Mexicans in returning illegally to the United States, primarily because the former must cross more boundaries (Jones 1988).

The process of mandatory repatriation and deportation underlines the inherent tension between an individual's desire to relocate to the country where opportunities are best and the "sovereign right" of states to control the exit and entry of people across their borders (Zolberg 1981). The "rules of access" that governments impose on cross-border migrants are closely linked to international relations, particularly in cases of bilateral conflicts (Weiner 1985). Although the International Bill of Rights recognizes the right of an individual to seek asylum in a foreign country, that country is under no obligation to grant such a request or to even allow entry into its sovereign territory (Hathaway 1991:231). Most vulnerable perhaps are guest workers who, because they are not necessarily persecuted by their own governments, do not qualify for the refugee status that would prevent rapid deportation.

While the UNHCR strongly disapproves of *refoulement,* that is, the forced return of refugees, there are no similar U.N. protocols for economic migrants because it is widely accepted that a sovereign state has the right to enforce its immigration policies. Problems also arise when the UNHCR and a host government disagree over the status of an asylum seeker or when one or both believe that repatriation would be safe, yet the refugees refuse to return (Ruiz 1993). Beleaguered government agencies, faced with long-staying communities of refugees and asylum seekers, are then tempted to shift from encouraging voluntary returns to implementing mandatory repatriations.

Vietnamese refugees who have landed on the shores of several Southeast Asian countries, as well as Hong Kong, exemplify the strains that asylum seekers can impose on international relations and the difficulties of implementing a fair refugee processing and repatriation program (Figure 7; Chantavanich and Reynolds 1988). The surge of 55,000 "boat people" into Hong Kong in the late 1980s, for example, triggered a heated international debate over Hong Kong's efforts to impose mandatory repatriation on the 80 percent of the boat people who were denied refugee status and third-country resettlement. After many years in refugee camps and in the absence of resettlement prospects, some boat people are now "voluntarily" returning home, but many others bitterly oppose mandatory repatriation.

The U.N.-sponsored 1992/3 return of over 340,000 Cambodians living in camps in Thailand underscores the murky policies that affect refugee status and repatriation. Although these Cambodians crossed an international boundary and were fleeing a violent civil war, the Thai government offered them sites for their camps but refused them refugee status. The Cambodians in Thailand were officially displaced persons and were technically unprotected by UNHCR refugee processing guidelines. Many Cambodians were forced to reside in camps run by resistance factions, where some were reportedly forced to serve as porters of goods, food, and weapons for guerrilla bases inside Cambodia. While repatriation was successfully completed in 1993, reintegration into Cambodian society will depend on U.N.-brokered peacekeeping and political institution-building among still hostile factions.

