Forced Immigration and Nationalism-The Connections and Conflicts

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## **Introduction**

Last week, on December 12th, 2019, Boris Johnson was elected as the Prime Minister to the United Kingdom using the slogan "Get Brexit Done." The United States President Donald Trump, has been a hard-liner on immigration since the day he took office, however, his announcement that the United States refugee allowance would be decreased from the already lowered 30,000 to 18,000 next year puts undue pressure on other nations to accept more refugees than ever before.<sup>1</sup> Countries like Switzerland with the Swiss People's Party, Austria with the so called Freedom Party and Hungary with the Fidesz and Jobbik Parties have experienced an upsurge in support for their nationalist agendas with these parties winning over 25% of the national election votes in the last elections.<sup>2</sup> According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, approximately 40 million people have been displaced because of conflict or disasters around the world in 2017.<sup>3</sup> How does the rise in nationalism and increase in country resentment towards immigration impact the increasing number of refugees seen around the world? Is there a connection between the rise in nationalism and immigration numbers? If so, what can be done to ensure that the world's most vulnerable population receives the support that they need to become re-integrated into society? This papers aim is three-fold: To discuss the reason for both the increase in this nationalist sentiment and the number of immigrants in addition to dispelling incorrect information about refugees. By doing so, hopefully conflict resolution tactics can be applied to the provention of escalated tensions between these two groups to propose a more cohesive global solution.

#### **Nationalism**

In order to understand how nationalism is used as a political weapon, it is first necessary to understand what nationalism is. As Grosby points out, "Scholarly examinations about the

division of humanity into nations began to appear in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and by the 20<sup>th</sup> century the number of such works had grown significantly." Humans have been dividing themselves into different groups for centuries. These divisions have included empires, religious organizations and nations and many other forms of groupings created by humans and enforced upon humans. The structures were justified by race, culture and even biology. However, after the brutality of World War I, in which various nations were pitted against one another, the research to understand what took place increased.<sup>4</sup> In the words of historian Christopher Alan Bayly, "the very act of nation building...tended to increase the perception of difference."<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this essay, the focus will be on the cultural aspect of nations and how this is used. Mayer describes culture as "the enduring norms, values, customs, historical narratives, and behavioral patterns common to a particular group of people."<sup>6</sup> This type of commonality between people provides a sense of security and belonging to those that match the description perpetuated by the majority. This feeling of collectivity is not necessarily a negative. In times of peace, it can offer those residing in a particular nation a sense of pride and togetherness. However, in times of conflict, or potential conflict, this sentiment can be weaponized. As Grosby states, "The complicating factor for naturalistic accounts of human behavior is that culture is not uniform."<sup>7</sup> Culture as it applies to a nation can mean different things to different people. These variations of the same country's nationalism can even hold contradictory meanings. For instance, in the United States, the Statue of Liberty reads, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..." and yet, it could be argued that the election of Donald J. Trump to the office of President began the global wave of nationalism.<sup>8</sup> At the very least, his executive orders and policies have substantially shifted the United States position in its relationship to immigrants. This is significant as the United States has been known for much of its existence as a

safe-haven for those looking for a new and better life. Thus, the shift in U.S policy is, unfortunately, a global indicator at the treatment of refugees.

