

9-21-2018

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Padraig O'Malley

*University of Massachusetts Boston*, [padraig.omalley@umb.edu](mailto:padraig.omalley@umb.edu)

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### Recommended Citation

O'Malley, Padraig (2018) "Migration and Conflict," *New England Journal of Public Policy*: Vol. 30 : Iss. 2 , Article 14.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol30/iss2/14>

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## **Migration and Conflict**

**Padraig O'Malley**

*University of Massachusetts Boston*

*The United Nations is ill-equipped to prevent, much less end, intrastate conflicts. Today's conflicts and an explosive mix of other interrelated causes—including violence, famine, extreme poverty, climate-related disasters and political oppression—have led to a global migration and population-displacement crisis. This article examines the intersection of conflict and migration. It presents the data on migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and exposes the rise of extreme nationalist tendencies in the West—in particular, Europe, where several measures to stem the flow of refugees have been imposed. The article concludes with a warning about global poverty and marginalization—a prescription for violent conflict and terrorism. Military power alone will not “defeat” terrorism, what is needed is developmental power but that calls for a reordering of the West's thinking and priorities.*

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**T**he issue of migrants making their way to Europe using treacherous life-threatening routes, with many not surviving the perilous journey, has befuddled the countries of the European Union. As the situation became more desperate and the influx accelerated, hospitality began to wear thin. European leaders started to close their national borders, threatening the foundation of the European Union itself—the Schengen agreement of free travel across national borders. The blitz of bombings in Paris by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in November 2015 brought a new frenzy of hand wringing: What if there were ISIS cells or even lone wolves coming from Syria or Iraq among the teeming crowds? In the United States people terrified themselves into hysteria, vehemently opposing the prospect of accepting twenty thousand Syrian refugees who would undergo security checks over a two-year period before they would qualify for entry into the country. (In 2017, the country let in 3,024. In 2018, that number is just 11.)<sup>1</sup> Most of the refugees who have created a crisis among the European Union's member states have fled the brutal ravages of the Syrian civil war, the war in Iraq, and the Afghanistan quagmire, which appears as much beholden to the Taliban as ever.

From the time *Homo sapiens* began to explore the limits of planet Earth, conflict and migration have been inextricably intertwined, beginning with conflict over resources to survive, later for control of territory. In the first half of the twentieth century, two devastating world wars scattered migrants in any direction they thought they might find refuge. After a postwar lull, migration became more pronounced in the latter years of the twentieth century and during the opening decades of the twenty-first.

Wars are no longer waged by nation-states against one another; they are intrastate conflicts. They are waged by warlords, by governments against their own people, by authoritarian rulers

*Padraig O'Malley is the John Joseph Moakley Chair of Peace and Reconciliation at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston.*

clinging to power, by ethnic groups settling historical scores, and by minorities within nation-states demanding self-determination; they are caused by religious differences and clashing ideologies; they erupt in weak or failing states where a concatenation of factors has eroded the authority of the state. We now include rape as a weapon of war, food as a weapon of war, and the acts of child soldiers as part of our definition of war.<sup>2</sup> Often more die fleeing war than in war itself.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the ratio of combatants to civilians killed in war was 8:1—eight combatants for every civilian. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the figures were reversed; the ratio was 1:8—eight civilians were killed for every combatant. In the space of a hundred years, war itself had been redefined—people with weapons of war now kill unarmed civilians, not each other. Today you are safer being a soldier in one of the competing armies or militias than being a civilian. Armies no longer “fight” on behalf of people; they kill people and the people flee.

## **Africa’s World War**

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—an oxymoron if ever there were one—the largest and deadliest war since World War II was fought in the mid-1990s between coalitions of African nations (at one point nine African nations were involved), ethnic tribes, communal groups, and meandering gangster marauders. More than 1 million people—almost all civilians—were killed in “combat”; another 1.5 million died fleeing shifting battlegrounds or psychotic plunderers.

In Rwanda another million were butchered by Hutu attacks on Tutsis in the genocide overlooked by the West. Over two million civilians fled into neighboring Uganda, Tanzania, and the DRC. (Many returned after normality settled in.)

African refugees died of thirst and lack of food and shelter, victims of hostile environments in unforgiving terrain. Most of those fleeing became either internally displaced persons (IDPs)—people who are effectively refugees within their own country—or refugees, crossing porous borders from one poor country to a neighboring poor country. But there were no television cameras to record the indescribable horrors of these hazardous routes from one country to another, and what does not exist on videotape has not happened. In the West the mention of the DRC merely raises quizzical looks. The West pays attention to the global crisis of migration only when the West itself comes under threat from massive inflows.

