

# **Will the movement of populations bear upon the world order by 2050?**

## **Why is migration important to understand?**

The figure of the migrant, diffused in media broadcasts across the world, is a political image that provokes polarizing reactions. The migrant—is it a completely novel emergence in history? Even a cursory reading on the topic reveals that migration is not a new phenomenon. A people—however nationalist myths construct them—have never been resting stagnant within nation-state borders. We are all migrants and mongrels of some sort. All desires for a pure nationalist phenotype are a nostalgic longing for idylls that have never existed.

Why is migration important to understand? While we may look upon past histories of migration with the detached interest of an academic, our contemporary migrations are all-too-close and all-too-urgent: they present an ethical imperative, a duty to decide and to act. This challenge is not one that the global community can neglect and stay a safe distance from.

The most recent mass migration has come from the Syrian Civil war, where an estimated population of 22 million Syrians were scattered about by the vagaries of historical circumstance — 13 million were displaced and 5 million of those displaced found themselves outside of Syrian national borders. The rippling geo-political effects of Syrian mass-migrations (among others) have impacted the world. Liberal democracies around the world agreed to do their fair share and house migrants; however, recent response by recipient states have changed. They have adopted a hostile position to migrants and from the fringes, alt-right parties and their leaders have begun to take center stage in contemporary politics. One commonality in these parties' platforms has been the rejection of and the anxiety toward the foreign migrant. Migration has changed national politics. National politics, in turn, have changed international politics as nationalist discourse has led to an inward-looking and parochial political vision. The British and American exits from free trade deals and international organizations suggest the first cracks in the liberal world order, with its goals for political and economic international co-operation. A comparatively small displacement led to profound effects around the world.

The future is filled with the possibility of migration. Mass migrations will be a potent combination of push and pull factors: it will be a combination of aspirational desires in rich, urban metropolises and retreats from poverty and political instability. Of course, not all migrant populations will be undesirable. The growing, young demographics in the Global South will be welcomed in the Global North to fill labour shortages. These are likely to be in the minority compared to the potential migrations spurred on by existential threats like climate change, which has the potential to make large swaths of land mass uninhabitable. How might the introduction of a large migrant population, one that grossly outnumbers the current migrants, spark intra-national and international conflicts, both diplomatic and military?

The future of mass migration that we head towards today provokes all of these questions. To neglect this question would be to drive without headlights in the darkness. Through analysis and by writing about this topic, I hope to turn on the metaphorical headlights and illuminate the faint contours ahead. Only in the crudest beliefs in human nature is the fate of humanity doomed to economic rationality and resource-related conflicts from migration. As human beings—and this, fellow futurists should be well aware—we have the power to *construct* the future. We are not mere passengers driven by fate.

Why is migration important to understand? To shape the future.

### **What are the drivers of migration in the past?**

Migration is an overdetermined phenomenon. Unlike a science experiment, we are unable to identify a series of dependent and independent variables to construct a predictive framework. As with many complex, real-world problems, we can turn towards history for inspiration. History may not repeat itself in perfect imitation, but the present moment often sounds out like a variation of the past. With a patient ear, we may be able to detect a melody, a theme, a musical structure - this will help us better understand and contextualize migration in the contemporary world. The melodies of the pre-historic past are too faint to hear out. With this in mind, we can listen to the migrations of the past century for our purpose.

Migration can be roughly categorized into migrations by push factors and by pull factors. This conceptual framework separates the migrations that happen by necessity (the push factors) and the migrations that happen by choice (the pull factors). Push factors include poverty and military conflict. In these cases, migrants find the prospects of the unknown better than the present circumstances before them. An example of the former are the two million Italian migrants travelled to the United States in between 1900 and 1910. One case of the latter is the Vietnam War and spread Vietnamese diasporic populations all across the world. Pull factors include voluntary, long-term immigration for a better life and short-term movements of skilled labour across national boundaries. The former are immigrants to Canada and the latter are expats. However, whether migration happens by push factors or by pull factors, in none of these situations was migration a predictable and foregone conclusion. The historical circumstances that provide the impetus for migratory desires are elusive and they escape hard predictions. One must maintain constant vigilance to multifarious trends. The future is constantly being shaped and reshaped.

