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Human Insecurity and Streams of Conflict for a Re-conceptualization of International Migration

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Abstract

Securitisation of international migration is now a widely accepted phenomenon. Human security or insecurity is an important aspect of this broader security concern. International migration raises security issues at different levels because it involves a multitude of agencies that often have conflicting interests. In this conceptual review, main areas and actors of migration associated conflict are discussed. The aim is to explore the possibility of developing a conflict-based model that will facilitate the understanding of contemporary international migration flows and the reasons, mechanisms and dynamics underpinning them. Different stages of migration bring out different sets of conflicting security interests. The concept of environment of insecurity is placed within this multilevel conflict model. This study aims to provide a new understanding of human security and migration nexus from a conflict perspective which is conducive to a comprehensive migration conceptualisation and viable policy solutions.

Keywords

Security; human insecurity; environment of insecurity; conflict; international migration

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Introduction

The 9/11 New York and 7/7 London acts of terrorism, along with other less prominent acts of terrorism, put state security at the forefront of debates on international migration. Even before this change, however, discussions on international migration often dealt with issues involving human security or insecurity—issues that have been and continue to be important in situations of forced and clandestine migration in particular. Human security and insecurity are complimentary in that they are intertwined with international migration. They are like different sides of the same security coin, but the latter is more likely to be a facilitating factor for those who move while the former is for those who stay. In other words, we can see human insecurity aligned with push factors whereas human security with pull factors referring to widely used push-pull model of international migration (van der Erf and Heering, 1995). "The concept of human security emerged out of the recognition that individuals and communities' security does not necessarily follow from the security of the state in which they are citizens" (Bilgin 2003: 213). Besides, we should add the potential differences between the security of individuals (i.e. migrants and host society members) and the security of other states in transit or destination. A clear formulation of the concept of human security appeared in the United Nations Development Program' 1994 Human Development Report, where the emphasis shifted towards 'people's security' (UNDP, 1994 in Bilgin 2003:214). Amartva Sen, in one of the early attempts at conceptualizing human security, linked human security to threats to "the survival, daily life, and dignity of human beings and to strengthening the efforts to confront these threats" (2000: 1).

Here we may also refer to the hierarchy of needs model which assigns significance to security. Abraham Maslow's five stage model, often depicted in a pyramid showing needs or motivational drives in order of importance, places security and safety on the second level following the basic needs such as air, food, shelter, and sex (1943). He argues such lower level needs must be satisfied before higher needs can be attended. Hence, one would need the security of a home and family, community, neighbourhood and country. He also recognises that the satisfaction is relative and personal. Thus, I argue that main motive in international migration can be formulated as seeking security; or avoiding human insecurity as the root cause. Thus we eliminate all unnecessary typologies (e.g. labour, family, asylum, irregular migrations etc.) which have been so far unhelpful in the endeavour of conceptualising the phenomenon. Categories of labour migrants, refugees, illegal migrants are just reflections of legislations and nothing to do with the migration motives as such. The threats to human security may come in many forms ranging from lack of job opportunities to inter-ethnic war or environmental hazards, all of which may channel into an exit option: emigration. However, in this paper, I would like to focus on the exploration of different streams of conflict rather than causes of migration. This is because the conflict does lead to change and vice a versa. Migration movements therefore need to be understood in such a dynamic and constantly changing conflict environment.

Although the concept of human security is not yet fully developed, it has been frequently used in the literature. Formulations of human security often emphasize the welfare of ordinary people (Paris 2001). Thomas argues "that material sufficiency lies at the core of human security" and "the problems of poverty and deepening inequality are central concerns" (2001: 159). In their elaboration of the Index of Human Insecurity, Lonergan et al. underline that "human security has been endangered not only by military threats, but also of resource scarcity, rapid population growth, human rights abuses, and outbreaks of infectious diseases, environmental degradation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity" (2000: 1; also see Homer-Dixon 1994). The human insecurity concept proposed herein incorporates all of the above mentioned threats to security. Human insecurity is a new concept that may have various emphasises on particular aspects depending on the context of a given population group. It could be civil strife for Sudanese minorities or

environmental hazards for Indonesian islanders. It is perceived subjectively by individuals (and/or households, communities and so on).

For growing numbers of people attempting to obtain a better life via cross-border migration, the recent militarization of border controls has elevated the risks to human security and so raised the level of human insecurity. The process of international migration almost always involves a certain level of conflict. Conflicts at the point of origin, in transit and in destination facilitate international migration and affect the ways in which migration takes place and evolves (Sirkeci 2006). They also shape the nature and composition of networks involved in the migration process. Poverty in the third world and the widening welfare gap between developed and underdeveloped countries are significant factors motivating people to move on to better pastures, mostly to the Western world. Given that strong push factors are present in many migrant-sending countries (e.g., lack of employment opportunities, ethnic conflicts and wars, and frequent natural disasters); migration related conflicts are likely to remain on the agenda for a long while.

