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Forum – Political Economy of Security in a Globalized World
The Political Economy of Global Migration and Border Security

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In the 1990s, international relations theorists began to equate globalization—the liberalization of trade, finance, and movement at regional or transnational levels—with the advent of a ‘borderless world.’ However, since the mid-1960s with a growing emphasis on the need to “reclaim” national borders, migration policies in liberal states have increasingly moved towards closure (Cornelius, Martin, and Hollifield 1994; Rudolph 2006). This tension has produced a ‘double movement’ in which liberalization is accompanied by a new set of political anxieties regarding borders, crime, “illegal” migration, and terrorism, along with political demands and initiatives to reassert state authority over borders (Andreas and Snyder 2005; Cornelius 2005). State management of migration is evident in a range of developments including: sharply rising internal security budgets, new legislation targeting unauthorized entry and residency, border surveillance, biometric passports and identity cards, stricter visa controls, and the augmented role of military personnel, methods, and hardware. This increasingly involves private actors and markets, producing a global and transnational migration control industry (Castles et. al 2013). The importance of territoriality and borders and the political salience of migration has thus shifted rather than diminished.

We call for the study of migration as a political economy of global security issue. This allows us to discuss migration causes and management along a continuum from local and internal security to international and global security. The causes of migration are issues of global scale, with widely dispersed effects and complexities.¹ Pressures like climate change, recessions, income, gender or racial inequality all instigate migration and “produce effects on all, or nearly all, of the globe” (Western 2016, 100). State responses to migration, on the other hand, are issues of global reach, with “more localized causes and effects” (Western 2016, 100). Crises unfold along localized border zones or migratory passages, but state responses to migration increasingly involve non-state actors and offshore sites, creating linkages across different political authorities and territories.

We propose three broad claims regarding the political economy of global migration as a base for further research. First, while state authority has resurged at borders, there is less distinction between domestic security policy, policing, citizenship, and identity management, and external state practices that have been used in the extraterritorial and foreign management of migration, border control and international cooperation. We refer to this continuum of internal and external practices as ‘population management.’ Under globalization, migration may be increasing, but states have more

¹ Migration has been systematically under theorized as a global security issue, due to “methodological nationalism” (see Wimmer and Schiller 2003).

tools for population management inside and outside their borders. The European Union (EU), while not a state, illustrates this continuum. French and Belgian nationals committed the November 2015 Paris attacks that killed 130. In response to the attacks, France invoked the EU Article 42(7) mutual defense clause. This is an example of what had been internal security blurring into external defense. The blurring has also gone in the other direction: in response to the refugee crisis, the EU announced a Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) mission to the Mediterranean to fight human trafficking to Europe. In this case, external defense blurred into internal security and migration management.²

Second, state migration and border management increasingly includes non-state actors including the privatization and the outsourcing of population management to international organizations, other states, and transnational corporations. While non-state actors in population management have proliferated, they have served as the “handmaidens” rather than the competitors to state authority (Torpey 2000). Outsourcing and privatization do not indicate a loss of state control: they are new “tools for control” that simultaneously insulate states from the accountability politics of security issues (Avant 2004, 153; Avant and Sigelman 2010). Indeed, states may “shif[t] liabilities outside of central governments [...] as a way to diminish the costs of immigration and reconcile competing interests” (Lahav 1998, 678). This “blurring [of] boundaries between public and private,” is a feature of state adjustments to globalization while “render[ing] opaque political responsibility for the wrenching adjustments entailed in late capitalist development” (Pauly 2002, 77).

Third, migration crises are driven by the endogenous practices of states themselves. Such ‘crises’ are marked by the criminalization of unauthorized movement and the subsequent rise in the dangers associated with migration, including an increase in violence and death at border zones. States may increasingly associate migrants with ‘security threats,’ but as Jones explains, “the hardening of the border through new security practices is the source of the violence, not a response to it” (Jones 2016, 5). The dangers associated with unauthorized migration emerge from both the increased security buffering of border zones and the increased internal policing of unauthorized residency.