Historical circumstances are only one part of the dialectic. Migration does not happen in a vacuum: there is always a political and institutional structure that facilitates and guides the flow of these migratory desires. The German *gastarbeiter* (guest worker) program in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was created to address labour gaps, leading to the Turkish migration to Germany. One purpose of the European Union was for the creation of a free market for capital flows and

labour. While history provides the drivers of migration, the political and institutional framework of the present moment directs to where migrants are *driven*.

On a more fundamental level, political and institutional structures define the discourse of migration. Above, migration was separated into those by push factors and by pull factors, but even this is an artificial categorization. Intolerable political and economic circumstances may push migrants away from the home country and pull them to one that will improve their situation, but there is no moment when migrants by necessity transform into migrants by choice. Participants of the German *gastarbeiter* program may have left because of a lack of economic opportunities and because of their desire to earn higher wages. Politics and clever framing play a significant role as an intermediary force. Additionally, institutions, whether national or international, provide the larger structure for migration. Even when migrants do not use these formal frameworks - by crossing illegally, for instance - these transgressions are negatively defined by the established institutional structure. Migration and migrants are ultimately a political category for analysis.

What are the drivers of migration in the past? Above, two separate dimensions that drive migration are discussed. The first are the historical circumstances that create the impetus for migration. While we can make careful conjectures about latent migratory events, one must be nimble and open to multiple possible futures. The second is the institutional and political structure. The institutional and political structure fundamentally defines the discourse of migrants and migration. Through it, migratory desires are directed to a tangible destination.

## **What are drivers of future migration?**

What are drivers of migration in the future? There is one large difference from the past. This is on the tip of everybody's tongue: climate change. We will take a critical look at this new driver of migration. It will complicate some of the narratives surrounding climate change related migrations, and we will consider some of the ultimate implications (and destinations).

Climate change holds the threat of ecological devastation and a radical global transformation — it is no wonder that it has occupied the popular imagination and mainstream political discourse in recent years. Climate change has been linked with migrations all over the world, whether in Central America or Bangladesh. Headlines like “Climate Change will Create World's Biggest Refugee Crisis” litter the contemporary mediascape. The Guardian, in the aforementioned article, suggests that “tens of millions of people will be forced from their homes.” This is a moderate estimate; in the extreme end, there is Vice with the headline “Climate Change Will Create 1.5 Billion Migrants by 2050 and We Have No Idea Where They'll Go” painting an apocalyptic scenario. In response, the first global movements have begun to protect the image of the climate migrant. In a very recent landmark ruling in January 2020, the United Nations human rights committee has declared that it is unlawful for governments to return migrants whose livelihoods are threatened by climate change.

The Syrian civil war has been linked to climate change as well. The Syrian civil war began as Arab Spring-inspired pro-democracy protests that were met with violent repression. This was the catalyst for further escalation. What sparked the initial discontentment? From a climate change lens, the narrative points to the drought from 2006 to 2011. This was the most severe in recorded history and decimated the livelihoods of the rural population. The drought led to a rural-urban migration, increasing competition for resources, and leading to conflict that took on an ethnic dimension.

This has not gone without scrutiny. Other researchers have pointed to policies of economic liberalization that cut rural subsidies and ultimately put farmers in debt. Government policies have led to the rural-urban migration in this narrative. It is beyond our scope to recount the play-by-play of academics in their boxing ring. It suffices to say that migratory events are complex and multi-factored. Climate change is undoubtedly an important consideration, but there is no First Cause when it comes to migration. A critical view on other migratory factors like internal politics and wealth concentration in urban areas allows a more nuanced perspective on contemporary migrations.

In the discourse of the climate change migrant in the West, there is mixed in an image of anxiety and fear. How will the West survive the flood of climate migrants? However, the West is far from a stoic Atlas that carries the burden of global migrations on its shoulders. The case of Syrian refugees presents a poignant demonstration.

Despite popular political narratives, most Syrian refugees have been relocated outside of Europe. As with other migrations, most of the migrants were displaced internally. Seven million of the 13 million are still within Syrian borders. In terms of international migration, there are roughly 3.6 million Syrians in Turkey, 950 thousand in Lebanon, and 670 thousand are housed in Jordan. Germany accepted 593 thousand Syrians, and this is followed by Iraq with 252 thousand. While this may not be representative of all migrations, the case of the Syrian migrations seems to suggest that not all roads lead to Europe.

As a conclusion, what are the drivers of future migration, and what are the consequences? In response to popular narratives, the article answered in the negative: climate change is not the Prime Mover in migration, and one must be aware of the erasure of other migratory factors when this occurs. Migrations in the future will not overwhelm the West. As with contemporary migratory patterns, one will expect internal migrations to occupy a large portion. External migrations will be distributed throughout the region, and will not be concentrated solely in the West.

