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**Survival Migration & the Need for Just Policies and Front-line Leadership in
Climate Change and Migration**

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Master in Migration Studies

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Abstract

This paper explores the growing phenomenon of migration due to climate change through an analysis of human rights and a review of international conventions. It argues that current migration, refugee and asylum regimes at the regional and international policy levels are inadequate to serve the needs of individuals, families and communities that are preemptively relocating or are forced to migrate due to climate change and its subsequent effects. This paper shows that environmentally-displaced migrants who are either forcibly displaced or preemptively migrating do not have sufficient recognition or legal or political protections compared to ‘traditional’ refugees or migrants. The lack of resources leaves environmentally-displaced migrants in a limbo where individuals, families and whole communities have migrated internally to capital and major city centers only to wait for limited visa or work opportunities in major regional or former colonial hegemonic states. The migrants themselves may resort to drastic unauthorized migration efforts only to be denied refugee or asylum claims at the destination state. This paper argues that refocusing the discussion around migration through the lens of Survival Migration which centers front-line communities and human agency, will provide relief not only for environmentally-displaced migrants but also state actors and humanitarian agencies.

Keywords: environmentally-displaced migrants, climate change, survival migration

1. Introduction

The region you recognize as your ancestral homeland erodes slowly at first but overtime you notice it has significantly washed away. The land where you grow crops to sustain your community produces less and less as the soil becomes saltier. The storms you were once able to weather, that marked the change of seasons, are stronger, more frequent and deadlier. People you know have started to leave; to the capital, urban centers, inland or to higher ground. These new destinations can't sustain the influx of newcomers and your government now must figure out how to prioritize relieving environmental degradation and economic stress. In fact, your government, at all levels, has been proactive, and they have tried to dampen the effects of a global phenomenon that is beyond their ability to control. You and your community are losing your land, your culture, your livelihoods and there may be no relief. You have not been persecuted by your government and the specter of death is not tied to civil or international conflict. The international community recognizes your jeopardy, but there are no outlets, laws, conventions or agreements to turn to. This is the reality for many communities in states facing the early impacts of climate change, and without a rethinking of our international system, more and more communities will face similar strife.

By highlighting climate change impacts on communities, the intention is not to scaremonger but rather to heighten awareness of realities that communities are currently facing and that communities globally will have to navigate soon. Current projections of environmentally-displaced migrants sit between 25 million and 1 billion by 2050 with the estimate of 200 million people by Norman Myers as the currently accepted estimate referenced by agencies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Myers 2005; Myers 2001). The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) notes that “disasters displace three to ten times more people than conflict and war worldwide”; further the NRC’s investigative body, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) emphasizes that those displaced by disasters and environmental deterioration are overwhelmingly displaced internally and disproportionately in the global south (IDMC 2018; IDMC 2017; IDMC 2016; IDMC 2015; NRC 2018). Apart from aid relief following shock events such as typhoons, there are currently no international agreements or international relief measures for states, communities or individuals suffering from

immediate or progressive internal and external migration. Refugee and Asylum guidance as dictated by the 1951 Convention Relating to The Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees requires crossing international borders and providing well founded proof of persecution (UNGA 1967; UNGA1951). Attempts at expanding refugee definitions or avenues for relief are admirable but still limited in their effective scope. The most notable attempts- the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration- add language expanding the ideas surrounding persecution and conflict generally, but they are regional and specific and also fall short of adding outlets for internally displaced persons and recognizing the specific plight of individuals and communities displaced due to climate change and environmental degradation (Regional Refugee Instruments & Related 1984; OAU 1969).

Migration and climate change are both global concerns weighed down by politics. The intersection of these issues will play out in the following years and decades as more people are forced to move. We will witness the loss of land, life and culture. The global community will be pressed to find sustainable solutions that look beyond border militarization and securitization. Finding these solutions is a matter of urgency considering several factors. Firstly climate change and the feedback loop effects that ravish ecosystems is accelerating at a rapid clip, and the IPCC estimates we may only have a decade left to stop and hopefully reverse climate change (IPCC 2019). Secondly, the international guidelines developed by the United Nations that states lean on for developing policies for receiving displaced people are significantly outdated and inadequate for our current global climate reality (UNGA 1951; UNGA 1976; McAdam 2015; McAdam & Loughry 2009). Thirdly, people will migrate at increasing rates and for non-prescriptive reasons that fit neatly within most recognized migration or refugee/asylum regimes; these migrants will attempt to preemptively leave areas that are growing more desperate as well as become major populations of ‘immediately’ displaced people as climate and environmental events become more violent and frequent. This paper will explore the unfortunate timing of these three realities: an increasingly more volatile global environment, inadequate migration regimes, and the migration projections that are cause and effect of both. The intersections of these realities create a paradox of relief. The paradox being that communities and individuals who are slowly losing their ability to survive, but are not actively being

persecuted by their states, cannot find relief through migration or refugee systems. In fact, some migrants are migrating away from states where the governments are actively trying to fight climate change and its manifestations but their efforts are unfortunately falling short.

1.1 Environmental Displacement's Place in Migration Studies

The body of work regarding environmentally-displaced migrants is growing. Up to this point, a great deal of the literature has focused on taxonomies: writing that explores the correct language for this class of migrant and/or possible solutions for rectifying the legal relief for this class of migrant (Brown 2007). There is also an overarching branch of literature that is concerned with environmental devastation in general that touches on displacement and forced migration in general terms without treating the subject in an in-depth manner.