Population Management: A Local-Global Continuum of State and Non-State Actors

While human mobility is as old as human life itself, its speed and reach have increased over the past two centuries. Relatively new is the involvement of the state in the regulation of movement, including criminalizing movement across borders. The authority over the right to move was the domain of empires and private actors up until nineteenth century, when nation-states began capturing this domain (Torpey 2000). By the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, modern states emerged to monopolize the

² The conventional wisdom about this blurring is that it is driven by twenty-first century events, primarily the threat of asymmetrical terror attacks. Schilde (2017) proposes this is insufficient for explaining EU strategic and political development. Foreign and security agendas also involve the political economy of defense interests and institutions, even in an international institution. The merging of EU immigration and security policy, and later security and defense policy, while driven by strategic changes, also has origins in the imperatives of security and defense markets.

authority over legitimate movement into and out of their territories, with the aim to settle mobile populations (Scott 1999; Tilly 1989). National sovereignty translated into key issues of population management, including citizenship, policing, borders and migration.

Non-state actors have long been involved in international migration in the form of smuggling and other forms of ‘illegal’ facilitation (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013). With the exception of visa-enforcement by transportation industries, non-state facilitators have historically challenged state authority by bypassing or undermining state control. With the securitization of migration post-2001, states have increasingly involved a wider range of non-state actors to support the state’s population management efforts by turning to private companies, international organizations, and regional unions. By utilizing private firms, states have retained control over the decision to accept or not accept migrants. Most of these control mechanisms over migration involve an increasingly global ‘migration industry’ in areas such as border enforcement and extraterritorial migration detention (Zolberg 2000). Population management has become a market issue of global reach, as it becomes pushed ‘upwards’ to international institutions, ‘downward’ to private actors, and ‘outward’ as a transactional issue between states, often in the form of outsourcing to other states or territories (Guiraudon and Lahav 2000).

An example of ‘upwards’ state outsourcing of migration control is the external management of EU borders around its borderless “Schengen” zone of states. EU member states increasingly coordinate over a ‘securitized’ external border management regime (D’Appollonia 2012; Givens and Luedtke 2004; Huysmans 2000). The EU border agency Frontex demonstrates how outsourcing can also provide states with a way of avoiding legal liability. The EU border regime has an opaque accountability framework over operations with shared legal authority over border control and migrant interdiction. Moreover, Frontex is tasked with border control, surveillance, and risk assessment, but no commensurate humanitarian mandate. Human rights groups have accused Frontex of poor humanitarian outcomes in EU border management operations, but have been unable to identify legal responsibility. As early as 2007, Frontex claimed it could not engage in emergency rescue operations because it was “not and never will be a panacea to problems of illegal migration.”³ Humanitarian concerns prompted Italy to launch its own Mare Nostrum search and rescue operation.⁴ Mare Nostrum was never supported by other European states, and the joint EU operation Triton replacing it had no search and rescue mandate and a smaller operational area (Neal 2009). The shift from Mare Nostrum to Triton saw some of the worst humanitarian outcomes—including a single disaster with over 900 casualties.⁵ While the crisis has intensified, there has been no political will to expand EU resources or mandates, nor hold any state accountable for the outcomes.

Another mandate shift occurred in 2015, when the EU created Operation Sophia, a military operation to “disrup[t] the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean [...] by undertaking systematic efforts to

³ “Frontex: Facts and Myths” June 11, 2007. Available at: <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/frontex-facts-and-myths-BYxkX5>

⁴ “Operation Mare Nostrum,” Ministero Della Difesa. Available at <http://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx>

⁵ European Commission, “Memo. Frontex Joint Operation 'Triton'” October 7, 2014). Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-566_en.html

identify, capture and dispose of vessels and assets used or suspected of being used by smugglers or traffickers.”⁶ The operation marks a critical juncture in global security: the EU—a non-state economic and political actor—uses military force to disrupt irregular migration in the Mediterranean by targeting other non-state actors, e.g. smugglers.

In addition to ‘upward’ outsourcing of population management to private industries, states have increasingly been outsourcing migration and borders ‘outwards’ to other states. Key examples are offshoring of migrant interdiction and detention and treaty arrangements linking remote migration control to development aid. Guantánamo Bay, Cuba is perhaps best known as the location of the United States’ extraterritorial detention center for terrorist suspects. Before 2001, the location was an offshore migrant detention center holding asylum seekers intercepted at sea by U.S. Coast Guard vessels. This offshore site was an extension of the Reagan administration’s program of intercepting Haitian boat migrants, moving South Florida’s border protection to international waters and beyond the reach of the U.S. courts. It was explicitly used to evade judicial overview and effectively shielded immigration officials from lawsuits challenging comprehensive denials of Haitian asylum claims (Kahn 2016).

