

CONFLICT AND INSECURITY IN CONCEPTUALISATION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION¹

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ABSTRACT

International migration has appeared frequently in the international security debates recently. However, the conflict and migration relationship is not a new one. At different levels, international migration elicits conflicting interests. This paper discusses the possible building blocks of a conflict perspective in understanding contemporary international migration flows. The emphasis is on the human (in)security rather than the state security. These layers refer to the conflicting interests at the governmental, household and individual levels and the confrontations between the regulating and migrating agents. The four layers of conflict are discussed in relation to the ethnic migrations from Turkey and Iraq. The third layer of conflict is elaborated within the concept of an environment of insecurity which was developed earlier as an analytical tool for understanding international migration.

*Σύγκρουση και ανασφάλεια
στην εννοιολόγηση της διεθνούς μετανάστευσης*

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η διεθνής μετανάστευση εμφανίζεται όλο και πιο συχνά στις πρόσφατες συζητήσεις για την παγκόσμια ασφάλεια. Παρ' όλα αυτά, η σχέση σύγκρουσης και μετανάστευσης δεν είναι καινούργια. Η διεθνής μετανάστευση, αν ιδωθεί σε διαφορετικά επίπεδα, προκαλεί συγκρουόμενα συμφέροντα. Το παρόν κείμενο προσφέρει μια συζήτηση για ένα πιθανό σχέδιο ερμηνείας των συγκρούσεων που συνδέονται με την κατανόηση των σύγχρονων διεθνών μεταναστευτικών ροών. Το κείμενο δίνει ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στην «ανθρώπινη (αν)ασφάλεια» και λιγότερο στην κρατική ασφάλεια. Τα επίπεδα όπου μελετάται το φαινόμενο των αντιτιθέμενων/συγκρουόμενων συμφερόντων είναι το κρατικό, το επίπεδο του νοικοκυριού και το ατομικό επίπεδο, καθώς επίσης και οι αντιπαραθέσεις ανάμεσα στους ρυθμιστικούς φορείς και στους μετανάστες. Τα τέσσερα αυτά επίπεδα σύγκρουσης αναλύονται σε σχέση με τη μετανάστευση εθνικών ομάδων από την Τουρκία και το Ιράκ. Τέλος, το κείμενο επεξεργάζεται το τρίτο επίπεδο σύγκρουσης μέσω της έννοιας του «περιβάλλοντος ανασφάλειας», η οποία έχει συγκροτηθεί ως αναλυτικό εργαλείο για την κατανόηση της διεθνούς μετανάστευσης.

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Introduction

International migration as a demographic process and as a social phenomenon has been part of the international security debates recently. The 9/11 New York and 7/7 London incidents, along with other minor events, have paved the way for more state security emphasis in migration debates. However, before and after these changes, international migration involved a certain degree of security question. This is human security or insecurity which is particularly important in the cases of forced migration and clandestine migration.

I have formulated human insecurity as a factor of international migration derived from the concept of "human security", which has been developed as opposed to (or going beyond) the state security and/or military defence. Only in the 1990s did a clear formulation of the concept appear. Human security was once described by Amartya Sen in relation to the threats to "the survival, daily life, and dignity of human beings and to strengthening the efforts to confront these threats" (2000: 1). Although the concept is not yet fully developed, it has been frequently used in some recent literature. The formulations of human security often emphasise the welfare of ordinary people (Paris 2001). Thomas argues that "material sufficiency lies at the core of human security" and "the problems of poverty and deepening inequality are central concerns" (2001: 159). Lonergan et al. underline that "human security has been endangered not only by military threats, but also of resource scarcity, rapid population growth, human rights abuses, and outbreaks of infectious diseases, environmental degradation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity" while elaborating the Index of Human Insecurity (IHI) (2000: 1). Thus, the human insecurity concept I propose refers to the threats on the above mentioned grounds, but one should also count on the relativity of insecurity which can be different for different population segments as well as perceived subjectively.

