

The Most Insidious Weapon Of The Changing World: Migration

Değişen Dünyanın En Sinsi Silahı: Göç

Teslim: 12 Mart 2022

Onay: 05 Kasım 2022

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ABSTRACT

In today's world, with changes in the perception of war and the replacement of conventional war by a new generation of wars, the tools and methods used by states and non-state actors for reaching their goals have changed, as well. One of these unconventional tools is human migration, and especially mass migration. In this framework, the use of migration as a weapon of sorts by states and non-state actors for reaching their various goals has increased, and the extent of the influence of this weapon, particularly in the hands of actors with evil intent, can be seen very clearly from experiences to date. The aim of the present study is to raise awareness among readers by creating a conceptual framework for the "weaponization of migration," a phenomenon that is increasing daily but has not been sufficiently studied academically yet. Since it does not reflect violence externally and is mostly conducted through discreet methods, it is difficult to distinguish when migration is being used as a weapon, in spite of its power. Therefore, raising awareness of the weaponization of migration, which is affecting the lives of all actors engaged in the international arena and especially states, as well as millions of people, is significant, and policymakers should be encouraged to develop and diversify defense mechanisms.

Keywords: *Migration, Mass Migration, Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Warfare, Weaponization of Migration, Migration Instrumentalization*

ÖZET

Günümüzde savaş algısının değişmesi ve konvansiyonel savaşların yerini yeni nesil savaşların alması ile, devletler ve devlet dışı aktörlerin hedeflerine ulaşmak için başvurdukları araç ve yöntemler de değişime uğramıştır. Bu tür alışılmışın dışındaki araçlardan biri de, insan göçü ve özellikle toplu göçlerdir. Bu çerçevede, göç hareketlerinin, devlet ve devlet dışı aktörler tarafından, çeşitli amaçlarına ulaşmada, adeta bir silah olarak kullanımı artmış; bu silahın, özellikle kötü niyetli güçlerin elinde, ne kadar etkili olabileceği bugüne kadar yaşanan pek çok tecrübeye görülmüştür. Bu çalışmada da esasen, kullanımı günden güne artan; ancak akademide yeterince çalışılmamış olan "göçün silahlaştırıl-

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ması” konusunda kavramsal bir çerçeve sunularak, okuyucuya farkındalık kazandırılması amaçlanmıştır. Zira, son derece etkili bir silah olmasına rağmen, görünüşte şiddet içermediği ve çoğu zaman gizli kapaklı yöntemlerle gerçekleştirildiği için göçün silahlaştırıldığı durumları fark etmek genellikle kolay olmamaktadır. Dolayısıyla, başta devletler olmak üzere, gerek uluslararası alanda faaliyet gösteren tüm aktörleri, gerekse milyonlarca insanın yaşamını yoğun olarak etkilemekte olan göçün silahlaştırılması kavramı konusundaki farkındalığın artırılması, bu konuda savunma mekanizmalarının geliştirilmesi ve çeşitlendirilmesi konusunda politika yapımcıların teşvik edilmesi bakımından da önemli görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Göç, Kitlesele Göç, Hibrit Tehdit, Hibrit Savaş, Göçün Silahlaştırılması, Göçün Araçsallaştırılması*

1. INTRODUCTION

It can be seen that with the transformations being experienced in the world, actors, and especially states, apply different strategies to reach their goals instead of using conventional combat methods. With every passing day, new strategies are added to those that already exist. Since these new types of strategies are unprecedented methods and prima facie do not involve violence like traditional wars, they can be practiced without drawing too much attention, and because they cannot be identified easily, they may be far more effective compared to conventional methods.

One of these strategies involves various ways of exploiting migration and especially mass migration, which occurs with the resettlement of significantly large groups of people. In this framework, actors, according to their desires, manage flows of migrations that have started due to reasons beyond their own control, and sometimes they also directly engineer planned migration flows.

Since it is a phenomenon that can create effects that threaten the security of states, mass migration is now being evaluated within the context of the concepts of hybrid threats and hybrid war², which emerged within a framework of war that has been transformed over time and are now heard of more and more often. In this respect, forced population shifts and migration are regarded as hybrid threats³ and they serve as instruments that can be applied in hybrid warfare, wherein armed conflicts and conventional weapons are also included. What all of this means is that human migration can be used as a weapon and a tool of war. The term “weaponization of migration” refers to the exploitation of migration as such a tool.

² For further information on this topic, please refer to Piotr Łubiński, “Hybrid Warfare or Hybrid Threat – The Weaponization of Migration as an Example of the Use of Lawfare – Case Study of Poland,” *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 51 (2021): 43-55.

³ Qiao Liang and Wand Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Panama City, Panama: Pan American Publishing Company, 2002), 123; Sean Monaghan, “Countering Hybrid Warfare: So What for the Future Joint Force?,” *PRISM: The Journal of Complex Operations* 8, No. 2 (2021): 89, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/prism/prism_8-2/PRISM_8-2_Monaghan.pdf.