## How does migration affect international relationships?

International migration has the potential to affect international relationships almost by definition. When the citizen of one state travels into the borders of another, they are foreigners and outside the safety of the home country. International embassies and consulates developed to protect citizens who are abroad, and infringements to the rights of a citizen of one state by the host state can lead to a souring of relations. This has happened recently with the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, the CFO of Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd. The Chinese government arrested two Canadian citizens and put sanctions on Canadian canola exports in retaliation. However, it is important to note, as is stressed previously, that migration rarely exists without an institutional context. Migration may affect international relationships, but this presupposes an existing agreement that facilitates the movement of people between two or more states.

The influence of individual migrants on international relationships between states is often negligible in comparison to the actions taken on the state level. Migrants present an opportunity – nation-states can use migrants within their borders to advance their interests. Migrants are instrumentalized for economic gain, as in the case of South Korea. The migrant population in South Korea has grown from roughly 40,000 in the early 1990s to about 2 million today through various labour movement programs and marriage migration programs. These migrants have created a class of multi-lingual and culturally fluid “Kosians” (a portmanteau of Korean and Asian) and naturalized non-ethnic Koreans. The Korean state has used these migrants to bridge economic relationships between Korea and other states.

Instrumentalization happens in other ways as well. Migrants can be used as pawns for international power plays, demonstrated by the E.U.-Turkey deal in 2016. The deal presented a way to put a stop to flows of migration for European states under duress. Turkey agreed to control the refugees going from Turkey to the Greek Islands. In response, the European Union pledged an initial €3 billion to Turkey. Additionally, there was a political component that reconfigured international relationships, such as visa-free travel into E.U. states for citizens of Turkey and new talks for Turkey’s membership into the European Union.

Top-down state policy can instrumentalize migrants to change international relationships, but contemporary events have shown that migrants change international relationships from the bottom-up as well. The response to migrations have led to nationalist movements across the European continent and in the United States by political movements largely categorized as the New Right or the Alt Right. These political movements have gained traction, partially motivated by an anxiety of the international migrant. Contemporary political events like Brexit and the election of President Trump, who campaigned against international free trade deals like NAFTA, are signals of an emerging and contentious vision of the world order. This new vision of the world challenges the normative liberal world order, the latter with its large trade blocs like the European Union that facilitate free movement of capital *and labour*.

Migrants and migration are able to influence international relationships between state actors, both from the top-down and from the bottom-up. States can actively utilize migrants to advance

their interests; however, they are at the same time beholden to their citizens. Migration has proven to be a contentious issue in recent times, and recent political movements have reconfigured international relationships from the bottom up.

## **How do nations control multicultural and multiethnic populations?**

How do nations control multicultural and multiethnic populations? We need to examine the concept of the nation and nationalism in relation to this question. *Control* is the word that must be thought through first. The word control implies that the nation-state, through heavy-handed measures, forces upon the migratory population a standard of behaviour to which they must conform. Control can be achieved through devious, circumlocutious tactics as well. A nation can *deceive* a migrant population to create docile subjects for governance. In the first is governance by repression; in the second, through ideology. Both of these cases rely on an unquestioned assumption. This is the separation of the *self*, the national population and the *other*, the migrant population. The boundary between the two is much more porous than they appear. There is no eternal national body with unchanging boundaries and neither is the migrant forever an excluded outsider.

What is the nation? The nation is much more than citizenship and bureaucratic inclusion. As scholar of nationalism Benedict Anderson suggests through the title of his landmark work, the nation is an “imagined community.” It is imagined because it is a *constructed* collective that relies on an imagined bond connecting members of the nation to other imagined members who they will never interact with. It is a community because the nation is “always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” as opposed to a hierarchical relationship. Nation-states are able to extend this community to migrants, and redefine the borders of national belonging. Construction does not imply invention and falsity. Even though nations and the feeling of national belonging are culturally constructed, it inspires community, belonging, and meaning for its members.

Canada is an example of one nation-state in which the definition of the national subject has changed. Canada is known for its brand of multiculturalism today. This was hardly the case in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when Canada’s identity was predicated on Britishness and whiteness. White Canada policies excluded non-white individuals as national subjects. However, the boundary that once existed between white Canada and the once unassimilable migrant population has disappeared in the present day.