Population upheavals intensified in Africa during the 1990s. About 13.7 million Africans remained uprooted (IDPs and refugees combined) at the end of the 1990s compared with about 12 million in 1990. But during the next fifteen years the number of IDPs increased dramatically. Although the number of refugees in Africa declined by about one-third during the 1990s; the number IDPs jumped from 7 million to about 10 million.<sup>3</sup>

The number of refugees estimated for all of Africa at the end of 2016 was 5.1 million. The number of refugees in the region is estimated to have increased by at least half a million in the first half of 2017.<sup>4</sup> The countries hosting the largest number of refugees are Ethiopia (highest), Kenya, Chad, Uganda, Cameroon, Sudan, and South Sudan; the countries from which most refugees flee are Somalia, Central African Republic, the DRC, Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan, and smaller but significant numbers are from Burundi, Mali, and Nigeria. All are war-driven refugees. In Eritrea, a country of six million people, a lingering war with Ethiopia, compulsory conscription, forced labor, and an oppressive military regime caused half a million to flee to

neighboring Ethiopia and South Sudan while tens of thousands have made their way to Europe, despite the perilous routes they had to follow.<sup>5</sup>

The highest displacement numbers are IDPs. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the end of 2016, there were 11.1 million IDPs in Africa. The number of IDPs in Nigeria for 2017 was 1.7 million. The largest IDP populations were located in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. The main cause of displacement (96 percent) was due to the ongoing conflict.<sup>6</sup> Boko Haram, a violent antigovernment group, spreads chaos and fear in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad. The Lake Chad Basin is the fastest-growing displacement crisis in Africa; 2.7 million people, 1.5 million of them children, have been uprooted by Boko Haram terrorists. In Kenya and Somalia, al-Shabaab, the Somali terrorist group, performs a similar function; Niger, desperately poor, shares troubled borders with Algeria, Chad, Libya, and Mali. Libya is in freefall and a destination for refugees fleeing other parts of Africa seeking hazardous sea routes to Europe; al-Qaeda has tentacles across the region, and the fingerprints of ISIS in a dozen countries sow fear in their populations and set in motion the march of refugees.

Kenya “hosts” the largest refugee camp in the world. The UNHCR set up Dadaab in the desert in 1991 for 90,000 refugees escaping Somalia’s civil war. The camp now has over 350,000 residents, who live in a space of less than fifty square kilometers, “roughly as if the entire population of Cleveland, Ohio, were forced to live in an area smaller than the Ohio State University campus.”<sup>7</sup> Kenya claims that members of al-Shabaab have infiltrated the camp and have repeatedly threatened to shut it down. Were it to do so, a humanitarian disaster would follow. As of the end of April 2018, there were 296,748 refugees in South Sudan and 1.76 million internally displaced South Sudanese who were forced to flee their homes but did not cross an international border.<sup>8</sup>

The living conditions of the displaced vary among and within the countries listed earlier. Conditions also vary by shelter type, whether overcrowded formal camps or makeshift shelters where refugees endure multiple displacements and frequent attacks by armed fighters. Common among all are water shortages and exposure to water-borne diseases, poor medical care, severe malnutrition, and the threat of famine. Women and children are vulnerable to sexual violence, and children, who have little access to education, risk being taken as child soldiers. In addition to armed violence, they remain vulnerable to climate-related exposure, to droughts and sudden floods. Many fear returning home or have no home left to return to.<sup>9</sup> The uncertainty of finding a passage to Europe, risk-ridden as it may be, outweighs the absence of a future that awaits them if they continue to live in the camps, and many follow well-trodden routes: either the western route, the main route for refugees from Mali, Gambia, and Senegal, or another western route in the Sahel that frequently crosses and connects with the central route, for which the source countries are Nigeria, Ghana, and Niger. The eastern route, the preferred route for refugees from Somalia, Eritrea, and Darfur in South Sudan, cuts north through Sudan and Egypt and extends along the northern coast of Africa. All routes converge in the Maghreb and in recent years mostly in Libya, where refugees attempt a sea crossing to Italy.<sup>10</sup>