Within the scope of the new generation of wars that include approaches to the various weaknesses of the involved structures and the use of many different strategies all at once, in contrast to conventional wars, many states and non-state actors can now be seen applying the weaponization of migration more often as a so-called non-violent approach.

The steady increase in the use of migration as a weapon forces states and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the European Union (EU) to take new precautions regarding this situation and to improve their current defense mechanisms. For instance, the EU recently focused on producing legislative tools that will provide protection against the weaponization of migration for Member States and the EU in general, introducing the term “migration instrumentalization,” which is a type of weaponization of migration, into its legislation.

The topic of migration, in general, is a subject of academic interest and many academic studies have been conducted on its different aspects. However, the deliberate use of migration as a weapon of sorts by states and non-state actors to meet political, military, or other goals remains an understudied topic.

Within this scope, the aim of this paper is to provide a framework for the weaponization of migration and types of weaponization of migration and to raise awareness about this insidious trend. In doing so, it is aimed to assist the relevant authorities in the identification of applications of weaponization of migration, which are rapidly increasing in today’s world, and to encourage the development of defenses against this weapon.

2. Concept and Background

Greenhill, who first introduced the term “weaponized migration” and has published comprehensively on the subject⁴, defined the concept of weaponized migration as “the manipulation of population movements as operational and strategic means to political or military ends⁵.” This type of manipulation can be realized by making threats about taking actions, as well as by directly performing those actions⁶. While Greenhill’s definition provides a fundamental idea about what weaponized migration is, the developments and transformations occurring in the world have given rise to the need for a broader understanding of the concept. If we are to give a more general definition, the weaponization of migration is the exploitation of voluntary or forced migration and refugee flows created deliberately for certain reasons or previously created by a third party with political,

4 Hans Schoemaker, “Allegations of Russian Weaponized Migration Against the EU with the Blackest Intention?,” *Militaire Spectator* 188, No. 7/8 (2019): 364, <https://www.militairespectator.nl/thema/internationale-veiligheidspolitiek/artikel/allegations-russian-weaponized-migration-against-eu>. Some of Greenhill’s publications are as follows: Kelly M. Greenhill, “Extortive Engineered Migration: Asymmetric Weapon of the Weak,” *Conflict, Security & Development* 2, No. 03 (2002); Kelly M. Greenhill, “Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War,” *Civil Wars* 10, No. 1 (2008); Kelly M. Greenhill, “Engineered Migration and the Use of Refugees as Political Weapons: A Case Study of the 1994 Cuban Balsemos Crisis,” *International Migration* 40, No. 4 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00205>; Kelly M. Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2010); Kelly M. Greenhill, “Migration as a Weapon in Theory and Practice,” *Military Review* 96, No. 6 (2016).

5 Greenhill, “Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War”, 7.

6 Nathan D. Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration: Examining Migration as a 21st Century Tool of Political Warfare” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 2017), 5.

military, or any other types of goals⁷. There are no limitations on who can perform such exploitation and it can be performed by both states and non-state actors.

The first thing that comes to mind with the expression of “weaponization of migration” is terrorism by violent extremist organizations creeping into migration and refugee flows and conducting terrorist attacks in the country of asylum under the guise of refugee status⁸. However, this is only one type of instance where migration is used as a weapon; there are many more forms of weaponization of migration. These variations constantly change within the framework of this developing and transforming concept, and the only limit to this dynamic structure is, unfortunately, the imagination of the involved actors and policymakers⁹.

There have been very overt examples of weaponization of migration in recent history. The following can be regarded as typical examples. Muammer Gaddafi, who was in power in Libya from 1969 to 2011, paid a visit to Italy in 2010 and said: “Tomorrow Europe might no longer be European, and even black, as there are millions who want to come in.” This was in reference to African migrants attempting to reach Italy illegally from Libya, and he wanted the EU to pay Libya at least 5 billion euro a year to stop that irregular African immigration and avoid a “black Europe¹⁰.” Gaddafi also stated “We don’t know if Europe will remain an advanced and united continent or if it will be destroyed, as happened with the barbarian invasions¹¹,” highlighting the fragility of Europe in the face of migration and signifying his weaponization of migration in this regard. Another example of migration being used as an overt weapon that is constantly mentioned is Fidel Castro’s encouragement of more than 100,000 Cubans to flee to the United States in the Mariel boatlift with the expectation of gaining political concessions from the United States in 1980¹².

However, actors using migration as a weapon do not always put forward their intentions as explicitly as in the examples above. In many instances, they move quite subtly. The effects of the strategies implemented in such cases may only be seen after many years, usually when it is too late to do anything about the situation. Russia’s actions in the unlawful “special military operation” that began in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, offer a prime example of an actor being extremely subtle in the weaponization of migration while preparing the groundwork of operations against adversaries.