Militarisation of border controls has just added up to the existing human security risks for those crossing the borders for betterment of their lives. Nevertheless, international migration, as a process, has always accommodated some degree of conflict at different levels and stages. As discussed elsewhere, conflicts at the origin facilitate international migration and also affect the ways in which this migration should take place (Sirkeci 2006). They also shape the nature and composition of networks involved in this migration process. Given the strong push factors prevalent in most migrant sending countries, including lack of employment opportunities, continuous ethnic conflicts and wars, and frequent natural hazards, migration pressures promise to remain significant. Poverty in the Third World and the widening welfare gap between developed and under-developed countries are significant factors motivating people to target those better-off destinations, mostly in the Western world.

Security focus of current international migration discourses is also a reflection of the worldwide injustice and inequalities which may lead to resentment among people in less privileged areas of the globe. I tend to see international migration as a search for security or as an implication of human insecurity. Sassen (2001), immediately after the 9/11 attack on New York, said, "we cannot hide behind our peace and prosperity". The terrorist as an individual, as an organisation, even as a nation-state, has appeared in a wide range of discourses following the incident. Clearly such acts can represent an extreme example of human agency challenges to the regulating agency, yet these extreme examples relate to

Sassen's argument that there is an ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor: "The attacks are a language of last resort: the oppressed and persecuted have used many languages to reach us so far..." (Sassen 2001). Is this a one-off incident or, as she presumably suggests, the beginning of a more terrorised international migration era? There is not enough evidence to answer this question, but it is clear that international migration regimes are getting more and more militarised and open to human tragedies.

There is no consensus among destination countries as different concerns are at stake. For some, immigration appears as a cure to aging populations (e.g. European countries), while others simply have too limited resources to accommodate additional populations (e.g. African countries hosting large influxes from neighbouring war zones). Hence the conflict of interest between the sending and the receiving countries is a real one. The former struggle to retain the most qualified and yet to release pressures of unemployment whilst the latter wish to receive very few and the most skilful. For individuals and households, these disputes among states make little sense as their major concerns are usually to release the economic and/or political pressures by emigration as a "survival strategy" or a "strategic option". This discord results in two tendencies regarding international migration today: (a) more restrictive immigration regulations have been put in place, and (b) international migration has largely shifted towards clandestine ways in response to tightening regimes of admission. Migration blended with security debates, hence, I argue, cries for a comprehensive discussion of a conflict perspective in understanding international migration.

Towards building such a conflict-oriented approach, we need to identify the conflict areas and levels or layers of conflict within international migration. This is a tentative first attempt; therefore, the categories I propose may seem controversial. The first layer of conflict, as mentioned above, would be between the sending and receiving countries based on their incompatible interests. Incompatible interests exist between the national actors and human agency, too.² At the origin, it may well be minority members with certain interests diverging from the national ones. This can be expressed in various forms of forced migration as well as a steady outflow of people within various migration categories. The discussion on the environment of insecurity will be mainly related to this layer of conflict. Another layer would be formulated to deal with the conflicts between immigrants and natives of the destination. Finally, within households, another layer of conflict can be uncovered regarding power relations as women often take control of households when lengthy absences of men emerge. Hence, international migration is such a dynamic process, revolving around a conflict between the regulating agency and human agency. The Kurdish emigration from Turkey and the Turkmen emigration from Iraq are referred to throughout the text as supportive examples from the literature, but the paper remains a conceptual review rather than being an empirical study. The layers of conflict are also linked to the environment of insecurity which was developed as an analytical tool.

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

The layers of conflict in international migration

A conflict approach to international migration needs to be based on an appropriate assumption: with a few exceptions, international migration, to a large extent, is

a “forced” experience despite the fact that in many occasions choices are available and informed decisions are made. There are push-pull factors determining the individuals’, families’, communities’ and peoples’ migration decisions, whether they migrate for betterment of finances, freedom of expression or ethnic freedoms, or better educational opportunities. Given the security concerns of the receiving states and the security of migrating human agency, this movement from an insecure environment to a relatively secure one inflicts conflict at several areas. The four layers of conflict refer to these confrontations between the regulating and moving agencies. It includes conflicts among regulating agencies (e.g. sending and transit countries vs. receiving countries) as well as among individuals (e.g. earlier migrants vs. latecomers, natives vs. immigrants, and natives vs. return migrants).