The conversation on nomenclature often focuses on the appropriate combinations or exclusion of 'migrant,' 'refugee,' 'climate,' 'environmental,' 'forced' and 'displaced' (Brown 2007). The debate on how best to categorize this vulnerable population has significant and dramatic implications. Oli Brown notes that "[t]his is not just semantics- which definition becomes generally accepted will have very real implications for the obligations of the international community under international law." (Brown 2007, 7). Brown uses the term 'forced migrant' to connect the movement of people and their migrations to a sense of displacement (Brown 2007). Brown notes the decision to not use any combination of terms with the term 'refugee' as important due to the very strict legal implications that the term 'refugee' implies (Brown 2007, 8).

Zartner Falstrom refers to 'environmentally-displaced persons' and 'environmental refugees' interchangeably throughout the 2001 report (Zartner Falstrom 2001). Zartner Falstrom, publishing, in the *Colorado Journal of International Environmental Law & Policy*, is one of the first instances where the term of 'environmentally-displaced person' for this kind of migrant is discussed academically. Importantly, Zartner Falstrom includes a discussion on methodologies and requirements for discussing naming this class of migrant. Zartner Falstrom suggests the use of 'refugee' in terminology may be appropriate for political purposes to heighten awareness around the narrowly defined legality enshrined

in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. Further, by invoking the environment as opposed to climate change, Zartner Falstrom is recognizing the protection and rights for individuals and communities forced to migrate due to climate events such as sea level rise and drought; policy-based decisions like deforestation and poor agricultural management; and shock events such as major storms or earthquakes (Zartner Falstrom 2001, 2).

While Brown takes a conservative approach to identifying this class of migrant, Zartner, writing from a legal perspective, attempts to push at both the understanding of displacement but also the rigid legality of the refugee law. Addressing the naming debate and the migrant refugee binary, Alexander Bett's theory of 'survival migration,' makes the case for recognizing all migration by its own inherent value; a recognition that prioritizes migrant agency in a manner that accepts and respects migrant decision making- whether based on environmental, political, economic or any other reasoning (Betts 2013, 23). Betts coined the term 'survival migrant' to further push both the discourse around migration in general but as a reminder that legal implications ought to be first rooted in human agency.

The second category of the literature focusing on possible solutions faces similar challenges as the debate around standardizing naming. The questions explored are often focused on how to prioritize solutions- by focusing on human agency or international legal structure. Returning to Betts', the position that all migration is valued and valuable in and of itself as both the legal and human centered aspiration can set a goal for potential solutions. With Betts' aspiration in mind, we can follow the literature and the proposed steps to achieving a Betttsian utopic migration policy.

As mentioned above, the debate tends to shift along the migrant-refugee binary. With one end concerned with an expansion of migration regimes and the other concerned with an expansion of refugee protections. Zartner Falstrom's proposition rests somewhere in the middle- it is an idea that recognizes the false nature of the migrant refugee binary but is still interested in an international legal aspect. Zartner Falstrom's proposition is the "convention approach"; an idea to develop a convention rooted in international law but with an emphasis on state responsibility to the individual. Zartner Falstrom specifically emphasizes using the international "Convention Against Torture" as a framework (Zartner Falstrom 2001, 10). Zartner Falstrom's example is emblematic of the convention

approach- identify a framework (like the Convention Against Torture), utilize language affirming rights rooted in humanity, emphasize the link between displacement and environmental degradation and compel state responsibility. The convention approach could be applied with many other conventions as the framework or model- The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migration Workers and Members of Their Families and the Convention on the Rights of the Child for example. However, convention enforcement is often difficult and time intensive and many states cannot even be compelled to comply due to low ratification (Pérez 2018, 221).

Considering the difficulties of universal protection through one overarching convention, Beatrice Felipe Pérez approaches protection for environmentally-displaced migrants with a ‘triage approach.’ Pérez’s approach understands that legal systems are labyrinthine in nature and the complexities of harmonizing international laws and treaties with state policies with an expectation of supranational enforcement is nearly impossible. Pérez’s triaging thus compartmentalizes the class of migrants into 4 categories: Climate-Induced Migration, Climate Emergency Migration, Climate-Forced Migration and Migration In/From Small Island states. Pérez maps current international laws and treaties for potential relief based on the factors of internal versus cross border migration and an underpinning of international human rights (Pérez 2018, 223-224). The triage approach is compelling due to its realistic understanding of how international and domestic-state laws truly work or do not to provide protection or pathways to migrants and displaced persons. The triage approach recognizes the long-term goals and harmonizing of the convention approach, but it has the potential for immediate action.

The question, however, on whether conventions need to be added or current international laws amended may have already been answered. Writing in 1997, Jessica Cooper makes the argument that environmentally-displaced migrants *already* meet the requirements set forth in the original definition of a refugee. Cooper’s argument addresses the persecution clause of the definition noting that since climate change and environmental degradation are caused and exacerbated by government policies and decisions, any displacement or forced migration due to the culmination of negative environmental policies is a persecution by your government (Cooper 1997, 502). Further, Cooper argues that the

collective outputs of greenhouse gases and state refusal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions constitutes an intentional policy of population persecution (Cooper 1997, 513). Cooper's argument speaking in tandem with Pérez's approach is further bolstered by Michel Prier's analysis that "the effects of disasters on the environment are issues of environmental law, the effects on humans correspondently belong to human rights law, with the particularity that they concern both classic human rights and the new human rights to the environment recognized both at the international level and in many national constitutions and laws" (Prier 2018, 233).