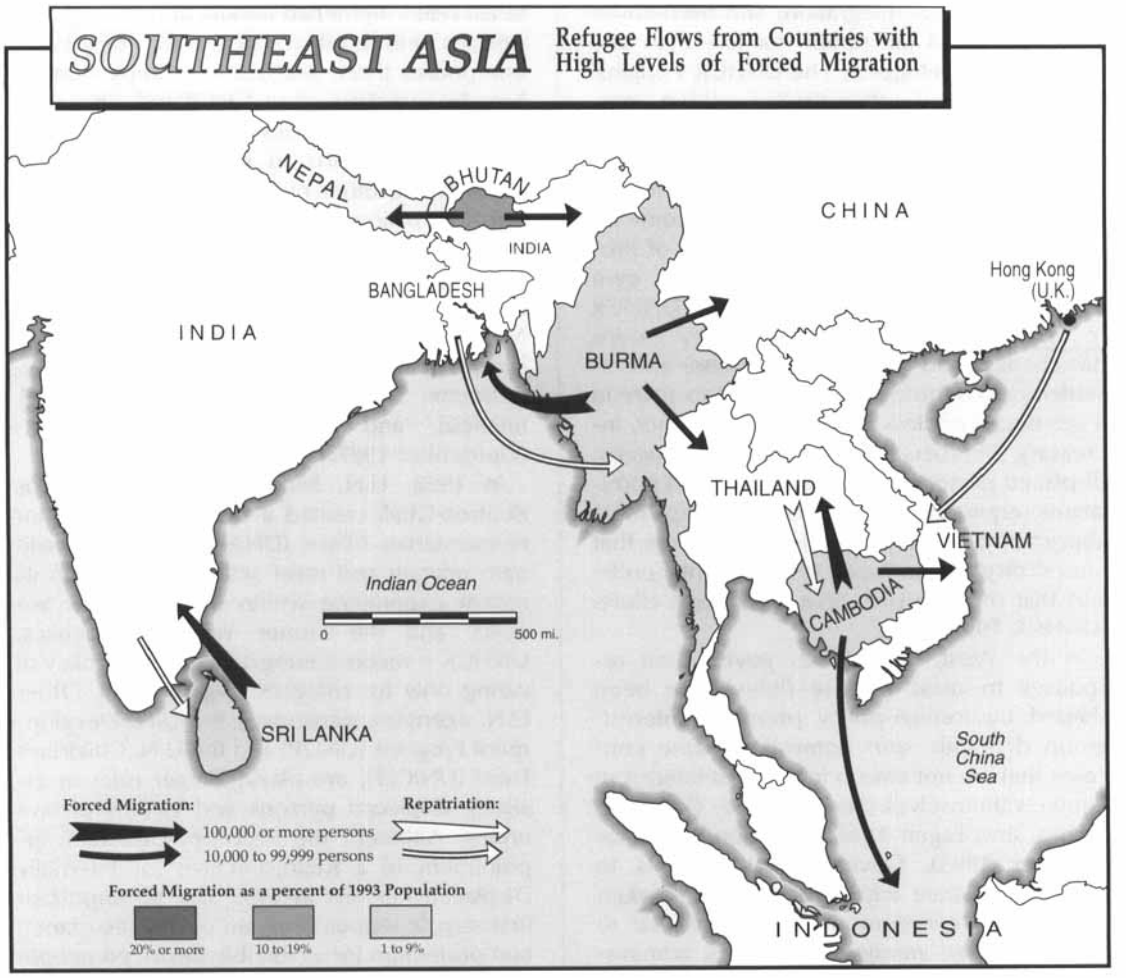

Figure 7. Refugee flows in Southeast Asia. Source: Office of the Geographer, U.S. Department of State.

What Can be Done? Multilateral Responses to Forced Migration

The complicated interconnections between refugees and other migrants at subnational and international levels demand remedial policies that are tailored to local and regional conditions and contexts. Perhaps the problem of mitigating refugee flows is intractable, and no amount of government cooperation will resolve the dilemma of increasingly transient populations moving among the unstable regimes that form the periphery of the world economy. But many government actions seem unconstructive in their futile attempts to force millions of migrants back whence they came. With the exception of U.N.-supported efforts to shelter refugees, most official responses to the plight of forcibly displaced migrants have been inconsistent, ineffective, and sometimes harsh in their application.

Much has changed since the 1951 U.N. Convention on the Status of Refugees was established to deal with Europe's post-World War II refugee crisis. The 1967 Protocol extended these protections to the rest of the world where chronic and often violent instability compelled cross-border flights. Within this mandate, the UNHCR tries to implement three "durable solutions" for refugees: safe, voluntary

repatriation; local integration; and third-country resettlement (an option for less than one percent of all refugees). The UNHCR's original mandate did not anticipate the sudden, massive flows and the complex multilateral politics that it now faces in nearly every world region (Rogge 1987). Moreover, in the past several years, the UNHCR has increasingly become involved in the politically charged issue of protecting vulnerable groups within their own countries (Goodwin-Gill 1993). The UNHCR recognizes that its relations with key groups has changed: on the one hand, donor and resettlement countries are less willing to share in a seemingly endless burden; on the other, increasing numbers of intermingled refugees, displaced persons, and threatened local populations require urgent assistance. Perhaps most importantly, the UNHCR also recognizes that forced displacement is a human rights' problem that requires proactive multilateral efforts (UNHCR 1993:6–10).

