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The Impact of Migration on International Relations: Power Relations, Security, and Migration Diplomacy Reexamined

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Key findings

- o The increased salience of migration in the political agenda has transformed International Relations (IR). It has primarily affected the areas of power relations, security, and diplomacy.
- o Migration has reshaped power relations in two ways. First, it has put greater emphasis on security policies and instruments, and second, it has strengthened the European Union's engagement with third countries.
- o While the concept of "migration diplomacy", which refers to migration as a diplomatic tool, has partially captured the link between migration and IR, the study of migration in IR remains a scientific niche dominated by Eurocentrism. Historically, the political emphasis has predominantly centred around migration as a security threat, a trend that gained momentum post-9/11 and intensified during the so-called refugee crisis of 2015.
- o The securitization of migration, though, may create new security challenges. It pushes, for example, migrants towards more dangerous routes and illegal pathways. It also fosters misconceptions among stakeholders who associate migration with heightened conflict and terrorism risks in host countries.
- o The securitization of migration in political debates has also securitized migration research. While broadening the understanding of themes like surveillance technologies and border control, the focus on security has de-complexified migration and overshadowed important topics like the migration-development-peace nexus.
- o Recent research on the migration-security nexus has played a pivotal role in uncovering misconceptions. For instance, it has challenged the prevailing belief that restrictive migration policies inherently reduce security risks. Increasing the rights of refugees can diminish grievances, lowering the risk of radicalization.
- o Contrary to widespread debates, research findings indicate that migration and displacement do not necessarily heighten the risk of conflict and terrorism. Moreover, climate-induced migration may not exacerbate security risks, as it is often short-term and internal.
- o Policy debates must recognize that migration within IR transcends being solely a security issue. Instead, it involves intricate interlinkages that demand thorough scrutiny beyond Eurocentric security perspectives.

1 Introduction

In 2023, a record-breaking 107 million individuals were displaced, as the UNHCR (2023) reported. The challenges inherent in displacement and migration may extend beyond the individuals directly concerned, affecting host communities. Migration, whether forced or voluntary, carries security implications (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006, Rügger 2019, Bohnet and Rügger 2019, Fisk 2019), development (Zhou and Shaver 2021), and, significantly, the dynamics of international relations. Notably, the impact of migration on global North-South relations has been profound. Major players such as the European Union and the United States, representing the global North, have actively pursued strategies to "manage" migration. This overarching objective has influenced various facets of international relations, shaping migration diplomacy, prompting the outsourcing of border security, and fostering the diffusion of norms through approximation. The repercussions of migration have assumed a central role in the European Union's interactions with neighboring countries. Relationships with Turkey, nations in the Western Balkans, and those in North Africa are increasingly dominated by the complex dynamics of migration.

This research note aims to unravel the complex interlinkage between migration and international relations. It builds on a research cooperation between the University of Continuing Education Krems (UWK) and the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) within the framework of a platform called "Zwischenräume" ("inbetween spaces"),¹ which aims to bring together and promote research between various disciplines, among them migration and international relations. In theory and practice, we examine the interconnectedness between migration and international relations (IR), focusing on three key concepts that define international relations: power relations, security and diplomacy (Weiner 1992, Choucri 2002, Adamson 2006).

Although a growing body of scholarship has emerged exploring the nexus between IR and migration, it has yet to transcend the confines of a niche or subsection. Integrating migration into foreign policies has often been done without considering its impact on international and regional dynamics and power relations. Only recently have policymakers sought to comprehend the implications of prioritizing migration within other policy domains, as shown by studies commissioned by institutional actors (European Parliament, 2023). Through this research note, we demonstrate how migration, both in terms of governance and scholarship, has profoundly influenced power dynamics, security relations and diplomacy as integral components of international relations. As Piper (2006) points out: "Migration creates a myriad of political challenges, both in terms of relations between states and also in the nature of politics within states through the creation of new constituencies and the generation of new policy debates" (p. 134).

¹ See for more information: <https://zwischenraeume.co.at/policybriefs-de/>.

The research note starts with an overview of how the interplay between migration and international relations has changed over time. An exploration of the connections and impact of migration on power relations, security, and diplomacy follows it. We then conclude with the example of Turkey, demonstrating how migration has impacted all three components of international politics, particularly diplomacy. The case underlines how migration can be used in turn as a coercive and cooperative diplomatic tool, changing international relations.