The increased focus on security issues in current international migration debates is predictable given the myriad of world-wide injustices and inequalities that are, at least in part, responsible for generating what appears to be a rising tide of resentment among growing numbers of people in less privileged areas of the globe. Hence, international migration can be conceptualised as a search for security or an implication of human insecurity. Immediately after 9/11, Sassen (2001) said "we cannot hide behind our peace and prosperity". The 'terrorist', as an individual, an organisation, or a nation-state, has appeared in a wide range of discourses following the 9/11. We have not developed a concept of migrant as 'terrorist' but with increasing domination of security discourses over international migration agenda, this may become a reality. Thus, for example, migrating human agency who challenges to the regulatory agency can be labelled or his or her acts can fall into 'act of terrorism' category. At a certain level of analysis, acts of terrorism can bee seen as a type of discourse between those that rule and those that see themselves as oppressed victims of an unjust system, between the haves and the have nots, between the rich and poor (although, certainly not all terrorists are poor). With regard to the underlying discourse of terrorism, Sassen makes this point clear: "The attacks are a language of last resort: the oppressed and persecuted have used many languages to reach us so far..." (2001). In terms of international migration, the question arises as to whether or not we have entered an era characterized by migration-stimulated terrorism? At present, there is not hard evidence to answer this question with any degree of accuracy. It is clear, however, that international migration regimes are getting more militarised and therefore causing more human tragedies as seen in numerous counts of deaths and abuses recorded in borderlands (Cornelius 2001, Esbach et al. 1999).

With regard to the pros and cons of migration, no consensus exists among destination countries as different concerns are at stake. For some destination countries, immigration is seen as a cure to an aging population (e.g. European countries). To other destination countries, immigration is seen as a threat to limited resources (e.g. African countries hosting large influxes from neighbouring war zones). Hence, interests (particularly socioeconomic interests) between sending and receiving countries can and often do conflict. Typically the former struggles to retain the most qualified people and reduce unemployment levels while the latter try to receive limited numbers of skilful people. For individuals and households whom migrate as part of a survival strategy or strategic option (e.g., to escape economic and/or political pressures), disputes among states over immigration policy tend to ring hollow if they are heard at all.

In today's world, increasingly more restrictive immigration policies are being put in place, and this in return causes international migration to become more clandestine due to the tightening regimes of admission. The dilemma appears to be impossible to resolve given the historic failure

of migration control (Cornelius, Martin, and Hollifield 1994; Cornelius et al. 2004). Thus an urgent need for a comprehensive discussion on the relationships between human security/insecurity and migration, possibly benefiting from a conflict-oriented approach that incorporates the evolving concept of human insecurity is necessary as a central component of international migration conceptualisation. The question is not simply a control issue. As partly opposed to what Duvel (2007) proposes in a recent article, it is not the 'conflict over migration' but *migration as a function of conflict what matters*. This paper aims to identify the conflict at different levels (e.g. individual, state), different streams (e.g. individual versus state, individual versus individual) and will refer to conflicting interests and demands. Thus it will enable researchers and practitioners in the field to see the potential of a conflict approach.

This work represents an attempt to lay out building blocks of a new conceptualisation of international migration as a function of conflict. These are different levels and streams of conflict which can be identified in the process of international migration. The categories I propose may seem to be controversial but deem to be valuable as a first attempt. Within the three levels, macro (state), mezzo (household, community) and micro (individual), I identify the streams of conflict which are often not confined into a single level such as migrating individual's struggle to overcome border controls imposed by receiving state.

The first stream of conflict is between the sending and receiving countries and is based on their often incompatible interests. Incompatible interests also exist between the national actors and human agency¹. At the point of origin, certain interests of minority members may diverge from national interests. This can be expressed in various forms of forced migration as well as a steady outflow of people within various migration categories. The discussion on the environment of insecurity can be mainly linked to this stream of conflict. A second stream of conflict centres on conflicts between immigrants and natives residing in the destination (and/or transit) country. Finally, within households, a third stream of conflict is discussed regarding power relations as women often take control of households when lengthy absences of men is inevitable due to international migration. International migration is a dynamic process which also sees conflict between the regulating agency and human agency at different levels (e.g. at border crossing points, at embassies, etc.). These streams of conflict are also linked to the environment of insecurity which was developed as an analytical tool in an earlier study (Sirkeci 2006; Icduygu, Romano, and Sirkeci 1999). In following sections, I will try to describe these different streams of conflict emphasising the role of conflict at different levels.

The streams of conflict in international migration

With exceptions, international migration, often, is a 'forced' experience despite in many occasions choices are available and informed decisions are made. There are push-pull factors determining the migration decisions of individuals, families and communities. And they come into play regardless of whether the purpose of migration is to improve a dire economic situation, obtain more freedom of expression or ethnic freedom, or access better educational opportunities. In the hypothetical bipolar world of security seeking human agency versus security seeking regulating agency, we can identify several confrontation points or areas. The four streams of conflict refer to these confrontations between the regulating and moving agencies. It includes conflicts among regulating agencies (e.g. sending and transit countries versus receiving countries) as well as among individuals (e.g. earlier migrants versus latecomers, natives versus immigrants, and natives versus return migrants).

¹ Here I would like to clarify that alongside human agency, household and/or family need to be considered as the household, as a unit of analysis, is of critical importance as shown by Cohen (2004).

The needs of receiving countries and sending countries rarely match and are often not conducive to long term cooperation. Such a match existed between the Federal Republic of Germany (receiving) and Turkey (sending) during the 1960s, for example. It produced a mass emigration of "guest workers" from Turkey to satisfy the labour shortages in Germany (Sirkeci 2005). However, when needs of Germany suddenly changed following the energy crisis of 1973, migration did not stop and since then has ever grown. Hence the conflict of interest between the two countries as excess labour issue in Turkey was not solved at the same time. Conflict between sending and receiving countries has arisen from such mismatches between migrant-export policies in the former and immigration policies in the latter, which also risks a tension for North-South relations over migration (Cornelius et al. 2004; Hugo and Stahl 2004; Wenden 2004). Another aspect of conflict at this level could be the inherent contradiction of globalisation which openly favours the free movement of goods and capital but not that of people (Massey et al. 1994). This may also cause tension between the state and small and medium businesses which seem to benefit from the abundance of relatively cheap immigrant labour (Jones et al. 2006). Of course, at this level, further conflict may arise from the fact that official policies and positions may differ from the socioeconomic reality (e.g. the demand for cheap immigrant labour versus populist anti-immigration policies and political discourses). This can, therefore, be treated as a separate stream of conflict—between regulating agencies and businesses in receiving countries. However, as a tentative framework and for reasons of simplicity, I prefer to keep this within the four stream model for the moment.