Population management increasingly includes offshore detention and return. Australia has been at the center of this practice with Europe and the US close behind (Doty and Wheatley 2013). The Australian government legislated offshore detention starting in 1992 to ‘deter’ refugees and asylum seekers. Agreements with Nauru and Papua New Guinea were signed in 2001. Successive governments have prevented migrants arriving by boat from accessing asylum procedures resulting in indefinite and mandatory detention of migrants in offshore private detention centers. Transnational human rights groups recently filed a communiqué in the International Criminal Court against the involved states for crimes against humanity under Article 15 of the Rome Statute. The claim documented overcrowded and unsanitary conditions of detention; abuse at the hands of guards and local gangs; sexual violence (including against children); inadequate access to food, water and medical treatment; and extensive mental suffering of detainees (Achiume, Aleinikoff, et al 2017). Human rights groups make similar claims against EU practices of ‘offshoring detention’ both at the borders and outside of the EU.

In an example of European states managing migration both ‘upwards’ and ‘outwards,’ EU policy has ‘externalized’ migration to third countries in the form of bilateral and/or multilateral agreements and institutionalized cooperation (Geddes 2005, Lavenex and Uçarar 2004). The EU has increased offshore detention⁷ and linked market access and development aid to population management conditionality (Lavenex and Kunz 2008). Offshore migration management became institutionalized with the 2016 EU-Turkey migration treaty and EU development aid to states such as Afghanistan, Sudan, and Libya.⁸ Observers note that the implications of this policy may be to enhance the

⁶ Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/778 of 18 May 2015 on a European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED). Available at <http://eurlex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015D0778&qid=1435825940768&from=EN>

⁷ Traynor, I., 2015. Brussels plans migration centres outside EU to process asylum applications. *The Guardian*, 5 Mar.

⁸ Pianigiani, G. and Walsh, D., 2017. Can E.U. Shift Migrant Crisis to the Source? In Libya, the Odds Are Long. *The New York Times*, 17 Feb; but at what cost? [online], 2017.

tools of regime violence and control, with little oversight or benefit outside of stemming migration flows to Europe.

The political economy of population management

If modern states monopolized the authority over human mobility by the nineteenth century, current state practices demonstrate that the monopolization of authority did not extend to control or enforcement. Across the globe, states use private entities and market mechanisms to assist in the management of migration flows. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this practice began with states holding the shipping and aviation industries liable for enforcing travel permits, fining those who did not comply. Today, the role played by private actors goes beyond enforcing travel permits; the private sector is involved in virtually every aspect of population management across regions and regime-types.

Population management is an economic foreign policy issue, as treaty agreements outsource both migration control and refugee protection to states willing to commercialize their sovereign territory, waters, and/or authorities. The practices of market-based migration management are modifying institutions and social relations on a global scale (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013). Population management has spurred a rapidly growing migration industry, while the structural existence of such industries subsequently enable or constrain future state policies.

For example, the *kafala* (guest worker) program of the Gulf Arab states is an extensive, institutionalized, and profitable Inter-Asian guest worker scheme. At the base of this extensive structure are individual-level linkages between Gulf citizens (or national firms) and non-citizen workers. Private citizens and companies are involved in the recruitment, residency and repatriation of migrants.⁹ Whether through direct recruitment or recruitment agencies, the *kafeel* identifies the non-citizen worker she/he would like to hire and then applies for a visa on their behalf. In so doing, the *kafeel* assumes the legal and economic responsibility for the worker for the duration of their stay in the country and informs the Ministry of Interior of any changes in the labor contract. Moreover, the *kafeel* is financially responsible for repatriating the worker as soon as the contract is fulfilled or terminated. This sponsorship arrangement effectively privatizes the costs of migration enforcement by holding individual citizens financially and legally accountable for each and every non-citizen. The cost of migrant deportation is thus externalized from the state to the private sector (Lori 2012).

The private sector has also played a growing role in migration enforcement in neoliberal democratic states. In Europe, a rapid succession of laws in the 1980s significantly increased the fines levied on transportation companies for carrying ‘non-admittable’ foreigners and compelled aviation companies to assist the state with deportations. In addition to the transportation dimension of deportation, migrant

⁹ This system is in place across the Gulf Cooperation Council states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Collectively they comprise the third largest migrant-receiving region. In 2006, Bahrain officially abolished the *kafala* system and established a government agency, the Labor Market Regulation Authority, to manage the guest worker program. However, this reform has not substantively eradicated the sponsorship relationship, since non-citizens still require national sponsors. This reform has nonetheless lessened some of the barriers against switching national employers. See Act No. 19 With Regard to the Regulation of the Labour Market (2006).