2 How the interplay between migration and international relations has changed over time: A state of the art

Over the past decades, migration has dominated domestic and foreign policy debates across the globe. Nevertheless, IR research neglected the study of migration and its implications for foreign relations and the international order for many years. As Chouchri (2002) notes, there is a "glaring absence of migration as a topic [...] and its practical non-existence in textbooks" on International Relations (p. 97).

Policy attention on the complex relationship between IR and international migration has only increased with the end of the Cold War (Miller 2000). In the eighties, the few works published focused mainly on international migration, state sovereignty, and the reciprocal impact on each other (Zolberg 1981, Weiner 1985). Two initiating volumes that link IR studies and refugee issues appeared in the late 1980s: "Refugees in International Politics", authored by Gordenker (1987), and "Refugees in International Relations", authored by Loescher and Monahan (1989). Both drew attention to the emergence of the international refugee protection regime and the challenges of irregular migration from empirical and policy-oriented approaches rather than developing theory (Betts 2014).

In the post-Cold War era, threat perceptions changed. Armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing, and violence against civilians in various world regions ranging from Iraq over former Yugoslavia to Rwanda and Sierra Leone dominated debates on international peace and security. Military conflicts also constituted the primary cause of large displacement. Migration came to be seen as the result of conflict (Loescher 1992, Dowty and Loescher 1996, Roberts 1998, Krause and Segadlo 2021). The perception of migration as a threat has driven a surge in research from a security perspective and a focus on international cooperation and governance. As Krause and Segadlo 2021 write: "The nexus of violent conflict and forced migration has received continuous scholarly attention since the 1980s" (p. 272).

The increase in irregular migration triggered fears of losing control over territorial sovereignty in destination countries. From the 1990s, debates on social cohesion, national identity and the protection of the welfare state increasingly dominated political debates in Europe and other countries of the Global North (Balch and Balananova

2016; Song 2018; Boubtane 2022). The language of security not only shaped political debates on migration but also constructed a new security logic that has permeated research (Bigo 2002; Neal 2009). Huysmans (2006, 47) argues that migration and asylum have been increasingly framed as a threat to the unity and security of the nation. A threatful "outside" is constructed as constitutive of the cohesion on the inside. In traditional (Waltz 2001) and critical approaches of IR (Aradau 2004; Huysmans 2014), security is regarded as a central aspect of international politics.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, IR and migration studies and policies have particularly been characterized by securitization. This can be seen through the increased importance of border security and counter-terrorism activities (Tirman 2004; Martin and Martin 2004; Boswell 2007; Chami et al 2021). Boswell (2007) emphasizes that in the post-9/11 era, governments tended to apply counter-migration and counter-terrorism interchangeably. This also affected institutional settings. Existing interior security institutions gained importance, and new agencies and institutions were established. On the EU level, this led to the founding of Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency). On the international level, it has included cooperation between the EU and third countries (mainly in the immediate neighbourhood). Cooperation has often aimed at externalizing migration control, border security and asylum to third countries in the European neighbourhood. In migration studies and IR, new themes such as research on surveillance technologies, including data collection on border control, emerged (e.g., Bigo 2002; Marin 2011; Molnar 2019; Sadık and Kaya 2020; Bircan and Korkmaz 2021; İşleyen 2021). Moreover, the use of high-tech, notably the Schengen Information System (SIS) and EU fingerprint database, has become a routine part of practices. These developments are also reflected in migration scholarship.

Social and political science debates were mainly concerned with the state's security. Migration scholars have, therefore, also engaged deeply with questions and problematizations of security in connection with migration (Bello 2020; Moffette and Vadasaria 2016; Robinson 2017). However, in time, the spectrum has broadened. New approaches, such as critical security studies, have questioned the concept of security and shifted the focus to the security of socially marginalized groups such as women, refugees, and migrants.

Yet, most research on migration management and its securitization has been limited to the EU and the Global North. Only a few authors have dealt with migration management and security from a southern perspective. Anievas, Manchanda, and Shilliam (2015) speak of the "global colour line" in international relations, which further locks inequalities between the Global North and the Global South by constructing the latter as a threat to the former.