In this first layer, the conflict is between sending and receiving (and transit) nation-states. The former wants to release the pressure of unemployed, low skilled or unhappy masses while the latter aims to admit only migrants with required skills and qualities. Consequently, immigration – control– policies rarely achieve their stated goals and frequently produce outcomes that are the precise opposite of what policy makers intended (Bean and Spener 2004). There is no consensus among researchers and policymakers on the effects of international migration on sending countries as well as on receiving countries (Massey and Taylor 2004). Nevertheless, the only consensus appears to be the existence of such a conflicting landscape of international migration.

As long as the gap between the developed and less developed countries or regions of the world remains wide, international migration will continue to be an area of conflicting interests between and among nations. Despite migration of manufacturing to low-cost areas of labour such as Southeast Asia, the desire among the people of poor countries to migrate to developed countries remains firm. Indonesians still desire to move to Western countries instead of neighbouring Malaysia. The role of wage differentials can be controversial, but it tells a great deal: minimum wage is about \$30 USD in Indonesia compared to about \$40 USD in Malaysia and \$1,700 Dollars in Germany (ILO 2006). Thus labour may not always follow capital. Despite the significant need for import labour that has been projected for many developed countries, the unanswered question is how to control these in flows. Such a restrictionist stance is expressed in receiving countries' attitudes towards sending and transit countries. Immigration countries/zones of the world have been fortressing their borders for decades. Recent efforts have included treaties to join forces in border controls as well as convincing -in some cases even blackmailing- third countries (i.e. nonmembers to economic or political unions such as the European Union) in order to ensure their populations (including transit migrants) are not leaving.² The conflict, however, does not exist only between the two ends of the migration process. Transit countries frequently have different concerns than sending and receiving countries and may opt for a relaxed policy about migration

² For a more detail account, readers may consult the volume by Cornelius et al. (2004), a comprehensive study of failures of immigration control policies following on from the first edition published in 1994. Franck Duvell (2005) also presents a brief picture of migration control.

as long as migrants are not staying but passing through. In some cases, transit migration creates a humanitarian tragedy at the borders as people attempting to flee a life threatening situation are sent back and forth between border control posts.³ Nevertheless, the essential question here is about the mismatch between the needs of different nation-states involved in the control process of international migration.

Confronting the security-seeking national actors (i.e. their enforcement agencies such as border patrols, visa officers, etc), the human agency or migrating actor is also seeking security or avoiding insecurity. The second stream is about conflict between the regulating agency and human agency in sending countries. There is competition for limited resources like jobs and welfare. In some cases there is conflict between different ethnic, religious or cultural units over political power, and thus over resources. Such competition may force some to fulfil needs beyond national borders and emigrate. Hence the context of the environment of insecurity comes into play. As will be discussed later, migration is not the sole strategic option in a conflict situation. It is only one of many available strategic options. This may even relate to many other international migration moves, including retirement migration from developed countries to countries with better climate and/or lower living costs (Illés 2005), where the tension may arise from unfavourable pension policies delivering so little to retirees to live on. In this case, one strategic option could be migration as opposed to other options. Political exclusion of ethnic minorities and discrimination at various levels are drivers of such an environment of insecurity for some. It appears to be particularly problematic for minority populations that are in conflict with a dominant, ruling majority (e.g., Kurds in Turkey, Turkmen in Iraq, Non-Muslims in Sudan, Palestinians in Israel). War-torn countries could also be placed in this category as they pose a similar environment of insecurity to their citizens. Nevertheless, in such a conflict situation, minority members may opt for "voting with the feet" (Fischer and Straubhaar 1994: 130). Extreme levels of displacement in Iraq today -over 4.5 million displaced- display a good case as such (Donnell and Newland 2008). Thus, it is a critical stream as the conflict at the point of origin may also act as a facilitator for international migration.

The third stream relates to the conflict between the human agency that is willing to migrate and the regulating agency in transit and destination countries that is willing to restrict and/or control immigration. At this stage, the sending nation-state may act along side the restrictionist receiving country agency due to international (inter)dependencies. For some categories of migrants, such as high skilled migrants, 'regular migration' is possible because they fulfil a need in receiving countries and/or have adequate resources to maintain themselves abroad. For many others, however, migration is likely to be increasingly clandestine, undocumented or irregular, given the restrictive immigration and refugee policies in developed countries (Adepoju 2004). International migration can be considered as a survival strategy, as seen in some African countries (Adepoju 2004: 64). Therefore, this third stream is set to be a very tough battleground prone to human right violations and even deaths in extreme cases⁴.

Migrant-receiving countries have moved towards increasingly restrictive policies, and immigration control has been a major policy goal. This extends into asylum/refugee policy too. While the regulating agency tries to restrict immigration, the human agency tries alternative ways of clandestine migration. A quick review of European migration history in the second half of the

³ See Yaghmaian (2005) for stories of border crossing migrants from Bulgaria, Greece, Iran, and Turkey.

