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THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN SECURITY AND ITS IMPACT ON MIGRATION

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The Concept of Human Security and Its Impact on Migration

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CONTENT

Arif Akgul & Hasan Aydin
MANAGING RISKS OR PROTECTING PEOPLE? RETHINKING THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MIGRATION GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN SECURITY 6

Emilia Alaverdov & Miranda Gurgenidze
MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTING MIGRANTS' RIGHTS IN THE MODERN WORLD 20

Abdulkadir Usman
THE IMPACT OF NOMADISM ON MIGRATION PATTERNS AND ASSOCIATED SECURITY DYNAMICS: A REVIEW OF THE NIGERIAN SITUATION (2020–2026) 29

Milivoje Pajović
EU MILITARISATION VS. MIGRATION 38

Jelena Zvezdanović Lobanova, Mikhail Lobanov & Milan Zvezdanović
GREEN TRANSITION AND LABOUR MIGRATION: DRIVERS, IMPACTS AND POLICY RESPONSES 51

Slavica Stamenić Janjić
THE PARADOX OF HUMAN SECURITY: THE LIMITS OF SOLIDARITY IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS' MIGRATION POLICIES 64

Vesna Perić & Maja Vasiljević
GENDER AND BORDER: TRANSNATIONAL SUBJECTS AND BODY IN EUROPEAN MIGRATION CINEMA 78

Vojkan Nikolić & Nikola Petrović
INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR MONITORING MIGRATION FLOWS AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS 82

Nenad Putnik & Dušan Smiljanić
INTERSTATE CONFLICTS AS CAUSE OF MIGRATIONS 106

Marija Vukadinović
IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND HUMAN SECURITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES 119

Ljubiša Matić
THE INVISIBILITY BARGAIN ON STAGE: THE THEATER AS A NONSTATE SECURITY ACTOR 132

Robert Ugochukwu Onyeneke, Frank Baffour-Ata, Jonathan Atta-Aidoo & Chinenye Judith Onyeneke
HUMAN SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION DYNAMICS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A DYNAMIC PANEL ANALYSIS 147

Hossam Nabil Elshenraky
GENDER ASPECTS OF MIGRATION AND CYBER-CRIME 166

Sandra Božić
THE WAR IN UKRAINE: MIGRATION AND HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES 185

Marijana Maksimović
HUMAN SECURITY IN THE INTERNATIONALRELATIONS - TERM, CONCEPT AND PRACTICE 199

1.

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MANAGING RISKS OR PROTECTING PEOPLE? RETHINKING THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MIGRATION GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN SECURITY

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the way governments manage migration, yet most existing scholarship examines only one dimension of this transformation: how AI serves as an instrument of border control and securitization. This paper argues that such a focus misses an equally important dimension, the humanitarian benefits of migration AI, which produces as unintended but foreseeable consequences of its securitization-oriented deployment. To understand both dimensions, the paper integrates three theoretical traditions: Securitization Theory (Buzan et al., 1998), the UNDP Human Security Framework (1994), and an intended-and-unintended-consequences framework theorized by Merton (1936, 1949) and De Zwart (2015). The paper aims to examine the paradox of securitized AI in migration governance, which AI deployment for border control simultaneously generates humanitarian benefits such as language access, legal information, employment support, and health navigation. Based on De Zwart's (2015) distinction between unintended and unanticipated consequences, the paper argues that these outcomes are foreseeable consequences policymakers could have planned for but chose not to. This paper concludes that AI governance framework in migration must be redesigned with a human-centric orientation, which moves beyond administrative efficiency toward human security as the main principle of migration governance.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, migration governance, securitization, human security, unintended consequences*

Introduction

The world is living through an unprecedented displacement crisis. By the end of 2022, over 110 million people had been forcibly displaced, the highest number ever recorded, due to conflict, persecution, climate disasters, and political instability (UNHCR, 2023). This reality has placed enormous pressure on governments, international organi-

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zations, and humanitarian agencies to manage human movement at a scale that overwhelms traditional administrative systems. Artificial intelligence has stepped into this gap, quietly transforming how borders are monitored, asylum claims are processed, refugees are identified and registered, and integration services are delivered.

AI-driven systems are now embedded at nearly every stage of the migration governance cycle. Across Europe and beyond, governments use automated decision-making tools for risk assessment, biometric identification, welfare distribution, and labor market matching (Shrishak & Pénicaud, 2025). A 2023 mapping by the Algorithmic Fairness for Asylum Seekers and Refugees project documented AI applications spanning the full migration spectrum: predicting displacement trends, prioritizing asylum seekers, processing visa applications, verifying documents, detecting fraud, monitoring released detainees, and extracting mobile phone data to verify migrant narratives (Ozkul, 2023). These are not isolated experiments. They represent a fundamental shift in how migration policy is made and enforced.

Most scholarships on this transformation have generally focused on its risks. Algorithmic bias, racial profiling, opaque decision-making, and the erosion of procedural rights have all been documented with care (Dumbrava, 2025; McGregor, 2023; Jones et al., 2023). While this paper takes those concerns seriously, it aims to identify a significant gap in literature. Scholars have not yet developed a systematic framework to understand how the same AI infrastructure that states deploy through a security lens also generates real and foreseeable benefits for the migrants and refugees it governs.

This paper fills that gap. It argues that AI systems in migration contexts operate simultaneously as instruments of control and as potential enablers of human security. This understanding of both functions requires a new analytical framework. That framework draws on three theoretical traditions: Securitization Theory (Buzan et al., 1998), which explains why states build AI for control; the UNDP Human Security Framework (1994), which provides normative criteria for evaluating AI's effects on migrant welfare; and an intended-and-unintended-consequences framework built on Merton (1936, 1949) and De Zwart (2015), which explains how the same system can produce both harmful and beneficial outcomes. The synthesis of these three frameworks reveals what this paper calls the "paradox of securitized AI in migration governance" and points toward the governance reforms needed to resolve it.

Literature Gap

Academic literature on AI and migration has grown substantially over the past decade, but it has developed along two tracks that rarely speak to each other. The first and dominant track examines AI as a securitization tool. Researchers including Amoore (2013), Beduschi (2021), and Molnar (2019) have shown how AI-enabled surveillance,

biometric data collection, and algorithmic risk profiling have restructured border control across liberal democracies, embedding discrimination and opacity into systems that are difficult to challenge. The EU AI Act (European Parliament and Council, 2024) itself classifies AI used in migration and border control as inherently high-risk, acknowledging its direct impact on fundamental rights while simultaneously permitting a broad range of such systems. As Shrishak and Pénicaud (2025) note, many of these systems operate with significant exemptions from transparency requirements, are recorded in non-public databases, and are shielded from independent review.

The second track, smaller but growing, documents AI's humanitarian potential. Reports from IOM (2021), UNHCR (2023), and UNDP (2021) identify AI applications in refugee registration, language access, employment integration, and asylum navigation. Latonero and Kift (2018) showed that digital technologies deployed in humanitarian settings for operational purposes consistently produce empowerment effects for migrants, which facilitates access to information, social networking, and self-advocacy, which were never part of the original design intent. Nalbandian (2022) similarly found that AI tools developed for managing displaced populations have generated significant humanitarian benefits in healthcare access and service navigation.

The gap between these two tracks is not only empirical but also theoretical. No existing framework can explain the structural relationship between securitization-driven AI and humanitarian spillover effects. How can the same system simultaneously serve state control and generate migrant benefits? Why do harmful consequences persist even when they are predictable? Why are beneficial uses left ungoverned even when they are visible? As De Zwart (2015) argues in a directly relevant theoretical context, conflating what is unintended with what is unanticipated systematically obscures governance responsibility. This paper builds a framework to name and address that obscurity.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding the dual role of AI in migration governance requires a framework that can hold two analytically distinct but empirically connected dynamics at the same time. This paper draws on three theoretical building blocks and synthesizes them into a coherent lens for examining AI as both a securitizing instrument and a potential human security enabler.

Securitization Theory

Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998) argue that security is not a fixed condition; it is constructed through political processes. When powerful actors successfully frame an issue as an existential threat, it moves outside normal political debate into a domain of emergency logic, where extraordinary measures become acceptable. Migration has undergone precisely this process across liberal democracies since the 1990s. Irregular

movement, asylum seeking, and refugee flows have been progressively constructed as threats to national security, public order, and social cohesion (Huysmans, 2006; Boswell, 2007). This framing has provided the political justification for deploying increasingly powerful technology at borders and within migration management systems.

AI is the most recent and most powerful stage of this technological escalation. The EU AI Act embeds the securitization logic directly into its regulatory language, authorizing AI to evaluate 'a risk, including a security risk, a risk of irregular migration, or a health risk, presented by an individual intending to enter or who has entered the territory of a Member State' (European Parliament and Council, 2024, Annex III, para. 7b). This framing defines each arriving migrant as a security variable to be assessed and controlled. Securitization theory answers the first question this paper poses: why do states build AI for migration control? The answer is that migration has been securitized, and AI is the technical expression of that political choice.

UNDP Human Security Framework

The UNDP Human Development Report (1994) introduced human security as a fundamental shift in how we think about security: away from the protection of states and toward the protection of people. The framework defines security across seven dimensions: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political, which are organized around three core freedoms. Freedom from fear means protection from violence, coercion, and arbitrary state action. Freedom from want means access to basic needs, economic opportunity, and essential services. Freedom to live in dignity means respect for rights, identity, and meaningful participation in society.

For migrants and refugees, these freedoms are frequently under threat from multiple directions at once (e.g., from the persecution that caused displacement, from the dangers of transit, and from the administrative systems of host states that too often treat people as risks rather than as rights holders). The Commission on Human Security (2003), co-chaired by former UNHCR High Commissioner Sadako Ogata and economist Amartya Sen, formalized this framework as an operational agenda for protecting and empowering those in severe insecurity. These three freedoms serve as the normative measuring standard throughout this paper, which applied consistently to every AI consequence examined whether designed as harmful or beneficial.

The Intended-and-Unintended-Consequences Framework

The third building block is the paper's most distinctive analytical contribution. It combines Merton's (1936, 1949) foundational sociology of consequences with De Zwart's (2015) important conceptual refinement and applies both to the governance of AI in migration.

Merton's (1936) seminal article established that formally organized action including government policy regularly produces outcomes its designers did not intend. He identified several structural reasons for this: ignorance, error, competing values, and what he called the 'imperious immediacy of interest.' In his later work (1949), Merton introduced the distinction between manifest functions, intended and recognized outcomes, and latent functions, unintended outcomes that nonetheless serve real social purposes. This distinction maps directly onto migration AI: manifest functions are the securitization objectives; latent functions are the humanitarian spillover effects that the same infrastructure generates through different uses.

A terminological point matters here. Merton's original (1936) article referred to 'unanticipated consequences.' In Social Theory and Social Structure (1968), however, he used 'unintended' and 'unanticipated' interchangeably as synonyms. As De Zwart (2015) documents, references to 'unintended consequences' began to outnumber 'unanticipated consequences' in scholarly literature from the early 1960s onward, to the point where 'unanticipated consequences' has largely disappeared from use. This linguistic shift matters more than it might appear, because the two terms are not the same thing.

De Zwart's (2015) central contribution is to restore the distinction. Something can be unintended, not part of the plan, without being unanticipated. Policymakers may know an outcome will occur. They simply chose not to make it part of their objectives. De Zwart calls these outcomes 'permitted consequences': neither designed nor accidental but allowed to happen because decision-makers weigh other priorities more highly or prefer not to acknowledge what they can foresee. As he argues, the conventional use of 'unintended consequences' with its implicit suggestion of genuine surprise 'obscures the choices that were made' and shields policymakers from accountability for foreseeable outcomes (De Zwart, 2015, p. 295).

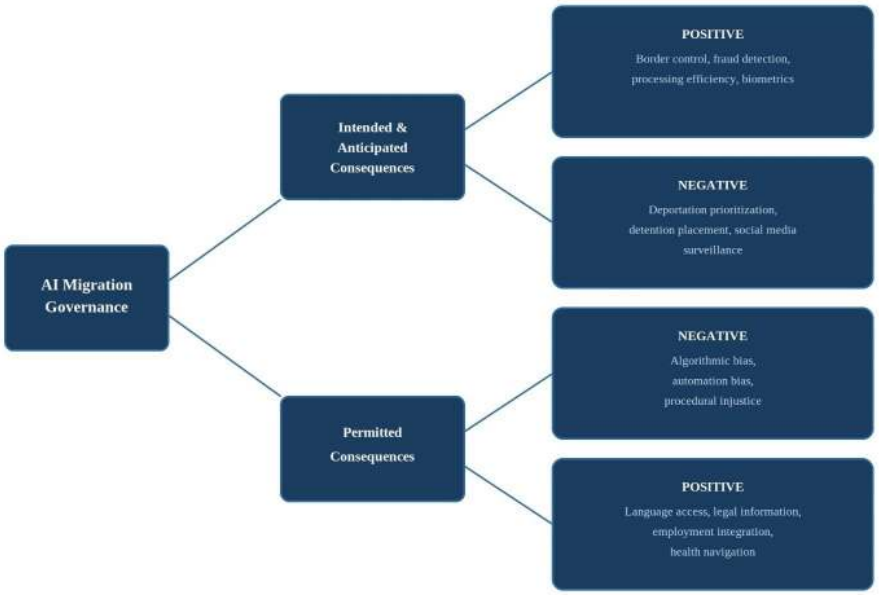
This distinction carries significant weight for migration AI. Suresh and Guttag (2020) demonstrated that many harmful and beneficial side effects of AI systems are structurally foreseeable, which means they are also structurally manageable, given the right analytical frameworks and accountability mechanisms. The harmful effects most widely documented in the literature such as algorithmic bias, automation deference, chilling effects on asylum claims, biometric data accessed by persecutors are not genuine surprises. By the time most national migration AI systems were scaled, the bias literature, behavioral research, and data security vulnerabilities were already well established. These are permitted harms: foreseeable consequences of deployment choices, whose persistence is a governance failure. The same logic applies to humanitarian benefits: their absence from governance frameworks is equally a choice, not an oversight.

Synthesis: The Paradox of Securitized AI in Migration Governance

Bringing these three frameworks together reveals what this paper calls the paradox of securitized AI in migration governance. The political logic that drives states to deploy AI for border control simultaneously creates an infrastructure capable of generating meaningful humanitarian benefits. However, those benefits remain largely ungoverned and unrealized. Securitization theory explains the genesis of this paradox: the logic of threat management determines why and how AI is deployed. The consequences framework explains its structure: the same modular, networked infrastructure designed for control generates latent humanitarian functions through the long implementation chains that connect state design to operational reality.

The governance implication is direct. If humanitarian functions were genuinely unanticipated, their absence from policy would call for better forecasting. But if they are unintended yet foreseeable, permitted outcomes in De Zwart's terms, then their non-realization is a deliberate governance choice. The question shifts from 'did policymakers know?' to 'why, knowing, did they permit this to continue?' Molnar (2019) observed that states have exploited the absence of binding international AI regulations to use migrant populations as experimental subjects for technologies that would face far greater scrutiny if applied to citizens. In this context, a governance gap that closing is a structural prerequisite for realizing AI's humanitarian potential. Figure 1 presents the full analytical structure of the framework.

Figure 1. *Consequence typology of AI in migration governance: intended and anticipated consequences versus permitted consequences (adapted from De Zwart, 2015; Merton, 1949).*



Mapping the Consequences of AI in Migration

The framework produces four categories of AI consequences, organised along two dimensions: whether outcomes were intended or unintended relative to securitization objectives, and whether they are anticipated or constitute permitted outcomes in De Zwart's sense. Table 1 summarizes the typology; the sections below work through each category against the UNDP human security criteria.

Table 1. *Consequence typology of AI in migration governance*

Category	Examples	Human security impact	Governance status
Intended / Positive	Border control, biometrics, fraud detection, processing efficiency	Mixed: efficiency gains vs. coercive data collection	Designed and evaluated
Intended / Negative	Deportation algorithms, detention placement, cross-border enforcement sharing	Damaging: undermines freedom from fear and dignity	Designed and defended
Permitted / Negative	Algorithmic bias, automation bias, chilling effects, data shared with persecutors	Severe: foreseeable harms governance chose not to prevent	Governance failure
Permitted / Positive	Language access, legal information, employment integration, health navigation	Significant: foreseeable benefits governance chose not to realize	Governance gap

Intended and Anticipated (Positive)

These are the outcomes states design, publicly justify, and measure performance against. Governments present them as improvements: faster processing of asylum backlogs, more consistent fraud detection, and better coordination across national databases. Biometric systems like EURODAC in the European Union, which collects fingerprint and facial recognition data from asylum seekers across member states, represent this category clearly. The system largely delivers what it was designed to do. Country-level implementations in Canada, the Netherlands, and Germany have also demonstrated genuine operational gains in biometric verification and administrative processing speed (Ozkul, 2023; Shrishak & Pénicaud, 2025).

Evaluated against the UNDP framework, the picture is mixed. Some efficiency gains do advance freedom from want, faster asylum determinations give people faster access to protection and services. However, the same biometric infrastructure involves coercive collection of sensitive personal data from some of the world's most vulnerable people, often without meaningful consent. The tension between administrative efficiency and human dignity is not an unintended complication; it is embedded in the design.

Intended and Anticipated (Negative)

Some AI consequences in migration are harmful by design. Deportation prioritization algorithms, detention placement tools, and cross-border enforcement data-sharing platforms are all built to coerce, restrict, and remove. These are not side effects of well-intentioned systems; they are the intended outputs. Winner (1980) argued that technologies embed political values in their structural design. Migration AI is a clear example: these systems do not merely reflect securitization logic, they instantiate it in algorithmic form, converting the coercive treatment of migrants from a contested political choice into a technical output.

Against the UNDP framework, the damage is unambiguous. Algorithmic enforcement systematically undermines freedom from fear. When migrants are tracked, scored, and ranked for removal, chronic insecurity becomes a structural feature of their lives. Freedom to live in dignity is equally compromised when people are reduced to risk scores rather than engaged as individuals with rights and circumstances. Beduschi (2021) and Bircan and Korkmaz (2021) both observe that the efficiency paradigm driving these systems persistently prioritizes state management over migrant welfare, reinforcing structural inequalities rather than addressing them.

Permitted Consequences (Negative)

These are the foreseeable harms that governance frameworks failed to prevent. They are unintended as design objectives, but they were predictable, and in many cases predicted, well before deployment at scale. De Zwart's framework is essential here: calling these outcomes 'unintended consequences' in the conventional sense insulates governments from accountability, because conventional usage implies genuine surprise. The more accurate framing is that these are permitted harms, foreseeable outcomes that governance chose not to prevent.

Algorithmic bias is the most extensively documented example. Clear racial and gender disparities in facial recognition and predictive risk systems were published and widely circulated by 2018 (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018). Yet AI systems using similar technologies were deployed in asylum and border contexts after this date without adequate safeguards. Xenidis (2025) and Dumbrava (2025) have both noted that the EU AI Act's broad exemptions for migration and border control AI significantly undermine the protections that would otherwise apply, which leaves the populations most affected by algorithmic bias with the fewest legal remedies.

Automation bias among asylum adjudicators is a second permitted harm. Decision-support AI was designed to assist human judgment, not replace it. Yet research consistently shows that caseworkers defer to algorithmic recommendations even when their own assessment diverges (Busuioc, 2021; Lorenz et al., 2021). The legal architecture designates asylum decisions as human responsibilities; the behavioral reality hol-

lows that designation out. Chilling effects represent a third permitted harm: the publicised deployment of social media monitoring and phone data extraction has deterred legitimate refugees from filing claims or providing complete accounts of their situations (McGregor, 2023). And perhaps the gravest permitted harm is biometric data accessed by persecutory governments. Registration databases designed for protection have, in documented cases, enabled the identification and targeting of refugees by the very authorities they fled from (Jacobsen, 2015; Privacy International, 2019).

Permitted Consequences (Positive)

This category is the paper's core analytical contribution. These are the humanitarian benefits that securitization-driven AI generates without design intent called latent functions, in Merton's terms, which emerge because the same modular digital systems built for state control can be accessed and redirected by civil society actors, legal aid organizations, and migrant communities toward protective ends. They are unintended relative to securitization objectives, but they are foreseeable. Their systematic absence from governance frameworks is therefore a governance choice, not an epistemic gap.

Language access is the most widely distributed of these latent functions. Natural language processing built for asylum testimony analysis and document screening carries within it the capacity for real-time translation and multilingual communication. NGOs across multiple countries have adapted this infrastructure to provide language support to migrants navigating healthcare, legal proceedings, and social services, which are directly advancing freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity. Latonero and Kift (2018) documented how digital tools deployed for institutional efficiency consistently produce these empowerment effects as secondary outcomes.

Legal information access is a second category. Legal aid organizations in Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Canada have built multilingual platforms drawing on NLP infrastructure originally developed for adjudication, which provides migrants accessible explanations of their rights, procedures, and available support. For many people encountering these systems, this represents a fundamental change in their relationship to the institutions governing their lives. Employment integration and health service navigation are two further categories, both advancing freedom from want. Labor market AI built for enforcement has been repurposed for employment matching and skills recognition. Health screening AI has been redirected toward service navigation and care pathway identification (Nalbandian, 2022).

What makes these outcomes analytically important is not simply that they exist, but that they are foreseeable. Civil society actors have identified them across multiple jurisdictions. International organizations have documented them. Researchers have reported them. De Zwart's framework compels the question: if these benefits are foreseeable, why

have governance frameworks consistently chosen not to plan for them? The answer this paper offers is that their non-realization is a permitted outcome, an implicit governance choice, sustained by securitization logic, to deploy AI without designing the conditions that would convert its latent humanitarian potential into a deliberate public good.

Governance Implications

The framework generates four practical implications for how AI in migration should be governed.

First, accountability for foreseeable harm. De Zwart's framework reframes algorithmic bias, automation deference, chilling effects, and data vulnerabilities not as unanticipated failures but as permitted outcomes. These are foreseeable consequences of deployment choices for which governance responsibility can and should be assigned. Responsible innovation frameworks (Stilgoe, Owen & Macnaghten, 2013) provide a practical model: requiring documented anticipatory assessments of foreseeable harms before deployment creates a record against which accountability can be measured.

Second, a positive obligation for humanitarian benefits. If humanitarian applications of migration AI are equally foreseeable, governance frameworks carry a positive obligation to plan actively for benefits, not merely to avoid harm. This means incorporating latent humanitarian functions into AI design and procurement from the outset, rather than leaving their discovery to under-resourced civil society actors. The UNDP Human Security Framework provides the normative foundation: a governance framework that deploys AI with foreseeable humanitarian applications and does nothing to realize them is choosing, in De Zwart's terms, to permit them to remain unrealized.

Third, formal recognition of civil society's role. In practice, almost all humanitarian uses of migration AI documented in this paper have been identified and developed by NGOs, legal aid organizations, and migrant communities, not by the states that built the underlying infrastructure. This is not accidental but structural: civil society actors are closer to migrants and more motivated to identify beneficial uses of available technology. Governance frameworks should formally recognize and resource this intermediary function, providing civil society with access to AI infrastructure and institutional channels through which identified humanitarian applications can be incorporated into governance design.

Fourth, urgency given technological lock-in. Collingridge (1980) identified a governance dilemma: a technology is easiest to reshape when it is new, but hardest to change once it is institutionally embedded especially when its impacts become fully visible. Migration AI is already entrenched in many jurisdictions. Molnar (2019) and the Council of Europe (Shrishak & Pénicaud, 2025) have both noted that closing the regulatory gap is a structural prerequisite for realising AI's humanitarian potential. The window for governance reform is narrowing, and continued deferral is itself a choice.

Limitations and Critical Reflections

This paper works with three frameworks, each of which carries recognized limitations. Securitization theory has been criticized for focusing too heavily on elite discourse while underestimating the agency of securitized groups to resist or redirect the technologies used against them (McDonald, 2008). The UNDP human security concept has been challenged for its breadth, which can produce analytical vagueness and allow states to exploit humanitarian language to justify initiatives that primarily serve national interests (Paris, 2001). The intended and unintended consequences framework, used alone, does not fully address institutional accountability especially whether a more deliberately human-centered AI design would produce better human security outcomes at lower cost to migrant rights than the current model of humanitarian result (Beduschi, 2021; Latonero & Kift, 2018).

The synthesis of all three frameworks is designed to compensate for these individual weaknesses. Securitization theory names the political logic; human security provides the normative standard; the consequences framework identifies the accountability gap. Together they produce a more complete picture than any single tradition can offer. The primary limitation that remains is empirical: the framework developed here requires systematic testing against specific AI systems and governance contexts, and the voices of migrants who remain underrepresented in the research informing migration AI governance.

Conclusion

Over 110 million people are currently displaced worldwide. The AI systems governing their lives were built primarily to manage risk, not to protect people. That is not a technical fact but a political choice. And it is a choice that can be made differently.

This paper has argued that AI in migration governance operates simultaneously as an instrument of control and as an ungoverned source of humanitarian potential. The same infrastructure that profiles migrants as security threats also generates language access tools, legal information platforms, employment matching services, and health navigation systems. These benefits are foreseeable, documented, and consistently absent from governance design. De Zwart's concept of permitted consequences names this gap with precision: these benefits are not overlooked because policymakers lack the knowledge to foresee them. They are unrealized because governance frameworks have chosen, implicitly and persistently, not to plan for them.

The paper makes three contributions. Theoretically, it provides the first systematic integration of securitization theory, human security, and a consequences framework for the migration AI context. Analytically, it produces a structured typology. It distinguishes manifest securitization functions, latent humanitarian functions, permitted harms, and genuinely unanticipated effects, which can guide empirical research and

policy evaluation. Normatively, it grounds a clear reform agenda: anticipate consequences, build in accountability, and design for humanitarian benefits. The governing principle of migration AI should be human security, not administrative efficiency. That shift is possible. It requires governance frameworks that take the full consequences of AI including intended and permitted, positive and negative dimensions.

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2.

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MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTING MIGRANTS' RIGHTS IN THE MODERN WORLD

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Abstract

In the modern world, the protection of migrants' rights remains one of the most important challenges, which is due to globalisation, conflicts, and increasing economic inequality. Migrants often face discrimination, exploitation, and social exclusion, which is why the existence of effective legal and institutional mechanisms is necessary. Migrants often find themselves in vulnerable situations due to their legal status, language barriers, inadequate social protection, and limited access to justice. In many cases, they face discrimination, labour exploitation, risks of human trafficking, and limited access to healthcare, education, and social services. These challenges highlight the need to develop effective mechanisms to protect migrants' rights at both the international and national levels. At the international level, the protection of migrants' rights is ensured by documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers. International organisations and regional structures that carry out monitoring and recommendations also play an important role. At the national level, states create legislation and policies aimed at the integration and protection of migrants' rights. Nevertheless, gaps still exist in practice, which require coordinated international cooperation and a human rights-oriented approach.

Keywords*: Migration, Human Rights, Discrimination, Social Protection, State Policy*

Introduction

In today's globalised environment, international migration has become an integral part of global socioeconomic and political processes. The growth of transnational population mobility is linked to economic disparities between countries, armed conflicts, political instability, climate change, and people's desire for higher standards of living. According to the International Organisation for Migration, the number of international migrants worldwide is constantly increasing, reinforcing the need to develop effective mechanisms to protect their rights and legitimate interests.

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Despite the recognition of migrants as subjects of international human rights, this category of individuals often finds itself in vulnerable situations. Migrants may face discrimination, restrictions on access to labour and social rights, exploitation in the labour market, and legal uncertainty in host countries. Under these circumstances, the development of a comprehensive system of international and national mechanisms to protect the rights of migrants is particularly important. International legal instruments and institutions aimed at ensuring respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms play a vital role in this system. One of the key documents in this area is the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as the work of international organisations, including the United Nations and the International Organisation for Migration, which develop international standards and promote their implementation.

The relevance of this study stems from the fact that, despite the existence of a well-developed international regulatory framework, the issue of effectively protecting migrants' rights remains one of the most complex in contemporary international law and politics. Many states face the need to find a balance between regulating migration flows, ensuring national security, and upholding universal human rights.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the main mechanisms for protecting migrants' rights in the modern world and to identify key challenges in their implementation at the international and national levels. Particular attention is paid to the role of international organisations, international legal instruments, and states in ensuring the effective protection of migrants' rights.

The Rights of Detained Irregular Migrants

The rule of law is a complex concept that has evolved historically and takes different forms in different democratic traditions. In general, it refers to a system in which all members of society, including all structures of the state and its agents, conduct their affairs in strict compliance with the law, and the judiciary acts as a guarantor of such protection. The rule of law is based on the principle of legality and the independence of the judiciary. Currently, the requirements of the rule of law in relation to deprivation of liberty are enshrined in constitutional texts and legislation around the world, and are applied and interpreted by the judiciary in different legal cultures and jurisdictions (European Law Institute, 2017).

The rule of law is one of the values on which the European Union is founded and, consequently, also one of the guiding principles of the EU's external action. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union states: “The Union is founded on the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are shared by mem-

ber states in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. To ensure effective respect for the values on which the European Union is founded, the Treaty on European Union (TEU) also establishes a sanctions mechanism (in Article 7) aimed at suspending certain rights of Member States in the event of "a serious breach of those values by a Member State" (Article 2) (EU, 2012).

Therefore, EU action in the field of asylum and migration - both within the EU Member States and in agreements with third countries must respect, promote and encourage the rule of law (Mermanishvili, 2021).

When taking any decision or order on the administrative detention of asylum seekers or irregular migrants, Member States implement not only EU law, but also, most often, Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (possibly in conjunction with Article 3 of the ECHR) and national constitutional and/or statutory provisions. The interaction between the three main systems of protection under EU law, the European Convention on Human Rights and national law can lead to very complex legal conditions that must be taken into account by the judge in each specific case. The fifth subsection describes this interaction with general approaches used by the relevant courts, which consider this interaction in practice. In the case of detention of asylum seekers, the link between EU law and Article 31 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (hereinafter referred to as the Geneva Convention) must be taken into account (UN, 2011).

Article 78 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) defines the relationship between EU law and the Geneva Convention. This article provides that the common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection "shall be in conformity with the Geneva Convention and other relevant treaties". Although the Court has referred to this provision, it has not yet specified which "other relevant treaties" it refers to (UN, 2012).

Statelessness, by its very nature, severely limits access to identity and travel documents that citizens normally possess. Stateless persons often have no legal residence in any country (Pirtskhalashvili & Mirianashvili, 2018).

Hence, the absence of documents or the necessary immigration permits cannot be used as a general justification for the detention of such persons. Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ("ICCPR"), which guarantees the right to liberty and security of a person, prohibits unlawful and arbitrary detention (UN, 1966).

For detention to be lawful, it must be regulated by domestic law, preferably with maximum limits, and subject to periodic and judicial review. For detention to be non-arbitrary, each case must be reasonable, proportionate and non-discriminatory in all circumstances. Indefinite and mandatory forms of detention are inherently arbitrary. EU Asylum Procedures Directive 2005/85/EC, Article 18(1): "Member States shall not hold a person

in detention for the sole reason that he or she is an asylum seeker"(Fordham et al., 2013).

If detained pending determination of statelessness status, they should not be held with convicted criminals or those awaiting trial. Furthermore, detainees must have access to legal representation during the detention review process, including free consultations for those who cannot afford it (UN, 2014).

The definition of immigration detention contrasts with "criminal detention." The merging of these two separate areas of law has led to confusion regarding the nature of immigration detention. In recent decades, we have clearly seen a trend towards the criminalisation of migration and migrants themselves, as the term "criminal migration" has emerged in the United States. Migration cuts across both criminal and administrative national laws, depending on local circumstances. In some countries, illegal entry is criminalised, leading to prosecution and imprisonment. A recent report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) found that all countries except Portugal, Spain and Malta punish illegal entry with fines or even imprisonment. As for illegal presence on the territory of a country, it is punishable in all EU member states except France, Portugal and Malta (Bloomfield et al., 2015).

Health Risks and Vulnerabilities of Migrants

The relationship between migration and health is dynamic and complex. Migration can lead to greater exposure to health risks, as is the case for migrant workers in precarious employment with limited access to affordable health care. Migrant health can be defined as differences in health status between migrants and the population in both countries of origin and destination, and in different migration contexts, such as labour migration, international and internal displacement, or irregular migration. Whether individual migrants' health improves or declines depends in part on the interaction of multiple factors that influence their health before, during, and after their migration journey. Social determinants of health include access to safe transportation, quality housing, and healthcare, as well as the response of government systems to migration and health issues. Developing migrant-friendly health services and monitoring migrant health through the Migration and Health in All Strategies (MHAP) approach ensures that migrants' health needs are met. Insufficient, inadequate or discriminatory systemic immigration and health services can lead to several negative health outcomes for migrants and their communities (members of the communities with whom they interact) (United Nations, 2008).

The field of migration and health explores patterns of health interdependence that occur between migrants and the host community and between different groups of migrants, including in situations where the host population struggles to meet its own needs for mental, social, and physical well-being. In the case of infectious diseases, delaying

treatment or attempting to continue treatment for chronic infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis or HIV/AIDS, can have negative consequences for the population, as the potential for further transmission may increase. Refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants are more vulnerable to infectious diseases than the host population (IOM, 2020).

The international human rights movement gained momentum when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on December 10, 1948 (UN, 1948). It aims at protecting and promoting respect for universal human rights and at ensuring the effective recognition and observance of the rights set forth therein (UN, 1994). Designed as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations," the Declaration, for the first time in human history, outlines the fundamental civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to which all human beings are entitled. Over time, it has become widely accepted as a fundamental norm of human rights that everyone must respect and uphold. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, constitute the so-called international bill of human rights (UN, 1948). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) establish civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Under international human rights law, ratification of UN conventions creates three types of obligations for states: obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights. Concerning the right to health, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has established in its general comment (fourteenth comment), paragraphs 30-33, that States have an obligation to ensure that people's health is inviolable. The obligation to protect obliges States to take measures to prevent violations of the guarantees set out in article 12; and the obligation to fulfil requires States to take appropriate measures to ensure the full realisation of the right to health. States must therefore take specific measures to fulfil and protect the right to health, as well as the basic conditions of health. They also have an obligation to refrain from "interfering directly or indirectly with the enjoyment of the right to health" (PICUM, 2022).

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) provides a number of examples of the obligations of states to refrain from actions that would impede the enjoyment of the right to health, known as negative rights. These include the obligation to refrain from denying or restricting equal access to all, including undocumented migrants, (but are not limited to):

- Preventive, curative and palliative healthcare services;
- Refraining from implementing discriminatory practices as a state policy;
- Refrain from imposing discriminatory practices related to women's health status.

Similarly, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), in its thirtieth general comment, reminded States parties to respect the right to health of

non-citizens and to refrain from denying or restricting their access to preventive, curative and palliative health services (UN, 2000).

Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) states that states are obliged "not to expel, return or extradite a person to another State if there is a risk that he or she would be in danger of being tortured;" and in its fourth general chapter, it states that victims of torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment should not be deported to another country where their medical treatment and services are not guaranteed.

Therefore, some provisions of the treaties are subject to "progressive realisation," including the right to health. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, progressive realisation "is the obligation to take appropriate measures to achieve the full realisation of economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum of their available resources" (UN, 2008).

Conclusion

Thus, we can claim that international migration is one of the most significant phenomena in today's globalising world. Economic inequality between states, political instability, armed conflicts, environmental problems, and people's desire for higher living standards continue to drive the growth of migration flows. Therefore, protecting the rights of migrants has become a crucial task for the international community. According to the International Organisation for Migration, the number of international migrants worldwide is steadily increasing, creating new social, legal, and political challenges for both countries of origin and host countries.

Migrants often find themselves in vulnerable situations due to their legal status, language barriers, inadequate social protection, and limited access to justice. In many cases, they face discrimination, labour exploitation, risks of human trafficking, and limited access to healthcare, education, and social services. These challenges highlight the need to develop effective mechanisms to protect migrants' rights at both the international and national levels.

This article examines the main mechanisms for protecting migrants' rights in the modern world. Particular attention is paid to international legal instruments and institutional mechanisms aimed at ensuring respect for the rights and freedoms of migrants. Key international documents are analysed, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as the activities of international organisations, particularly the United Nations, which play a key role in shaping international human rights standards.

Discrimination and ill-treatment of migrants are contrary to the framework of human rights instruments, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 10

December 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris, General Assembly Resolution 217, which grants everyone the right to seek asylum in another country for reasons of particular concern; the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which are considered fundamental legal instruments as they define the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers and set international standards of protection. The principle of non-discrimination in human rights is enshrined in specific framework instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICCPR). International Covenant (ICESCR), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and Members of Their Families (ICRMW).

The general principle that can be argued is that human rights belong to all people by virtue of their humanity; if rights differ because of a person's immigration or status, the difference must be reasonably justified by law, serve a legitimate aim and be proportionate to achieving that aim. The principle of non-discrimination must be at the heart of all measures taken to combat violence against migrants. In practice, this principle means that receiving States, their legislative and public institutions, politicians and the receiving community must respect and protect the rights of all migrants, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion. Since all people should be equal and have equal rights and should enjoy all fundamental human rights. States and the parties within them must not only refrain from discrimination, but must also take positive steps to combat all forms of discrimination by both private and public actors.

The article concludes that, despite the existence of a well-developed international legal framework, many challenges remain in the practical implementation of mechanisms to protect the rights of migrants. Strengthening international cooperation, improving national legislation, and developing institutional mechanisms are essential for effectively protecting the rights and dignity of migrants in the modern world.

In this regard, it is important to note that when social, cultural, religious and ideological differences are ignored in attempts to integrate migrants into society, this can have very difficult consequences, leading to conflict between migrants and the host country and its society. Moreover, racist, discriminatory or xenophobic attitudes and the isolation of migrants also violate their fundamental rights, leading to the radicalisation of migrants.

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3.

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THE IMPACT OF NOMADISM ON MIGRATION PATTERNS AND ASSOCIATED SECURITY DYNAMICS: A REVIEW OF THE NIGERIAN SITUATION (2020–2026)

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Abstract

Background: In Nigeria, traditional nomadism – primarily pastoral transhumance – has evolved from a seasonal economic activity into a significant driver of national instability. As climate change accelerates desertification in the far north, the resulting "emergency migration" of herder communities into the Middle Belt and Southern regions has disrupted centuries-old land-use patterns, creating a volatile security landscape.

Objectives: This review examines the shifting trajectory of nomadic migration in Nigeria and analyzes its direct correlation with escalating rural insecurity, communal violence, and the proliferation of non-state armed actors. It further explores how institutional gaps in land management and social inclusion have exacerbated these dynamics.

Methodology: The study utilizes a mixed-methods review of longitudinal data (2020–2026) from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), ACLED conflict trackers, and International Organization for Migration (IOM) displacement reports. It synthesizes qualitative assessments of "Open Grazing" legislation and quantitative trends in cattle rustling and farmer-herder fatalities.

Key Findings: (1) Migration Distortions: Climate-induced migration has forced nomadic groups to bypass traditional "grazing corridors," leading to permanent or semi-permanent settlement in high-density agricultural zones; (2) The Security-Insecurity Cycle: The review identifies a "death spiral" where resource scarcity leads to livestock loss, which in turn fuels the recruitment of nomadic youth into banditry and kidnapping-for-ransom (KFR) syndicates; (3) Institutional Failure: Current security frameworks remain reactive. The slow implementation of the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) and the "securitization" of borders have deepened the social exclusion of nomadic populations, framing them as "aliens" rather than mobile citizens; (4) Economic Toll: Conflict-driven migration has resulted in the displacement of over 2.2 million people and an annual economic loss exceeding $13 billion, primarily due to destroyed harvests and decimated livestock populations.

Conclusion and Recommendations: The study concludes that nomadism-related insecurity in Nigeria cannot be solved through military force alone. It recommends a shift

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toward institutional capacity building, focusing on the gazetting of grazing reserves, the integration of nomads into national digital identity databases, and the transition toward tech-enabled ranching. Sustainable security depends on transforming nomadic migration from an unregulated survival tactic into a structured, inclusive economic system for enhanced food security.

Keywords: *Nomadism, Transhumance, Migration Patterns, Nigeria Security, Farmer-Herder Conflict, Climate Migration, Social Inclusion*

Introduction

Background: Nomadism in Nigeria between 2020–2026 has significantly shaped migration patterns, fueling herder–farmer conflicts, cross-border insecurity, and policy debates around land use and border governance. Climate change, porous borders, and weak enforcement have intensified these dynamics, while government responses (anti-grazing laws and border closures) have had mixed effects.

Nomadism, Migration, and Policy Challenges in Nigeria (2020–2026)

Nomadism in Nigeria between 2020 and 2026 has significantly shaped regional migration patterns, fueling herder–farmer conflicts, cross-border insecurity, and intense policy debates around land use and border governance (Edewor, 2026; Inyama, 2026; IOM, 2026). Cross-Border Movements has also contributed to these problems across Nigeria's 4,047 km of land borders with Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Onyekachi, 2018). Climate change, porous borders, and weak institutional enforcement have intensified these dynamics, while state-level government responses such as anti-open grazing laws and selective border closures have yielded highly mixed success (Onyekachi, 2018).

Nomadism, particularly pastoral transhumance (the seasonal movement of livestock), remains sa defining feature of Nigeria's broader migration landscape (IOM, 2026). Between 2020 and 2026, the complex interplay of climate pressures, resource competition, and porous borders has structurally heightened tensions between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers, creating severe security challenges across agricultural zones (Edewor, 2026; Inyama, 2026; Wikipedia, 2026).

Key Drivers of Migration Patterns: Climate Change and Desertification

Advancing desertification and variable rainfall in Northern Nigeria have structurally pushed pastoralist groups steadily southward in search of viable pasture and reliable water points (Eke, 2026; IOM, 2026; Wikipedia, 2026).

Expansion of Seasonal Routes: This ecological shift has forced the expansion

of traditional migration routes deeper into the Middle Belt and southern states, resulting in frequent land-use disputes and localized crises with agricultural communities (Onyekachi, 2018; Wikipedia, 2026).

Cross-Border Influxes: Gaps in regional migration policies and weak border controls have facilitated unregulated transboundary herding flows (Wakdok and Bleischwitz, 2021; Isaac et al, 2024), which introduces small arms risks and complicates community-level peace negotiations (Onyekachi, 2018). These events are summarised in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. *Key Nomadic Migration Trends (2020–2026)*

Factor	Impact on Migration	Security Consequence Climate
Change	Southward movement of herders	Resource conflicts
Porous borders	Cross-border pastoralism	Smuggling, arms trafficking
Weak governance	Poor enforcement of grazing laws	Escalation of violence
Border closure	Reduced inflows temporarily	Economic disruption, limited success
Regional cooperation (ECOWAS)	Limited implementation	Need for stronger frameworks

Table 2. *Key Factors Driving Insecurity in Nigeria*

Factor	Impact on Security
Porous Borders	Enables cross-border crime, smuggling, and the infiltration of militant groups.
Environmental Scarcity	Climate change reduces available arable land, intensifying the zero-sum competition between farmers and herders.
Governance Deficit creates a power	The near-absence of the state in remote forest areas vacuum often filled by bandits and insurgents.
Mislabeling and Stigmatization complicates conflict	Ethnic profiling of all pastoralists as "militants" resolution and fuels radicalization.

This review examines the shifting trajectory of nomadic migration in Nigeria and analyzes its direct correlation with escalating rural insecurity, communal violence, and the proliferation of non-state armed actors. It further explores how institutional gaps in land management and social inclusion have exacerbated these dynamics.

