

ON CLIMATE MIGRATION

EXPLORING CASES
FROM TÜRKİYE AND BEYOND



EDITORS
MUHİTTİN ATAMAN
İBRAHİM EFE

SETA

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INTRODUCTION: THE NEXUS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

MUHİTTİN ATAMAN*

İBRAHİM EFE**

Climate change and migration are two major phenomena that are constantly altering our planet and need a broad perspective to comprehend. Climate change has lately risen to the top of the worldwide agenda, and both the international community and national governments are scrambling to find adequate answers to its overwhelming impacts on the planet and its people. Migration has become a sobering concern, both as an epiphenomenal repercussion of climate change and as an inherent dynamic in and of itself, particularly in the light of recent mass movements of people from war-torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and, most recently, Ukraine due to Russia's invasion. The international community now has major concerns about climate induced migration, i.e., climate migration. Climate migration is the movement of people inside their own country or across international borders in response to the effects of climate change, such as increasing sea levels, extreme weather events, and diminishing agricultural production. Due to environmental risks, climate migrants may be compelled to leave their homes, or they may choose to relocate in quest of better living conditions or economic possibilities. As the effects of climate change continue to worsen, climate migration is a rising worldwide issue that involves crucial social, economic, and political questions, and it is projected to become a major challenge in the coming years.

Climate change has been increasingly one of the ultimate drivers of human migration; many observers claim that in the near future its impact may exceed

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all man-made impacts. Although violence, persecution, and poverty have always driven people to leave their homes and their countries, climate change and natural disasters such as massive earthquakes, destructive floods, and global warming have been increasingly playing important roles in influencing migration. The current global climate emergency has begun to influence not only the security of peoples but also nation-states. While some natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods cause direct and immediate human displacements, climate change-related emergencies such as drought and erosion cause slow but steady migrations. As incremental climate change can increase the risk of natural disasters, their consequences will have vital implications for displacements (local or cross-border) and international policymaking. According to the World Bank, climate change, including drought and sea level rise, could force at least 216 million people to migrate in the next 30 years.¹ Climate change is already thought to have exacerbated droughts that have left people hungry in several African countries.

There are two major debates that are linked to one another.² The first concerns environmental and climatic factors in migration and their relationship to other push or pull factors, whether social, political, or economic. The second dispute concerns the political structure under which environmental migration should occur and how those who relocate should be treated.³

The role of climate change in migration and the interplay between these and other push and pull factors (such as social, political, or economic conditions) is the subject of the first discussion. Migration is just one of many strategies that people develop to deal with (or adapt to) environmental stress, and understanding the role that the environment plays in the dynamics of migration requires an understanding of not only the ways in which and the reasons why people are vulnerable to climate change, but also the various strategies they develop to deal with (or adapt to) environmental stress.

Understanding the role of the environment in migration dynamics requires analyzing how and why people are vulnerable to climate change and the strategies they develop to cope with (or adapt to) environmental stress, migration being one

¹ "Climate Change Could Force 216 Million People to Migrate Within Their Own Countries by 2050", *The World Bank*, (September 13, 2021), retrieved December 08, 2022, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/13/climate-change-could-force-216-millionpeople-to-migrate-within-their-own-countries-by-2050>.

² Etienne Piguet, Antoine Pécoud and Paul de Guchteneire, "Migration and Climate Change: An Overview", *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3, (September 2011) p. 2-3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdr006>.

³ Piguet et al., *Migration and Climate Change: An Overview*, p. 2.

of them. The second argument is about the political framework for environmental migration and how to treat those who move. This implies a discussion of how to protect vulnerable people and the responsibilities of states and the international community in doing so. The extent to which the environment affects migration is tied to the status of the affected people.

The enjoyment of a safe, clean and sustainable climate is a vital factor of the right to a healthy and humane environment and therefore is essential to human life and well-being. It is the responsibility of all states to take necessary measures such as preparing rights-based decarbonization plans, achieving zero carbon emissions, decreasing the use of fossil fuels, protecting vulnerable peoples, and increasing climate finance. In other words, maintaining a safe climate and protecting human rights are two interrelated issues. While most observers have been focusing on the movement of people leaving their homes and countries due to war and political crises, far less attention has been given to the millions fleeing their homes and countries due to climate change or other natural disasters. According to the International Displacement Monitoring Center, since 2008 more than 21 million people on average per year have been displaced due to different natural disasters.