The needs of the receiving and sending countries rarely match, and are not sustainable in the long run. Such a match existed between the Federal Republic of Germany (receiving) and Turkey (sending) during the 1960s, for example. It produced a mass migration of “guest workers” (Sirkeci 2005). However, when Germany’s needs suddenly changed following the energy crisis of 1973, migration did not stop and since then has steadily grown. Conflict between sending and receiving countries has arisen from the mismatches between migrant-export policies in the former and immigration policies in the latter, which also risks a tension in North-South relations over migration (Cornelius et al. 2004, Hugo & Stahl 2004, Wenden 2004). Another aspect of conflict at this level could be the inherent contradiction of globalisation which openly favours the free movement of goods and capital but not that of people (Massey et al. 1994). This may also cause tension between the state and small and medium businesses which seem to benefit from the abundance of relatively cheaper immigrant labour. Of course, at this level, further conflict may arise from the fact that official policies and positions may differ from the socioeconomic reality (e.g. the demand for cheap immigrant labour). Therefore, this can even be treated as a separate layer of conflict, that between the regulating agencies and businesses in the receiving countries. However, as a tentative framework, I prefer to keep this within the four-layer model for simplicity.

In this first layer, the conflict is between sending and receiving nation-states; while the former want to release pressure of unemployed, low skilled or unhappy masses, the latter aim at admitting only the ones with required skills and qualities. There are contradictions between immigration policies and realities in developed countries, with the consequence that immigration policies rarely achieve their stated goals and frequently produce the opposite outcome of what policy makers intended (Bean & Spener 2004). There is controversy among researchers and policy makers on the effects of international migration on sending countries as well as on receiving countries (Massey & Taylor 2004). The remittances are attributed a significant role at the sending end, while the immigrant workers are perceived to some extent as a cure to aging populations at the receiving end. Nevertheless, the only consensus is on the existence of such a conflicting landscape of international migration.

As long as the gap between the developed and less developed countries or regions of the world remains, international migration will be an area of conflicting interests between nations. Despite migration of manufacturing to low-cost areas of labour, such as Southeast Asia, the desire among the people of poor countries to migrate to developed countries stands stable. The Indonesians still desire to move to Western countries instead of neighbouring Malaysia. The role of wage

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

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

differences can be controversial but it shows a great deal: the minimum wage is about US\$ 40 in Indonesia, compared to about US\$ 40 in Malaysia and US\$ 1,700 in Germany (ILO 2006). Thus, labour may not follow the capital. Despite the significant need for imported labour projected for many developed countries, the question still is how to control its flow. Such restrictionist stance is expressed in the receiving countries' attitude towards sending and transit countries. Immigration countries or zones of the world have been fortressing their borders for decades. Such recent efforts have included treaties to join forces in border controls as well as convincing –even blackmailing– Third World countries in order to make sure their populations (including transit migrants) are not leaving for Europe, for example.³ The conflict, however, does not exist only between the two ends of the migration process. Transit countries have also different stakes: they may be happy as long as migrants are not staying but passing through. Transit migration also creates a further humanitarian tragedy at the borders: people sent back and forth between border control posts.⁴ Nevertheless, the essential question here is about the mismatch between the needs of different nation-states involved in the control process of international migration.

Against the security-seeking national actors, human agency or migrating actor is also after security. The second layer is about the conflict between the regulating agency and the human agency in sending countries. There is a competition for limited resources, such as jobs, welfare, whereas in some cases there is also a conflict between different ethnic, religious or cultural segments of the population over political power and thus over resources. Such competition may force some to fulfil needs beyond national borders and emigrate. Hence, the context of the environment of insecurity comes into play. Thus, migration is not the exclusive option in this conflict situation but only one of the available strategic options, as will be discussed later. This may relate to many international migration moves, including retirement migration from developed countries to countries with a better climate and/or lower living costs (Illés 2005). The second type occurs when a disparity over political control exists between different ethnic populations, often at the expense of minorities. Ethnic-oriented tensions can be expressed at different forms, ranging from discrimination to civil war. This conflict area is hard to generalise but exists particularly for minority populations in conflict with dominant, ruling majorities, such as the Kurds in Turkey or the Turkmen in Iraq. War-torn countries could also be classified into this category as they pose a similar environment of insecurity to their citizens. Nevertheless, under such conflict situations, emigration appears as one of the strategic options for those who are disadvantaged. Hence, they may opt for “voting with the feet” (Fischer & Straubhaar 1994: 130). This is a critical layer, as the conflict at the origin may also act as a facilitator for international migration.