Methodology:

The study utilizes a mixed-methods review of longitudinal data (2020–2026) from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS 2020-2026),, and International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020-2026) displacement reports. It synthesizes qualitative assessments of "Open Grazing" legislation and quantitative trends in cattle rustling and farmer-herder fatalities. These trends were converted to visual analytics as presented in the results (Fig 1, 2. 3 and Table 3) to improve understanding of nomadic migration in Nigeria

Results and Discussion

The results are presented review analysis are presented below:

Figure 1. *Visual Relationship of Nomadic Migration Patterns and Security Risk*

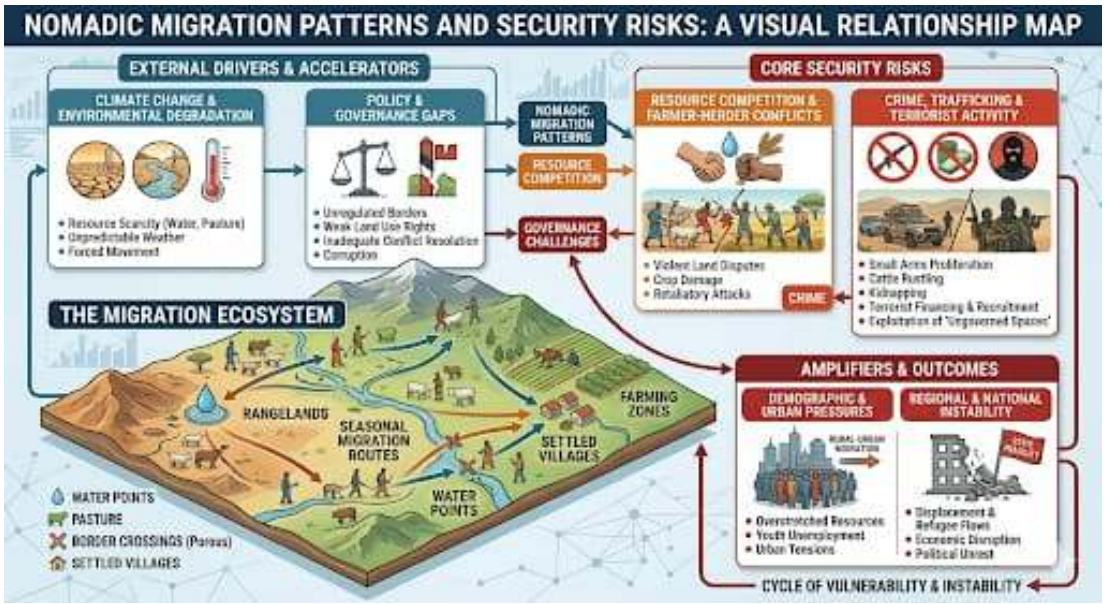

Figure 2. *Nexus of Nomadic Migration and Security Risks in Nigeria*

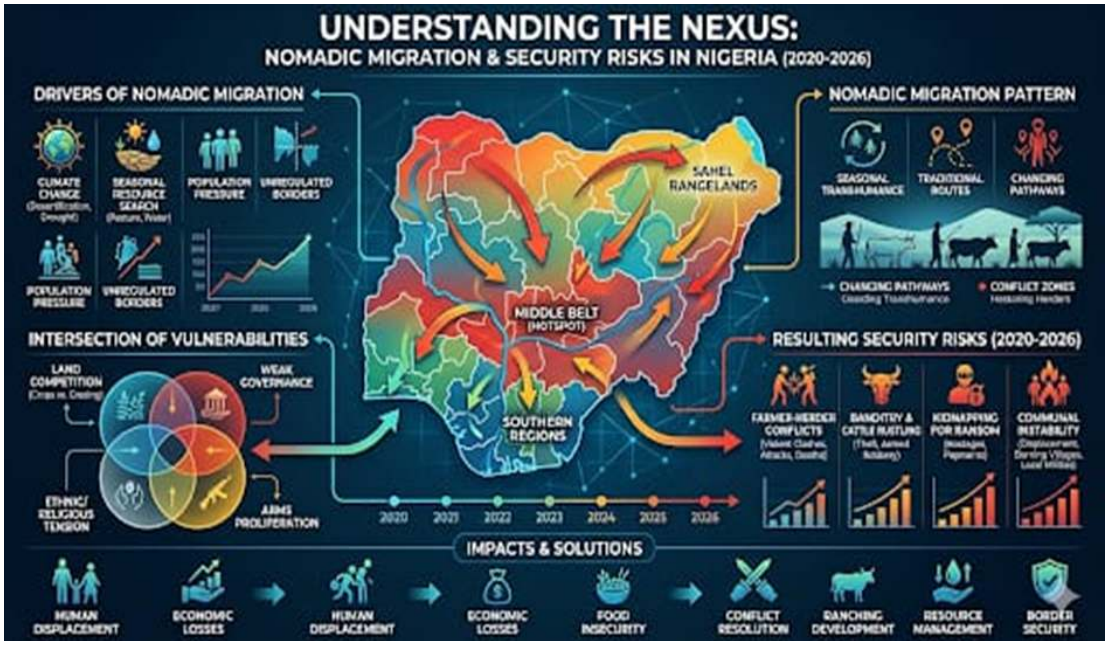

Figure 3. *Correlation Analysis of Nomadic Migration and Escalating Insecurity in Nigeria*

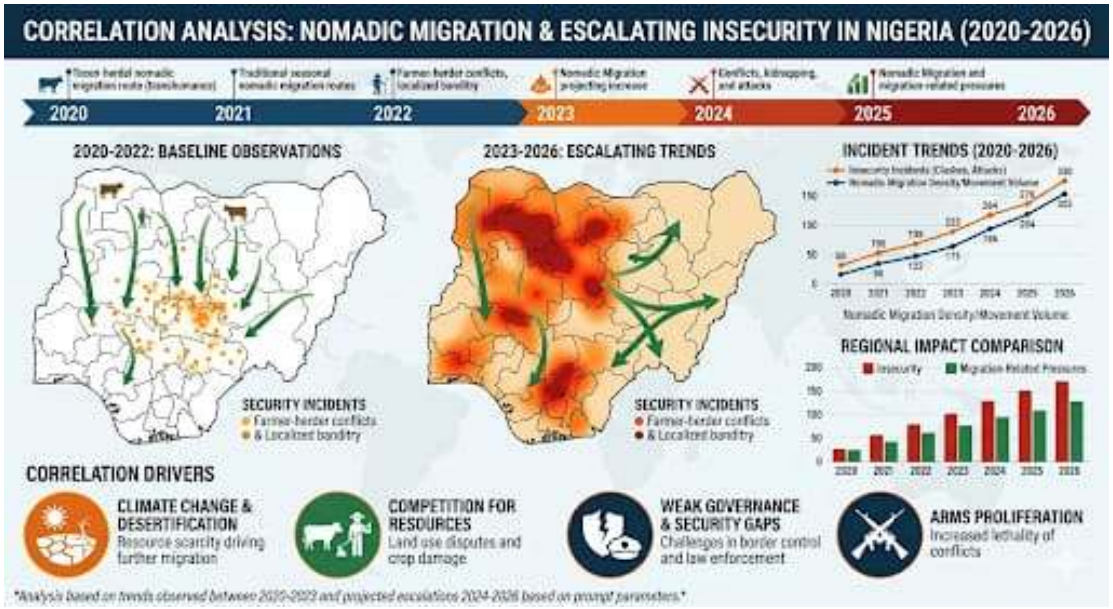

Figure 1 shows migration pattern while the data in Figure 2 indicates a strongly positive correlation between shifting nomadic migration patterns and escalating insecurity in Nigeria. As environmental and systemic pressures have forced transhumance (seasonal migration) into new territories, the incidence of both localized violence and broader, syndicated criminality has spiked.

The analysis of how these variables interact and escalate is given below:.

Drivers of Altered Migration Patterns

The initial friction points occur when external pressures force nomadic herders to deviate from traditional routes, pushing them into settled, agrarian communities. Such external factors are described below.

Climate Change and Desertification: Deteriorating environmental conditions, soil degradation, and desertification have forced Fulani herdsmen to alter their traditional transhumance routes from Northern Nigeria southward into the Middle Belt and Southern regions.

Resource Competition: The core of the conflict is rooted in the competition for increasingly scarce resources. Crop destruction and competition over grazing routes and watering points act as direct triggers for violent clashes.

Population Pressures: An expanding agriculturist population has led to the cultivation of lands that were previously designated or used as pasturelands, severely limiting open grazing areas.

The Mechanics of Escalation: "Ungoverned Spaces"

The correlation between migration and violence strengthens dramatically when it intersects with systemic vulnerabilities in state governance.

Virtual Territorial Ungovernability: Nigeria's borders and vast rural areas are characterized by "virtual territorial ungovernability," with hundreds of unmonitored pathways connecting to neighbouring countries.

Unregulated Corridors: The lack of regulation by the Nigerian government regarding nomadic migration and pastoralism has created an environment ripe for violent crimes.

Proliferation of Small Arms: Increased ease of access to weapons has dramatically increased the lethality of what were once localized disputes. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a significant predisposing factor to the escalation of banditry.

Metamorphosis into Broad Insecurity (Banditry and Terrorism)

Between 2020 and 2026, resource-based farmer-herder conflicts acted as an incubator for larger, highly organized insecurity networks.

Illicit Economies and Cattle Rustling: Unregulated transnational migration and border crossings have fostered illicit economies around the nomadic trade, leading to organized crimes such as smuggling, human trafficking, and cattle rustling.

Kidnapping and Mass Raids*:* The general climate of insecurity established by periodic clashes allows broader criminality to thrive, wherein gangs of bandits target vulnerable rural communities for raids and mass kidnappings. Zamfara State, for instance, became an epicentre for a lucrative kidnapping-for-ransom industry.

Terrorism Financing: The illicit economies surrounding unregulated transhumance also provide avenues for insurgency and terrorism financing, raising severe national security concerns.

Downstream Socio-Economic Impacts

The escalating insecurity correlated with these shifting migration patterns has yielded severe compounding consequences for the nation.

Agricultural Collapse and Food Insecurity: The destruction of farmlands, loss of livestock, and the displacement of farming communities have caused significant declines in agricultural productivity, directly threatening Nigeria's food security.

The Human Toll: The conflicts have led to vast displacement, trauma, anxiety, and a pervasive sense of helplessness among attacked communities.

Fig 3 visualizes the complex correlation between nomadic migration and escalating insecurity in Nigeria over the requested timeframe. The graphic integrates several key data visualizations:

Comparative Mapping: It compares migration routes and security incident hotspots between the 2020–2022 baseline and projected 2023–2026 trends, illustrating the geographic spread and intensification of conflicts.

Trend and Impact Charts: Line graphs and bar charts track the simultaneous rise of security incidents and migration volume, further highlighting the statistical relationship between the two factors.

Correlation Drivers: Table 3 (below) presents a breaks down of the primary underlying factors such as climate change, resource competition, weak governance, and arms proliferation that link environmental shifts to increased conflict.

Table 3. *Summary of Correlation Matrix of Migration Variables and Their Insecurity Outcomes*

Migration Variables	Insecurity Outcomes	Nature of Correlation
Climate-induced route alterations	Frequency of Farmer-Herder land clashes	Strong Positive
Unregulated border crossings	Cattle rustling and illicit arms trade	Strong Positive
Loss of traditional grazing land	Crop destruction and retaliatory violence	Strong Positive
Weak rural/forest governance	Rise in organized banditry and kidnapping	Strong Positive

The analysis demonstrates that nomadic migration is not inherently a security threat on its own. Rather, the unregulated nature of modern migration, when combined with severe climate pressures, arms proliferation, and unpoliced rural territories, creates a highly volatile nexus that has driven the rapid escalation of insecurity in Nigeria from 2020 to 2026.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that nomadism-related insecurity in Nigeria cannot be solved through military force alone. It recommends a shift toward institutional capacity building, focusing on the gazetting of grazing reserves, the integration of nomads into national digital identity databases, and the transition toward tech-enabled ranching. Sustainable security depends on transforming nomadic migration from an unregulated survival tactic into a structured, inclusive economic system for enhanced food security.

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Milivoje Pajović[1]

EU MILITARISATION VS. MIGRATION

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Abstract

When the Taliban regime was re-established in Afghanistan in 2021, the High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs stated that preparations should be made for negotiations with the authorities in Kabul to prevent a potential "migration catastrophe". Objective critics immediately pointed out that Josep Borrell did not focus his concern on the human rights situation of Afghan citizens, but rather understood the „catastrophe" as a possible influx of large numbers of people and asylum seekers to the borders of the EU. This once again raised questions regarding the EU policy implemented several years earlier when the Brussels administration, among others, engaged the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to halt the migration wave from the Middle East. Most of the public identified the IOM with other United Nations (UN) organizations, such as UNHCR or UNICEF. However, a more detailed examination of the structure and system of the organization revealed that it is not an integral part of the UN system, but merely an organization "related" to the UN. In this sense, it is not necessarily obliged to act in accordance with UN standards, unlike, for example, UNHCR, which places human rights and human protection at the very center of its work. Instead, it operates according to the interests and demands of its employer-donors, in this case, the EU. As a consequence, a large number of asylum seekers, vulnerable and helpless individuals, were returned from EU borders regardless of the degree of danger they faced. This paper examines the nature of the EU – IOM partnership, through which the EU uses the IOM as a specific barrier for migration containment, alongside the remilitarization of borders, the use of sophisticated surveillance systems and migrant detention centers, and the encouragement of military and police forces to conduct unlawful and forced deportations.

Keywords*: European Union, International Organization for Migration, human rights, border protection.*

Introduction

The increased public attention caused by the migration waves that surprised Europe beginning in 2015 led to significant activities and changes in the normative and organizational sectors of European administrations as public authorities in the main mi-

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grant destination countries. This also resulted in the definition and establishment of new attitudes and opinions that fundamentally changed the former declarative approaches to the problems of refugees and migrants in Europe, as well as the treatment and testing of the place and role of universal human rights. Europe began rearming itself in order to stop and deter new waves of migrants.

However, over the past several decades, the discretionary power of public authorities has been limited by a force they had previously been able to safely ignore: the human rights of migrants. A cultural revolution has taken place, whereby actors involved in migration-related conflicts increasingly use the language of human rights to articulate their interests and self-understanding. In the absence of an established theoretical concept, some authors describe this transformative process and the resulting dynamics as the "humanization of migration discourse" (Bast, 2024: 208). Furthermore, speaking about borders and contemporary perceptions of borders, Michel Agier argues that they will be guarded with increasing vigilance, but precisely because of this, migrants will persist even more strongly in trying to cross them. At the same time, after long and exhausting struggles to reach European soil, migrants become increasingly convinced that this is their legitimate, if not entirely legal, right (Ažije, 2019: 17).

On the other hand, citizens of the European Union, caught between feelings of indifference and former commitments to solidarity, are increasingly accepting the narratives of political authorities who, for internal political reasons, intensify their rhetoric, securitize borders, and build strategies designed to clearly separate "the other" – the foreigner – and prevent them from moving toward zones of European comfort. As the aforementioned author further states, such models of political practice promote the understanding that every threat to this comfort, to private property, territory, the body, and ultimately to individualism as a new way of life, actually comes from outside, from some abstract foreigner who is demographically excessive, superfluous, and therefore dangerous and unpredictable (Ažije, 2019: 14).

During the Danish Presidency of the European Union in July 2025, a meeting of European officials was organized in Copenhagen regarding attempts to resolve the migration issue in Europe. If the general conclusion of this meeting were to be summarized briefly, it would be: increase the number of deportations. Danish Minister for Immigration and Integration Kaare Dybvad Bek, without excessive euphemisms, emphasized that the EU asylum system is not functioning properly. According to him, half of asylum applications are rejected, while only one out of four rejected applicants actually leaves the EU. The solution proposed at the time involved seeking partners outside the European Union capable of carrying out tasks on behalf of the Union. This simultaneously implied finding countries willing to accept deported individuals, which was presented as the greatest obstacle to achieving the goal of intensified deportations. German Interior Minister Dobrindt stated at the time that there are countries outside the

European Union that could become partners in organizing so-called "Return Hubs." This objective, he argued, must be concretized and jointly implemented within the EU. Therefore, stronger pressure is needed regarding deportations, the search for partners in third countries to which those without the right to remain should be deported, as well as intensified efforts against human smugglers (www.infomigrants.net).

In order to implement these and previously established doctrines derived from the European Convention on Human Rights and other regulations concerning migrants, the European Union engages the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as an entity functioning on the basis of decades of experience in monitoring and managing migration, but also as an organization declaratively close and connected to the United Nations. Reacting to some of the methods employed by this organization, as well as to its mandate and transparency when engaged by the European Union, academic and professional circles have expressed completely opposing views regarding the legality, legitimacy, and effectiveness of the IOM, particularly from the perspective of well-founded suspicions that migrants' human rights are often suspended in favor of the perceived interests of European Union countries, alongside the United States, the most desirable employer of the IOM.

IOM – Origins, Development and Controversies

The very beginnings of the engagement of the IOM in Europe date back to 1951, when the organization, then called the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME), received its first tasks related to the resettlement of people scattered across the continent as a consequence of the war in Europe. The following year, it adopted a statute (constitution) and changed its name to ICEM – the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (Ahmetašević et al., 2023: 12). At that time, it was also defined that the organization would deal with refugees, displaced persons, and migrants in terms of organizing, coordinating, and providing logistics for international migration. By consensus, the broadest possible definition of the term migrant was adopted, encompassing refugees, displaced persons, expelled persons, stateless individuals, as well as workers who migrated for economic reasons (Parsanoglou, 2015: 58-59).

From the very beginning of its engagement, the absence of clear category definitions created grey areas in the activities of the newly established organization. Although the IOM (and its predecessors) long presented itself as a migration agency with broad interests concerning the movement of large groups of people outside their home states, in the contemporary context, as well as at various moments throughout its history, the organization actually worked predominantly with displaced persons, whether refugees or internally displaced individuals (Bradley, 2017: 99). For example, until 1974, around

90% of those supported by ICEM were refugees. Despite the agency's long history of engagement with displaced populations, experts often minimized its significance, failing to recognize it as an important international actor. Throughout its existence, it was frequently mocked as a "travel agency" organizing journeys for all kinds of migrants (Bradley, 2017: 99). When the IOM constitution was adopted in 1989, several organizational objectives directly referred to work with forced migrants and the humanitarian sector in general, thereby providing the foundation for its later expanded humanitarian engagement. The goals guiding the development of the IOM Constitution included strengthening the „basic humanitarian character and orientation" of the organization and emphasizing the importance of cooperation among states and international agencies regarding refugee and migration issues in a broader sense (Perruchoud, 1989: 132).

Sociologist and professor Dimitris Parsanoglou argues that the ambiguity of the terms „migrant" and „refugee" can also be viewed in the context of the Cold War and the specific European realities of the late 1940s and early 1950s. He advances the thesis that the United States could use ICEM to relocate groups and individuals useful in the struggle against communism without having to consider their legal status. On the other hand, the semantic closeness and overlap between these categories created extensive grey zones: men and women who became refugees before the war, those displaced during the war, those categorized as refugees after the war; individuals fleeing religious persecution or politically hostile governments; men and women living in refugee camps, as well as those living among local populations; and citizens and refugees facing chronic unemployment and seeking jobs and better lives abroad (Parsanoglou, 2015: 59).

It is evident that the character and nature of the organization have not significantly changed to this day. Although its name, scope, and competencies were defined through a new constitution, its mandate generally remained vaguely defined. As early as 1997, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata and then-IOM general director James Purcell signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the IOM. Through this document, the IOM visibly opened the door to the United Nations, eventually becoming, from 2016 onward, a UN-related organization bearing a designation strikingly similar to regular UN agencies.

The Memorandum defined that the IOM would cover activities and cooperation between the two organizations for the benefit of refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers, returnees, and internally displaced persons. The document also provided framework definitions for these categories, notably emphasizing in Article 8 that the IOM had received a mandate from „its member states" to ensure orderly migration processes, including the organized transfer of refugees. The services that could be provided included pre-identification, counseling, documentation, medical processing, training, transportation, reception, and integration. Terms such as repatriation or depor-

tation were not explicitly mentioned. Furthermore, the same document carefully addressed the sensitive status of asylum seekers, stating that the term „asylum seeker" refers to a person whose refugee status has not yet been determined by authorities, but whose asylum claim entitles them to a certain protective status to be determined through complete and fair procedures, given that they may indeed be refugees (emergency.unhcr.org).

Regarding persons not in need of international protection, it was declared that the IOM and UNHCR were prepared to support states, under certain conditions, in efforts to facilitate the return or onward migration of such categories of persons. The conclusion was that such returns could be considered part of a sustainable migration policy that simultaneously contributes to preserving the institution of asylum. However, the key point was that such returns must not involve measures contrary to the humanitarian interests of either organization: they must take into account the best interests of the persons affected and recognize that return is primarily a bilateral issue between the countries concerned. Finally, Article 14 of the same memorandum introduced the explicit term "voluntary repatriation," meaning that the IOM had agreed with the United Nations to organize and ensure successful reintegration only for those individuals who chose voluntary repatriation. It is precisely the deviations from this memorandum with the United Nations that form part of the contemporary practice of the IOM, reflected in organizing and implementing European Union policies oriented toward military tactics and police techniques, with the absolute supremacy of EU member state interests over the concept of human rights.

An attempt to outline an understanding of the IOM's role was also made by sociologist Antoine Pécoud, who is cited by the authors of the aforementioned report (Ahmetašević et al.). Namely, he states that it is simply difficult to grasp the nature of the IOM („…the nature of IOM often seems difficult to capture"). The organization cooperates with UN agencies and is often perceived as part of the UN system, but it is merely a „related organization" (and only since 2016). Therefore, according to Professor Pécoud, it is an intergovernmental organization functioning like a private company. At the same time, it competes with civil society organizations and NGOs. Ostensibly focused on migration, it also performs tasks not directly related to migration, such as rebuilding regions affected by natural disasters. It is called a migration organization, yet much of its work is directed against migration: returning unwanted migrants to their countries and preventing unauthorized migration. Thus, the IOM appears as a loosely connected network of projects and field offices dealing with mixed issues and rapidly shifting from one task to another depending on opportunities and circumstances (Pécoud, 2018: 1622).

At the beginning of the migration crisis in 2015, unlike the situation in other countries, particularly Hungary, which began erecting strong border fences, migration movements across the territory of Serbia were not regulated. The treatment of people on the move in Serbia was presented as humane compared to the growing securitization trend in Europe. However, by early 2016, the transformation of the migration policy

framework from humanitarian to security-oriented had become evident. In order to reduce the number of people, border protection was intensified. The Serbian army was deployed to assist the police, and Belgrade's migration policy officially shifted its focus toward securing borders rather than supporting people on the move. Similarly to other countries in the region, media outlets regularly published reports on the number of people prevented from entering the country, now as illustrations of the efficiency of the security apparatus. Although the state boasted about such measures, it never acknowledged that pushbacks were being conducted through demonstrations of force. Instead, it was explained that migrants were deterred from entering merely by the presence of Serbian police officers employing only patrol and ambush methods (Stojić Mitrović et al., 2020: 44-45).

In order to address migration issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the IOM adopted an Engagement Strategy for the period 2022-2025. This document clearly outlined the coordinating and managerial role of the IOM, highlighting the organization's influence over the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The text states that at the state level, the IOM coordinates with the Ministry of Security, which chairs the Operational Headquarters for Migration Issues. Thus, the IOM coordinates the activities of a sovereign state's security ministry in the field of border management policy, which also implies control over human movement. Furthermore, the document states that the IOM oversees numerous other important operations in the areas of immigration and border management, including the full spectrum of return assistance. Additionally, the IOM cooperates with the Ministry of Security on activities related to the reintegration of families of former collaborators of violent extremist groups and on prevention measures, while collaborating with the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees on enabling access to rights, protection, and long-term solutions (IOM Strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022-2025): 18).

One of the sharpest critiques aimed at questioning the position, role, and practices of the IOM was recorded in the report from the Border Wars series – December 2023, titled *Prepakivanje imperijalizma: Granični režim EU-IOM na Balkanu (Repackaging Imperialism: The EU-IOM Border Regime in the Balkans)*, published by the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam. The newly established methods of protecting European borders are described by these authors as a „deadly border regime" while through impressive argumentation they seek to expose, on the one hand, the hypocrisy of European administrations, and on the other, the serious violations committed by the IOM as the executor of such European policies (Ahmetašević et al., 2023: 3).

The report primarily analyzes the European Union's attempt to eliminate conditions for retaining larger migrant contingents in Balkan countries that are not EU members, treating this part of Europe as its own testing ground where policies, strategies, action plans, and procedures can be tested. The authors logically conclude that the deadly character of such regimes stems from the fact that migrants are forced to choose routes and crossings toward European countries that are inherently dangerous, while

further endangering their own lives through inhumane methods of transportation (usually hidden in inaccessible transport vehicles), as well as through the creation of an entire spiral of violations and an extensive network of smuggling involving people, human organs, drugs, and weapons.

Whether it is too harsh to describe the IOM as a tool for repackaging imperialism, specifically the new imperialism of Europe, is not the subject of this paper. Authors more familiar with conditions in the Balkans speak about a specific form of IOM activity, as well as successful propaganda through which the organization maintains a very high level of credibility. Experts testify that the IOM possesses characteristics making it more suitable than the UNHCR within the framework of EU migration management policies, particularly for the externalization of EU borders toward Balkan countries that are still not EU members. As an organization, the IOM functions through projects and therefore remains accountable only to its donors. It does not necessarily owe accountability either to public opinion or to the authorities of the countries in which it operates. Although it presents itself as a UN migration agency and a UN-related organization, the IOM is not subject to the same security and reporting protocols that apply to all UN agencies. It submits neither reports to the UN General Assembly nor to other UN bodies. Finally, as a key principle in migration management, it employs a combination of humanitarian and securitization approaches. In addition, it has developed strong marketing and public relations services that present the work of the IOM in an extremely positive and humanitarian light, while rarely responding to critical journalistic inquiries regarding its activities. All of this helps the EU implement its migration control policies in the Balkan region by emphasizing that it engages an organization connected to the United Nations (Ahmetašević et al., 2023: 28).

Nevertheless, the literature also contains numerous examples portraying the IOM as an organization with a legitimate role and function, more efficient than other agencies and organizations, if for no other reason than because of its effective logistics and persuasive rhetoric. One such example occurred in June 2020, when the IOM issued a statement on its official website condemning the forced displacement of migrants. The statement expressed concern over persistent reports of migrant pushbacks and collective expulsions, in some cases violent, at the European Union border between Greece and Turkey. In the same statement, the IOM referred to media reports and footage showing the use of life-saving equipment at sea to push migrants back across the eastern Aegean. The organization also condemned arbitrary arrests in Greece and returns to Turkey, as well as violence against migrants by certain border officials. At the same time, the IOM called on Greek authorities to investigate all allegations and testimonies of people forced to cross the Greek-Turkish border. Finally, the IOM urged states to refrain from border security and migration practices that could endanger migrants' human rights, including measures such as building border walls, militarizing border patrols, or increasing deportations (Paraskeva, 2023: 82).

New European Practice: The Militarization of Borders

At the time this paper was being written, in mid-May 2026, during a ministerial meeting in Chișinău, all member states of the Council of Europe supported what was euphemistically referred to as a new interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights – essentially amendments and radical additions to the section relating to migration and migrants (Reuters: 2026/05/15). Although legally non-binding, the revised version of the Convention was created with the aim of increasing political pressure on the courts and legislative systems of member states, while emphasizing the need for additional protection of European borders and territories. In the future, this is to be implemented through the struggle of surveillance and security apparatuses against illegal migration, as well as through political and administrative facilitation of the deportation of persons already present within the territory of the European Union.

Emphasizing migration control as a matter of public interest, Article 18 of the aforementioned Convention also adopted a ministerial declaration, thereby establishing the position of member states that every state has the sovereign right to decide on the entry, residence, and supervision of foreigners on its territory, as well as on their extradition. European countries will use new mechanisms to deter mass refugee waves, including the use of so-called „return centers" in third countries in cooperation with states located along transit routes. These return centers are planned for Balkan countries that are not members of the EU, as well as for countries on the African continent. In addition to a detailed description of the recommended measures concerning deportations, the document also contains a recommendation that EU member states are under no obligation to reduce disparities between their own healthcare systems and the level of treatment available in the receiving state during deportation procedures (Chişinău Declaration: rm.coe.int/pdf).

These developments came as a consequence of demands made by several European Union countries (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland), which in a joint open letter during the previous year claimed that the European Convention on Human Rights prevented them from deporting foreign nationals who had committed criminal offenses. Therefore, Point 24 of the Chișinău Declaration specifically emphasized the concern of the Council of Ministers that suspected individuals cannot be extradited for trial or imprisonment for serious criminal offenses, thereby evading justice in the country where the crime was committed simply because they had left that country.

Nevertheless, the most striking innovation is the assessment of the danger posed by the „instrumentalization of migration by hostile states". In this regard, Articles 37-39 of the latest declaration state that the Council of Ministers notes with concern that cases of instrumentalization by a hostile state „or another actor" may lead to acute humanitarian crises, leaving migrants trapped at borders where they may face significant risks of vio-

lence, exploitation, human trafficking, smuggling, or inhuman and degrading treatment without adequate protection or assistance. In this context, the instrumentalization of migration is interpreted as a situation in which migratory movements, including illegal border crossings, are deliberately facilitated, encouraged, or exploited by a hostile state or another actor, in some cases through the use of force, with the aim of exerting pressure, destabilizing, or undermining European systems and democracy. In connection with this, the militarized version of the Convention becomes particularly evident through references to a „hostile state or another actor" that must not be allowed to „undermine European democracies and values" upon which the Convention is based. It is therefore entirely clear that the European Union will continue the securitization and militarization of migration policy, while the contracted migration organization IOM will further tighten border regimes in coordination with governmental authorities until EU borders are transformed into impassable fortifications, perhaps resembling the Great Wall of China.

Despite, or perhaps because of, these developments, physical abuse, sexual violence, and killings remain common both at borders and along the routes that people are forced to use in order to reach and cross them. The militarization of border control creates conditions in which state authorities are encouraged to inflict suffering in order to prevent crossings, accompanied by violent rhetoric and the absence of accountability for actions taken outside official rules of conduct. Militarization also includes the widespread use of „less-lethal" weapons such as „sound cannons," which are heavily criticized by human rights observers.

Furthermore, in camps such as the „Jungle" camp in Calais, border forces routinely confiscated and destroyed migrants' food, shelters, and personal belongings with the explicit intention of breaking their spirit and weakening their determination to reach the British coast. The camp was closed at the end of 2021, and around 6.000 migrants, including more than 700 children, were relocated by French police to other parts of the country. In addition, in the Mediterranean Sea, countless people have been endangered through deliberate negligence and pushback operations conducted by patrol boats aimed at preventing migrants from reaching European shores. This has resulted in thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean and the English Channel. The elimination of safe routes pushes increasing numbers of people into the hands of predatory human traffickers, exposing them to abuse, torture, and slavery (peopleandplanet.org/divest-borders).

At the same time, European countries demonstrate a double discriminatory approach. First and foremost, close to humiliation is the pressure placed on certain Balkan countries to adopt strategies serving exclusively the political and economic interests of the European community. However, as Todorova notes, because the Balkans are geographically inseparable from Europe yet culturally constructed as its "internal other," the region repeatedly presents itself to Europe as a convenient place for absorbing numerous externalized political, ideological, and cultural frustrations originating from ten-

sions and contradictions inherent in societies outside the Balkans (Todorova, 2006: 355).

It is precisely through projects of border externalization, financed by the EU and implemented by the IOM, that support is provided for a system of pan-European police networks, including training and equipment procurement for local police forces, as well as the application of military methods for monitoring border areas involving detention facilities. All of this serves the suppression and control of migration movements with the ultimate goal of ensuring the full efficiency of deportations from temporary detention zones back to migrants' countries of origin. On the other hand, all people on the move – migrants who have left their countries for whatever reason – are treated almost as a faceless mass that can be channeled and redirected according to political convenience.

At the request of the European Union, the IOM functions de facto within a legal vacuum: it is not guided by generally accepted principles and, unlike the UNHCR, does not possess clearly defined norms and principles, but rather operates according to narratives. In this sense, such discourses are compatible with the interests and narratives of donors and financiers, without hesitation in using language that accuses migrants – even without investigation or evidence – of being opportunists and less deserving of protection. Thus, international law is effectively suspended through the practical actions and narratives of an international migration agency (Ahmetašević et al., 2023: 4-5).

Another news report, published by Deutsche Welle, further illustrates both the arrogance and the weakness of European governments. Under the headline Innovative Solutions for Fewer Migrants, the newspaper reported that „an important new step on the path toward reforming the EU migration system was symbolically accompanied by a significant move by the German Ministry of the Interior: at the very moment when the meeting of EU interior ministers began in Copenhagen – where one of the main topics was the deportation of foreigners without the right to remain in the EU – a charter plane carrying deported migrants departed from Leipzig for Iraq. One week earlier, when German Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt hosted colleagues from neighboring countries to discuss migration, another charter plane departed from Leipzig, this time bound for Afghanistan. The timing of these flights was not accidental. The message from both meetings was that the European Union must do something about illegal migration, and one of the key elements of this policy is increasing the number of deportations, that is, the number of people who have no right to remain in the EU" (dw.com/sr/evropska-unija-inovativnim-rešenjima-do-manje-migranata).

This tragicomic news report also raises many other questions, including the criteria according to which it is determined who has or does not have the right to remain within the territory of the EU – who will be deported and who will receive asylum. Numerous questions therefore arise: how is evidence obtained to determine whether someone is a false or genuine asylum seeker; who and how can assess a situation that may appear peaceful at one moment, yet radically change by the time migrants and their

families are returned to their countries of origin? Many other similar questions and dilemmas remain unresolved.

A concrete example is the closure of the so-called Balkan Route in 2016 (e-erim.ief.hr). In the case of Greece, the failure of an effective, efficient, and lasting relocation program resulted in human rights violations at the borders precisely in the name of border protection, thereby disrupting the fragile balance between Greece's right to protect its (European) borders and its obligations under international treaties and human rights laws. In March 2016, the EU promoted and Greece implemented the joint EU–Turkey Statement, aimed at halting the flow of illegal migration from Turkey into Europe. According to the statement, all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving from Turkey on the Greek islands whose asylum applications were declared inadmissible were to be returned to Turkey under the concept of a "safe third country" (Council of the EU, Press Release 144/16, 18/03/2016).

Through this policy, the EU attempted to transfer its humanitarian and legal obligations toward refugees onto Turkey, sending a clear message to third-country nationals that they were not welcome in Europe. In doing so, it worsened their situation by trapping them in inhumane and difficult conditions on the Greek islands amid the evident militarization and securitization of borders. According to a report submitted to the Greek government following visits to camps by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) in April 2018, foreign nationals could still be readmitted to Turkey under the bilateral Greek – Turkish Readmission Protocol ratified in 2002. However, as the CPT noted, the protocol no longer functioned effectively and had been suspended by the Turkish government (Paraskeva, 2023: 10-11).

Conclusion

Cooperation between the European Union and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), although entirely legal within the framework of international law, can no longer avoid suspicions, accusations, and even evidence suggesting that the treatment of human rights is increasingly changing to the detriment of both human rights and migrants themselves. The right to movement and residence, together with an entire set of other rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is being suspended in the face of the evident fear among European states of growing migratory waves.

The countries of the Western Hemisphere, many of them former colonial powers, are now experiencing a destiny they themselves, in some way, helped create. New generations – descendants of populations once colonized – now arrive at Europe's doors due to the instability within their own societies, instability that remained unresolved and incomplete precisely because of the rule of colonial protectorates. Yet it is not

merely their representatives who are knocking on Europe's doors, but entire generations, tens of millions of people, while Europe itself no longer appears powerful enough to offer a constructive answer, a solution, or an alternative to lives hanging by a thread.

It is easiest to arrest people and return them to Kandahar. There is no need to further explain how the new Afghan authorities would treat women and girls, or young people who fled the irrational Taliban regime. In such cases, what can the IOM actually do, and what can the European Union achieve through the IOM and other actors on the ground, once it succeeds in stopping the wave of desperate individuals fleeing not only inhumane regimes but also desperately pleading for refuge on European soil simply in order to survive? Probably very little.

Therefore, despite every desire and effort to preserve the authenticity of a Christian, democratic, and freedom-oriented Europe, the time has inevitably come to reexamine the anti-Christian, undemocratic, and illiberal actions of the ancestors of today's Europeans, who seem to care little for methods other than barriers and armored defenses. After all, it was not the people of Bangladesh, Ceylon, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Burma, and other countries who once invaded the parks along the Thames and the Seine. Rather, it was the colonial powers that left unfinished relations and unresolved conditions which, according to the logic of history, inevitably return for reconsideration. Africa need hardly even be mentioned.

For this reason, it is the modest opinion of this author that people who have embarked on a journey of survival cannot easily be deterred from that path. No matter how many times they are returned, they will continue trying again and again until they eventually succeed. The role of the IOM and other implementing actors will ultimately become negligible. In essence, the only viable path for the European Union is to cooperate with other hegemonic and dominant political entities in order to stabilize conditions and create acceptable living circumstances in migrants' countries of origin – conditions that people themselves will be willing to accept. Any involuntary deportation, especially if it endangers human life, has little chance of long-term success. Very soon, experienced individuals who have already crossed these routes and overcome all obstacles will return once more, together with members of their immediate and extended families, whose numbers may in the meantime have doubled.

Finally, the problem of mass migration and the perceived excess of migrants is not a question of the statute or capacities of a single organization. It is, par excellence, a political issue. Even if it is also a budgetary question, it is necessary to calculate whether it would have been cheaper to address the unpaid debts and unresolved responsibilities of history earlier, or whether Europe must now, with the "enemy at the gates," pay whatever price migration experts from around the world demand – all with an uncertain final outcome.

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5.

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GREEN TRANSITION AND LABOUR MIGRATION: DRIVERS, IMPACTS AND POLICY RESPONSES[4]

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Abstract

The green transition, driven by decarbonization initiatives, is fundamentally transforming economic structures and labour markets worldwide. These changes have significant implications for human mobility, altering both the determinants and patterns of migration. This paper investigates the interplay between green transition processes and migration dynamics, focusing on underlying causes and broader socio-economic effects. As economic activity shifts from carbon-intensive industries to sectors emphasizing sustainability, renewable energy, and low-carbon technologies, employment requirements are substantially redefined. The geographic distribution of new economic opportunities often does not align with regions experiencing employment declines in traditional industries, resulting in marked regional disparities. As a result, the green transition prompts substantial outmigration from areas negatively affected and encourages in-migration to regions benefiting from investments in renewable energy and sustainable industries, thereby facilitating the redistribution of human capital. This process intensifies internal migration flows and may also increase cross-border mobility as workers respond to evolving labour market demands and seek emerging opportunities. By synthesizing existing literature and examining key transmission mechanisms, this study demonstrates the dual role of migration as both a response to and a catalyst for the green transition. The findings underscore the need to develop inclusive and balanced policies to mitigate adverse effects and support a just transition.

Keywords*: migration, climate change, green transition, employment, human capital*

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Introduction

The shift towards a low-carbon economy has become an urgent and fundamental issue. Avoiding severe and irreversible climate impacts requires a swift and significant decrease in greenhouse gas emissions over a relatively short period. In accordance with the objectives set out in the 2015 Paris Agreement, limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C requires achieving net-zero emissions by the mid-21st century, alongside significant interim reductions. The phase-down of coal-based power generation must occur at a rate significantly exceeding that of past energy transitions. Its success depends on a range of interrelated factors, including the availability of financial resources, access to critical raw materials, and the resilience of global supply chains (Lobanov et al., 2025).

The green transition alters labour market demand by creating new economic opportunities in certain regions while leading to job losses in others. The pace of global decarbonization depends on a robust and skilled labour force, whose importance is often underestimated. Recent findings from the Center for Global Development identify a shortage of human capital as a primary barrier to the implementation of sustainable technologies (Huckstep & Dempster, 2024). Moreover, evidence from ten diverse economies demonstrates that internal labour markets are unable to meet the increasing demand for specialized roles. Therefore, a twofold approach that integrates international labour mobility with financial support for skill enhancement is required to address structural bottlenecks and support effective green transformation.

By synthesizing existing literature and examining key transmission mechanisms, this paper investigates the dual role of migration as both a response to and a catalyst for the green transition. The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 1 examines the primary drivers of migration within the context of climate change and the green transition, focusing on labour market transformations, environmental pressures, and climate-related mobility. Section 2 discusses the socio-economic implications of migration, including its effects on employment, regional disparities, and the redistribution of human capital. Section 3 analyses policy responses and the challenges associated with ensuring a just and inclusive green transition. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and underscores the importance of coordinated policies that integrate migration governance, labour mobility, and sustainable development objectives.

1. Drivers of Labour Migration in the Context of Climate Change and Green Transition

The influence of climate change and the green transition on migration dynamics is receiving growing scholarly attention (ILO, 2026; Lobanov et al., 2024; Petrović & Lobanov, 2022). In the context of gradual environmental changes, climatic pressures often interact with other structural drivers, such as limited access to quality employment,

institutional weaknesses, and social instability, thereby amplifying existing vulnerabilities (Zvezdanović Lobanova & Lobanov, 2025; Lobanov et al., 2022). Notably, many sectors that employ a large share of the population (such as agriculture, energy, and certain industrial activities) are also among the most exposed to climate-related risks.

Due to the deteriorating environmental conditions and increasingly uncertain livelihoods, individuals and households may be forced to relocate in search of more stable living and working conditions. This trend is becoming more pronounced over time, particularly among younger populations, who tend to be more mobile and responsive to changing economic and environmental circumstances. Consequently, migration emerges not only as a coping mechanism but also as a structural response to the combined pressures of climate change and socio-economic constraints. Transitioning to a more environmentally sustainable economy necessitates reallocating labour from high-pollution sectors to environmentally sustainable occupations.

Well-managed migration can be a powerful driver of sustainable development, whereas poorly managed migration may exacerbate inequality and environmental degradation. For instance, Mason et al. (2022) indicate that human mobility can be an important mechanism for addressing workforce flexibility and skill gaps in the green transition, especially in the context of climate change adaptation and other environmental challenges. On the other hand, migration is often misperceived as a threat, although it can generate significant economic, social, and environmental benefits for both migrants and host communities.

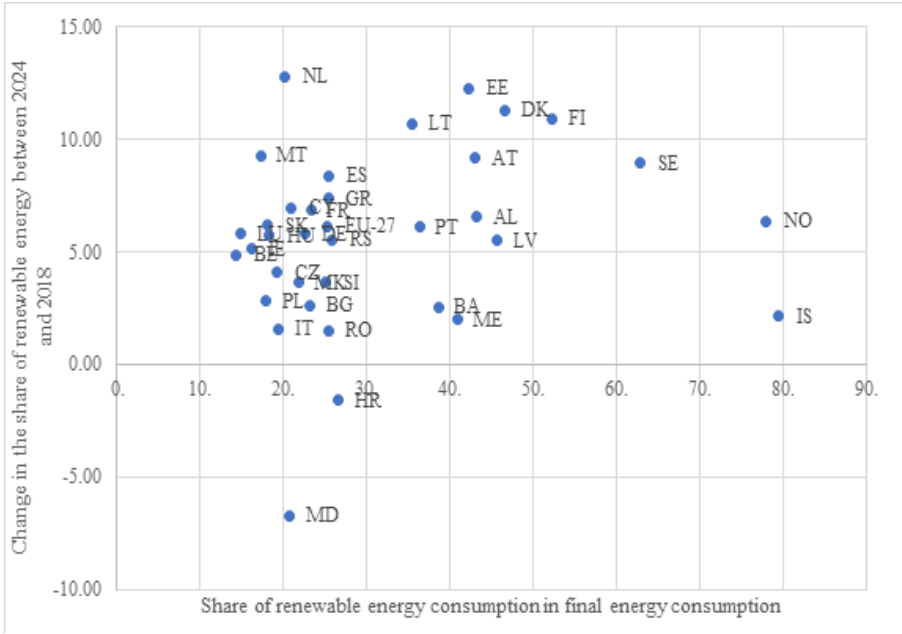
Within the European Union (EU), the European Green Deal was adopted as a comprehensive new growth strategy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 in response to the escalating climate crisis. In order to "transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy" (European Commission, 2026), the EU focuses on three main strategies: improving energy efficiency, increasing the adoption of renewable energy sources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Zvezdanović Lobanova & Lobanov, 2023). In 2023, the European Union updated the Renewable Energy Directive by establishing a binding target of at least 42.5% renewable energy in gross final energy consumption by 2030, alongside a broader ambition to achieve 45% (European Commission, 2026). In 2024, Nordic countries such as Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland recorded the highest shares of renewable energy in final energy consumption. At the same time, several countries with relatively lower initial shares, including the Netherlands, Estonia and Lithuania, achieved the largest increases between 2018 and 2024. Most European countries recorded moderate but positive growth in the share of renewables, indicating continued progress in the green energy transition, while only a few countries, such as Moldova and Croatia, experienced stagnation or decline (see Figure 1).

In line with the objectives of the European Green Deal and the expansion of renewable energy policies, the Fit for 55 package was introduced on 14 July 2021, com-

prising a series of legislative reforms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030. Simultaneously, the rapid implementation of climate and energy policies has broader socio-economic consequences, including effects on migration and labour mobility. Climate-related migration poses a serious test for the European Union's legal and political framework, particularly by exposing the contradictions in its green transition. The EU recognizes climate change and environmental degradation as significant factors contributing to migration and displacement (European Commission, 2025). On the other hand, it stresses that migration can be seen as an investment in both the economy and society, helping to drive the EU's shift towards green and digital innovation, while also fostering greater social cohesion and resilience across Europe (European Commission, 2022).

However, Baraggia (2026) points out that, although the EU promotes the green transition and the fight against climate change as key priorities, the issue of climate migrants remains insufficiently recognized and legally unregulated, which indicates the limitations of the existing approach that is focused primarily on energy and technological transformation, and less on the social and humanitarian consequences of climate change. At the same time, instead of developing new protection mechanisms, EU migration policies increasingly acquire a securitized character through strengthening border control and deterring migration, thus treating climate migration primarily as a security, rather than a humanitarian and climate problem.

Figure 1. *Share of renewables in energy consumption in 2024 and change (2018-2024)*



Source: *Own work based on the Eurostat (2026)*

The phase-out and decline of the coal industry, especially in monolithic economies, can lead to a significant labour market gap (Wong et al., 2022). The transition from fossil fuels to renewable and other clean energy sources requires significant changes in the economy, investment patterns, and the labour market. There is a justified concern that, due to the emergence of labour market rigidities, workers will be reallocated between sectors and occupations, thereby generating skills gaps and labour shortages in emerging green industries (Andersson, 2023). Although the green transition has the potential to generate new employment opportunities and stimulate economic development, workers displaced from sectors such as coal, oil, and gas often struggle to secure comparable positions in emerging industries (IEA, 2021). Early retirement is widely used as a key mechanism for managing labour market shocks caused by the decline of the coal industry (Wong et al., 2022). Since former coal regions often lacked adequate transport and educational infrastructure, retraining workers and attracting new businesses proved difficult, especially in rural areas. Although these measures helped reduce poverty and unemployment, they were generally unsuccessful in redirecting workers toward secure long-term employment.

The changes in the labour market associated with the green transition are expected to increase demand for both high- and low-skilled workers. The gradual phase-out of fossil fuel industries may increase demand for highly skilled occupations, particularly in engineering and technology sectors, while labour-intensive sectors such as construction are also expected to expand. Since a significant proportion of migrant workers are employed in sectors relevant to the green transition, migrants may play an important role in addressing emerging labour shortages (Andersson, 2023).