detention has grown into a lucrative industry over the past three decades with the increasing dependence upon a handful of large transnational security corporations (Bloom 2015). The use of private security companies for migrant detention is oligopolistically concentrated in three companies: Geo Group Limited, G4S and Serco (Menz 2011). In addition to privatizing deportation and detention, states have also privatized entire border processing facilities such as airports (with the US post 9/11 as the exception) (Verkeuil 2007), and border crossing management (adopted by Israel since 2005 (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2013) and also under EU consideration)¹⁰

Migration ‘Crises’ as an Outcome of State Policies

Migration flows produce ‘crises’ because people continue to move even when they lack the authority to do so. As an example of the security impacts of borders, the growing number of deaths of Europe-bound migrants have led scholars to refer to the European Union’s boundaries as the “world’s deadliest border” (Jones 2016: 12). Data on migrant deaths shows that though the Mediterranean passage may be treacherous, the deaths are largely concentrated at the edges of the European Union itself.¹¹ While migratory routes are certainly dangerous, there can be even greater perils to migration after the journey is completed—when displaced populations do not have the ‘authorization’ to rebuild their lives. Displacement is a problem when, for years (if not decades) after completing their journeys, families still cannot register births, enroll their children in school, gain access to national identity documents and licenses, or legally earn a living.

The challenges and experiences that an individual faces upon entrance into a country depends on the status he or she gains from the receiving state. Forced migrants receive a different status than economic migrants. For example, Jordan is not party to the refugee convention, and Turkey is party to the convention but applies the geographic limitation (which means that it only recognizes refugees from Europe and Syrians are not eligible for this legal status). As a result, in both countries Syrians are technically ‘guests.’ This practice is not uncommon; the vast majority of displaced people find themselves in ‘refugee-like’ situations (in the sense of being unable to safely return home for long periods of time) without being afforded the formal protections of refugee status specified under international law. States assert the distinction between “illegal” immigrants and those who are “deserving” of being resettled, but such distinctions are frequently driven by foreign policy calculations rather than differences in objective circumstances (Weiner 1992-3).

When displaced populations are unable to access durable solutions (repatriation, local integration, or third country resettlement) they may face criminalization or become a stateless person. Instead of being formally incorporated these populations persist, sometimes over generations, with precarious legal statuses. Statelessness can also occur in the absence of displacement. Statelessness is also caused by the hardening of national boundaries through identity checks and regularization drives. State-building, political restructuring, and identity regularization drives can effectively strip minorities of

¹⁰ Private security firms cash in on guarding EU borders [online], 2017. Available from: <https://euobserver.com/priv-immigration/121454> [Accessed 4 Mar 2017].

¹¹ On the growing number of deaths at the edges of the European Union, see also (Brian and Laczko 2014) and the International Organization for Migration’s Missing Migrants Project (missingmigrants.iom.int).

nationality rights—as the literature has documented in such places the former Soviet Union, Thailand and Sri Lanka (Shevel 2011; Harris 2013; Wolozin 2014). Former Yugoslav states demonstrate how political restructuring creates liminal and stateless populations; some groups of former Yugoslav citizens became aliens forced to go through a process of naturalization (Shaw and Stiks, 2013). During Slovenian state formation, a national homogenization campaign “deleted [thousands] from the Slovenian State register in 1992 [...] subsequently [...] known as ‘erased persons’” (Blitz 2006: 2). These individuals were then deemed to be “illegal aliens” and had their residency revoked.

The outcome is a vicious cycle: displacement creates illegality and in some cases statelessness, and those who experience protracted periods of precarity as illegal aliens or stateless persons are often forced to migrate for survival, creating even more displaced populations.¹²

Conclusion

We propose an agenda addressing the larger social, political, and economic context of the political economy of migration as well as state reactions to increasing population movements. We emphasize the structural and cyclical linkages between migration and regional economic integration, between regions in international cooperation and conflict, the global supply of and demand for asylum, and the transnational diffusion of border security practices. We highlight the implications of increasing state authority over practices of population and border management—such as strategies of offshoring and outsourcing migration control, detention, and forced return—that have reinforced the control of state and regional institutions. We propose an agenda that focuses on the issues of population movement and management at the interaction of political economy and security, such as growing markets in border security and migration management. We also locate migration as a key issue blending local and global, particularly in the elimination of boundaries between external and internal security.

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¹² For an example of the cyclical relationship between statelessness and forced migration in Africa’s Great Lakes region, see (Hovil and Lomo 2015).

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