The second dispute concerns the political structure under which environmental migration should occur and how those who relocate should be treated. This necessitates a dialogue regarding the scope of protection that should be afforded to those in need, as well as the roles that individual states and the international community play in this regard. There is a close relationship between the two problems because the degree to which the environment influences migration decisions is directly related to the social standing of the people involved.

The capacity of nation-states in dealing with large swathes of people fleeing their home countries due to war, conflicts, natural disasters, and climate change has been of increasing interest for scholars and policymakers. The international refugee system and associated institutions have been criticized for failing to address the issue and lagging behind the developments producing further refugees. Countries, particularly the 'developed' ones, are responding to the problem by erecting further walls on their borders and around their policies, leading to the securitization of refugees mainly based on economic arguments while most of the world's refugees continue to live in 'less developed' parts of the world.

We can add a third dimension to these disputes, which is the mental walls erected in front of climate refugees. In line with the rise of rightwing populism in Western and European countries, refugees are invariably politicized via an-

ti-refugee discourses marked by the cultural difference they exemplify. Türkiye's open-door policy toward the Syrian refugees since 2011 presents an exceptionally welcoming approach compared to the strict refugee regime of the European Union (EU) countries. Notwithstanding the dubious normative power of Europe and liberal humanitarianism, it stands for, most European countries reveal an unequivocal stance against accepting refugees from the South. Whereas they have unconditionally opened their arms to Ukrainians, fleeing their country due to the Russian invasion, revealing a bitter double standard of the West when it comes to war and refugees.

This edited volume entitled *On Climate Migration: Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond* brings together two broad objectives. First, it aims to present an alarming and innovative perspective on climate change via case studies from all across the globe. Second, it will provide a fresh insight into the issue of migration from the vantage point of global and regional dynamics that force people to migrate. Overall, the edited volume aims to encourage international organizations and governments to find long-term solutions to this ever-changing process.

The book is divided into three distinct sections. In the first part, the papers discuss the legal and ethical implications of the connection between climate change and migration, as well as the problem of inadequate state policies on both national and international levels. In the second part, Türkiye, specifically, will be the focal point of attention as a regional context. The papers included in this section discuss Türkiye's actions in response to the massive influx of Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war in their country. These actions include efforts to halt further instances of irregular migration and to assist refugees in resettling in Türkiye. Additionally, the papers provide an in-depth analysis of Türkiye's efforts to contribute to climate security and how these efforts have influenced migration patterns. The book's third and final part focuses on climate-induced migrations and the appropriate state responses in other parts of the world, as well as migrations from Africa and the EU's response to these.

In Chapter One, Burak Güneş and Bengü Çelenk, in their address to the second debate, lay out the challenges and potentially fatal conflicts that are inherent in the emerging attempts to respect state sovereignty while crafting progressive and truly responsive sets of approaches to a sui generis global problem such as the climate crisis. These challenges and conflicts could prove fatal to the emerging attempts.

Following on this perspective, in Chapter Two Burak Güneş and Haydar Karaman investigate how the United Nations Human Rights Council's recent decision

recognizing “The Human Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment” paves the way for a legal and political debate regarding climate-related issues. The decision was made in recognition of “The Human Right to a Safe, Clean, and Healthy Environment.” They focus their critical attention on the situation in Haiti and use it as a lens through which to examine the effects and significance of international law and politics on climate refugees. Additionally, they provide solutions that can be implemented to help people who have been forced to relocate as a result of issues related to the environment. They hypothesize that migration as an adaptation framework could be useful for policymakers in determining how voluntary migration can help reduce vulnerability and exposure to climate-related damages. This is based on their analysis of the relevance of international law and politics on climate refugees in the case of the Republic of Haiti. Migration as an adaptation framework could be useful for policymakers in determining how voluntary migration can help reduce vulnerability and exposure to climate-related damages. It is of the utmost significance that they demand that nations adopt legal frameworks and mechanisms that can be enforced in order to deal with this inescapable threat.

Abdullah Ayaz discusses climate change as well as the more recent causes of migrations from a global perspective in the following chapter, which is Chapter Three and deals with the role of the international system and nation-states. In particular, he investigates the effect that policies regarding externalization have on migratory movements, which are anticipated to gain momentum as a consequence of the growing variety of factors that push people to migrate. In addition to this, he emphasizes the roles that are played in the implementation of border restrictions, repatriation agreements, and other legal procedures that are designed to make it more difficult for migrants to receive international protection and financial support programs. Because of the greater impact and frequency of migration, the author makes the valid argument that migration management at the international level needs to be reorganized in a manner that is more equitable. Ayaz draws the following conclusion from his recommendations: the international community should take on a greater level of responsibility for events that are related to migration and concentrate on addressing the fundamental factors that contribute to migration. It is possible to draw from this discussion the conclusion that it is necessary to focus on the primary causes of migration rather than aiming to drive migrants away through the implementation of policies that promote externalization in order to achieve more just, equitable, and humane management of international migration.