Causa et al. (2024) indicate that the green transition profoundly changes the labour market, with effects unequally distributed across social groups and regions. A key role in adaptation is played by education and skills, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields, which significantly increase the chances of employment in green sectors. Young and highly educated workers are in a more favourable position, while there are marked gender and socioeconomic inequalities, partly due to the lower representation of women in STEM disciplines. At the same time, workers in polluting industries face a greater risk of job loss and long-term negative consequences of the transition. Nevertheless, the results indicate that adequate public policies – such as retraining, investment in education, employment support and inclusive labour market measures – can mitigate these effects, with a combination of general and targeted, regionally adapted policies necessary for a successful transition.

Mechanisms of Influence of Green Transition on Migration Flows

The World Economic Forum's expert estimates indicate that the green transition will affect about 14.4 million jobs worldwide by 2030 (World Economic Forum, 2025). According to the same source, about 2.4 million jobs will be eliminated, while the overall effect is expected to be positive, i.e., a net increase of approximately 9.6 million new jobs. The findings from the EIB Climate Survey (EIB, 2022), which was, among other things, conducted to investigate the economic and social effects of the green transition, indicate that a majority of Europeans expect the green transition to have a positive impact on employment and quality of life, with 56% believing that climate policies will create more jobs than they remove.

There is no doubt that the green transition will affect green, brown, and white-collar jobs differently, and its effects will also be visible in changes to labour migration flows. The impact on the "brown" sectors (exploitation of coal and lignite, highly polluting industries such as manufacturing and agriculture) is particularly highlighted, with job losses at the regional level. As a consequence, there would be migration of workers from mining and industrial regions to urban and "green" economic centers, depopulation of certain local communities and further growth of regional inequalities (Vandeplas et al., 2022). Migration may be driven by skill mismatches, as workers from the aforementioned sectors may lack the knowledge and skills required to perform green jobs. Such a mismatch can encourage professional labour migration, the cross-border migration of highly qualified experts, and the outflow of qualified personnel from less-developed regions and countries to countries that develop a green economy more quickly. At the same time, the growth in demand for technical and highly skilled occupations further increases competition for skilled labour and deepens regional inequalities.

"White" jobs (the so-called neutral-carbon jobs), which have a relatively limited environmental impact, will generally not disappear but will adjust their tasks and adopt more sustainable work practices. Although changes in this segment of the labour market will be more moderate, certain professions could see increased employment due to the development of environmental policies and new labour market needs. On the other hand, "green" jobs, which include activities aimed at protecting the environment and developing sustainable technologies, are likely to see increased labour demand, especially for highly qualified and technically trained workers. This can encourage the migration of experts to regions and countries that are developing sustainable economies more intensively.

The green transition raises the issue of fair transformation of the labour market and the position of migrant workers in the decarbonization process. Developed countries, which develop the green economy more intensively, can attract qualified labour from less developed countries, thereby increasing the risk of "brain drain" and deepening development inequalities. Migration can support sustainability transitions, including the green transition, but it can also create localized pressures, especially in areas receiving

large numbers of displaced people. Therefore, the effectiveness of the green transition process depends on governments' capacity to address social vulnerabilities and ensure inclusive adaptation to new conditions. At the same time, ensuring that the green transition is implemented in a fair and inclusive manner remains a critical challenge, particularly for sectors and regions highly reliant on fossil fuels. In the contemporary global context, the transition efforts to secure access to clean, reliable, and sustainable energy sources should go hand in hand with policies that facilitate labour mobility and promote social inclusion, ensuring that no individual or community is left behind.

Table 1 presents a SWOT analysis of the impact of the green transition on labour market migration flows. Two key questions inevitably arise from this analysis. First, how can we effectively leverage the attraction of international experts and foreign direct investment (FDI) to fill skill gaps in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector and in renewable energy through just transition policies? And secondly, how can the high costs of retraining, together with the risk of brain drain, lead to the depopulation of former mining regions if the state fails to respond in a timely manner?

Table 1. *Swot analysis of green transition effects on labour migration*

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Potential for sustainable economic growth and regional modernization	Skills mismatch between workers from "brown" sectors and the requirements of emerging green industries
Stimulation of innovation and technological advancement through green transformation	Labour market rigidities that hinder worker reallocation across sectors and regions
Increased green investments and expansion of sustainable industries	High costs of reskilling and upskilling programmes
Growing demand for highly skilled workers, fostering human capital development	Uneven regional impacts, particularly in fossil-fuel-dependent regions
Improved employment opportunities and labour market attractiveness in regions investing in green industries	Risk of unemployment and social exclusion for displaced workers
Promotion of green entrepreneurship and the development of new business models	Dependence on migrant labour in key sectors may create integration challenges
Creation of new jobs in renewable energy, sustainable transport, and other green sectors	Limited institutional and infrastructural capacity in less developed regions

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Development of "just transition" policies that combine climate, labour, and migration strategies	Brain drain from less developed regions and countries toward advanced green economies
Expansion of international cooperation on green skills and labour mobility	Deepening regional inequalities and depopulation of industrial and mining regions
Increased investments in education, reskilling, and lifelong learning	Long-term unemployment among workers displaced from fossil-fuel industries
Strengthening labour mobility to meet green labour demand	Social tensions caused by the unequal distribution of green transition benefits
Potential for attracting FDI to green industries	Insufficient availability of qualified labour for green industries
Better integration of migrants into green labour markets	Securitization of migration policies and stricter border controls
Enhancement of social resilience and sustainable regional development	Slow policy adaptation and weak institutional coordination
Possibility of reducing global environmental degradation through coordinated transition policies	Economic instability in regions highly dependent on carbon-intensive industries

Source: *Compiled by authors*

Coal phase-out and just transitions require adequate support for workers, economic sectors, and local communities, especially those currently reliant on coal-intensive activities, to ensure an equitable distribution of both the costs and benefits of the transition. Without timely intervention, the accelerated green transition and labour shortages in certain sectors lead to an increased reliance on migrant labour, with issues of justice and equal access often being marginalized. In this regard, Osso (2026) points out that the sustainability of the green transition depends not only on environmental goals, but also on the ability of institutional frameworks to recognize migrant workers as active actors with rights, and not as passive instruments of the labour market. Moreover, the impacts of the green transition will not be evenly distributed and may disproportionately affect vulnerable population groups, increasing their exposure to risks. Moreover, addressing these inequalities is hindered by the challenge of monitoring labour market trends and skills needs in the green transition. Data quality varies across

regions, and many conventional data sources lack granularity in jobs, tasks, and skills. In the past, finding data to adequately measure and interpret labour market change brought about by greening was often a struggle (Cedefop, 2024).

3. Policy Responses and the Challenge of a Just Transition

The effects of the green transition will be particularly pronounced at the local level, especially in regions dependent on fossil fuels, which is why a successful transition requires the implementation of "just transition" policies, investment in retraining and upskilling of workers, as well as coordination of climate, social and migration policies in order to prevent long-term unemployment and forced migration. To mitigate migration pressures resulting from the green transition, it is necessary to address how the domestic labour market can adapt to forthcoming structural changes. In this context, labour mobility and skills development become essential components of a successful green transition. Ensuring the workforce has the necessary skills for the transition involves strong cooperation among regional authorities, educational institutions, and industry to ensure training aligns with changing market needs (Cedefop, 2024). Furthermore, the complexity of the transition process demands such a coordinated approach to effectively address diverse social and economic challenges, promote fairness, and ensure that no group is left behind during the shift to a greener economy.

Strategic workforce management that enhances the employability of the domestic population and minimizes reliance on external migration flows is crucial for achieving a fair and inclusive green transition as well as sustainable development. Therefore, timely adaptation of both formal and informal education systems is essential to equip the domestic workforce with the knowledge and skills required, thereby reducing reliance on migration in response to labour market transformations.

The development and improvement of regular labour migration channels can help mitigate the imbalance between supply and demand in the labour market resulting from the green transition. By matching the qualifications of the migrant workforce to labour market needs and enabling safe, legal internal and international mobility, labour markets can respond more effectively to new demands and changes arising from green occupations and sustainable economic activities. In this way, labour mobility can become an important mechanism for supporting sustainable transformation in both countries of origin and countries receiving migrants (IOM, 2023).

The International Organization of Employers (IOE, 2024) advocates for migration systems that support legal avenues for workers skilled in green technologies, facilitating their movement to where they are most needed for the low-carbon transition. By updating existing frameworks to better recognize and validate foreign qualifications, businesses can more easily recruit talent essential for implementing climate policies.

The "Hire-Train-Move" model is highlighted as an effective solution that enables migrants to develop green skills in their destination countries and transition into vital roles, while ensuring fair recruitment and regulatory oversight. Governments are encouraged to create specialized migration pathways for green talent, enforce fair hiring practices, and align policies across sectors to ensure a consistent and ethical approach to meeting climate-related workforce needs. Effective transition policies require anticipating future labour market needs, investing in reskilling and upskilling programmes, and facilitating safe and regular labour mobility (Gençsü et al., 2020).

Migration can also have positive effects on countries of origin, as migrants and the diaspora, through remittances, investments, knowledge transfer, and skills development, can strengthen the resilience of local communities and promote sustainable development. At the same time, the sectors most affected by the decarbonization process, such as agriculture and certain service industries, often employ large numbers of migrant workers, which is why there is a need for policies on retraining, protection of labour rights, and social integration. In this context, the concept of "just transition" implies implementing policies that enable ecological transformation without deepening social and economic inequalities and that contribute to inclusive and sustainable development (IOM, 2023). Labour migration programmes should be adaptable, tailored to specific requirements, and support the movement of migrant workers across the skill levels needed for the green transition (Andersson, 2023).

Conclusion

The green transition has the potential to significantly improve environmental quality and public health outcomes. Nevertheless, it also requires profound structural changes across key sectors, including industry, energy, transport, and the broader economy. In this regard, providing adequate support to workers, economic sectors, and local communities, especially those currently reliant on coal-intensive activities, is essential for ensuring an equitable distribution of both the costs and benefits of the transition. Although this transformation is already underway, achieving these ambitious goals remains highly demanding.

Taken as a whole, the process of decarbonization and economic restructuring can lead to the redistribution of labour between sectors and regions, increasing workers' mobility and migration, especially in cases of skills mismatch and the regional concentration of polluting industries. Therefore, a combined strategy of promoting international labour mobility and investing substantially in vocational training is necessary to address these structural challenges and enable a successful ecological transition.

We argue that migration should be viewed not only as a consequence of the green transition but also as a mechanism to facilitate adaptation to emerging labour mar-

ket demands and to support sustainable development. Migration of workers, both within and across borders, can help address labour market imbalances arising from decarbonization. Therefore, the success of the green transition will depend not only on technological progress and climate policies but also on governments' ability to implement inclusive labour market measures, strengthen reskilling and upskilling systems, and ensure coordinated migration and social policies. A just and sustainable transition requires balancing environmental objectives with social cohesion in order to prevent the deepening of regional inequalities, long-term unemployment, and forced migration.

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6.

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THE PARADOX OF HUMAN SECURITY: THE LIMITS OF SOLIDARITY IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS' MIGRATION POLICIES

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Abstract

Contemporary migration flows represent one of the key challenges to global security, as they highlight the tension between restrictive state security demands and the proclaimed solidarity toward individuals. In international relations discourse, the concept of human security has emerged as an alternative to traditional state-centric paradigms, placing the individual at the center of the global security agenda. In this context, international organizations play a significant, but also ambivalent role in shaping migration policies, as they simultaneously seek to respond to the security imperatives of key subjects of international law to protect universal human rights. This paper aims to analyze the policies of relevant international organizations and assess the extent to which they succeed in operationalizing the concept of human security in migration governance process. Special emphasis is placed on the tensions between normative frameworks that promote the protection of human rights and practical policies that often reflect restrictive, state-driven security approaches. In this article author was applying qualitative content analysis of strategic documents and comparing declared objectives with actual outcomes. The paper identifies a gap between stated goals and their implementation in practice. Although international organizations are normatively grounded in the principles of human security, they operate within constraints imposed by state interests, which results in the selective application of this concept. The paper contributes to a better understanding of contemporary migration policies through the perspective of human security, highlighting the need for a more consistent and coherent approach by international organizations in addressing complex migration challenges. In conclusion, the author suggests the necessity of redefing cooperation between international organizations and individual states in order to ensure stronger protection of migrants' rights, in line with the geopolitical imperatives of border control.

Keywords*: migration, human security, international organizations, security, human rights, solidarity*

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Introduction

The contemporary world is confronted with the phenomenon of migration, which, due to its intensity, global scope and political implications, transcends traditional frameworks of crisis management. Migration has become one of the most significant political, social, and security challenges of the twenty-first century. The scale and complexity of current human mobility have fundamentally transformed the ways in which states and international organizations approach questions of governance, sovereignty, and security. According to recent estimates, more than 280 million people worldwide currently reside outside their country of birth, while the number of forcibly displaced persons has exceeded 120 million as a result of armed conflicts, persecution, environmental degradation, and economic instability (UNHCR, 2024).

As the number of people on the move continues to increase, the response of the international community remains deeply divided. This division is not merely technical or logistical in nature, it is fundamentally ideological and normative, reflecting competing understandings of security and responsibility. On the one hand, international legal frameworks and humanitarian principles emphasize the protection of human rights and the provision of assistance to individuals fleeing insecurity. On the other hand, states increasingly prioritize concerns related to border control, public order, national identity, and domestic political stability.

This tension has provoked intense political debates concerning the relationship between state security and the protection of individual rights. In many countries, political leaders, media actors, and state institutions have increasingly portrayed migrants as potential threats to social cohesion, economic stability, cultural identity, and public security. As a result, migration has progressively been framed as a security issue rather than solely a humanitarian or socio-economic phenomenon. This process, commonly referred to as securitization, has transformed migration from a matter of social policy into an issue of national security, thereby legitimizing extraordinary measures aimed at controlling human mobility (Huysmans, 2006).

At the centre of this debate lies the concept of human security, which emerged as an alternative to traditional state-centric understandings of security. Rather than focusing primarily on the protection of borders and state sovereignty, the human security approach places the individual at the centre of the security agenda, emphasizing the protection of human dignity, life, and fundamental rights (Bilgic et al., 2020). The growing gap between the normative commitment to human security and the increasingly restrictive migration policies adopted by states and international organizations constitutes one of the central paradoxes of contemporary migration governance and serves as the primary focus of this study.

The evolution of the human security paradigm fundamentally challenged traditional, state-cantered understandings of security. Formally articulated in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report (UNDP, 1994), human security shifted the analytical and policy focus away from strictly territorial defence toward the holistic protection of individuals and communities. Rather than emphasizing military threats alone, this groundbreaking concept highlighted deep-seated vulnerabilities arising from poverty and economic uncertainty, physical violence and political repression, disease and public health crises, environmental degradation and climate displacement.

The coexistence of these two competing paradigms, state security versus human security, creates a fundamental contradiction in contemporary global migration governance. On the one hand, international organizations increasingly promote human security principles, emphasizing dignity, rights, and protection. On the other hand, migration policies continue to prioritize border control, surveillance, deterrence, and externalization measures. This contradiction raises important questions regarding the actual capacity of international organizations to operationalize human security within a political environment dominated by sovereign states.

In order to systematically deconstruct this phenomenon, the paper focuses on the following key research question that should be raised is to what extent do international organizations operationalize the concept of human security within contemporary migration governance? The article raises the following hypothesis: although international organizations formally embrace human security principles and solidarity-based approaches to migration governance, their policies remain constrained by state interests and security imperatives, resulting in the selective and inconsistent protection of migrants' rights.

This article seeks to examine the paradox of human security in migration governance by analyzing the role of international organizations in shaping migration policies. It investigates the extent to which these organizations succeed in translating normative commitments into practical outcomes and explores the limitations imposed by state interests and geopolitical considerations.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its integration of human security theory, securitization studies, and migration governance studies. By examining the gap between normative commitments and policy implementation, the article contributes to ongoing debates concerning the future of international migration governance and the evolving role of international organizations in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment.

Theoretical Framework: From State-Centric to Human Security

The Human Security Paradigm

The traditional understanding of security dominated international relations throughout most of the twentieth century and was firmly grounded in the realist paradigm, which

emphasized military power, policy of deterrence, and the protection of the state from external threats. Within this Westphalian model, sovereignty was regarded as absolute, while the state was considered the primary and sole legitimate actor in international politics.

According to such kind of framework, migration was almost exclusively perceived as a potential threat to social cohesion, national identity, or economic stability. The realist school of political thought views migrants as actors who may undermine the integrity of the sovereign state understood as a closed political system exercising absolute sovereignty within clearly defined territorial borders. This approach largely ignores the structural causes of migration, treating people on the move as destabilizing factors comparable to military threats. Consequently, it legitimizes the use of state coercive apparatuses and security mechanisms for the purpose of territorial defence and border protection.

A significant conceptual shift occurred in 1994 with the publication of the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report*, which placed the individual rather than the state at the centre of the security agenda (UNDP, 1994). The concept of human security emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional security approaches. It introduced a holistic framework encompassing seven interrelated dimensions of security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security.

Human security rests upon two fundamental principles. The first is freedom from fear, which refers to protection from physical violence, armed conflict, persecution, and other direct threats to life and bodily integrity. The second is freedom from want, which encompasses access to essential resources necessary for human survival and well-being. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for understanding insecurity in contemporary societies (Panebianco, 2021).

For migrants and refugees, human security is particularly relevant because migration often results from the absence of one or both of these conditions. Individuals may flee armed conflicts, political persecution, environmental disasters, or severe economic deprivation. Consequently, migration itself can be interpreted as a survival strategy aimed at achieving human security.

Securitization Theory

Migration represents one of the clearest examples of securitization in contemporary international politics. Throughout Europe, North America, and other regions, political discourse increasingly links migration with terrorism, organized crime, cultural insecurity, and economic competition. Such narratives contribute to the perception of migrants as security risks rather than vulnerable individuals requiring protection.

The securitization of migration has profound implications for human security. As states focus on preventing unauthorized mobility, humanitarian concerns often be-

come secondary to security objectives. This dynamic creates a paradox in which policies intended to enhance security simultaneously generate new forms of insecurity for migrants themselves.

While human security emphasizes the protection of individuals, securitization theory explains how political actors construct certain phenomena as security threats. The Copenhagen School of Security Studies, particularly through the work of Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, argues that securitization is not merely an objective response to a threat but rather a specific speech act through which a particular issue is framed as an existential threat in order to justify the adoption of extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998).

According to this perspective, an issue becomes securitized when influential actors successfully portray it as an existential threat requiring extraordinary measures. Once migration is framed as a security threat, governments acquire greater legitimacy to implement restrictive policies. This process enables states to militarize borders, deploy advanced surveillance technologies, and, in certain circumstances, restrict international legal obligations, including access to asylum procedures, under the justification of protecting national security (Völkel, 2017).

To gain a deeper understanding of this process, it is also necessary to consider the contributions of the Paris School of Security Studies, particularly the work of Emeritus Professor at Sciences Po, Didier Bigo. Unlike the Copenhagen School's focus on political discourse, professor Bigo emphasizes the role of bureaucratic, police, and security networks in producing and reproducing perceptions of insecurity. He introduced the concept of the "management of unease" (Bigo, 2002) whereby security institutions continuously generate and amplify public perceptions of insecurity in order to justify their existence, budgets, operational mandates, and surveillance capacities. Within this framework, the migrant is transformed into an idealized and permanent security threat, regardless of empirical evidence regarding actual risks. The construction of migration as a security issue therefore serves not only political purposes but also institutional interests. Security agencies, border-control authorities, and surveillance industries become key stakeholders in the expansion of migration-control regimes, contributing to the normalization of exceptional practices and restrictive border policies.

The Paradox of Human Security

At this point, a fundamental theoretical and practical paradox emerges. While liberal political theory traditionally conceives the state as the primary guarantor of security, in practice the state often becomes a significant source of insecurity for individuals who exist outside its legal and political community. Migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees frequently occupy a legal and political liminal space in which they are neither fully protected by their states of origin nor fully integrated into the protection frame-

works of destination states. As a result, they become particularly vulnerable to exclusion, exploitation, detention, and violations of fundamental rights.

Human security thus remains constrained by the framework of national interests and sovereign state authority. Under such conditions, solidarity is transformed from a universal moral and political principle into a selective and conditional category, dependent upon the political acceptability of migrants, their perceived economic utility, their legal status, or broader geopolitical considerations. Consequently, the implementation of human security principles within migration governance often reflects not universal humanitarian commitments but rather the strategic priorities of states and international actors operating within an increasingly securitized global environment.

Also, attempts to implement this concept in the practices of international organizations (IOs) reveal a profound and troubling paradox. While international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), formally advocate universal solidarity and the protection of migrants' rights, their actual policies frequently become instruments of sophisticated control regimes imposed by powerful member states. This paper explores the nature of this paradox through a critical analysis of the migration policies of key international actors during the period from 2015 to 2026. This timeframe encompasses the European migration crisis, the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration, reforms of the Common European Asylum System, and recent developments in migration governance across the Western Balkans.

The Paradox of Human Security in the Policies of International Organizations

International organizations operate within a constant tension between their universal mandates and their structural dependence on member states that finance them and delegate authority to them. This duality generates profound ambivalence in their actions and policy outcomes.

The United Nations and the Limits of Soft Power

The United Nations has played a central role in promoting a human-centred understanding of migration. Through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and numerous refugee protection instruments, the UN established a normative framework emphasizing the inherent dignity and rights of all individuals regardless of nationality or migration status. The concept of human security further strengthened this approach by recognizing that security should be measured not only through the protection of states but also through the protection of individuals from structural and direct forms of violence.

The adoption of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* in 2018 represented a landmark development in international migration governance. The Compact explicitly recognizes migrant vulnerability as a central challenge and calls for the protection of human rights regardless of an individual's legal status (GCM, 2018). It further promotes measures aimed at reducing the adverse drivers that compel people to leave their countries of origin, while simultaneously strengthening legal pathways for migration.

Nevertheless, the structural limitations of this document are evident. Critics have rightly pointed out that its non-binding nature allows states to treat it as a "policy buffet," selectively implementing provisions related to migration management and border control while systematically neglecting obligations concerning rights protection and migrant integration (Bilgic et al., 2020). States have retained their sovereign authority to determine who may enter and remain within their territories, thereby reducing the normative reach of the GCM largely to the level of political rhetoric.

The European Union as a Migration Governance Actor

The European Union represents one of the most influential actors in contemporary migration governance. Through the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), the EU has sought to harmonize asylum procedures and establish common standards of protection across member states. On the global stage, the EU consistently presents itself as a normative power committed to human rights, the rule of law, and universal solidarity.

However, its internal and external migration policies, particularly in the aftermath of the 2015 migration crisis, reveal a profound and systemic erosion of these values. The migration crisis of 2015 exposed significant weaknesses within this framework. More than one million refugees and migrants arrived in Europe, generating political tensions among member states regarding responsibility-sharing, relocation mechanisms, and border management.

The adoption of the *New Pact on Migration and Asylum* in 2024 represents a turning point in this process. It seeks to address these challenges by establishing a more integrated migration management system. While the Pact introduces mechanisms intended to strengthen solidarity, critics argue that it prioritizes migration control and return procedures over refugee protection. In particular, provisions related to accelerated border procedures and external cooperation have raised concerns among human rights organizations.

The EU therefore exemplifies the paradox of human security: an institution committed to universal rights that simultaneously develops increasingly sophisticated mechanisms of migration control. The EU effectively exports human insecurity beyond its territorial borders in order to preserve internal political stability and social comfort.

The Instrumentalization of IOM and UNHCR

Within this context, international agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are frequently drawn into complex processes of institutional instrumentalization. Historically established outside the UN system as a logistical migration-management agency and incorporated into the UN framework only in 2016, IOM plays a central role in implementing *Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration* (AVRR) programs.

Although these programs are officially presented as humane and dignified solutions, critical scholarship suggests that such returns often occur in circumstances where migrants face detention, violence, or inhumane living conditions, leaving them with few realistic alternatives (Župarić-Iljić & Valenta, 2019). Under such conditions, the notion of voluntariness becomes highly questionable.

Consequently, humanitarian organizations may provide logistical support and moral legitimacy to deportation regimes financed by the European Union, thereby becoming, consciously or otherwise, participants in broader systems of migration control. This development further illustrates the paradoxical relationship between humanitarianism and securitization in contemporary migration governance.

The Limits of Solidarity: The Western Balkan Route and the Externalization of Migration Control

Over the past decade, the Western Balkans has emerged as a crucial geographical and political testing ground for the limits of international solidarity. From serving as a humanitarian corridor during the 2015 migration crisis, the region has gradually been transformed, through successive border closures and evolving international policies, into a permanent buffer zone and waiting room at the margins of Europe.

It is within this space that some of the most restrictive and coercive dimensions of European migration governance are implemented. Simultaneously, states of the region, seeking political legitimacy and financial support from Brussels, have increasingly accepted the role of external guardians of Fortress Europe.

EU policies toward the Western Balkans reflect what critical security scholars describe as the securitization of discomfort (Župarić-Iljić & Valenta, 2019), the tendency to transfer responsibility for managing a complex humanitarian crisis and its associated logistical challenges to geographical and political peripheries in order to preserve the stability and comfort of the centre. Countries such as Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina have consequently become spaces in which systematic violations of human rights are tolerated under the guise of security cooperation and the fight against cross-border crime.

Individual Migrant in a Legal and Political Grey Zone

Reports of violent and unlawful collective expulsions, commonly referred to as pushbacks, have become a structural feature of everyday border governance throughout the region. Their frequency, organization, and severity, documented by numerous non-governmental organizations, investigative journalists, and Council of Europe bodies, demonstrate that the principles of human security are readily suspended whenever they come into conflict with the imperative of protecting the external borders of the Schengen Area (Cocco, 2017).

Within this framework, solidarity emerges as an exclusive and deeply discriminatory category. It is primarily reserved for EU Member States seeking burden-sharing arrangements and protection from perceived migratory pressure, while remaining largely absent with regard to individuals whose security and dignity are directly threatened by the very mechanisms designed to safeguard European borders.

Case Study:
Specific Cases and Institutional Responsibility at Serbia's Borders

Serbia as a Transit and Buffer State

Serbia occupies a particularly important position within the Western Balkans migration corridor. As a candidate country for EU membership, Serbia has strengthened cooperation with European institutions regarding migration management, border security, and asylum procedures. While significant progress has been made in developing reception capacities and asylum institutions, challenges remain. Human rights organizations have documented concerns related to prolonged stays in reception centres, limited access to legal assistance, and uncertainty regarding durable solutions.

The situation along the borders of the Republic of Serbia between 2024 and 2026 provides one of the clearest empirical illustrations of the theoretical paradox discussed above. As a central transit country along the Western Balkan route, Serbia is surrounded by borders where markedly different yet equally restrictive practices are implemented, directly undermining both the rule of law and the principles of human security.

The Hungarian Border and Institutionalized Violence

Along the Serbian-Hungarian border, the practice of informal externalization and the suspension of access to asylum has not only persisted but become increasingly institutionalized. Hungarian authorities continue to rely on domestic legislation allowing for the automatic return of migrants apprehended near the border fence without individualized procedures or meaningful access to asylum mechanisms. These practices stand in direct contradiction to rulings of both the Court of Justice of the European

Union and the European Court of Human Rights, which have repeatedly found elements of Hungary's asylum system incompatible with European legal standards.

Particularly concerning developments observed during 2025 and 2026 indicate that temporary facilities located near the border fence have effectively functioned as sites of detention and rapid expulsion without a clear legal basis, effective judicial oversight, or access to legal remedies. Migrants are frequently returned through specially constructed gates in the border fence, often involving the use of physical force, guard dogs, and less-lethal weapons. Local medical organizations operating in Serbia have documented numerous cases of serious physical injuries resulting from these practices.

The Croatian Border and Structural Deterrence

At the border with Croatia, organizations associated with the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) continue to document systematic patterns of violence and mistreatment. These reports increasingly suggest that such incidents are not isolated cases of misconduct but rather components of a broader deterrence strategy in which violence and humiliation function as instruments of migration control.

Ambivalence in the Domestic Institutional Response

The Serbian institutional response to these challenges is characterized by significant ambivalence and strategic adaptation. The Serbian legal framework contains provisions that could, in principle, provide meaningful protection. Misdemeanor courts in Serbia occasionally demonstrate a degree of sensitivity toward the international principle of non-penalization for irregular entry or stay when it is established that an individual intends to seek asylum. (Čučković, 2024)

However, the broader legal and political environment within which the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and the Ministry of Interior operate remains highly restrictive and increasingly instrumentalized. Serbia generally does not pursue long-term integration of migrants and asylum seekers but rather seeks to facilitate their onward transit or accommodate them in remote reception centres, particularly during periods of heightened domestic political sensitivity.

The Expansion of Frontex and the Wall of Legal Non-Accountability

A central actor in this evolving security landscape is the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). Through the implementation of new status agreements concluded between the European Union and Western Balkan countries between 2023 and 2025, Frontex has acquired significantly expanded operational powers within Serbian territory.

Unlike earlier arrangements that limited Frontex activities to borders shared with EU Member States, the new legal framework authorizes agency personnel to participate in border surveillance, identity verification, and joint patrol operations throughout Serbian territory, including borders with third countries such as North Macedonia and Bulgaria.

The growing presence of European border forces within Serbia contributes to increasing opacity and fragmentation of responsibility. When allegations of human rights violations, pushbacks, or inhumane treatment arise during joint operations involving both Serbian authorities and Frontex personnel, victims frequently encounter an almost impenetrable wall of institutional silence.

Serbian authorities often shift responsibility to their European partners and obligations arising from EU integration processes, while Frontex relies upon complex legal arrangements, host-state sovereignty, and institutional immunities to avoid direct legal accountability before either EU Member State courts or Serbian judicial institutions.

At the same time, the agency's internal Fundamental Rights Office has frequently been criticized for its limited effectiveness in conducting independent field investigations. The result is the emergence of a zone of legal uncertainty and accountability deficits that directly undermines the very foundations of human security and human rights protection (Kienast et al., 2025).

The Gap Between Norms and Practice: The Instrumentalization of Humanitarian Discourse

The findings of this study confirm that the concept of human security occupies an increasingly prominent position within migration governance discourse. International organizations consistently invoke principles of dignity, rights, and solidarity. However, the practical implementation of these principles remains constrained by the political realities of the international system.

The persistence of state sovereignty fundamentally shapes migration governance outcomes. States retain primary authority over border control, admission policies, and residence regulations. Consequently, international organizations often function as mediators rather than autonomous actors capable of enforcing human security principles.

The Serbian case demonstrates how these dynamics operate in practice. Although international organizations contribute to humanitarian assistance and institutional development, migration governance remains heavily influenced by security concerns and externalized border controls.

The paradox of human security therefore reflects a broader contradiction within global governance itself, the coexistence of universal normative commitments and territorially bounded political authority.

One of the most subtle and sophisticated aspects of the contemporary paradox of human security is the instrumentalization of humanitarian discourse by actors engaged in the securitization of migration. International organizations and states have developed a specific linguistic and conceptual strategy in which the rhetoric of protecting human lives is employed to justify and legitimize precisely those measures that most directly endanger them. Humanitarian assistance itself increasingly becomes politicized and securitized, thereby further narrowing the space for independent civil society engagement (Panebianco, 2021).

To overcome the enduring paradox of human security, a fundamental paradigm shift is required in both the theory and practice of international relations. Such a transformation necessitates moving beyond the technical management of mobility and the militarization of borders toward addressing the underlying causes of human insecurity in countries of origin (Milan & Chiodi, 2023).

Conclusion

This article examined the paradox of human security within the migration policies of international organizations. The analysis demonstrated that although human security has become an increasingly prominent normative framework in migration governance, its practical implementation remains uneven and selective.

The findings indicate that international organizations have played an important role in developing international standards, promoting cooperation, and advancing the protection of migrants' rights. However, their capacity to operationalize human security principles is significantly constrained by the structure of the international system and the continued predominance of state sovereignty. As states retain primary authority over border management, admission policies, and migration control, international organizations frequently operate within limits established by national political and security priorities.

The case of the Western Balkans illustrates the practical consequences of this dynamic. While international organizations contribute to humanitarian assistance, institutional development, and protection mechanisms, they also participate in governance arrangements that emphasize migration containment, border externalization, and security-oriented approaches. This creates a persistent gap between normative commitments to human security and the realities of migration management in practice.

The central hypothesis of this study is therefore confirmed. Although international organizations formally embrace the principles of human security and universal human rights, their migration policies remain substantially influenced by state interests, resulting in selective implementation and limited expressions of solidarity. Consequently, the paradox of human security reflects a broader contradiction within contemporary global governance: the coexistence of universal normative commitments and

territorially bounded political authority.

The study further suggests that restrictive migration policies may generate unintended consequences, including increased migrant vulnerability, the expansion of irregular migration channels, and growing pressures on transit regions. These developments demonstrate the limitations of approaches that prioritize border control without adequately addressing the structural drivers of displacement, such as armed conflict, political instability, economic inequality, and environmental degradation.

Addressing this paradox requires a more coherent integration of human security principles into migration governance. This includes strengthening accountability mechanisms, expanding safe and legal pathways for migration, improving responsibility-sharing arrangements among states, and ensuring more effective protection of migrants' rights throughout the migration process. Greater attention should also be directed toward addressing the root causes of forced migration through long-term development, conflict prevention, and international cooperation initiatives.

Ultimately, the future credibility of international organizations in migration governance will depend on their ability to narrow the gap between normative commitments and policy implementation. Human security can only serve as a meaningful framework for migration governance if the protection of individual dignity, rights, and well-being becomes a practical objective rather than a solely declaratory principle.

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7.

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GENDER AND BORDER: TRANSNATIONAL SUBJECTS AND BODY IN EUROPEAN MIGRATION CINEMA

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Abstract

This paper examines the figure of the migrant in contemporary European cinema through the lens of gender, embodiment, and transnational subjectivity. Focusing on a corpus that encompasses both auteur and high-production films of 21st century – Dirty Pretty Things (Stephen Frears, 2002), Head-On (Gegen die Wand, Fatih Akin, 2004), The Melon Route (Put lubenica, Branko Schmidt, 2006), Joy (Sudabeh Mortezai, 2018), As Far as I Can Walk (Strahinja Banović, Stefan Arsenijević, 2021), Green Border (Zielona granica, Agnieszka Holland, 2023), and Io Capitano (Matteo Garrone, 2023) – the paper explores how migration is inscribed onto the body and mediated through gendered experience. Drawing on theories of transnational cinema (Ezra & Rowden, 2006), European immigration cinema (Ballesteros, 2015), and contemporary media representations of migration (Bayrakdar & Burgoyne, 2022), the paper argues that the migrant figure is constructed within a paradoxical regime of visibility and erasure.The paper further implies that gender operates as a crucial axis in shaping narrative agency, mobility, and vulnerability. By analyzing the interplay between space, corporeality, and narrative structure, this paper demonstrates how contemporary European migration cinema not only reflects but also reconfigures the cultural imagination of borders, identity, and gender in an increasingly transnational context.

Keywords: *border, gender and migrations, embodied subjectivity, female migration, sexual work, body politics, transnational cinema*

Introduction

In the 21st century, the phenomenon of migration emerged as one of the most prominent themes in European cinema, framed in film studies as migration and transnational cinema. These films narrate migrant experiences but also participate in broader cultural discourses concerning the nature of Europe itself, its borders, and its relationship to migrants desperately seeking entry into its political and social space. Here comes the

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contemporary notion of "Fortress Europe" referring to the European Union's increasingly strict migration policies, protecting EU borders through surveillance and restricted access.

Europe is now confronting its own contradictions, and migration cinema clearly shows its challenges because on the one hand, Europe presents itself as a space of mobility, human rights, and multicultural coexistence but on the other hand there is tightening of border controls, the criminalization of migrants, and continuous forms of exclusion. This tension is obvious in contemporary migration cinema.

Transnational cinema emphasizes the movement of people, their capital, and identities across borders. Thus, migrants embody the instability of national categories. As Hamid Naficy argues, migrancy involves a form of movement in which "neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain" (Naficy, 2001, p. 165, cited in Ezra & Rowden, 2006). Therefore, we can't understand migration only as a physical journey between two fixed locations (states). Instead, it is an ongoing process of negotiation in which identities and belonging can't remain fixed. The figure of migrant becomes a paradigmatic transnational subject whose existence challenges the assumption that identity can be easily contained within national borders.

As Ballesteros (2015) argues, immigration cinema has become one of the most significant cultural forms through which contemporary Europe confronts globalization and multiculturalism. But what is crucial to these cinematic representations is a paradox of visibility – migrants are highly visible in public discourse and media, but they remain socially marginalized and precarious. In that respect, migrants occupy paradoxical positions. They are hyper visible as racialized and gendered bodies subjected to surveillance and representation, yet invisible as political subjects whose agency and claims to belonging are marginalized: or the contrary, visible as social actors and invisible as individuals with their own rights (Ahmed 2000; De Genova 2013; Yuval-Davis 2011).

Migration cinema clearly depicts migrants as vulnerable and subjected to exclusion, surveillance and erased from official economy and labor market.

Contemporary border regimes in EU countries influence the politics of visibility of migrants. De Genova (2013) argues that border is more than just a territorial line between the states but a political apparatus that stigmatizes people who do not belong anywhere. De Genova's concept of the spectacle of migrant illegality is particularly relevant to migration cinema, which reveals how migrants are incorporated into European societies.

Recent comprehensive review of feminist migration theory (De Tona, 2025) addresses the historical invisibility of migrant women and how feminists have shown that migration is deeply gendered. So far, the questions of gender have been insufficiently integrated into many film analyses of mobility, borders, and transnational identity. The migrant body functions as a site where broader political, economic, and cultural forces become materially visible. Gender influences not only who migrates and under what conditions, but also how migration is represented on screen.

This paper examines the figure of the migrant in contemporary European cinema through the lens of gender, embodiment, and transnational subjectivity. It focuses on a corpus of seven feature films: *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002), *Head-On* (Gegen die Wand, Fatih Akin, 2004), *The Melon Route* (Put lubenica, Branko Schmidt, 2006), *Joy* (Sudabeh Mortezai, 2018), *As Far as I Can Walk* (Strahinja Banović, Stefan Arsenijević, 2021), *Green Border* (Zielona granica, Agnieszka Holland, 2023), and *Io Capitano* (Matteo Garrone, 2023). In this paper the authors will explore and illuminate on selected movie examples how migration cinema of 21st century constructs the migrant body in intersection of border regimes, labor relations, and gendered visibility.

Interpretation will be conducted through three analytical dimensions. The first concerns mobility and border regimes, focusing on how films represent movement, waiting, transit, and restriction (*Green Border, Io Capitano, The Melon Route, and As Far as I Can Walk*). The second examines labor and embodiment, exploring how migrant bodies become sites of exploitation, surveillance, commodification, and resistance (*Dirty Pretty Things* and *Joy*). The third addresses gendered subjectivity, diasporic identity, investigating how masculinity and femininity shape experiences of displacement, agency, and belonging (*Head-On*).

Border Regimes and Mobility

In his influential analysis of migrant illegality, Nicolas de Genova (2005, 2013) argues that borders should not be understood only as geographical lines separating countries. Rather, they function as political instruments producing distinctions between citizens and non-citizens, legality and illegality, inclusion, and exclusion. Central to De Genova's argument is the concept of the spectacle of migrant illegality (2005, p. 242–249). Through media coverage, political rhetoric, and state practices, migrants become publicly visible primarily as objects of control and regulation. Border enforcement creates dramatic spectacles of exclusion that focus attention on the movement of migrants while obscuring the inequalities and geopolitical conditions that generate migration. Thus, the border becomes a site where state power is repeatedly performed and reaffirmed.

Migrant have become the main figure in transnational cinema. It embodies the instability of fixed national identity, and it usually inhabits liminal spaces. The migrant's mobility is not just a movement from one location to another. It is a continuous process of redefining and transformation. Migrants become a subject that is unfinished, their identity and home belong to the field of instability and uncertainty.

Green Border

Among the films in the corpus, *Green Border* offers the most direct examination of the contemporary European border. The film story is set on the frontier between Be-

larus and Poland during the 2021 migrant crisis and follows refugees, activists, and border guards whose lives become entangled within a political system designed to prevent entry into the European Union. Poland is the first entry point since the refugees come via Turkish airline to Belarus capital. The narrative focus shifts in three directions: first, it is a Syrian family whose grandfather and son got killed and woman from Afghanistan who joins them, second is a young Polish border guard expecting his wife to give a birth to their child and feeling reluctant to brutalize migrants, and the third is a group of (mostly female) NGO activists, among them a reclusive widowed psychiatrist ready to offer her home and all the logistic to help those in need.

Agnieszka Holland rejects sensationalist depictions of migration, she opts for personal dramas set in dark and threatening surroundings. Both Belarus and Polish government refuse to give migrants access to their countries and refugees are repeatedly pushed across the border in both directions. The bordering forest becomes a liminal zone where legal categories cease to exist, so the migrants are brutally beaten, violated, robbed and dehumanized, including the pregnant women. The border is not just a line separating Poland and Belarus, but also a space of perpetual horror and suspension. It becomes a nightmare. Migrants are neither admitted nor removed; they are trapped within an endless cycle of movement and return, acting like a human ping pong ball. The refugees in *Green Border* are hyper-visible as political objects yet invisible as individuals. Marluza da Rosa explained the functioning of hypervisibility in the media field, and how it conceals the process of social invisibility of which migrant subjects are part (2020, p. 29–33). As this movie deals with different ethnic groups and governments which are officially against giving access to migrants to their wishing countries, paradox of media and public hypervisibility, as well as their struggle to achieve individual rights. Their suffering becomes a consequence of geopolitical conflict between Belarus (considered as Putin's puppet) and Poland (representing European Union).

There is an echo of Nazi concentration camps in Poland – director Agnieszka Holland parallels the dehumanization of Jews and other undesirable nations in WWII with contemporary treatment of Asian and African political and economic refugees in Poland. The black-and-white cinematography delivers the documentary quality to the film. The forest becomes a space of ambiguity and uncertainty, mirroring the precarious legal status of the migrants themselves. Holland's emphasis on physical exhaustion, hunger, and bodily deterioration further highlights the extent to which border regimes operate through the regulation of bodies and movement. And what's brave and uncompromising is her political stance – last scenes of the film picture Ukrainian refugees that fled to Poland in 2023 with completely different reception. They are welcomed by Polish officials and border officers and given the asylum instantly, in contrast to underprivileged Asian and African migrants. The European Union is represented with completely opposite political and humanitarian approach to the migrants depending on their race and origin.

Io Capitano

If *Green Border* examines the violence of the European border from the perspective of arrival, *Io Capitano* shifts focus to the journey itself. Matteo Garrone's film follows Seydou (Seydou Sarr) and Moussa (Moustapha Fall), two Senegalese teenagers who secretly leave Dakar hoping to reach Italy. Their route takes them across the Sahara Desert, through detention camps and exploitation in Libya, and eventually across the Mediterranean, almost a mythical border between Africa and Europe. Rather than presenting migration as a simple movement toward a desired destination, the film foregrounds the uncertainty, vulnerability, and unpredictability that characterize contemporary migratory trajectories. But there is a mystical and ritual element that gives the antithesis to real and concrete hardships that follow – before the boys' journey, a Senegalese witch doctor performs a ritual to appease the spirits of ancestors to help Seydou and Moussa on their Odyssey.

The narrative structure reflects Naficy's understanding of migrancy as a process in which "neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain" (Naficy, 2001, p. 165, cited in Ezra & Rowden, 2006). Italy functions less as a concrete destination than as an imagined horizon, a dream and a hope. Each stage of the journey introduces additional forms of precarity, transforming migration into an extended and exhausting condition of instability rather than a finite passage from one place to another.

The Sahara, detention centers, smuggling routes, and the Mediterranean become crucial components of the migration experience. Border control begins long before migrants reach European soil, operating through networks of surveillance and detention across multiple states and territories of north Africa.

At the same time, *Io Capitano* challenges representations that reduce migrants to passive victims. Although Seydou experiences repeated forms of exploitation and violence, the film consistently foregrounds his agency, determination, and capacity for decision-making. In one moment, two friends separate their ways only to meet again in Tripoli. Seydou's vitalism, optimism and endurance, the will to reach the dreamed Italy, makes him heroic figure who cares about his friend and many refugees. He dares to drive the boat himself across Mediterranean to Sicily.

This questions the binarism identified by Bayrakdar and Burgoyne (2022), according to which migrants are frequently represented either as helpless victims or as threatening intruders. Seydou occupies neither position. Instead, he appears as a complex subject whose actions are shaped by aspiration, responsibility, fear, and resilience.

The film's visual style further reinforces this perspective. Vivid colors of Sahara and migrants' clothes and high-key photography in exterior locations contrasts darkness of claustrophobic detention camps. Mateo Garrone combines elements of realism with moments of dreamlike imagery, particularly during the desert sequences – Seydou helps a dying woman left behind and later has a hallucination of her being alive. Also, in the

moments of strongest crisis, he dreams of an angelic creature (called Malaika in Arab) who takes him to visit his mother back in Senegal. These scenes transform the journey into both a material and symbolic experience, emphasizing deep psychological dimensions of migration.

The Melon Route

Branko Schmidt's movie *The Melon Route* has a colloquial term for the smuggling of East Asian refugees already in its title. Movie plot is set along the Croatian and Bosnian border and follows Mirko (Krešimir Mikić), a former Croatian soldier in Yugoslav wars and a post-war drug addict who becomes involved in the smuggling of undocumented migrants using his small wooden boat. Through his encounter with a young Chinese woman (Mei Sun) hidden among transported migrants, the film reveals the human consequences of systems that transform mobility into a commodity.

The *Melon Route* focuses on the everyday human trafficking practices through which borders generate economic opportunities and exploitative relationships. The border appears not merely as a site of exclusion but as a market. Human movement acquires monetary value, and migrant bodies become objects of exchange within networks of trafficking and smuggling.