Though, 'migration diplomacy' (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019) has emerged as a new concept in migration studies, describing a tool used by governments of the Global North *and* the Global South. The concept refers to using diplomatic tools for migration-

related purposes or, conversely, using migration policies for diplomatic purposes (Oyen 2016, Tsourapas 2018). Migration diplomacy has, for example, been applied by third countries, notably Turkey and Morocco, utilizing migration as a leverage tool (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019, Kaya 2020, Tsourapas 2022). It describes a trend in migration governance whereby migration diplomacy is more characterized by bargaining than solidarity. The phenomenon of 'global migration governance' became increasingly debated in migration, IR, and multi-level governance literature in the 2000s. However, earlier studies, like Hollifield (1992), have also addressed international migration governance and cooperation. The aspects of global migration governance that have particularly received attention in the literature are the proliferation of institutions and the complexity of migration governance (e.g., Betts 2010; Kunz et al. 2011), the inter-agency competition within the UN system (Gottwald 2010), the norm translation into the local context (Schmidt 2006), regional migration governance (e.g., Lavenex 2019, Rayp et al. 2020) and international cooperation (e.g., Martin 2011; Hansen et al. 2011).

In sum, understanding the relationship between migration and IR is crucial for migration scholarship and governance because they impact each other reciprocally. Today, a growing body of scholarship addresses the nexus between IR and migration in various areas, such as border security, regional and international cooperation, humanitarian aid, human security, and human rights perspectives. In addition, the role of international regimes, organizations, state and non-state actors, and the effects of economic globalization and climate change have received increasing attention. However, a strong focus on the securitization of migration can be identified, neglecting other topics of concern, like development. While migration studies have become an integrated part of IR and international politics over the past decades, the growing scholarship dealing with the nexus between IR and migration has not yet succeeded in moving beyond a niche or subsection of the discipline. In the following, we thus aim to examine more closely the interlinkages and impact of migration on power relations, security and diplomacy as components of IR and international politics.

3 Migration's transformative tide: Reshaping power relations, security and diplomacy

This section examines how migration influences three critical areas of international relations: power relations, security, and diplomacy. This link has not only led to increased securitization of migration. It has also revealed misconceptions and fostered greater collaboration between states in the Global North and South, altering power dynamics.

3.1. Power relations and migration

Over the last decade, international relations have experienced some radical changes. The decline of Western hegemony and the rise of new global and regional actors has led to a multi-polar world order in which power politics have increasingly replaced normative policies. While this has weakened the role of multilateralism and multilateral organizations, it has supported a trend towards bilateralism and transactional approaches in international relations. These shifts have certainly impacted North-South relations. The rise of a multi-polar order has diversified the foreign policy options of states in the South and helped challenge enduring post-colonial power structures.

Migration management as a centrepiece of the EU's relations with its neighbours

Migration management has traditionally been a principal element of bilateral relations between the global North and the global South. However, in contrast to labour migration management in the second half of the 20th century, migration management and management of refugee movements have become securitized in recent years. Security concerns have superseded other interests, such as economic cooperation, cultural cooperation, democracy promotion, and civil society promotion in the EU's foreign relations with its neighbourhood.

Since the so-called Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, migration management and prevention have been gradually integrated into the EU accession processes and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)², which addresses relations with countries of the Eastern neighbourhood and the MENA region. EU policies aim to export migration management policies and standards to these countries. This has included outsourcing migration management and prevention practices and helped create peripheral zones around the EU that have been seen as a buffer (Del Sarto 2010, 3). The intensity of cooperation between the EU and third countries has depended on the level of integration. In the case of the Western Balkan candidate countries, the issue of migration is part of both EU accession conditions and bilateral agreements. With Turkey (having fewer prospects for accession), the EU has signed the EU-Turkey deal on migration (see further down).

The securitization of migration and changing power dynamics

The effect of the integration of migration into power relations has had two different dimensions. First, it has changed the perspective of countries in the core of the EU towards their neighbourhood. The countries of the neighbourhood have been primarily conceived through a security lens as a buffer and a zone designed to stop illegal migration. This has not only entailed a growing emphasis in relations on security

² See: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy_en.

policies and instruments but has often come with intrusions in the territorial sovereignty and legal orders of states in the neighbourhood, such as the disruption of transport routes or unlawful practices such as pushbacks or detention centres. Notable examples are well-documented pushbacks on the border between Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Greece (Amnesty International 2021, June 23; Ecre 2023, January 27; Human Rights Watch 2023a). The externalization of EU border protection was scrutinized in the context of pushbacks. FRONTEX's rapid growth and the criticism it faces for allegedly covering up illegal pushbacks at the Greece-Turkey border, as reported by Human Rights Watch (2023b), are notable examples.