Other nation-states are going through their own transitions. The foreign population in South Korea was roughly 40,000 in 1990 and has grown to approximately 2.5 million today. Previously, one had to have “pure” Korean blood to claim belonging to the Korean nation, but the growing foreign population is challenging and redefining what it means to be Korean. The South Korean state is an active participant in these redefinitions through mechanisms like multiculturalist policies.

There are several potential incoming sources of migration in the coming years. These range from “pull” factors, such as labour market migrations, to “push” factors, like climate change related migrations. How might these migrants be welcomed into the national body? Thinking about the future is always limited by the ways of thinking in the present. There has been a revival of narrow nationalist discourses in the political landscape in recent years. In these discourses, the migrant is a figure who is completely exterior to the national community. The migrant threatens traditional, eternal ways of life with a strange dress, a strange tongue, and unfamiliar mannerisms.

However, the politics of the present need not be the politics of the future. Just as the national community is constructed, it can be reconstructed anew. The story of migration is in part a story of the reinterpretation of the national community. The migrants of today can be full members of the nation tomorrow.

### **How might international organizations facilitate migration?**

International migration is facilitated by pre-existing institutional structures, which guide migratory desires to end destinations. Even illegal migrations are defined as such because they are transgressions against the formal institutional structure. Institutional structures run the gamut from national policy to large political unions like the European Union that enable movement of people and labour.

International organizations serve various roles in this structure. There are organizations like the European Union that serve as a legal and governing framework to manage the flow of migration. There are organizations like the International Organization for Migrants (IOM) that provide services and counselling for governments and migrants, helping potential migrants navigate through dense bureaucratic structures. Other organizations from all different political persuasions try to change the system: an example is the Migrant Rights Network, which advocates for migrant rights and protections. All these international organizations form a relatively stable equilibrium of competing interests that result in small changes and reforms to the structures in place.

However, there are Events in history that overwhelm the status quo. These require a rewriting of the global playbook and a reconstruction of established institutional structures. One such Event that occurred was World War II, which led to a displaced population of over 60 million people. Most of the affected were on the European continent. It is important to note that—according to the UNHCR—our contemporary displacements have only recently overshadowed this number in 2015. (This is only the displaced population of refugees, and does not include the general population of migrants worldwide.)

Confronted with the daunting prospect of accommodating these displaced peoples, international organizations managed migrations through laws like the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which granted the right to asylum and the right to other

protections for displaced peoples fleeing from a “well-founded fear of being persecuted.” Moreover, new international institutions were founded, like the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in 1943. This institution is the origin of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that manages international refugees today. These international structures still inform the processes for the current international response to our current migrations.

While the current international structures might seem rigid and slow to change, large-scale crises have created international organizations to radically transform global and national institutional structures to meet migratory exigencies. Our current historical moment provides a cogent example of rapid structural change. In a matter of a few months, the coronavirus pandemic has overwhelmed the previous international logics of globalization. Nation-states are repatriating both citizens and supply chains from abroad, and closing down borders, restricting entry to foreign nationals. While there are hopes for a rapid return to the “normal,” such dreams are yet uncertain: will international flows of people return to levels seen in the past?

Similar crises in the future may prompt a response that is similar in kind. One large question mark looms in the horizon. While we previously critiqued climate change for obscuring the multi-factored nature of international migrations, climate change will create a crisis in one possible future. The mediascape reminds us of this possibility almost daily. For example, a recent *The Guardian* article title reads “One billion people will live in insufferable heat within 50 years.” Where will these people go if their homes become uninhabitable?

How will the world respond to a scenario like this? A quick read into the past suggests that a response is not confined to limitations of current international structures. If such a crisis does arise, then completely new international organizations and a new institutional structure could emerge to replace the structures of the past. Of course, this does not promise to be a frictionless and conflict-free process.

## **Could population flows lead to conflict?**

Migration and conflict seem to be intrinsically connected. Intra- and inter-state conflicts around the world have devastated livelihoods and led to displaced peoples both inside and outside of home country borders. One can think of the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and recently, Syria, as examples.

The converse appears to be the case as well. The recent movement of migrants into the borders of the West have shifted domestic politics. In the United States, President Trump has vowed to build a wall to keep Mexican migrants out. In the European Union, there has been a similar political realignment. In the absence of an appropriate European response, nationalist responses have threatened to unravel the fragile political tapestry that is the European Union. Europe ended up paying Turkey to host migrants—the solution was figuratively displaced.