## **A Global Glance**

In 2002, there were twenty-one major armed conflicts in nineteen locations around the world. By 2008, according to the Armed Conflict Survey (ACS), there were sixty-three armed conflicts around the world producing 56,000 fatalities, whereas in 2014 there were only forty-two armed conflicts producing 180,000 fatalities. In 2016, fatalities dropped to 157,000. According to John Chipman, director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the London-based think

tank that produces the ACS, 80 percent of the total number of deaths in conflicts last year were in ten hotspots.<sup>11</sup> Though the number of armed conflicts around the world has been progressively declining since the Armed Conflict Database was launched, the decline in the number of conflicts has been more than compensated for by an inexorable rise in the intensity of violence associated with them. But, the ACS asserts, the impact of conflict cannot be judged simply by the number of fatalities and injuries to which it gives rise. The conflicts being covered are generating ever higher levels of refugees and IDPs, leading the UNHCR to observe that 2013 was the first year since the end of World War II when the global number of displaced persons had exceeded 50 million.<sup>12</sup>

According to a report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies Task Force, by June 2018, “almost 66 million people worldwide [had] been forced from home by conflict. If recent trends continue, this figure could increase to between 180 and 320 million people by 2030 . . . as a result of conflict and violence, persecution, political oppression, economic malfeasance, environmental, climate and human-induced disasters, or food insecurity and famine.”<sup>13</sup> In the post-Cold War era, internal conflicts invariably are struggles over control of exploitable resources and access to wealth and political power. Ethnic and religious differences often exacerbate or underlie such conflicts, making them even more volatile. Civilians are perceived either as threats, in case they support the “other” side, or as a potential source of new supporters. Thus, they are often key targets for combatants on all sides. In many internal conflicts, combatants have no compunction about using the most nefarious techniques of warfare, including torture, killing, and maiming, as in Sierra Leone, or the wholesale expulsion of civilians, as in Kosovo. The violence of internal conflicts is facilitated by the wide availability (at modest prices) of an array of light and medium weapons. The growing availability of small arms has been a major factor in the increase in the number of conflicts. Small arms account for 90 percent of all casualties. The global arms trade is not subject to international monitoring or regulation.<sup>14</sup> The United States is responsible for almost 75 percent of all exports of small arms. Armed groups continue to force child soldiers to fight. A Stockholm International Peace Research Institute report estimates that in 2000 about 10 percent of all combatants worldwide were younger than eighteen. It is estimated that in 2017 some 300,000 children are involved in conflicts worldwide.<sup>15</sup>

In February 2004, the “child army” of the Lord’s Resistance Army, most of them no more than ten or eleven years old, massacred two hundred civilians in northern Uganda, one more atrocity in a seventeen-year-old civil war where the rebel army is made up mostly of abducted children. Refugee and IDP camps have been used as bases for operations by combatants in countries such as Burundi, the DRC, Liberia, and Pakistan, increasing the risks for camp populations and relief workers alike. Refugee camps in many countries are not safe havens, causing many migrants, especially in Africa, to become second- and third-generation migrants.

Contending forces in a number of conflicts use relief as a weapon of war. In Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sudan, and Sierra Leone, warring factions systematically regulated the flow of food into specific areas to weaken public support for their opponents or to strengthen support for their own side. Genocidal conflicts aimed at annihilating all or part of a racial, religious, or ethnic group, and conflicts caused by other crimes against humanity—such as forced large-scale expulsions of populations—generate massive humanitarian needs. Humanitarian emergencies generated by such conflicts typically produce sudden and especially large movements of refugees and IDPs, with accompanying emergency needs for food and

shelter, as in Kosovo and Rwanda. In Syria, the Assad regime frequently uses the withholding of aid to coerce rebel or ISIS forces into submission or withdrawal.<sup>16</sup>

Conflicts and food security are related. Food security and migration are related. In 2018, 815 million people (1 in 9) worldwide go hungry each day.<sup>17</sup> In 2017, almost 124 million people across fifty-one countries and territories faced crisis levels of acute food insecurity or worse.<sup>18</sup> The populations of many developing countries lack “food security”—they lack enough food to perform the basic tasks of daily living. Rich nations spend \$250 billion on farm subsidies to their own farming sectors while depressing world prices and enabling the United States and EU countries to dump their food products in poor countries, depriving them of the export earnings they desperately need.<sup>19</sup>