Smugglers, traffickers, employers, and state institutions all become involved in systems that profit from migrants' precarious legal status. The film demonstrates how exclusion itself becomes economically productive. not for the victims but for the criminals.

At the center of the narrative is the young Chinese migrant woman whose family drowned in the bordering river between Bosnia and Croatia. Her limited ability to communicate reflects the broader condition described by Ballesteros (2015), in which migrants often occupy positions characterized by invisibility and marginality. She is physically present yet socially absent, visible as an object of transportation while remaining largely invisible as a political subject. She finds temporary shelter at Mirko’s crumbling house, finding support and solace in him, although Mirko was reluctant at first. His Christ-like weary and drained secluded figure suggests his self-sacrifice at the end. He kills local smuggler chief and gives all his savings to Chinese girl and his friend, war orphan, to escape to Germany. Thus, the traumatized man with PTSD becomes far more human than any of his compatriots and capable of heroic act. There is, however, a fairytale element in this narrative. Director Branko Schmidt chooses vibrant red coat for Chinese girl contrasting it with muddy and rainy riverbanks in dark grey and blue washed out tones, just as if a Little red riding hood enters the dangerous wolf’s zone. Yet her body does not end in his bowel, a symbolic representation of migrant bodies entering the zone of exclusion, but the story implies a possible happy ending.

As Far as I Can Walk

Stefan Arsenijević's *As Far as I Can Walk* (*Strahinja Banović*) offers a different perspective on migration by shifting attention from border crossing to prolonged waiting. Inspired by motifs from the eponymous Serbian epic poem, the film follows Strahinja (Ibrahim Koma), a Ghanaian refugee living in a refugee camp Serbia and playing in a local football team, whose wife Ababuo (Nancy Mensah-Offei) leaves a camp and attempts to continue her journey toward London in search of theatre acting engagement. Strahinja embarks on a search for her, transforming the narrative into both a migration story and a contemporary reworking of an epic quest. In original narrative, Serbian medieval warrior is confronted with his wife's escape to Ottoman Turk conqueror's camp and yet he decides to forgive her unfaithfulness. In this film story, Strahinja is ready to forgive Ababou for fleeting with Syrian intellectual whom she met in a refugee camp.

The film explores migration after the moment of arrival. Unlike all the other (i.e Hungarian or Croatian), Serbian authorities and immigrant policies truly respect human rights in their temporary status. Yet refugee camps emerge as spaces of temporal uncertainty and anticipation. As De Genova argues, systems of migration management increasingly operate through waiting, uncertainty, and legal precarity rather than through direct exclusion alone. Strahinja's life is defined by this condition of suspension. His future remains dependent upon bureaucratic processes but his talent for football can make him a Serbian citizen, which is not Ababou's dream. The films also display the network of smuggles and criminals involved in human trafficking, taking migrants illegally across the Serbian-Hungarian border where brutal border officers with German shepherds lurk for the refugees.

Strahinja's journey to Hungary, the first European country bordering Serbia on the north, is motivated not by economic aspiration or escape from violence but by his commitment to finding Ababuo. The narrative therefore challenges dominant representations of male migrants as figures defined exclusively by mobility, competition, or survival. Here, masculinity is associated with care, responsibility, and emotional vulnerability, the same pattern that is shown in medieval epic poem. This aspect of the film is particularly important for a gendered analysis of migration cinema. Ababuo exercises action and engagement by choosing to continue her journey independently from her husband, while Strahinja remains committed to preserving their marriage despite repeated obstacles. The film therefore subverts conventional gender roles and demonstrates how migration reshapes both masculine and feminine forms of subjectivity.

Gendered Labor

In comparison to other movies, *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Joy* reveals that the migrant experience is shaped by incorporation into economic systems that depend upon

precarious and invisible forms of work. In these narratives, the body becomes a crucial site where migration, labor, gender, and power intersect. Migrant bodies are valued, regulated, exploited, and commodified.

Migration is ultimately experienced through (moving) bodies. In line with that, gender perspective is essential for understanding the representation of migration in contemporary cinema. Women occupy central positions within global migration systems. They belong to domestic labor, care work, service industries, and informal economies. Ballesteros emphasizes that "female immigrants sustain the global sweatshop economy (…) and the domestic service industry" (2015, p. 63). Migration is, therefore, profoundly gendered not only in terms of representation but also in relation to economic structures and labor relations.

Female migrants are often represented within systems that commodify labor and regulate mobility, exposing the intersections between gender, class, race, and legal status. However, reducing women to passive victims' risks reproducing the very frameworks that critical migration cinema seeks to challenge. Many films instead foreground forms of constrained agency, demonstrating how migrant women develop strategies of survival, resistance, and managing within unequal social conditions.

Gender also shapes representations of male migration. Male protagonists are frequently associated with movement, endurance, and physical journeys across hostile terrain. Yet these narratives often reveal the fragility of masculine agencies under conditions of displacement. Borders, detention, precarious labor, and social exclusion undermine traditional associations between masculinity, autonomy, and control. The migrant body becomes both a vehicle of movement and a site upon which political and economic violence is inscribed.

Through representations of undocumented employment, trafficking, domestic service, and bodily exploitation, they reveal the extent to which migrant workers are simultaneously indispensable and disposable.

Dirty Pretty Things

Stephen Frears's Dirty Pretty Things is one of the most influential migration films produced in early 21st century Europe. Set in London, the film follows Okwe (Chiwetel Ejiofor), a former Nigerian doctor working illegally as a hotel receptionist and taxi driver, and young girl Senay (Audrey Tautou), a Turkish asylum seeker employed in exploitative labor conditions. London is presented through the lens of the immigrants – they clean hotel rooms, drive taxis, wash clothes, and perform other forms of labor that remain largely invisible to those who benefit from them. Their legal and social status remains precarious. This condition closely reflects Ballesteros's description of the immigrant subject as defined by "invisibility, anonymity, and transience" (2015, p. 80). Okwe even

speaks about invisibility to the human organs trafficker: “We are the people you don’t see. We are the ones who drive your cabs. We clean your rooms and suck your cocks”. Both Okwe and Senay are illegal immigrants. Employers, landlords, and criminal networks benefit from their precarious position, knowing that migrants possess limited access to legal protection. In this sense, *Dirty Pretty Things* illustrates De Genova's (2005, 2013) argument that migrant illegality is not simply a matter of legal condition but a social relation that structures labor.

The commodification of migrant existence is metaphorically displayed through the organ-trafficking plot – the manager of the hotel participates in trafficking human organs and mostly the immigrants decide to sell their organs in order to obtain forged passports and secure legal status. Citizenship acquires a biological, bodily sacrifice. The film thus exposes the extent to which migrants are valued primarily in terms of their utility. Excellent example of body sacrifice of migrants we found the dystopian narrative *Children of the People* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006), in which infertility on a global level presents a challenge, until it is revealed that one woman is pregnant. Although, the triply underprivileged refugee (woman, pregnant, African American), Ki becomes a tool of political significance – a symbol of continuity, hope, and power. Yet she is treated only as a useful resource and is deprived of bare existence, as if in a cage (Perić & Vasiljević 2025, p. 105–106).

At the same time, this commodification is especially significant from a gender perspective. So, in *Dirty Pretty Things*, while both Okwe and Senay experience exploitation, the forms of vulnerability to which they are exposed differ substantially. Okwe's body is primarily valued as labor power, whereas Senay's body becomes the object of sexualized forms of control. Her experiences reveal how gender intensifies migrant precarity by linking economic exploitation to the regulation of female sexuality. She is still a virgin, but her body is violated first by a small sweatshop owner who forces her to oral sex, and then by hotel manager who rapes her. She decides to sacrifice her body even more, offering her kidney in exchange for a passport and the operation is supposed to be performed by Okwe. However, he remains highly moral and even acts as a punisher, anesthetizing the manager instead of Senay and delivering his kidney to the trafficker.

Joy

Sudabeh Mortezai's *Joy* examines one of the most gendered forms of contemporary migration: trafficking for sexual labor.

In the film’s prologue, like *Io Capitano*, an African ritual takes place – a Nigerian witch doctor (ju-ju priest) sacrifices a hen to protect the girl who is about to migrate to Europe and needs a protection along the way. But this is an obligatory act and since the ju-ju priest blackmails the girl to send him the money from Europe in order to protect her

from the evil. The film story then follows Joy (Joy Alphonsus), a Nigerian woman living in Vienna who works within a trafficking network. She is simultaneously constrained by her illegal status and capable of strategic action – she works as a prostitute for Nigerian Madame (Angela Ekeleme) but aware that in a decade she can earn her freedom.

This complexity can be understood through the framework proposed by Bayrakdar and Burgoyne (2022). As they observe, migrants are frequently represented either as "innocent victims" or as threatening outsiders. Joy refuses both categories. The protagonist is neither a helpless victim nor a criminal figure. Instead, she occupies an ambiguous position that reflects the contradictory realities of contemporary migration. Her decisions are shaped by obligation, economic necessity, family responsibility, and personal aspiration.

The film insists that women involved in trafficking networks possess histories, motivations, desires, and perform actively so that they cannot be reduced to victimhood alone. At the same time, the film foregrounds the relationship between gender and labor. Joy's body functions as a site of economic exchange, demonstrating how migration and commodification intersect within global inequalities. Particularly significant is the relationship between Joy and Precious, the younger girl she is expected to supervise. Their interactions reveal how exploitation reproduces itself through hierarchical relations among migrants themselves.

The female protagonists exhibit different roles – the chief operator in this bordello is a middle-aged woman, Madame, who also started her European life as a street prostitute, but she became a merciless exploiter. Even the mothers back in Nigeria are aware that their daughters work as prostitutes but embrace this as inevitable female's position. Through its nuanced representation of female migration, Joy demonstrates that agency and vulnerability both exist in migrant women experience.

Both *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Joy* reveal how migration is inseparable from labor and how labor is fundamentally shaped by gender. Through representations of undocumented employment, trafficking, bodily commodification, and exploitation, both movies demonstrate that the migrant body functions as a crucial intersection of economic value and political exclusion.

Gendering Transnational Subjectivity

Head-On, however, occupies a distinctive position within the corpus because it shifts attention toward the complexities and ambivalence of diasporic identity. Unlike the refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants who dominate the other films discussed in this study, Fatih Akin's protagonists inhabit a different migratory condition. Both Sibel (Sibel Kekilli, the actress briefly taking part in adult films before this film) and Cahit (Birol Ünel) belong to the Turkish-German diaspora and possess legal membership within German society. Their struggles are not primarily organized around ter-

ritorial movement or legal exclusion but around questions of cultural belonging and identity. This distinction is significant because it expands the understanding of migration beyond the moment of border crossing itself. Migration does not end upon arrival to Europe but continues to shape identities across generations. Sibel is a first generation born in Hamburg, Germany (the same as director Fatih Akin). Cahit is born in Turkey, but his German is better than his mothertongue and he cut ties with his family. They meet at psychiatric hospital after suicide attempts, him grieving his late wife and her defying her conservative parents and patriarchal Oriental heritage. Subverting traditional norms, she proposes him to marry her. Their arranged marriage is her strategy for escaping patriarchal control and in exchange she promises to act as a cook and housekeeper, the traditional woman's roles.

While *Green Border*, *Io Capitano*, *The Melon Route* and *As Far as I Can Walk* focus primarily on the external structures that regulate migration, *Head-On* investigates the psychological and cultural dimensions of transnational existence.

At the center of the film lies the experience of living between cultures. Sibel and Cahit are neither fully integrated into dominant German society nor entirely defined by traditional conceptions of Turkish identity. Instead, they inhabit what might be described as a transnational social space. This condition reflects the broader concerns of transnational cinema identified by Ezra and Rowden (2006), whose work emphasizes the instability of fixed national identities in an era of globalization and migration. In *Head-On* neither German nor Turkish identity appears as a stable category. Characters move between Hamburg and Istanbul, between languages, and between different cultural environments.

The protagonists remain suspended between multiple worlds, unable to achieve a definitive sense of home. In this respect, *Head-On* exemplifies the transnational condition described by Naficy, in which neither departure nor arrival provides a stable foundation for identity.

Unlike *Joy*, whose life is shaped by trafficking networks, or Senay in *Dirty Pretty Things*, whose vulnerability is linked to undocumented status, Sibel's struggle concerns autonomy within a diasporic and patriarchal environment. Her central conflict is not legal exclusion but the regulation of female behavior through cultural expectations and gender norms.

This distinction makes *Head-On* particularly important for a gendered analysis of migration cinema. Isolina Ballesteros argues that migration discourse frequently "denies or minimizes female protagonism" (2015, p. 65). Akin's film directly challenges this tendency by constructing a narrative that is fundamentally driven by Sibel's desires, decisions, and acts of resistance. Although Cahit occupies a prominent role within the story, Sibel is a driving force and the film's central dramatic energy originates from her refusal to accept the limitations imposed upon her.

The body occupies a crucial position within *Head-On*, functioning as a site where cultural norms, personal desires, and social expectations intersect. Whereas the bodies depicted in *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Joy* are primarily shaped by labor and economic exploitation, the body in *Head-On* is associated with sexuality, intimacy, and self-expression. Sibel finally can be promiscuous and experimental. In this respect, *Head-On* reveals how borders can operate not only through immigration policies and state institutions but also through cultural norms that regulate women's behavior

Conclusion

Rather than culminating in integration or upward mobility, the narratives of selected movies construct a circular pattern of (female) migrant experience. The protagonists move through successive forms of economic, emotional, and social precarity, suggesting that migration does not function as a linear trajectory toward liberation. Instead, the films depict what Berlant (2011) terms "cruel optimism", where the promise of a better life continually motivates movement while remaining structurally unattainable (2011, p. 23–50).

Although classical migration matrix promising integration and "better" future, in selected movies, we faced absence of that kind of path, to call it: happy ending. These films end without expected resolution like return, success, or belonging, but with another departure, another (low) job, another border crossing, or simply the continuation of migration struggle. This issue of impossibilities of integration remind us on Avtar Brah (1996) concept of "diaspora places" arguing that migration does not automatically lead to emancipation but often reproduces existing inequalities in new settings. Therefore, female migrant trajectory ending not in integration but in a return to precarity. The chosen film corpus supports this argument. Two examples of staying in limbo between happy and without happy ending happened in T*he Melon Route* and *Head-On*. In *The Melon Route*, the Chinese girl is perhaps the closest to receiving a fairy-tale ending, but the text itself notes the fairy-tale quality of this resolution, suggesting it is exceptional rather than representative. On the other hand, ending could be understood as one more cycle of going back for Chinese migrant since her eventual love story with a war veteran is dysfunctional and a confirmation of her belonging to the underprivileged and social outcasts.

Finally, in Fatih's *Head-On* Sibel gains autonomy, but she didn't get stability, reconciliation, or belonging, but she moved from one negotiation of identity to another.

Beside denial of the main migration goal analysis implicitly shows how the old European narrative of migration as a path toward integration is weakening. The films examined in this paper demonstrate that migration is not merely a social phenomenon but also a cultural and political condition that reshapes understandings of identity and Europe itself. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of transnational cinema and mi-

gration cinema, this paper has argued that contemporary migration cinema constructs the migrant body as a central site where political power, economic inequality, and gendered social relations intersect. Whether crossing deserts and seas, waiting in refugee camps, navigating undocumented labor markets, surviving trafficking networks, or redefining diasporic identities, migrant protagonists confront systems that regulate movement while simultaneously producing forms of exclusion and precarity.

The analysis of border narratives in *Green Border*, *Io Capitano*, *The Melon Route*, and *As Far as I Can Walk* demonstrate that contemporary borders extend far beyond territorial frontiers. At the same time, these films challenge dominant political representations that reduce migrants to anonymous masses by foregrounding individual experiences of endurance and aspiration.

The examination of *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Joy* reveals that migration cannot be understood independently of labor. Both films expose the economic structures that depend upon migrant workers while simultaneously making them socially and politically marginal.

A gendered perspective proves particularly important in this context. Male protagonists are frequently associated with movement, endurance, and border crossing, whereas female protagonists more often confront forms of bodily regulation, sexualized vulnerability, and labor exploitation. Yet the corpus also challenges conventional gender binaries.

Through its exploration of diasporic identity, cultural in-betweenness, and female autonomy, the film *Head-On* reveals the psychological and cultural dimensions of transnational existence. Migration is shown not merely as geographical displacement but as an ongoing redefining of identity.

Ultimately, the figure of the migrant in 21st century transnational cinema emerges not as a marginal figure but as a key subject through which contemporary Europe understands itself. Migration cinema demonstrates that questions of mobility, citizenship, labor, and identity are no longer peripheral concerns but fundamental dimensions of contemporary European life.

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8.

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INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR MONITORING MIGRATION FLOWS AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of information systems in monitoring migration flows, with particular attention to the link between operational efficiency, cybersecurity and the protection of people involved in migration procedures. The subject is not treated as a simple matter of border surveillance. It is approached as a problem of data management across several actors, including border authorities, asylum bodies, reception centres, health services and humanitarian organisations. The paper uses publicly available data from UNHCR, IOM, Frontex and Eurostat to show why timely and verifiable data processing has become relevant for decision-making. It proposes a modest operational matrix that connects data categories, possible security value and mandatory safeguards. The contribution is not presented as a new software solution, but as a practical way of assessing whether existing or future systems balance institutional needs with the protection of sensitive personal data.

Keywords*: migration flows, information systems, cybersecurity, interoperability, data protection*

Introduction

Migration flows are often described through numbers: how many people crossed a border, how many applied for asylum, how many were accommodated in reception centres. These numbers are necessary, but they do not say enough on their own. Behind them are different situations: people escaping war, families seeking protection, persons in transit, and networks that exploit insecurity for profit. For that reason, information systems in this field cannot be treated as ordinary administrative registers. In contemporary states, migration data are produced in several places. A border authority records a crossing or an attempted crossing. An asylum authority manages a procedure. A reception centre keeps information on accommodation and immediate needs. A health service may hold urgent information that matters for the protection of life but should not be widely shared. If these data remain isolated, institutions react late or on the basis

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of a partial picture. If they are connected without rules, the risk shifts toward excessive surveillance and misuse. This is also a legal, not only technical, question. The GDPR requires personal data to be collected for specified and legitimate purposes and to be limited to what is necessary for those purposes, while Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 places migration management within a wider framework of responsibility, coordination and solidarity between competent authorities (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016; Regulation (EU) 2024/1351, 2024). The question addressed in this paper is therefore practical: how can a system for monitoring migration flows help institutions work faster and more accurately without turning sensitive data into an instrument of uncontrolled control? The answer is not only a matter of technology. The same database, GIS layer or analytical module may be useful or harmful depending on who has access, what is stored, for how long, on what basis decisions are made and whether later review is possible.

The paper is written as an analytical review with a conceptual contribution. It first explains why migration is demanding from the standpoint of data management. It then discusses core technological components, security risks and interoperability. The final part proposes an operational matrix that can be used to check whether a system gives equal attention to security, individual protection and institutional accountability.

Migration as a Data Issue, Not Only Movement of People

The visible part of migration takes place on the ground: border crossing, registration, transport, accommodation and interviews with officials. Less visible is the flow of data that follows every one of these actions. That flow often determines whether a decision will be made in time, whether a person will receive appropriate protection and whether services will notice a security risk before it becomes more serious. The typical problem is not a complete lack of information, but fragmentation. One part of the data may be in a police record, another in an asylum case file, a third in a reception register, and a fourth in reports prepared by international organisations. When data are entered manually or exchanged through informal channels, every next institution receives the picture with a delay. In ordinary conditions this causes administrative difficulties. During pressure periods it may have more serious effects: poor capacity planning, missed protection of minors, or late detection of organised groups using the same routes. The opposite risk should not be ignored. Migration data are not ordinary statistical entries. They often include identity, biometrics, family relations, location, legal status and indicators of vulnerability. For people who have fled persecution, such a set of data may be dangerous if it reaches the wrong actors. A migration information system therefore needs a double logic: it must be connected enough to prevent institutions from working blindly, but restricted enough so that each actor sees only what is necessary for its task. It is useful to distinguish three levels of data. The first is the operational level, where officials

work with specific cases and identities. The second is the analytical level, where patterns are observed by time, route and type of event. The third is the strategic level, where capacity and policy responses are planned. Mistakes occur when these levels are mixed, for example when individual data are used for broad analysis without protection, or when aggregated data are treated as proof of risk in an individual case.

Data and Methodological Approach

The paper relies on publicly available sources because they provide a verifiable basis for discussing system requirements. It uses global data from IOM and UNHCR, Frontex data on detections of irregular crossings at the external borders of the European Union, and Eurostat data on first-time asylum applicants (IOM, 2024; UNHCR, 2025; Frontex, 2025; Eurostat, 2025). These sources do not provide a complete field picture, but they are sufficient for testing the main assumption of the paper: a migration information system has to process statistical volume, individual casework and data-security risk at the same time.

Table 1. *Indicative public data relevant to migration flow monitoring*

Source	Data point	Relevance for an information system
IOM, World Migration Report 2024	About 281 million international migrants worldwide in 2020.	Shows the scale of the phenomenon and the need for stable records rather than ad hoc reporting.
UNHCR, Global Trends 2024	123.2 million forcibly displaced people at the end of 2024.	Shows that migration data often involve humanitarian and legal protection, not only administration.
Frontex, 2024	239,159 detections of irregular border crossings at EU external borders; 38% decrease from 2023.	The system has to distinguish an overall decrease from shifts in routes and methods.
Frontex, Western Balkan route 2024	21,520 detections; 78% decrease.	For countries on the route, local patterns matter more than a general European average.
Eurostat, 2024	912,000 first-time asylum applicants in the EU, 13% fewer than in 2023.	Connects border data with later administrative procedures and asylum capacity.

Source: *Author's presentation based on IOM (2024), UNHCR (2025), Frontex (2025) and Eurostat (2025).*

The figures in the table should be read carefully. A decrease in detections on one route does not mean that risk has disappeared. Movement may have shifted, smuggling

methods may have changed, or controls may have had different effects than before. Similarly, asylum applications do not describe all migration. Some people never apply, some remain in transit, and some enter through regular channels. A system should not treat a single indicator as final evidence. Methodologically, the paper combines a functional analysis of information systems with risk analysis. It first asks what the system should enable: recording, verification, spatial display, exchange and analytical processing. It then asks what may go wrong with each function. This is more practical than a general list of technologies, because the same technical component can have very different value depending on how it is introduced and used.

Technological Components of the System

In an operational environment, a system for monitoring migration flows is rarely a single application. It is more often a set of services: a case register, an identification module, a GIS layer, a data-exchange service, a user portal and an analytical dashboard. The need to process heterogeneous and fast-moving data is also visible in smart-city security contexts, where OSINT sources and Hadoop-based analytics have been used to support rapid person identification and scalable data processing (Petrović & Nikolić, 2025). These components exchange events, case statuses and spatial records, usually through an API layer or scheduled synchronisation. If that layer is not documented clearly, errors do not appear immediately in the interface; they appear later, when two authorities work with different statuses for the same person.

Table 2. *Typical system components and points of risk*

Component	Operational function	Risk if the control is poorly configured
Case register	Records status, accommodation, procedure stage and basic identifiers.	Overly broad case access or incorrect identity merging.
GIS layer	Displays routes, pressure points and event clusters over time.	Tracking an individual instead of an aggregated spatial trend.
Biometric check	Deduplicates records and verifies identity through a controlled query.	Exposure of non-changeable data or unauthorised reuse.
Analytical dashboard	Signals deviations, route shifts and repeated patterns.	Automatic judgement without human review or explanation of the signal.
API/data exchange	Exchanges status and minimum attributes between competent authorities.	Uncontrolled data sharing and inconsistent access rules.

Source: *Author's presentation*

The case database remains the most sensitive point of the system. It combines identifiers, procedure status, accommodation history, field notes and, in some cases, biometric or health-related attributes. The technical issue is not only data storage, but also data linkage. A poorly configured deduplication mechanism may merge two different identities, while an overly broad query may display more information than the user needs for the task at hand. The analytical module often receives the most attention, especially when it is used to detect route shifts, unusual crossing frequencies or repeated use of the same logistical points. Its output should not be treated as a decision, but as a signal for review. A useful dashboard therefore does not display only a risk label; it also provides a basic trace: time period, geolocation cluster, event type and confidence level. Without that trace, analytics becomes a black box and the official receives a feeling of precision that cannot be checked. For end users, the GUI is decisive because it shapes the quality of data entry. If a form contains too many mandatory fields, the official will often choose the fastest option rather than the most accurate one. If the system does not separate operational entry from analytical review, the same user may easily gain access to data that are not necessary for the task. For that reason, work screens, the administration panel, audit view and analytical dashboard should be separated from the start.

What the System Can Detect, and What It Must Not Assume

Information systems can be useful in the early detection of patterns. A sudden route change, repeated use of the same contact points, an unusual number of unaccompanied minors or unexpected pressure on a reception centre may require a response. These signals are not evidence by themselves, but they help direct attention and resources to places where review or assistance is more urgently needed. In relation to human trafficking and migrant smuggling, analytics must not become rough profiling. A person coming from a particular country or moving along a particular route should not be treated as a risk for that reason alone. More useful are behavioural and situational indicators: dependence on the same intermediaries, inability to explain the journey, signs of coercion, family separation, or frequent changes in the account of events. Even these indicators have to be interpreted carefully, because fear and trauma can also affect a person's statements. The system can also support humanitarian response. If the number of families with children increases over a short period, the total number of people is not enough. Information is needed on structure, duration of stay, available accommodation and services. This shows the difference between control and management. Control records that an event has taken place. Management tries to anticipate the next practical problem: food, transport, medical support, interpretation, legal counselling or safe accommodation. The limits of the system should be stated clearly. It cannot assess the truth of a life story by itself, replace an interview with an official, or solve the political causes of migration. Its

realistic value is more modest, but still important: it reduces information delays, connects services that otherwise work separately and leaves a trace of how a decision was made.

Cybersecurity and Protection of Sensitive Data

Cybersecurity in migration systems is not an additional technical issue to be solved at the end of a project. It determines whether the system can be legitimate at all. If one database contains identity, location, biometrics, family links and procedure status, a data breach may have consequences more serious than in many other public registers. The damage would not be only administrative. A person could be exposed to retaliation, blackmail, discrimination or information being returned to actors from whom they fled.

Alignment with the RBAC (Role-Based Access Control) model means that a reception-centre operator sees, through the graphical user interface (GUI), only accommodation status, interview schedule and basic contact information, while asylum case-file elements, medical history or biometric templates are masked by the system. An analyst may see aggregated spatial and temporal patterns without seeing a person's full name. A system administrator maintains accounts and permissions, but should not have unrestricted access to case content. This separation is not a formality. Similar role-limited access is important in mobile intranet environments, where a WireGuard-based model can connect field users through a controlled gateway while peer-specific addresses, AllowedIPs and firewall rules restrict access according to operational roles (Petrović et al., in press). It is the practical translation of GDPR principles such as purpose limitation, data minimisation, accuracy, integrity, confidentiality and accountability into daily system use (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016). Biometrics require a stricter regime than ordinary identity data. In a practical configuration, the biometric template is separated from the basic case file, encrypted both at rest and in transit, and never displayed as raw biometric data to the application user. The user should see the verification result, such as a confirmed match or a warning about a possible duplicate entry, not a data element that cannot be changed if it is exposed. Insider misuse is a real risk, especially when several services use the same system. The audit log should therefore record not only failed login attempts, but also case views, data exports, status changes, permission changes and manual identity merges. Simple anomaly rules may also be useful, for example an alert when a user opens a large number of cases in a short period without a link to that user's organisational unit. This is not a substitute for an investigation, but it is an early signal that access should be reviewed. Reliability concerns are also present in intrusion-detection systems, where threshold determination and redundancy mechanisms can reduce false signals and improve the stability of security decisions (Maksimović et al., 2024).

Interoperability and Exchange Between Institutions

Interoperability is often presented as a technical requirement, but in this field it has security, legal and humanitarian value as well. If systems do not exchange data, a person may go through the same procedure several times, while services may make decisions without knowing relevant earlier events. If exchange exists but is not regulated, the risk only moves elsewhere: data travel faster, but no one knows who saw them and why. A good exchange model does not have to mean one large central database for everyone. In many cases, it is better for institutions to keep their own records while exchanging limited and standardised data sets through controlled services. This reduces the need to copy entire case files. Earlier work on e-government services in the crime domain also shows that timely institutional responses depend on structured information exchange and clearly modelled service workflows (Nikolić et al., 2017). For example, one institution can confirm that a case exists and indicate its status without disclosing all details to every user who sends a query. This approach is consistent with Regulation (EU) 2024/1351, which treats asylum and migration management as a coordinated system of responsibility and solidarity rather than a set of isolated national procedures (Regulation (EU) 2024/1351, 2024). Standardisation of terms is less attractive than artificial intelligence, but often more important. If one service uses 'registration' to mean first contact, another uses it for biometric verification and a third for opening an official procedure, aggregate reports will not be reliable. The same applies to statuses such as 'in transit', 'accommodated', 'referred', 'left the centre' or 'vulnerable category'. A system needs a common vocabulary used by all participants. Secure data exchange also requires institutional discipline. In crisis situations there is often pressure to share everything with everyone. This may look efficient, but in the long run it undermines trust and increases the risk of error. A better approach is to define in advance which data are shared, with whom, in which situation, under which legal basis and for how long they are retained.

Operational matrix as the contribution of the paper

The contribution of this paper is not a new algorithm or a finished system architecture. That would be too ambitious for a paper of this scope. The proposal is simpler: an operational matrix through which each system function is checked by three questions. What is the smallest amount of data needed? What is the concrete security or humanitarian value? What control prevents the data from being used more broadly than justified?

Table 3. *Operational matrix for balancing security and rights protection*

System question	Minimum data needed	Required control
Has the person already been recorded?	Case identifier and limited identity markers.	Duplicate check without broad disclosure of personal data.
Is the route changing quickly?	Aggregated spatial data by point and period.	Anonymisation or aggregation where individual identity is not needed.
Is there a smuggling risk?	Movement pattern, frequency and linked events.	Human review before any operational decision.
Is the person particularly vulnerable?	Age, family status, health or protection note.	Strictly limited access and a log of every consultation.
Does the system produce errors?	Records of corrections, appeals and later changes.	Audit log, periodic review and a right to correction.

Source: *Author's presentation*

The matrix is intended as a working tool for system design or review. Its value lies in forcing system designers to explain the purpose of processing before adding a new function. If a function cannot be connected with a minimum data set and a safeguard, it is probably not sufficiently justified. This matters especially in risk analytics, where there is a temptation to collect more data on the assumption that it might be useful later. For example, when the system signals a route shift, the operational matrix prevents that information from being automatically linked to an individual identity. The first step is aggregation at the level of a geolocation point, or event cluster, while identity is introduced only if additional indicators of a criminal offence, a protection need or a concrete operational procedure exist. In this way, the same information can support situational assessment without unnecessarily widening the circle of personal data. This approach is not spectacular, but it is usable. It can be applied by a small institution introducing a basic register, or by a larger system reviewing existing modules. The matrix does not solve every problem. It does not replace law, data-protection impact assessment or expert security judgement. Its purpose is to organise the most basic question: whether the system uses data for protection and management, or merely accumulates them because technology makes this possible.

Data Quality and the Problem of Incorrect Record Matching

A separate issue in migration records is not only protection, but also data quality. These systems often contain names transliterated from different scripts, uncertain dates of birth, incomplete family links and short notes entered under pressure in the field. If such records are later connected mechanically, the system may produce a neat but inaccurate case file. For the service, this is an operational problem. For the person concerned, it may become a serious legal burden. For that reason, a deduplication module should not rely only on exact matching of first and last names. A more realistic configuration combines a case identifier, a limited set of biometric templates, registration history, first-contact location and controlled manual confirmation by an authorised officer. The system may show that two records are similar, but it should not merge them automatically without a marked verification step. This reduces the risk that an incorrectly merged record will later influence the asylum procedure, accommodation decisions or a security assessment. Data quality also depends on the design of the interface. If the GUI forces quick entry through drop-down lists without space for a short note, the officer in the field will often choose the closest option, not necessarily the most accurate one. If, on the other hand, the form relies too much on free text, later analysis becomes unreliable. A better solution is a combination of controlled fields and short structured notes, with mandatory logging of who entered the data, when the change was made and what the basis for the change was. In this paper, data quality is treated as part of system security. An inaccurate record is not merely an administrative error. It may lead to a wrong allocation of resources, unnecessary additional checks, or an unjustified association of a person with a risk pattern. In migration systems this is particularly sensitive because errors can travel between institutions. A wrongly flagged case may continue to appear in data exchange even after the original assumption has been corrected. Practical quality control does not have to be complicated. Mandatory fields should be used only where they are truly needed, the reliability level of individual data elements should be marked, information confirmed by a document should be separated from information obtained through a statement, and high-impact records should be reviewed periodically. Such measures do not slow the system down significantly, but they prevent the digital record from gaining more authority than it deserves.

Operational Flow for Processing a System Signal

The practical value of an information system can be seen more clearly through a typical signal-processing flow. For example, the system may register that, over several days, entries along an alternative route are increasing, while a reception centre reports a larger number of persons mentioning the same gathering point. This is not evidence of smuggling. It is a signal that requires verification, comparison with the previous period

and assessment against other indicators. The first step in such a flow should not be the opening of individual case files, but aggregation. The analytical dashboard should display change by location, time and event type without automatically listing identities. Only if the signal persists and is supported by other sources, such as a field report or accommodation pressure data, should the case move into a more detailed verification mode. In the second step, an officer checks whether the signal is caused by a technical error, a change in recording practice or a real development in the field. This matters because information systems sometimes register changes produced by the system itself: a new input form, delayed synchronisation or a local change in classification may look like a new operational trend. Only the third step may involve broader access to case files, and even then with approval and recorded access. At that point, RBAC rules must distinguish between an operational user, an analyst and a manager. Table 4 presents a simplified signal-processing flow. Its purpose is not to replace an institutional procedure, but to show how technical processing can be linked to data minimisation and verifiable decision-making.

Table 4. *Processing flow of an operational signal in a migration information system*

Phase	What the system does	Control that limits risk
Signal	Displays change by route, time or reception-centre capacity.	Uses aggregated data without automatically opening identities.
Verification	Compares the signal with the previous period and the source of entry.	The audit log shows who entered or changed data and from which module the record came.
Correlation	Connects the signal with other indicators, such as field reports or repeated references to the same contact point.	Correlation does not produce a conclusion of guilt, but only a basis for further checking.
Action	Assigns a task to the competent service or manager.	RBAC determines who may see the case, and each access remains recorded.
Review	Checks afterwards whether the signal was useful or false-positive.	The result of the review is used to adjust rules and reduce future errors.

Source: *Author's presentation*

System Limitations and Conditions for Responsible Implementation

Even a well-designed system cannot remove all limitations. The first limitation is dependence on input data. If data are entered under pressure, without sufficient training or under different local rules, analytics will only display the existing inconsistency in a more organised form. It is therefore misleading to expect that the problem of migration management can be solved by purchasing software. Software helps only when clear procedures already exist. The second limitation concerns the interpretation of risk. Migration flows change because of visa policy, weather conditions, closure of particular routes, the activity of smuggling networks, but also because of rumours that spread quickly among people on the move. The system can register a change, but it does not always know its cause. If every change is immediately treated as a security threat, the result is a large number of false alarms and a loss of trust among system users. The third limitation is institutional unevenness. One service may have a stable network, trained administrators and defined procedures, while another may work with outdated equipment and limited staff. For that reason, the system should be introduced gradually. Modules that are critical for identity and access control should not depend on the most complex analytical functions. Basic recording, access control and audit logging must remain reliable even when an advanced module is unavailable. The fourth limitation concerns the trust of the persons whose data are processed. If a person does not understand why data are collected, to whom they may be forwarded and how long they will be kept, the system may be perceived as a tool of pressure. This does not mean that every technical procedure has to be explained in detail, but the basic purpose of processing must be clear and accessible. Transparency is not only a legal requirement; it is also a practical condition for better cooperation in the field. Responsible implementation therefore rests on several modest but firm rules: collect fewer data when that is sufficient, separate operational work from analytical inference, keep a human in the loop for decisions that may affect an individual, and regularly check who accessed sensitive records. Such rules do not make the system perfect, but they make it more usable and less risky.

Continuity of Operation and Incident-Mode Procedures

A migration information system must be designed for ordinary days, but its real value usually becomes visible during periods of sudden pressure, temporary route closure, field-network outage or cybersecurity incident. If basic recording stops working at that moment, services return to paper lists and later manual re-entry creates duplicate or unreliable records. For that reason, a limited offline or restricted mode can be useful, but only with a minimal data set: time of contact, location, temporary case number and a basic category of need. It should not contain a full asylum file, medical data or broader biometric information. Once the connection is restored, synchronisation should mark

the record as created offline and subject it to later verification. The analytical layer should also display the status of the data source. A sudden drop in registrations may be a real route change, but it may also be the result of a local outage or delayed synchronisation. The recovery plan should therefore distinguish normal mode, restricted mode and recovery mode. Normal mode uses full validation and access controls. Restricted mode narrows the data set and enables basic recording without opening sensitive modules. Recovery mode verifies and marks records created during the interruption. This division improves resilience, but also prevents a crisis from becoming an excuse for unlimited collection and sharing of data.

Discussion

Public data can easily lead to quick conclusions about whether pressure on a route is increasing or decreasing. That is not enough for assessing an information system. A system is not successful simply because it records a lower number of events. It is successful if institutions use its data to recognise change earlier, allocate resources better and reduce harm to people in procedure or in transit. This is particularly relevant for the Western Balkan route. The 78% decrease in detections recorded for 2024 should not be read as proof that regional risk has disappeared; it may also indicate route displacement, changed methods of movement or different control effects. For countries on this route, national and regional systems therefore need controlled interoperability with central European systems, including Eurodac and the Schengen Information System (SIS), while preserving strict data-quality and access-control rules (European Commission, n.d.; eu-LISA, n.d.). The main advantage of digital systems is the speed with which they connect information. Their main weakness is the possibility that speed turns into automatic judgement without context. In migration, context is essential. The same movement pattern may result from organised smuggling, but also from the closure of another route, weather conditions, fear of registration or misinformation circulating among migrants. Analytical output should therefore be treated as a question for review, not as a final answer. Another issue is trust. Migrants often do not know who processes their data, why biometrics are taken and to whom information may be forwarded. If a system cannot explain the purpose of processing in clear terms, it risks losing legitimacy. This does not mean that every operational detail must be public. Basic processing rules, rights of the person and complaint mechanisms must, however, be understandable. A third problem is the uneven capacity of institutions. It is not realistic to expect every service to have the same level of equipment, training and staffing. Systems should therefore be modular. A smaller number of reliable functions that are actually used is better than a large number of modules that exist only on paper.

Conclusion

Information systems for monitoring migration flows can significantly support institutions, but only if they are developed with a clear understanding of the limits of technology. They can speed up data exchange, reduce duplicated records, help detect changes on routes and support capacity planning. They can also help identify vulnerable persons earlier and refer them to appropriate protection. The same systems can cause serious harm if introduced without access control, a clear purpose of processing and review of algorithmic outputs. Biometric data, spatial tracking and analytical risk models are particularly sensitive. Security should therefore not be understood only as border protection or protection of the database against hackers. In this field, security also includes protection of the person whose data are processed. The proposed operational matrix offers a simple way to check each system function before implementation: whether the data are truly needed, whom the function serves and which safeguard follows it. Such an approach may help migration systems become efficient and responsible at the same time. That is probably the central point: an information system in this field should not be only a faster register, but a controlled mechanism for making better, more verifiable and more humane decisions.

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INTERSTATE CONFLICTS AS CAUSE OF MIGRATIONS

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Abstract

This paper examines intrastate conflicts as a key driver of contemporary migrations, with a focus on the complex interplay between security, socio-economic, cultural, environmental and psychological factors. Moving beyond traditional economic explanations, the study highlights how conflict reshapes migration from a voluntary, opportunity-driven process into a survival strategy. Drawing on empirical and theoretical contributions, including (Cattaneo & Foreman, 2023), (Taralashvili, 2024), and (Czaika & Kis-Katos, 2009), the analysis demonstrates that migration decisions are influenced not only by structural conditions but also by emotional responses, perceptions of risk, and anticipatory behavior. The paper further explores how non-violent political tensions, or "soft conflicts," can significantly alter migration patterns by affecting perceptions of stability and future security. Cultural distance is examined as a contextual factor that shapes both conflict dynamics and societal responses to migrants, while climate change is identified as a catalyst that intensifies both migration pressures and conflict risks. Additionally, the study addresses the psychological consequences of conflict, emphasizing the role of trauma and geopsychiatry in understanding long-term social impacts. The findings suggest that migration and conflict should not be treated as isolated phenomena, but rather as interconnected processes within a broader global system. The paper concludes that effective policy responses must adopt an integrated approach that addresses the root causes of displacement, including conflict prevention, environmental vulnerability, and socio-political instability.

Keywords*: intrastate conflict, migration, forced migration, cultural distance, climate change*

Introduction

Contemporary migration flows are increasingly difficult to explain solely through classical economic models that have long dominated theoretical approaches to this phenomenon. Although differences in income, employment, and living standards remain important factors, it has become evident that political, security, and social conditions play an equally significant, and often decisive, role in shaping migration patterns.

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In this context, intrastate conflicts, more precisely internal conflicts within states, emerge as one of the key drivers of contemporary migration.

An important aspect of migration is that it does not operate only through economic consequences, but also through social and psychological reactions of indigenous population in receiving countries. The presence of migrants, even when it does not represent a real economic threat, may be perceived as competition for limited resources or as a challenge to existing cultural patterns. Such perceptions frequently stimulate the development of xenophobic attitudes, social instability, anger and political mobilization, thereby influencing interstate relations and increasing the potential for conflict escalation. This observation is consistent with findings by Cattaneo and Foreman (2023), who emphasize that non-economic factors, particularly emotional responses, play a crucial role in conflict dynamics. As they note, "it has been documented that non-economic factors, including emotional cues such as anger or fear can lead to inter-group violence" (Cattaneo & Foreman, 2023). Furthermore, the relationship between migration and political tensions is dynamic and anticipatory in nature. According to the same authors: "Relations between countries are likely to affect migration rates. It is possible that as tensions increase between two countries, individuals considering whether to migrate might decide to move before tensions escalate into conflict" (Cattaneo & Foreman, 2023). This insight demonstrates that migration is not only a reaction to conflict, but may also function as a preventive strategy in anticipation of escalating tensions. Migrations may also be caused by dissatisfaction with the political regime or by its replacement. All of this points to the importance of threat perception and emotions in the formation of migration patterns.

At the global level, the importance of this issue is further reinforced by recent data. According to the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO, 2025), "as of 2025, ongoing wars and political violence have reached one of the highest levels in recent decades, affecting multiple continents simultaneously." This trend underscores the urgency of understanding the relationship between conflict and migration in contemporary international relations. Taken together, these perspectives indicate that migration cannot be analyzed as an isolated phenomenon. Instead, it must be understood as part of a broader system in which conflict, climate change, and socio-political dynamics are deeply interconnected.

Intrastate Conflicts: Theoretical and Empirical Framework

Intrastate conflicts represent the dominant form of contemporary violence and encompass a wide range of political and social tensions occurring within state borders. Their causes are complex and often include political and ideological disagreements, economic inequalities, ethnic, race and religious divisions, and historical grievances.

Unlike interstate conflicts, these conflicts have a more direct impact on civilian populations, making them particularly relevant for the study of migration.

A significant analytical shift in understanding modern conflicts involves moving away from the binary distinction between war and peace toward recognizing a continuum of tensions. In this context, the concept of "interstate soft conflict" has been introduced to describe situations in which relations between states deteriorate without the use of military force. These conflicts may arise from political disagreements, economic disputes, or cultural controversies, and are manifested through diplomatic pressure, public condemnation, boycotts, and symbolic political actions. Although such conflicts do not involve violence, they produce tangible consequences by increasing the costs of cooperation and undermining trust between states. Empirical research confirms that these tensions significantly reduce bilateral migration flows. As Taralashvili (2024) argues in How interstate soft conflicts affect bilateral migration, migration must be viewed within the broader framework of global interdependence. The author emphasizes that "migration is an essential driver of the interconnected global economy, influencing various aspects of societies, economies, and cultures worldwide" (Taralashvili, 2024). Moreover, Taralashvili highlights the complexity of the migration–conflict nexus, stating: "The existing literature on the impact of conflict on migration offers insights into the complex relationship between these two phenomena. Scholars have examined different aspects of this relationship, including the drivers of migration during conflicts, the consequences of displacement on individuals, and the broader implications for host and origin countries" (Taralashvili, 2024). These findings demonstrate that even low-intensity conflicts can have measurable and long-term effects on migration, reinforcing the need to include soft conflict dynamics in analytical frameworks.

Violence as a Driver of Migration: Threshold and Intensity

One of the key insights in the literature is that the impact of violence on migration is not linear. Instead, there exists a threshold beyond which security considerations become dominant in individual decision-making. The case of Guatemala provides a clear illustration of this dynamic.

Morrison and May (1994), in *Escape from Terror: Violence and Migration in Post-Revolutionary Guatemala*, note that "researchers to date have focused on identifying the impact of either political or economic factors on migration decisions" (Morrison & May, 1994, p. 112). However, their analysis demonstrates that these factors are deeply intertwined. In situations of low-intensity violence, economic considerations continue to

play a primary role in shaping migration decisions.[3] However, as violence escalates, the logic of decision-making shifts, and the need for security becomes paramount. Under such conditions, migration ceases to be a strategy for improving living standards and instead becomes a means of (bare) survival. Violence often acts as a direct mechanism of coercion, particularly in cases involving extreme practices such as "scorched earth" tactics, massacres, and systematic destruction of settlements. These processes lead to mass exoduses and rapid demographic transformations in affected regions (Morrison & May, 1994). At the same time, violence does not operate in isolation. It interacts with economic and social factors, reinforcing structural inequalities and contributing to the emergence of conflict. The development of capitalist agriculture in Guatemala, for example, led to land dispossession and the marginalization of rural populations, thereby intensifying social tensions and contributing to violent conflict (Morrison & May, 1994)[4].