The third layer relates to the conflict between the human agency willing to migrate and the regulating agency in transit and destination countries, willing to restrict and/or control immigration. At this stage, the sending nation-state may also act alongside the restrictionist receiving country agency due to international (inter)dependencies. For some sectors, e.g. high-skilled migrants, “regular migration” has been possible, as they either fulfil shortage occupations in the receiving developed countries or have adequate resources to maintain themselves abroad. For many others, however, migration is likely to be increasingly clandestine, undocumented or irregular, given the restrictive immigration and

refugee policies in developed countries (Adepoju 2004). International migration can be considered as a survival strategy, as seen in some African countries (Adepoju 2004: 64). Therefore, this third layer is to be a very tough battleground, prone to result in human rights violations and even deaths in extreme cases.⁵

Migrant-receiving countries have moved towards increasingly restrictive policies and immigration control has been a major policy goal. This extends into asylum/refugee policy, too. While the regulating agency tries to restrict immigration, the human agency attempts alternative ways of clandestine migration. A quick review of the European migration history in the second half of the 20th century would provide us with adequate evidence as to how types of immigration have changed parallel to changes in immigration needs and policy changes. Following the mass labour migrations in the 1960s, family reunifications became ample. Then, refugee migrations were followed by asylum migrations and eventually undocumented migrations prevailed. At least in the Turkey-Germany case, the volume of migration flows, despite changes in types of migration, remained more or less the same (Sirkeci 2006). Guest workers' neighbours and their children arrived as asylum seekers and illegal migrants in the 1980s and 1990s; the categories were changed in official statistics but the motives and the people remained the same (Sirkeci 2006). Although populist discourses of right-wing media prefer such distinctions to scapegoat "illegal" or "asylum" migrants, it is well understood that migrants often have multiple motivations. Thus, many people escaping from political pressures had emigrated as "guest workers" in the 1960s, while later many others with solely economic motives had emigrated among refugees, asylum seekers and illegal migrants. Almost half of the Turkmen in Iraq fled to other countries without permission or visas and most believe this is acceptable (Sirkeci 2005). Without doubt, many of those Iraqi Turkmen who illegally crossed the borders would be guest workers if there was any such programme to move them from war-torn Iraq to, say, Germany.

The restrictionism at the receiving end includes "stricter" admission and visa policies, militarised border controls, higher income thresholds for immigrant sponsors, expedited deportation procedures, and scapegoating of immigrants in the destination. Spanish naval boats to stop Africans or "immigrant prison islands" in Pacific and slightly innocent-sounding "reception centres" of the U.K. are extensions of such militarisation of migration politics (Politics.co.uk 2007). The terrorist acts targeting the U.S., the U.K. and Spain have provided an excuse for such militarisation as well as anti-immigration policies and practices (and at the cost of promoting xenophobia and racism). Nevertheless, success in controlling migration seems far away (Cornelius et al. 2004). More selective immigration regimes and tighter controls are likely to forge clandestine migration, because the root causes of migration often lie in the areas of origin and not those of destination. Yet, human agency seems capable of overcoming further restrictions in their endeavour to survive despite increasingly risking death at the borders.

It is important to remember here that a desire for and seeds of a tougher migration control were there even before the recent discourses and practices linking terrorism to immigration (Düvell 2005, Zolberg 2001). Immigration countries or zones of the world have always been concerned about fortressing their borders.

This conflict between the human agency and the regulating agency does continue after the arrival and even after the naturalisation of the migrant. Securiti-

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

sation of migration discourse may explain this, at least partly, as it also paves the way to human rights violations. When an immigrant stays undocumented or is kept in limbo (e.g. many asylum seekers' situation in the countries of asylum) they are open to any kind of abuse, as they are almost non-existent legally and therefore lack full protection enjoyed by the natives. It was evident in the case of the Turkish Kurds working illegally in Turkish-run restaurants for a fraction of the normal wages in Germany (Sirkeci 2006). There is no social security and yet they often have to accept low-paid and unsecured jobs because they are not allowed to work legally and are poorly supported, if at all. The threat does not disappear even if these immigrants are naturalised. For instance, recent attempts to change legislation link migration to terrorism and aim at authorising the U.K. government to deport immigrants (including the naturalised ones) on the basis of alleged terrorism links (Home Office U.K. 2004). This kind of legislation changes and increasing militarisation of migration control is likely to make international migration, and migrants of course, open to human rights violations in various forms and degrees. There could be differences in the degree and types of violations among receiving and transit countries [e.g. the Libyan response can be crueler than the French (Arie 2004)], but ill-treatment will be a common feature across most borders.