In the West, meanwhile, government responses to mass refugee flows have been shaped by foreign-policy priorities, interest-group demands, and domestic welfare concerns that are not always in the best interest of refugees themselves (Nichols 1988; Gallagher, Forbes, and Fagen 1987; U.S. Committee for Refugees 1993). Governmental attempts to maintain separate legal processes for asylum seekers and economic migrants have led to poorly planned immigration policies, administrative bottlenecks, and costly efforts to prevent aspiring immigrants from manipulating "the system." The result has been increasingly restrictive asylum and immigration laws (Wood 1989a). Multilateral efforts to coordinate immigration policies—even in an integrating Europe—may be dashed, though, by the enormity of the socioeconomic and political problems in most migrant-generating countries and by the rancorous political debate over immigration policies in the major recipient countries (Widgren 1990).

Redefining the Scope of the Problem

U.N. and NGO (non-governmental organizations) relief agencies charged with refugee protection and care must deal with threats of violence and daunting political, financial, and logistical obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian relief. Tightened asylum and immigration policies and controversies over repatriation compound these problems. In implementing broader mandates, the UNHCR and other refugee and relief agencies have expanded their international efforts to cope with displaced persons and other non-refugee status groups. The International Organization for Migration, for example, has organized the return and reintegration of economic migrants such as the foreign workers who fled Iraq and Kuwait. Most relief agencies have had to establish politically sensitive relationships with host governments involving geopolitical, ideological, financial, and bureaucratic considerations (Gordenker 1987:122).

In 1992, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali created a new Department for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to better coordinate refugee and relief activities. Based on its recent experience within northern Iraq, Somalia, and the former Yugoslav republics, UNHCR is reconsidering its traditional policy of caring only for refugees (Ogata 1992). Other U.N. agencies, particularly the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) and the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), are playing larger roles in assisting displaced persons and victims of civil unrest. Although the Secretary-General's appointment of a Representative for Internally Displaced Persons in 1992 was an important first step, a serious program of U.N. assistance and protection for all forcibly displaced people cannot be implemented without a substantial increase in staff, resources, and funding (Cohen 1994). Similarly, while safe repatriation is the optimal "durable solution" for UNHCR-registered refugees, U.N. and private relief agencies barely have the resources to implement the repatriation process itself, let alone begin to cope with the complicated and entrenched conditions that hinder political and socioeconomic reintegration of the returnees.

West European governments are acutely aware that economic tensions and political conflicts in the former Soviet Union could escalate, resulting in hundreds of thousands of economic migrants and asylum seekers. But international efforts to deliver relief supplies to displaced groups and besieged communities within war-devastated countries have fallen short, and some have called for armed foreign intervention to protect relief distribution. Meanwhile, as these debates continue, secu-

rity for most forcibly displaced people remains unrealized (Frelick 1993). Protection has been sporadic and usually after famine and war threaten hundreds of thousands with impending death as they did in Somalia where anarchy and starvation led to a belated U.S./U.N. military intervention. Yet once each of these "crises" is "resolved," the international community customarily moves on to other pressing concerns, leaving behind the displacement-inducing conditions and the displacees themselves. As long as these underlying tensions are left unaddressed, costly and difficult international relief efforts will bring, at best, only a temporary respite.

Mobilizing a Geographic Perspective

I am encouraged by recent geographic research on forced migration which reveals in its thematic diversity a common concern with processes and their underlying causes. Two volumes edited by geographers, Rogge's *Refugees, A Third World Dilemma* (1987) and Black and Robinson's *Geography and Refugees* (1993), suggest that geographic studies of forced migration have matured and broadened in scope. One senses a subtle shift from descriptive accounts to more contextual critiques of government policies and programs. Each collection offers a nice variety of timely essays: from historical refugee flows covering large regions to resettlement policies in particular countries to individual refugee experiences. Both volumes also underscore the central argument of this paper, namely that the traditional conceptions and legal definitions of "refugees" grossly undercount the extent of forced migration. The largest portion of this tragic phenomenon remains regrettably enshrouded by international boundaries and by government claims to sovereignty over their citizens and territories.

As the numbers of forcibly displaced people increase—their fates determined by the progress of wars, revolutions, partitions of states, ethnic conflicts, and political repression—geographers will have no shortage of important research topics (Kliot 1987; Wood 1989b; Kenzer 1991; Robinson 1993). Geographic research—often based on difficult field work in remote areas—will become critical as socioeconomic and political conditions worsen in many countries. But geographic research on forced migration need not be confined to distant lands, as a recent study on the mobility of homeless people in the United States ably shows (Wolch, Rahimian, and Koegel 1993:167).