⁴ A few tragic examples of that kind recently represented in media are as follows: The bodies of 58 Chinese clandestine immigrants have been found to have suffocated while being smuggled in the back of a lorry at the English port of Dover (BBC 2000); Migrants were shot dead at the border fence as Spain deploys army to control illegal immigration (Statewatch 2005); 13 died on voyage to Italy from Libya (BBC 2006).

20th century provides us with adequate evidence on how types of immigration have changed parallel to the changes in immigration needs and policies. Following the mass labour migrations in the 1960s, family reunifications became ample. Then, refugee migrations were followed by asylum migrations and eventually undocumented migrations prevailed. At least in the case of Turkey-Germany, the volume of migration flows, despite changes in types of migration, remained more or less the same (Sirkeci 2006). Guest workers' neighbours and their children arrived as asylum seekers and illegal migrants in the 1980s and 1990s. The categories were changed in official statistics, but the motives and the people remained the same (Sirkeci 2006). Although populist discourses in right wing media prefer such distinctions to scapegoat "illegal" or "asylum" migrants, it is well understood that migrants often have multiple motivations. Thus, many people escaping from political pressures emigrated as 'guest workers' in the 1960s while, later, many others with sole economic motives emigrated among refugees, asylum seekers and illegal migrants. Almost half of Turkmen in Iraq fled to other countries without permission or visas and most believe this is acceptable (Sirkeci 2005). Without doubt, many of those Iraqi Turkmen who illegally crossed the borders would be guest workers if there were any such program to move them from war torn Iraq to, say, Germany.

The restrictionism at the receiving end includes stricter admission and visa policies, militarised border controls, higher income thresholds for immigrant sponsors, expedited deportation procedures, and scapegoating of immigrants in the destination. Spanish naval boats to stop Africans or 'immigrant prison islands' in the Pacific and the slightly innocent-sounding 'reception centres' of the UK are extensions of such militarization of migration politics (Politics.co.uk 2007). The terrorist acts that targeted the US, the UK and Spain provided an excuse for such militarization as well as anti-immigration policies and practices. And they did so at the cost of promoting xenophobia and racism. Nevertheless, success in controlling migration seems far away (Cornelius et al. 2004). More selective immigration regimes and tighter controls are likely to increase clandestine migration. Because, as is well known, the root causes of migration often lie in the areas of origin and not that of destination. Human agency seems capable of overcoming further restrictions in his or her endeavour to survive despite an ever increasing risk of death at borders.

It is important to remember that the seeds of tougher migration control were planted before the recent discourses and practices linking terrorism and immigration (Düvell 2005; Zolberg 2001). Immigration countries or zones of the world have always been concerned about fortressing their borders. Such control efforts have included treaties to join forces in border controls as well as convincing and even blackmailing the third countries in order to ensure that their populations are not leaving for Europe, for example.⁵

This conflict between the human agency and the regulating agency continues after the arrival and even after the naturalisation of the migrant. *Securitisation* of migration discourse may partly explain this because it paves the way to human rights violations. When immigrants stay undocumented or are kept in limbo (e.g. the situation many asylum seekers find themselves in due to lengthy procedures), they are open to any kind of abuse as they are almost non-existent legally and lack the full protection enjoyed by the natives. This was evident in the case of Turkish Kurds working illegally in Turkish-run restaurants at a fraction of the normal wage in Germany (Sirkeci 2006). For these migrants, there is no social security. In order to survive, they are strongly compelled to accept low-paid and unsecured jobs because they cannot work legally and

⁵ For a more detail account, readers may consult the volume by Cornelius et al. (2004), a comprehensive study of failures of immigration control policies following on from the first edition published in 1994. Franck Duvell (2005) also presents a brief picture of migration control.

are often supported poorly, if at all. The threat does not disappear even after immigrants are naturalised. For instance, in the UK there have been numerous attempts to change migration legislation on the grounds that migration and terrorism go hand in hand. The aim of such legislation is clear: to authorise the UK government to deport immigrants (including the naturalised ones) on the basis of alleged links to terrorists (Home-Office(UK) 2004). This kind of knee-jerk legislation coupled with an increasing militarization of migration control is likely to make international migration, and migrants of course, open to human rights violations in various forms and degrees. There could be differences in the degree and types of violations among receiving and transit countries. For example, the Libyan response could prove to be more cruel than the French (Arie 2004). But ill-treatment will be a common feature across most borders.

To address the conflict at this layer, migrating human agency is likely to utilise his or her resources to reduce the risks of migration. This may involve receiving assistance through a various transnational networks. This is a realm where regulating agency cannot easily intervene but may try to establish a network of its own to control migration. Some countries, for example, sign treaties or form joint border control forces. The coordination efforts between receiving, transit and sending countries (e.g. the EU efforts) can be considered as such. Human agency forms and participates in networks that can be based on family and friendship ties, political, religious or cultural connections, economic networks as well as clandestine networks of smugglers and traffickers. These transnational networks may facilitate international migration⁶, help in border crossings (legally or illegally), provide support at the destination, and expand the living space of the immigrant to increase his/her survival chances. S/he is not obliged to be bound to a specific territory, can move back and forth, or move to another destination that is accessible through transnational networks. A Kurdish immigrant from Turkey, for example, can meet friends and family at Kurdistan festivals in Germany, join demonstrations in Rome while living and working in the UK. These networks can give immigrants sorts of security; sheltering, offering opportunities, including migration to a third country. In oppressed ethnic minority cases, such transnational networks also facilitate political movements and foster ethno nationalisms, as is the case for the Turkish Kurds (Sirkeci 2006; Wahlbeck 1999).