“Relative deprivation” and “othering” are the root causes of numerous wars in the last century, many of which have carried over into the twenty-first. Relative deprivation refers to the perceived incongruity between what a group (a nation-state, or any one or more of its racial, religious, ethnic, and social components) believes it is entitled to and what it actually has. “Othering” refers to assigning actual or imputed differences to others to rob them of attributes generally shared by human beings. “Others” are different—not the same as “we.”<sup>20</sup>

Othering fuels relative deprivation through the use of social, ethnic, religious, national, and socioeconomic cleavages which are attributes of conflict. While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights holds the promise for a lessening of the conditions that marginalize people and cause war, it is honored more in the breach. Without the authoritative tools to make of its provisions something more than noble aspirations, the Declaration of Human Rights remains an idealistic proclamation in a very untidy world. But the steady inculcation of the culture of human rights among nations, accelerated by the information revolution, gives hope that progress toward the ideal will increase. Hope, however, is a palliative, the handmaiden to misbegotten assumptions.

One critical issue that has largely gone unaddressed is the relationship between poverty and violent conflict on one hand and terrorism and poverty on the other hand and the interrelationships among these variables. Even though we hear the figures frequently, we remain disconnected from their far-reaching implications: an estimated 900 million people in 2012 lived on less than \$1.90 a day—the new international poverty line; the number for the beginning of 2018 under the new line is 767 million people. Poverty also is becoming increasingly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. Globally more than 800 million people are still living in extreme poverty.<sup>21</sup>

By 2030 the world population will reach 8.5 billion people, most of them in the developing world.<sup>22</sup> An aging West will face an explosion of young people elsewhere who face lifetimes of poverty and have little prospect for better lives. Relative deprivation and resource deprivation will affect social cohesion among developed and developing countries, within and among developing countries, and within and among developed countries, fostering alienation, exploitation, and dependency, the accoutrements of violence.

The phenomenon of growing inequality accompanying global economic trade between the developed countries in the Northern Hemisphere and the developing countries in the Southern Hemisphere and the perception within developing countries that the developed countries (read: the West) are using trade agreements to advance their interests at the expense of their poorer neighbors increases resentments. A 2003 World Bank report argues that “an unequal distribution of wealth exacerbates societal tensions and increases the perception of relative deprivation.” “These trends,” it concludes, “lead to perceived grievance and potential strife.”<sup>23</sup> More than ten

years since the report appeared, global television—and now the World Wide Web accessed by laptop and increasingly on smart phone devices—feeds feelings of envy and resentment that disparities in income levels generate. Violent conflicts are most likely to occur within countries with weak social cohesion, that is, countries where the informal sectors of the economy are most pervasive, where surviving and protecting one’s meager assets require guile, alliances with gangs, and frequently a resort to violence. In poor and extremely poor countries the informal sectors of society are expanding; adherence to such things as the rule of law is a misnomer since there is no rule of law, only the excessive consumption of the elites and the petty corruption that survival in the informal world necessitates.

The link between poverty and terrorism is less demonstrable, but it exists, nevertheless. Terrorist groups exploit conditions of poverty to expand the political appeal of their cause and find fertile grounds for nurturing recruits. Yet, the countries most in need of aid for development rarely receive it. The limited resources that developed countries are prepared to allocate to development aid is given to countries where the infrastructure offers the prospect for a high return on the aid they receive, that is, countries already some significant way up the developmental ladder. Those countries at the lowest rungs lack the basic capacity to use aid or the aid ends up in the coffers of corrupt officials. They have been written off. And therein lies the blind eye.

An Oxfam study reported that in 2014 sixty-two billionaires owned as much wealth as the poorer half of the world’s population.<sup>24</sup> Another study shows that “the share of the world’s wealth owned by the best-off 1% increased from 44% in 2009 to 48% in 2014; while the least well-off 80% currently own just 5.5% percent” and that “on current trends the richest 1% would own more than 50 percent of the world’s wealth by 2016.”<sup>25</sup> A more recent Oxfam study, released in January 2018, reports that the 82 percent of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1 percent of the global population, while the 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world saw no increase in their wealth.<sup>26</sup>

But this is the rub: the greater the levels of inequality within and among countries, the greater the perceived levels of relative deprivation as redefined by the new information age. The greater the perceived levels of relative deprivation, the more at risk these countries are for violent conflict, especially if they are in the quadrant of extreme poverty.