As briefly mentioned above, although we encounter such examples of both overt and discreet weaponization of migration in various stages of history, it is obvious that the academic resources addressing the weaponization of migration are limited.¹³

7 Ibid., 6.

8 Ibid., 1.

9 Ibid., 1.

10 “Gaddafi wants EU cash to stop African migrants,” *BBC News*, August 31, 2010. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11139345> (07.05.2022).

11 Ibid.

12 Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration*, 89-106; Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 1; “How Migration Became a Weapon in a ‘Hybrid War,’” *Financial Times*, December 5, 2021. <https://www.ft.com/content/83ecec7e4-cc71-45b5-8db7-766066215612> (07.05.2022).

13 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 1-2.

It was Teitelbaum¹⁴ and Weiner¹⁵ who first put forth the thesis of governments creating migration flows for certain goals as means of foreign policy¹⁶. In this regard, Teitelbaum gave historical examples of the migration of US nationals to the Mexican territory that is now Texas, Britain's forced migration of convicts to North America and Australia, the settlement policy implemented by Israel in the West Bank, and several such movements occurring throughout the history of Russia¹⁷. Other studies were conducted to broadly reveal the goals of states in deliberately creating migration flows after the initial works of Teitelbaum and Weiner¹⁸.

American political scientist Kelly Greenhill, the creator of the term "weaponization of migration" and the most significant contributor to the literature on this subject, referred to the deliberate migration flows created by states as "strategically engineered migration" and categorized strategically engineered migration within four categories: dispossessive, exportive, militarized, and coercively engineered migration¹⁹. However, Greenhill particularly focused on coercively engineered migration in her studies and primarily developed her theories in that field. Furthermore, Greenhill based her studies on inter-state migration and generally considered states as the actors that are weaponizing migration²⁰.

However, when today's conditions and operational environments are considered in the context of weaponized migration, weaponized migrations arising from intra-state issues should be addressed as well as deliberately exploited inter-state migrations, and it should also be highlighted that migration can be weaponized by non-state actors and IGOs as well as by states²¹. In our opinion, the broadest possible perception of the actors that can weaponize migration should be adopted and it must be kept in mind that both governments and groups bearing a common identity (e.g., political, economic, or religious groups) can be actors in the weaponization of migration.

3. Types of Weaponization of Migration

When the works of the authors who have contributed to this field to date are evaluated, the weaponization of migration can be categorized into seven groups²². These are the coercive, dispossessive, exportive, economic, fifth-column, militarized, and political/propaganda variants of weaponized migration.

While it is possible to use only one form of weaponization of migration in a given instance (for example, the coercive variant), in many other instances several variants are

14 Michael S. Teitelbaum, "Immigration, Refugees, and Foreign Policy," *International Organization* 38, No. 3 (1984): 437.

15 Myron Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," *International Security* 17, No. 3 (1992): 100, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539131>.

16 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 3.

17 Teitelbaum, "Immigration, Refugees, and Foreign Policy," 438.

18 Karen Jacobsen, "Factors Influencing the Policy Responses of Host Governments to Mass Refugee Influxes," *International Migration Review* 30, No. 3 (1996): 665, doi: 10.2307/2547631.

19 Greenhill, "Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War," 8.

20 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 4.

21 Ibid., 4.

22 Ibid., 6.

used together²³.

In the case of some of these variants of weaponized migration, the relevant challenger often deliberately starts the migration. In other words, migrations are strategically engineered. In the case of some other types, pre-existing situations are exploited with an opportunist approach²⁴. In this framework, it is seen that in cases of the fifth-column and political/propaganda variants, it is generally more common for the challengers to strategically engineer the migrations. On the other hand, in cases of the coercive, military, and economic variants, actors generally benefit from pre-existing opportunities²⁵.

When the examples of weaponized migration observed to date are considered, it is unsurprisingly seen that this tool is most often used by nation-states. It has also been found that different types of governing bodies (e.g., democracies versus authoritarian governments) are prone to applying different variants²⁶.

Another important research finding is that non-state actors overall weaponize migration much less often, and in the rare instances that they do weaponize it, they utilize a more limited number of the variants listed here. On the other hand, state actors can approach weaponized migration in many other ways and can thus act within a wider range of the spectrum²⁷. For instance, IGOs such as the EU participate in the weaponization of migration in a very limited way due to the difficulty of IGOs with many members with conflicting interests coming to an agreement in this regard²⁸. When we consider that these types of organizations are generally established for economic reasons, the most likely point to be agreed upon by members is the economy; therefore, IGOs generally resort to economic or coercive (with reasoning related to the economy) variants of weaponized migration²⁹.

In the following sub-sections, explanations of all of these variants are provided.

3.1. Coercive

The coercive variant is the type of weaponized migration for which the most arguments are produced. It occurs when a challenger uses human migration or threats of using it to change certain behaviors of the targeted subject or to extort certain concessions (mostly political) from them³⁰.