To tackle with the conflict at this layer, migrating human agency is likely to utilise their resources to reduce the risks. This may involve receiving assistance through various trans-national networks. This is the realm where regulating agency cannot intervene but may try to establish one for its own ends as some countries sign treaties or form joint forces to control international migration. The coordination efforts between receiving, transit and sending countries (e.g. the E.U. efforts) can be considered as such. Human agency forms and participates in networks which can be based on family and friendship ties, political, religious or cultural connections, economic networks as well as clandestine networks of smugglers and traffickers. These trans-national networks may facilitate international migration,⁶ assist in border crossings (legally or illegally), provide support in the destination and, finally, expand the living space of the immigrants to increase their survival chances. They are never obliged to be bound to a territory; they can move back and forth, or move to another destination accessible through trans-national networks. A Kurdish immigrant from Turkey, for example, can meet friends and family in Kurdistan festivals in Germany while living and working in the U.K. It can give the immigrant a shelter that comes with some opportunities, including migration to a third country.⁷ In oppressed ethnic minority cases, such trans-national networks also facilitate political movements and enhance ethno-nationalisms, as is the case of the Turkish Kurds (Sirkeci 2006, Wahlbeck 1999).

Communities, households and families left behind go through changes, too, due to international migration. A significant conflict area appears to be that of power relations within the household or the family. Migration is often male-dominated and, thus, when the husband moves abroad, the wife left behind has to take control of the household. Such ad hoc empowerment of women may also cause a conflict within the family, especially in traditional societies.

Once the determined human agency reaches a more desirable country, they will face a new struggle: the fourth layer of conflict. No matter how the migration took place (i.e. regular or clandestine), at the receiving end there are reflections of the first layer of conflict. The host country will be attempting to limit the stay and avoid any settlement as much as possible. Despite very little

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

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

—and often contradicting— empirical evidence, there are claims that immigrants are posing a threat to welfare benefits and burden (Borjas 1999, Gott & Johnston 2002). Such public opinion is also reflected in the restrictionist attitudes as represented by declining welfare benefits for immigrants, further restrictions on immigrant employment, and impediments on acquiring citizenship (Bendel 2005, Geddes 2003). In many countries, systematic discrimination against immigrants is in place as well as a growing xenophobia and islamophobia (Abbas 2004, Kaplan 2006).⁸ At this layer, we may also see a conflict between new immigrants and ethnic minorities developed out of labour migrations in the 1950s and 1960s, as the earlier immigrants may see the latecomers as a threat to their gains.

One important aspect at this layer would be the management of public opinion on immigration, immigrants and relevant issues. Popular media and right-wing political parties tend to exploit problems related to immigrants and immigration and to blame immigration for wider socioeconomic problems in the receiving countries. This often does not reflect reality, or represents a distorted reality at best. However, it imposes further pressure on immigrants and adds to the conflict because such public opinion feeds into the conflict between the regulating agency vs. the immigrant as well as the native vs. the immigrant.

The security abroad is for many immigrants a “relative security”, which does provide a betterment of life compared to life at the origin, but still leaves them in a less favourable position compared to the natives of the destination countries. This should be linked to the conceptualisation of “relative deprivation” as a factor facilitating international migration (Quinn 2006, Stark & Wang 2000). However, immigrants also have to tackle with socioeconomic deprivation in destination countries (Khattab et al. 2006, Sirkeci 2006). Particularly among Muslim immigrants, further hostility added by discourses of *anti-terrorism/-Islam/-migration* has contributed to some resentment.⁹ Considering, also, the fact that migrants are often employed in sectors and jobs supposedly “unwanted” by native workers, integration and elimination of such resentment seems very difficult. Faist has discussed the —mostly adverse— implications of such *securitisation* of international migration for immigration and immigrant integration (Faist 2006). He pointed out that the migration-security nexus was there even before 9/11 and explored the regulatory side of the phenomenon, concluding with a call for a “world of societies” (instead of a world of states) as a guarantee for the diffusion of human rights globally (Faist 2006: 116-117). Nevertheless, seeking security has always been there for individuals or groups (i.e. migrating agency) who fled their countries. Yet, this further securitisation of migration described by Faist and others poses certain threats, leading to a larger insecurity among current and potential migrants. The next section explores the conflicts at the origin examining the security seeking aspects in international migration from the human agency perspective drawing upon the Turkish and Iraqi cases.