In the final chapter of Part I, Chapter Four, Mahmood Monshipouri, Burcu Akan Ellis, and Cassidy Renee Yip argue that helping refugees to curb the spread of the current coronavirus cannot be divorced from social contexts. They call for a new approach to deal with the pandemic while at the same time calling for a new approach to cope with the pandemic. In addition, they show that there are ethical as well as practical considerations to take into account when deciding how to help refugees deal with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19 pandemic). Because the vast majority of refugees live in densely populated areas, particularly urban areas, a disease outbreak would quickly spread through the communities in which they are currently located.

In Chapter Five, Ömer Yılmaz examines Ankara's 'safe zones' in Northern Syria. He also clarifies whether or not the creation of safe zones in response to the Syrian civil conflict and the subsequent humanitarian catastrophe was a choice for Ankara or a requirement for Ankara in terms of irregular migration and border security. These questions are addressed in the context of the book's overall discussion of irregular migration and border security. Yılmaz contends that Türkiye has declared multiple safe zones within Syria's borders, exercising its right to self-defense in accordance with international law, in order to combat terrorist organizations that have taken advantage of the growing authority void on Syrian land in order to place Turkish borders and nationals in jeopardy. Yılmaz proposes that the safe zones serve three preventative and prospective functions by (i) providing a safe haven for the civilian population, (ii) paving a step forward in the counter-terrorism campaign and attempts to stop irregular migration, and (iii) allowing Syrians to return to their homeland. Yılmaz does this by recounting the critical turning points in the Syrian civil war.

Ching-An Chang, in Chapter Six, investigates the socioeconomic characteristics of the Syrian refugees currently residing in Türkiye, as well as the possibilities that this data presents for more effectively organizing policies regarding refugees. The conflict in Syria, which has been going on for more than ten years, is the worst humanitarian disaster that has occurred since World War II. Over four million Syrians call Türkiye their home, making it the nation with the largest Syrian population. The author claims that there is still a long way to go before war refugees can return to their country of origin. Since many of these refugees have already started a new life in the nation that is housing them, it would be difficult for them to simply give up what they have worked so hard to build. To get more specific, the destruction of their communities in their home countries is another reason why

people are reluctant to return. As a result, the creation of a long-term integration strategy for the nations that are hosting the refugees is unavoidable.

Mehmet Emin Birpınar and Çiğdem Tuğaç discuss the link between climate change and migration in the concluding chapter (Chapter Seven) of Part 2, as well as the potential repercussions in the context of climate security throughout the world and in Türkiye. They come to the conclusion that international co-operation should help realize human rights such as the right to life, the right to sufficient food and water, the right to appropriate health opportunities, education, and housing, and the right to realize one's own potential in order to be in line with the concept of human rights being fulfilled.

In the first chapter (Chapter Eight) of Part 3, Sibel Yanık Aslan questions whether the inclusive link between migration and security has an impact on efforts to develop uniform migration policy. She comes to the conclusion that the formulation of an effective immigration strategy is hampered by decisions made under the influence of securitization. According to the viewpoint of Yanık Aslan, the fundamental principles of the EU are put in jeopardy whenever migration policies are regulated for the sole purpose of ensuring national security.

In Chapter Nine, the use of coercive engineered migration as a hybrid threat during the 2015 EU refugee crisis is investigated. İrdem and Raychev argue that a state can use coercive engineered migration as a threat even when it is not the source of outflows; that it is possible under conditions of an internal or external conflict in the state that is the source of migration; and that a state-challenger would most likely be an authoritarian state that supports the government of the emigration state. The authors assert that the prudent course of action for Türkiye and the EU in the context of the crisis of 2015 would be to develop a migration diplomacy initiative that could contribute not only to an agreement but also to a mutually beneficial, long-term solution for both parties.