Transformation of Migration Decision-Making in Conflict Contexts

Beyond the immediate impact on migration flows, intrastate conflicts significantly reshape the internal logic of migration decision-making. In stable environments, migration is typically associated with long-term planning and the evaluation of economic opportunities. Factors such as income, education, and age play a central role in

[3] Even in cases of low-intensity violence, saying that economic factors play a decisive role does not mean denying the thesis about the security-related nature of individuals' decisions to migrate. Namely, in the search for better employment opportunities, higher incomes, and economic stability in general, individuals are also striving for survival, only in this case their survival as such (so-called "bare survival") is not threatened in their country of origin, but rather the ability to survive in a way they find desirable. In that sense, the interest in migrating for the sake of a more desirable existence, one that is more stable and therefore safer, is certainly a security interest, of which economic factors are a measurable expression.

[4] A compelling historical example supporting this thesis is the mass emigration of populations from the territories of the former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In addition to the vast number of individuals who fled war-affected areas during and as a result of the conflict, a significant proportion, predominantly young people, also left Serbia despite the absence of armed conflict on its territory, at least during the period from 1991 to 1998. Migration was largely due to perceptions of bleak future prospects in general, not just economic factors. Within Serbia during that time, there existed both political and criminal violence; however, it cannot be asserted that migration was driven by levels of threat comparable to those present in situations of high-intensity violence, such as civil war. Migration of youth from the territory of the Republic of Serbia continues to the present day, and although the level of violence has decreased and the threat of war appears absent, young people's perceptions of a better future, as well as their trust in state institutions and the rule of law, remain negative and low. This indicates that economic factors cannot be regarded as the sole, nor even the dominant, drivers of migration, even in contexts characterized by low-intensity violence.

determining who migrates and why[5]. However, this pattern changes fundamentally under conditions of violence and instability.

Recent research has emphasized the importance of distinguishing between migration behavior and migration aspirations. Ruhe and Kuhnt (2025) argue that individual decisions to migrate are grounded in a comparative assessment of staying versus leaving, noting that "individuals form a preference for migration by weighing the relative utility of staying versus leaving" (Ruhe & Kuhnt, 2025, p. 208). In conflict settings, however, this calculation is no longer primarily economic. Instead, immediate threats to personal safety and survival override long-term considerations. The authors further demonstrate that conflict alters the structure of migration determinants by weakening the influence of socio-economic and demographic variables. As they state, "conflict attenuates the effect of demographic and socio-economic variables on permanent emigration aspirations" (Ruhe & Kuhnt, 2025, p. 210). This finding suggests that conflict acts as a leveling force, reducing differences between social groups and expanding the range of individuals who consider migration. Importantly, the increase in migration aspirations during conflict does not necessarily reflect a stronger desire among traditionally mobile groups, but rather the emergence of new groups who begin to consider migration under conditions of insecurity. In this sense, conflict broadens the base of potential migrants, reshaping the social composition of migration flows.

Cultural Dimension of Conflict and Migration

While economic and security-related factors provide a necessary foundation for understanding migration, they are not sufficient on their own. Cultural dynamics play an equally important role, particularly in shaping how migration is perceived and how conflicts emerge or intensify. Earlier theoretical approaches often relied on rigid categorizations of culture, such as religion or civilizational belonging. However, more recent scholarship has moved toward the concept of cultural distance, which captures variations in values, norms, and patterns of behavior between societies. This shift allows for a more nuanced understanding of how cultural differences influence political and social interactions.

[5] Worldview beliefs also play a significant role in shaping patterns of migration under conditions of relative stability. More precisely, a certain regularity can be observed among determinants such as the modernization of consciousness, tendencies toward migration to developed Western countries, and birth rates. If we take Kosovo Albanians as an example, we can observe that an increase in the modernization of their consciousness has been accompanied, within a relatively short period, by a rise in migration to European Union countries and a decline in fertility rates. This suggests that one of the key formative factors influencing who migrates is the so-called "worldview," understood as the broader horizon of perception.

Research by Fearon (1995) and Bercovitch and Elgström (2001) highlights the role of cultural differences in increasing the likelihood of misinterpretation and miscommunication. These differences do not directly produce conflict, but they create conditions in which misunderstandings become more likely, thereby increasing the risk of escalation. Empirical studies have further demonstrated that cultural distance can have measurable effects on conflict probability. Differences in language, social and moral values, religion, and institutional practices have been shown to increase the likelihood of militarized disputes, even when other factors such as economic interdependence or geographic proximity are taken into account (Gartzke & Gleditsch, 2006; Martin et al., 2008). In the context of migration, cultural factors operate in a particularly complex way. Migrants are often perceived not only as economic actors but also as representatives of different cultural frameworks. This perception can trigger reactions that are not necessarily based on objective conditions, but on subjective interpretations of difference and belonging.[6]

As suggested in the earlier analysis, migrants may be viewed as competitors for resources or as a challenge to established social norms, even when empirical evidence does not support such claims. These perceptions can foster social tension, especially in environments characterized by political instability or economic uncertainty. At the same time, the strength of this relationship is context-dependent. In societies where institutional trust is high and inclusive norms are well established, cultural differences are less likely to translate into conflict[7]. Conversely, in contexts marked by polarization and

[6] As Carl Schmitt (2007, p. 26-27) precisely observed in his renowned work *The Concept of the Political*, the political distinction between friend and enemy, as the expression of the highest degree of association and dissociation among human beings, does not require that the other be perceived as ugly, morally evil, or "inferior", in order to be perceived as enemy. For the other, in this case a migrant, it is sufficient that they are perceived as a stranger, "other" in the sense of being different, in order to become subject to such a radically negative qualification. The cultural dimension in such cases often plays a decisive role.

[7] However, such an orientation within a given cultural milieu toward migrants can change over time, precisely as a result of migrants' own behavior. For instance, in Sweden, often cited as a state characterized by high levels of trust in institutions and overall stability, from economic to security, there have recently been noted tensions involving migrants. This has contributed to growing dissatisfaction among the native population and a decline in inclusive norms.

See more in: Nkulu Kalengayi, F. K., Baroudi, M., & Hurtig, A. K. (2024). *Prevalence of perceived discrimination, determinants and associations with self-rated general and sexual health, healthcare utilization and self-perceived integration: A cross-sectional survey of migrants in Sweden*. BMC Public Health, (24)699. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-18160-2; Statistics Sweden. (2024, November 21). *New analysis of the views of foreign-born and Swedish-born persons on their municipality and society.* Statistics Sweden. https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population-and-living-conditions/integration/integration - analysis/pong/statistical-news/the-views-of-foreign-born-and-swedish-born-persons-on-society/; Hivert, A.-F. (2026, May 2). Swedish government's anti-immigrant escalation sparks backlash among population. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2026/05/02/swedish-government-s-anti-immigrant-escalation-sparks-backlash-among-population_6753054_4.html

weak social cohesion, even relatively minor differences can become sources of tension.

Thus, cultural distance should not be understood as a strong deterministic cause of conflict, but rather as a factor that interacts with political and economic conditions, shaping the likelihood and form of conflict as well as the reception of migrants.

Climate Change as a Trigger Mechanism for Migration and Conflict

In recent years, climate change has increasingly been recognized as a factor that connects migration and conflict in indirect but significant ways. Rather than acting as a direct cause, environmental pressures function as catalysts that intensify existing vulnerabilities and trigger complex social processes. Cattaneo and Foreman (2023) provide a detailed analysis of this relationship, demonstrating that climate-related factors influence both migration and conflict dynamics. Environmental changes such as extreme temperatures, droughts, and floods contribute to deteriorating economic conditions and reduced access to resources, thereby increasing the likelihood of migration. At the same time, these conditions may alter the incentives for conflict. When economic opportunities decline and resource scarcity increases, the relative cost of engaging in violence decreases. In this sense, climate change simultaneously pushes individuals toward migration and increases the propensity for conflict.

Another important dimension of this relationship concerns the political effects of climate-induced migration. As migration flows increase due to environmental pressures, receiving countries may experience heightened social and political tensions. These tensions are particularly pronounced in contexts where public attitudes toward migrants are already negative, reinforcing the link between migration and conflict.[8] Cattaneo and Foreman (2023) further emphasize the indirect nature of this relationship, showing that climate-induced migration can influence interstate relations. Although the probability of conflict escalation remains relatively low in absolute terms, the effect is consistent and statistically significant. This finding underscores the importance of viewing migration, climate change, and conflict as interconnected processes rather than separate phenomena. Taken together, these insights highlight the need for an integrated analytical framework that accounts for the interaction between environmental, political, and social factors. Without such an approach, it is difficult to fully understand the dynamics that

[8] In this regard, it would be of interest to analyze the policy of Israel toward the population of Iran. It is well known that Israel possesses some of the most advanced water desalination technologies, upon which many countries in the region depend for a stable supply of potable water. As a means of exerting pressure on the regime, with the aim of stimulating public discontent, Israel is argued to contribute to water scarcity in Iran. However, when viewed from a long-term perspective, if peace and regional stability constitute Israel's strategic objectives, it remains an open question to what extent such measures are ultimately conducive to those aims, particularly insofar as they may trigger additional waves of migration and thereby prolong the prospects for regional stabilization.

drive migration in the contemporary world.

Forced Migration: Historical Patterns and Structural Context

Forced migration represents one of the most enduring and structurally embedded forms of population movement in modern history. Unlike voluntary migration, it occurs in conditions where individuals are deprived of meaningful choice, being compelled to leave their homes due to violence, coercion, or systemic political pressure. Historical analysis shows that forced migration has been a recurring phenomenon rather than an exceptional one. Stola (1992), in his study of Central Europe, emphasizes the scale and persistence of this process, stating that "in Central Europe, forced migrations constitute a considerable and in some countries a major part of all migratory movements in modern history" (Stola, 1992, p. 324). This observation underscores the structural nature of forced migration and its deep connection to political transformation.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, forced migrations intensified in parallel with major geopolitical changes. The collapse of empires, the emergence of nation-states, and the reconfiguration of borders created pressures to align political territories with ethnic identities. Given the heterogeneous composition of many regions, such efforts often resulted in the displacement or expulsion of minority populations. The period between 1939 and 1949 represents a particularly extreme phase, during which war, territorial shifts, and totalitarian regimes combined to produce mass displacement on an unprecedented scale. Forced labor, deportations, and systematic resettlement became integral components of political control. These processes were not random but organized, ideologically programmed and legitimized, involving the identification, removal, and relocation of targeted groups. Importantly, the consequences of forced migration extended far beyond immediate demographic changes. They reshaped social relations, disrupted economic structures, and left long-term political and psychological legacies[9]. Collective memories of displacement and violence continued to influence intergroup relations long after the events themselves.

This historical perspective is crucial for understanding contemporary migration patterns. Many of the structural conditions that produced forced migration in the past, such as political instability, ethnic tension, and institutional weakness, remain present today, suggesting a continuity rather than a rupture in migration dynamics.

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[9] Perhaps the most compelling evidence for this conclusion is given by the aforementioned state of Israel, whose establishment in 1948 was a factor that most profoundly contributed to the radical transformation of the entire region. The most powerful impetus for its founding was the the persecution of Jews under Nazi rule, which resulted in mass migrations. It remains an open question whether Zionist tendencies would have possessed a sufficiently strong impetus for state formation in the absence of these forced migratory movements.

Migration, Security, and the Transformation of Policy Frameworks

In contemporary analysis, migration is increasingly framed within a security-oriented perspective. This shift reflects broader changes in the understanding of global risks, as well as the expansion of the concept of security beyond traditional military concerns. Adelman (2001) situates this transformation within the framework of human security, emphasizing that migration is no longer viewed solely as a humanitarian issue. As he notes, "the security focus matches a historical shift because human security is an issue stressed by scholars and state policymakers, as well as the UNHCR" (Adelman, 2001, p. 8). This shift indicates that migration has become integrated into broader discussions of stability, governance, and risk management. Displaced populations are no longer perceived exclusively as victims in need of protection, but also as actors within complex socio-political environments that can influence state stability. At the same time, this transformation has produced tensions within migration policy. On the one hand, international norms emphasize the protection of refugees and displaced persons. On the other hand, states increasingly adopt restrictive measures aimed at controlling migration flows and limiting access to asylum. This duality is clearly illustrated in the work of Ormsby (2017), who argues that restrictive policies are not simply reactive but structurally embedded. As he states, "this trend represents a natural outgrowth of existing refugee deterrence policies" (Ormsby, 2017, p. 1191). This observation suggests that contemporary migration policies are shaped by long-standing institutional frameworks rather than *ad hoc* political decisions. Moreover, these policies have broader implications beyond migration itself. Ormsby (2017) further notes that "a growing number of states have adopted refugee deterrence policies that also infringe upon the civil liberties of their own citizens" (Ormsby, 2017, p. 1201). This finding highlights the extent to which migration policy intersects with domestic legal and political systems, affecting not only migrants but also the rights of citizens. Taken together, these developments illustrate a fundamental shift in the conceptualization of migration, from a humanitarian concern to a central issue of security and governance. This shift has important implications for both policy and research, as it requires a more integrated approach to understanding migration within broader socio-political frameworks.

Psychological Consequences of Conflict and Displacement

While the physical and economic impacts of conflict are widely recognized, its psychological consequences are often less visible but equally significant. Intrastate conflicts generate conditions of prolonged stress, insecurity, and loss, which have profound effects on mental health. Arafat and Hossain (2026) emphasize the importance of contextual factors in shaping these outcomes, noting that "geography and living conditions could significantly impact mental health in war-affected areas, where environmental

and social factors play a vital role" (Arafat & Hossain, 2026). This perspective highlights the relevance of geopsychiatry, which situates mental health within a broader socio-political and environmental context. In conflict-affected regions, the prevalence of mental health disorders increases significantly. Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder become widespread, particularly in areas where healthcare systems are weakened or collapsed. These conditions are further exacerbated by displacement, poverty, and ongoing insecurity.

An important dimension of this issue is the persistence of trauma beyond the immediate period of conflict. The concept of transgenerational trauma illustrates how psychological effects can be transmitted across generations, influencing family dynamics, social relations, and collective identity. In this sense, the impact of conflict is not limited to those directly affected, but extends to future generations.

Perceptions of Violence and Social Consequences

In addition to its direct effects, conflict also shapes how violence is perceived and interpreted. These perceptions are not uniform, but vary depending on individual experiences and exposure to conflict, but also collective factors such as national culture[10]. Empirical research indicates that individuals who have directly experienced violence tend to attribute responsibility differently from those who have not. As shown by Pechenkina, Bausch, and Skinner (2019), "exposure to violence shapes the way individuals attribute responsibility for indiscriminate state attacks". This distinction has important implications for post-conflict societies. Individuals who have experienced vi-

[10] The degree of propensity toward aggressive behavior, or toward a positive valuation of certain forms of violence, is significantly shaped by the national culture in which an individual is raised. This can already be seen in the ancient distinction between Athens and Sparta, where the former was oriented toward commerce, public rhetoric and deliberation, as well as scientific inquiry, and was therefore less inclined toward violence than Sparta, in which a strict and austere military ethos was cultivated, and where various forms of violence constituted an integral part of social life. In contemporary terms, differences in tendencies toward and perceptions of violence can also be comparatively observed in one and the same natinal culture. For example, in Serbia a shift toward the reduction of the perception of violence as a necessary political instrument can be seen when comparing the protests against the Milošević regime in the 1990s with those occurring during the period of the current refime. Particularly striking is the absence of violent measures, as well as a markedly negative attitude toward violence as a means of political struggle among members of the student movement during last year's protests against the government. Whereas the protests of the 1990s almost regularly ended in serious confrontations with the police, often resulting not only in injuries but occasionally in fatalities, during the nearly one and a half decades of rule of the Serbian Progressive Party, the only more significant episodes of violent protest occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, and even these were considerably weaker in both intensity and scale compared to, for instance, the March 9 protests in 1991 or the student demonstrations of 1997. The reasons for this shift are numerous and complex, and a detailed examination of them falls beyond the scope of this discussion.

olence are more likely to hold state actors accountable, while those without direct experience may interpret violence within a broader contextual framework. These differences influence trust in institutions, perceptions of legitimacy, and the potential for reconciliation. The relationship between experience and perception highlights the importance of psychological factors in understanding conflict dynamics. It suggests that the consequences of violence extend beyond physical damage, shaping the ways in which societies interpret and respond to conflict.

Beyond observable migration flows, it is essential to consider migration aspirations as a key component of migration dynamics. Aspirations reflect individuals' intentions to migrate, which may not always result in actual movement but nevertheless provide insight into underlying social and demographic trends. Conflict has a significant impact on these aspirations by altering the conditions under which migration decisions are made. In stable environments, migration is often associated with specific demographic groups, such as younger individuals or those facing economic disadvantage. However, conflict disrupts this pattern by introducing security as the dominant concern. As previously discussed, Ruhe and Kuhnt (2025) demonstrate that conflict reduces the importance of socio-economic and demographic factors in shaping migration aspirations. This effect can be interpreted as a form of equalization, where differences between social groups become less relevant in the face of shared insecurity. As a result, conflict does not simply intensify migration among those who are already mobile, but expands the pool of individuals who consider migration as a viable option. This shift has important long-term implications, as it alters the demographic composition of potential migrants and contributes to broader patterns of population movement. Moreover, the gap between aspirations and actual migration highlights the role of structural constraints. Financial limitations, legal barriers, and logistical challenges may prevent individuals from acting on their intentions, creating a latent pool of potential migrants whose decisions may be realized under different conditions.

Empirical Complexity of the Conflict–Migration Nexus

The relationship between intrastate conflict and migration is inherently complex and cannot be reduced to a single causal mechanism. Instead, it is shaped by the interaction of multiple variables, including security conditions, economic factors, cultural perceptions, and environmental pressures. Several key empirical patterns can be identified. First, violence in the country of origin acts as a strong push factor, increasing the likelihood of migration. At the same time, instability in potential destination areas can act as a deterrent, influencing both the direction and intensity of migration flows. Second, the effects of conflict are mediated by contextual factors. Cultural perceptions, institutional capacity, and social attitudes all influence how migration is experienced and

interpreted. As previously noted, emotional responses such as fear and anger can contribute to intergroup tensions, linking psychological processes to broader patterns of conflict (Cattaneo & Foreman, 2023). Third, environmental factors, particularly climate change, function as amplifiers that intensify both migration and conflict dynamics. By exacerbating resource scarcity and economic instability, environmental pressures create conditions that increase the likelihood of displacement and violence. These findings highlight the importance of adopting an integrated analytical approach that accounts for the interaction between different drivers of migration. Without such an approach, it is difficult to capture the full complexity of the conflict–migration relationship.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this paper demonstrates that intrastate conflicts are among the most significant drivers of contemporary migration, yet their effects cannot be understood through a simple or linear framework. Migration emerges as the result of a complex interplay of security, economic, cultural, environmental, and psychological factors. Intrastate conflict acts as a critical turning point in migration decision-making, transforming migration from a strategy aimed at improving living conditions into a mechanism of survival. This shift expands the pool of potential migrants and reshapes the structure of migration flows, both in the short and long term. At the same time, cultural and psychological dimensions play a crucial role in shaping both conflict and migration. Cultural distance influences perceptions of migrants and can intensify social tensions, particularly in politically unstable environments. Psychological factors, including trauma and emotional responses, further shape individual behavior and collective dynamics, leaving long-lasting effects on societies. The integration of climate change into this framework underscores the interconnected nature of contemporary global challenges. Environmental pressures contribute to both migration and conflict, reinforcing the need for a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach.

From a policy perspective, these findings highlight the limitations of approaches that focus solely on managing migration flows. Effective responses must address the root causes of migration, including conflict prevention, economic inequality, and environmental vulnerability, while also ensuring the protection of human rights. Ultimately, understanding intrastate conflicts as a central driver of migration is essential for developing sustainable and effective policies in an increasingly interconnected and unstable world.

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IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND HUMAN SECURITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This paper examines migration governance in the Western Balkans during the so-called "Migration Crisis," focusing on the conceptual debate over whether the phenomenon should be understood as a migration/migrant crisis in itself or as a crisis of border management and institutional capacity. It argues that the dominant framing of large-scale mixed migration flows, particularly during the peak period of 2014–2016, reflects a securitized discourse that risks obscuring the governance and institutional dimensions of the phenomenon. This tendency was reinforced by the absence of a unified European Union response, which contributed to fragmented national approaches and uneven burden-sharing across the region. To address these challenges, the paper adopts a resilience perspective. In this sense, resilience is understood as the capacity of states and regional actors to align migration governance with human security principles. From this perspective, resilience encompasses both the ability to respond to migration pressures while safeguarding vulnerable populations and the capacity to promote institutional adaptation and regional cooperation in support of long-term human security. Finally, the paper argues that although the Western Balkans' role as a transit corridor was particularly pronounced during 2014–2016, future migration pressures and potential crises remain likely. Strengthening resilience therefore requires enhanced regional cooperation, improved institutional preparedness, and a more balanced integration of human security perspectives in migration governance.

Keywords: *Resilience, Security, Western Balkans, Regional Cooperation, Human Security Threats*

Introduction

International migration is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon shaped by a wide range of political, economic, social, and security factors, and it remains a central feature of contemporary global dynamics. While migration has long been subject to regulatory and political control, its systematic framing as a security threat became

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significantly more pronounced in the post-9/11 period, when migration, terrorism, and border control increasingly converged within security policy discourse (Tatalović & Malnar, 2016: 286-287). Such framings risk overlooking the complexity and diversity of migration dynamics, while shaping governance responses in ways that may privilege (national) security logics over broader human security considerations. In debates surrounding what has been referred to in recent academic literature as the "Migration Crisis" or "Migrant Crisis," concerns emerged within the European Union regarding the scale and management of incoming flows of asylum seekers and (ir)regular migrants, particularly in relation to the capacity of certain member states to accommodate potential long-term settlement (Ajzenhamer, 2018: 291). These perceptions contributed to a range of policy responses aimed at strengthening control over the EU's external borders, including intensified surveillance measures and, in some cases, the construction of physical barriers. Such developments unfolded within a broader structural tension between the Union's normative commitment to humanitarian principles and the increasing prioritization of internal security and societal stability, which also revealed differing national approaches to migration governance, as noted by Ajzenhamer (2018: 291). Taken together, these dynamics demonstrated how migration evolved into a significant issue within contemporary European geopolitical and security discourse.

The "Migration Crisis" or "Migrant Crisis" has often been framed as a situation in which human security and national security came into "conflict", with states facing the challenge of balancing humanitarian obligations and security concerns (Athanasiou, 2026). This paper starts from the assumption that such a conflict may be more apparent than real. Drawing on the concept of human security, it explores whether the protection of individuals and the pursuit of national security can be understood as mutually reinforcing rather than competing objectives. This paper proceeds from the assumption that the "Migration Crisis" in the Western Balkans represents a relevant case for examining the interaction between human security considerations and state security responses. It analyzes human security threats and risks associated with the crisis during the peak period of 2014–2016 and explores how its aftermath may have contributed to processes of resilience-building in addressing future migration-related challenges. Additionally, it can be argued that the formulation "Migration Crisis" or "Migrant Crisis" reflects a stronger national security framing, in which migrants are more readily constructed as a security concern. In contrast, the term "border management crisis" may offer a more analytically neutral framing that shifts attention toward governance structures and institutional capacity, thereby allowing for a human security perspective in which migrants are treated as the primary referent object of protection.

The Western Balkans (route) is understood, in line with International Organization for Migration (IOM) usage, due to the spillover effects of the Mediterranean route, as comprising the post-Yugoslav republics excluding Slovenia and Croatia, while also in-

cluding Albania (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2025). It is important, however, to accentuate that although now widely used in academic and political contexts, the term "Western Balkans" is a relatively recent administrative and policy-oriented designation.[2] It distinguishes a subset of Balkan states within EU discourse, even though the region is more broadly and historically understood simply as part of the Balkans. While the Western Balkan region has historically experienced various forms of internal displacement and intra-regional migration during and after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, it had not previously been confronted with large-scale intercontinental migration flows of the type observed during 2014–2016 (Lilyanova, 2016: 1-6). This distinction is important, as the Western Balkans functioned primarily as a transiT[3] corridor rather than a destination region during the 2014–2016 crisis and understanding this role is essential for analyzing the governance, border management, and human security challenges generated by onward movement toward destination countries in the EU.

Migration/Migrant Crisis or Border Management Crisis?

It is necessary to critically assess whether the term *"*Migration Crisis" or "Migrant Crisis*"* can be regarded as an analytically neutral concept, or whether it instead represents a politically and normatively biased formulation used to describe the complex dynamics of human mobility over the past decade. The political aspect of this crisis, as examined in this paper, is based on the idea that the crisis initially emerged primarily as a humanitarian issue, with many political actors within the EU emphasizing solidarity and refugee protection, however, the subsequent closure of several EU borders and the introduction of restrictive migration policies revealed tensions and contradictions within the Union's response (Komljenović, 2022). Although the scope of this paper does not allow for a comprehensive examination of this argument, securitization theory, as developed by the Copenhagen School (especially through the work of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde) offers a useful point of departure for analyzing the construction of migration as a security concern. To be precise, securitization theory argues that an issue does not become a security threat because it is objectively dangerous in an existential sense, rather, an issue becomes "securitized" through political and discursive processes (Buzan et al., 1998, as cited in Vukadinović, 2024: 40).

[2]see Vuletić D., (2018). *NATO i Zapadni Balkan*, Vojno delo 7/2018.

[3] As noted by Tošić (2017: 150-160) during the peak of the 2015 migration flows the Western Balkans (particularly urban centers such as Belgrade) were commonly described by local actors, media, and policymakers in terms of "transit" and "movement," with an emphasis on facilitating onward passage rather than long-term settlement. This framing was also reproduced in broader European discourse on the so-called "Balkan Route," which predominantly conceptualized the region as a corridor rather than a destination space (Tošić, 2017).

Within securitization theory, threats are not understood as objective or self-evident phenomena, but as socially and politically constructed through discourse. Drawing on Austin's speech act theory, the Copenhagen School argues that language does not merely describe security threats but can actively constitute them (Austin 1975: 117; Macdonald, 2012: 119). Through specific "speech acts," political actors frame certain developments as existential threats requiring urgent and exceptional measures. In this sense, securitization occurs when an issue is successfully presented as a matter of security rather than ordinary politics. According to Wæver, a "speech act," whereby political actors such as governments, ministers, or EU institutions frame a particular issue as an existential threat, and if the audience – including the public, state institutions, and EU actors – accepts this framing, the issue is transformed from a matter of normal politics into one requiring extraordinary measures (Vukadinoviã, 2024). Scholars examining securitization have also emphasized the importance of framing processes in shaping perceptions of risk and urgency (Kouloglou, 2026: 2). Political leaders, institutions, and experts often rely on particular rhetorical strategies, terminology, and narratives to construct migration or other developments as security concerns and such discursive practices influence public perception by emphasizing danger, instability, or crisis, even where threats may be uncertain or difficult to define concretely (Kouloglou, 2026: 2). Consequently, the framing of threats becomes closely connected to questions of political authority, legitimacy, and the justification of specific policy responses.

Hence, this paper argues that the term "Migration Crisis" or "Migrant Crisis" reflects a securitized framing that has, from the outset, mischaracterized the nature of the events surrounding the large-scale movement of people into Europe. Rather than migrants themselves constituting a security threat, the crisis should be understood primarily as a crisis of border management and political coordination within the EU. The uneven and fragmented response of EU member states, together with the subsequent reintroduction of internal border controls, exposed structural weaknesses in the governance of the Schengen area and the Common European Asylum System (Vukadinović, 2024). Drawing on securitization theory and a human security perspective, this paper contends that migrants should not be conceptualized as sources of insecurity, but rather as referent objects of security. In many cases, they also became members of host societies in destination countries, further challenging exclusionary security narratives (Komljenović, 2020: 188). Accordingly, the events of 2014–2016 are more accurately understood as a border management and governance crisis than as a "migration crisis" per se. Given that the Western Balkan region functioned primarily as a transit corridor for migrants en route to more economically developed EU member states, this paper argues that future migration flows may increasingly transform these states from transit zones into (semi)permanent destinations. In such a scenario, migration would no longer be managed solely as a matter of border control and short-term mobility, but would also

raise longer-term challenges. Far from being a static phenomenon, the “Migration Crisis” or “Migrant Crisis”, in this paper referred to as the border management crisis, can be seen as reshaping regional cooperation, state responses, and perceptions of stability within the Western Balkans and beyond the region.

From Securitization to Human Security: Migration Governance and Referent Objects of Security

The intellectual roots of the human security approach can be traced to the cosmopolitan philosophy of Immanuel Kant.[4] According to Daniele Archibugi (1995), Kant's concept of cosmopolitan law was not merely a framework governing relations between states, but a legal and moral principle that extended certain rights beyond national borders. Archibugi argues that cosmopolitan law served two important functions: first, it required states to recognize basic rights that applied to individuals regardless of citizenship, and second, it created a basis for international society to intervene when fundamental rights were violated (Archibugi, 1995: 430). As Kant observed, humanity had entered a "universal community" in which violations of rights in one part of the world could be felt everywhere (Archibugi, 1995: 430). This emphasis on the protection of individuals rather than the exclusive protection of state sovereignty foreshadows the contemporary human security approach, which similarly identifies the individual as the primary referent object of security and focuses on safeguarding people from threats such as violence, poverty, and human rights abuses.

The relationship between securitization theory and human security can be productively understood through the concept of referent objects of security, referring to the entities whose survival, stability, or well-being is constructed as requiring protection and is thereby positioned as being under threat (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998). As the author has previously mentioned, in securitization theory, security is not treated as an objective or material condition, but as a socially and politically constructed process. The border management crisis was transformed from a socio-economic or humanitarian phenomenon into a security issue, thereby justifying exceptional policy responses such as intensified border controls, emergency measures, and the externalization of migration management, with the referent object remaining predominantly state-centric, as the primary concern is the protection of political and territorial order from perceived external pressures. By contrast, the human security paradigm fundamentally reconfigures both the referent object and the meaning of security itself.

[4] Whereas cosmopolitan approaches view individuals as the primary referent object of security, realist approaches maintain that the state remains the central object of security. Realists argue that the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity is a prerequisite for individual welfare, making state security logically prior to human security (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979).

Emerging prominently in the 1994 *UNDP Human Development Report 1994,* human security shifts the analytical focus from the state to the individual and community level outlining seven key components of human security: Economic security (income, employment), Food security (access to sufficient food), Health security (protection from disease and access to healthcare), Environmental security (protection from environmental degradation), Personal security (protection from physical violence), Community security (protection of cultural and social identity), Political security (protection of human rights and freedoms) (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). Additionally, it defines security in terms of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want," thereby expanding the scope of security to include protection from violence, deprivation, displacement, and structural vulnerability. Ergo, the individual becomes the primary referent object of security, and the central normative concern is the safeguarding of human dignity and basic needs rather than the preservation of state authority alone. This understanding is consistent with contemporary interpretations of human security, which emphasize that it does not displace the state but rather repositions it as one of several instruments for ensuring individual well-being, including within security sector contexts (Lewis-Simpson & Meharg, 2023).

The human security perspective is further reflected in contemporary migration governance frameworks that prioritize the protection and well-being of migrants as individuals rather than treating migration solely as a matter of border control. In this regard, the International Organization for Migration's Migration Governance Framework (MIGOF) and Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) provide a useful operationalization of human security principles in the migration context. The framework emphasizes the protection of migrant rights and access to humanitarian assistance, institutional preparedness and whole-of-government approaches to migration governance, as well as regional and international cooperation in crisis management (IOM, 2015: 2019). These dimensions correspond closely to the core assumptions of human security, particularly the protection of individuals from vulnerability, deprivation, and insecurity. Furthermore, by assessing states' capacities to respond to emergencies, coordinate migration policies, and maintain social and institutional resilience during crises, the MGI framework demonstrates that human security extends beyond immediate protection measures and encompasses the broader governance structures required to safeguard individual well-being in situations of large-scale human mobility.

This shift from state-centric to individual-centric security can also be observed in migration governance indicators such as Migrant integration policy index. MIPEX can be interpreted through a human security lens as an indicator of how far states translate formal commitments into the protection of individuals as the primary referent object of security. Serbia (50), Albania (43), and North Macedonia (42–43) are classified as "equality on paper," suggesting that while individual rights are formally recognized,

their implementation remains limited in practice (Migration Policy Group, 2019). Croatia's score of 44 (2023) reflects a similar pattern.[5] These findings indicate that even in states primarily functioning as transit countries, migration governance still reflects uneven institutional capacity to secure individual well-being, reinforcing the gap between formal policy commitments and substantive human security outcomes.

The conceptual tension between securitization theory and human security therefore lies not in whether migration constitutes a form of (in)security, but in how (in)security is defined and whose security is prioritized. While securitization frameworks tend to privilege the protection of the state and its institutional order, human security frameworks prioritize the protection of individuals, particularly those in situations of heightened vulnerability such as refugees and migrants. This divergence has significant analytical implications, as it reveals that security is not a neutral category but a politically contested one shaped by competing normative assumptions about referent objects and appropriate responses to perceived threats.[6] In the case of the Western Balkans during the 2014–2016 migration crisis, migration governance was characterized by the simultaneous operation of securitized and humanitarian rationalities. On the one hand, states engaged in border control practices and cooperation aimed at managing and regulating transnational mobility, reflecting a state-centric understanding of security (Greider, 2017). On the other hand, the scale and visibility of transit migration flows necessitated the implementation of humanitarian measures, including emergency accommodation, transit facilitation, and coordination with international organizations (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2015). As a result, migrants were simultaneously constructed as objects of border governance and as subjects of humanitarian protection.

Building Resilience to Human Security Challenges in the Western Balkans

While the Western Balkans maintained a predominantly humanitarian approach during the peak migration period, this apparent success should be interpreted with cau-

[5] Although Croatia is not part of the Western Balkans (route) and is not a primary focus of this study, its score is included for comparative reference. As an EU member state, Croatia nonetheless records the same score in 2023, suggesting formal equality in indicators despite differing contextual realities. It should also be noted that while the data for Western Balkan countries derive from 2019 reports, the Croatian data are based on 2023 sources.

[6] The interpretation of the border management crisis depends on which referent object is placed at the centre of analysis. If the state is the referent object, migration appears primarily as a security challenge. If the individual (migrant) is the referent object, migration appears primarily as a human security issue requiring protection and assistance.

tion.[7] The region's response was shaped by the fact that most migrants and refugees viewed the Western Balkans as a transit corridor rather than a final destination. Hence, national authorities were primarily confronted with the challenges of registration, temporary accommodation, humanitarian assistance, and border management, rather than the long-term social, economic, and political questions associated with integration and settlement (Sardelić, 2025: 79-84). This raises an important question regarding the sustainability and transferability of the region's response: whether the same level of commitment to human security principles could be maintained under circumstances in which Western Balkan states become destination countries rather than transit countries. The answer to this question remains open and warrants further scholarly attention, particularly in relation to demographic change, labour market needs, and evolving migration patterns across Europe (Nikolić & Maksimović, 2024: 65-83). These issues, however, lie beyond the scope of this paper. The present study focuses on resilience in the Western Balkans, using human security as its central analytical framework, while leaving broader structural questions for future research in the field.

The concept of resilience becomes central to understanding how states in the region adapt to shifting migration patterns. Specifically, rather than focusing exclusively on restrictive security measures, resilience highlights the ability of political, social, and institutional systems to absorb, adapt to, and recover from migration-related pressures (Labarre, Mandalenakis & Niculescu, 2025: 21-39). From a resilience perspective, human security is operationalized through the capacity of multi-level governance systems to protect civilians under conditions of systemic stress, requiring coordinated responses between states, international organizations, and local actors (Atkinson et al., 2022).[8] Resilience is not only observable in the immediate "crisis" response but also in the longer-term institutional adjustments that followed the peak migration period. The border management crisis exposed significant deficiencies in the human, financial, material, and institutional capacities of states along the Western Balkan route (Subotić, 2024). In response, the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) identified key areas requiring improvement, including humanitarian protection, coordinated response mechanisms, and

[7] It should be noted that the Western Balkans as a region cannot be analytically regarded as an unequivocally successful case of migration-crisis management, given the significant variation in national responses, capacities, and levels of regional coordination. Nevertheless, Serbia's response to the humanitarian and operational challenges of the 2014–2016 migration flows has been assessed positively, including by European institutions, particularly with regard to the treatment of migrants and refugees transiting through its territory. For a detailed discussion of regional cooperation and Serbia's role during the crisis, see Vukadinović (2024).

[8] For the purposes of this paper, migrants are operationalized as the primary referent object of human security analysis, understood as civilians in situations of heightened vulnerability arising from forced or irregular mobility.

multi-stakeholder cooperation (UNHCR, 2016). These measures can be understood as efforts to strengthen resilience by enhancing the capacity of states, international organizations, and local communities to anticipate, absorb, and respond to future migration-related pressures. Therefore, resilience emerges not as the absence of vulnerability, but as the development of institutional and cooperative mechanisms capable of managing human security risks more effectively. The emphasis placed on partnership and coordination further reflects the recognition that migration is a transnational phenomenon with political, social, economic, and security implications that cannot be addressed by individual states alone, but require sustained regional and international cooperation. The establishment of coordinated frameworks such as the UNHCR and IOM Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (UNHCR & International Organization for Migration, 2016) reflects the increasing externalization and multi-level governance of migration management in Europe, although such coordination mechanisms have been criticized for operating within fragmented institutional structures and for placing significant pressure on already limited national capacities in transit regions such as the Western Balkans (Potitò, 2026).

Resilience, when viewed through a human security lens, is not limited to institutional robustness but also encompasses the capacity of governance systems to ensure the protection, dignity, and basic needs of affected populations, including migrants and refugees in situations of large-scale mobility. This dual dimension (institutional and normative) captures the core contribution of resilience to human security-oriented migration governance. Initiatives such as the Open Balkan can be understood as attempts to enhance regional coordination and reduce administrative barriers among participating states. Although not explicitly designed as a resilience strategy, such initiatives may nevertheless contribute to resilience-building by strengthening the institutional preconditions for collective action in migration governance.[9] A similar logic of regional interdependence and coordinated governance can be observed in adjacent policy areas, such as ecological diplomacy and the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (Vukadinović, 2025), as well as in energy security and sustainability transitions, where regional cooperation is increasingly framed as a structural requirement for effective policy implementation (Vukadinović, 2026). However, the effectiveness of such initiatives remains contingent on sustained political alignment and consistent implementation across participating states.

[9] Open Balkan is a regional initiative of Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia aimed at facilitating the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, and strengthening regional economic cooperation in line with EU integration processes (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of North Macedonia, n.d.).

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the conceptual framing of the "Migration/Migrant Crisis" in the Western Balkans is analytically significant, and that the formulation of a border management crisis provides a more appropriate lens for understanding the phenomenon. This framing shifts analytical attention away from the politicization of migration flows as a security threat and toward the institutional, governance, and capacity-related dimensions of border management. By contrast, securitized interpretations risk reinforcing a state-centred logic that obscures the structural and operational challenges faced by both the European Union and Western Balkan states during the peak period of 2014–2016. The analysis has further shown that fragmented policy responses and the absence of a coherent EU-wide approach contributed to uneven burden-sharing and reactive national strategies across the region. The paper highlights the need for more systematic and coordinated governance frameworks capable of addressing future migration pressures. Strengthening institutional preparedness and regional cooperation remains essential, particularly in light of the Western Balkans' continued geopolitical relevance as a (transit) space. The study contributes to ongoing debates on migration governance by demonstrating how different conceptual framings shape both policy responses and understandings of responsibility within European migration management. Rather than treating the Western Balkans as a uniform or fully coordinated regional actor, the analysis also acknowledges variation in national responses and institutional capacities, as well as the fact that migration governance was shaped by the region's position as a transit corridor toward European Union destination states. This positionality is crucial for understanding both the scope and the limits of adaptive capacity (resilience) during the crisis period. In line with securitization theory, migration itself is not inherently a security threat; rather, it becomes treated as a security threat when political actors frame it as one through political and discursive processes. From a resilience perspective, the significance of the 2014–2016 migration crisis lies not only in the challenges it generated but also in the lessons it provided for future crisis management.

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11.

Ljubiša Matić[1]

THE INVISIBILITY BARGAIN ON STAGE: THE THEATER AS A NONSTATE SECURITY ACTOR

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Abstract

This presentation interrogates the tension between state-centric border security and the human security of displaced populations by synthesizing two distinct frameworks: the documentary theater of the Italian collective Kepler-452 and Jeffrey Pugh's concept of the "invisibility bargain" (2021). Using the 2024 theater production A Place of Safety –developed after the company embarked on a five-weeks mission by the German NGO Sea-Watch that rescued 156 people – this study explores how nonstate actors (both humanitarian and artistic) function as critical brokers in a landscape of martial law and state indifference. Pugh defines the invisibility bargain as an unwritten contract where migrants are tolerated only as long as they remain socially and politically invisible. We argue that Kepler-452's radical dramaturgical choice to exclude migrants from the stage is a meta-commentary on this bargain. By focusing on the "drowned" and the "rescuers" (the crew), the play refuses to force the "saved" into a "spectacularization of pain." This artistic obliteration mirrors the migrants' survival strategy of invisibility, shielding them from the "pornography of victimhood" while forcing the audience to confront the void left by state-sponsored neglect. In the absence of political will for rescue (the shift from Mare Nostrum to Triton), NGOs have assumed "practical authority." This presentation aligns Pugh's theory of network governance with the reality of Mediterranean SAR operations. When the state defaults on its obligations under UNCLOS Art. 98, a "dense network" of nonstate actors and artistic "mediators" emerges. These actors create an informal governance structure that provides a "place of safety" when the formal state has become an executioner through deliberate obstructionism. Finally, we propose that the theater itself acts as a "broker" in the invisibility bargain. By acting as a "link between that world and ours," the performers use their "rights-based discourse" to make demands on behalf of the invisible. The stage functions as a temporary "informal institution," challenging the militarized Mediterranean and reclaiming the concept of human security from the constraints of national citizenship.

Keywords*: invisibility bargain; nonstate security actors; SAR operations; place of safety; documentary theatre.*

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In his essay *Shipwreck with Spectator* (1979), philosopher Hans Blumenberg explores seafaring as a potent metaphor for the human condition, highlighting the fundamental tension between a perilous sea voyage (evoking danger) and safe observation from solid shores (offering security). From ancient Greece onward, humans rooted on dry land have paradoxically understood their life's journey by absorbing nautical imagery – replete with coasts, islands, storms, lighthouses, and navigational tools – as a primary conceptual framework for the unpredictability and contingency of existence. Blumenberg argues that the spectator's resulting detachment does not simply stem from *Schadenfreude*; rather, witnessing danger from afar allows humans to experience the thrill and tragedy of life while remaining intellectually and emotionally insulated from it. Ultimately, it is this very distance that provides the spectator's solace. Viewed this way, modern society's consumption of arts and media relies on the ability to frame real-world catastrophes as a controllable, safe "spectacle."

Blumenberg's existential metaphorology does not imply a spectacular commodity in the Debordian sense of "the self-portrait of power"[2], nor could he have been compelled to relate scenes of shipwreck to contemporary migrant[3] lives in jeopardy. Indeed, global migration in the late 1970s differed profoundly from today's landscape, characterized by a significantly lower volume of total migrants, rigid Cold War borders, and an analogue regulatory framework. Whereas border control in that era relied heavily on physical paperwork, ink stamps, and localized ledgers – prior to the existence of international security databases – contemporary migration is highly securitized through the use of biometric tracking, facial recognition, satellite surveillance, and digital visa registries. The Central Mediterranean receives particular scrutiny from human rights journalists as the world's deadliest migration route[4], demanding high-profile media coverage of shipwrecks and the operations of European border agencies such as Frontex.

Assuming that the dynamic of the shipwreck and the spectator – wherein the disasters of others are observed from a safe, controlled distance – constitutes humanity's fundamental mechanism for managing existential dread and intellectual curiosity, contemporary politically engaged art faces a new mandate. Confronted by an epistemolog-

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[2] "The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (Debord, 1995, p. 12).

[3] While international law strictly distinguishes between "refugee" and "migrant" statuses, this essay uses the terms interchangeably. This choice reflects the overlapping socio-political realities of mixed migration flows, where individuals share identical transit routes, vulnerabilities, and human rights violations regardless of their eventual legal classification.

[4] Since the onset of the European "Migrant Crisis" in 2014, the Mediterranean Sea crossing has claimed the lives of over 28,000 migrants and refugees. Despite a sharp drop in arrivals, the United Nations' IOM (International Organization for Migration, 2026) reports an unprecedented surge in fatalities, with nearly 1,000 casualties recorded in the first half of 2026 alone.

ical crisis that destabilizes European identity, it is driven to challenge the contemporary human security framework by actively dismantling, within our current era of hypervisibility, the state-controlled spectacle of forsaken migrants left adrift.

While a surge of interdisciplinary scholarship at the intersection of performance and human rights has explored how these practices operate within applied, participatory, and devised theatre, this study investigates how twenty-first-century documentary drama engages this crossover. Specifically, I interrogate this live arts subgenre through the conceptual lens of the recently formulated "invisibility bargain."

Between State-Led Erasure and Hidden Governance Networks

Coined by political scientist Jeffrey Pugh in his eponymous book (2021, p. 32), this framework describes an "informal" and "unwritten" social contract whereby migrants' physical presence is tolerated on the condition that they meet three key expectations: "valued contribution," whereby migrants must be perceived as providing economic or other socially valued benefits to the host society; "social invisibility," requiring them to minimize visible cultural and social differences that challenge host society norms; and "political invisibility," meaning they should refrain from overt political activism or claim-making that contests the host country's authority.