The ethnic environment of insecurity in Turkey and Iraq

I have been using the phrase “seeking security” on purpose to bridge the so-called classifications of labour migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants, high-skilled migrants in relation to motivations. These distinctions between types of migrations have been meaningless and useless in terms of policy formulation.

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

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

Especially in ethnic-oriented environments of insecurity, all these categories may blur into one broad category, such as “asylum seekers” or “illegal migrants” or any other category we have in our international migration lexicon. I would like to explain first how the context or the second layer of conflict prepares the infrastructure for outflows; and, when needed, how it serves as an opportunity framework mainly referring to the third layer of conflict mentioned above.

Bowen (1996) argues that ethnic conflicts are man-made and built through time and mainly caused by ethnic groups’ relationships to power, not diversity per se, which often leads to political instability. Hence, such man-made tension may lead the contesting ethnic groups to attempt imposing their “national” identities over others (see Gurr 1994). The dominant ethnic group may force others to convert into the dominant “national” identity. Such latent or explicit acts of ethnic cleansing coincide with political instability, in some cases even civil war. Such a context, in turn, may boost perceived insecurity among minority groups and guide some towards exit options. Exit options are increasingly limited, particularly in terms of international migration as discussed above. There, the ethnic environment of insecurity may also serve as an opportunity framework for minority members and others.

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

In the face of such an environment of insecurity facilitated by ethnic conflict, minority members are forced to choose between the two: (a) status quo, and (b) exit. The status quo option suggests they stay put and try to survive while the two armed parties battle. This could be done by remaining in the conflict region and adopting the dominant ethnic identity or whatever the dominant group imposes upon them (e.g. arabisation in Iraq). They may also align with the government forces in many possible ways (e.g. village guard system in Turkey).¹⁰ The exit option involves mainly three strategies: joining the rebel/opposition forces, migrating to a safer area within the conflict country, or migrating abroad. Joining rebel or opposition forces can, for example, include participation in civil society, joining political parties or joining the guerrilla groups. There can, of course, be mixed strategies combining tactics from both the status quo and exit options.

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

The environment of insecurity as a combined set of background factors could well be helpful in understanding international migration involving ethnic minority groups.¹¹ It links our discussion of conflict and security to survival and coping strategies of individuals and groups in the context of ethnic conflict. The ethnic environment of insecurity burdens its sufferers and forces them to exit in some cases. At the same time, it also serves as an opportunity framework for those who have been willing to migrate but are restricted by admission regulations and eventually find a way through asylum migration (Sirkeci 2005: 201-202). On the one hand, as a response to a variety of "push factors" arising from a broader socioeconomic deprivation which is characterised by lack of job opportunities and limited facilities for human capital development, people tend to move abroad, where they perceive jobs and welfare opportunities are abundant. On the other hand, ethnic discrimination and an ongoing armed conflict increase threats to life and minority members may be forced to seek security in other countries, only if they are capable of doing so.

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

The environment of insecurity in Iraq and Turkey is defined in terms of the two broader categories, as I would like to highlight, of both material and non-material. In Iraq, wars (from 1979 until 2003) have coincided with and triggered internal ethnic conflicts, and there is evidence pointing out that this facilitates international migration (Sirkeci 2005). The overall instability in Iraq has also added to the environment of insecurity for ethnic groups in the country. However, it is important to remember that the instability in Iraq is not only a result of the recent operations of the U.S.-led "coalition forces". Its roots are in Saddam Hussein's brutal regime as well as in the long-term ethnic tensions, due to the fact that Sunni Arabs (a minority) have run the government for the past half century at the expense of other ethnic groups (Day & Freeman 2003, Hurmuzlu 2003).