Households and families that are left behind also go through some changes due to the emigration of a male head of household. Often, his absence creates a power vacuum and so an area of conflict within the household or family. This is not a rare phenomenon as migration is often male dominated. Wives, mothers or sisters who are left behind have to take control of running the household when husbands, fathers or elder brothers move abroad. Such ad hoc empowerment of women may cause a conflict within the family, especially in traditional societies. This may change shape after the return as there is likely to have both men and women empowered and no easy return is possible to traditional gender roles within family.

Once the determined human agency reaches a more desirable country, she or he will face a new struggle: the fourth stream of conflict. No matter how migration took place (i.e. regular or clandestine), at the receiving end indicators of the first stream of conflict await the immigrant. Typically, the host country will, as much as possible, attempt to limit the stay and avoid any settlement. Despite very little and often contradicting empirical evidence, there are claims that immigrants are posing a threat to welfare benefits and burden (Borjas 1999; Gott and Johnston 2002). Such public opinion is also reflected in restrictionist attitudes as represented by declining

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⁶ The dynamic nature of these networks should be noted as each migration attempt strengthens the network, too.

⁷ It may be also expanded to include transnational ethnic marketing networks which help ethnic small businesses to survive.

welfare benefits for immigrants, further restrictions on immigrant employment, and impediments on acquiring citizenship (Bendel 2005; Geddes 2003). In many countries, systematic discrimination against immigrants is already apparent along with widespread xenophobia and Islamophobia (Abbas 2004; Kaplan 2006). In this stream, conflict may surface between new immigrants and long established ethnic minorities that see the latecomers as a threat to their gains -a conflict traceable to the labour migrations in the 1950s and 1960s.

One important aspect in this stream is the management of public opinion on immigration, immigrants and relevant issues. Popular media and right wing political parties tend to exploit problems related to immigrants and immigration and blame immigration for wider socioeconomic problems in receiving countries. These often do not reflect reality. At best they represent a distorted reality. However, it imposes further pressure on immigrants and adds to the conflict because such public opinion fuels the conflict between the regulating agency vs. the immigrant as well as the native vs. the immigrant.

For many immigrants, the security that is found abroad is a 'relative security' that provides a better life compared to life at the origin but often a less favourable position compared to the natives of the destination countries. This should be linked to the conceptualization of "relative deprivation" as a factor facilitating international migration (Quinn 2006; Stark and Wang 2000). However, immigrants also have to tackle with socio-economic deprivation in destination countries (Khattab et al. 2006; Sirkeci 2006). Particularly among the Muslim immigrants, further hostility added by discourses of anti-terrorism-Islam-migration has contributed to a wide spread resentment. Considering the fact that migrants are often employed in sectors and jobs supposedly "unwanted" by native workers, integration and elimination of such resentment seem very difficult. Faist discussed the mostly adverse implications of such securitisation of international migration for immigration and immigrant integration (Faist 2006). He pointed out that the migration-security nexus was there even before the 9/11 and explored the regulatory side of the phenomenon and concluded with a call for a "world of societies" (instead of world of states) as a guarantee for the diffusion of human rights globally (Faist 2006: 116-117). Nevertheless, seeking security has always been a concern for individuals or groups (i.e. migrating agency) fleeing their countries. Yet, this further securitisation of migration described by Faist and others poses threats that lead to a larger insecurity among current and potential migrants. In the next section conflicts at the origin are explored in order to show some examples for the above mentioned conflict streams. Migration from Turkey and Iraq are highly linked to ethnic conflicts and wars. Thus, we can identify the two streams of conflict here: individuals and households (members of the ethnic minorities) versus governments of the dominant ethnic groups and individuals and households opting for emigration in response to the environment of insecurity, or in other words, high levels of human insecurity in Turkey and Iraq.

The ethnic environment of insecurity feeding into the streams of conflict in Turkey and Iraq

I have been using the phrase "seeking security" on purpose to bridge so-called classifications of labour migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants and high-skilled migrants, because one can consider all these various motivations for migration as expressions of security seeking.

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⁸ The final stream of conflict should accommodate also the conflict between the return migrants and their non-migrant fellow citizens. Return migrants often face discrimination from their fellow citizens at home. For example, with all derogatory connotations it carries, "Alamanci", a concept used for Turkish guest workers and their families in Germany, is a good example of this type of dislike if not discrimination.

⁹ Foreign policy mistakes as in the case of the UK regarding Palestine-Israel conflict also contribute to such resentment. Sassen's call for listening to these voices may be worthwhile at this point (2001).

These distinctions between types of migrations have very little use for theory building as well as policy formulation to an extent. Especially in ethnic-oriented environments of insecurity, all these categories may blur into one broad category such as 'asylum seekers' or 'illegal migrants' or any other category we have in our international migration lexicon. In what follows I explain how the context or second stream of conflict prepares the infrastructure for outflows and, when needed, serves as an opportunity framework. In doing so, I mainly refer to the third stream of conflict mentioned above.

Bowen (1996) argues that ethnic conflicts are man made, built through time, mainly caused by ethnic groups' relationships to power (not diversity per se) and often lead to political instability. Such human constructed tension may compel the contesting ethnic groups to impose their 'national' identities over others (see Gurr 1994). The dominant ethnic group may force others to embrace the dominant 'national' identity. Latent or explicit acts of ethnic cleansing may coincide with political instability and, in some cases, civil war. Such a context, in turn, may boost perceived insecurity among minority groups and guide some towards various exit options. The exit options are increasingly limited, particularly in terms of international migration and for all of the reasons previously discussed. At this juncture, the ethnic environment of insecurity may serve as an opportunity framework for minority members and others.