Since the coercive type of weaponized migration is generally embedded within the dispossessive, exportive, or militarized variants, which are strategically engineered and camouflaged, its prevalence is generally under-recognized and its significance is under-estimated³¹.

23 Ibid., 9.

24 Ibid., 9.

25 Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration*, p. 14; Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 9-10.

26 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 10.

27 Ibid., 10.

28 Ibid., 9-10.

29 Ibid., 11.

30 Greenhill, "Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War," 8; Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 7.

31 Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration*, 14.

When a challenger employs this variant, it does not restrain itself from using important conventions and protocols on refugees and immigrants or international human rights laws to drive the targeted subject into a corner for its own goals³².

The Human Rights Declaration of 1948 includes Article 14 on the right of asylum, which states: “(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution³³.” The subsequent 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol³⁴ identify who is a “refugee” and draw the lines of both refugee rights and the legal obligations of states to protect those rights. The essential principle underlying under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol is the non-refoulement principle mentioned in Article 33 of the Refugee Convention. According to this regulation, no refugees should be expelled or returned to a country where they would face serious threats to their life or freedom on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion³⁵.

These types of fundamental international law texts are put forward in discourses and arguments in which migration is coercively weaponized, and relevant doctrines have stated that these texts make states vulnerable to coercive weaponized migration³⁶. Essentially, such expressions used for important and fundamental legal texts often have a tone that conflicts with the importance the texts bear in terms of human rights, and, disturbingly, they are often shallow expressions. At the same time, it is a reality that such conventions aimed at the protection of the rights of refugees and migrants in particular and human rights in general may force states to decide between making certain concessions and paying high prices while accepting refugees or protecting their own interests while ignoring issues of human rights and refusing refugees³⁷.

When considered from a historical perspective, in previous years, it was noted that those who utilized this variant or threatened to do so were much weaker in terms of military strength than the states they aimed to confront³⁸. However, this has recently started to change and the military power of most challengers is now greater than that of their target subjects³⁹.

Russia, Iran, and Pakistan are among the states that have used coercive weaponized migration successfully⁴⁰. On the other hand, the EU, which is an IGO, also uses this variant successfully. In doctrine, when cases of coercive weaponized migration are addressed, the examples of the EU and Türkiye are often given, and it is particularly noted that Tür-

32 Here the term “lawfare” is been used in reference to the use of law as a weapon. For further information on this concept, see Orde F. Kittrie, *Lawfare: Law as a Weapon of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Craig Martin, “What are the Limits on Lawfare?”, *Opinio Juris*, May 5, 2019. <http://opiniojuris.org/2019/05/05/what-are-the-limits-on-lawfare/> (10.07.2022).

33 United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, 10.12.1948, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>, (15.05.2022).

34 UNHCR, “Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees”, <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>, (15.05.2022).

35 UNHCR, “About The 1951 Refugee Convention”, <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>, (15.05.2022).

36 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 7.

37 Ibid., 11.

38 Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration*, 23-31.

39 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 12.

40 Ibid., 12.

kiye uses the migrants and refugees within its borders, most of whom are from Syria, to put pressure on the EU⁴¹. A brief review of publications on this topic, and especially of those that originate from the EU, reveals a clear bias, with authors often blaming Türkiye⁴². The existence of this bias among publications that address the subject from only one perspective supports the argument that there is a deliberate effort to manipulate negative perceptions of Türkiye regarding Syrian immigrants, which in itself is a typical example of the use of another type of weaponized migration, namely the political/propaganda variant. However wrong and biased it would be to claim that Türkiye has never applied coercive weaponized migration against the EU, it would be equally biased and wrong to portray Türkiye as the villain and the EU as the victim. On the contrary, the issue of immigrants and refugees has become a crisis for Türkiye in the past few years, and most of the moves made against the hypocritical position of the EU as a so-called human rights advocate have been Türkiye's attempted solutions for ending that crisis.

3.2. Dispossessive

The dispossessive variant of weaponized migration generally occurs when an actor uses migration as a tool to capture desired territory or resources that are under the control of the targeted subject⁴³. Ethnic cleansing movements, entailing the purging of a group deemed to be a political, ethnic, or economic threat, are also considered within the dispossessive category of weaponized migration⁴⁴.

The dispossessive variant, on top of having long been a frequent type of weaponized migration, is one of the most commonly applied forms. Challengers that utilize the dispossessive variant are most often states⁴⁵. However, it is also possible for non-state actors and even ethnic groups to rely on the dispossessive form.

The Israeli settlements in the West Bank, as noted above, are the most outstanding example of the first type of weaponized migration that is used to capture fertile lands and are also described as dispossessive migration⁴⁶. Most of the Israeli governments in power since the Arab-Israeli wars began in 1967 have supported Jewish migration financially (for example, by providing additional tax benefits to settlers and encouraging tourism and agricultural projects in the region⁴⁷) and militarily, and have used migration as a weapon to stop the disputed region from becoming a Palestinian state in the future⁴⁸.