Today, both ethnicity-oriented and religion-oriented powers are struggling and the shattered economy and infrastructure are maintaining the Iraqi environment of insecurity. Within the debates on reconstruction of Iraq there is very little evidence that ethnic minorities will be protected against further cleansing or abuse. The elections held in 2005 heated up the contest between ethnic groups in Iraq rather than produced any widely acceptable framework. The referendum planned to be held in Kirkuk, the most contested multi-ethnic city, will not help unless used to identify and secure the rights and existence of ethnic groups. Ethnicity-based quotas in governing structures are likely to promote ethnic clashes and will encourage the neighbouring states' interference in Iraq. Examples of such clashes and interference are already there. Eventually, lack of any democratic assurance for ethnic groups and their culture and practices is likely to cause more of an environment of insecurity, involving killings, displacement and widespread abuse, at least for some ethnic groups.

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

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

The Kurds and the Turkmen have suffered from such an environment of insecurity through arabisation policies, Iraqi army's brutal attacks, and forced displacements of populations for decades (Sirkeci 2005, HRW 2003, ICG 2003, 2006, Hurmuzlu 2003). International sanctions against Saddam's government have also contributed to Iraq becoming poorer through the wars and embargo.¹² These specific conflict influences have been combined with widespread poverty, the uneven distribution of wealth and the ongoing human rights abuses in the country (HRW 2003). It seems that the current situation will last many years, given the record of failures of U.S.-led reconstructions in other cases in the past (Barton & Crocker 2003, Day & Freeman 2003, Pei 2003). Iraqi population has grown from about 10 million to 27 million in three decades, while the country slumped from an oil-rich land of attraction to a state of survival on humanitarian aid. The overall deprivation is evident in demographic statistics. The Iraqi population is very young (42% are below 14 years of age) and suffering from high mortality rates: infant mortality rate was 94.9‰ while only 9.7‰ for Europe and 7.1‰ for North America (U.N. 2000, 2001). Three years after Saddam Hussein's fall, there is still no evidence of progress in any aspect of that environment of insecurity.

Iraqi emigration has strengthened during the last three decades, with numbers increasing from a mere few thousands to over a million (Sirkeci 2005: 205-209). Not surprisingly, the majority of these flows are asylum seekers and refugees. Although there are no statistical figures available on the ethnic breakdown of these immigration streams, disadvantaged minorities (e.g. the Kurds—in the past—Turkmen and Assyrians) are expected to constitute the majority of the Iraqi immigrant stock in other countries today. The simple reason for this is that these minorities have been oppressed by Saddam's regime for decades until its collapse in 2003. However, since then emigration from Iraq is likely to carry people from every ethnic or religious group alike, because the devastating effects of war are not supposed to be ethnically selective. In fact today, after the war, Kurd-controlled Northern Iraq is the safest area in the country and attracts other Iraqis, who have to live in a state of civil war in the southern parts of the country. Therefore, one may expect that the Kurds, who have a relatively privileged position in the current ethnic balance of power in Iraq (i.e. the current Iraqi President Mr. Talabani is Kurdish), are less likely to flee Iraq than other ethnic groups at present.¹³

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

The environment of insecurity in Turkey has been ethnically characterised and the Kurdish-speaking populations mainly living in the east of the country have been exposed to its impact in every inch of their lives. It has been a combination of systematic discrimination, arbitrary and legal erasure of rights and freedoms related to their ethnic identity and mother tongue concurred with vast regional disparities in terms of economic development. Despite a wide range of changes in legislation and attitude since the arrest of the Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999, there are still occurrences of discriminatory practices against the Kurds. Turkey's half-a-century-old desire to become a member of the European Union has been one major factor in these favourable legislations. Turkey's recently begun accession process with the European Union paved the way for progress on all fronts of human rights, e.g. the Kurdish MPs were released in 2004 and the Turkish state television (TRT) broadcast its first programme in the Kurdish language, but not all issues have been solved, including the return of internally displaced populations (HRW 2005: 431, 2006: 407-409).

However, regional disparities in Turkey are still disfavoured the eastern provinces, compared to the wealthy West of the country. Income disparities between regions and shortage of jobs in the eastern provinces are still encouraging internal and international migration of people from these areas. 78% of the least developed districts were those in the East, according to the State Planning Organisation's recent report (Dincer et al. 2003). Thus, in the western provinces, sizeable Kurdish minorities emerged during the last three decades due to internal migration (Sirkeci 2006: 53-54). The armed conflict between the Turkish army and Kurdish rebel forces has continued, despite a short break between 1999 and 2004, since 1984. Various figures place the number of casualties between 30,000 and 60,000 and the number of the internally displaced is still estimated between 370,000 and 3 million, according to different sources (Kurban et al. 2006).