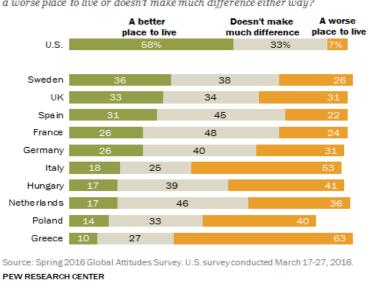
## Nationalism and the Media

Nationalist sentiment, while not a new way of rallying the masses to a cause, has been weaponized through new technologies such as social media. Through these platforms, campaigns can use fear-mongering tactics to gain support while creating antipathy toward groups that do not look like the construct of what that party has decided the nation should look like. Ramsbotham and Woodhouse describe the role that media can play in exacerbating one view of the conflict over the other. They emphasize "how crucial the role for the media is in shaping either a constructive or a destructive response to conflict." They also describe the role of media outlets by stating, "good journalists are well aware of this. They stress the importance of reporting all sides of a story."<sup>9</sup> This is important to remember when considering how the media has used their power to influence the masses the last few years. One name stands out specifically, Cambridge Analytica. This company targeted user profiles on social media platforms like Facebook. Through this platform profiles of users who agreed to have their information used as well as friends of these users and friends of their friends were collected. Thus, millions of user profiles and information was composed. This data included information on the likes, dislikes, party affiliations, etc. of these users. This mass data collection lead to the creation of specific algorithms that were used by various political campaigns to micro-target potential supporters. Such campaigns included, the Leave.EU campaign (or the Brexit campaign) as well as Donald Trump's campaign for the United States presidency.<sup>10</sup> This type of information distribution is dangerous for several reasons. First, the information could be targeted to degrees of support in real time. Meaning, specific types of adds that vie for the same type of political support in

different ways could be distributed en masse. If a user decided that one ad was too strong, the algorithms worked with the platform experience to learn which ads appealed to that user the most. Thus, paying the way for more add like the ones the user spent the most time on. Secondly, these types of advertisements were only distributed to those who were likely to support specific campaigns or could be swayed to do so. Therefore, the claims being made by one party could not be specifically disputed by other campaigns because there would be no guarantee that the opposition would see that same advertisement. The algorithms would make sure of this. Thus, the "good journalists" were no longer able to control the information. Instead, companies working for profit were able to disseminate this information unregulated. This issue remains unresolved. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the Democratic Representative for New York in the House of Representatives, recently had a hearing in which she asked the founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, specific questions that revealed the level to which Facebook would begin regulating the information on their platform. Some questions were as simple as Ocasio-Cortez asking, "Would I be able to run advertisements on Facebook targeting Republicans in primaries saying that they voted for the Green New Deal?" (something that would be an absolute falsehood) to which Zuckerberg reported, "I think probably."<sup>11</sup> This was in October of this year. Therefore, not only is Facebook aware of the problem, they are defending their actions in not disseminating between fact and fiction. When the ability of today's youth to distinguish fact from opinion is considered the ability of the public to make educated political decisions becomes even bleaker. According to The New York Times podcast The Daily entitled "America's Education Problem", statistics from the international exam show when children were given a situation in which two arguments were made on whether milk was beneficial or detrimental to their health, only 14% of United States students could determine fact from opinion.<sup>12</sup> This is

relevant to immigration for several reasons. This spread of disinformation, the platforms unaccountability and the masses inability to distinguish fact from fiction all culminate in the belief that immigrants are harmful to society. As a matter of fact, according to research conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2016, most Europeans thought that growing diversity made their country a worse place to live. This wide-spread sentiment can be seen in Figure 1 below. Before the source of the conflict between nationalists and immigrants can be solved, understanding who an immigrant or refugee actual is, where they come from and the reasons for which they become displaced must also be examined.

Figure 1: Diversity and Country Satisfaction<sup>13</sup>



Americans more likely to say growing diversity makes their country a better place to live

Do you think having an increasing number of people of many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities in our country makes it a better place to live, a worse place to live or doesn't make much difference either way?

Source: Bruce Drake and Jacob Poushter, *In views of Diversity, Many Europeans are Less Positive than Americans*, (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2016) https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/12/in-views-of-diversity-many-europeans-are-less-positive-than-americans