Lastly, it is important to recognize the body of literature that, while not addressing migration or displacement as its primary focus, addresses the human impacts of climate change and environmental degradation broadly. This body of work addresses the human impacts in terms of exploitation, land rights, securitization and general human survival. These lines of thought intersect with migration by shedding light on the traditional discussions of push-pull factors as well as the possible implications of a future policy regime that removes humanity from the environmental discourse and vice versa.

Naomi Klein famously articulates the idea of disaster capitalism; the understanding that as shocks and stressors of climate change begin to change the landscape (literally and figuratively) of human interactions, a super elite will emerge to profit off the masses by selling survival (Klein 2007; Klein 2014). And while capitalists may be primed to exact riches, states will be faced with policy decisions. Todd Miller's analysis of state securitization based on climate change as a "threat multiplier" states are currently incentivized to promote nationalist political agendas, to ramp up militarization and to enclose themselves from the mass migrations already occurring and the many yet to come (Miller 2017). Responding to both the threats of capitalism and future colonial endeavors, scientist Vandana Shiva introduces the idea of "Earth Democracy" as a potential framework to move beyond injustices and recognize the environment's integral participation in humanity (Shiva 2015). And finally, cautioning on what the future may or will be, David Wallace-Wells warns of the "climate caste system" that will compound the challenges of the future on the poorest and most persecuted amongst us while Dr. Jem

Bendell asserts there is no righting of the ship and total social collapse is imminent (Wallace-Wells 2019, 24; Bendell 2018).

The body of work guiding the discussion on environmentally-displaced migrants highlights one of the major obstacles for a human-centered framework: the false distinction between so called traditional migration and traditional displacement. That the literature is primarily focused on where this class of migrants sits within state and international policy in terms of legal authorization, economic contribution and/or state responsibility to vulnerable populations, underscores the need for a total rethinking and overhaul of the global migration system. That the system of laws, treaties, conventions and individual state policies is discussed as a management or governance system belies the reality that the so-called system is at best an unintentionally inefficient use of resources and at worst is an intentional system of human control. This paper will further explore the possibilities of a human centered migration system acknowledging the body of work to date while asserting a way forward for policy makers.

This paper is designed to synthesize several discussions in the climate change migration nexus. It asserts a terminology that is centered on human agency while invalidating the migrant refugee binary. This paper contextualizes the debates on governance and process with a case study approach that focuses on impacts and projections to inform a rethinking of international governance. It centers the climate change discussion on tangible human impacts.

1.2 Terminology

Since the focus of this paper is on the intersection of two highly political issues, climate change and migration, it is worth clearly discussing the language used and the reasoning behind these choices. In the migration space, the term for populations will be “environmentally-displaced migrants.” Many of the state governments in the most impacted regions are actively seeking solutions to climate change with population displacement relief in mind. This proactive stance inherently negates the persecution narrative (AOSIS 2009; Pacific Islands Forum 2008; Republic of Maldives 2007). Further, many theorists reject “climate change” in the terminology since climate change is not entirely comprehensive (Brown, 2007).

This paper takes the position that the migrant refugee binary is a false distinction. It recognizes mixed motivation migration, as it is known within migration studies, as a human-centered holistic approach to understanding individual, familial, community or whole population centers decisions to migrate (Long 2013). The mixed motivation perspective provides an understanding that throughout a migrant's life as well as their migration journey, they can move through 'forced' and 'voluntary' migrations; they can decide to migrate for economic concerns once their livelihood is devastated by environmental degradation; they can migrate in similar patterns with others and that they may have similar reasons such as fleeing political violence or seeking economic opportunities or none at all; but, most importantly, a mixed motivation understanding of migration returns agency to migrants and moves beyond bureaucratic governance that others people and attempts to control them (Betts 2013; Carling and Talleraas 2016, 11-12). More discussion on an enlightened understanding of migration will follow in the theoretical framework section.

2. International Policy and State Politics

2.1 International Guidance for State Policy

The UDHR alluded to the future of international refugee standards, in article 13 which addressed the right to movement within and without the borders of any country and Article 14's stated international right to seek asylum (UNGA 1948). The comprehensive United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted in 1951 to provide an international legal framework for displacement and restitution from war and atrocities specifically in Europe and for events before 1951 (UNGA 1951). The initial 1951 document provides the first legal and still widely accepted and applied definition of refugees:

Article 1. A (2):

“... the term ‘refugee’ shall apply to any person who: ... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the

protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” (UNGA 1951).