The vicious cycle of conflict, forced migration, and further conflict threatens to spiral out of control, particularly due to the unresolved threat of climate change, which may worsen food stability and literally render some areas of the world uninhabitable. According to a commonly cited figure, there will be over 200 million forced displacements related to climate change by 2050. The current figure is at 80 million forced displacements (both internal and external) today.

A brief sketch of 2050 may frighten the reader into believing in an apocalyptic image of the future, in which over-migration will lead to resource scarcity, societal disorder, and violent conflict. However, one can temper this image of 2050, where migrants storm the gilded gates of the West.

Despite popular conceptions, the share of migrants as a percentage of the global population has hardly changed since 1960. It has remained at 3% of the global population, from 93 million out of a population of 3 billion in 1960 to 244 million out of a population of 7.3 billion in 2015. However, the flow of migration has changed. The European continent has changed from being a source of migration (due to colonization and push factors) to become a destination for migrants. It attracts 1.5 to 2.5 million migrants per year today, which equates to 0.3% to 0.5% of the entire European Union population.

Forced displacements have occupied a powerful image in the public imagination. However, Europe and the West is not the final destination of all of the nearly 80 million displaced people in the world. According to the UNHCR, at the end of 2019, 45.7 million were displaced internally, and 26 million were considered refugees (being displaced externally). Of the 26 million people, 73% were hosted in neighbouring countries, and 85% were hosted in developing countries. While climate change threatens to create forced displacements, the majority of those displaced will be displaced internally and most of them will be displaced into neighbouring countries.

Finally, additional context about the present discourse around migration and conflict needs to be discussed. While migrants may create some legitimate cultural and structural tensions, it is also important to explore the economic context underlying the recent shift in public discourse about migrants. Research suggests that the inhabitants of regions hit by economic insecurity, due to the 2008 financial crisis and the outsourcing of supply chains, are more likely to be anti-migration. Insecure livelihoods and scarcity revive the well-worn trope of the lazy, but job-stealing migrant, who simultaneously takes jobs from locals but also undermines the welfare state. The migrant has perhaps returned to the position of the scapegoat. These economic conditions contribute to the perception of the conflict-bringing migrant in political discourse.

Migratory movements in the future may lead to conflict; however, we can also imagine and create a future in which migration and conflict are not inevitable. One must escape the confines of the present economic and political context to think more rationally about migration and potential conflict in the future.

## Where are the migration flashpoints?

Migration may spark internal, intra-state conflict, as discussed previously. This still leaves a whole set of unexamined questions on the potential effect of migration on inter-state conflict. Where are the potential flashpoints, at which state-on-state conflict may erupt?

As is evident from the contemporary political landscape, state violence and state-on-state conflict begets a certain type of migrant, the refugee. Refugees can be political exiles who remain involved in the politics of their country. As politically marginalized figures with a vested interest in the affairs of the home country, refugees may continue their political dissidence from the safety of the host country—sometimes with the support of the host country, who see an opportunity to advance their interests.

Of course, it is not our intention to cast the shadow of a security threat onto the bodies of refugees: the vast majority of refugees seek only a better life. However, 73% of refugees are hosted in neighbouring countries, which make them a potent conduit of such engagement against the home state. Additionally, great numbers of refugees have not been resettled in any meaningful capacity. 25% of refugees are stuck in refugee camps, where they may stay for years or even decades. The refugees in these camps lack basic infrastructure and any semblance of a decent future. These conditions foster resentment, despair, and can lead to collusion with dissident groups. As an example, the Palestine Liberation Organization operated from Lebanon and Jordan and relied on Palestinian refugee camp networks for support. Climate change related factors will lead to the increase of externally displaced refugees and may exacerbate political tensions between refugees and home country. Without a coordinated global response to resettle refugees, refugee camps will only grow larger and refugees will only become more desperate.

Refugee camps on the boundaries of nation-states may play a larger role in facilitating political conflict as these trends continue. To name some of the larger camps, there are nearly a million Rohingya refugees in southern Bangladesh, there are nearly 5.6 million Syrians in refugee camps in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, and there are Somalian refugees in camps near Kenya and Ethiopia. The locations of refugee camps may change in the future; however, potential flashpoints can be found in nations vulnerable to climate change (like Bangladesh) and conflicts that produce refugees.