Security dilemmas in the "buffer zone for the EU" in the Western Balkans

The case of the Western Balkans countries exemplifies the first dimension, considering the neighbourhood countries of the EU through a security lens. With the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, the Western Balkans became a "buffer zone for the EU" (Dimitriadi, 2022). The region has been conceptualized through 'migratory essentialism' as a transit and a sending space (Leutloff-Grandits, 2023). Ever since the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, migrants have been increasingly depicted as a threat to the EU's and its member states' security and territorial sovereignty. The conception of migrants as a potentially violent group that threatens public order has legitimized the securitization of migration and human rights violations such as pushbacks in the buffer zones such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (see El-Shaarawi & Razsa 2019; Dzihic 2021). The recent debate on building detention centres in refugee camp Lipa in the Western part of Bosnia without the consensus of local authorities amplified the impression that the EU is ready to go even further and cross the legal red lines in securitization of migration in third countries.

EU's growing dependence on cooperation with third countries

The second dimension that reflects the impact of migration on power relations is the increasing focus on preventing migration in the North, which has heightened the leverage of the states in the South. The EU's growing dependence on the cooperation of third countries in migration management has increased the political leverage of third countries (Tittel-Mosser, 2018). Hence, migrants have become a pressure tool and bargaining chip. The most pressing example is the so-called EU-Turkey deal. The ambitious deal had multiple goals, aiming to reduce the pressure on Europe's borders and dissuade future asylum seekers and economic migrants from making the journey to the EU. At the same time, the deal was meant to signal that the EU can stand united on migration and the question of asylum. This symbolic message, however, turned into a boomerang for the EU as Turkey's President Erdogan discovered the deal as a security and political bargaining chip vis-a-vis the Union. While the EU bloc remained utterly divided over the migration policy, Tayyip Erdogan's partial reopening of Turkey's border in 2023 was a clear sign that he is willing and ready to leverage its geopolitical

position, which made the EU dependent on Turkey (see more on Turkey and the EU in chapter 3.3.).

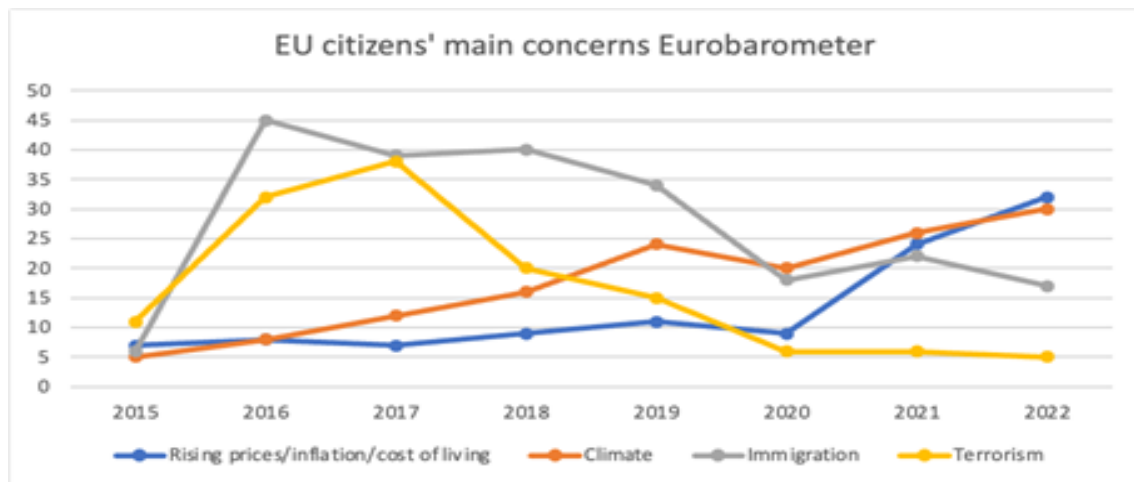
The focus on migration control and security has strengthened the EU's collaboration with third countries at a level that would not have materialized otherwise. This engagement with third countries, aimed at preventing, controlling, managing, and governing migration movements, is now considered a fundamental element of EU migration policies (Lavenex 2006). Additionally, in order to add the root causes of migration, the external dimension of EU migration policies was strengthened via three financial instruments: The EU Trust Fund for Africa, the EU Regional Trust Fund to address the Syrian crisis, and the Africa Investment Facility (CPMR, February 2018). While these have been discontinued, their rationale and dominant narrative have been integrated into the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

Despite the increase in cooperation, the EU's emphasis on a security perspective in implementing these programs and collaborations, rather than a developmental one, has resulted in outcomes that are not consistently sustainable or effective, often exhibiting short-sightedness (Gulrajani and Calleja 2019). These outcomes have heightened existing misconceptions and created new ones.