The prescriptions that a refugee is someone fleeing any persecution and that they must cross borders are arguably the areas that need the most modernizing. The implications that violence and persecution create mass movements of forcibly displaced peoples are not incorrect, but they are limiting and subject to state interpretation. The 1967 Protocol expanded the legal framework to include all persons who meet the 1.A(2) definition universally and temporally (UNGA 1967). Interestingly this protocol, while expansive in nature, also includes language that devolves authority back to State signatories. This devolution is evident in:

Article II. 2, (a) (b) (c):

“In order to enable the Office of the High Commissioner, or any other agency of the United Nations which may succeed it, to make reports to the competent organs of the United Nations, the States Parties to the present Protocol undertake to provide them with the information and statistical data requested, in the appropriate form, concerning:

- (a) The condition of refugees;
- (b) The implementation of the presented Protocol;
- (c) Laws, regulations and decrees which are, or may hereafter be, in force relating to refugees (UNGA 1967)

These documents serve as the current broad international legal frameworks for recognizing and accommodating rights for displaced people. States, regional networks and non-governmental organizations have acted on their own to expand or reduce these definitions to meet political and economic needs. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has also attempted to make gradual expansions on their body’s understanding of refugee and persecution, but even with rethinking and updates, the

UNCHR's Handbook and Guidelines still do not recognize environmental events and climate change as prime causation for displacement (UNCHR 2011).

Finally, linking international guidance to practical applications for states with regards to climate change has been a point of interest from supranational bodies like the United Nations. In its founding documents, The United Nations Framework Convention asserts that:

Article 3 Principles 1 and 2:

1. The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof.
2. The specific needs and special circumstances of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, and of those Parties especially developing country Parties, that would have to bear a disproportionate or abnormal burden under the Convention, should be given full consideration. (UNFCCC 1992).

This focus on equity and the need for global north states to contribute proportional To their historical pollution is a revolutionary stance. The assertion, however, that global north states should be leading the fight against climate change is unfortunate especially considering that global south states- chiefly small island nations-have been leading and lobbying the international community on climate and environmental policy from the beginning.

2.2 Leadership from Impacted States and Frontline Communities

Global South nations and Frontline Communities (communities highly vulnerable to climate change impacts) have been leading on climate and environmental policy at the international level from the beginning. In fact Global South clubs such as The Alliance of

Small Island States (AOSIS) have been leading since 1989 with the Malé Declaration on Global Warming and Sea Level Rise which asserted global negotiating power and called “upon the States of the world family” to address climate action and recognize the small island group’s outsized vulnerability to climate change (Malé Declaration 1989). In the spirit of this political will, AOSIS members often push for the most comprehensive global regulations, and even famously took a major leadership role in the first draft version of the Kyoto Protocol (Yamamoto & Esteban 2014). These states have the most to lose in terms of their physical land, but also within their economies along the way. A study conducted by Negin Heidari and Joshua M. Pearce found that AOSIS member states stand to lose over \$570 Trillion (USD) from climate change related damages (Heidari & Pearce, 2016).

AOSIS has constantly maintained the model of self-advocacy through global awareness and diplomacy in their role as key players in high level climate negotiations within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Yamamoto & Esteban 2014). Member states and like organizations- such as the Pacific Islands Forum- also publish reports that ground their state’s threat to existence in climate change. The Niue Declaration on Climate Change and the Malé Declaration on the Human Dimension of Global Climate Change serve to update the international community on several important points of climate negotiations. First the Malé Declaration on the Human Dimension of Global Climate Change makes the request of the international community to bring in consideration the human dimension of climate negotiations, to explicitly include the UNHCR and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) into UNFCCC climate discussions and to further press the UNHRC to debate human rights and climate change in a singular context (Republic of Malé, 2007). Furthering the discussion on climate change, the Niue Declaration on Climate Change adds to the Malé assertions of human rights with discussions on responsibility and culture (The Pacific Islands Forum 2008). The Niue Declaration specifically notes that though Pacific Island nations are “amongst the lowest contributors to factors causing climate change, the Pacific Islands region is one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change including its exacerbation of climate variability, sea level rise and extreme weather events” (The Pacific Islands Forum 2008). The Pacific Islands Forum further stresses that though addressing and finding solutions for climate change is a global issue, retaining social and cultural

identity is an immediate concern for these states (The Pacific Island Forums 2008). The Niue Declaration even puts in writing the need for technical and financial support for potential relocation as well as assistance with adaptation and mitigation measures (The Pacific Islands Forum 2008). The leadership from small island states is inspiring in its efficacy and humility. These states are emblematic of the struggle for survival in the face of global inequities, and they have been fervent and successful at shaping the global conversation on climate change. AOSIS as a block constitutes one fifth of UN membership, and this bloc strategy has been successful within negotiating bodies like the UNFCCC (Yamamoto & Esteban 2014). To this point, the UNFCCC's establishing document specifically states:

Acknowledging that the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and their social economic conditions (UNFCCC 1992).

The language noting the international community's "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and their social economic conditions" provided standing for organizations like AOSIS and other nations in the global South to pursue environmental and humanitarian equity.

3. Development and Resource Indicators

The following data illuminates the UNFCCC's emphasis on burden sharing and responsibility mentioned above. The data captures information from states that are the largest contributors to climate change including the US, the European Union and China in contrast to states that represent highlight *impacted* states including: Bangladesh and Kiribati (Olivier et al. 2017; Huq & Ayers 2007).

3.1 Development Indicators

The following development indicators provide a picture of how global inequality across states has grown over time. The US and the European Union show how industrialization through resources bolster their steady economic growths over a long

period of time. China's data sets show how rapid economic development via industrialization, dependency on fossil fuels and a disregard for the environment can rapidly place a state in the top tiers of global economies.