Crucially, Pugh's analysis extends beyond mere categorization to offer a structural critique of how this asymmetric framework systematically disadvantages forced migrants. He argues that this imposed survival strategy not only "constrains migrants' identities" (2018, p. 978) but also locks them into a state of protracted precarity to evade deportation or systemic violence. Consequently, this bargain remains inherently unstable and hazardous; if a migrant population becomes overly visible – or if a newer, more prominent demographic wave arrives, such as the influx of Venezuelans alongside Colombians in Ecuador – host-nation tolerance precipitously erodes, triggering acute xenophobia and discrimination.

In response to these systemic vulnerabilities, migrants operate within a constellation defined by a stark bifurcation: assimilate and obfuscate cultural difference to evade sanctions, or assert their identity at the risk of open conflict. To navigate this tension, they negotiate integration at an everyday, sub-national level, largely bypassing formal state apparatuses. This localized negotiation is vividly illustrated in Ecuador – Pugh's primary empirical focus. While the country features highly progressive *de jure* structures, including the pathbreaking constitutional recognition of universal citizenship, persistent governance deficits outside major urban centers undermine effective security enforcement. Hence, decentralized, nonstate actor networks step in to mitigate these institutional gaps, fostering a degree of localized human security and peace that outpaces the host nation's centralized resource constraints.

Expanding on this dynamic, Pugh (2021, Chapter 4) demonstrates that network density and diversity offer far greater explanatory power for migrant human security than state capacity or economic development alone. His core insight is that relational web-building – across both social and institutional registers – is foundational to integration. While validating these governance constellations as essential mechanisms for protecting displaced populations, Pugh introduces a crucial caveat: his endorsement is balanced by a rigorous critique of the restrictive geopolitical conditions that necessitate such alliances in the first place. He illustrates how dense, heterogeneous coalitions of state and nonstate actors – encompassing non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), international bodies, and grassroots advocates – safeguard migrants more effectively than centralized state apparatuses. Where institutional support is absent, this collaborative patchwork constructs a vital safety net, successfully delivering rights and resources through informal, low-profile channels.

Rather than operating within visible arenas of formal legislative debate or strict administrative protocols, these governance networks function discreetly to maintain systemic stability. Their operations depend heavily on uncodified relationships, backchannel negotiations, and consensus-building rather than transparent, bureaucratic mechanisms. Because highly visible political actions – such as marches or protests – have historically resulted in deportation, state violence, and negative media framing, Pugh shows that the informal, low-profile nature of these webs is distinctly advantageous. He highlights that migrants "were more likely to seek out the governance network when they felt unsafe, but to do so by approaching nonstate organizations as their entry point" (2021, p. 99). By extension, these informal structures enable actors to bypass political hostility and safely protect marginalized populations.

While Pugh theorizes these dynamics within the context of South–South migration, this framework can be productively transposed to the European border regime. Here, the treacherous Mediterranean crossing serves as an equally grim prelude to the "invisibility bargain" that awaits displaced populations upon arrival in highly institutionalized host countries with robust law enforcement capabilities. By relying on covert, self-organized, or smuggler-facilitated maritime transit and attempting to circumvent borders without leaving digital traces, asylum seekers at the European Union's southern maritime frontier actively self-censor, complying *ex ante* with the structural demand to exist under the radar. As a result, the Central Mediterranean has evolved into a hyper-militarized space, where a *de facto* state of exception – aimed at repressing irregular mobility – horoughly permeates international operational agreements.

This state of exception is clearly manifested in the shifting policy landscape of the Central Mediterranean. Over the last decade, following the termination of Operation Mare Nostrum (2013–2014), the Italian state's approach to search-and-rescue (SAR) has transitioned from proactive, state-led humanitarianism to a restrictive policy frame-

work defined by border externalization, systematic bureaucratic obstruction, and the criminalization of civil society efforts – a shift enacted in direct contravention of Article 98 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which establishes an international obligation to rescue persons in distress. Through the Italy–Libya Memorandum (2017), Italy initiated the financing and training of the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept migrant vessels prior to their entry into international or European waters. This legislative curtailment of NGO operations was subsequently institutionalized by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's administration. Under the pretext of mitigating an alleged "pull-factor," the state enacted the Piantedosi Decree (2023), which obstructs maritime rescues through three primary mechanisms: levying punitive administrative fines and vessel impoundments; legally mandating that ships return to port immediately following a single rescue operation; and deliberately assigning distant disembarkation destinations in Central or Northern Italy. This latter tactic forces traumatized survivors to endure up to five days of prolonged transit across rough waters, effectively removing rescue assets from active migration corridors for weeks at a time. The subsequent Decreto Flussi (2024) expanded this restrictive apparatus to the skies, severely constraining civilian aerial monitoring designed to locate distressed vessels.

By design, these state-led interventions target more than just physical logistics; they achieve a deeper structural objective. Because humanitarian actors do not merely preserve life but actively document human rights violations, illegal pushbacks, and maritime disasters, the physical eviction of NGO vessels and aircraft creates an unmonitored maritime zone devoid of independent witnesses. This systemic erasure remains largely obscured within public and media discourses, which systematically omit the fact that the operational footprint of humanitarian groups has been severely marginalized. Indeed, as Paynter (2025, p. 99) observes, "up to 80% of rescues are instead carried out by Italian authorities."

Kepler-452's Ethics of Absence

It is within this hostile socio-political and humanitarian landscape that the Bologna-based theatre collective Kepler-452 developed a production whose auto-reflexive title destabilizes the very concept it names: *A Place of Safety. Viaggio nel Mediterraneo centrale*[5]. In maritime law, a "place of safety" is a precise technical and legal designation denoting a secure harbor assigned by state authorities to NGOs – a location where a rescue operation is formally concluded and survivors' lives are no longer in jeopardy. However, the production subverts this institutional definition. As the company

[5] The production premiered in February 2025 at the Arena del Sole in Bologna. It was co-produced by Emilia Romagna Teatro, Teatro Metastasio of Prato, Centro Sperimentale Spettacolo Teatro Stabile di Innovazione del Friuli Venezia Giulia of Udine, and Théâtre des 13 vents CDN of Montpellier, France.

notes, the work constitutes "the story of the encounter between a theatre company and a group of people who have chosen to dedicate part of their lives to rescue at sea" (Kepler, 2024), shifting the phrase from an administrative endpoint to an ongoing site of ethical and human engagement. On one hand, the title functions performatively, forcing the spectators to interrogate whether such a sanctuary can truly exist within the modern border regime. On the other hand, it directs Pascal's Wager (*Vous êtes embarqué.*) directly at them, driving them to realize that they themselves cannot be provided a safe haven in that distant, plush, red velour theatre seat. Living, in itself, means "already being on the high seas, where there is no outcome other than being saved or going down, and no possibility of abstention" (Blumenberg, p. 19).

To ground this philosophical stance in empirical reality, the production's structural backbone and script derive from extensive field research conducted by directors and dramaturgs Enrico Baraldi and Nicola Borghesi in the summer of 2024. Following a research residency and interviews with NGOs (such as Sea-Watch and Emergency[6]) in Lampedusa, the artists embedded themselves aboard the *Sea-Watch 5* vessel during a central Mediterranean SAR mission. Over nearly five weeks of navigation, the crew rescued 156 individuals in distress, who subsequently disembarked at the port of La Spezia. The artists synthesized the resultant experiential, audiovisual, and narrative material to construct the documentary framework of their performance.

The translation of this maritime fieldwork into a performance text begins with a striking spatial arrangement. In the opening sequence, a pile of red life jackets scattered across the stage floor immerses the spectator in the isolation of the high seas. The long hull of the boat, positioned astride the stage, soon transforms into a screen for projecting infographics and images collected by the cast/crew on the journey. Only a few more scenographic touches interspersed throughout the show animate the sets designed by Alberto Favretto: a ramp for the gangway, a riser for the deck, a fly platform from the ceiling for the forecastle, and a rolling stage platform for a RHIB (rigid-hulled inflatable boat).

Populating this spare architectural landscape, the ensemble addresses the audience not as conventional actors, but as direct witnesses to the crisis. This cast comprises six individuals, including Miguel Duarte, a Portuguese mathematical physicist and former

[6] Sea-Watch is a German non-profit organization focused specifically on civil SAR operations for refugees and migrants in the Central Mediterranean Sea. They operate ships (like *Sea-Watch 5* and *Aurora*) and reconnaissance aircraft to spot, assist, and rescue people in distress while documenting human rights violations at Europe's external borders. Emergency is an international humanitarian NGO founded in Italy in 1994, dedicated to providing free, high-quality medical and surgical care to victims of war, landmines, and poverty. They build and manage hospitals, surgical centers, pediatric and maternity clinics, and rehabilitation facilities in conflict zones across more than twenty countries. They heavily focus on training local staff so their medical facilities eventually become self-sustaining. While their primary focus is medical care on land, Emergency also carries out SAR missions in the Mediterranean Sea aboard their ship, *Life Support*.

head of mission for *Iuventa*. In 2024, Duarte and nine other humanitarian workers risked up to twenty years in prison after being accused of "aiding and abetting illegal immigration" by the Italian Government. The remaining cast members include Flavio Catalano, a former submarine technical officer in the Italian Navy and current deck team leader for *Life Support*; Giorgia Linardi, a jurist specializing in International Law and Sea-Watch spokesperson; Floriana Pati, an emergency nurse specializing in Global Health at *Life Support*; and José Ricardo Peña, a Texan electrician for Sea-Watch. Peña, the son of Mexican immigrants, positions himself as the "ship's clown" to alleviate the all-embracing suffering on board. The sixth and final crewmate is Nicola Borghesi, one of the production's co-directors.

Lest there be any doubt: no migrant participated in the creation of the production. "After completing the mission," as Baraldi (quoted in De Sanctis, 2025) explains why the actors aren't refugees, but rather rescue operators, "Nicola and I wondered whether to tell the story of a migrant who survived or who lost his life at sea. But at a certain point, we realized that once again we were choosing, and it felt like a huge injustice, a form of power we didn't want to exert." Both critical and popular audiences have generally approved of this decision to exclude migrant presence; the alternative would not only invite paternalistic gestures but also reflect what both opposing sides of the political spectrum label "pornography of pain."

Thus, ploughing the waves before the spectators are the real people who, unlike the audience, have seen it all. The ones who have, regardless, not yet acceded to the invisibility bargain, and who oppose this obscuration at the bargain's most existentially urgent juncture. Be that as it may, their multilingual lines suggest they are frequently affected by what might be termed impostor syndrome. This stems either from the scale of the humanitarian crisis dwarfing their individual capabilities – leaving them feeling inadequate despite their life-saving efforts – or from an internal conflict over whether their presence empowers refugees or perpetuates a "white savior" complex, causing them to question their true motives. Most devastatingly, when thrust into high-stakes triages or the trauma of bearing witness to mass drownings while surviving unscathed, they feel as though they are "faking" expertise in disaster response. Although one of the merits of *A Place of Safety* lies in its rehabilitation of NGOs from the vilifying political discourse of both governments and the public – where they are smeared as "human traffickers," "pirates," "smugglers," and "taxisti del mare" – their actual performances ultimately divest them of hero status.

In mapping this psychological weight, the 110-minute performance archives an array of their visceral anxieties: a failed cardiac resuscitation that leaves the rescuer with the charred remains of a young woman destined to become an anonymous casualty bereft of history, or the pungent distress of those gone astray at sea. Yet, what ultimately dominates the dramaturgy is the meticulous replication of operational workflows. The

script privileges institutional choreography: psychological screenings prior to boarding, routine team briefings, mandatory protocols, and the tactical detection of compromised vessels. These procedural structures give way to idle intervals heavy with personal reflection, before pulsing with a farewell party prior to disembarkation into a port whose bright lights shock eyes unaccustomed to the glare.

De-skilling of the Documentary Stage

As previously signaled by the crew's presence, the collective's work rejects conventional theatrical labor; rather than relying solely on professional actors, Kepler-452's preferred staging model involves embedding real-life subjects on stage, whom they refer to as *attori-mondo* (world-actors). For example, in *Il giardino dei ciliegi* (The Cherry Orchard, 2018), they cast actual victims of evictions from Bologna city council free-concession housing, a method mirrored when working with striking auto plant workers from Florence's GKN collective for *Il Capitale* (Das Kapital, 2022). However, in the context of documentary theatre, the invisibilization of migrants in *A Place of Safety* emerges as a rare and strikingly distinct strategy.

To contextualize this distinct aesthetic choice, it is necessary to consider how the genre functions as a tool for re-interrogating justice, revising historical narratives, and fostering political dialogue. It often mimics legal trials, relying on actors to act as "witnesses" delivering conflicting testimonies. Performance studies scholar Carol Martin uses the phrase "bodies of evidence" to highlight two specific layers of meaning in this theatrical form. On one hand, it encompasses the literal documents, audio transcripts, diary entries, emails, news reports, and other archival materials that a documentary theatre play is built upon. On the other hand, it represents the physical, breathing presence of the performer who brings these documents to life, transforming static data into a living, emotive, and visceral experience. As Martin observes, "Documentary theatre is an imperfect answer that needs our obsessive analytical attention especially since, in ways unlike any other form of theatre, it claims to have bodies of evidence" (2006, p. 15). Stressing the idea that all evidence in theatre is inherently curated, edited, and performed, Martin warns that because documentary theatre presents itself as possessing evidentiary, factual authority, it requires constant critical engagement from audiences. This allows spectators to distinguish between the unvarnished reality of actual events and the subjective choices of playwrights and directors.

As a direct consequence of this evidentiary framing, the ontological status of the performer becomes a dual site of evidence; here, the performers exist on stage simultaneously as themselves and as dramatic characters, both living in the present moment, whereas "[t]he absent, unavailable, dead, and disappeared make an appearance by means of surrogation" (Martin 2006, p. 10). In *A Place of Safety*, however, this col-

lection of bodies does not get surrogated: from within a sea of imperception with which the play engulfs the spectators, they are tasked with disentangling, throughout the performance, the presence and identities of those who concede to remain invisible at the cost of death.

Operating as an *attore-mondo*, the individual conversely brings a presence to the stage that is inextricably bound to their socio-economic background. When a theater company places a factory worker or a shelter resident under the spotlight, these individuals present more than just a character; they physically embody an entire social reality. Their bodily comportment, accent, sociolect, and posture construct a lived authenticity that a trained actor enacting a role cannot replicate. Because theater audiences predominantly occupy a specific cultural and social stratum, this integration of the *attori-mondo* intrudes upon the performance space with unfiltered fragments of the external world, thereby compelling the audience to confront a reality from which they usually avert their gaze.

Of even greater critical significance, the rescue specialists' lack of formal theatrical training disrupts the assertive authorial coherence of traditional stagecraft[7]. A similar divergence occurs regarding the performers' actual expertise in boat handling, humanitarian law compliance, or mass casualty triage.[8] The primary casting criterion during field interviews was to construct a representation of maritime missions that is "as multifaceted and diverse as possible" (Enrico Baraldi, quoted in Ringozzi, 2025). Nonetheless, the mutual rejection of established theatrical techniques and professional virtuosity bespeaks the project's informal, networked architecture as well as its despectacularized aesthetic.

This commitment to an unadorned presentation manifests directly in how the narrative is delivered; the metatheatrical account of how a troupe approaches the world of sea rescue to frame it in a production is reported here with clarity and simplicity,

[7] The concept was heavily inspired by the German theatre collective Rimini Protokoll, who pioneered using non-professionals and labeled them *Experten des Alltags* ("Experts of Everyday Life"). As performance theorist Florian Malzacher writes, "A Rimini performance is never perfect, nor should it be. At the point where the performers become practiced enough to feel secure, begin to build their roles and to act, the piece loses more than just its charm. Insecurity and fragility are the defining moments of what is understood by many to be authenticity. Yet such moments where timing, tension, empathy and presence disappear are also agonising. [... Y]ou feel uncomfortable as an audience member. You suffer too for a moment, feel embarrassed or touched by the efforts of performers who cannot protect themselves through acquired techniques" (Malzacher, 2008, p. 27).

[8] When an ensemble member requires replacement during a commitment-heavy production run, the company calls upon actors, playwrights, or activists to act as standbys. Rather than functioning merely as temporary replacements, these artists frame their participation as an act of political solidarity, identifying themselves not as understudies, but as accomplices who recognize their presence as a deliberate political gesture.

avoiding heavy blocking or indulging in pathos even during highly emotional moments. It is as though the production goes to great lengths to prevent the audience from visualizing the shipwreck or the agonizing faces of the drowned, thereby stripping them of easy, morally outsourced relief.

Disrupting the Border Spectacle

Synthesizing these performance strategies, I contend that Kepler-452's staging of the "invisibility bargain" functions as live theatre's response to a recent proliferation of media and academic conceptualizations that view the border as theatre – or, more precisely, as a Debordian spectacle. Sociocultural anthropologist Nicholas De Genova was among the first to argue that state borders are not passive lines, but active, theatrical sites of enforcement. "It is precisely 'the Border'," he elucidated, "that provides the exemplary theater for staging the spectacle of 'the illegal alien' that the law produces" (2002, p. 436). A decade later, De Genova demonstrated that it is not only migrants who become invisibilized in this process (2013, p. 1185). The spectacle of enforcement demands that the law itself remain elusive and invisible while producing and naturalizing migrant illegality:

> If the Border Spectacle supplies a scene of ostensible 'exclusion' – indeed, if it fashions 'the' border as a veritable *mise-en-scène* of the larger dramaturgy of migration as a site of transgression and the reaction formations of (law) 'enforcement' – it nonetheless conceals (in plain view, as it were) the public secret of a sustained recruitment of 'illegal' migrants as undocumented labour. (2013, p. 1185)

Deploying a deliberate wordplay on the theatrical notion of the "off-stage," De Genova conceptualizes the dynamic as the "obscene of inclusion" – a phenomenon wherein the very political and legal campaigns that claim to exclude these individuals are precisely what enable their inclusion as subjugated laborers.

Extending this theatrical paradigm to the level of spatial configuration, human geographer Paolo Cuttitta emphasizes how specific geographic sites are actively constructed into physical theaters. Specifically, he demonstrates how immigration control policies have intensified the island of Lampedusa's border character (its "borderness") through a long process of "borderization" and simultaneous spectacularization (2014, p. 203). Cuttitta breaks down the historical evolution of immigration control on Lampedusa (2004–2012) into five chronological acts of the "border play," each of which is characterized by distinct political goals, key actions, dominant thematic focuses, and scenic designs (2014, pp. 207–210). He argues that the state oscillates between two seemingly conflicting but mutually reinforcing scripts: the securitized narrative of the "tough" border and the humanitarian narrative of the "humane" border. These scripts feed into a self-perpetuating cycle, utilized simultaneously by the state to achieve its ultimate goal: controlling and sorting human mobility without sacrificing political legitimacy.

More recently, border criminologist Katja Franko challenges the notion of a seamless merger between policing and humanitarianism. She argues that the border spectacle is not merely a tool for states to perform power for citizens; rather, it is a contested public stage where nonstate actors also build authority. When NGOs step into the Mediterranean to rescue migrants independently, they wrest away a core pillar of state sovereignty. Through a textual and visual analysis of communications from Frontex (the EU Border Agency) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Franko demonstrates that Frontex imagery avoids showing migrants' faces, aligning with a strategy of depersonalization and denial. Conversely, MSF leverages what Franko terms a "principled authority" (2021, p. 381), broadcasting visceral images of migrant suffering and death – often utilizing direct eye contact to engage the viewer ethically and emotionally. In doing so, MSF visually shames European states, exposing the moral corruption and human cost of restrictive border policies. In the final analysis, the border emerges as a fragmented "theater of sovereignty" where state actors and humanitarian organizations vie to control the narrative of European values.

Finally, legal scholar Anne Neylon critiques the simplistic dichotomy of hypervisibility and invisibility, arguing instead that they coexist and interact simultaneously. This dynamic is shaped strongly by the "spectacle of deterrence," which relies on communicating "necessary suffering" to present asylum seekers as deserving of poor treatment to discourage others from attempting entry (2025, p. 4). The creation of "spectacular law" (p. 24) occurs when the political and media spectacle surrounding migration overshadows constitutional principles and international legal commitments, resulting in "[t]he flattening of the law to [...] specific imaginary tropes" (p. 25); consequently, disentangling law from imagery becomes increasingly difficult. In addition, Neylon suggests that the shift from hyper- to invisibility is "more pendulous than has been accounted for" (p. 6). This pendulum-like oscillation means the state does not simply move asylum seekers from hypervisible arrival to invisibility in a fixed, linear manner. Significantly, these shifts are inherently unstable, variable, and cyclical; they operate on an *ad hoc*, context-dependent basis, meaning asylum seekers are repeatedly pulled into the visible spectacle or pushed out of view based on political decisions, legal shifts, media framing, and public reaction.

When mapped onto Kepler-452's production, this unstable visibility dynamic manifests as a form of artistic subversion. Without violating the invisibility bargain – a mechanism maintained lest host society backlash be triggered – the unseen migrant characters in *A Place of Safety* are rerouted or – to borrow the Situationist vocabulary – subjected to *détournement* from flat images of "threats," "victims," "legals," or "illegals." In this regard, Baraldi and Borghesi's production exemplifies the "border counter-spectacle," which has been framed as "practices that take on border spectacle directly and thereby create an alternative point of focus" (Negrón-Gonzales, p. 94).

In terms of immediate stage practice, this theatrical intervention manifests along two distinct registers. On the one hand, by dismantling the spectator's perspective on the

migrants' material humanity, and on the other, by establishing a counternarrative focused on relational networks between theatremakers and nonstate rescue entities, the work portrays the emotional and psychological realities of displacement to evoke solidarity rather than pity. This on-stage representational refusal – which stands in stark contrast to the persuasive aestheticization of trauma upon which legal survival depends within the state's asylum process – is critical to fostering solidarity among spectators because it de-emphasizes the migrants' bureaucratic identity as asylum seekers. In the context of migration governance networks that states have been forced to shift to, Pugh emphasizes that "practical authority" is anchored in "informal institutions, flexible networks, and personal relationships more than formal institutional mandates and legal jurisdiction" (2021, p. 231). This concept originates in the work of political scientists Rebecca Abers and Margaret Keck (2013, p. 7), who observe: "Practical authority is a kind of power in which the capabilities to solve problems and recognition by others allows an actor to make decisions that others follow."

If, then, one views *A Place of Safety* not merely as an artwork but also as an informal institution that facilitates and articulates the political agency of migrants, it becomes evident that it is live theatre's capacity to generate new affective registers within the spectator's imagination, while simultaneously leveraging social capital, which integrates the staff members of media-stigmatized NGOs into Kepler-452's innovative practice. Conversely, the influence and authority of civil SAR actors over theatremakers and spectators were generated and exercised through their ability to witness, document, and manage migrants' harm. As Pugh instructs, the denser and more diverse the networks of such coalitions, the better the outcomes for migrants and their neighbors, regardless of state efforts or the economic conditions of the receiving community. Kepler-452's subversive counter-spectacle is, admittedly, unlikely to directly precipitate institutional policy reforms; nevertheless, its efficacy in destabilizing border spectacles must be evaluated across an extended temporal framework.[9]

Beyond the scope of a single production, bridging the disciplines of security studies and performance theory reveals a mutual oversight; migration studies rarely address how aesthetic performance and other artistic practices function as institutional brokers or access points that enhance human security. Viewed from the reverse perspective, this

[9] This slow-burning subversion highlights a distinct structural paradox: a production born from an alliance subverting official state policies is underscored by the troupe's deep institutional integration. Despite its identity as an independent, grassroots collective, the group founded in 2015 operates with substantial institutional backing; since 2018, its repertoire has been regularly produced by the Emilia Romagna Teatro Fondazione – one of Italy's premier public National Theatres – and subsidized by EU cultural funds. This institutional legitimacy culminated in 2025, when A Place of Safety received two of Italy's highest theatrical honors: the critic-led Premio UBU for best production, and the industry-voted Le Maschere del Teatro for best new play. Following this latter achievement, the creators were even formally received by the President of the Republic at the Quirinale Palace. Ultimately, when coupled with major international festival partnerships, these institutional lifelines have enabled this artivist production to circulate throughout the European Union.

framework – with its focus on individuality and empowerment – presents contemporary cosmopolitan theatre with the challenges of live representation of asylum seekers. Navigating social expectations around the invisibility bargain, productions must grapple with questions of whether involving real refugees on stage creates an ethical dilemma of exploitation or empowers those represented. In the perpetual struggle over migratory optics in a securitized asylum framework, artists continuously shift between "giving voice" to migrants as anonymized masses (through masks, veils, negative space, or a total caesura of representation) and "displaying" them as humanized, embodied individuals with ethically charged faces and agency. To invoke Neylon's qualification, this choice must remain as context-dependent as the state's own maneuvering of migrant hypervisibility and invisibility – a constant, "pendulous" oscillation.

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Figure 1.

Migrant Presence Excluded: Director Nicola Borghesi on stage in Kepler-452's *A Place of Safety* (2025) © Luca Del Pia

Figure 2.

Sea Rescuers-cum-Actors: Miguel Duarte, José Ricardo Peña, Flavio Catalano, Giorgia Linardi, and Floriana Pati in Kepler-452's *A Place of Safety* (2025) © Luca Del Pia

Figure 3.

Despectacularized Aesthetic: Nicola Borghesi, José Ricardo Peña, Floriana Pati, Miguel Duarte, Giorgia Linardi, and Flavio Catalano in Kepler-452's *A Place of Safety* (2025) © Luca Del Pia

12.

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HUMAN SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION DYNAMICS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A DYNAMIC PANEL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This paper investigates how human security influences international migration in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Despite an expanding body of literature on African migration, empirical studies often remain narrowly focused on economic factors, neglecting the broader structural insecurities that shape mobility. To bridge this gap, the paper incorporates a human security framework encompassing political, environmental, economic, and food security dimensions into a dynamic panel analysis of 34 SSA countries from 2006 to 2021. The research utilises secondary data from various international sources and databases. Using the System Generalised Method of Moments (System GMM) framework, which accounts for endogeneity, reverse causality, cross-country heterogeneity, and the persistence of migration, our results indicate that international migration in SSA is highly persistent, with strong network effects shaping migration patterns. Several human security indicators markedly influence migration flows. Political security indicators – such as political stability and conflict-related fatalities – significantly increase migration. Environmental factors, such as climate vulnerability, have a significant positive effect on migration, while the Standardised Precipitation Evaporation Index (SPEI) decreases migration, suggesting that drier climatic conditions correlate with increased migration flows. Economic security, represented by GDP per capita, also boosts migration, as do higher urbanisation levels. Food security indicators – food production and undernourishment – are linked to increased migration. This paper contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive

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and robust empirical analysis of the relationship between human security and migration, highlighting that policy actions should integrate political stability, climate resilience, and improvements in food and economic security to address the root causes of migration.

***Keywords**: Human Security; International Migration; System GMM; Sub-Saharan Africa; Migration Persistence*

Introduction

The concept of human security marks a fundamental paradigm shift in how security is understood in policy discourse. Conventionally, security had been conceived almost exclusively in state-centric terms – focused on territorial integrity, military power, and the protection of nation-state borders from external threats (Wolfers, 1952; Nye & Lynn-Jones, 1988). This orthodox conception treated individuals and communities as subordinate to the state's overarching security interests. In the past couple of decades, new forms of threats have emerged – hunger, environmental degradation, ethnic conflict, economic deprivation, and political repression –which render millions of people deeply insecure not through inter-state wars but through failures of governance, development, and global economic inequality (Vietti & Scribner, 2013; Sirkeci, 2008).

In this context, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced human security as a new organising framework for thinking about security at the individual rather than the state level in 1994 (UNDP, 1994). The UNDP (1994) defined human security as the condition of being free from two foundational threats: freedom from fear – protection from violent, physical, and political threats – and freedom from want – freedom from deprivation, disease, poverty, and hunger. This definition was deliberately people-centred, arguing that states exist to serve people's security, not the other way around (Estrada-Tanck, 2012; Gasper & Sinatti, 2016).

The UNDP (1994) introduced a multidimensional conceptualisation of human security comprising seven distinct domains including economic security, ensuring basic income and livelihoods; food security, involving access to adequate nutrition; health security, including freedom from disease; environmental security, encompassing access to clean water, air, and a non-degraded natural environment; personal security, covering protection from physical violence; community security, protecting cultural identity and social belonging; and political security, guaranteeing fundamental human rights and freedoms. These dimensions are deeply interconnected because degradation in one domain tends to compound insecurities in others, creating cascading vulnerabilities that frequently culminate in involuntary displacement and migration (Terminski, 2012; Arafa, 2023). Individuals migrate not only to escape physical danger but also because insecurity across economic, environmental, food, and political domains renders their home environments untenable (Vietti & Scribner, 2013; Gasper & Sinatti, 2016).

International migration remains a major socio-economic shift in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where movement increasingly reflects responses to intricate and interconnected insecurities. While economic inequalities and labour market dynamics have traditionally been viewed as significant influences on migration, recent findings indicate that migration choices in SSA are heavily shaped by various aspects of human insecurity, such as environmental disturbances, poor governance, persistent poverty, and food system instability (Wolde et al., 2023; Williams, 2024). Increasing climate variability, internal strife, and unstable livelihoods persistently undermine well-being across the region, fostering conditions in which mobility becomes a survival tactic rather than merely an economic option (International Organisation for Migration, 2024). These realities highlight the need to reassess migration from a human security perspective that accounts for the complex, interconnected vulnerabilities that shape mobility.

The migration–human security nexus has attracted substantial scholarly attention since the early 2000s. Vietti and Scribner (2013) argued that a human security framework offers a more effective analytical approach to understanding the root causes of mass migration than state-centric security models, which tend to frame migrants as threats rather than as people responding to threats. Gasper and Sinatti (2016) similarly argued that a human security approach is migrant- and person-centred, systematically investigating the vulnerabilities and opportunities of individuals as complex social actors rather than reducing them to statistical flows. Purkayastha (2018) extended this framework to encompass glocal terrains of migration – the intersection of global structural forces, national policies, and local conditions – arguing that questions of migrants' human security cannot be understood without integrating insights across international migration, internal migration, and forced displacement.

Although migration research has grown in recent years, significant theoretical and practical gaps persist. A substantial portion of the literature continues to emphasise narrow economic interpretations, often overlooking the structural vulnerabilities that shape cross-border movement. Current studies frequently rely on isolated, single-factor analyses, focusing, for instance, solely on climate fluctuations or conflict, without considering how various insecurities interact to influence migration (Wolde et al., 2023; Aurélien & Marthe, 2026). Moreover, SSA is underrepresented in empirical studies that consistently incorporate human security into migration analysis, despite the region's significant exposure to political instability, food insecurity, and climate-related disruptions (Williams, 2024). This creates a significant gap in understanding how multidimensional insecurity shapes mobility trends in a region that will remain vital to global migration patterns in the decades ahead.

This research seeks to address these gaps by empirically integrating the human security framework into the study of international migration in SSA. It examines five key research questions on how economic insecurity, food insecurity, political instability, en-

vironmental vulnerability, and ongoing migration shape international migration patterns in SSA. To do so, the study incorporates the human security framework into empirical migration analysis and utilises a dynamic panel approach to assess how different forms of insecurity influence these patterns. By analysing the interactions among these factors, the research aims to provide deeper, evidence-based insight into the causes of migration.

Specifically, the research aims to respond to these questions:

(1) To what extent does economic insecurity influence international migration flows in sub-Saharan Africa?

(2) How does food insecurity affect migration dynamics across the region?

(3) What role does political instability, including conflict and weak governance, play in shaping migration decisions?

(4) Do environmental vulnerabilities, particularly climate risks and natural disasters, significantly influence migration behaviour?

(5) To what extent do past migration patterns and network effects contribute to the persistence of migration flows in SSA?

The research offers numerous important contributions to the existing literature. First and foremost, it enhances conceptual understanding by integrating a comprehensive human security framework, shifting away from economic-focused methods towards empirical migration analysis in SSA (Mnisi et al., 2024). Secondly, the research utilises a dynamic panel econometric approach using the System Generalised Method of Moments (System GMM), a technique adept at addressing endogeneity, reverse causality, and continuity in migration trends (Maket et al., 2023; Vossen, 2026). Third, the study provides region-specific empirical data for SSA, a region where migration is closely linked to structural insecurities yet remains under-researched (International Organisation for Migration, 2024). Fourth, the results will guide policy by pinpointing which aspects of insecurity most significantly affect migration choices, aiding the creation of cohesive migration, development, and human security approaches. Ultimately, this study lays the groundwork for future comparative research in other areas experiencing similar insecurities by creating an analytical framework that addresses the human security–migration connection (Kanga et al., 2024). The research enhances comprehension of migration patterns in sub-Saharan Africa by centring human security within migration studies and utilising robust empirical techniques to shed light on the foundational factors driving mobility.

Methodology

Data and Description of Variables

The study focused on Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper used data from thirty-four (34) countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (see Figure 1) covering a period of sixteen years

(2006 – 2021). Data on the variables used in this research were sourced from the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, the World Bank Group's World Development Indicators, the Kaggle database, the World Bank Group's Environmental, Social and Governance Database, and Our World in Data (see Table 1), all of which are publicly available on the respective organisations' websites.

The selection of 34 countries is primarily based on the availability and adequacy of data for all variables included in the study. Countries with substantial missing data were excluded to ensure the robustness of the panel dataset. The period 2006 to 2021 was chosen because it offers relatively complete and available data across the study variables and captures important phases in Africa's conflict and security landscape, including the rise of non-state armed groups.

Figure 1. *Map of Africa showing countries studied*

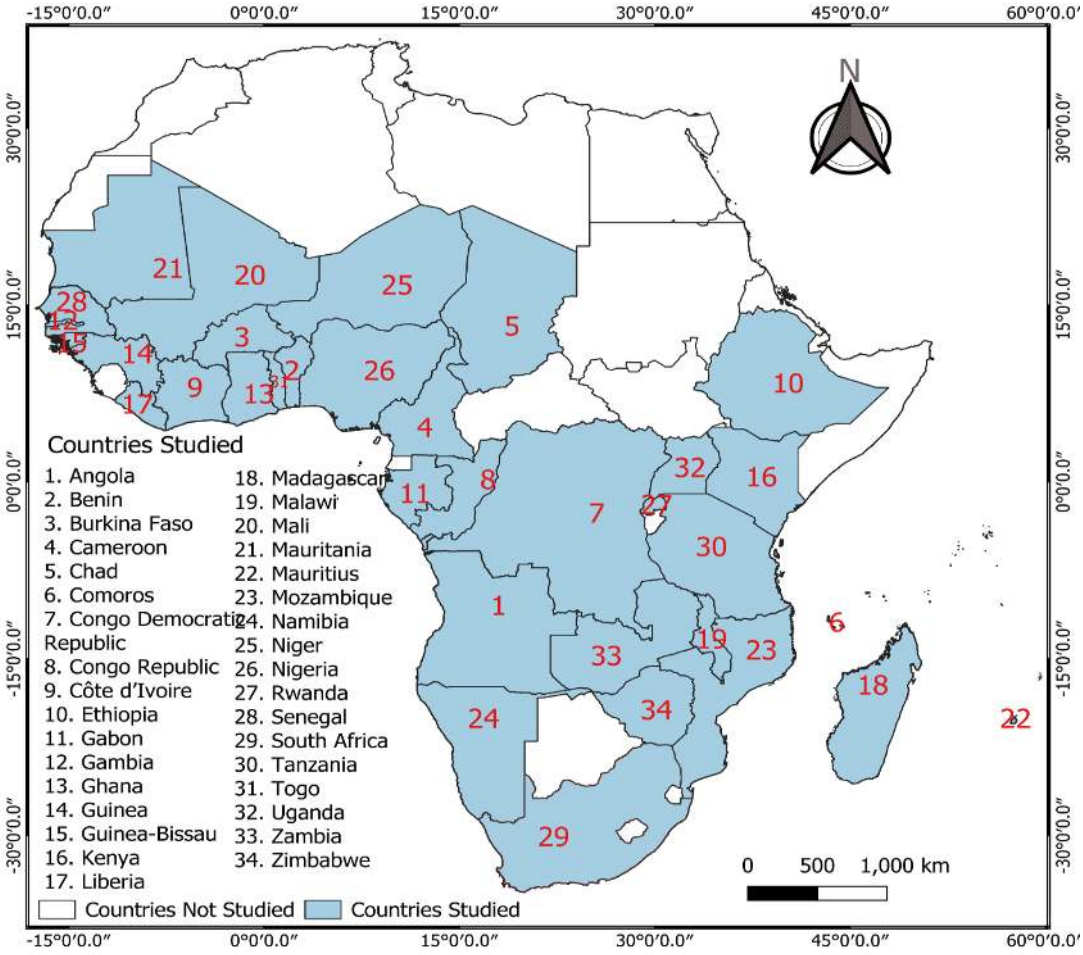

Table 1. *Description of the variables*

Variables	Data Source	Link
Net Migration (number)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#
Rule of Law (number of sources)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#
Government Effectiveness (number of sources)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#
Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (number of sources)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#
Deaths in ongoing conflicts in a country (best estimate) - Conflict type: all (number)	Kaggle database	https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/saurabhbadole/countries-in-conflict-dataset
Standardised Precipitation-Evapotranspiration Index (Proxy for Drought)	Environment, Social and Governance Database of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/environment-social-and-governance-(esg)-data/Series/EN.CLC.SPEI.XD
Vulnerability score	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative	https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/download-data/
Annual temperature anomalies	Our World in Data	https://archive.ourworldindata.org/20260309-085120/grapher/annual-temperature-anomalies.html
GDP per capita (current US$)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#
Unemployment, total (% of total labour force) (modelled ILO estimate)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#
Prevalence of undernourishment (% of population)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#
Food production index (2014-2016 = 100)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#
Urban population (% of total population)	World Development Indicators of the World Bank Group	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#

Analytical Approach

The static model is as follows in equation 1:
MIG
=f(RULE,GOVT,POLS,CONF,TEMP,SPEI,VUL,GDP,UNEMP,URBAN,
FOOD,UNDER) (1)
Where:
MIG = Net Migration (Number of persons)
RULE = Rule of law (Number of sources)
GOVT = Government Effectiveness (Number of sources)
POLS = Political Stability (Number of sources)
CONF = Deaths arising from Conflicts (Number)
SPEI = Standardised Precipitation-Evapotranspiration Index
VUL = Vulnerability score
TEMP = Annual temperature anomalies
GDP = GDP per capita (current US$)
UNEMP = Unemployment, total (% of total labour force) (modelled ILO estimate)
UNDER = Prevalence of undernourishment (% of population)
FOOD = Food production index (2014-2016 = 100)
URBAN = Urban population (% of total population)

The study converted the observations for each variable to natural logarithms to address potential heteroscedasticity in the dataset. The study categorised the independent variables into four components of human security: political, environmental, economic, and food security. The dependent variable is net migration. The political security indicators include rule of law, government effectiveness, political stability and absence of terrorism and violence, and deaths arising from ongoing conflicts. The environmental security indicators include the standardised precipitation-evapotranspiration index, climate vulnerability score, and annual temperature anomalies. The economic security indicators include economic growth, measured as GDP per capita, and unemployment, while the food security indicators include the prevalence of undernourishment and the food production index. Urban population served as the control variable.

The generalised method of moments regression models is presented in equation 2:

$$\begin{aligned}\ln MIG_{it} = {} & \beta_0 + \beta_1 ln RULE_{it} + \beta_2 \ln GOVT_{it} + \beta_3 \ln POLS_{it} + \beta_4 \ln CONF_{it} + \beta_5 \ln TEMP_{it} \\ & + \beta_6 SPEI_{it} \\ & + \beta_7 VUL_{it} + \beta_8 \ln GDP_{it} + \beta_9 UNEMP_{it} \\ & + \beta_{10} URBAN_{it} + \beta_{11} \ln FOOD_{it} + \beta_{12} \ln UNDER_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} + u_i \quad (2)\end{aligned}$$

Where; *i*:1, 2, 3, …, 34 countries; *t*: 2006, 2013, 2014, …, 2021 year; ln denotes natural logarithm; ε is the error term. Furthermore, *β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4, β_5, β_6,β_7,β_8,*

β_9, β_10, β_11, and *β_12* define the estimated percentage change in net migration caused by a one per cent change in rule of law, government effectiveness, political stability, deaths arising from ongoing conflicts, temperature anomalies, standardised precipitation-evapotranspiration index – a measure of drought, climate vulnerability score, GDP per capita, unemployment, urban population, food production index, and undernourishment, respectively, while all other factors are constant. ε_it is the unobserved country-specific fixed effects.

The dynamic model is specified in equation 3 as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\ln MIG_{it} = {} & \beta_1 \ln MIG_{it-1} + \beta_2 \ln RULE_{it-1} + \beta_3 \ln GOVT + \beta_4 \ln POLS + \beta_5 \ln TEMP_{it-1} \\ & + \beta_6 \ln SPEI_{it-1} + \beta_7 VUL_{it-1} + \beta_8 GDP_{it-1} \\ & + \beta_9 \ln UNEMP_{it-1} + \beta_{10} \ln URBAN_{it-1} + \beta_{11} \ln FOOD + \beta_{12} \ln UNDER_{it-1} \\ & + \varepsilon_{it} + u_i + \delta_t \qquad (3)\end{aligned}$$

Equation (3) includes two additional error terms, μi and δt, representing the idiosyncratic error term and the unobserved time effects, respectively. Including the lagged migration as an independent variable serves to assess whether migration is persistent over time and to address potential endogeneity. This is also why the system of generalised method of moments (GMM) econometric procedure proposed by Arellano and Bover (1995) was applied in this study.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the summary statistics of the variables used in the study for all 34 SSA countries. Three institutional variables, namely, rule of law, government effectiveness and political stability, were used in the study. The rule of law, government effectiveness, and political stability indicators had an average of 13.65, 9.77, and 6.33 underlying sources, with coverage ranging from 6 to 18, 4 to 12, and 2 to 9 sources, respectively, across all observations. The standard deviations of 2.5, 1.90, and 1.29 show moderate variation in the number of sources across observations. The study observed that net migration exhibits substantial variability, ranging from large net outflows (-879,235) to significant inflows (641,150), with a negative average of -5,669.7, indicating that countries in our sample experience net emigration on average. This is consistent with recent estimates suggesting that sub-Saharan Africa is predominantly a net emigration region (Li & Samimi, 2022). The variable of conflict-related deaths reveals considerable dispersion, ranging from zero to 13,532 deaths. The variable shows a relatively low mean of about 268 deaths but a large standard deviation (1035.61), indicating that the large number of conflict-related deaths may be associated with a small number of countries and a few con-

flict episodes. Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) confirms that a few countries in SSA account for a disproportionate share of total fatalities. The variable for undernourishment shows an average prevalence rate of 19.18 percent, with values ranging from 3.4 to 48.1 percent. This shows wide heterogeneity in the prevalence of undernourishment across our sample despite a wide spread of food insecurity. Climatic variables used in this study, that is, standardized precipitation-evapotranspiration index and temperature anomalies, show visible variability within the dataset. The standardized precipitation-evapotranspiration index averages -0.22, which indicates slightly drier-than-normal conditions. Temperature anomalies variable also shows a slightly positive average of 0.22, which reflects warmer-than-normal conditions. These two indicators may have implications for the vulnerability of residents in the selected countries in the sub-region. The average vulnerability index was 0.53, with scores ranging from 0.40 to 0.66, indicating moderate vulnerability. This standard deviation of 0.05 shows a relatively low variation in vulnerability across our observations.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rule of Law	544	6.00	18.00	13.65	2.50
Government Effectiveness	544	4.00	12.00	9.77	1.90
Political Stability	544	2.00	9.00	6.38	1.29
Net Migration	544	-879235.00	641150.00	-5669.70	86525.68
Deaths arising from Conflicts	544	0.00	13532.00	268.18	1035.61
Undernourishment	544	3.40	48.10	19.18	10.17
Standardised Precipitation-Evapotranspiration Index	544	-2.22	2.42	-0.22	0.85
Vulnerability	544	0.40	0.66	0.53	0.05
GDP	544	189.35	11818.75	1877.91	2204.49
Unemployment	544	.32	34.01	6.74	6.42
Urbanization	544	14.59	90.79	40.19	16.10
Food Production	544	48.54	183.45	96.63	18.53
Temperature Anomalies	544	-1.14	1.70	0.22	0.33

Multicollinearity Test

Table 3 presents the results of the multicollinearity test based on variance inflation factor (VIF) computations. The test results show that although some political security indicators (lnRULE and lnGOVT) exhibit moderate correlations with other predictors, their VIFs remain below the 10 threshold, which may indicate severe multicollinearity. This is consistent with standard practice, in which variables with VIFs below 10 are considered acceptable, especially if they are theoretically justified (Kutner et al., 2005; O'Brien, 2007). The two other political security indicators (lnPOLS and

lnCONF), together with all environmental, economic, and food security indicators, show no multicollinearity, as their VIFs are below 5 (Onyeneke et al., 2026, 2025).

Table 3. *Multicollinearity test*

Human Security Categorization	Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Political Security Indicators	lnRULE	0.161	6.201
	lnGOVT	0.152	6.593
	lnPOLS	0.234	4.268
	lnCONF	0.830	1.205
Environmental Security Indicators	lnTEMP	0.973	1.028
	lnSPEI	0.954	1.048
	lnVUL	0.314	3.188
Economic Security Indicators	lnGDP	0.296	3.377
	lnUNEMP	0.429	2.329
Control Variable	lnURBAN	0.506	1.976
Food Security Indicators	lnFOOD	0.706	1.416
	lnUNDER	0.719	1.390

a Dependent Variable: lnMIG

Cross-sectional Dependence

Table 4 presents the results of the cross-sectional dependence test based on Pesaran (2015). The results reject the null hypothesis of no cross-sectional dependence and confirm its presence in our dataset, indicating that the countries in our study share similar characteristics and shocks.