3.2. Migration-security nexus reexamined: Uncovering misconceptions

The language of security has become prevalent in political debates on migration (Bigo 2002; Neal 2009), as shown in the examples above. Migration has become heavily securitized, particularly in the context of populist far-right discourses. Nevertheless, this does not reflect anymore the main concerns of EU citizens. As illustrated by the latest Eurobarometer report (Standard Eurobarometer 98, 2023), migration is not among the top concerns of EU citizens anymore, unlike the situation a few years ago. This can be seen in the figure 1 below. While immigration and terrorism, for example, were the highest issues of concern between 2016 and 2017, this dropped by 2020 and stayed low until today. The top concern now is rising prices, inflation costs and climate change. Nevertheless, migration continues to be projected in political discourses as a top, if not the main, threat to European and national security.

Figure 1: Immigration as a main concern over time among EU citizens



Daniela PISOIU created the graph based on the European Union Eurobarometer Standard Survey. See <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/browse/all/series/4961>.

The pandemic and digitalization have exacerbated the securitization of migrants

The Covid pandemic has been used as an "excuse" for further securitization of migration (Yayboke and McAuliffe 2021). In 2011, Koser already wrote that "the securitization of migrants and migration is nothing new" (Koser 2011). However, we can identify a steady increase in the securitization trend, with peaks after 9/11, during the Syrian refugee crisis and COVID-19. International politics often uses labelling something as a security threat to justify a specific response (Koser 2011) and labelling migrants as risk carriers heightened the securitization of migrants. "Discourses and practices during the pandemic drew on and reinvigorated long-standing racial tropes" (cf. Mayblin 2022, Koinova et al. 2023). The EU also used increased digitalization techniques to control irregular migration. Digital controls and tracing apps have significantly deepened securitization (Koinova et al., 2023). However, this securitization can be problematic as it forces more people into irregular routes and can distract from "real security challenges that exist along such pathways" (Yayboke and McAuliffe 2021). For example, these security challenges can be seen in the Sahel region, where smugglers take advantage of the migrants and exploit them (Zoubir 2021).

Differential treatment of migrants and restrictive policies increase security risks and do not reduce them

Because of security concerns by policymakers, threats of cultural differentiation or economic competition by host communities (Landmann, Gaschler and Rohmann 2019), both host governments and communities often prefer some migrant groups over others. As Abdelaaty (2021) points out, countries "discriminate among refugee groups, welcoming some and excluding others" (p. 4), such as nationality or ethnicity. However,

preferential treatment does not always occur because of ethnic or cultural affinity but could also be driven by political motivations (Norman 2021, 2016). Yet, be it because of ethnic affinity or political motivation, differential treatment occurs in almost all countries. This can be seen with Ukrainians and Afghans in Germany (De Coninck 2021). Alternatively, in Turkey, aid distribution is more directed towards Syrians than Afghans (Almasri, 2023).

While it has been shown that horizontal inequalities increase the risk of violence (Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013), and violence can arise from both disadvantaged or advantaged groups (Ostby 2008, Must 2016), differential treatment among refugee or migrant groups is often the case, as well as restrictive policy measures are taken not to create "pull" mechanism for refugees or migrant groups. However, it has been proven that policy restrictions (Savun 2022) do not reduce violent conflict but instead increase it. Therefore, policymakers and hosts should be aware that differential treatment of migrants and exclusionary/restrictive policies do not foster security but rather may heighten security risks and violence.

Terrorism and migration: The allure of simple explanations

One of the most discussed security issues has been terrorism (Randahl 2016). There is "widespread fear that hosting refugees will mean more terrorism in host states" (Polo and Wucherpfennig, 2022). While migration and an alleged lack of integration have sometimes been linked to radicalization and terrorism, the empirical literature indicates that there is "little evidence that more migration unconditionally leads to more terrorist activity, especially in Western countries" (Helbing and Meierrieks 2022, Polo and Wucherpfennig 2022). Indeed, terrorist attacks in Europe have overwhelmingly been carried out by homegrown individuals (Hacker, 2023). From a distinct perspective, however, jihadi terrorism is intrinsically related to external conflicts carried over to Europe.

Furthermore, experiences of discrimination in Europe are often instrumentalized in the jihadi narrative to recruit and mobilize. That said, quantitative data show a correlation between terrorist activity and involvement in external conflicts, namely the war on terror. Concretely, the countries most affected by terrorism are the ones that are part of the coalition against Daesh (ibid.). From a discursive perspective, the topic of migration has been awarded a central part in conspiracy theories underlying right-wing extremist radicalization and mobilization. In this context, analyses have shown how populist, neo-Nazi and new Right actors unite in depicting apocalyptic scenarios related to migration, not unlike historical National Socialist imagery (Ahmed and PISOIU 2021).