Although an imperfect indicator, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will represent economic growth in this analysis. The World Bank data dating back to 1970 tell a story of steady growth for the United States and the European Union (Fig 1a). China experienced a significant period of rapid economic growth in the last two decades (Fig 1b.), and as is shown below we can see parallels in Chinese economic growth to greenhouse gas emissions (Table 1).

The story of growth is not only less significant, but on a totally depressed scale for our least developed countries. Though the scale is significantly smaller, Bangladesh does experience a growth pattern that mirrors China's while Kiribati barely registers on the scale (Fig. 1b). This could be due to Bangladesh's proximity to major economic monoliths like China and India while also showing how Kiribati is relatively isolated in terms of any access to a proximal economic hegemon.

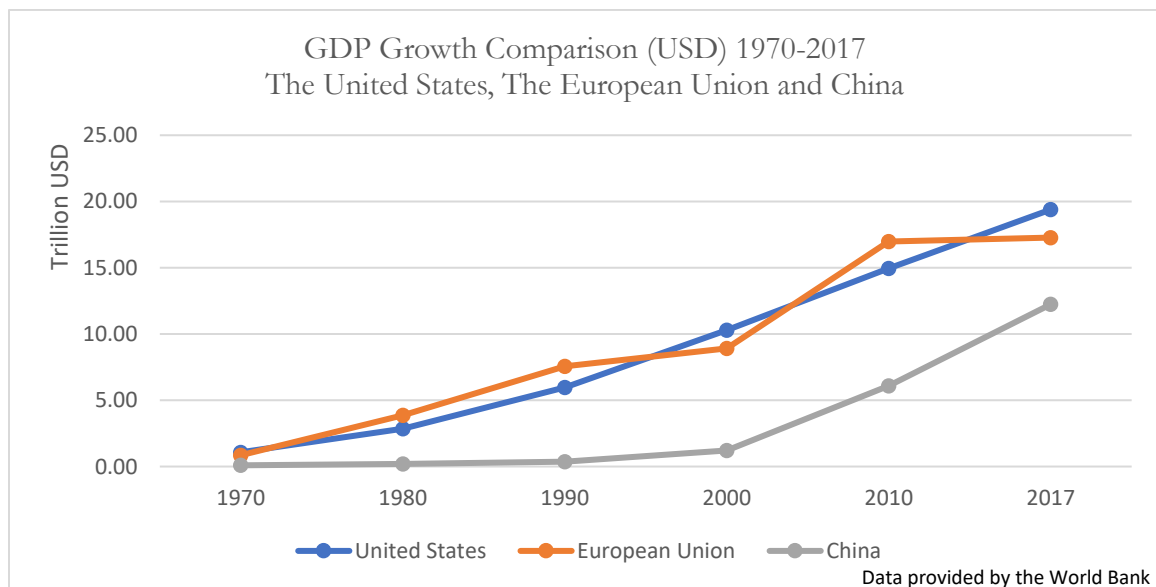


Fig 1a. GDP Growth Trends in the United States, The European Union and China (1970-2017)

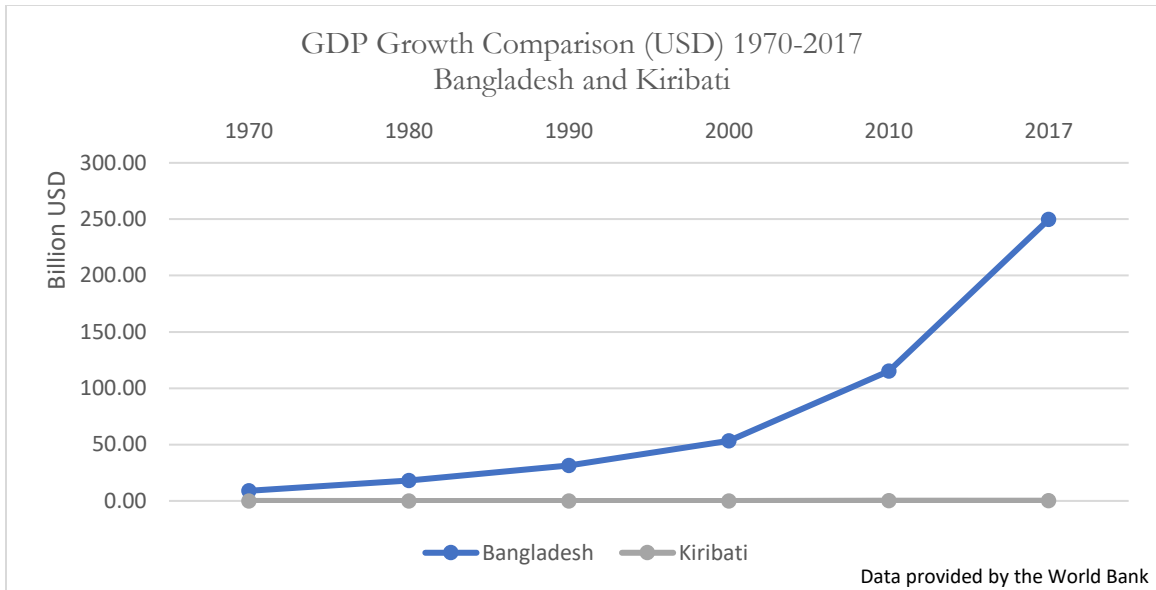


Fig. 1b. GDP Growth Trends in Bangladesh and Kiribati (1970-2017)