Migrants can also be used in state policy. Turkey has struck a deal with the E.U. to host refugees. A failure to uphold the deal or a miscommunication may result in retaliatory action and subsequent conflict. Additionally, a migrant—if not yet a citizen of the host country—is fundamentally in an ambiguous position in between two nation-states. Having left the safety and sovereignty of the home country, the migrant has abandoned his or herself to the goodwill of the host state. Nation-states exert a degree of influence through embassies and consulates that provide political services for their citizens abroad, but their powers are limited. Nation-states can prey upon the extra-territorial migrants under their jurisdiction, creating or aggravating conflict between states. In a recent demonstration, Meng Wanzhou, the CFO of

Huawei and daughter of the founder, was arrested by Canadian authorities on December 1, 2018 to be extradited to the United States. In response, the Chinese government detained two Canadian citizens working in China under the state secrets law. While the current pandemic virus has radically changed inter-state mobility, labour market migrants are fodder for this type of state maneuvering.

Migrants motivated by both push factors (refugees) and pull factors (economic migrants) are a potential locus of flashpoints. Both of these forms of migration promise to increase in the future. The unresolved climate change problem will lead to millions of displaced people. If the trends toward globalization continue past the end of the pandemic, then economic migrants can be potential political pawns to advance state interests, particularly as conflicts between states intensify.

## **How does economic inequality affect migration?**

How does economic inequality affect migration? We can examine the question from two vantage points. The first vantage point will take the international context. As for the second, we will examine the effects of economic inequality on migration from the intra-national context.

In the international context, economic inequality and migration seem to be inextricably tied in a cause-and-effect relationship. In a dominant narrative, migration happens because of economic inequality, or the differences between the economically underdeveloped nations and the developed world. In this narrative, there is an inversely proportional relationship between economic development and migration: the less economically developed the nation, the greater the motivation for potential migrants to emigrate and pursue a better livelihood. Pursuing this logic, some politicians, development workers, and scholars advocate for a “smart solution” to migration by tackling the problem at the roots. They advocate for ideas like “circular migration” and suggestions for temporary migration, in which international migrants contribute to the development of their home countries through remittances and the development of human capital through their experiences working abroad. These hopes seem justified, given the role of remittances on economic output for some underdeveloped countries. For example, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), 42% of Tajikistan’s GDP came from remittances in 2015.

More recent scholarship puts the correlation between development and migration into doubt. Actual empirical migration processes hardly conform to this relationship. While it seems rational to assume that people will migrate to improve their long-term material prospects, a more nuanced way of conceptualizing migration takes migratory capabilities into consideration. Realistically speaking, migrants need access to information, personal networks, a certain degree of capital, and skills for the labour market to migrate to another country. Higher

levels of human and economic development actually facilitate migration, although migratory aspirations eventually decrease as nations reach developed country status.

Empirical data also corroborates this way of theorizing migratory patterns. The largest movement of migrants come from countries like Turkey and Mexico, not from countries like Liberia and Bhutan. Eventually, after a certain level of development, potential migrants will be satisfied with the opportunities available at home and the home country will start to become a destination for migrants. Countries like South Korea, which has traditionally been a sender of migrants, are starting to become a receiving nation. In either case, economic development will lead to migration to a certain extent. Given how vastly unsuccessful development initiatives have been in the past decades, this does not promise to radically increase migrations from the global South to the global North in the future.

In the domestic context, economic inequality plays a role in the reception of and the attitudes toward migrants by the local population. Studies suggest that individuals who perceive a *lack of control* harbour anti-migration sentiments: these individuals often face financial insecurity, feel political alienation, and lack trust in public institutions. As it stands, the general feeling of a lack of control looks to increase in the future. In the current political-economic landscape, there is increasing alienation of citizens from the political process, there are the politics of austerity, and income and wealth inequality are as high as they have been for decades. In the United States, almost 40% of Americans report that they would struggle to meet an unexpected \$400 expense. These trends were happening before COVID-19 exacerbated the situation: the wealth of American billionaires has grown \$365 billion to \$3.65 trillion since the middle of March, while middle-to- low-income families have not fared well. Following the research, we may expect anti-migrant sentiments to increase, along with anti-migrant discourse from political parties, if these trends continue to hold in the future.

Economic inequality affects migration in both the international context and the intra-national context. In the international context, economic inequality creates migratory aspirations while limiting migratory capabilities. In the intra-national context, economic inequality sets the ground for nationalist, anti-migration sentiments. This latter point will drive the next article, which will examine future scenarios of migration given a nationalist response.