The concept of Environment of Insecurity (EOI) refers to a combined set of push factors that are ethnic-oriented (Sirkeci 2006). Initially, the concept was developed to understand the causes of ethnic conflict between the Kurds and Turkish army in Turkey (Icduygu, Romano, and Sirkeci 1999). Based on two interrelated components, that is, material and non-material insecurities, the EOI delineates two strategic options on people: maintaining the status quo or exit. The material environment of insecurity refers to relative deprivation of the minority population represented in various forms such as poverty, armed conflict, lack of job opportunities, shortage of educational and health facilities. The non-material environment of insecurity contains explicit or implicit threats towards the minority (as perceived from the perspective of the minority group). It ranges from fear of persecution to various forms of ethnic discrimination and practical constraints. including banning the use of mother language (Sirkeci 2006: 19-20). The distinction between the material and non-material EOI is for conceptual simplification. Clearly there is a high level of interaction between the two categories. For example, the perception of insecurity or threat is often related to real processes of systematic discrimination, as in the Turkish Kurdish and the Turkmen cases. History obviously shows that some forms of systematic discrimination exist for an extended period. Hence, these should not be read as rigid exclusive categories but as interacting parts within the EOI concept.

When an EOI is facilitated by ethnic conflict, minority members are forced to choose between the two alternatives: accept the status quo or exit. The status quo option means that minority members remain in place and try to survive while the two armed-parties battle. This could be done by remaining in the conflict region and adopting the dominant ethnic identity or whatever cultural norm the dominant group imposes upon them (e.g. *Arabisation* in Iraq). They may also align themselves with government forces in various ways (e.g. *village guard system* in Turkey¹⁰). The exit option primarily involves three strategies: joining the rebel/opposition forces, migrating to a safe zone within the conflict country, or migrating abroad. Joining rebel or opposition forces

¹⁰ The village guard system (Koruculuk) was established in 1985 recruiting nearly 60,000 ethnic Kurdish villagers functioned in this militia civil force in southeast Turkey (Balta 2004: 22). Village guards were on very poor training and discipline and involved in a variety of crimes including smuggling, kidnapping, and abuse of authority. Some people willingly joined the guard but many others faced fierce pressure from the military police including large scale detentions in some areas (HRW 1998).

can, for example, include participation in civil society, joining political parties or joining the guerrilla groups. There can, of course, be mixed strategies combining tactics from both status quo and exit options.

The environment of insecurity as a combined set of background factors could well be helpful in understanding international migration involving ethnic minority groups¹¹. It links our discussion of conflict and security to survival and coping strategies of individuals and groups in the context of ethnic conflict. The ethnic environment of insecurity burdens its sufferers and forces them to exit in some cases. At the same time, it also serves as an opportunity framework for those who are willing to migrate but restricted from doing so by admission regulations and for those who found a way through asylum migration (Sirkeci 2005: 201-202). On the one hand, responding to a variety of "push factors" arising from a broader socio-economic deprivation-characterised by a lack of job opportunities and limited facilities for human capital development-people tend to move abroad where they perceive jobs and welfare opportunities as being abundant. Then again, ethnic discrimination and ongoing armed conflict increase threats to life and, in response, minority members that are capable of doing so may seek security in other countries.

We can relate this to the relative deprivation theory of international migration where the perceived deprivation is believed to trigger emigration (Stark and Wang 2000). This perceived deprivation -in socioeconomic and political terms- exists for the Kurds in Turkey (Sirkeci 2006) and the minorities in Iraq (Sirkeci 2005). However, given the fact that it is up to the perceptions of individuals and appears as a function of socio-economic and/or political deprivation and ethnic and/or religious discrimination, one can argue that elements of an environment of insecurity can be found in every country.

The environments of insecurity in Iraq and Turkey can be defined in terms of two broad categories: material and non-material. In Iraq, the wars (1979 till 2003) have coincided with and triggered internal ethnic conflicts. There is evidence pointing out that this facilitates international migration (Sirkeci 2005). The overall instability in Iraq has also added to the environment of insecurity for ethnic groups in the country. However, it is important to remember that the instability in Iraq is not only a result of the recent operations of the US-led "coalition forces". Its roots can be found in Saddam Hussein's brutal regime as well as in long-term ethnic tensions. Instability in Iraq is largely rooted in the fact that Sunni Arabs (a minority) have run the government for the last half a century at the expense of other ethnic groups (Day and Freeman, 2003; Hurmuzlu, 2003).

In contemporary Iraq, struggles over ethnicity and religion and a shattered economy and infrastructure are maintaining the Iraqi environment of insecurity. Within the debates on the reconstruction of Iraq, evidence is scarce that ethnic minorities will be protected against further cleansing or abuse. The elections held in 2005 heated up the contest between ethnic groups in Iraq rather than producing any widely acceptable framework. The referendum planned to be held in Kirkuk, the most contested multiethnic city, will not help unless it is used to identify and secure the rights and existence of ethnic groups. Ethnicity-based quotas in governing structures are likely to promote ethnic clashes and will encourage neighbouring states' interference in Iraq. Examples of such clashes and interference are already there: Turkey's military operations at the end of 2007 and Iran's bombardments of Qandil Mountains in pursuit of destroying PKK guerrillas are a few recent cases. Eventually, the lack of any democratic assurance for ethnic

¹¹ Here I use 'minority' not in its legal meaning but referring literally to ethnic groups who are not dominant majority in any country.

groups and their culture is likely to worsen the environment of insecurity, leading to more killings, more displacement and more abuse for some ethnic groups.