GDP per capita growth further shows how as our profile countries get rich, and their citizens are individually benefitting from industrialization. Interestingly, the European Union’s dip in gross GDP growth (Fig. 1a) and GDP per capita (Fig. 2a) is correlated with a decline in CO₂ emissions (Table 1). The opposite is true for China; significant gross GDP (Fig. 1a) and GDP per capita growth (Fig. 2a) is in line with China’s astounding leap in CO₂ emissions (Table 1). Interestingly, GDP per capita also grew in the same period of

time for Bangladesh and Kiribati (Fig. 2b) without similar increases in CO₂ emissions.

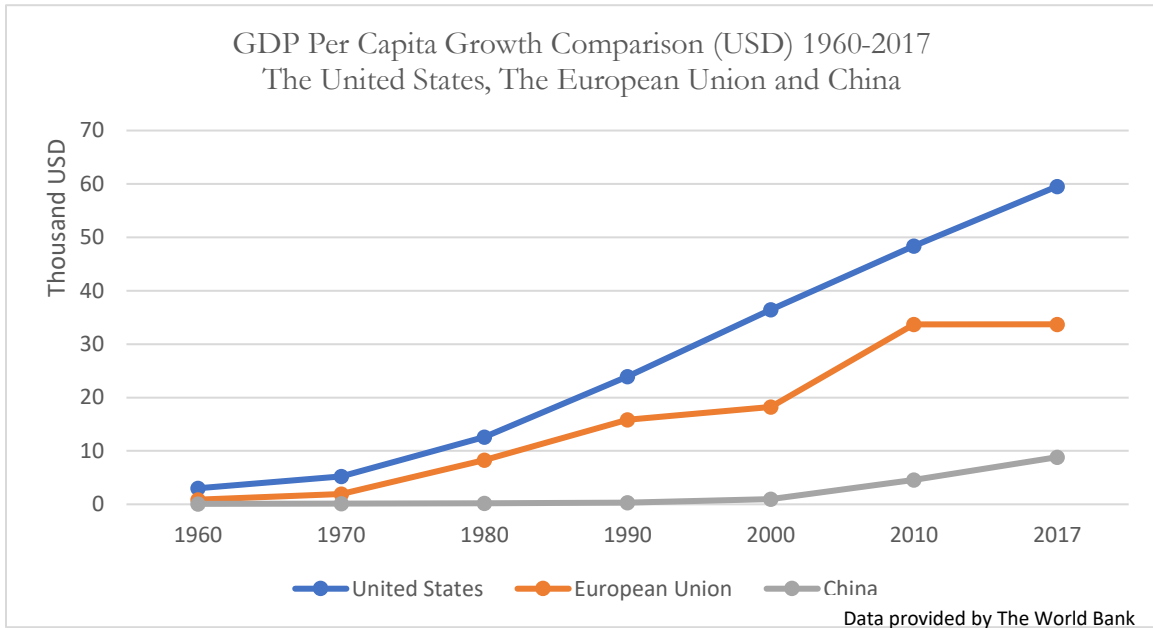


Fig. 2a. GDP Per Capita Growth Comparison in the United States, The European Union and China (1960-2017)