## **How might migration lead to a nationalist response in 2050?**

The following two pieces will engage in an imaginative exercise. In both the year is 2050, and there are two different political responses to migration. In the first scenario, migration has led to a nationalist response, and in the second, a system of international cooperation has emerged to manage migration. Both of these scenarios are *ideal types*—they are not predictions. They will provide a way of thinking of migration in the future by presenting completely different political circumstances.

The year is 2050. Incipient nationalist movements have taken centre stage and have become politically dominant. Various European nations have followed the example of Brexit, leading to the death of the dream of European unity. Other international organizations and multi-lateral agreements have lost support. Various nation-states around the world have drifted away from these agreements, after support by the largest economies had faded away. There had been efforts at creating regional blocs. However, following the failure and dissolution of the European Union, these efforts have lost momentum. In China there was the Belt & Road Initiative, and similar efforts had floundered in Africa and in South America. The failure of Europe is something that nationalist leaders all around the world like to point out.

Larger blocs have failed due to the tensions created by climate change. Climate change is a global problem requiring an international response, and with a weak international system, nations have looked towards parochial solutions to safeguard their own interests. In this scenario, the worst climate change predictions have come to fruition. The world is past the tipping point. Any semblance of ecological balance has been destroyed, and the effects of climate change continue to accelerate uncontrollably. These have ignited tensions and conflicts within budding regional blocs. Migrants from vulnerable areas have crowded into safer regions, creating resource conflicts, especially for clean drinking water. Intra-national tensions also exist.

Climate change has led both directly or indirectly to refugees and mass migration. Whole swaths of land have been submerged or are literally unfit for human habitation. There are an estimated 400 million internally and externally displaced migrants around the world. While responses differ from nation to nation, the predominant response by nations has been that of securitization and militarization of borders. This is more so the case after the great pandemic of 2032, in which an ultra-infectious, asymptomatic, and deadly virus passed from nation to nation through the few trading routes and through migrant bodies. The militarization and securitization of borders have led to small-scale skirmishes, some of which have escalated into larger military conflicts. Non-nationals are regarded with great suspicion. There are emerging and embedded nationalist discourses and myths of “genetic purity.” Refugees in refugee camps have no hope of resettlement, and there are talks of forming Refugia, which is a state-like formation that would represent the collective interest of refugees.

Labour migrations have also slowed to a trickle, due to the break-down of institutional arrangements between states. Only in rare cases are labour migrants accepted and most nations do not offer routes to naturalization or citizenship. Large multi-national corporations have also been affected. Branded as “unpatriotic” for outsourcing jobs and avoiding taxes in tax havens, they have either been driven out or nationalized by the state. Nation-states play a strong role all around the world, prompted by the exigencies of border securitization and growing military threats from neighbouring nation-states.

In this scenario in the year 2050, a nationalist response has nearly stopped all international migration. This includes both privileged migrants, such as expats, and migrants forced from

their homes due to various circumstances. Events linked to climate change drive most of the forced migration. States have responded with stronger border securitization.

## **How could international cooperation manage migration?**

Like the previous article, this article will explore the context of migration in 2050 through a hyperbolic set of assumptions about the international governance framework. In this scenario, nation-states have collectively decided to forgo national sovereignty. Ultimate political authority has shifted to the World Government.

This shift was prompted by global challenges, among which the most prominent was climate change. In 2029, a convergence of factors led to the historical moment that made these shifts possible. On the side of the private sector, climate change created massive uncertainties that increased levels of business-associated risk, especially after insurance companies stopped providing coverage for climate-change related damages. On the side of civil society, massive peaceful climate change movements mobilized in cities and towns all across the world, led by a loosely-organized group of highly-connected youth. These movements paralyzed cities and towns for weeks at a time in some locations. The peaceful movement was accompanied by the threat of a more radical wing, who employed cyberattacks (and occasionally resorted to violence) against politicians who opposed the will of the people and conducted DDoS attacks that shut down the infrastructure of large oil and gas corporations.

In this unique political movement of pure possibility, leaders and populist politicians around the world decided on the creation of the World Government, which would (in theory) rise above the parochial interests of nation-states and govern in a way that is best for all people. The rudimentary structures were found in a document, *The World Constitution*. Latent tensions continue to spark discussions, and this great experiment in global governance continues to be refined.