“Many of these frail, artificial states [in the Middle East and Africa],” the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman observes,

don’t correspond to any ethnic, cultural, linguistic or demographic realities. They are caravan homes in a trailer park—built on slabs of concrete without real foundations or basements—and what you’re seeing today with the acceleration of technology, climate change stresses and globalization is the equivalent of a tornado going through a trailer park. Some of these states are just falling apart, and many of their people are now trying to cross the Mediterranean—to escape their world of disorder and get into the world of order, particularly the European Union.<sup>27</sup>

During 2014, according to the United Nations, some 14 million people were forced from their homes in armed conflicts worldwide, and much of the huge increase was due to the wars in Syria and Iraq, with Afghanistan lagging not far behind. In Syria, more than half of the total prewar population of 22 million is now uprooted, as either new refugees or IDPs. During the first

four months of 2015 alone, another 700,000 Syrians fled, many to nearby countries, the highest rate at any time during the war. In the countries that border Syria, the flow of refugees into stuffed camps threatens the stability of the states themselves. As of January 2018, nearly 13 million Syrians had been displaced.<sup>28</sup> Turkey hosts over 2.5 million Syrian refugees; Lebanon, over 1.3 million—more than 25 percent of Lebanon’s fragile confessional balance; Jordan, over 750,000, leading King Abdullah to tell the United Nations bluntly that Jordan had reached its limits.<sup>29</sup> Many refugees, finding different kinds of hopelessness in the camps, unemployed and struggling at odd tasks to make ends meet, strike out for greener pastures.

Less noticed, and with unforeseeable repercussions, is the increasing instability in several countries in Africa, especially Libya, and also many parts of Afghanistan. Additionally, Hugh Eakin, a senior editor at the *New York Review of Books* who covers conflicts across the Middle East, reported that by the time international forces withdrew from Afghanistan, in 2014, “Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, which had together absorbed more than five million Afghans in recent years, had begun taking aggressive steps to send them home or prevent them from staying”; by summer 2016, “tens of thousands of Afghans were joining the Syrians trying to enter Europe.”<sup>30</sup>

The 1990s ended with 36.7 million uprooted worldwide (IDPs and refugees combined), 3 million more than in the 1980s. In 2010, the global “refugee” count stood at 15.52 million, according to UNHCR, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and the U.S. Committee for Refugees. The next five years saw escalations in the number: 16.7 million in 2013; 19.5 million in 2014; and 20 million in 2015.<sup>31</sup> The global refugee total, which a few years ago was 20 million, had as of mid-2018 reached 22.5 million for the first time since 1992.<sup>32</sup> Still the most dramatic increase in displacement occurred in the number of IDPs. In October 2017, some 40.3 million people were internally displaced, compared with 21.2 million at the turn of the century.<sup>33</sup>

In a report published in 2015, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) writes:

Never . . . from the peak of the Darfur crisis in 2004 and the sectarian violence in Iraq in the mid to late 2000s to the uprisings of the Arab Spring in 2011 and the ensuing crises in the Middle East have we reported such a high estimate for the number of people newly displaced in a year. Today there are almost twice as many IDPs as there are refugees worldwide.<sup>34</sup>

In the IDMC 2018 global report, there were 30.6 million new internal displacements in 2017, which is the equivalent of 80,000 people displaced each day.<sup>35</sup> The growing number of IDPs is a problem with which the international community has not come to grips. The displaced are often cut off from international humanitarian aid and protection because of insecurity on the ground, difficult logistics, or restricted access imposed by the country’s government. IDPs are usually trapped in some of the world’s most dangerous places. They are nonpeople in their own countries, where marginalization is usually the common condition of most. Hence, displacement is a springboard for migration. David Miliband, president and CEO of the International Rescue Committee, referring to IDPs worldwide, says it is “very, very important . . . to recognize that those 40 million people are tomorrow’s refugees.”<sup>36</sup>

## **Europe: Fear and Loathing**

In the “civilized” West the atrocities committed in the name of ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia generated supertime yawns. As the Yugoslav federation of republics disintegrated and conflicts consumed the region, minorities in its disparate republics fled to republics where they were

majorities. The worst displacements and migrations occurred in what is now called Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Bosnian Muslims and Russian Orthodox Serbs live cheek by jowl in uncomfortable accommodations and in Kosovo where Kosovars fled to Albania and Serbs fled Kosovo for Serbia. In Germany, migration from the Balkans peaked in 1992. Of the total flow of 429,000 immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, immigrants to Germany amounted to 281,000—more than half. In 1994, Sweden hosted 43,000 people—ten times the flow in 1990; in Switzerland the immigration peaked at 41,000 in 1992.<sup>37</sup>