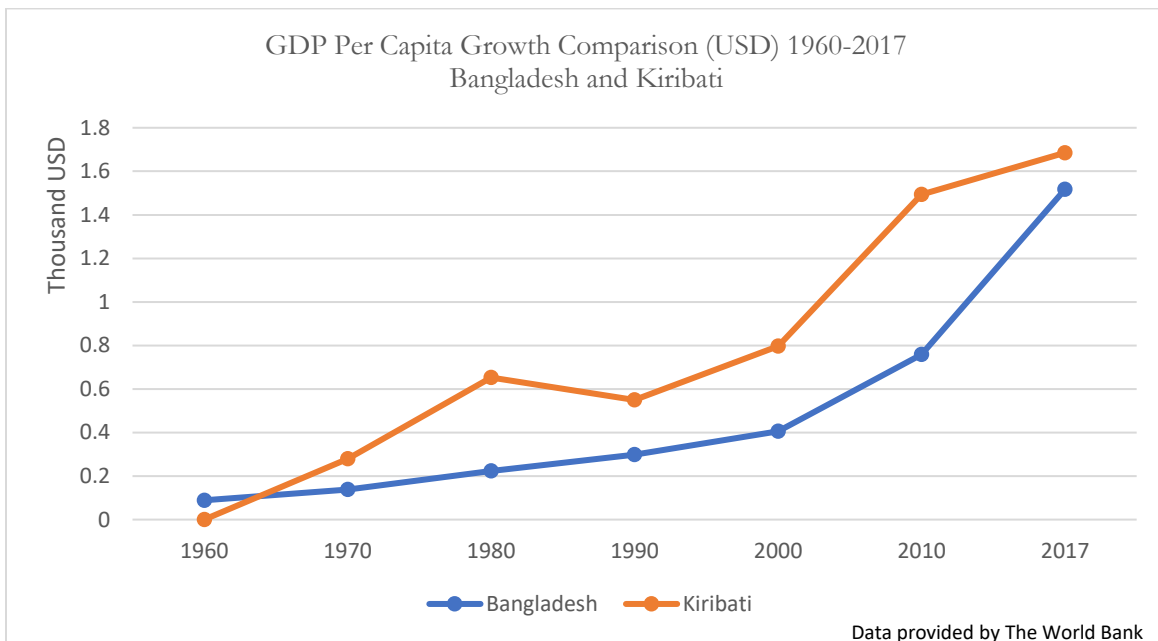
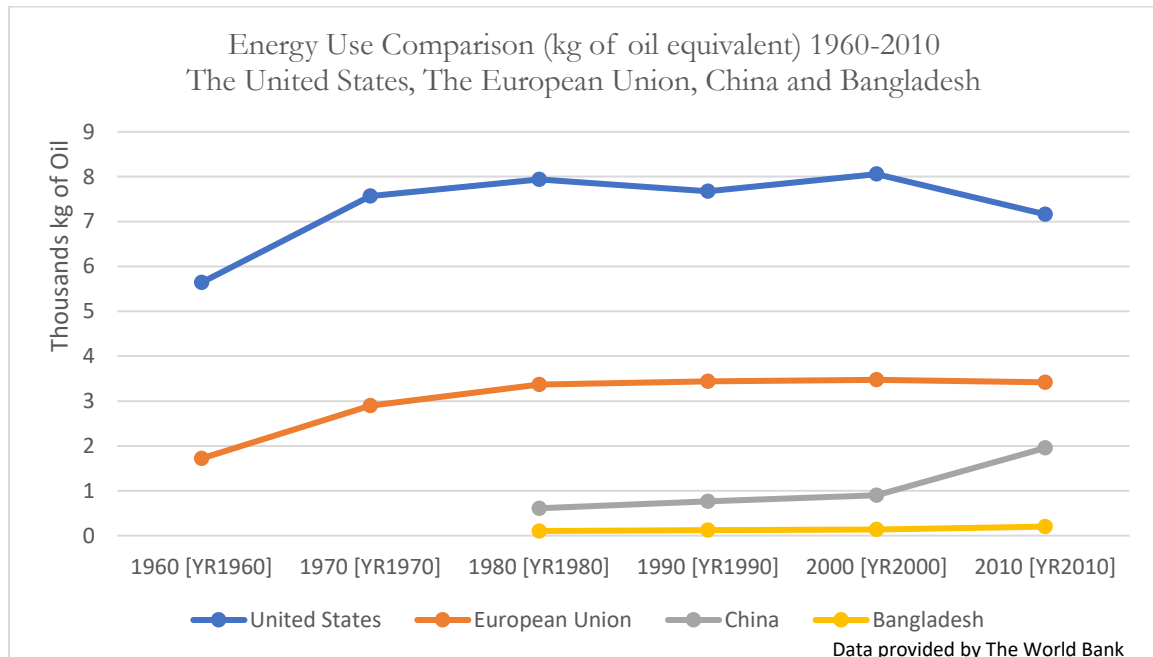


Fig. 2b. GDP Per Capita Growth Comparison in Bangladesh and Kiribati (1960-2017)

3.2 Resource Consumption

Looking at economic growth data alongside consumption data further provides a more complete understanding of what global inequality across states look like in terms of unequal economic growth, unequal resource consumption and, in turn, contribution to climate change. For consumption metrics on our profile states we will look at energy consumption per capita and national water footprint.



*Insufficient data for Kiribati

Fig. 3. Energy Use Comparison in The United States, The European Union, China and Bangladesh (1960-2010)

Since energy use is one of the primary sources for state output of CO₂ emissions, we can see how state energy consumption is tied to CO₂ emissions. The European Union's energy use plateaued (Fig. 3), and they were able to experience a net decline in CO₂ emission output (Table 1) suggesting growth in energy efficiency. The United States meanwhile did see a dip in energy consumption (Fig. 3) but has yet reduce annual CO₂ emissions below 1990 levels (Table 1). China's tripling of CO₂ emissions output (Table 1) correlates with its steep increase in energy consumption (Fig. 3).

Table 1. CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion in The United States, The European Union, China, Bangladesh and Kiribati

CO ₂ Emissions From Fuel Combustion (million tonnes of CO ₂)												% change 1990-2015
	1971	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014	2015	
The United States	4,288.1	4,355.0	4,594.9	4,513.7	4,802.5	5,073.2	5,642.6	5,702.3	5,347.0	5,168.1	4,997.5	4.1%
The European Union	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,028.2	3,812.2	3,785.5	3,921.2	3,612.6	3,159.4	3,201.2	-20.5%
China	789.4	1,040.2	1,378.4	1,648.0	2,109.2	2,923.6	3,127.1	5,399.0	7,748.6	9,084.4	9,084.6	330.7%
Bangladesh	2.9	4.4	6.6	7.7	11.4	16.5	20.9	32.0	49.9	62.9	70.5	517.1%
Kiribati ¹	10.6	12.8	16.7	10.2	10.3	9.4	11.4	15.5	22.1	26.6	25.3	144.7%

[Source: Data from IEA]

Energy use is directly tied to CO₂ emissions, and the data from both sets will inform how development inequalities came to be today and how future inequalities may persist. The United States has been the largest emitter for the longest time, and cumulatively they bear the most responsibility due to the cumulative effect, but unfortunately, The United States has yet to make a negative output on CO₂ emissions, and with the current political state this may not be in the United States' near future (Table 1). The European Union for its part, in terms of international responsibility, has been able to turn a negative CO₂ output (Table 1). China's rapid growth has created a massive CO₂ output increase doubled that of The United States (Table 1). China's emissions may serve to negate any gains from reductions from The European Union and elsewhere, and their turn as global leader in emissions output implies the need for China to assume a leadership role and national responsibility for reducing CO₂ emissions. Finally, though the percentage change of our global south nations looks significant, gross output is virtually negligible when compared to monoliths like The United States, The European Union and China (Table 1).