A new, uniform system of education was installed after the establishment of the World Government, and it includes a common history of humankind. The first generation of students educated under this new regime are entering adulthood. As new generations come of age and replace previous generations, the underlying metaphor of a unified human family comes to replace the national divisions of the past. Motivated by this image, the World Government takes on projects to pursue the betterment of humankind.

For decades, one of the World Government's long-term goals has been to properly relocate and resettle the estimated 200 million peoples displaced by conflict and climate change-related factors. The Department of Movement was created to manage resettlement. While the worst of the climate catastrophe had been averted, the feedback loops created by a warmer climate require constant mitigative actions. Peoples from regions most affected by climate change are resettled into established communities or form new communities, and the World Government provides support for key infrastructure and financing. While this becomes the source of some

disgruntlement by the established population, there is a sense of communitarian duty towards these newcomers, as if one is hosting a distant relative.

Generally speaking, there is free movement of people and of labour. The passport, which had facilitated a system of asymmetrical movement, has been removed entirely. In theory, all individuals have the right of access to the four corners of the world. In practice, people have a different capacity to movement due to wealth inequalities.

The world government has not only done away with nation-state sovereignties, but it has also created a global market of consumers, the access to whom are unimpeded by state regulations and tariffs. This has benefited those with capital. There is a highly mobile, global class of moneyed elites who possess capital, a managerial middle class, and a growing lower class who survive off of a diet of UBI payments and unstable work. Class conflict has emerged as the locus of the greatest antagonisms in society, especially as economic elites gain political power in the World Government.

In this scenario of international governance, historical contingencies have led to the establishment of the World Government. The World Government manages the resettlement of forced migrants, while providing a border-less institutional framework that allows free movement of people and labour. However, class divisions regulate access to migratory capacities. A growing lower class do not have the privilege of mobility. This echoes the greatest source of antagonisms in this scenario: the locus of conflict has moved from the nation to class.

## **Will the movement of populations bear upon the world order by 2050?**

How has migration impacted the world in the past? From a wide historical lens, migration is a natural aspect of the story of homo sapiens. The drama of migration goes hand in hand with human history. We can expect migratory events to continue to shape the world into the distant centuries, millennia, and beyond.

How has migration shaped the present? This question requires us to narrow the lens into our contemporary history. There is one important analytical variable to consider: the modern nation-state. Modern migrations can be distinguished from migrations of the pre-modern past due to the dominance of the nation-state as a form of political governance in the international world order. Migration, like other complex human phenomena, is the result of multiple interconnected factors. However, nation-states set the basic framework through which migration happens. Even illegal migration is defined as such through the framework. Observers can look towards international migratory frameworks as indication of potential migratory flows.

Nation-states have a complicated relationship with the migrants within their borders. From the perspective of governance, there are pros and cons to migration. Migration and migrants can be used as a tool for the purposes of economic growth and to mitigate the economic effects of

an aging population. At the same time, migrants can be a source of conflict, both on the level of international, state-to-state relationships and on the intra-national level. As Brexit and the politics of Donald Trump has shown us, migration can influence national politics. In the end, nation-states have the power to dictate the terms of the relationship. Migrants can be permitted in or excluded, and nation-states can decide if migrants can be integrated as citizens and as a part of the national community.

In the contemporary world, the climate crisis looms on the horizon as a possible trigger for uncontrollable migratory events. A commonly cited figure suggests that roughly 200 million forced displacements will occur due to climate change by 2050. This need not provoke anxiety from those in the West. It is likely that only a small portion of these migrants will resettle in Europe and North America. There are currently 80 million peoples forcefully displaced and roughly 33% (26 million people) are displaced externally. Most of those who are displaced externally are resettled in neighbouring countries, not in Europe. Additionally, we may be prisoners of the current historical moment with regards to the political discourses on (more specifically, against) migration. Research suggests that economic precarity and political marginalization fosters anti-migrant attitudes. It is important to keep these frames in mind as we construct our images of the future.

Due to the importance of the institutional framework surrounding migration, we examined two hyperbolic images of the future centred on different levels of international cooperation. The first scenario imagines a purely nationalist response; it is a world without international cooperation and multilateralism. The second scenario images a world where nation-states forfeit sovereignty to the World Government, which manages migration flows. Will the movement of populations bear upon the world order? These two scenarios outline the faint contours of possible futures, but they serve another purpose. They remind us of this important truth: we are not bound to fate; we are the masters of our future.

**Kevin Jae**