## Who Are Refugees?

Who a migrant or refugee is and how they impact the societies that they flee to is difficult to monitor. However, from the information that is available, the trend in countries with the most immigrants do align with those showing upsurges in nationalistic parties. According to the International Organization for Migration (herein referred to as the IOM), who a migrant is, is "not defined under international law". However, the generally accepted idea of a migrant or refugee is someone who has moved away from their residence.<sup>14</sup> To further clarify, the categories found in Khalid Koser's International Migration: A Very Short Introduction can be used. He distinguishes between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migration. Those made to leave their homes usually do so because of conflict or environmental reasons, such as a flood, hurricane, famine, or other disaster. This group is generally referred to as refugees. Other migrants can move for reasons including political persecution or economic reasons.<sup>15</sup> The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's 2017 report shows there were 30.6 million new displacements in 2017. 11.8 million were caused by conflict and 18.8 million were because of disasters.<sup>16</sup> The IOM provides statistics on different regions and the number of immigrants that they receive. Their database shows, "Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and France [are] hosting the highest numbers of the estimated 31.9 million non-European Union (EU) nationals residing in Europe. The two sub-regions combined host 72.5 million migrants, representing 8.7 per cent of the total population."<sup>17</sup> When compared to an article from BBC entitled, "Migration to Europe in Charts", Italy and Greece can also be included in the list of countries with the most immigrants. While the numbers for Greece dropped significantly from 2015 to 2017, in 2015 Greece received approximately 850,000 migrants and refugees in that year alone. This number decreased to just under 200,000 in 2016 and fell below 100,000 in 2017. Italy has consistently received an estimated 100,00-200,000 refugees from 2014-2017. Most of these refugees come from conflict

ridden areas such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. <sup>18</sup> The Americas and the Caribbean, while significantly lower in their number of migrants still have "approximately 57.5 million international migrants in the Americas; about 50 million in North America and 7.5 million in the other sub-regions."<sup>19</sup> This information is based on data collected two years ago as data on immigrant flows is difficult to obtain.<sup>20</sup> Migrants can get lost in the system for several reasons. Many are reluctant to talk to authorities for fear of being deported, other refugees go from being counted as 'irregular' immigrants to 'regular' while others return to their home country or move to another before their presence is detected. Unfortunately, some migrants are trafficked and therefore, hidden from the view of governmental organizations.<sup>21</sup> However, from the information that is available, a direct relationship can be seen from the countries that have the most immigrants to those that have seen nationalistic parties gain popularity.

#### **Crime and Refugees**

The information that is spread about immigrants includes misinformation about crime rates that claim increases occur when migrants are let into the country. How accurate these claims are will be examined next. In Germany, their "open door policy," has meant that in Europe, they have received the largest number of refugees in the last few years. Thus, their crime rates make for a good case study in terms of refugees and crime rates. According to the *BBC News* article entitled, "Reality Check: Are Migrants Driving Crime in Germany," overall crime has been decreasing in Germany since the 1990s. However, in 2015, just as refugees began entering the country this trend is claimed to have changed. The article states that violent crime and murder rates grew at the same time the number of refugees increased.<sup>22</sup> However, according to the German Police Crime and Statistics Report from 2015 crime rates increased by 4.1% from the previous year only when violations of laws such as illegal entry and illegal residence were

included in the total crime. As a matter of fact, according to their report, total crime excluding these types of crimes decreased by 0.5%. Murder only constituted 0.1% of crime and violent crimes made up 3.1% of total crime. In contrast, drug related offenses, damage to property and theft offenses made up 56.4% of crime. <sup>23</sup> In the United States, the perception of crime is also incorrect. According to the Pew Research Center, most voters say that crime has worsened since 2008 with 78% of Trump supporters holding this belief. However, according to the FBI and similar agencies, there has been a double-digit decrease in violent and property crimes since 2008.<sup>24</sup> When considering the lack of basic human needs and scrutiny that these populations are under, it is surprising that these numbers are not higher. As stated by conflict resolution professors Kevin Avruch and Christopher Mitchell, "When denied fulfillment of needs that all people share, like identity, security and recognition...all people will rebel, rising up to cause problems for those who manage the offending institutions of society."<sup>25</sup> Refugees are not only denied identity, security and recognition but some are deprived of even more basic needs such as shelter and food. Therefore, the tendency of refugees towards crime is not only being misrepresented, but their lack of crime is not being given enough attention.