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

As refugees and asylum seekers are mentioned, it needs to be noted that the environment of insecurity also offers some opportunities to potential international migrants. As armed conflicts, wars and diseases continue to exist, there will be a need for a protective migration system for the sufferers and so far refugee and asylum laws have done the job. Despite the efforts of immigration countries to restrict the scope of refugee and asylum seeking categories further, I assume that asylum migration will continue to be one of the avenues through which migrants try to reach developed or more prosperous areas of the world. The logic behind it is simple. Although there are avenues to immigrate into, let's say, European Union countries, these are restricted to the "highly skilled".¹⁴ So those with no skills or with unwanted skills are less likely to proceed to these "regular" pathways. Thus, they can immigrate clandestinely. Upon arrival, they either continue their clandestine existence or attempt to legalise their stay through various ways, one of which has been by applying for asylum. For this second option, I argue that the environment of insecurity serves as an opportunity framework for a number of would-be migrants. Of course, this may relate to a small group of migrants only and should never be read as a proof for xenophobic claims on "bogus asylum seekers". Besides, it is just a challenge, a manoeuvre to cope with the increasingly restrictive immigration policies of the receiving countries. The guest worker Kurds who emigrated from Turkey in the 1960s and asylum seekers and illegal Kurdish migrants who arrived in Europe in the late 1990s have suffered from the same environment of insecurity which denied them their ethnic existence and offered them very little to live on (Sirkeci 2006).

Sirkeci (2005, 2006) has found high rates of emigration among the Kurds in Turkey (over 30%) and Turkmen in Iraq (over 35%) and also pointed out these current migrants and their families are not promoting migration abroad. These migration rates are higher than the national averages for Turkey and Iraq.

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

The explanation, at least partly, lies in the environment of insecurity which often has an uneven impact on different ethnic groups. The Kurds in Turkey were exposed to a conflict exclusively imposed upon them, whereas the Turkmen were subject to a nationwide oppression by Saddam's regime mistreating almost every ethnic minority member alike.

Both Turkmen and Kurdish cases, however, display ethnic differences in terms of participation rates in international migration. Kurdish households are more likely to send their members abroad (32%) compared to their Turkish neighbours (24%). Although there is no comparable study for the whole of Iraq, we can still conclude that migration abroad is more likely among the Turkmen compared to their Arab neighbours,¹⁵ considering the fact that migrant households constitute more than one third of all Turkmen households.

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

Conclusion

I have discussed the possibility of a conflict model for understanding international migration and twinned it with the concept of the environment of insecurity characterised by an ethnic conflict. I tend to see the process of migration as a multi-layered conflict revolving around the struggles between the human agency and the regulating agency. The human agency is the individual looking for ways to overcome the "human insecurity" they face, whilst the regulating agency is seeking to preserve its control over a territory and its borders. The environment of insecurity displays one aspect of this process interwoven by conflict at different levels but connected through the trans-national networks of both parties.

Such conflict perspective may also better embrace the dynamic nature of the migration process, where regulations as well as the migration mechanisms and pathways frequently change. In such competition between the migrating and regulating agencies, the former is likely to be a step ahead of the restrictionist regulating agency. This is because the latter often has to react and readjust according to past experiences retrospectively. Besides, the regulating agency's decision-making processes tend to be more complicated and longer than individual or household decision-making.

Ethnic conflicts or conflicts involving ethnic competition are likely to cause a strong outflow of disadvantaged minorities, such as the Kurds in Turkey or the Turkmen in Iraq. These minorities escaping from the conflict in the areas of origin fight through ever-toughening admission regimes at the borders of the receiving nation-states and continue to struggle in a relative security of destination. Erosion of immigrant rights and entitlements and the increasing existence of undocumented migrants and jobs are additional obstacles in this journey to security from an environment of insecurity.

The layers of conflict identified in the international migration process are tentative and open to reduction or addition. The potential conflicts between nation-states over international migration and the place of the individual human agency within this conflict is an interesting area in need of further inquiry. Further development of a conflict model for the analysis of international migration requires longitudinal studies.

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