In total, the 1991–1995 conflicts in Yugoslavia resulted in forced displacement of nearly 3 million people. The religious/ethnic dimension of the conflicts led to “ethnic cleansing,” massive ethnic reshuffling, and a slew of new countries. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an estimated 1.3 million were internally displaced, some 500,000 sought refuge in neighboring countries of the region, and about 700,000 became refugees in Western Europe.<sup>38</sup>

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, post–Arab Spring upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Morocco, the civil war in Syria and the emergence of ISIS and other Islamic groups, some with fealty to ISIS and others to al-Qaeda, have resulted in a fundamental change in the relationship of the European Union to its migrant populations that threatens to change the character of the European Union itself and may be the death knell for border-free travel across the European Union. Adding to the desperation, the World Food Program has run out of money in Syria and UNCHR has cut allowances to refugees in the camps in Jordan and Turkey by half, to the edge of subsistence. In the absence of adequate security, an increasing number of UN agencies, the Committee of the Red Cross, and NGOs will withdraw, at least temporarily, from particularly dangerous humanitarian operations.<sup>39</sup> Hence, the flow of migrants to EU shores has become ceaseless, despite the hazards for refugees from Bodrum, Izmir/Smyrna, and Mersin in Turkey who make the crossing in dinky, overcrowded rubber boats to the Greek islands of Kos, Lesbos, and Leros, or for refugees from poverty-ridden camps in African countries who undertake the hazardous journey to reach Tripoli and Benghazi in the hope of securing a passage to Malta or Italy.

Nearly 5 million refugees have fled Syria.<sup>40</sup> According to UN estimates, Turkey’s Syrian refugee population was more than 2.7 million by mid-March 2016, and the large unregistered refugee population means the true figure is even higher.<sup>41</sup> As of May 2018, UNHCR and government figures indicate 3,583,434 Syrian refugees are registered in Turkey.<sup>42</sup> By mid-year 2015, 1.2 million refugees—mainly from Syria and Iraq—entered the European Union, constituting a fourfold increase over the previous year.

As explained in the Editor’s Note, the migrant crisis that followed threatens to undermine the European Project itself. The EU countries of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia, as well as Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia have imposed several measures to stem the flow of refugees from Greece.<sup>43</sup> The quintessence of the European Union is the surrender of part of national sovereignty. Now the interests of national sovereignties are suddenly taking center stage. The sprawling, labyrinthine bureaucracy that holds the European Union together is fraying at the seams. The European Union works when an aggregate of national interests can produce consensus, no matter how opaque. It creaks to a halt when national interest takes precedence.

There are no antidotes to the suicide bomber, the lone-wolf terrorist, the indigenous radicalized or sleeper terrorist cell—all prepared to die or even knowing that they will be killed carrying out their terrorist attacks; no safeguards against those who place no value on human life, least of all their own. These terrorists do not need advanced technology to carry out their acts,

putting at some disadvantage countries that rely on advanced technologies to secure their safety; the acts of terror that elude them take place beyond the most sophisticated security threshold. These terrorists have mastered the ways to communicate among cells in several sovereign states. They are not only extraordinarily elusive; they are recombinant. This is the new reality, for which the affluent developed countries have no safeguards other than to slam closed the doors of refuge for incoming migrants, with guilt by association rapidly displacing reason. Right-wing xenophobes began gaining traction during 2015 and accelerated their reach during the early months of 2016. Right-wing parties, once considered peripheral, started to swell their ranks and win elections.<sup>44</sup> Faced with a European Union at loggerheads with itself over how to simultaneously act collectively and act on individual sovereign-state definitions of security, the latter prevailed. Member states failed to agree on a migrant-distribution quota system. After months of wrangling, rancor, bellicose threats, and intransigence across the bloc, the European Union struck a Faustian deal with Turkey on March 18, 2016: Henceforth, new asylum seekers who make their way to Greece from Turkey would be returned to Turkey; for each returnee, the European Union would resettle one Syrian from a camp in Turkey.<sup>45</sup> These measures were at best a finger in the dike, begging the question: And what of migrants who find alternative routes to Europe?