The second type of dispossessive weaponized migration is that with the aim of ethnic cleansing. Among the clearest examples of this type are the attacks by ISIS targeting eth-

41 Ibid., 14; Greenhill, "Migration as a Weapon in Theory and Practice," 25.

42 See, e.g., Arthur Jennequin, "Turkey and the Weaponization of Syrian Refugees," Brussels International Center Policy Brief (2020), <https://www.bic-rhr.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/ME%20Policy%20Report%20-%20Turkey%20and%20the%20Weaponization%20of%20Syrian%20Refugees%20-%20Jan%202020.pdf>.

43 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 7.

44 Greenhill, "Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War," 8.

45 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 25.

46 Ibid., 25.

47 Hugh Lovatt and Mattia Toaldo, "EU Differentiation and Israeli Settlements," European Council of Foreign Relations Policy Brief (2015): 4.

48 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 25-26.

nic Yazidis and non-Sunni Muslim populations in the north of Iraq in 2014⁴⁹. During these attacks, approximately 3,100 people were killed directly by execution or by forced starvation on Mount Sinjar⁵⁰. Additionally, ISIS conducted the forced evacuation of 830,000 people from the region⁵¹ and thus applied dispossessive weaponized migration.

In doctrine, it is stated that challengers using dispossessive weaponized migration combined with other types of weaponized migration may be interpreted as actors who aim not only for regional success but also pursue other political and military goals⁵².

3.3. Exportive

The exportive variant of weaponized migration typically occurs when the government in power deports a group that has been labeled as “opposition” to strengthen its own power. Migration flows emerging because of the displacement of populations can also be used to destabilize the opposition politically⁵³. In most cases, the involved actors pursue two goals at the same time; they seek to create imbalanced conditions for their enemies by warding off the opposition on the one hand and by creating destabilizing migration flows on the other⁵⁴.

The governments of former European colonies such as Sudan, Congo, and Zimbabwe in Africa still use the exportive form of weaponized migration by exporting the opposition to strengthen their ruling power⁵⁵. This approach is said to be most often applied after revolutions, when the relevant actor desires to reshape the demographic structure of the region⁵⁶.

One of the clearest examples of the exportive variant of weaponized migration being used to imbalance enemies is Iran’s exportation of Afghan refugees for various reasons, who sought asylum in Iran following the Soviet invasion. Iran sent them back to Afghanistan on occasions, with the aim of destabilizing that country. For example, in 2007, Iran exported 80,000 Afghans in protest to Afghan President Hamad Karzai allowing an official NATO presence in Afghanistan⁵⁷. The Iranian government has adopted exportive migration for other reasons, as well, and for a long time used the Afghan refugees that were under its protection to control the government of Afghanistan and prove its power over it⁵⁸.

Another method frequently used by relevant actors in cases of exportive migration is to

49 Ibid., 26.

50 Valeria Cetorelli, Isaac Sasson, Nazar Shabila, and Gilbert Burnham, “Mortality and Kidnapping Estimates for the Yazidi Population in the Area of Mount Sinjar, Iraq, in August 2014: A Retrospective Household Survey,” *PLoS Medicine* 14, No. 5 (2017): 8-12, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002297>.

51 Amnesty International, “Ethnic Cleansing on a Historic Scale: Islamic State’s Systematic Targeting of Minorities in Northern Iraq,” August 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/mde140112014en.pdf> (25.05.2022).

52 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 27.

53 Greenhill, “Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War,” 7.

54 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 27.

55 Ibid., 29.

56 Greenhill, “Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War,” 9.

57 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 29.

58 Ahmad Majidyar and Ali Alfonch, “Iranian Influence in Afghanistan: Refugees As Political Instruments,” *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook*, 5 (2010): 1-3; Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 29.

create a “rescuer” image while re-establishing balance, in spite of the fact that the same actor had deliberately generated the imbalance by triggering a migration flow. Iran, for example, has frequently portrayed itself as a rescuer in the case of Afghanistan and has taken action to solve problems that it itself created in the regions of Afghanistan, especially in the regions that have no NATO presence⁵⁹.

3.4. Economic

The economic form of the weaponization of migration emerges when an actor uses inward or outward migration or any displaced civilian populations for economic profit⁶⁰.

In line with the importance of economic elements continuously increasing in the world, the economic variant of weaponized migration is utilized more often. In this framework, in addition to states, IGOs and even transnational criminal organizations exploit human migration in many different ways for economic gain⁶¹.

According to a recent doctrinal classification, the economic variant can be sub-divided into four smaller categories⁶². These include the use of migrants as inexpensive labor, the exportation of labor from among the challenger’s own population for profit, the exaggeration of refugee numbers, and efforts to obtain economic profit from populations living abroad via remittances or taxes⁶³. From among these categories, the use of refugees as inexpensive labor and the exaggeration of the number of refugees are most commonly employed. However, this categorization should not be regarded as restrictive, because the weaponization of migration for economic purposes can be realized in many diverse ways.