Conflict-migration-conflict nexus: Development and peace not to be neglected

Forced migrants often flee from conflict and can lead to conflict (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006), yet the latter happens in very few circumstances (Bohnet and Rügger 2019) and only under specific conditions. For example, when the ethnic balance is upset (Rügger 2019) or the host state's capacity is weak (Böhmelet et al. 2019). Nevertheless, the perceptions of host communities and policymakers are that they often do. Host communities may, for example, hold negative perceptions towards refugees, considering them economic or cultural threats (Getmansky et al. 2018). However, conflict literature shows that hosting refugees does not necessarily lead to "the likelihood of new conflict, prolong the existing conflict, or raise the number of violent events or casualties" (Zhou and Shaver 2021).

Furthermore, migration can have the opposite effect, leading to peace and development, yet this is often neglected (Krause and Segadlo 2021). Zhou and Shaver (2021) demonstrate that refugee presence can instead decrease conflict risk due to increased development. In Uganda, for example, the increased presence of refugees has brought humanitarian aid that has improved "public service delivery for host communities," like health care and schools, and decreased the likelihood of conflict (Zhou, Grossman and Ge, 2023).

Climate change and climate-induced migration risks reconsidered

As climate change has risen prominently on the political agenda, so has the concern that migration related to climate impacts will increase significantly. However, the fear is not substantiated by empirical evidence. For example, Cottier and Salehyan (2021) demonstrate that "amid irrational fears that climate change is going to cause a flood of African migration to Europe, there is no evidence that a drought has ever increased such unauthorized migration". Instead, they indicate that drought can negatively impact the size of migration flows, especially in countries that rely on agriculture (Cottier and Salehyan 2021).

Although the Security Council also considers climate-induced migration a threat multiplier and security risk (Security Council Report 2021), climate-induced migration may not necessarily lead to new security risks. As Bohnet, Cottier and Hug (2021) show, disaster-induced migration differs from conflict-induced displacement and does not necessarily lead to violent conflict. Because climate-induced migration is often short-term and internal, conflict risk is small (Raleigh et al. 2008). The relationship between climate, displacement and conflict is still complex and "may be lost in the frequently simplistic debate over population flows" (Brozka and Fröhlich 2016)³. Like in the case of migration generally, securitization has been used as a strategy in climate politics (Boas 2015). Nevertheless, climate-induced migration should not be instrumentalized and misused for political goals. The following section shows how migration has been used in diplomacy.

³ See: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/statement-United-Nations-Security-Council-0>.

3.3. Migration and diplomacy: The elephant in the "engine room" of IR

As the above cases on the interlinkages between migration, power relations and security underline, the increasing connection between migration and international politics has significantly affected diplomacy, which is "the institutional framework within which much of international negotiation takes place" (Jonsson 2002). Migration has gradually entered the "engine room" of IR, as Jonsson (2002, pp.21) puts it. This means it is now part of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations as issues like war, trade, culture, and the environment.

Conceptually, this process has been captured by the notion of migration diplomacy, which defines the connections between cross-border mobility, state interests, power inequalities, interstate bargaining, and diplomacy. The term has gained attention in both public and scholarly debates in recent years, contributing to the emergence of a distinct field of study. Given the expanding repertoire of instruments and practices actors employ to achieve their objectives, there is a growing need for heightened scrutiny from both scholarly researchers and practitioners alike.

An evolving conceptualization of migration diplomacy

Migration diplomacy describes the use of diplomatic tools for migration-related goals - or, conversely, migration policies for diplomatic purposes (Oyen 2016, Tsourapas 2018). It is neither a synonym for a country's migration policy nor a subset of a state's foreign relations and diplomacy. Instead, it identifies the strategies and instruments mobilized by different actors to link the above dimensions. As long as changes in border and asylum policies affect another country's behaviour, for instance, they can be considered a form of migration diplomacy (Thiollet 2011). Likewise, the redefinition of diplomatic relations (through the signature or the negotiations of international agreements) to affect migration and asylum policies in other countries - such as those pursued by the EU vis-à-vis Morocco or Turkey in 2013 (Norman 2020; Benjelloun 2021; Geddes & Maru 2020) are telling of the nexus between migration and diplomacy.