The rapidity with which ISIS gobbled up huge swaths of Iraq and Syria elicited hyperbolic reactions. The United States believes that they pose a threat to global order, and specifically a threat to Europe. “This [ISIS] is a threat to everybody in the world,” President Barak Obama declared in March 2016, “[It is] overtly committed to destroying people in the West and in the Middle East. Imagine what would happen if we don’t stand and fight them, if we don’t lead a coalition—as we are doing. If we didn’t do that, you could have allies and friends of ours fall. You could have a massive migration into Europe that destroys Europe, leads to the pure destruction of Europe, ends the European project, and everyone runs for cover and you’ve got the 1930’s all over again, with nationalism and fascism and other things breaking out. Of course, we have an interest in this, a huge interest in this.”<sup>46</sup>

## **Interventions to Slow the Flows of Migrants from the Conflicts That Are Their Bedrocks?**

No matter how we view history, especially in the post-millennial era, the mindless brutality of psychotic dictators, the mass elimination of political opposition in nondemocratic states, internal dispositions for ethnic cleansing, and internal conflicts that escalate into mass atrocities cause people to flee and set in motion displacement and migration. In the case of the Syrian civil war, there is a need to develop criteria for just intervention. No sovereign state has the right to murder its own citizens. How, then, do we balance the rights of sovereign states in a global world that has redefined the definition of sovereignty and the rights that sovereign states have in a world of increasing interdependencies that recognizes the international primacy of human rights? When does oppression reach a point where international intervention on humanitarian grounds should give way to forceful intervention? Of course, there is no single context. Was it difficult to make a forceful case for a military intervention in Iraq, when Saddam Hussein was ruthlessly exterminating Kurds and Shiites?<sup>47</sup> Why stop with overthrowing one ruthless dictator? Besides the destabilization such an intervention would bring, triggering perhaps even more repression in neighboring countries, it would have required a prior debate to reach consensus that would justify such an intervention, one that would henceforth be universally applied. The major redefinitions of international law would have ramifications that would be difficult to apply and

impossible to enforce. We are faced with what Kofi Annan once referred to as “problems without passports”—which require a serious review of the existing framework for the just use of force. In Syria, the case for just intervention is more compelling.

The United Nations is ill-equipped to carry out the very task, the prevention of war that is its founding mandate. It has tried in various ways to adapt to a post-Cold War era, to a unipolar world, to a post-9/11 era, to a multipolar world, and now to the rise of global jihadist extremism. Member states have been unable to agree that there should be a permanent UN international army, thus requiring it to improvise ways to deal with wars. Peacekeeping—never mentioned in the charter—had to be invented. For more than seventy years, the United Nations has been the proxy battleground for competing ideologies, and it is still locked into the decisions or the lack of decision by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Because the UNSC is unable to agree on any matter that would seem to diminish the international standing of one of its members, the UNSC is for the most part moribund and next to useless for accomplishing much in the way of deterring intrastate conflicts.

The UN Charter expressly declares the sanctity of the principle of nonintervention. It has now set limits on that sanctity. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) sets out the principles for international military intervention in either failed, about to fail, or rogue states where conflict is ready to erupt or has already erupted. These principles are the right intention, the last resort, proportional means, and reasonable prospect.<sup>48</sup> Most important, the ICISS was unambiguous in two regards: the principle of nonintervention yields to the principle to protect, and intervention is wedded to the principle of the need to rebuild. Thus, one of the major consequences of our interdependence is to recognize that a threat to peace must now include the “feared adverse international consequences of civil conflicts involving humanitarian catastrophes.”<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately, while the goal is high-minded, no state has taken upon itself to intervene in another state’s internal conflict no matter how compelling the evidence that parties have engaged in acts contrary to the Geneva conventions. Nor is an intervention likely unless the permanent UNSC countries are on board. In Syria, Russia’s military intervention in support of the effort to degrade and destroy ISIS, in reality became more of an attempt to prop up the Assad regime. Neither, for that matter do the U.S.-led coalition airstrikes on ISIS targets.

The United Nations has also addressed the question of accountability. The International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda address gender crimes perpetrated during war, such as rape, sexual assault, sexual slavery, and forced prostitution and for the first time define them as crimes against humanity, war crimes, grave breaches of the Geneva Convention, and genocide. The Rwanda Tribunal handed down convictions for rape as a crime against humanity or genocide. The International Criminal Court, established in 2002, prosecutes perpetrators of crimes against humanity, but it is no deterrent to conflict itself. In many conflicts, especially intrastate conflict, UN peacekeeping forces exercise little influence.