#### **Economic Strain and Refugees**

Economic strain is another reason nationalistic parties claim immigration has negative impacts on countries. The Migration Policy Institute in a report published March of this year states that "an injection of 700 million euros more than originally budgeted for emergency assistance actions between 2014 and 2017 [was needed]."<sup>26</sup> This is an enormous amount of money. Although, if this is compared to the amount of money that these refugees could contribute to society, this number is relatively low. According to the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, if refugees were paid the same wages as American natives, they

would be able to contribute \$3.2 billion to the U.S GDP alone.<sup>27</sup> This statistic does not include the contribution that refugees could make through self-owned businesses. According to an article by the National Immigration Forum, refugee-owned businesses generated \$4.6 billion in income in 2015. Furthermore, compared to the 9% of U.S natives who are entrepreneurs, refugees make up 13% and other immigrants 11.5%.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, if the refugee population were not considered a burden and alternatively thought of as opportunities for economic growth, petty crime rates would most likely decrease and the economic prospects of countries with immigrant flows would not decrease but increase rather significantly.

## Legal Entry

The cry for immigrants and refugees to "come to the country legally" can be heard as the rallying cry of nationalist parties around the world. However, becoming a citizen of any country is a slow process that can take years to overcome. The Dublin Regulation III came into effect July 2013. This European Law determines which EU Member State is responsible for considering the application by a person seeking international protection under the Geneva Convention and the EU Qualification Directive within the European Union. Generally, this means that where the refugee arrives, they are to seek asylum.<sup>29</sup> As many of these migrants are coming to the EU by sea, most of them go through Spain, Italy and Greece initially. Although many lose their life on the journey, there are still tens of thousands of refugees that enter these countries yearly. Thus, it is unrealistic to expect them to be able to handle the number of asylum claims they receive in a timely manner. In the United States, immigrants can come to the country 'legally' through employment visas, diversity visas, or as refugees and asylum seekers. However, each of these categories are tied to their own number of limitations. For instance, there are per country limits that state countries, large or small are only allowed a certain number of visas a

year. To show the impact this has on those seeking to enter legally, take the example of Mexico. Those who applied in 1997 for a visa to the U.S are just now being admitted over twenty years later.<sup>30</sup> The UN Refugee Agency also known as UNHCR followed the story of a woman dealing with the consequences of such a flawed system. Her name is Maha Mamo. Her parents are from Syria, however, one of them is Christian and the other is Muslim. While her parents fled to Lebanon to avoid persecution, due to Syrian nationality laws their marriage and her birth could not be registered with the Syrian government. As citizenship is not given to those simply born on Lebanese soil, she could not be given a Lebanon nationality either. Therefore, she remained stateless for over thirty years. It wasn't until this year, through a new Brazilian law that expedited the process for Syrian refugees (because of the war there) that she was able to gain citizenship in Brazil.<sup>31</sup> If these same systems are kept in place, with the lack of resolution in the Middle East and the increasing number of climate related displacements, the world's refugee crisis will worsen causing immense strain on an unprecedented amount of countries. The conflict resolution methods that can be used to achieve these alternative outcomes do not make resolution easy, but, if applied correctly could have lasting results.

#### **The Influence of Culture**

In all types of conflict, culture and a person's background can have a large, if only unconscious impact on how they behave. Thus, before the conflict resolution methodologies are applied to this issue, the ways in which culture plays a role must be discussed. As many of the refugees mentioned are coming from Middle Eastern backgrounds to "Western" cultures, the division in beliefs cannot be discounted. This does not mean that a resolution is not possible. However, it does mean that when utilizing each of these conflict resolution tools this difference in experience must be at the forefront of the process. High-context and low-context cultural

differences help illustrate how this dynamic can be a factor in conflict. As Mayer states, "When a significant part of the communication is implied or understood rather than expressed overtly, a high context interaction is occurring. When the predominant meaning is directly and overtly expressed, the interaction is low-context."<sup>32</sup> When this is considered, refugees are forced to come to a new country that has a new means of communication which could easily be misconstrued as confrontational. Not only are there high context cultures dealing with low context cultures, the influence of power and culture must also be considered. Mayer describes this dynamic as the conflict between "cultural domination or forced acculturation." He states, "A clash of cultures is usually about conflicting norms and values." In other words, the dominant culture may try to force the other into submitting to its beliefs with limited attempts made to understand the minority group. However, the less powerful group may still inflict what it believes to be "normal" on the more powerful group.<sup>33</sup> This is the situation we are seeing around the world today. Those in the "West" are the dominant culture with those being displaced making up the less powerful group. Because of a lack of effort to understand one another, this dynamic is creating fear and resentment between the two groups.