3.5. Fifth Column

A “fifth column” is defined as “a group of secret sympathizers or supporters of an enemy that engage in espionage or sabotage within defense lines or national borders⁶⁴.” As a variant of weaponized migration, the fifth-column type reflects a long-term strategy of sending immigrants to the land of the targeted subject, or organizing immigrants that are already in the targeted territory, with the aim of harming that subject⁶⁵. The challenger might choose to use its own citizens or sympathizers living abroad as the fifth column against the targeted enemy⁶⁶.

Since they are extended over a long period of time and undertaken discreetly, fifth-column operations as a variant of weaponized migration are usually hard to discern. In doctrine, acts such as espionage activities or putting pressure on the target government and engaging in labor strikes to disturb the peace can be seen as examples of secretly conduct-

59 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 30.

60 Ibid., 7.

61 Ibid., 30-31.

62 Ibid., 31.

63 For more detailed information, please see Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 31-35.

64 Fifth-column definition, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fifth%20column>, (14.05.2022).

65 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 7 and 35.

66 Ibid., 7 and 35.

ed fifth-column efforts⁶⁷. However, it is also possible to execute fifth-column operations in open and more violent ways.

3.6. Militarized

The militarized variant of weaponized migration can take various forms, but it primarily entails the forced displacement of a population to disrupt enemy operations or to prevent military support from being provided for the the opposition⁶⁸. The militarized variant can also occur when people who plan to engage in terrorist activities infiltrate the target territory via migration or asylum, legally or illegally, or recruitment of dislocated civilians, generally by force, to increase the military manpower⁶⁹.

The first type of the militarized variant, aimed at blocking enemy operations, was seen when the Soviets encouraged refugees to move toward Iran and Pakistan to deprive Afghanistan of guerilla support through actions such as carpet bombings of specific locations during its invasion of Afghanistan⁷⁰. Another example in more recent history is how, in December 2015, after Türkiye shot down a Russian Su-24M aircraft on the Türkiye-Syria border, Russia began bombing the Türkiye-Syria border and dislodged thousands of internally displaced Syrians sheltering in that area. This created a new migration flow toward Türkiye⁷¹.

Another way in which the militarized variant occurs is with people who will engage in terrorist activities legally or illegally infiltrating the target territory via migration or asylum-seeking. This sub-variant has led to anxiety in the EU as it has dealt with recent migration flows, and particularly those from the Middle East and North Africa. For example, this sub-variant lay in the background of the success of some terrorist attacks conducted in Europe, such as that in Paris in November 2015⁷².

Another sub-variant of the militarized form of the weaponization of migration, is the recruitment of dislocated civilians, mostly by force, to increase military manpower. With this sub-variant, the relevant actor uses displaced civilians for additional military force, and in addition to increasing its military power, it also creates a more sacrificable army.

One example of this is the Iran recruiting Afghan refugees, voluntarily or by force, to combat ISIS on behalf of Bashar al-Assad's regime and other radical Sunni groups⁷³. As another example, in the 1980s, Thailand hosted a quarter million Cambodian refugees, and also used them as a human buffer zone to protect itself in the ongoing conflict with Cambodia⁷⁴. Particularly cruel versions of this can be seen when child refugees are re-

67 Ibid., 35.

68 Ibid., 7.

69 Ibid., 7, 37.

70 Greenhill, "Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War," 9; Marek Sliwinski, "Afghanistan: The Decimation of a People," *Orbis* 33, No. 1 (1989): 39-56.

71 Alia Fakhry, Roderick Parkes, and András Rácz, "Migration as a Weapon, Europeans Should Respond in Kind," German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) Policy Brief No. 6 (2022): 7.

72 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 40.

73 Ibid., 39.

74 Greenhill, "Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War," 9-10.

cruited and forced to fight. For instance, since 2014 in the continuing conflicts in Syria, many children have been recruited as soldiers. According to UNICEF data, more than half of those children are below the age of 15 and some are even as young as 7 years⁷⁵. Unfortunately, it is a prevalent practice that especially unaccompanied and separated child refugees are commonly used as soldiers around the world.

3.7. Propaganda/Political

This variant of weaponized migration involves using migration to increase political legitimacy, decrease the political clout of an adversary, or justify actions to be taken in the future⁷⁶. Actors using this variant utilize propaganda related to migration in order to increase their regional or international legitimacy⁷⁷.

Propaganda particularly matured during the 20th century, but it would not be wrong to assume that the earliest of human societies also made use of it⁷⁸. States used it especially frequently to expand their spheres of influence and success in the world wars of the 20th century. After World War II, developing its own dynamics, propaganda transformed into an art that can grow and change according to the needs of the day, being applied for seemingly infinite topics with countless different approaches⁷⁹. The appearance of propaganda about human migration, and especially propaganda intended to increase actors' political power, can be accepted as a logical outcome of that greater phenomenon, although it is still relatively new and less common⁸⁰.