For decades, the Kurds and the Turkmen have suffered from such environment of insecurity through Arabisation policies, Iraqi army's brutal attacks, and forced displacements of populations (Sirkeci 2005; HRW 2003; ICG 2006, 2003; Hurmuzlu 2003). International sanctions against the former Saddam Hussein government contributed to the problem as Iraq became poorer through successive wars and an embargo¹². These specific conflict-related influences have been combined with widespread poverty, the uneven distribution of wealth, and the ongoing human rights abuses in the country (HRW 2003). Given the records of failures of US-led reconstructions in other cases in the past, the current situation will likely last many years (Barton and Crocker 2003; Day and Freeman 2003; Pei 2003). The population of Iraq grew from about 10 to 27 million during the past three decades. The bulk of this growth occurred at a time when the country was descending into a state of survival on humanitarian aid. The overall deprivation is evident in demographic statistics. The Iraqi population is very young (42 per cent below age 14) and is suffering from high mortality rates: infant mortality rate was 94.9 per thousand while it was only 9.7 for Europe and 7.1 for North America (UN 2000, 2001). After three long and trying years since the fall of Saddam Hussein, there is no evidence of progress on any aspects of the environment of insecurity. In short, the EOI in Iraq is worsening, which means conflicts; among different ethnic groups, between regulating agencies and individuals and families will continue to influence migration behaviour.

Iraqi emigration has strengthened during the last three decades with numbers increasing from a mere few thousands to over a million (Sirkeci 2005: 205-209). Not surprisingly, the majority of these flows were comprised of asylum seekers and refugees. UNHCR estimates that 4.5 million Iraqi who left their homes and more than 2 million fled the country leaving another 2.4 million internally displaced (UNHCR 2007). International Organization for Migration (IOM) also reported similar figures and pointed out that only in 2006 and 2007 over a million Iraqi are displaced (IOM 2007).

Although there are no exact figures available on ethnic break down of Iraqi emigration streams, the disadvantaged minorities (e.g. the Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians) are expected to comprise a sizeable portion of Iraqi migrants abroad. The simple reason for that is that, prior to the collapse of the regime in 2003, the minorities were oppressed by Saddam's regime for decades. After the 2003 invasion, however, one can presume that composition of emigration flows from Iraq will be different. First of all, the devastating effects of the war may or may not discriminate any particular group. Secondly, changing balance of power among ethnic components in the country may be influential. For example, after the war, Kurdish controlled Northern Iraq is the safest area in the country. It is a region that is particularly attractive to southern Iraqis who no longer wish to live in a state of civil war in parts of the south. Therefore, one may expect that the Kurds who hold a relatively privileged position in the current ethnic balance of power in Iraq (i.e. the current Iraqi President Mr. Talabani is Kurdish) will be less likely to flee Iraq than other ethnic groups. 13 The IOM report indicates some after-the-war changes in ethnic composition of the displaced people: of whom 90% were Arabs, about 3.8% Assyrian, 2.6% Kurds, 1.7% Turkmen and 1.7% other minorities (IOM 2007). So unlike the past, in today's Iraq, Kurds are less likely to migrate whereas Arabs, Assyrian, Turkmen and others are more likely to leave their homes.

¹² The United Nations' sanctions and embargo began in August 1990 is such an example.

¹³ Of course, one may expect to see further Kurdish out-migration from Iraq because already established Iraqi Kurdish immigrant communities abroad are likely to attract further migrants from Iraq (e.g. chain migration, migration networks).

The environment of insecurity in Turkey is ethnically defined and the Kurdish speaking populations mainly living in the East of the country have been exposed to its impact in every inch of their lives. It is a combination of systematic discrimination, arbitrary and legal erasure of rights and freedoms related to ethnic identity and mother language concurred with vast regional disparities in terms of economic development. Despite a wide range of changes in legislation and attitude since the arrest of the Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999, discriminatory practices against the Kurds still occur. Turkey's half a century old desire to become a member of the European Union has been a major factor in these favourable legislations. For example, Turkey's recently initiated accession process with the European Union paved the way for progress on human rights as evidenced by the release of Kurdish MPs in 2004 and the Turkish state television (TRT) broadcast of its first program in Kurdish language on 9 July 2004. But not all issues are solved, including the return of internally displaced migrants (HRW 2005: 431; 2006: 407-409).

Even though the western areas in Turkey are the most wealthy, regional disparities in socioeconomic development favour the eastern provinces. These disparities between regions are encouraging internal and international migration of people from the eastern provinces. According to a fairly recent report by the State Planning Organisation, 78 per cent of the least developed districts are located in the East (Dincer, Ozaslan, and Kavasoglu 2003). In western provinces, sizeable Kurdish minorities emerged during the last three decades due to internal migration (Sirkeci 2006: 53-54). Despite a short break in between 1999 and 2004, the armed conflict between the Turkish army and Kurdish rebel forces (a conflict that has taken place since 1984). Various sources estimate the number of casualties between 30,000 and 60,000 and the number of internally displaced between 370,000 and 3 million (Kurban et al. 2006).