Geographers working on non-forced migration may also provide insights on forced migrations by focusing attention on the social networks and changing economic fortunes that tie migrants to their places of origin while pushing them to new destinations (Brown 1991). Geographic research on Third-World migrations also touch on forced ecomigrations, e.g., emigres from El Salvador's war-devastated economy (Jones 1988) and the movement of Nepalese peasants from heavily eroded and congested hill farms to the lowland "frontier" region (Shrestha 1989). Similarly, if we are to understand government reactions toward illegal immigrants and asylum seekers, we will need geographic studies that examine the economic forces and policies that influence voluntary international migrations, such as of North African migrant workers to French industries (Oberhauser 1991). Studies of government-sponsored population redistribution efforts, such as Indonesia's transmigration program (Leinbach, Watkins, and Bowen 1992), are equally useful for understanding less voluntary relocations implemented elsewhere. Moreover, ethnic-based displacements and plans for refugee repatriation invite comparative migration studies of ethnic groups, for example, Jews and Arabs in Israel (Lipshitz 1991). Finally, research on all sorts of migrations will need to incorporate the communication and transportation technologies that facilitate worldwide "diaspora networks" (Brunn 1993).

The Challenge

If geography has a role to play in understanding forced migrations around the world, that role will not be an easy one. As the traditional distinctions between political refugee and economic migrant become less tenable, beleaguered governments may become less sympathetic to the plight of migrants and more confused about how to handle them. With industrialized countries facing their own domestic economic woes, foreign aid for employment-generation programs in poor countries

may even decline, leaving potential migrants with even fewer reasons to stay home. Even if calls for increased investments in Third-World countries are heeded, the impact of foreign-assistance programs will pale in comparison with other transnational economic forces that directly influence migration flows. Within these larger migration circuits, the magnitude of forced migration will serve as a barometer of global and regional political and economic instability.

Obfuscation of motives and causes behind forcibly displaced migrations will hinder timely governmental assistance to even the most worthy of *bona fide* refugees. Perhaps more crucial in terms of sheer numbers, the fate of those deemed to be "non-refugees" poses a dilemma for host governments. Does their failure to qualify for asylum mean that their human rights are of lower priority than those who are accorded protection? Of equal importance perhaps is that inadequate economic development assistance for those repatriated—voluntarily or forcibly—leaves many of them without the means to improve upon the grim living conditions that underlay their initial flight.

The international commitment to cope with forcibly displaced migrants and to establish basic standards of treatment for all migrants will not come cheaply or quickly. U.N.-led interventions in northern Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia offer poignant testimony on the extent of, and limits to, multilateral efforts in protecting forced migrants and other victims of war. U.N. mandates notwithstanding, most forced migrants are unlikely to be protected against hostile regimes or vicious local militias; they will not find a safe haven for the forseeable future.

Forced migration demands more than pathos, more than one more hand-wringing conference. Migrants would benefit most perhaps from an immediate international action program that coordinates the resources and talents of U.N. agencies, NGOs, and government agencies involved in refugee programs, migrant transportation and reintegration, economic-development assistance, emergency-relief operations, and human-rights' protection. A clearer comprehension of the linkages among political instability, economic and ecological decline, and ethnic conflict—a geography, as it were—is a critical first step toward truly appreciating the dilemma of forced migration in a world of restricted mobility.

Note

1. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Government.

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Wood, William B. 1994. Forced Migration: Local Conflicts and International Dilemmas. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers.* 84(4):607–634. *Abstract.*

Current patterns and trends in forced migration are increasingly a result of ethnic conflict, inequitable access to natural resources, declining living conditions, and chronic and pervasive human rights abuses. As a result of these overlapping causal factors and an international trend towards tighter immigration and asylum policies, many of those who have been forcibly uprooted, particularly those who remain within their country, are without adequate protection and assistance. This paper argues that legalistic distinctions between "economic migrants" and "political refugees" impedes multilateral efforts to prevent an increase in all types of forced migrations. Such efforts must focus on underlying conditions that prompt political and socioeconomic instability. **Key Words:** immigration, migration, refugees, Third World.