The projections of most expert institutions suggest that the current migration crisis is only the tip of the iceberg. In 2016, an estimated 362,000 refugees and migrants risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea with 181,400 people arriving in Italy and 173,450 in Greece. In the first half of 2017, over 105,000 refugees and migrants entered Europe.<sup>50</sup>

This movement toward Europe continues to take a devastating toll on human life. Since the beginning of 2017, over 2,700 people are believed to have died or gone missing while crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe.<sup>51</sup> Russian military bombardments in rebel-held areas in Syria killed civilians indiscriminately, giving further impetus to the outward flow of refugees and

further exacerbating the crisis in the European Union. Russian president Vladimir Putin achieved two outcomes: one intended—emerging as the major powerbroker in putative peace talks—and one unintended—weakening the European Union’s political cohesion.

## **Denial**

Migration is a global phenomenon. At some moment the rich West will have to direct its attention to the countries at the ladder’s lowest rung. But that won’t happen until crisis becomes catastrophe. The commitments must be long-term no matter how faltering and difficult partnerships with the countries at barrel’s bottom may be; otherwise they will fail. Marginalization incubates itself. Globalization that leaves tens of millions of people in perpetual free fall is a prescription for violent conflicts, out of which will emerge new terrorist groups with agendas of hate and access to the technologies and weapons that will give lethal expression to that hate. Unless national security analysts include in their security calculus the link between poverty and violent conflict and how poverty creates conditions that are breeding grounds for terrorist groups, their analyses of possible terrorist threats will be incomplete and possibly wrong. Military power will not “defeat” terrorism; developmental power may. But that calls for a reordering of the West’s thinking and priorities. In sub-Saharan Africa, the epicenter of interstate migration and intrastate conflict, the percentage of people living on less than \$1.25 a day in 2015 was more than 300 million or (41 percent) and more than twice as high as any other region (such as South Asia, with 17 percent).<sup>52</sup> If the West, and more specifically Europe, continues to believe that it can somehow hoard enormous wealth without consequence while millions risk their lives to breach its fortified borders, it is inviting disaster. Though many of the Millennium Development Goals are being successfully met, migrants and IDPs, nevertheless, have increased exponentially in pivotal regions of the world because globalization is inherently disruptive, offsetting interdependence with fragmentation, and fragmentation with conflict. For the moment, the European Union has outsourced its migrant crisis from a seemingly endless war in Syria, an endless war in Iraq, and the multiplicity of wars in Africa fueled in part by the West’s lucrative arms trade with the belligerents. But outsourcing is a band-aid. You reap what you sow. The West may try to psychologically erase the relentless stream of migrants, but that will not slow their momentum as a nexus of factors ensures that conflicts, due to old grievances and new threats, converge, creating new refugees on Europe’s shores: new barbarians at the gate.

In “Armed Conflict: Trends and Drivers,” Ernie Regehr, a Fellow of the Simons Foundation, reports that, according to best estimates, in 1987, thirty-seven wars were taking place in thirty-four countries; by 2010, that number had declined to twenty-eight wars in twenty-four countries. One-third of the conflicts that were under way in 1987 were still active in 2010. Of those twenty-eight conflicts that were active at the time of his writing, Regehr says, “only six are less than a decade old. Six have been underway for more than three decades, seven more for more than two decades, and another nine for more than one decade.”<sup>53</sup> The total number of conflicts increased from forty-one in 2014 to fifty-two in 2015 and decreased only slightly to forty-nine in 2016.<sup>54</sup> By 2017, however, at least fifty-five armed conflicts were wreaking devastation in twenty-nine states and territories.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, their intensity has increased disproportionately because of the sophistication of the weaponry involved, the deliberate targeting of civilians as the most efficacious way to achieve military ends, and the resort to atrocity to create pandemonium, inspire terror, and send whole populations fleeing their homesteads. Who recalls the genocide in Darfur and the marauding Janjaweed? Each conflict results in migration. Smart phones have collapsed

distances, become instruments of navigation and information sharing, relaying which routes are most desirable, which are to be avoided, where borders are porous and where they are walled off, and which destinations are paths to safety. These innovations in technology have facilitated both conflict and migration.

## Notes

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<sup>6</sup> *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, Round XXI Report, *Nigeria* (International Organization for Migration [IOM], February 2018), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/01%20DTM%20Nigeria%20Round%20XXI%20Report%20February%202018.pdf>. See also “Nigeria,” Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), May 2018, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/nigeria>.

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