Adamson and Tsourapas (2019) differentiate between cooperative and coercive migration diplomacy, with the former involving consensual agreements between states for mutual benefit and the latter employing measures like threats, violence, or domination by one state against another. These dimensions, however, often overlap since economic, social, demographic, or political asymmetries make it difficult to assess the degrees of coercion exercised, accepted, or resisted. The EU discourse on a "partnership approach on migration" with third countries – recently recalled by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Joseph Borrel (2023) - has long been contested on the grounds of exploiting power asymmetries to externalize border control. The increasing link between cooperation on migration and economic agreements does not mean that security logic has lost its relevance. Nevertheless, it has become one of the many factors states may leverage to achieve

their migration-related goals. For instance, the EU's guarantee to protect Jordan in the context of the Syrian war has played a crucial role in persuading the Jordanian government to cooperate on migration (Seeberg 2020; Seeberg & Völkel 2022).

The analysis of the complexification of migration diplomacy – with negotiations linking a wide range of policies, types of agreements and societal dimensions – has highlighted how non-state actors may affect the diplomatic process and the outcomes. For instance, Malit and Tsourapas (2021) show how actors like public-private partnerships, construction companies, business elites, NGOs, and foreign consulting firms have shaped the Emirates' migration diplomacy vis-à-vis the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Despite the described versatility of the concept of migration diplomacy, there are several aspects the concept has not yet captured. In her paper published in 2023, Tolay criticizes the persistent Eurocentrism that characterizes both the concept and its application. To address this limitation, a greater focus on migration diplomacy in and between countries of the Global South is necessary. Research and policy analysis should also acknowledge and explore power asymmetries (and the colonial legacies behind them) in triggering and shaping coercive migration diplomacy (Tolay, 2023). Along with the critique of Eurocentrism, Tsourapas and Zartaloudis (2022) point out that the study of coercive migration diplomacy - which has mainly been attributed to countries of the Global South - should be studied more for countries of the Global North. Hence, Greece's employed 'blackmailing' and 'backscratching' strategies towards the European Union in response to the 'European migrant crisis' should not be isolated cases (Tsourapas and Zartaloudis 2022).

Moreover, the concept has been mostly applied from a realist and structuralist perspective, implying that bargaining happens primarily for tangible, material aims. Other important motives, such as status, recognition, reputation or moral standing, are thus overlooked (Ahlborn 2019, Tolay 2023).

Migration as a cornerstone of bilateral and multilateral relations: The case of Turkey

Turkey is an exemplary case of how migration has impacted all three components of international politics and relations: Power relations, security and, foremost, diplomacy. Turkey's strategic location as a bridge between Asia, Europe, and Africa has positioned it as a crucial partner for the European Union (EU) in managing irregular migration flows (İçduygu 2000; Dimitriadi et al. 2018). While Turkey has long been acknowledged as a transit country, the influx of Syrian refugees since the early 2000s has transformed it into a receiving country (Üstübcü 2019). This shift has resulted from a combination of the EU's externalization policy of migration and Turkey's accession process, which have led to significant changes in Turkey's migration governance in political, institutional, and legislative contexts (Üstübcü 2019). These changes have impacted bilateral cooperation between Turkey and Greece and between Turkey and the EU,

particularly after the Arab Spring, as irregular migration became a driver in diplomatic relations (Dimitriadi et al. 2018). The Readmission Agreement between Turkey and the EU in 2016 played a crucial role in framing this cooperation, with the subsequent dialogue for visa liberalization highlighting the mutual needs of both sides (Kaya, 2020; Derviş et al., 2004).

Beyond the EU's increasing need for Turkey's cooperation in managing irregular migration, Turkey's aspiration to assume a new role as a soft and smart power in the Middle East during the post-Arab Spring era facilitated the instrumentalization of migration in its foreign policy (Dimitriadi et al. 2018; Kaya 2020). This transformative period came to a turning point in 2015 with the adoption of the Joint Action Plan and the EU-Turkey Statement of March 18, 2016, which set the foundation for migration as a diplomatic tool by both sides. While the EU aimed to prevent irregular migration, Turkey sought to revive visa liberalization talks, revitalize the accession process through high-level dialogues, and open new negotiation chapters (Kaya, 2020; Toygür, 2022).