#### **Conflict Resolution Methodologies**

There are several methodologies that could be applied to the issue of how nationalists and immigrants relate to one another in a way that could resolve the issues shown above. The first that will be discussed is reframing. Reframing the issues each group is being faced with will help ease the tensions by showing the increase in refugees in a different way. There are several levels of reframing: detoxification, definitional, metaphoric and narrative. For the purposes of this issue, detoxification reframing, and definitional reframing will be applied. Detoxification reframing changes the way a problem is articulated. Definitional reframing explains an issue in

more unifying manner.<sup>34</sup> The message that is being spread by alt-right groups, that immigrants are criminals is untrue. However, it is really the refugee's differences that are allowing these statistics to capture the hearts and minds of the populace. Therefore, instead of focusing on the number of immigrants that are coming into the United States and European countries, media organizations should be using detoxifying tactics such as explaining why these people are migrating from one country to another. They are not trying to "take over" or "destroy" the "Western" way of life, they are simply trying to survive. The extreme conflicts and environments they are fleeing from make it impossible to raise a family, get a job, or find food. This is not necessarily a choice, but something that is forced upon them. This population should not be defined as "illegal" but as "survivors". Once this reframing is achieved, other conflict resolution tactics can be applied.

Context and structural transformation through multi-track diplomacy, could immensely benefit the communication loop and conflict between immigrants and nationalists. These concepts are best explained by Ramsbotham and Woodhouse. These authors claim that when it comes to context transformations, it is important to recognize that, "local conflicts which are fueled by global forces may not be resolvable at the local level without changing the structures or policies which have produced them." Similarly, in structural transformation, "if the root causes of the conflict lie in the structure of relationships within which the parties operate, then a transformation of this structure is necessary to resolve the conflict."<sup>35</sup> As the refugee crisis has impacts all around the world the solution to the problem should not be left to individual nations. Instead, organizations such as UNHCR and other international actors should be doing more to help individual countries create systems that are more conducive to accepting and re-integrating refugees into local systems. By doing this, a structural and a contextual transformation is

possible. Countries would be getting an increase in much needed resources, including funding, personnel or a distribution of populations that is more equal among countries. In addition, the refugees, or the group with less power would be given an increase in voice by giving them a setting through which their concerns were heard and a means through which their basic human needs could be met more quickly. Each of these transformations would require a multi-track approach to resolution. By having grassroots organizations work with middle and top leaders, a broader understanding of the issue can be developed.<sup>36</sup> In turn, a more pervasive problemsolving solution could be instituted through which the issues of both the nations and the forced migrants could be understood and resolved. The communication loop between these two parties would also be able to shift. As Mayer states, "This communication loop is a necessary part of effective interchanges. People's ability to connect with each other, particularly in the course of intense and significant interaction, is dependent on their ability to tune into the often-subtle messages that reveal how a communication is being received."<sup>37</sup> Without a multi-track approach to this issue, because of the amount of people and the large expanse of territory it impacts, it would be impossible for any one organization to gain an understanding of the causes of displacement or create an effective solution. The total amount of information that is being duplicated and therefore, the amount of resources that are being mismanaged is clear from the number of individual organizations that put forth similar statistics and calls for financial support. If these efforts were stream-lined, the communication and resources between these organizations would increase, the refugees impacted would decrease and the governmental organizations responsible for re-integrating these populations could hope for faster, more informed, decision making processes.