Table 4. *Cross-sectional dependence*

Human Security Categorization	Variable	CD-test	p-value
Political Security Indicators	lnRULE	54.08	0.000
	lnGOVT	59.58	0.000
	lnPOLS	56.83	0.000
	lnCONF	22.83	0.000
Environmental Security Indicators	lnTEMP	10.31	0.000
	lnSPEI	29.54	0.000
	lnVUL	36.39	0.000

Economic Security Indicators	lnGDP	47.79	0.000
	lnUNEMP	11.30	0.000
Control Variable	lnURBAN	76.43	0.000
Food Security Indicators	lnFOOD	58.93	0.000
	lnUNDER	2.43	0.015
Dependent Variable	lnMIG	19.73	0.000

Main Findings

Estimates of the effect of human security on migration are presented in Table 5. Post-estimation diagnostics indicate that the model is well identified and passes all key IV diagnostics. The lagged migration used as an instrument in the GMM estimation was found to be valid based on model diagnostics. The study failed to reject the null hypothesis of no overidentification, as indicated by the p-value of the Hansen J statistic, confirming that the instrument is valid. The Sanderson-Windmeijer multivariate F-test of excluded instruments (14.18, $p < 0.01$) shows that the instrument is valid and identified. The p-value of the Kleibergen-Paap rk LM test statistic shows the presence of a strong instrument by rejecting the null hypothesis of under-identification. The Anderson-Rubin test shows that our GMM estimates are not compromised by weak instruments. The Stock-Yogo weak ID test indicates that our instrument is sufficiently strong to keep bias below 10 per cent. Overall, the model explains 52% of the variation in international migration ($R2 = 0.52$), and the F-test confirms that the explanatory variables jointly explain this variation ($F = 248.85$, $p < 0.01$).

The results reveal a statistically significant positive persistence effect: past migration is a strong predictor of current migration. The study estimated that a percentage increase in the previous year's migration volume leads to an approximately 0.93% increase in the current migration volume. Beyond past migration, urbanisation was estimated to be a significant positive predictor of migration. The study estimated that a 1 percentage-point increase in the urban population as a proportion of the overall population will lead to about a 2.37 percentage-point increase in international migration.

Within the political security component of the human security framework, two of the four variables were significant predictors of migration. While the rule of law and government effectiveness were not significant predictors of migration, political stability and conflict-related fatalities were positively associated with international migration. The paper estimated that a percentage increase in political stability and in the number of conflict-related fatalities will lead to increases of 4.65% and 0.17% in international migration, respectively.

The environmental security component of human security, measured by three variables, yielded mixed results. While temperature anomalies had no significant effect on in-

ternational migration, the SPEI, which measures drought, did. The estimates show that the coefficient on lnSPEI is negative and weakly significant (-0.42), suggesting that wetter conditions are associated with a decline in international migration, implying that drier conditions increase migration. Additionally, the study estimated that higher vulnerability levels are associated with increased international migration. The results reveal that a percentage increase in vulnerability will lead to about a 9.32% increase in international migration.

Table 5. *Generalised method of moments, estimation results of the impact of human security on international migration*

Variables	Estimates
lnMIG(-1)	0.93*** (0.06)
lnRULE	2.60 (2.23)
lnGOVT	−2.98 (2.01)
lnPOLS	4.65*** (1.61)
lnCONF	0.17** (0.08)
lnTEMP	−0.005 (0.17)
lnSPEI	−0.42* (0.25)
lnVUL	9.32*** (2.96)
lnGDP	2.20*** (0.39)
lnUNEMP	−0.27 (0.30)
lnURBAN	2.37*** (0.61)
lnFOOD	1.80* (0.99)
lnUNDER	1.19*** (0.38)
Constant	−35.086***(6.66)
Observations	544
Groups	34
R2 (Centred)	0.52
F-test	248.85***
Post-estimation diagnostics	
Sanderson-Windmeijer multivariate F test of excluded instruments	14.18***
Hansen J Statistic (p-value)	0.498
Kleibergen-Paap rk LM statistic (p-value)	0.000
Anderson-Rubin Tests (p-value)	0.000
Stock-Yogo weak ID test critical values: 10% maximal IV relative bias	11.52

Note: The parentheses contain the robust standard errors.
***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1.

Both measures of the food security component of human security were found to be significant in explaining international migration. The study estimated that a percentage increase in food production and prevalence of undernourishment will lead to about 1.8% and 2.37% increases in international migration, respectively. Only one of the two economic security indicators was found to be a significant predictor of international migration. The study estimated that a percentage increase in GDP is associated with about a 2.2% increase in international migration.

Discussion

The study's results provide strong evidence of migration persistence, suggesting that international migration is a self-reinforcing process. Meso theories of migration, such as the network theory of migration, suggest that past migration reduces the costs and risks associated with migration by providing the necessary support system (Adhikari et al., 2023; Bernard et al., 2022; Bernard & Perales, 2021). As previous migrants settle and establish themselves in destination countries, they create migration pathways for people within their networks from their native countries, making it easier for new waves of migrants by providing information, financial support, and contacts (Sha, 2021).

The results were nuanced regarding political security indicators. While rule of law and government effectiveness did not appear to be significant predictors of international migration, political stability and conflict-related deaths were positively associated with it. The direction of the impact of political stability is somewhat counterintuitive. Studies such as Arif (2020) highlight that better political institutions serve as a pull factor of migration but have no push effect on migration. That is, improved political stability in destination countries may attract migrants, but improved political stability in originating countries has no significant role in migration decisions. On the contrary, Dutta and Roy (2011) and Barra and Ruggiero (2023) show that political stability significantly affects emigration rates, particularly among skilled workers. The authors contend that this is true for both developing and developed countries. This may be because a politically stable environment tends to enable individuals to accumulate the resources necessary to migrate. Further, Giménez-Gómez et al. (2019) contend that political persecution, civil conflicts and political instability drive African emigration, particularly into European destinations. Additionally, conflicts, and for that matter, conflict-related deaths, have been widely established as a driving force of migration in all parts of the world (Conte & Migali, 2019; Akindoyin & Akuche, 2024; Crippa et al., 2025). This is because people in danger of an imminent threat to their lives find migration a way of escaping their eventual demise.

The environmental security component reveals the complex relationship between climate variability and migration. The negative association between SPEI and migration suggests that higher drought intensity is linked to greater migration. This find-

ing aligns with a growing body of literature linking climate stress – particularly water scarcity and agricultural shocks – to increased emigration (Adaawen et al., 2019; Ceola et al., 2023; Defrance et al., 2023; Fishman & Li, 2022; Smirnov et al., 2022). While some studies indicate a direct association between drought and migration, others, such as Cattaneo and Foreman (2023) and Freeman et al. (2017), show that unfavourable climatic conditions induce resource conflicts, which ultimately lead to migration. By contrast, the insignificance of temperature anomalies in this study suggests that not all climate indicators have uniform effects. Moreover, the paper observed a significant positive relationship between vulnerability and migration. This is because, in conditions of high vulnerability, people are likely to resort to migration as a coping strategy (McLeman & Hunter, 2010; Singh & Basu, 2020).

The two food security indicators, as components of human security, showed positive associations with international migration. That is, higher food production and higher levels of undernourishment were associated with higher migration levels. The positive effect of undernourishment on international migration is consistent with the fact that food insecurity acts as a push factor for migration (Sadiddin et al., 2019; Smith & Wesselbaum, 2021). Smith and Floro (2020) further indicate that the severity of food insecurity increases intentions to migrate monotonically but reduces migration preparations. While the direction of the effect of undernourishment on migration is consistent with existing literature, the positive effect of food production requires a deeper understanding. The study contends that the positive effect of food production reflects an income effect arising from improved agricultural productivity. That is, increased food production offers households more income, which can be used to finance international migration, i.e., enhanced capacity to move.

This ties into the role of the economic security component of human security as a driver of international migration. Viewing GDP growth as a measure of improved economic conditions in origin countries, we contend that such improvement facilitates migration by easing the financial constraints associated with migration intentions. Financial constraints serve as a barrier to poor households who would like to migrate but cannot afford to (Angelucci, 2015). In effect, improved economic growth can make them better off, thereby increasing their ability to afford the expenses associated with international migration. Indeed, Kleemans (2015) contends that a positive income shock, likely from GDP growth, may increase international migration, as households can now afford to pay the costs of migration up front. Households bear such costs because they view migration as a form of insurance and believe that the investment will pay off eventually as the migrant begins to remit earnings from abroad (Simpson, 2022).

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The research indicates that international migration in SSA is shaped by an intricate combination of human security issues rather than by individual, separate factors. Political unrest, conflict-related violence, vulnerability to environmental risks, food insecurity, and economic strain all combine to influence individuals' decisions to migrate. Migration in the region tends to perpetuate itself over time, as established migrant networks reduce the costs and risks of movement, increasing the likelihood that migration will persist unless fundamental structural insecurities are resolved. Crucially, the results indicate that political unrest and economic or environmental factors drive migration, whereas improvements in income, food production, and political stability may also promote migration by providing the resources necessary to fund it. This implies that migration is not only a response to crisis but frequently a component of broader livelihood strategies.

Policy implications highlight the need for strategies to treat migration as a human security and development concern rather than merely a border-control issue. Governments should focus on strengthening governance frameworks, averting conflict, and fostering trust in institutions, as reduced political instability can reduce forced migration. Concurrently, investing in climate resilience, through drought prevention, climate-smart farming, and improved adaptation strategies, can safeguard rural livelihoods and reduce displacement driven by environmental factors. Enhancing community resilience depends significantly on improving food security through increased agricultural productivity, better nutrition, and investment in rural infrastructure. Inclusive economic development, job creation, and social protection initiatives are equally significant, as they address the economic vulnerabilities that drive distress migration, while acknowledging that higher incomes can initially enhance individuals' ability to migrate.

The research emphasises the importance of effectively coordinated migration governance that incorporates human security considerations and aligns with regional frameworks such as the African Union's Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018 – 2030). Given factors that transcend borders, regional collaboration among organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States, the South African Development Community, and the East African Community is crucial. In the end, effective migration management in SSA requires policies that reduce core vulnerabilities, enhance resilience, and ensure that, when migration occurs, it is safe, organised, and rooted in regional development needs rather than insecurity or desperation.

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All data used in this paper are publicly available.

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13.

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GENDER ASPECTS OF MIGRATION AND CYBER-CRIME

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Abstract

This paper examines the intersection between gender, migration, and cyber-crime, focusing on how digital environments have transformed the nature of risks, victimization patterns, and criminal opportunities affecting migrant populations, particularly women and vulnerable gender groups. With the increasing digitalization of migration processes, employment recruitment, financial transactions, and social communication, migrants are becoming increasingly exposed to cyber-enabled crimes such as online fraud, human trafficking recruitment through social media, identity theft, cyber exploitation, and digital blackmail.

The study argues that cyber-crime risks are not gender-neutral, as female migrants are often disproportionately targeted in cyber-enabled exploitation, including online recruitment scams, forced labour networks, sextortion, and cyber-facilitated human trafficking. At the same time, male migrants are more frequently targeted in financial fraud schemes, illegal online employment networks, and cyber-enabled smuggling arrangements. The paper therefore highlights how gender roles, economic vulnerability, digital literacy levels, and legal status interact to shape exposure to cyber-crime.

The paper adopts an interdisciplinary analytical approach combining cyber-criminology, migration studies, and gender studies to develop a conceptual framework explaining cyber-crime risks among migrant populations. It also analyses how transnational organized crime groups increasingly use digital platforms, encrypted communication, cryptocurrencies, and social media to recruit, control, exploit, and extort migrants across borders.

The paper concludes that addressing cyber-crime against migrants requires gender-sensitive cybercrime policies, improved digital awareness programs for migrants, stronger international cooperation between law enforcement agencies, and the integration of cyber-crime risk assessment into migration governance and protection policies. The study contributes to the emerging field of cyber-criminology by highlighting migration and gender as critical dimensions in understanding cyber-crime victimization and prevention in the digital era.

Keywords: *cyber-crime, migration, gender, cyber exploitation, online fraud, human trafficking, cyber-criminology, digital vulnerability*

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Introduction

Migration in the Digital Era

International migration has increased significantly over the past decades due to globalization, economic inequality, labour market demands, political instability, and environmental changes. Migration today is no longer limited to physical movement across borders; instead, it has become a complex process that involves digital communication, online recruitment, digital financial transactions, and virtual social networks. The development of information and communication technologies has transformed migration processes, making digital platforms an essential part of migration journeys, employment opportunities, and migrant communication networks.

Digital technologies now play a major role in migration decisions and migration processes. Migrants use the internet and social media to search for jobs, communicate with recruiters, obtain information about migration routes, apply for visas, send money to their families, and maintain communication with migrant communities. Online recruitment platforms, social media networks, messaging applications, and financial technology services have become central tools used by migrants before migration, during migration, and after arrival in destination countries. As a result, migration has become increasingly digitalized, and digital platforms have become part of what researchers describe as the digital migration infrastructure.

However, while digital technologies have made migration easier in many ways, they have also created new risks for migrants. Digital platforms have created new opportunities for criminals to target migrants through online recruitment fraud, identity theft, cyber-enabled human trafficking, financial fraud, cyber exploitation, and digital blackmail. Migrants often rely on online information and digital communication networks, which may expose them to misinformation, fraud, and criminal networks operating through digital platforms. Therefore, digitalization has not only transformed migration processes but has also transformed migration-related crime.

Cyberspace as a New Environment for Migrant Risks

Cyberspace has become a new environment where migrants may face various risks and forms of victimization. Traditional migration risks such as exploitation, fraud, trafficking, and smuggling are increasingly facilitated through digital platforms. Criminals use social media, online recruitment websites, messaging applications, and digital payment systems to recruit migrants, advertise fake jobs, organize smuggling routes, conduct fraud, and control victims. This means that many migration-related crimes now begin online before the migrant physically moves from one country to another.

Online recruitment fraud is one of the most common cybercrimes targeting migrants, where criminals advertise fake job opportunities and request recruitment fees, visa processing fees, or travel costs. Migrants may also be asked to submit personal documents online, which can later be used for identity theft or document fraud. Social media platforms are also used by traffickers and smugglers to recruit migrants and communicate with them. Digital financial services are used to transfer money for recruitment fees, smuggling payments, or financial fraud. These developments show that cyberspace has become an important environment for migration-related crime.

The digital environment also allows criminals to operate across borders, hide their identities, and target large numbers of victims at low cost. This makes cybercrime targeting migrants more difficult to detect and investigate compared to traditional crimes. Therefore, cybercrime targeting migrants should be understood as part of cyber-enabled crime and transnational organized crime rather than traditional migration crime alone.

Gender Dimension in Migration Vulnerability

Gender plays an important role in migration experiences and vulnerability to crime and exploitation. Migration patterns differ between men and women in terms of employment sectors, working conditions, migration routes, and vulnerability to exploitation. In recent decades, there has been an increase in female migration for employment, particularly in domestic work, caregiving, hospitality, and informal labour sectors. This phenomenon is often referred to as the feminization of migration.

Female migrants often work in sectors characterized by informal employment, limited legal protection, and dependence on employers or recruitment intermediaries, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Male migrants, on the other hand, are more likely to work in construction, manual labour, transportation, and industrial sectors, where they may face labour exploitation, recruitment fraud, or smuggling-related risks.

In digital environments, these gender differences may lead to different cybercrime risks. Female migrants may be more exposed to cyber exploitation, sextortion, online harassment, and trafficking recruitment through social media and online communication platforms. Male migrants may be more exposed to online recruitment fraud, financial scams, and smuggling-related online fraud. Vulnerable gender groups may face additional risks such as online harassment, digital blackmail, and identity exposure threats. Therefore, cybercrime risks among migrants are not gender-neutral but are influenced by gender roles, employment sectors, and social vulnerability.

Research Problem

Despite the increasing digitalization of migration processes and the growing use of digital platforms by migrants, there is limited research that examines cybercrime risks affecting migrants from a gender perspective. Most research on cybercrime focuses on financial cybercrime, hacking, or cyber security, while migration research focuses on labour migration, migration policies, and social integration. Gender research often focuses on labor migration or gender-based violence but does not focus specifically on cybercrime targeting migrants.

At the same time, cybercrime targeting migrants appears to be increasing, particularly in the areas of online recruitment fraud, cyber-enabled trafficking, identity theft, online financial fraud, and cyber exploitation. Migrants may be particularly vulnerable to cybercrime due to economic vulnerability, irregular migration status, dependence on intermediaries, low digital literacy, and lack of legal protection. However, there is still limited research integrating migration, gender, and cybercrime into a single analytical framework.

Therefore, the research problem of this study is to understand how cybercrime risks affect migrants in digital environments and how gender, migration status, digital literacy, economic vulnerability, and legal status influence cybercrime exposure among migrants

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between migration, gender, and cybercrime in the digital age. The study aims to analyze how digital migration processes increase cybercrime risks affecting migrants, examine gender differences in cybercrime victimization among migrants, analyze the role of digital platforms and transnational organized crime in migration-related cybercrime, examine law enforcement and policy challenges in combating cybercrime targeting migrants, and develop a conceptual model explaining cybercrime risks affecting migrants.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How has the digitalization of migration processes increased cybercrime risks affecting migrants?
2. What types of cybercrime most commonly target migrants in digital environments?
3. How do cybercrime victimization patterns differ between male and female migrants?

4. What role do digital platforms and transnational organized crime play in migration-related cybercrime?
5. What challenges do law enforcement agencies face in combating cybercrime targeting migrants?
6. How can cybercrime risks affecting migrants be reduced through prevention and policy measures?
7. How can a conceptual model explain cybercrime exposure among migrants?

Structure of the Paper

This paper is organized into several sections. The introduction presents the research background, research problem, objectives, and research questions. The literature review discusses previous studies related to migration digitalization, cybercrime targeting migrants, gender differences in victimization, organized crime involvement, and law enforcement challenges. The methodology section explains the research approach and analytical framework used in the study. The findings section presents the main analytical findings related to cybercrime risks affecting migrants. The discussion section interprets the findings and explains their theoretical and policy implications. The paper concludes with a summary of findings, policy recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Migration in the Digital Age

Recent literature shows that migration has become increasingly digitalized, transforming the way migrants search for jobs, communicate with families, transfer money, obtain documents, and plan migration journeys. Digital technologies such as social media, online recruitment platforms, messaging applications, and financial technology services have become central tools used by migrants throughout the migration process. Researchers argue that digital technologies have created a "digital migration infrastructure," where migration decisions, recruitment processes, and communication networks are increasingly organized through online platforms rather than traditional intermediaries (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Leurs & Smets, 2018).

Digitalization has improved migrants' access to information and employment opportunities, but it has also increased exposure to online risks such as recruitment fraud, identity theft, misinformation, online smuggling networks, and cyber exploitation. Migrants often rely on online information sources and informal digital networks, which may expose them to fraudulent information and criminal networks. As a result, digital technologies have become both tools that facilitate migration and environments where migrants may be exposed to cybercrime risks (Alencar, 2018).

Another important aspect of digital migration is migrants' dependence on digital platforms for communication with families, financial transfers, job searching, and navigation of migration routes. Financial technology services and digital remittance systems have become essential for migrants sending money to their families. However, these systems also expose migrants to online financial fraud, phishing attacks, and digital identity theft. This demonstrates that digital dependence increases cybercrime exposure among migrants (International Organization for Migration, 2022).

Cyber-crime Targeting Migrants

Cybercrime literature indicates that many traditional crimes such as fraud, trafficking, smuggling, and exploitation are increasingly facilitated through digital technologies. These crimes are often referred to as cyber-enabled crimes, meaning traditional crimes that are committed or facilitated using digital platforms such as social media, messaging applications, online payment systems, and digital identity systems (Wall, 2007).

Migrants are particularly targeted by cyber-enabled crimes such as online recruitment fraud, fake visa services, identity theft, financial scams, cyber-enabled human trafficking, sextortion, and online smuggling arrangements. Criminals often use social media platforms and online recruitment websites to advertise fake job opportunities and request recruitment fees or personal documents. Victims may lose money or become victims of identity theft and document fraud (Europol, 2023).

Human trafficking networks also increasingly use digital platforms to recruit victims, communicate with them, control them, and organize exploitation. Traffickers may use online job advertisements, social media communication, and messaging applications to recruit migrants and later exploit them in forced labour or sexual exploitation. This demonstrates that cybercrime targeting migrants is often connected to transnational organized crime networks (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020).

Online financial fraud targeting migrants is another major cybercrime risk. Migrants frequently transfer money internationally, which makes them targets for phishing attacks, fake financial services, and digital payment fraud. Identity theft is also common, especially when migrants submit personal documents through online recruitment platforms or visa websites. These crimes show that cybercrime targeting migrants often occurs at different stages of the migration process.

Gender and Migration Vulnerability

Gender is an important factor in migration studies because migration experiences differ between men and women in terms of employment sectors, working conditions, vulnerability to exploitation, and social protection. The concept of the feminization of migration refers to the increasing number of women migrating for work, particularly in

domestic work, caregiving, hospitality, and informal labour sectors, which are often characterized by weak legal protection and higher vulnerability to exploitation (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

Research shows that female migrants are often more vulnerable to exploitation, harassment, trafficking, and gender-based violence during migration processes, while male migrants are more exposed to labour exploitation, smuggling-related risks, and financial exploitation (Mahler & Pessar, 2006). In digital environments, these gender differences translate into different cybercrime risks. Female migrants may be more exposed to cyber exploitation, sextortion, and online harassment, while male migrants may be more exposed to recruitment fraud, financial scams, and smuggling-related online fraud.

Studies on online gender-based violence show that women and vulnerable gender groups are disproportionately affected by online harassment, cyber exploitation, and digital blackmail, which indicates that gender plays an important role in cybercrime victimization patterns (Henry & Powell, 2018). Therefore, gender should be considered an important variable when studying cybercrime risks affecting migrants.

Digital Platforms and Transnational Organized Crime

Another important theme in the literature is the role of digital platforms in facilitating transnational organized crime related to migration. Organized crime groups increasingly use social media, messaging applications, encrypted communication, and digital payment systems to recruit migrants, organize smuggling routes, conduct fraud, and control victims. Digital technologies allow criminal networks to operate across borders, coordinate activities remotely, and reduce the risk of detection (Europol, 2023).

Research on migrant smuggling and trafficking shows that online platforms are now used to advertise migration routes, communicate with migrants, negotiate payments, and coordinate border crossings. This demonstrates that migration-related crime has become increasingly digital and that cybercrime and organized crime are now interconnected in migration contexts (UNODC, 2018).

Some researchers argue that migration-related crime should be analysed within the broader framework of cyber-enabled organized crime rather than traditional organized crime alone. This perspective highlights that digital technologies have transformed the structure, organization, and operation of criminal networks involved in migration-related crimes.

Law Enforcement and Policy Challenges in Cybercrime Against Migrants

The literature also highlights significant challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in combating cybercrime targeting migrants. One of the main challenges is the transnational nature of cybercrime, where offenders, victims, digital platforms, and finan-

cial transactions may be in different countries. This creates jurisdiction problems, legal cooperation challenges, and difficulties in collecting digital evidence (UNODC, 2019).

Another challenge is the underreporting of cybercrime by migrants. Many migrants do not report cybercrime due to fear of deportation, lack of legal status, language barriers, lack of trust in authorities, or social stigma associated with certain crimes such as sextortion or exploitation. Underreporting makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to measure the scale of cybercrime targeting migrants and to identify criminal networks (International Organization for Migration, 2022).

Digital evidence collection is also a major challenge because cybercrime investigations require digital forensic capabilities, cooperation with online platforms, and international legal cooperation. These challenges demonstrate that cybercrime targeting migrants requires specialized law enforcement strategies and international cooperation.

Research Gap

Although there is extensive literature on cybercrime, migration, gender, and organized crime separately, there is still limited research that integrates these fields together. Most cybercrime research focuses on individuals, organizations, or financial systems, while migration research focuses on labour markets, migration policies, and social integration, and gender research focuses on labour migration or gender-based violence. Few studies examine how cybercrime specifically targets migrants and how gender influences cybercrime victimization patterns among migrant populations.

Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by integrating cyber-criminology, migration studies, and gender studies to develop a conceptual framework explaining cybercrime risks affecting migrants. The study also proposes a cyber-crime risk model that explains how gender, migration status, digital literacy, economic vulnerability, and legal status interact to influence cybercrime exposure among migrants. This interdisciplinary approach helps address the gap in the literature and provides a framework for future research on cybercrime targeting migrants.

Methodology

Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a qualitative analytical research design to examine the relationship between migration, gender, and cyber-crime in digital environments. The research does not rely on primary quantitative data but instead uses an interdisciplinary analytical approach that integrates cyber-criminology, migration studies, gender studies, and digital vulnerability theory to develop a conceptual understanding of cybercrime risks affecting migrants. The study is therefore conceptual and analytical in nature, aiming

to develop a theoretical framework and conceptual model explaining cybercrime exposure among migrants rather than testing a specific hypothesis using statistical methods.

The analytical approach is appropriate for this study because the research topic lies at the intersection of multiple disciplines, including criminology, migration studies, gender studies, and cybersecurity studies. The study aims to explain patterns of cybercrime victimization among migrants and the structural factors that increase vulnerability rather than measure cybercrime rates or test causal relationships statistically.

Interdisciplinary Research Framework

The methodology of this study is based on an interdisciplinary framework combining four main theoretical areas:

1. Cyber-criminology, which explains crime in digital environments and cyber-enabled crimes.
2. Migration vulnerability theory, which explains the structural vulnerabilities faced by migrants.
3. Gender and crime theory, which explains gender differences in victimization and crime exposure.
4. Digital vulnerability theory, which explains how digital exposure and digital literacy affect cybercrime victimization.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study develops a comprehensive framework explaining cybercrime risks affecting migrants in digital environments.

Data Sources and Literature Analysis

The study relies on secondary data sources and literature analysis. The research is based on the analysis of academic literature, international reports, policy documents, and cybercrime reports related to migration, cybercrime, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, online fraud, gender and migration, and digital vulnerability.

The main sources used in this study include:

- Academic journal articles on cybercrime and cyber-criminology
- Migration studies literature
- Gender and migration research
- Reports from international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Europol, and International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Policy reports on cybercrime, migration governance, and human trafficking
- Digital crime and online exploitation reports

The literature analysis focuses on identifying common patterns of cybercrime targeting migrants, gender differences in victimization, the role of digital platforms in migration crime, and law enforcement challenges in combating cybercrime targeting migrants.

Analytical Method

The study uses qualitative analytical methods, including:

- Thematic analysis of literature related to migration, cybercrime, and gender
- Comparative analysis of cybercrime risks affecting male and female migrants
- Analytical review of organized crime involvement in cyber-enabled migration crime
- Policy analysis of law enforcement and prevention strategies
- Conceptual model development explaining cybercrime risks among migrants

The analytical method focuses on identifying relationships between migration digitalization, gender vulnerability, digital literacy, economic vulnerability, legal status, and cybercrime exposure.

Development of the Conceptual Model

One of the main methodological contributions of this study is the development of a conceptual model explaining cybercrime exposure among migrants. The model is developed based on the literature review and theoretical framework and proposes that cybercrime exposure among migrants is influenced by the interaction between several key variables:

- Gender
- Migration status
- Digital literacy
- Economic vulnerability
- Legal status
- Level of digital exposure

The conceptual model assumes that cybercrime risk increases when migrants experience higher levels of vulnerability across these variables. The model provides a theoretical framework that can be tested in future empirical research using surveys, interviews, or statistical analysis.

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the study is conceptual and analytical and does not include primary empirical data such as surveys or interviews with migrants. Second, cybercrime targeting migrants is underreported, which makes it difficult to ob-

tain accurate data on the scale of the problem. Third, migration experiences and cybercrime risks vary between countries, migration routes, and legal systems, which means that the findings of this study may not apply equally to all migration contexts.

Despite these limitations, the study provides an interdisciplinary analytical framework that helps explain cybercrime risks affecting migrants and provides a conceptual model that can be used for future empirical research.

Summary of Methodology

In summary, this study adopts a qualitative interdisciplinary analytical methodology based on literature analysis, theoretical integration, and conceptual model development. The study integrates cyber-criminology, migration vulnerability theory, gender and crime theory, and digital vulnerability concepts to explain cybercrime risks affecting migrants in digital environments. The methodology aims to provide a theoretical and conceptual understanding of cybercrime targeting migrants and to propose a conceptual model that can guide future research and policy development.

Findings

This section presents the main findings of the study based on the analytical review of migration digitalization, cybercrime patterns, gender differences, organized crime involvement, and law enforcement challenges. The findings show that cybercrime targeting migrants is strongly linked to digital migration processes, structural vulnerability, gender roles, and transnational organized crime networks.

Digitalization of Migration Increases Cybercrime Exposure

One of the main findings of this study is that the digitalization of migration processes has significantly increased migrants' exposure to cybercrime. Migration is no longer limited to physical movement between countries; instead, many migration activities now occur online, including job searching, recruitment, visa applications, communication with intermediaries, financial transfers, and identity verification. Migrants increasingly rely on social media platforms, online recruitment websites, messaging applications, and financial technology services throughout the migration process.

This heavy dependence on digital platforms creates multiple opportunities for cybercriminals to target migrants. Criminals can create fake recruitment websites, fake visa services, fraudulent job offers, and online smuggling services that appear legitimate. Migrants may submit personal documents, pay recruitment fees, or transfer money through digital platforms, which exposes them to fraud, identity theft, and financial exploitation. Therefore, the study finds that digital migration processes have created a new environment

where migration risks are increasingly cyber-related rather than only physical risks.

Cybercrime Targeting Migrants is Mostly Cyber-enabled Crime

Another important finding is that most cybercrimes targeting migrants are not purely technical cybercrimes such as hacking or malware attacks. Instead, they are cyber-enabled crimes, meaning traditional crimes that are facilitated through digital technologies. These crimes include online recruitment fraud, cyber-enabled human trafficking, identity theft, document fraud, online financial fraud, sextortion, and online smuggling arrangements.

In most cases, criminals do not need advanced technical skills to target migrants. Instead, they rely on deception, social engineering, fake online identities, fraudulent websites, and digital communication platforms. This means that cybercrime targeting migrants is largely based on fraud, deception, and exploitation rather than technical cyber attacks. As a result, prevention strategies should focus on awareness, regulation of online platforms, and protection mechanisms rather than only technical cybersecurity measures.

Gender Differences in Cybercrime Victimization Among Migrants

The study also finds that cybercrime risks affecting migrants are not gender neutral. There are clear gender differences in the types of cybercrime risks faced by migrants. Female migrants are more vulnerable to cyber exploitation, sextortion, online harassment, trafficking recruitment through social media, and digital blackmail. This is often linked to employment sectors such as domestic work, caregiving, and informal labor, where recruitment often occurs through informal digital networks and social media platforms.

Male migrants, on the other hand, are more frequently targeted by online recruitment fraud, financial scams, fake job offers, illegal migration arrangements, and online smuggling networks. Male migrants are often targeted through job advertisements promising high salaries or migration opportunities, which later turn out to be fraudulent or exploitative.

LGBTQ migrants may face additional risks such as online harassment, blackmail, identity exposure threats, and digital exploitation due to social stigma and discrimination. Criminals may use personal information, photos, or online conversations to blackmail victims or threaten to expose their identity.

These findings demonstrate that gender plays an important role in shaping cybercrime victimization patterns among migrants and should be considered in cybercrime prevention and migration policies.

Role of Transnational Organized Crime in Digital Migration Crime

Another key finding is that transnational organized crime groups play a major

role in cybercrime targeting migrants. Organized crime networks increasingly use digital platforms to recruit migrants, organize smuggling routes, conduct fraud, control victims, and transfer illegal profits. Social media platforms, messaging applications, encrypted communication, and digital payment systems are commonly used by organized crime groups involved in migrant smuggling, human trafficking, recruitment fraud, and financial exploitation.

Digital technologies allow organized crime networks to operate across borders, communicate securely, coordinate activities in multiple countries, and reduce the risk of detection. Recruitment may occur online, payments may be transferred digitally, communication may occur through encrypted messaging, and exploitation may occur in different countries. This demonstrates that migration-related crime has become increasingly digital and transnational, and cybercrime and organized crime are now closely interconnected in migration contexts.

Migrants' Structural Vulnerability Increases Cybercrime Risk

The study finds that cybercrime exposure among migrants is strongly influenced by structural vulnerability factors rather than technology alone. The main vulnerability factors include economic vulnerability, irregular migration status, lack of legal protection, low digital literacy, language barriers, and dependence on intermediaries or informal networks.

Migrants who are economically vulnerable may be more likely to trust fraudulent job offers or pay recruitment fees. Migrants with irregular legal status may be afraid to report cybercrime due to fear of deportation. Migrants with low digital literacy may not be able to identify fraudulent websites or phishing attempts. Migrants who depend on intermediaries or smugglers may be exposed to fraud and exploitation through digital communication platforms.

This finding supports the proposed conceptual model that cybercrime exposure among migrants is influenced by the interaction between gender, migration status, digital literacy, economic vulnerability, and legal status.

Law Enforcement and Policy Challenges Increase Cybercrime Risks

The study also finds that law enforcement agencies face significant challenges in combating cybercrime targeting migrants. The main challenges include the cross-border nature of cybercrime, jurisdiction problems, digital evidence collection difficulties, and underreporting of cybercrime by migrant victims.

Many cybercrime cases involving migrants involve offenders, victims, servers, and financial transactions located in different countries, which complicates investigations and legal procedures. In addition, many migrants do not report cybercrime due to fear of deportation, lack of trust in authorities, language barriers, or lack of knowledge

about reporting procedures. Underreporting allows cybercriminals to continue targeting migrants without detection.

These challenges indicate that cybercrime targeting migrants cannot be addressed only through traditional law enforcement methods but requires international cooperation, digital investigation capabilities, victim protection mechanisms, and gender-sensitive cybercrime policies.

Summary of Findings

The main findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. Digitalization of migration processes has increased migrants' exposure to cybercrime.
2. Most cybercrimes targeting migrants are cyber-enabled crimes based on fraud and deception rather than technical hacking.
3. There are significant gender differences in cybercrime victimization among migrants.
4. Transnational organized crime groups increasingly use digital platforms in migration-related crimes.
5. Migrants' structural vulnerabilities such as economic vulnerability, legal insecurity, and low digital literacy increase cybercrime risk.
6. Law enforcement agencies face cross-border, legal, and digital evidence challenges in combating cybercrime targeting migrants.
7. Cybercrime targeting migrants should be addressed through integrated cybercrime, migration, and gender-sensitive policies.

These findings provide the basis for the discussion and policy recommendations presented in the following sections.

Discussion

This study examined the intersection between migration, gender, and cybercrime in the digital age and demonstrated that cybercrime risks affecting migrants cannot be understood only as technological crimes but must be analysed within broader social, economic, legal, and migration contexts. The findings of the paper indicate that migrants have become increasingly dependent on digital platforms throughout the migration process, including job search, recruitment, communication, financial transfers, identity verification, and social networking. This digital dependence has created new opportunities for cybercrime targeting migrants, particularly in areas such as online recruitment fraud, cyber-enabled trafficking, identity theft, financial fraud, sextortion, and online smuggling arrangements.

One of the key issues emerging from this study is that digital platforms have transformed migration-related crime from traditional physical crimes into cyber-enabled crimes. Recruitment, communication, control, financial transactions, and exploitation can now occur through digital platforms without direct physical contact between offenders and victims. This transformation has made migration-related crime more transnational, more organized, and more difficult to detect and investigate. Organized crime groups increasingly use social media, messaging applications, encrypted communication, digital payments, and online platforms to recruit migrants, coordinate smuggling routes, conduct fraud, and control victims. This demonstrates that cybercrime targeting migrants is closely linked to transnational organized crime and should be addressed through integrated cybercrime and organized crime strategies.

The discussion also highlights that cybercrime risks among migrants are strongly influenced by structural vulnerabilities rather than technology alone. Factors such as economic vulnerability, irregular migration status, dependence on intermediaries, limited digital literacy, language barriers, and lack of legal protection significantly increase migrants' exposure to cybercrime. This means that cybercrime victimization among migrants is not random but is shaped by social and economic inequalities. Migrants who are economically vulnerable or legally insecure are more likely to trust fraudulent job offers, use informal migration networks, or engage with risky digital platforms, which increases their exposure to cybercrime.

Another important issue discussed in this paper is the role of gender in shaping cybercrime victimization patterns among migrants. The study suggests that cybercrime risks are not gender neutral. Female migrants are more likely to experience cyber exploitation, sextortion, online harassment, and trafficking-related deception, while male migrants are more likely to be targeted by recruitment fraud, financial scams, and smuggling-related online fraud. LGBTQ migrants may face online blackmail, identity exposure threats, and digital harassment linked to discrimination and social stigma. These differences demonstrate that gender roles, labor migration patterns, social norms, and vulnerability to stigma influence the type of cybercrime risks faced by different migrant groups. Therefore, gender should be considered an important analytical variable in cybercrime and migration research.

The proposed conceptual model in this study also contributes to the discussion by suggesting that cybercrime exposure among migrants is influenced by the interaction between gender, migration status, digital literacy, economic vulnerability, and legal status. This model suggests that cybercrime risk increases when multiple vulnerability factors are present at the same time. For example, migrants with irregular legal status, low digital literacy, high economic pressure, and dependence on online recruitment platforms are more likely to become victims of cybercrime. This intersectional vulnerability approach helps explain why some migrant groups are more exposed to cybercrime than others and provides a framework for future empirical research.

From a policy perspective, the discussion shows that traditional cybercrime policies and migration policies are often developed separately, even though cybercrime targeting migrants occurs at the intersection of these two policy areas. Cybercrime policies often focus on technical crimes such as hacking, malware, or data breaches, while migration policies often focus on border control, visas, and labour migration regulation. However, cybercrime targeting migrants includes recruitment fraud, trafficking recruitment, financial fraud, and digital exploitation, which are linked to migration systems, labour markets, and organized crime networks. Therefore, policy responses should integrate cybercrime policy, migration policy, labour policy, and victim protection policy.

The discussion also highlights the importance of prevention rather than only law enforcement responses. Many cybercrimes targeting migrants rely on deception, fraud, and social engineering rather than technical hacking. This means that digital awareness programs, regulation of online recruitment platforms, verification systems for migration services, and safe reporting mechanisms for migrant victims may be more effective in preventing cybercrime than relying only on criminal investigations after the crime occurs.

Finally, this study contributes to the field of cyber-criminology by introducing migration and gender as important dimensions in understanding cybercrime victimization. Cybercrime research has traditionally focused on individuals, organizations, or financial systems, but less attention has been given to migrants as a specific vulnerable group in digital environments. By linking cybercrime, migration, gender, and transnational organized crime, this study provides an interdisciplinary framework that can be used for future research on cybercrime victimization, migration governance, and digital security policies.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that cybercrime targeting migrants is a multidimensional issue that involves digital technologies, migration systems, gender inequality, economic vulnerability, legal insecurity, and organized crime networks. Addressing this issue requires interdisciplinary approaches combining cybercrime prevention, migration governance, gender-sensitive policies, international cooperation, and migrant protection mechanisms.

Conclusion

This paper examined the relationship between migration, gender, and cybercrime in the digital age, focusing on how digital technologies have transformed the risks, victimization patterns, and criminal opportunities affecting migrant populations. The study demonstrated that migration processes are increasingly digitalized, including recruitment, communication, financial transactions, identity management, and migration planning. While digital technologies have improved access to information, employment opportunities, and financial services for migrants, they have also created new opportunities for cybercrime, fraud, exploitation, and organized crime activities targeting mi-

grants. As a result, migrants have become a particularly vulnerable group in cyberspace due to their dependence on digital platforms, economic vulnerability, legal insecurity, and limited access to protection mechanisms.

The findings of the paper show that cybercrime risks affecting migrants include online recruitment fraud, cyber-enabled human trafficking, identity theft and document fraud, online financial fraud, cyber exploitation, and sextortion. Many of these crimes are facilitated through social media platforms, online recruitment websites, messaging applications, digital financial services, and online communication networks. The study also showed that transnational organized crime groups increasingly use digital tools to recruit migrants, organize smuggling routes, control victims, conduct financial transactions, and launder illegal profits. This demonstrates that migration-related crime has become increasingly digital, and cybercrime and organized crime are now closely interconnected in migration contexts.

One of the most important findings of the paper is that cybercrime risks among migrants are not gender neutral. Female migrants are often more vulnerable to cyber exploitation, sextortion, online harassment, and trafficking-related deception, while male migrants are more frequently targeted by online recruitment fraud, financial scams, and smuggling-related online fraud. LGBTQ migrants may face digital exploitation, blackmail, identity exposure threats, and online harassment linked to discrimination and social stigma. These differences demonstrate that gender, migration status, digital literacy, economic vulnerability, and legal status interact to shape cybercrime victimization patterns among migrants. Therefore, cybercrime risks should be analyzed through a gender-sensitive and migration-sensitive framework rather than a general cybercrime framework.

The paper also highlighted the role of digital platforms in facilitating migration-related crime. Social media platforms, online recruitment websites, messaging applications, digital payment systems, and online identity systems are now central tools used by both migrants and criminal networks. Criminal groups use these platforms for recruitment fraud, trafficking recruitment, smuggling coordination, financial fraud, identity theft, and digital exploitation. This shows that digital platforms are not only communication tools but also environments where migration-related crime can be organized, facilitated, and concealed. Therefore, digital platforms play a central role in the transformation of migration crime into cyber-enabled crime.

Another important conclusion of the paper is the need for gender-sensitive cybercrime policies and migration policies that address cyber risks affecting migrants. Traditional cybercrime policies often focus on technical crimes such as hacking or malware, while migration policies often focus on border control and labour migration regulation. However, cybercrime targeting migrants occurs at the intersection of migration governance, labour markets, digital platforms, organized crime, and social vulnerability. Therefore, effective policy responses should include gender-sensitive cybercrime poli-

cies, digital awareness programs for migrants, regulation of online recruitment platforms, international police cooperation, protection mechanisms for migrant victims, and integration of cybercrime risk assessment into migration policies.

Finally, the paper suggests several directions for future research. Future studies could develop empirical research to test the proposed cyber-crime risk model for migrants by examining the relationship between gender, migration status, digital literacy, economic vulnerability, legal status, and cybercrime victimization. Researchers could also conduct comparative studies between different countries or migration routes to examine how cybercrime risks vary across migration systems. In addition, future research could explore the role of artificial intelligence, cryptocurrencies, and emerging digital technologies in facilitating migration-related cybercrime. Another important research direction is the study of law enforcement responses, digital investigations, and victim protection mechanisms in cybercrime cases involving migrants.

In conclusion, this paper argues that cybercrime targeting migrants should be understood as a multidimensional issue located at the intersection of cybercrime, migration, gender, and transnational organized crime. Understanding these interconnections is essential for developing effective prevention strategies, law enforcement responses, and protection policies for migrants in the digital age.

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14.

Sandra Božić[1]

THE WAR IN UKRAINE: MIGRATION AND HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The war in Ukraine has generated profound security, humanitarian, and migration-related consequences that extend beyond the regional framework of the conflict and significantly affect the contemporary European security environment. In addition to conventional military confrontation, the conflict has intensified large-scale migration flows, institutional pressures, and various forms of hybrid threats, including information operations, social destabilization, and the securitization of migration processes.

The paper examines the relationship between the war in Ukraine, migration dynamics, and human security challenges within the context of contemporary hybrid threats and changing European security policies. The main assumption of the research is that migration caused by contemporary armed conflicts can no longer be understood exclusively as a humanitarian issue, but increasingly represents an important security and political challenge for European states and institutions.

The theoretical framework is primarily based on the neorealist approach, complemented by the concepts of human security and securitization theory. The paper concludes that the war in Ukraine represents a contemporary hybrid conflict in which migration, human security challenges, and hybrid threats become integral components of the broader European security environment.

Keywords: *war in Ukraine, migration, human security, hybrid threats, securitization*

Introduction

The war in Ukraine can be viewed as the most complex security crisis in Europe after the end of the Cold War and one of the events that had a profound impact on European international relations in the XXI century, contributing to the transformation of the global security architecture (Stent, 2019). Although the conflict had a pronounced military and geopolitical dimension from the beginning, its consequences quickly went beyond the framework of classic interstate or regional confrontation and affected economic, security, energy and other changes in flows and processes in international relations. This

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conflict has triggered changes in the strategic environment at the global level, and together with the ongoing rivalry between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, contributed to growing insecurity, complexity and uncertainty regarding the determination of the future world order. In addition to the consequences and effects produced by this war in all areas of the strategic environment, special attention is drawn to the wave of migration from the war-affected area to the European Union, which was already trying to manage the crisis caused by migration from the Middle East and North Africa. The conflict on the territory of Ukraine demonstrated that wars are no longer limited exclusively to the military domain, but increasingly encompass the political, social and humanitarian dimensions of the wider international environment (Acharya, 2014; Farrell & Newman, 2019; Sharma, 2026).

One of the most visible consequences of the war is the displacement of the population, unprecedented in the modern history of Europe. According to international organizations, millions of Ukrainian citizens left the country after the beginning of the conflict on the territory of Ukraine in February 2022, while a significant number of people remained internally displaced within Ukraine itself (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], & International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2024). The scale and pace of migration movements have created strong pressure on European countries, especially in the areas of border control and protection, labor market, education, health systems and social protection. In this context, migration has become much more than just a humanitarian consequence of war and has grown into an important element of European political and security dynamics (UNHCR, 2024; Sharma, 2026).