However, the cooperative migration diplomacy between Turkey and the EU during this period experienced a significant interruption when Turkey unilaterally opened its Western borders for irregular migrants' crossings to the EU on February 28, 2020, following the killing of 34 Turkish soldiers by Syrian government forces in Idlib (The Guardian, February 28, 2020; Reuters, February 27, 2020). This act by the Turkish government turned migration into an instrument of coercive migration diplomacy, exerting pressure on the EU (The Guardian, March 17, 2020). The subsequent resolution of the double crises - Idlib and border crossings - involved the renewal of the refugee deal between Turkey and the EU following high-level diplomacy between President Erdoğan and European leaders such as Emmanuel Macron, Boris Johnson, and Angela Merkel (The Guardian, March 17, 2020).

In sum, the Turkish case highlights the dual nature of migration as a diplomatic tool, encompassing both cooperative and coercive aspects (Tsourapas 2017). On the one hand, Turkey's cooperation with the EU in managing irregular migration describes the cooperative aspect of migration diplomacy, involving joint action plans and agreements. It recognizes states' interdependence and willingness to address migration challenges through dialogue and negotiation. On the other hand, Turkey's use of border policies to leverage the EU exemplifies the coercive component of migration diplomacy, raising serious concerns about the impact of these practices on the rights of migrants. In addition to the migration diplomacy between Turkey and the EU, the high level of politicization of Syrian refugees in Turkey during the parliamentary and presidential elections in May 2023 indicates the beginning of a new chapter of diplomatic relations with Syria for the repatriation of Syrian refugees. The fact that the promises of the Turkish opposition leaders for the repatriation of Syrian refugees became a focal issue for the presidential elections in Turkey, there are increasing

debates on the normalization of relations between Turkey and Syrian and starting negotiations with Syria on the repatriation of Syrian refugees (VOA Türkiye, May 9, 2023).

4 Conclusion

Migration has garnered increasing attention within international relations and the broader global political landscape. Despite a growing body of scholarly work studying the intersection of international relations (IR) and migration, such as the literature on migration diplomacy, this nexus remains inadequately explored. This research note, however, underscores that migration, both in terms of governance and scholarship, has the potential not only to unveil misconceptions and alter power relations but also to challenge political and academic analysis. We therefore argue that migration ought to be recognized as an integral component of international relations. Both policymakers and scholars should acknowledge and address the complex interdependencies between migration and international relations, particularly in the realms of power relations, security, and diplomacy.

Migration has not only transformed the dynamics of cooperation between the EU and its neighbours, but it has also significantly shifted the power dynamics between the Global North and South. This transformation has made the EU more reliant on third countries. In particular, migration has evolved into a crucial bargaining chip for countries in the South and neighbouring EU nations alike. In the realm of migration diplomacy, the emphasis has leaned more towards strategic bargaining rather than fostering solidarity. While migration has undoubtedly fostered a degree of cooperation, it is important to note that this collaboration has, to some extent, been characterized and driven by coercive measures.

Migration in international relations remains a "security issue", especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to a much lesser degree, is considered a driver of development or peace. The research note nevertheless points out that migration is not necessarily linked to renewed conflict or terrorism in the host country. Fears about "floods" of climate-induced migrants are also not substantiated. Immigration as a significant concern is not reflected anymore as the primary concern among EU citizens as it has been replaced by high inflation. Nevertheless, populist far-right discourses frame migration as a security threat to the nation, arguing for policy restrictions and measures to stop migration. In some countries like Germany and Austria, these anti-migrant far-right narratives fall on fertile ground and lead to new highs for far-right political parties in opinion surveys (see examples of FPÖ in Austria and AfD in Germany). However, migration and conflict scholarship has provided empirical evidence that restrictions increase rather than decrease security.

Acknowledging the interconnectedness and influence of migration on scholarship within international relations is an ongoing journey that requires further exploration and

scrutiny. There is a need to push the boundaries and question established assumptions in international relations, particularly those framing migration solely as a security threat and adhering to a state-centric perspective. Additionally, to foster a more comprehensive understanding, migration scholarship in IR should strive to transcend the limitations of a Eurocentric perspective.

The UWK-oiip cooperation sets as their agenda to bring different scholars and policymakers of various disciplines together, such as migration and international relations as both fields of studies, migration and international relations, can foster the partnership to interrogate complexities of the international system and improve migration governance migration. While migration studies focus on the human, the vulnerable, and the reasons behind and ahead of mobility, IR develops theories that help better understand international structures and foreign policy motivations. We argue that integrating IR perspectives into migration studies can help provide a better ground for systematic comparative research, the generalization of conceptions, theory building and the consideration of international political and economic structures in the analysis of migration.

5 Bibliography

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