This worsening environment of insecurity has provided a strong force for Turkey's Kurds to migrate: thousands have opted for emigration to European countries since the 1960s and increasingly since the mid-1980s. Despite changes in migration pathways (from labour migrations to clandestine migration), the Kurdish emigration from Turkey has been stable over the past 40 years. Migration from mainly Kurdish populated areas dwarfed other provinces as emigration has been more prevalent among Kurdish households than others (Sirkeci 2006: 127-130). Sirkeci reported that in 20 years following the military intervention in Turkey (1980), about 600,000 asylum applications from Turkey were filed in Europe (2006: 67-69). It is commonly accepted that about half a million among them are of Kurdish origin.

It needs to be noted that the environment of insecurity offers some opportunities to potential international migrants. In the wake of what surely will be more armed conflicts, wars and epidemics, there will be a need for a protective migration system for sufferers. To date, refugee and asylum laws have largely met this need. Despite the ongoing efforts of immigration countries to narrow the scope of refugee and asylum seeking categories, asylum migration will no doubt continue to be a significant method allowing migrants to reach developed or more prosperous areas of the world. The logic behind this is simple. Although there are avenues to immigrate into that may offer a better life for migrants (e.g., European Union countries), these avenues are increasingly being closed to all but the "highly skilled". So those with no skills or unwanted skills are less likely to proceed to these "regular" pathways. Still, one other option is available to them: they can immigrate clandestinely. Upon arrival, these immigrants either continue their clandestine existence or attempt to legalise their stay through available means, one of which is to apply for asylum. For this second option, the environment of insecurity serves as an opportunity framework for a number of would-be migrants. Of course this may only apply to a small group of

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¹⁴ Highly skilled often refers to people with higher qualifications and/or higher income/wealth.

migrants and should not be interpreted as proof for xenophobic claims on "bogus asylum seekers". However, one should consider this as a way available to migrants to cope with increasingly restrictive immigration policies. The guest worker Kurds that emigrated from Turkey in the 1960s and the asylum seekers and illegal Kurdish migrants that arrived in Europe in the late 1990s suffered more or less from the same environment of insecurity, one that denied their ethnic identity and offered very little to live on (Sirkeci 2006).

Sirkeci (2006; 2005) found high rates of emigration among the Kurdish households in Turkey (over 30 per cent) and Turkmen households in Iraq (over 35 per cent), despite the fact that current migrants and their left-behind families were not promoting migration abroad. The explanation for these very high migration rates, higher than the national averages we can estimate, at least in part, lies in the *environment of insecurity* which has an uneven impact on different ethnic groups. The Kurds in Turkey have lived through a conflict exclusively imposed upon them. Kurdish populated provinces have been literally a battlefield for more than two decades. Turkmen in Iraq were subject to a nationwide oppression by Saddam's regime that discriminated against and mistreated virtually all ethnic minority members. Both Turkmen and Kurdish cases, however, display ethnic differences in terms of participation rates in international migration. Kurdish households are more likely to send their members abroad (32 per cent) compared to their Turkish neighbours (24 per cent). Although there is no comparable study for the whole of Iraq, when one considers the fact that migrant households constitute more than one third of all Turkmen households one can conclude that migration abroad is more likely among the Turkmen compared to their Arab or Kurdish neighbours.¹⁵

Conclusion

Some evidence from Turkey and Iraq are supportive of the third stream of conflict in a potential conflict model of migration. Human insecurity concept plays a central part in such a model conducive to a better understanding of the process of international migration. I see the process of migration as a multi-streamed conflict that revolves around a struggle in and across three levels (state, household, individual). The security issues mainly arise in the conflict between the human agency and the regulating agency. The human agency is the individual or the household who is looking for ways to overcome a perceived human insecurity, which can be expressed in many ways including ethnic-oriented armed clashes in Turkey and war in Iraq. The regulating agency is the government that is seeking to preserve its control over territory and borders, thus ensuring security.

I believe a conflict perspective can be more effective in illuminating and defining the dynamic nature of the migration process in situations where the regulations, migration mechanisms and pathways are in constant motion. Where competitions exits between the migrating and regulating agencies, the former is likely to always be a step ahead of the latter. This is because the regulating agency is normally reactionary, responding to migration events of the past. In relation to this, the decision-making process of the regulating agency (with all its flaws) is typically more complicated and time consuming than the decision making process of individuals and households.

Ethnic conflicts (or conflicts involving ethnic competition) are likely causes of strong and steady outflow of disadvantaged minorities, such as Kurds from Turkey or Assyrians, Turkmen, Arabs

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¹⁵ One approximation can be based on the total number of migrants of Iraqi origin, which was estimated to be less than half a million by 2002 and nearly 90 per cent of which were asylum seekers and refugees (Sirkeci 2005). Hence, the overall percentage of migrant households in Iraq is expected to be around 10 per cent or less which is incomparably lower than that of the Turkmen.

from Iraq. These minorities may escape conflict in areas of origin, fight through ever-toughening admission regimes at the borders of transit or receiving nation states, and continue to struggle in a relative security in the destination. In this journey to relative security from an environment of insecurity, the erosion of immigrant rights and entitlements are added obstacles. The hostile discourses arising around asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, and migration-terrorism links are also diminishing the relative security in destination.

Four streams of conflict I have identified in the international migration process are tentative and other scholars of the field should feel free to discuss, change, revise, add or drop these streams. In fact, I am not even comfortable with the term "stream" which I arrived after trying "level" and "layer". Thus it is a wide open debate. The potential conflicts between nation states over international migration and the place of the individual human agency within this conflict is an evolving research area in need of further inquiry. However, further development of a conflict model for the analysis of international migration requires longitudinal empirical studies.

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