In addition to the practical challenges generated by migration, various theoretical questions are also raised about the relationship between migration, security and international relations. The relationship between migration and security in recent decades occupies an increasingly prominent place in studies of international relations, and it is changing significantly.

Traditional approaches to security have long been primarily focused on the state, territorial integrity and military power. Such a framework still has, by default, significant analytical value, especially when it comes to the geopolitical dimension of the war in Ukraine. The neorealist approach starts from the assumption that the anarchic structure of the international system forces states to strive for survival and security, with the balance of power arising as a consequence of their behavior (Waltz, 1979). Mearsheimer (2014) additionally emphasizes that great powers strive to preserve or expand their own influence and prevent the strengthening of potential rivals. The war in Ukraine illustrates the continued relevance of these theoretical assumptions, especially through the relations of the Russian Federation, NATO and the European Union in this conflict. These developments suggest that a purely traditional state-centric interpretation is not enough

to understand the consequences of modern conflicts. Like any war of this scale, the war in Ukraine has shown that security crises threaten not only the territory and sovereignty of states, but also the basic living conditions and fundamental rights of populations. This is precisely why the concept of human security represents an important supplementary analytical framework. Unlike traditional approaches, the concept of human security deals with issues that are focused on the individual and social communities, that is, on the protection of everyday existential security. The Human Development Report from 1994 defines this concept through: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, social and political security (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). The war in Ukraine simultaneously affects almost all of the above-mentioned dimensions through population displacement, economic impoverishment, destruction of infrastructure, health risks and challenges to long-term social stability.

An additional theoretical framework for the analysis is provided by the securitization theory of the Copenhagen School. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde (1998) consider that security threats are not predetermined categories, but phenomena that are shaped through political and institutional discourse. Processes are securitized when political actors present a certain issue as an existential threat that requires special measures and a departure from usual political procedures and established practices. Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, migration was simultaneously presented as a humanitarian challenge, but also as a matter of internal stability, border protection and institutional resilience in the European political space. This dual logic illustrates the complexity of modern migration management and its new dimension of challenges, risks and security threats.

Along with the consideration of migration through the prism of the concept of human security, there is a need to analyze migration through the perspective of international relations. The appearance of migration as an important challenge in international relations is a relatively new phenomenon, because before that migration was the subject of security science studies. Increased politicization is the reason why migration is becoming a subject of study within the discipline of international relations. From the perspective of the neo-realist approach in international relations, the international system is anarchic, which is why states remain key actors in international relations and direct their behavior towards preserving security, survival and the balance of power in relation to other actors. (Waltz, 1979). International organizations, such as the European Union in this case, according to Mearsheimer (1995), reflect state calculations of their own interests based on concern over relative power. Furthermore, Mearsheimer (2014) additionally emphasizes that great powers strive to preserve or expand their own influence and prevent the strengthening of potential rivals, so the war in Ukraine confirms the importance of these patterns through confirmation of geopolitical competition and conflicting security interests of great powers in this part of the world.

The conflict on the territory of Ukraine further confirmed the importance of hybrid threats in contemporary international relations. Today's conflicts no longer involve only conventional military force, but also information operations, cyber activities, energy pressure, economic sanctions and political destabilization. Farrell and Newman (2019) demonstrate that international interdependence can become an instrument of political coercion and geopolitical competition. Critical infrastructure, which includes energy flows, financial networks, digital systems and information networks, in the Ukrainian case proved not to be neutral elements of globalization, but rather important instruments of a broader strategic conflict.

The theory of hybrid war emerged under the influence of the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine in 2014, when a discussion arose about new ways of using military and other instruments of national power. By analyzing its content, it can be seen that the aspects of practical manifestation have not yet been sufficiently studied, so there are serious discussions about the acceptability of the use of this phrase in a general theoretical consideration within the framework of military science. On the other hand, the practical aspects of the manifestation of the content of hybrid war are recognized as hybrid threats that seriously threaten the norms of the international legal framework, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The subject of this research is the analysis of the relationship between the war in Ukraine and migration processes in the context of European security policies in the period after 2022. The aim of the paper is to show how the migration caused by the war in Ukraine have an impact on the transformation of the security policies of the European Union, but also their implications for the global security order.

The main hypothesis of this paper is that the war in Ukraine has not only produced a military and humanitarian crisis, but also a deeper change in the European security environment, in which the problems of human security and migration are intertwined. Methodologically, the work is based on a qualitative analysis of the relevant scientific literature, institutional reports and available empirical data on the migration and security consequences of the war in Ukraine. The subject of the paper is examined through the perspectives of the Copenhagen school on international relations and the securitization theory, the neorealist approach in international relations and the theory of hybrid war.

Migration as a Challenge within the Concept of Human Security

Migration as a phenomenon has been discussed in the traditional approach to security and the concept of human security, whereby these approaches represent different perspectives in the broader framework of international security policy. The group of authors Buzan, Waever and de Wilde redefined the security paradigm by advocating a shift from a traditionally state-centric focus to a broader concept of human security (Buzan et

al., 1998, p. 4). Paris (2001) highlights the growing relevance of the concept of human security, which goes beyond the consideration of exclusively military threats and includes economic, ecological and social vulnerabilities (Paris, 2001). This way of consideration emphasizes the change from preserving the security of the state and territorial integrity to preserving the security and rights of the individual. The concept of human security is particularly important for understanding the consequences of migration crises.

Although forced migrations caused by armed conflicts in a certain territory during the duration of the conflict are not new, migration caused by the war in Ukraine represents one of the most visible indicators of the changes that the European space has undergone since 2022. The scale of population displacement from Ukraine, the speed of migration flows and their political consequences have shown that contemporary migration crises have a much wider significance than the classical humanitarian dimension. The consequences of the war no longer stop at the territory affected by the conflict, but directly affect the internal stability of the host countries, the functioning of institutions, and in this case also the creation of European policies.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 5.7 million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded worldwide by 2025, and almost 90% of them live in European countries such as Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Germany.

Within Ukraine, millions remain displaced; by mid-2022, approximately 8 million people were internally displaced persons (IDPs). The demographic pattern of displacement is particularly striking - around 90% of the refugees are women and children, as men between the ages of 18 and 60 were barred from leaving due to the state of emergency. (Sharma, 2026, p. 725)

According to the available data, it can be concluded that the war in Ukraine produced the largest displacement crisis in Europe after the Second World War (UNHCR, 2024; Sharma, 2026).

Based on available data, it can be concluded that migration caused by war produces long-term demographic and institutional consequences that go beyond the immediate framework of the conflict itself and affect the capacities of the receiving states (Korzeniewski et al., 2024; Sharapov & Komenda, 2025).

A particularly significant example is Poland, which during the first months of the war became a key transit and receiving country for Ukrainian refugees. Korzeniewski et al. (2024) state that during the first five weeks of the conflict approximately 2.3 million people crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border, while by mid-2023 more than 13 million crossings between the two states were recorded.

As already emphasized, the structure of migration flows further highlighted the concept of human security within this conflict, since the dominant part of the displaced population was women and children, while the number of men of military age was sig-

nificantly lower due to the mobilization regime within Ukraine. Such processes opened the issues of long-term social protection, access to education, health services and institutional support for the most vulnerable social groups.

According to the Human Development Report of the United Nations from 1994, the concept of human security is defined through the protection of the basic living conditions of an individual, including economic security, health care, food security, social stability and the protection of human dignity (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). The war in Ukraine just confirms such a transformation of security challenges, because the consequences of the conflict are reflected not only through military operations and territorial changes, but also through long-term and structural displacement of the population, the collapse of critical infrastructure, economic uncertainty and the growth of social vulnerability.

The health dimension of the migration crisis represents one of the particularly important aspects of human security. Korzeniewski et al. (2024) warn that a prolonged nature of the conflict increases the risk of worsening the health condition of the displaced population, resulting in an additional burden on the health systems of the host countries.

In addition to health challenges, war-induced migration in Ukraine has increased various forms of social and economic vulnerability. Sharapov and Komenda (2025) indicate that displaced persons are exposed to an increased risk of human trafficking, labor exploitation, discrimination and social marginalization, especially in conditions of prolonged legal and economic uncertainty. The authors state that long-term displacement further complicates the integration of migrants into host societies, especially when states are unable to provide a stable institutional framework for long-term social and economic inclusion. This is precisely why migration directly affects the political stability and institutional resilience of European countries.

The war in Ukraine also demonstrated that migration has direct political consequences for European countries and the European Union. The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive enabled accelerated access to legal residence, the labor market, education and health care for Ukrainian refugees (Shara-pov & Komenda, 2025). However, the European response also opened up the question of the selectivity of European migration policies. Different approaches to Ukrainian refugees compared to migrants from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq showed that the European Union's migration policies are not guided exclusively by humanitarian considerations, but remain linked to the political, cultural and identity criteria of the European space and foreign policy orientations and the broader distribution of political interests in the contemporary international system.

A special problem is the long-term integration of the displaced population. Lazarenko (2025) states that, despite formal protection mechanisms, a large number of displaced persons remain faced with economic insecurity, housing problems and long-term social uncertainty. The author uses the term "permanent temporariness" to describe

a situation in which formal legal status does not eliminate the daily vulnerability and institutional insecurity of displaced persons.

Migration, due to pressures on the internal political dynamics of the receiving country, becomes a challenge for it. Rising living costs, pressure on welfare systems and the issues of integration of the displaced population have contributed to the strengthening of populist and anti-immigration narratives in some European countries. Migration thus becomes a factor of the internal political stability of the European space (Sharapov & Komenda, 2025; Lazarenko, 2025). This is precisely why the migration crisis caused by the war in Ukraine has much wider consequences than the classic refugee waves of previous decades.

Based on the foregoing analysis, it can be concluded that the migrations caused by the war in Ukraine represents far more than a short-term humanitarian consequences of armed conflict. It also affects security policies, institutional capacities, political stability and social relations of European countries.

Hybrid Threats and Securitization of Migration

The war in Ukraine further confirmed that armed conflicts in the XXI century can no longer be analyzed exclusively through conventional theories of war. The physiognomy of modern wars is characterized by the simultaneous use of military, informational, economic, cyber and political instruments of action, while the boundary between war and peace becomes less and less clear. This is precisely why hybrid threats occupy an important place in contemporary security studies and represent one of the key analytical frameworks for understanding the war in Ukraine. The conflict showed that the destabilization of the adversary no longer implies only territorial control or military supremacy, but also the ability to influence information flows, energy security, political stability and social cohesion.

Modern warfare encompasses a wide range of activities that go beyond classical warfare. In addition to military operations, the war in Ukraine includes intensive information campaigns, cyber activities, propaganda narratives, economic pressure, energy conditioning and various forms of political destabilization. This relativizes the boundaries between military and civilian space, internal and external security, as well as between wartime and peacetime. Such multi-layered threats complicate the ability of states and international organizations to develop a coherent and long-term sustainable response to new security challenges.

The information domain represents a particularly important dimension of contemporary conflict. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated that narrative control, media mobilization and shaping of public opinion are becoming an integral part of modern warfare. Today, information operations are not only aimed at propaganda action against the opponent, but also at destabilizing domestic political stability, deepening social po-

larization and weakening trust in institutions (Farrell & Newman, 2019).

Migration in such a context becomes a particularly suitable issue for political instrumentalization and security rhetoric. Mass migration flows caused by the war in Ukraine have produced intense political debates within European societies about border protection, institutional capacities and long-term sustainability of migration policies. Consequently, migration increasingly enters the process of securitization, whereby a social phenomenon is framed as a security issue requiring special institutional measures.

The theoretical framework of securitization is particularly important for understanding how migration becomes a matter of security. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde (1998) believe that securitization implies a political and institutional process through which a certain phenomenon is presented as an existential threat that requires special measures and extraordinary responses. In the case of the war in Ukraine, migration is simultaneously presented as a humanitarian challenge and a potential security problem, especially in the context of border protection, internal stability and social cohesion of European countries. Such processes confirm that migrations become part of the security risk management strategy.

In addition to information operations and migration pressures, hybrid threats include the economic and energy dimensions of the conflict. Authors Farrell and Newman (2019) indicate that international interdependence can become an instrument of political and geopolitical pressure, especially in conditions of growing fragmentation of the international system. The war in Ukraine has shown that energy links, financial systems, global supply chains and communication networks can be used as instruments of strategic influence and political pressure. The post-2022 energy crisis has produced serious political and social consequences across Europe, including rising inflation, rising costs of living and further political polarization.

Cybersecurity represents a special dimension of hybrid threats. The war in Ukraine has shown that cyber activities today have become an important segment of the conflict, where attacks on information infrastructure, communication systems and state institutions can produce serious political and social consequences. Cyber space is emerging as a new dimension of international conflict, especially because digital infrastructure forms the foundation of the contemporary economic, energy and political systems. This further blurs the border between military and civilian space, since conflicts are increasingly affecting the infrastructure essential for the daily functioning of societies.

The connection between migration, hybrid threats and securitization shows how complex the European space has become after 2022. Today's conflicts no longer produce only foreign policy or military consequences, but deeply affect the internal stability of states, institutional capacities, political narratives and the daily life of the population. Therefore, the analysis of the war in Ukraine requires the integration of neorealist, human security and securitization theory approaches in order to understand the changes in the European environment and the transformation of international relations in the XXI century.

European Security Policies After 2022: Institutional Responses and the Transformation of Migration Management

The perception of migration as a security issue and threat within the European Union has evolved over time. Since its establishment, and especially since the end of the last decade of the last century, the European Union has successively adopted five-year programs that have significantly shaped migration policies (1999-2004), (2005-2010) and (2010-2015). During this period, the European Union gradually developed a legal and institutional framework for the formulation of common migration policies. The Stockholm program proposed several additional measures to strengthen the border control system, which became the basis of a unified system of migration and prevention of irregular migration. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, followed by events such as the invasion of Iraq, the Syrian civil war, the Arab Spring and the war in Ukraine were extremely important in creating and shaping this perception. Prior to the war in Ukraine, the development of security-oriented migration policies of the European Union was largely characterized by their association with terrorism. The members of the European Union have taken various measures to protect their borders since the attack on the World Trade Center. Since 2010, and especially since 2015, the European Union has been forced to consider and adopt new measures due to the increased number of migrants, so in 2020 the European Commission announced the "New Pact on Migration and Asylum", which set priorities in the migration policies of the European Union (European Commission, 2023a).

One of the most important institutional responses was the activation of the European Union Temporary Protection Directive in March 2022, for the first time since its adoption in 2001. The Temporary Protection Directive is the first instrument intended to strengthen the Common European Asylum system and ensure its functioning in the event of a large scale influx of displaced persons. The aim of this Directive is twofold: to establish minimum standards for the temporary protection of a mass influx of displaced persons and to balance the distribution of responsibilities between member states in the reception and management of the consequences of the reception of displaced persons (European Commission, 2023b).

The decision of the Council of the European Union enabled Ukrainian citizens to have accelerated access to legal residence, the labor market, education, health care and social services without undergoing lengthy asylum procedures (Sharapov & Komenda, 2025). This model of protection was a precedent in European migration policy, especially compared to the more restrictive approach during the 2015 migrant crisis. The activation of the Directive showed that the European Union in the conditions of a major crisis can relatively quickly develop a coordinated institutional response when there is a political consensus among the member states.

At the same time, the European response to the war in Ukraine opened up the question of the selectivity of European migration policies. Lazarenko (2025) indicates

that Ukrainian refugees in many European countries had a significantly more favorable legal and institutional treatment compared to migrants and refugees from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq during previous migration crises. Such a difference opened up the question of political, cultural and identity criteria that shape European migration regimes. The European Union thereby showed that the humanitarian response to migration crises is not completely universal, but that it is significantly related to the political perception of the conflict, cultural proximity and strategic interests of the member states.

At the same time, the war in Ukraine led to a redefinition of European security priorities. European countries have intensified investments in defense capacities, energy security, protection of critical infrastructure, cyber security and border management, while migration is increasingly integrated into the security strategies of EU member states. This further confirms the growing tendency of securitization of migration within the European political space.

An additional complexity of the European landscape lies in the fact that migration caused by the war in Ukraine is not the only migratory process shaping Europe after 2022. A broader analysis of migration flows and the security challenges emerging along Europe's periphery is therefore necessary.

From a broader theoretical perspective, the war in Ukraine has intensified ongoing processes of transformation within both the European and global order. Acharya (2014) argues that the contemporary international system is characterized by increasing fragmentation, regionalization and dispersion of power, making the international order less centralized and less predictable. The war in Ukraine just confirms these tendencies, since it has simultaneously produced a military, energy, migration and institutional crisis that goes beyond the limits of the conflict itself. In this context, migration, human security issues and hybrid threats become an integral part of the European security area and one of the key challenges of international relations in the XXI century.

In support of the previous claim, Kissinger also wrote that the stability of the international order depends on the existence of a minimum consensus among great powers regarding the rules of conduct, while its violation increases the probability of systemic crises (Kissinger, 2014).

The analysis demonstrates that the war in Ukraine generated not only a regional security conflict, but also a profound transformation of the European space. Migration, human security issues and hybrid threats have become interconnected elements of contemporary international relations. In this sense, the Ukrainian case has a theoretical significance that goes beyond the conflict itself and raises the question of the adequacy of existing approaches in explaining modern security processes. Although neorealism provides a convincing explanation of the logic of geopolitical rivalry and the behavior of great powers in the conditions of the anarchic structure of the international system (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2014), its explanatory power becomes limited when analyzing the long-term

consequences that the conflict produces at the social, economic and humanitarian levels. The war in Ukraine shows that the security consequences of contemporary conflicts are not exhausted by shifts in the balance of power among states, but also encompass transformation of domestic social structures, migration patterns and public policies.

On the other hand, approaches based on the concept of human security make it possible to understand the consequences that conflicts produce for individuals and society, but often do not sufficiently explain the wider geopolitical context in which such consequences arise (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). Considered in isolation, neither approach provides a complete explanation of the processes triggered by the war in Ukraine. This is precisely why the Ukrainian case confirms the need for a theoretical connection of different security perspectives rather than treating them as mutually exclusive.

The theory of securitization offers an especially valuable contribution by explaining how certain issues become objects of security policy (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). The war in Ukraine demonstrates that migration is not automatically perceived as a security problem, but becomes one through political and institutional processes of interpretation. The same migration flow can simultaneously be presented as a humanitarian obligation, a demographic opportunity or a security challenge, depending on the political and social context in which it is viewed. Such ambiguity is particularly visible in European states that simultaneously developed protection mechanisms for Ukrainian refugees and strengthened border controls towards other migrant groups.

The Ukrainian case therefore shows that contemporary security studies can no longer rest on strictly separated analytical categories. Military security, energy security, migration policy, digital infrastructure and social resilience have become interconnected elements of a wider security framework. A crisis in one area very quickly produces consequences in other sectors, creating chain effects that exceed the capacities of traditional sectoral policies. This interconnection is one of the key features of the modern European security area.

The empirical development of events after 2022 confirms such a tendency. Energy disturbances affected the growth of inflation and social costs; migration waves have opened up issues of integration, education and the labor market; information operations contributed to political polarization; while cyber threats have shown the vulnerability of critical infrastructure. None of these processes can be observed in isolation. On the contrary, their interconnectedness shows that the security of modern societies depends on the ability of institutions to manage complex and simultaneous crises.

From the perspective of European policies, the concept of resilience is particularly important. Unlike traditional approaches increasingly emphasize the capacity of societies to function under conditions of disruption. Resilience implies the ability of institutions to absorb shocks, adapt to new circumstances and preserve the basic functions of the system even during prolonged crises. The war in Ukraine has shown that resilience is no longer just a technical or administrative issue, but a central element of the European

Union's contemporary security strategy.

Viewed within a broader international context, the war in Ukraine further confirms ongoing processes of transformation within the global order. The responses of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have shown that the international system is becoming less hierarchical and that the number of actors who strive to lead an autonomous foreign policy independent of the great power rivalry is increasing (Acharya, 2014). Such developments indicate the gradual strengthening of polycentric tendencies and the weakening of the ability of one center of power to shape global rules of conduct.

The findings of this study therefore suggest that the most significant lessons of the war in Ukraine lie not only in its immediate consequences, but also in its exposure of structural transformations that have been unfolding within the European and international systems for an extended period of time.

The conflict has demonstrated that security, migration, energy, economy and social stability have become integral parts of a single analytical space. This is precisely why the Ukrainian case represents one of the most important studies of contemporary security transformation in the XXI century.

Conclusion

The war in Ukraine represents one of the most significant turning points in contemporary international relations and a conflict whose consequences far exceed the regional framework of Eastern Europe. The analysis conducted in this study showed that today's armed conflicts no longer produce exclusively military and geopolitical consequences, but simultaneously generate migration, humanitarian, institutional, economic and social processes that directly affect the stability of states and international organizations. Therefore, the war in Ukraine cannot be understood solely trough traditional concepts of interstate conflict and balance of power, but also trough a broader framework encompassing collective and individual security, migration processes, and contemporary hybrid threats.

Empirical data confirms that migration caused by war no longer represents only a short-term humanitarian consequence of armed conflict, but a long-term political and social challenge for European countries. Thus, migration becomes an integral part of the European space and one of the important elements of the policies of the European Union after 2022. The approach to designing future policies has changed, particularly with regard to crisis management under conditions of prolonged armed conflict. A particularly important contribution of this study lies in the analysis of the relationship between migration and the concept of human security. Contemporary conflicts do not only affect the military security of states, but directly impact the everyday living conditions of populations. This war demonstrated that these issues are becoming one of the central aspects of contemporary crises, especially in conditions of prolonged conflicts and mass migration flows.

At the same time, the analysis has shown that modern conflicts increasingly involve different forms of hybrid threats. Information operations, cyber activities, energy pressures and political destabilization have become integral components of the contemporary international environment, with the border between internal and external security becoming less and less clearly defined. The war in Ukraine additionally showed that migration can become part of a wider political and security dynamic, especially through processes of securitization and management of migration pressures within the European space. Precisely because of this, migration increasingly functions at the intersection of humanitarian, political and security issues.

The European response to the war in Ukraine has shown a certain degree of institutional flexibility and political coordination, particularly through the activation of the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive. However, the prolonged duration of the conflict has raised questions regarding the long-term sustainability of European migration policies, the capacity of social systems, the integration of the displaced population, and the growth of political polarization within European societies. This confirmed that modern migration processes have long-term political and institutional consequences that significantly affect the stability of the European space.

On a broader theoretical level, the war in Ukraine additionally confirms the processes of transformation of the contemporary international order, growing geopolitical fragmentation and redefinition of the European system after 2022. This shows that today's security challenges require a multidisciplinary approach that goes beyond the traditional military-political framework of international relations.

The war in Ukraine therefore represents one of the most significant examples of a modern conflict in which migration, security and humanitarian issues are intertwined and collectively shape the new dynamics of the European space in the XXI century.

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HUMAN SECURITY IN THE INTERNATIONALRELATIONS - TERM, CONCEPT AND PRACTICE[2]

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Abstract

TRespecting the political and geo-economic reality, in the last decades of the 20th century until today, the focus has been on people as a significant factor in international relations, political, economic, security and social. The aim of this research paper is to present the notion and concept of human security. With the help of the comparison method, the differences between the presented case studies, which relate to the practice of human security, were observed. In this sense, analysis and comparison form the methodological framework of this paper. The findings of this study point to the conclusion that there is no single definition or concept of human security. The result of this research is that human security models differ from country to country. The conclusion is that greater mobility of people conditioned the need for greater protection of individuals, and the need to create a national strategy on human security. The national strategy is the basis for inclusion in international human security strategies.

Keywords: *human security, theory, practice, human resources, international relations*

Introduction

Today, geopolitical and social processes indicate that after bipolar, then unipolar division, geoeconomic fragmentation and multipolarization of the world will follow. With geo-economic fragmentation, international human security (HS) has become threatened, by the influence of large states in the regions and beyond, where neither small states nor human resources have an influence on the solution of political and territorial outcomes, but primarily political and economic power. It was seen that HS is endangered in the context of wars - exposure to armed conflicts, nuclear wars, terrorist acts; and in the context of peace - exposure to climate change, financial crises, poverty, epidemics, criminalization of society and human trafficking. Thus, it becomes clear that the human factor must be protected from the negative influence of the power of international interest groups, company consortia and sluggishness of public policies. In ad-

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dition, the individual must adapt to changes: the use of artificial intelligence and the transformation of life and work that it brings. Information technologies dictate the pace of establishing new mutual relationships, thus creating new cognitive processes. They put a person in a position to move between real life and virtual reality. However, despite the intensive development and widespread use of artificial intelligence, the interest in human resources and human security is not abating. Human still remains the supreme value, and security is in fact its way of exercising human rights. In fact, man is the bearer of human rights and human security (Titko and Kurtynets, 2019). The most common discourse on the concept of human security moves around the relationship between resilience and vulnerability. The more resilient a person is, the less vulnerable they are, and as such, the more capable they are of returning to their pre-vulnerability state as soon as possible (Tanaka, 2015). For them, crisis management (ecological disasters, natural disasters) is important, as well as protection from domestic and foreign hostile actions. Individual and national security should complement each other. Individual security means the right to a dignified life and work, overcoming existential problems and well-being for all. Otherwise, well-being is encouraged by employment, for example, it is necessary to encourage female entrepreneurship (Dokmanović & Maksimović, 2026; Maksimović, Nikolić & Dokmanović, 2025). National security refers to protection from emergency situations, cyber security, protection from armed attacks and external aggression (military security) and protection from terrorism, crime, organized corruption and energy risks (Hastings, 2009). In this sense, in this conceptual research paper, methods of analysis and comparison were used to interpret the discourse of human resources in the context of international and security reality. Examples from practice such as the example of the European Union (EU) are discussed, followed by Asian models: the example of Japan, China and the ASEAN countries.

The Definition of Human Security

At the end of the 20th century, major crises were foreshadowed, such as the crisis of global poverty, pressure on the population and the underdevelopment of certain regions. These crises require a long process of recovery, and an increasing need to empower people, instead of marginalizing them. For these reasons, the United Nations (UN) submitted the Human Development Report in 1994 (UNDP, 1994), the essence of which refers to freeing people from the fear of scarcity. They gave a new definition of human security, emphasizing the individual component. This report emphasized that stability can be achieved if people are safe in their daily lives. Freedom from fear (protection from crime, violent conflicts, state and social repression) and freedom from scarcity (food, water, health security) stand out as two main components. However, job insecurity and environmental threats are a threat to every person and every type of country. The goal of

public policy makers should be to reduce elements that increase fear and increase better living conditions. A country that has problems defending itself against threats to human security actually means that it is 'weak' in terms of its defense capabilities.

Positions from 1994, the UN confirmed in 2016 in its report (UN, 2016), but also in Agenda 2030, requiring member countries to ensure the protection of people from constant threats such as disease, poverty, hunger, violence; and protection from repression in everyday life. Thus, human security has become an element of sustainable development. The implementation of the UN approach actually implies: that people's lives take place in freedom and dignity for all. This means all groups of people and communities; ensuring peace, respect for human rights (political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights). People's security does not imply the use of force, and does not replace state security; while strengthening the concept of national and local security. It also implies active participation in international security, which strengthens the cooperation of civil society organizations and encourages intergovernmental dialogue at all levels. At the same time, the sovereignty of the state and its territorial integrity must be respected.

For a clear definition of the concept of human security, it is necessary to emphasize the difference between traditional security and human security, which is viewed in the light of individual security (Taylor, 2004; Sudha, 2027). Table 1 shows those differences.

Table 1. *Traditional and human security*

Type of security	**Referent object**	**Responsibility to protect**	**Possible threats**
Tradicional security	The state	The integrity of the state	Interestate war Nuclear proliferation Revolution
Human security	The individual	The integrity of the individual	Disease Poverty Natural disaster Violence Landmines Human rights abuses

Source: *Taylor, 2004: 17.*

Then, in the further conceptual determination and definition of human security, an account of the main components of human security and the causes of insecurity, i.e. their opposites, is given. The opposite actually threatens human well-being (Table 2). People can be life-threatening due to deep poverty, natural disasters, as well as when they are victims of conflicts. This resembles the concept of 'structural violence' (Suhrke, 1999).

Table 2. *Definition of human security and dimensions of human insecurity*

Dimensions of human security	**Dimensions of human insecurity**
Economic security (guaranteed income)	Economic insecurity (unemployment, poverty, deprivation of economic opportunities)
Food security (access to food)	Food insecurity (hunger, sudden increase in food prices)
Health security (protection against diseases)	Health insecurity (malnutrition, epidemics, inability to access health care)
Environmental safety	Environmental insecurity (natural disasters, depletion of resources)
Personal security (protection from crime, violence)	Personal insecurity (physical violence, human trafficking, child labor)
Community security (protection from sectarian violence, protection of culture and betrayal of ethnic groups)	Community insecurity (crime, terrorism, religious and other identity-based tensions)
Political security (protection of human rights and freedoms)	Political insecurity (political repression, violation of human rights)

Source: *UNDP, 1994 and United Nations, 2016.*

Furthermore, there is no single definition of human security in the literature. One simple definition says that human security is the absence of insecurity and threats. A somewhat broader definition considers that human security is the basic tool for understanding contemporary crises. However, everyone agrees that security for people means freedom from fear (psychological or physical violence, persecution) and the desire for food, access to healthy living and health services and well-being. According to Sadako Ogata, former president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the definition of human security is a focus on each person, as well as giving priority to individual security. For example, people's safety is preserved if the epidemic does not spread. Also, peace in everyday life represents a kind of security. The concept of human security was defined in 2019 as the protection of people's lives, their means of livelihood, the protection of dignity, the empowerment of people and societies, the creation of a resilient society capable of resisting various dangers. At the same time, it is necessary to empower people, encourage them to get an education in order to realize their potential (JICA, 2022).

The Concept of Human Security

The UN report (UNDP, 1994) elaborates on people's way of life, their access to the market and social opportunities, whether they have the right to choose and the right to exercise it. In this sense, the security of people is hidden in the development of the economy and society, that is, in their changes. The positive changes that have occurred so far from a century ago to now are longer life spans, increased education levels, reduced infant mortality and better nutrition. Human security is not threatened only at the national (local) or personal level, it becomes threatened globally, by terrorism, human trafficking, epidemics, drug trafficking, pollution or the fear of nuclear disasters. Uncertainty is increased with the arrival of crises, and constant adaptation to emergency situations and crises is necessary. As a result, a new concept of security is needed, because the previous one, which referred only to interstate conflicts that were resolved with weapons, has been overcome.

When we talk about the HS concept, it can be concluded that there is no single concept for all countries. Rather, it can be said that there is a list of topics that each country sets as a priority, and this constitutes the country's national HS concept. HS is viewed individually, not en masse. The reason for this is that many threats have loomed over human security, namely those related to human existence. Threats have many causes, many elements, but this must not be a hindering factor to approach the protection of human resources. Human security in this sense requires the engagement of scientific disciplines such as social sciences and humanities, natural sciences (biological) and engineering. For example, natural resources (national wealth) can be a source of threats and conflicts for human security. Since the distribution of these resources requires human engagement, human resources can be subject to corruption, blackmail and similar pressures, and thus be brought into a situation of threat to dignity (Tanaka, 2015). Also, special attention should be paid to insurance against sudden disturbances such as, for example, climate change (Tadjbakhsh, 2005). In this sense, four elements of the concept of HS, i.e. elements of the strategy of HS, are listed here. They are:

A) Migrations - Migrations have become one of the more complex phenomena of today. They imply a change of residence from the territory of one state to the territory of another state, and whose stay lasts longer (Lutovac, 2023). When it comes to migration, globally, it can be said that migration from 1950 to 2015 was at the level of between 2.5 and 3.5 percent of the world's population. It was a time of relative stability, and since 2015 the situation has been changing (Haas et al. 2018). The biggest wave of migration happened in 2015, and that's when the Balkan route became important. It was significant from May 2015 to March 2016, when a large influx of migrants from Africa and the Middle East to Europe was recorded. It was often called a "black hole" because of the large influx of illegal migrants. However, with the agreement signed by the EU and Turkey in

2016, a decline in migrants to the EU was observed, and a dramatic increase in Turkey (Perišić, 2018). During that period, facing a large wave of migrants, EU member states were guided by their own interests. Germany was the least restrictive at the time, but that has changed today. As for the countries of the Western Balkans, it can be said that during the collapse of the SFRY, about 3.5 million inhabitants emigrated, mostly to Western Europe with the help of the diaspora, to countries such as Germany, Austria, France and Switzerland, and then Greece and Italy - which are particularly interesting for migrants from Albania. At the end of 2013, the diaspora of these countries consisted of 5.7 million people, with an emigration rate of 31.2%. As far as Serbia itself is concerned, from 2010 until today, its inhabitants emigrate mostly to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia, and this wave of emigration is not decreasing. With this, certain parts of Serbia are demographically emptied and this threatens sustainable regional development. Population emigration for Serbia represents a structural problem of the labor market. The younger population emigrates, the older population stays, and this creates pressure on the pension fund (Nikolić, Maksimović, 2024; Maksimović, 2018).

B) Cyber security - when talking about HS, another conceptual component is emphasized, which is digitalization. In recent times, there is a connection between international migration and digitization. Namely, digitalization is, on the one hand, used as a means to control and regulate the flow of people across border crossings. On the other hand, thanks to the development of information and communication technologies, information is more accessible to migrants, encouraging them to be mobile. People began to connect electronically, and today there is communication through applications, within social networks (virtually) and in the context of digital ecosystems. The protection of digital ecosystems includes the protection of people, information and data (Maksimović, Zabijakin Čatleska, 2025). For example, digitization and artificial intelligence have changed the way of communication, the way of payment, the way of selling and the way of work. The need to keep data secret (personal data), confidentiality and integrity has come. In this sense, it can be said that the need for information security and information protection has arisen. Users of information technologies are sometimes exposed to cybercrime and abuse, which can threaten human integrity (Olt, 2022). It is evident that it is increasingly difficult to maintain the security and privacy of information.

C) Business security - another conceptual item of HS is business security. In the broadest sense, it includes the absence of threats related to business interests. Threats can come from the internal and external environment. Business security is part of organizational policy and the task of top management, to deal with the

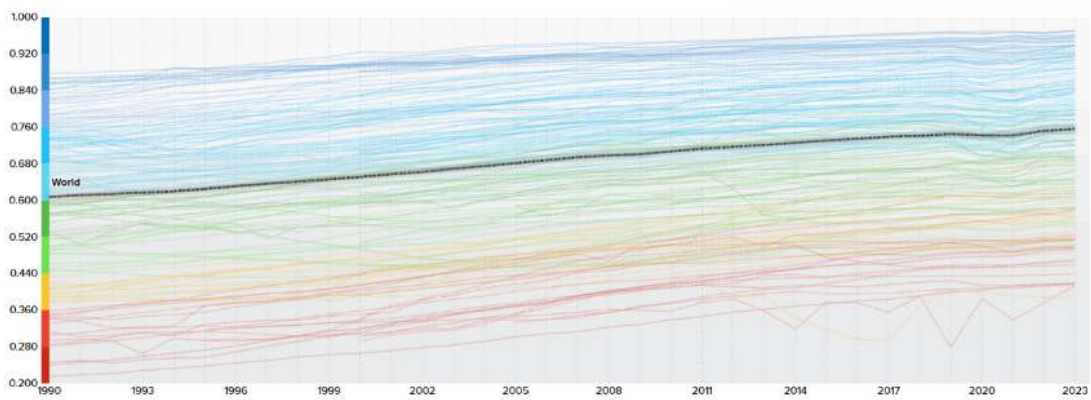
avoidance of threats and crises. It depends on human resources, and for them integrity is the most important thing. Carefully selected human resources, committed and responsible, dedicated to the achievement of organizational goals, reduce security risks and failures. If human resources are unmotivated, if they refuse training and further education, i.e. training in accordance with the needs of the company, they can threaten the security of business and the organization itself. Furthermore, in large companies there are personnel who are responsible for company security. This is not just about keeping safe through insurance, but about the safety and security of personnel, property and the reputation of the corporation. In recent times, it is the protection of information and data. Conversely, there may be people who may knowingly or unknowingly endanger the business and its security. Today, the biggest threats come from insiders, careless employees within the company itself. Most often it is considered that insiders, personnel who have physical access to IT data, can cause great harm to the company through actions such as: corruption, economic espionage, fraud, unauthorized disclosure of official and proprietary information, and violent injury to others. Their actions can have negative consequences for the company's operations and human resources. For example, there may be damage to equipment, financial losses, mistrust among employees (Poudin, 2019). As an example of negligent behavior that endangers human safety, the example of a large factory in the city of Minamata can be cited. She discharged waste water into Minamata Bay, and the water was contaminated with mercury. The disease that the population contracted due to mercury poisoning was called Minamata disease (Tanaka, 2015). Furthermore, there is security and consumer security, and it refers to the security of their personal data. However, food safety is also important, especially food purchased online.

D) Inequality - the issue of inequality is an old issue, which at the beginning of the 21st century was returned to the focus of researchers dealing with human resources, the labor market and human security (Milanović, 2023). Inequality implies inequality between groups of people who share a common identity. This problem is not isolated from other problems related to economic development and the labor market. If the state of a country's economy is such that it does not provide people with a decent life, it can be a source of human insecurity. When there is pronounced inequality of income, fluctuations in the prices of goods, it can threaten people's security (Duralia, 2016).

It is assumed that HS is provided when human development is at a stable level, and when these components are in balance with other elements of development. There is a human development index to measure HS. Until the definition of the human development index, the socioeconomic development of countries/economies was assessed

with the help of DBP per capita. However, the UN has developed a robust composite indicator, called the Human Development Index (HDI), which is based on the following aspects of human development, namely: health (measured by estimated life expectancy), knowledge (measured by adult literacy rate) and standard of living (as an economic component includes GDP per capita and purchasing power parity). The indicator refers to socioeconomic security, personal security and community security (Koundouri, & Dellis, 2022). This index is published annually and is more complex than the quality of life index. It actually includes health, economic, food, political, environmental, social and personal security, as well as well-being. The human development index in 2023 for Serbia was 0.833, and thus it is in 62nd place out of a total of 193 countries. Graph 1 shows the HDI by country from 1990 to 2023. On that list, the first is Iceland with 0.972, and the last country is South Sudan, with a value of 0.388 in the same year. In 2019, the Central African Republic had the lowest index since it has been measured, and it was 0.279. Japan is in 23rd place with an index of 0.925 and China is in 78th place with an index of 0.797 (UNDP, 2026).

Graph 1. *HDI by country from 1990 to 2023*



Source: *UNDP. (2026). Human Development Index (HDI).*

Practical Examples

In this research paper, an example of human security in the EU is given, as well as Asian models of human security through the example of HS Japan, China and ASEAN. The Asian perspective on human security encompasses many non-traditional issues such as migration, climate change, pandemics and resource scarcity. Until the beginning of the 20th century, human security was marginalized in Asia, but with the aforementioned threats it becomes relevant.

Example of Human Security of the European Union

The EU's experience on human security is based on the European Security Strategy from 2003, on the European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy, and on the Lisbon Treaty from 2007. Namely, the EU is an international actor, and its human security is conceived that way, based on its historical experience, and member countries have a broad view of HS. HS is based on freedom from fear AND freedom from scarcity. At the beginning of the tenth decade of the 20th century, the EU tried to ensure the stability of the HS by political and economic means. Today, it stands for non-military security measures, focuses on multilateral cooperation, building institutions and supranational integration. Instead of military coercion in international relations, it prefers security through persuasion, reward, attraction, negotiation, solidarity and democracy. It represents the idea of normative power, and respect for human rights is one of the basic principles of the EU. This implies the rule of democracy, equality, freedom, and respect for human dignity. It also implies respect for the rights of women, children and members of minorities. The goal is to achieve tolerance, non-discrimination, justice and equality between men and women. It was expressly emphasized that the central place in the concept of human security of the EU belongs to people, not states (the sovereignty of the member states is not key to it). The goal is for each person to develop their individual potential and for there to be no poverty (Marquina and Caballero-Anthony, 2008).

An Asian Perspective on Human Security

The Asian perspective on HS includes several examples from the Asian region, namely Japan, China and ASEAN.

A) The Japanese example of HS - In Japan, the concept of human security became significant after the Asian financial crisis in 1987. The HS model of Japan practically includes the concept of comprehensive national security (the concept of "sogo-anzenhoshou"). In this regard, the Japanese government prepared a report in which it listed as elements of national security protection from conventional military attacks, protection from disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, tornadoes and volcanic eruptions), as well as from disruptions in the import of natural resources and food. In addition, Japan has prepared other non-military and military means to ensure the complete protection of the population. Non-military means could include protection against biological and ecological disasters. For example, the COVID 19 pandemic, or previous bird flu epidemics, have led to threats to human survival and well-being. The experiences of the Great Kobe Earthquake in 1995 and the Great Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011 emphasized the need for psychological support for citizens affected by these disasters. The reason for this is that large-scale natural disasters leave profound

psychological effects on survivors (Tanaka, 2015). One of the factors that enabled northeastern Japan to limit the damage and recover quickly from the 2011 earthquake and tsunami may be that the society is egalitarian, homogeneous and endowed with high social capital. The Japanese model calls for the participation of all actors in the international community, namely international organizations, governments and civil society. The Japanese concept of human security includes protection from threats to human life, securing livelihoods and dignity (fighting poverty, environmental destruction, illegal drug trafficking, crime, infectious diseases and anti-personnel mines). Support must be provided to the elderly, people with disabilities, children and women and other socially vulnerable segments. They advocate a comprehensive and inclusive concept, like the UNDP, which implies prosperity for the benefit of the people, i.e. its survival and well-being. Japan assists other international agencies dealing with human security issues (Marquina and Caballero-Anthony, 2008; Shinoda, 2004).

B) China and human security - With the arrival of President Xi in 2013, the Central Committee of China called on its supporters to implement seven NOs: "No to promoting constitutional democracy, universal values, civil society (individual rights, challenging the Party's social foundation and its leadership of the masses), neoliberalism (total marketization), the Western idea of journalism through freedom of the press (contrary to Party discipline), historical nihilism against the history of the Party and New China, and No to any questioning of the nature of socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Tucker, 2022: 216). This was proclaimed by China as security and stability at the national level. For China, issues of human security are very important. China has been slow to react, and has had slow approaches to security challenges. However, on the international level, she singled out the fight against transnational crime and the fight against infectious diseases. Its goal is an all-out struggle, on an individual, national, international and global level. Moreover, the term used by Chinese scientists, leaders and mass media for this is 'non-traditional security'. Interest in this area exists in China, but on a slightly smaller scale than in the previous two cases, the EU and Japan. In the Chinese case study, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) considers human security together with social security to be the basis of national security. At the same time, the state has a central role in ensuring these conditions (Marquina and Caballero-Anthony, 2008). The Chinese approach differs from the other mentioned HS approaches that advocate individual freedom and the rule of law, because it emphasizes the importance of the state and the collective.

C) Case of ASEAN[3] - The concept of HS in ASEAN has attracted a lot of interest. It must be noted that the member countries are politically and culturally aligned and have overlapping interests in the region. Their main goal is to overcome the shortcomings in the matter of mutual trade exchange. Their primary priority is cooperation with countries in the region, followed by the USA, India, China, and Russia (ASEAN, 2026). After the Asian crisis of 1997, which had devastating effects on countries and problems that quickly followed each other, there was a clear definition of the HS concept in ASEAN. At first, some ASEAN countries were skeptical about the term "get rid of fear". That is why there was apprehension about the application of this concept. Nevertheless, the member countries agree that the HS in the region should have the character of comprehensive security. Comprehensive security should go beyond the military dimension, and include economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions. It is characterized by the stability of the regime and economic development, which appears as a means of domestic stability. This represents the dominance of the state-centric approach to security. ASEAN countries base their security on three main challenges: 1. poverty and economic dislocation (private sector debts, credit crisis, decline in consumption, decline in production, decline in investment, inflation, high unemployment, increase in social problems, labor migration, political unrest); 2. the problem of transnational crime (money laundering, illegal trade in drugs and weapons, cybercrime, piracy, credit card fraud, the threat of criminal organizations, threats to national administrations, threats to national borders, violations of the rule of law, threats to national economies through blackmail and corruption); and 3. infectious diseases (ever since the emergence of SARS in 2003, then H5N1 - bird flu in 2004, until COVID 19, 2020, the threats are serious to security and all aspects of the economy and all members of society). Despite the clear definition, ASEAN has a problem in terms of interstate cooperation and transnational response to these issues. There are sensitive issues for which there is no single answer to HS, namely the problem of corruption, domestic jurisdiction, exchange of sensitive information and extradition law. All these issues are understood as security issues and require institutionalized cooperation, given the great challenges that the states face within this initiative, but also in the entire region. They also require measures that lead to regional capacity building, especially for disease control (Marquina and Caballero-Anthony, 2008).

[3] ASEAN - (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is a economic and political alliance of countries: Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, Myanmar, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos and East Timor (ASEAN, 2025).

Conclusion

Human security is one of the most important issues of today. Exposure to increased information and transport communication has led to more frequent movement of people outside their country of residence, which often requires their protection. To that should be added the protection of people at work in the context of employees in international companies, which are not always favorable to the human resources segment, trying to perfidiously influence the reduction of their income. This leads to facing the challenges of endangering the health and life of employees. Disgruntled employees can threaten business security. However, there is no human security without state security or international security. The presented case studies indicate the diversity of approaches regarding HS. While the EU model concentrates on the rule of law, the Asian models have a wider range of elements related to HS. Each of these models has a specific environment, and therefore it is necessary to identify threats, risks and dangers for each model individually. Therefore, future research should pay attention to preventive protection and strengthening of human resources. The concept and strategy of human security must contain an in-depth analysis of sectors and actors that were not previously included in public policies and HS. It must include local resources, and at the same time have a multisectoral approach and ensure coordination between sectors.

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