Another way to approach the conflict between refugees and nationalists is to look at the borders and walls that are used to separate the refugees from the countries to which they are fleeing. Anna Grichting discusses this type of socio-ecological approach to viewing border landscapes by stating, "nature conservation benefits from the inclusion and empowerment of human communities instead of their exclusion and marginalization."<sup>38</sup> In her work, she examines how borders in regions like Cyprus and Berlin have been turned into nature landscapes that host various educational and memorial cites as well as governmental organizations dedicated to uniting the borders they once enforced. This tactic could be applied to the U.S-Mexico border in ways that would not only allow families who have been separated to see one another but could create a safe and educational spaces for both Americans and Mexicans. This could lead to understanding of the reasons for Mexican migration as well as what the United States expects from those who enter its borders. Imagine instead of a metal wall created to keep people out, a pathway with ecological and humanitarian benefits. The structures that have been placed far into the ocean could hold solar panels which would power the centers further inland that would provide refuge and teach about American culture, language and expectations. Gardens for families to reunite, if even for a while, could grow food that could be provided to the refugees in need. Facilities in which Americans could come and learn Spanish would not only be educational but create a bridge between two cultures. This same concept could be applied to areas like Northern and Southern Ireland that are currently experiencing extreme panic around the conflict that Brexit could bring to an area that has finally found peace. By creating memorials for those who were lost during The Troubles, as well as trading centers and agricultural plots, space could be given to heal old wounds and to prevent new conflicts. This type of solution may seem better suited to the "hippies" of the 1960s than to today's nation-states. However, the borders that have

been constructed up until now have not only lead to an increase in conflict but have been a deterrent to collaborative methods of problem solving.

#### **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to dissect the relationship between an increase in nationalism in Europe and the United States and refugees. In addition, by exploring conflict resolution methods that could be applied to solve the conflict that has developed between these two groups. The volume of countries impacted by refugees as well as the number of states refugees are fleeing from due to conflict or disaster is enormous. While this is not a new phenomenon, the number of disasters is increasing due to global warming and the conflicts in the Middle East that are responsible for migrants leaving their homelands do not seem to have a simple resolution. Therefore, it is vital that new methods are applied to the issue. By understanding the role that culture plays in conflict and applying this to various conflict resolution methods, perhaps a global solution can be achieved. Detoxification and definitional reframing can be used to tell the story of the refugee in a more honest and humane way. The newfound understanding of their situations can hopefully lead to a decrease in fear surrounding this group and an increased desire to help a fellow human in need. Once a baseline of understanding has been created, the focus of resolution can be shifted to contextual and structural transformations. By using multi-track diplomacy, the power dynamics between these two groups will be able to shift making the issues of both sides more apparent and therefore, more easily addressed. Combining the resources and knowledge of grassroots organizations with mid-level and top-level leaders will lessen the efforts needed by each organization to achieve their goals and decrease the waste in each organization. If these solutions are successful, new methodologies, such as Anna Grichting's socio-ecological border landscapes can be applied. This approach would not only benefit the globe ecologically

but would create a sort of neutral territory in which both sides of the various conflicts can come together to resolve the issues of today as well as create lasting relationships. There are several global issues such as climate change and nuclear weapons that will undoubtedly require immense amounts of attention to resolve in the near future. Therefore, if the issue of refugees is met with nationalistic parties, the problem will not be resolved and it will worsen. This will mean that millions of lives will be harder and potentially lost altogether. This is detrimental to the world not only in terms of its humanity, but in terms of its human capital. If millions of people remain stateless, their potentials cannot be met. Therefore, by not addressing this issue, future leaders and scientists that could be the solution to the problems facing the world will remain undocumented and undeveloped thereby creating another global crisis instead of becoming the answer.

## Notes

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<sup>3</sup>"Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018," *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre*, May 16, 2018, http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/

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<sup>5</sup> C.A Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 220.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Mayer, *The Dynamic of Conflict.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016, 93.

<sup>7</sup> Steven Elliot Grosby, *Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005 . Accessed December 16, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central, 123.

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<sup>15</sup> Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd edn. (New York: Oxford, 2016; online edn, Very Short Introductions online, June 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198753773.001.0001, accessed December 17, 2019, 15.)

<sup>16</sup> "On the Grid: The Global Displacement Landscape," (IOM UN Migration, 2019, accessed December 16, 2019, http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/)

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<sup>20</sup> "International Migration Flows," Migration data portal, accessed December 17, 2019, https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-migration-flows.)

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<sup>22</sup> "Reality Check: Are Migrants Driving Crime in Germany?," BBC News (BBC, September 13, 2018), https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45419466)

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