Within this category of weaponized migration, we can consider several sub-variants, the most prominent of which is the "passportization" technique. Passportization entails issuing high numbers of passports to increase the number of a state's own citizens, especially in contested regions, often allowing for the fast-track naturalization of people living in a third country⁸¹. These new passport holders in the relevant region are then used to provide legitimacy to various operations. Russia stands out as one of the most successful countries in applying the passportization technique. In fact, before the invasion of Ukraine started on February 24, 2022, it was confirmed that Russia had issued fast-track passports to approximately 720,000 people in the contested Donbas region.⁸² Later, as a justifica-

75 John Davidson, "Syrian war creates child refugees and child soldiers: report" Reuters, March 14, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-children-idUSKCN0WG0R0> (16.07.2022).

76 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 7.

77 Ibid., 7.

78 İbrahim Uğur Erkiş and M. Erhan Summak, "Propaganda ve Dış Politika," Journal of Selcuk University Social Sciences Vocational School 14, No. 1-2 (2014): 295, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/116730>; Propaganda, Power and Persuasion: From World War I to Wikileaks, ed. David Welch (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2013), 3.

79 Erkiş and Summak, "Propaganda ve Dış Politika," 298. The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were the first states to use propaganda systemically and consistently during the period prior to World War II. Especially in the case of Nazi Germany, Hitler conducted successful propaganda efforts for a long time to reach his political goals.

80 Steger, "The Weaponization of Migration," 42.

81 Elia Bescotti, Fabian Burkhardt, Maryna Rabinovych, and Cindy Wittke, "Passportization: Russia's 'Humanitarian' Tool for Foreign Policy, Extra-Territorial Governance, and Military Intervention," Verfassungsblog on Matters Constitutional, March 25, 2022, <https://verfassungsblog.de/passportization/>.

82 "Russia has issued 720,000 fast-track passports in separatist-held areas of eastern Ukraine," Euro News, February 17, 2022. <https://www.euronews.com/2022/02/17/russia-has-issued-720-000-fast-track-passports-in-separatist-held-areas-of-eastern-ukraine> (10.05.2022).

tion for the operation that it began in Ukraine, Russia made claims to the global public regarding its “citizens” in the Donbas region being “exposed to genocide and humiliation⁸³” and requiring protection⁸⁴. This strategy was not a new one for Russia, however; it had prepared for a military intervention in Georgia in 2008⁸⁵ and later for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 in quite similar ways.

Another sub-variant of political weaponized migration is seen when actors transform migration into international propaganda through the use of migration-based discourse. With this technique, an actor attempts to display the real situation (e.g., the numbers of migrants or asylum seekers seeking refuge in the relevant state) as being worse than it really is to gain the support of international actors⁸⁶.

4. Weaponization of Migration vs. Migration Instrumentalization

Another expression similar to “weaponization of migration” is “instrumentalization of migration.” The similarity of these expressions makes it necessary to distinguish between them clearly and to consider whether any linkage exists between them.

First of all, it should be noted that “migration instrumentalization” appears to be a term that has originated from the EU. In that context, according to a commonly accepted definition, “the instrumentalization of migration occurs when non-EU countries instigate migratory flows towards the external borders of the European Union to unsettle the Union or a Member State⁸⁷.”

Essentially, the main origin of that definition is the regulation proposal released by the European Commission on December 14, 2021, which addresses situations of instrumentalization in the field of migration and asylum⁸⁸. The regulation proposal, which can be briefly referred to as the Instrumentalization Regulation, provides some normative tools for Member States to protect themselves upon encountering state-sponsored mass migration flows⁸⁹. This Instrumentalization Regulation constitutes one of the pillars of the EU

83 See Putin’s speech prior to the military operation against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” Official Site of the President of Russia and the Presidential Executive Office, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843> (15.07.2022).

84 “Is There Any Justification for Putin’s War?,” *The Guardian*, March 13, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/13/is-there-any-justification-for-putins-war> (10.07.2022).

85 Bescotti, Burkhardt, Rabinovych and Wittke, “Passportization: Russia’s “humanitarian” tool for foreign policy, extra-territorial governance, and military intervention”, 1.

86 Steger, “The Weaponization of Migration,” 44.

87 Mirko Forti, “Weaponisation of Migrants? Migrants as a (Political) Weapon and the EU Regulatory Response: What to Expect Now,” Blog of the European Journal of International Law (EJIL: Talk!), March 10, 2022, <https://www.ejiltalk.org/weaponisation-of-migrants-migrants-as-a-political-weapon-and-the-eu-regulatory-response-what-to-expect-now/>. It was seen in a press release that the Finnish Ministry of the Interior defined migration instrumentalization quite similarly. See, Finnish Government, Ministry of the Interior, “Commission proposes common model to respond to instrumentalization of migrants,” February 2022. https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/commission-proposes-common-model-to-respond-to-instrumentalisation-of-migrants?_cf_chl_tk=wuMCCVrJ3walu925Th9WuaY1o4REbfZoPwNFs2456M-1657993266-0-gaNvcGzNB-U (15.07.2022).