Alexander Ugwukah's timely paper in Chapter Ten on the migration to and from Libya is marked by the critical perspective that binds together all of the discussions in our edited volume. This study takes a concise but in-depth look at the socio-economic effects of undocumented migration into and out of Libya. It does so in a manner that is both brief and insightful. Its purpose is to investigate the factors that led to the escalation of the situation, the manner in which it morphed into new forms of slavery and became a source of income for certain criminal elements, the role that the EU played in the situation, and the effects that the situation has on Nigerians and other citizens of countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the findings of Ugwukah, the situation needs to be addressed from every possible vantage point, including the origin of the supply, the recipients and accomplices in Libya, and the final destination locations in Europe, which will either accept or reject the migrants.

In the Chapter Eleven, Joseph Bangura delves into the topic of contemporary African migration, which does so by situating it within the framework of historical connections that have existed between Europe and the Americas ever since the 15th century. In addition, he considers contemporary migration from Africa through the lens of factors such as the globalization of labor, the influx of skilled Africans, severe unemployment, and frequent social upheavals, amongst other factors. According to Bangura's argument, migration from Africa not only drains the continent of highly qualified professionals but also swells the labor force in the countries that take in African migrants.

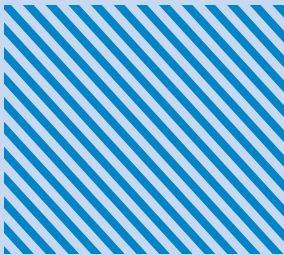
In the penultimate chapter of Part 3, Rabia Aamir's study of the personal story of Ghada Karmi, an anglicized Arab woman who was forced to leave her birth and childhood home in Palestine more than eighty-three years ago, focuses on the main themes of destruction resulting from state violence and the concomitant ethical concerns. This conceptual paper examines Karmi's presentation of her right to return to the land of her birth, how she problematizes the ongoing marginalization, erasure, and Nakba of her land, both by external and internal factors, and how she states the environmental ethic of her place, all while understanding the need for social justice and decolonization as expressed in her memoir.

In the book's concluding chapter (Chapter Thirteen), Irudaya Rajan and his colleagues evaluate the role of inter-state migrants in the socio-economic profile of Kerala and comment on the necessity to include them as a priority in the discussions regarding migration policy, particularly in light of the fact that the state is prone to natural disasters. In particular, they comment on the necessity to include them as a priority in light of the fact that the state is prone to natural disasters. They come to the conclusion that because the region is prone to regular floods, landslides, and other natural disasters, it is long past due for inter-state migrants to be integrated into society and state policy in order to avoid mass migration and abuse during such trying times. This conclusion was reached because the region is prone to regular floods, landslides, and other natural disasters.



ONE

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS: LEGAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND



CHAPTER ONE

THE IMPASSE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW ON CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRATION: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND THE UNITED NATION'S JANUARY 2020 DECISION ON CLIMATE REFUGEES

BURAK GÜNEŞ*
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INTRODUCTION

Recent trends show that there has been a gradual increase in climate-induced migration around the world. In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) warned that “climate, environmental degradation, and natural disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movements.”¹ The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) analyzed data from 148 states and released the finding that 17.2 million people were displaced internally in 2018 as a result of climate change, whereas 10.8 million people were displaced due to violent conflicts.² Following this, approximately seven million people left their homes due to climatic reasons in the first half of 2019.³ However, Myers predicted in 2002 that “200 million people overtaken by sea-level rise and coastal

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¹ “Climate Change and Disaster Displacement,” *UNCHR*, (2018), retrieved March 29, 2020, from <https://www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html>.

² “Internal Displacement from January to June 2019,” *IDMC*, (September 12, 2019), retrieved March 10, 2020, from https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2019-mid-year-figures_for%20website%20upload.pdf.

³ “Internal Displacement from January to June 2019,” p. 7.

flooding, by disruptions of monsoon systems and other rainfall regimes, and by droughts of unprecedented severity and duration,”⁴ would emigrate in the coming years, while the IDMC demonstrated that around 265 million people already had to leave their country of origin owing to climate-related disasters between 2008-2018.⁵

As climate change is associated with the increase in migration, it raises the question of whether the existing legal concept of refugees is adequate in the face of this challenge. The present legal framework is based on the 1951 Geneva Convention, which while critical for protecting refugee rights, cannot account for the status of climate refugees due to the novelty of the concept, in practice as well as in literature. Therefore, any new decision that could constitute case law in terms of refugee law is quite important. Taken together all these points raises the important question of how difficult it is to establish the objective legal status of climate refugees, an issue that constitutes the main topic of the argument of the study. In this paper, we will provide a legal and political review of climate-induced migration by examining the tension between state sovereignty and human necessities. In other words, by examining the relationship between climate-induced threats and sovereignty, we attempt to show how climate-induced problems could also undermine state sovereignty, which is deemed as the sole regulatory principle of the state system.