88 European Commission, “Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council addressing situations of the instrumentalization in the field of migration and asylum”, 14.12.2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A890%3A-FIN&qid=1639757068345>, (15.07.2022).

89 Forti, “Weaponisation of Migrants? Migrants as a (Political) Weapon and the EU Regulatory Response: What to Expect Now.”

legislative package known as the New Pact on Migration and Asylum⁹⁰ and it introduces some amendments to the Schengen Borders Code to decrease the vulnerability of Member States in the face of instrumentalization of migration⁹¹.

State-sponsored mass migration phenomena is defined in the Recital 1 of the Instrumentalization Regulation as follows:

“A situation of instrumentalisation of migrants may arise where a third country instigates irregular migratory flows into the Union by actively encouraging or facilitating the movement of third country nationals to the external borders, onto or from within its territory and then onwards to those external borders, where such actions are indicative of an intention of a third country to destabilise the Union or a Member State, where the nature of such actions is liable to put at risk essential State functions, including its territorial integrity, the maintenance of law and order or the safeguard of its national security⁹².”

In this context, the instrumentalization of migration appears to have a narrower meaning compared to the weaponization of migration. More precisely, instrumentalization of migration can be understood as a coercive or exportive variant of weaponized migration, applied by third countries that are not members of the EU, specifically aimed at the EU or the Member States with the ultimate goal of destabilizing the EU or the relevant Member State(s).

For the scope of this article, no further details will be given regarding the concept of migration instrumentalization. However, it is worth noting that the legislations made by the EU in response to the phenomenon of migration instrumentalization are being criticized in some respects⁹³. At the same time, the fact that the EU has generally revised its migration and asylum policy by centralizing the concept of migration instrumentalization confirms once again that mass migration can be used as a powerful weapon and that its influence increases with every passing day as sophisticated new applications are found by diverse actors. Another issue highlighted by the recent steps taken and the relevant legislations made by the EU regarding migration instrumentalization is the vulnerability of the EU towards mass migration.

90 European Commission, “New Pact on Migration and Asylum”, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en, (15.07.2022).

91 Forti, “Weaponisation of Migrants? Migrants as a (Political) Weapon and the EU Regulatory Response: What to Expect Now.”

92 European Commission, “Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council addressing situations of the instrumentalization in the field of migration and asylum”, 14.12.2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A890%3A-FIN&qid=1639757068345>, (15.07.2022).

93 See, e.g., Forti, “Weaponisation of Migrants? Migrants as a (Political) Weapon and the EU Regulatory Response: What to Expect Now”; European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), “Policy Note: A Step Too Far: Introducing “Instrumentalisation” in EU Law”, 25.03.2022, <https://ecre.org/policy-note-a-step-too-far-introducing-instrumentalisation-in-eu-law/> (16.07.2022).

5. CONCLUSION

The weaponization of migration means that migration, and particularly mass migration, is used deliberately by states or non-state actors as a “weapon” of sorts to reach political, economic, military, or any other types of goals.

With the understanding of how significant its effects are and what a harmful weapon it could be in the hands of ill-intentioned actors, mass migration is now understood to be a tool of hybrid warfare, which is a new generation of war in today’s world.

When the policies and actions of states and other actors, including those in international society, are examined regarding human migration in the last 50 years, many examples of weaponized migration are seen. The use of migration as a weapon is increasing steadily and it can be observed that states refer to this weapon more and more often with the passing of time.

On the other hand, it is not always easy to identify whether migration is being used as a weapon; in this regard, awareness of the phenomenon and thorough background information are necessary. Knowledge of the variants of weaponization of migration described above is, of course, also helpful in making such an identification. However, what is most essential is to first identify whether or not weaponization of migration is occurring; the exact variant of weaponization being used by the relevant actor is secondary in terms of importance because the variants described here are not limited. Variants develop and change in line with the imagination of the actors applying weaponized migration.

The aim of this paper has been to raise awareness by giving general background information on the topic of weaponization of migration. The use of weaponized migration is increasing day by day; however, since it does not always seem to entail violence from an external perspective and it is usually discreetly applied, it is generally very difficult to notice this phenomenon.

What should be acknowledged most essentially is that this discreet yet dangerous weapon kills innocent and vulnerable people to serve the temporary aims of states and non-state actors that cannot be compared to the worth of human life. There is a critical need to diversify the defense mechanisms that can be integrated into routine application to hinder the inhumane use of migration. The legislative regulations and initiatives recently implemented by the EU within the framework of migration instrumentalization are examples of such defense mechanisms. However, in light of the proven extent of its effect and its potential to influence millions of people, the global response to this weapon requires much more detailed planning and an extensive defense strategy.

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