In doing so, we ask whether sovereignty is being jeopardized because of external physical effects such as climate change by investigating the case concerning Mr. Ioane Teitiotia’s, who sought refugee status from New Zealand in 2013, citing as causes of climate change, rising sea levels, and water shortages in Kiribati, and the rejection of his application in 2015, application to New Zealand for protection as a climate refugee, as this was the first of its kind. Ultimately, we conclude that the sole regulatory and indispensable principle of the state system, i.e., sovereignty, has been challenged in its primary position as the highest principle that denies any rule restricting it. The environment has been forcing sovereignty and sovereign states to adapt to new situations. Therefore, in the legal sense, there are attempts by some authorities to mediate between state sovereignty and threats external to

⁴ Norman Myers, “Environmental refugees: a growing phenomenon of the 21st century,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B: Biological Sciences*, Vol. 357, No. 1420 (2002), p. 609.

⁵ “Disaster Displacement: A Global Review, 2008-2018,” *IDMC*, (May 2019), retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201905-disaster-displacement-global-review-2008-2018.pdf>.

the state system, like climate change. We argue that this way of thinking ultimately will deadlock the system.

In the next section, we will discuss the relationship between climate change and migration. Additionally, the paper contains a general background about climate change in Kiribati, focusing on how climate change affects this small island country in the Pacific (the Archipelagic State). After we analyze the case of Ioane Teitiota, we finally examine, through the field of migration studies, the historical decision by the UN in January 2020 on climate-induced refugees, that could lead to changes in state practices and therefore court decisions.

ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

Climate has always naturally changed throughout history but for the first time, the world has been faced with human-induced climate change. Even though this period has been called the ‘Anthropocene Epoch’ by many scholars,⁶ this label is not yet officially accepted by the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and the International Commission on Stratigraphy, which specifies global units and determines the global time scales to fix the global standards.⁷ The Industrial Revolution has been accepted as a turning point of human-induced climate change due to being associated with high carbon emissions and the production of

⁶ The term ‘Anthropocene’ was firstly introduced by Crutzen, a Nobel Prize-winner and Atmospheric Chemist, in 2006. For more information see, Paul. J. Crutzen, “The ‘Anthropocene,’” in Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft (eds.), *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene*, (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2006) pp. 13-18.

⁷ International Commission on Stratigraphy’s (ICS) primary objective is to precisely define global units (systems, series, and stages) of the International Chronostratigraphic Chart that, in turn, are the basis for the units (periods, epochs, and age) of the International Geologic Time Scale; thus, setting global standards for the fundamental scale for expressing the history of the Earth. For more details see, <http://www.stratigraphy.org/>. In 2009, Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) was founded under the Sub commission on Quaternary Stratigraphy (SQS) which is a constituent body of International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS). The aims of AWG are to provide scientific evidence and give opinion about whether the Anthropocene era has started or not. They presented a positive opinion in 2019 but ICS has not approved yet. For more details see, <http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/> and <http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/>. For the debate see, Paul. J. Crutzen, “The ‘Anthropocene,’” in Ehlers and Krafft Ehlers E. (eds.), *In Earth System Science in the Anthropocene*, pp. 13-18; Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, “Defining the Anthropocene,” *Nature*, Vol. 519, No. 7542 (2015), pp. 171-180; Will Steffen, Jacques Grinevald, Paul Crutzen, and John McNeill, “The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, Vol. 369, No. 1938 (March 13, 2011), pp. 842-867; “Working Group on an Anthropocene,” *Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy*, (May 21, 2019), retrieved March 17, 2020, from <http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/>.

Climate change has become one of the primary drivers of human migration, with many observers predicting that its impact will outweigh all other man-made factors in the near future. While some natural disasters, such as earthquakes and floods, result in immediate and direct human displacements, climate change-related emergencies, such as drought and erosion, result in slow but steady migrations. As climate change increases the likelihood of natural disasters, the consequences will have far-reaching implications for local and cross-border displacements, as well as international policymaking.

The edited volume combines two broad objectives. First, it intends to present an alarming and innovative perspective on climate change through case studies from around the world. Second, it will provide a new perspective on migration from the perspective of global and regional dynamics that force people to migrate. With a special emphasis on Türkiye's climate change policy and its organizational capacity to meet new challenges that have emerged, especially after its successful response to the massive influx of Syrian refugees, the edited volume overall aims to inspire international organizations and governments to find long-term solutions to this dynamic process.