Nation-specific consumption of a finite resource is an interesting indicator to analyze when thinking about future conflict and migration scenarios. Table 2 highlights annual per capita freshwater consumption. While there is no data available from the World Bank, the Kiribati government self-reports that they are well below the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendation of 50 liters per person per day (Republic of Kiribati 2019). While the CO₂ indicators discussed above are helpful for discussing

¹ Kiribati did not have state level data and was grouped in the IEA report with 'Other non-OECD Asia'

responsibility for climate change, the water indicators in Table 2 show how one of the most important resources water is extracted and consumed across states. China provides an interesting case in that per capita consumption is not very high compared to its gross consumption. It's significantly lower than the United States and only slightly higher than Bangladesh with significant population differences compared to both states. Importantly, as people begin to migrate due to climate change and environmental destruction, water resources will be further stressed. Bangladesh shares a border with China and as the state begins to become uninhabitable on a large scale, we can expect that cross-border migration into China will be a major route for many migrants.

Table 2. Per Capita Water Consumption by Country (liters/person/year)

Per Capita Water Consumption by Country (billion M³)			
Country	Total Annual Freshwater Withdrawals (billion M³)	Population (thousands)	Per Capita Consumption (M³/person/year)
China	594	1,392,730	420
The United States	418	327,167	1,270
Bangladesh	35	161,356	210
Kiribati	No Data	116	No Data

[Source: Data from the World Bank]

Kiribati is already experiencing deep water stress. The government notes that freshwater sources are extremely hard to come by, and the state has resorted to drilling for water in deep underground water tables (Kiribati 2019). This process is cumbersome and puts further stress on the environment (Kiribati 2019). An inability to access resources like water among others is already factoring into many migrants' decisions to leave Kiribati (UN ESCAP).

4. Survival Migration

From the field of Migration Studies we can begin to tell a story that reflects how the international convention model primarily existed to benefit the global north from its

inception, and how the migration and refugee regimes have been utilized by the global north to the detriment of the global south (McAdam 2015). Katy Long's historical analysis of the interwar period from 1920-1950 sheds light on the necessity for criteria of exception that specifically enabled refugees to cross borders for protection (Long 2013). Long rightfully notes that prior to and during the interwar period attempting to shoehorn persecuted peoples through traditional economic migration avenues provided insufficient relief for the large population in need (Long 2013, UNGA 1951). Long couples this analysis with a critique noting that simply providing relief for persecution without economic ties and social support has been an unsustainable model for social integration (Long 2013; UNGA 1967; UNGA 1951).

With this critical history in mind, many migration scholars have been keen to expand our understanding of displaced persons. The concept of "Survival Migration" from Alexander Betts highlights that the 1951 and 1967 regimes were solutions to specific causes and that the definition provided for refugees "simply ignores many of the drivers of cross-border displacement in most of the developing world" (Betts 2013). Theorizing in the vein of "mixed migration" critiques on the current international systemic norms, Betts asserts that migrants move or people are displaced for multiple reasons and that sourcing one reason is insufficient (Betts 2013; Van Hear, Brubaker & Bessa 2009). Betts coined the term "survival migration" to expand the concept of displaced person to recognize them in a humanitarian perspective identifying survival migrants as "persons who are outside their country of origin because of an existential threat for which they have no access to a domestic remedy or resolution" (Betts 2013). This expanded concept gives us an opportunity to assess displacement in terms of the individual's perception of their human rights and their inability to attain relief from their sending or domestic origin.

5. Impacts on Sending and Receiving States

The above data shows how states like the US and China are responsible, capable and culpable for climate change in total. The following narratives show how small island states are attempting to utilize migration as a climate change adaptation strategy with a comparison of how a global north state is attempting to include in-migration in climate change policy.

The following cases studies examine how communities from Small Island States are approaching the tough decision to leave their homelands and how one country- New Zealand- is seeking out long term humanitarian solutions for these migrants. New Zealand's policy makers are having debates that are designed to address both the current emergency as well as what future scenarios will look like by designing inclusive migration policies that are not fixed on historical accords and agreements but rather policies that might be better suited for an unknowable future (McAdam 2015).

5.1 Small Island States

Kiribati is comprised of one raised limestone island and 32 low-lying atolls, the highest elevation is 81 meters, but the average height sits just between 2-4 meters (Oakes, Milan & Campbell 2016). Kiribati is highly vulnerable to sea level rise, king tides and major storm systems (Oakes, Milan & Campbell 2016). Kiribati then is representative of a state that is at risk for both climate change shocks and stressors; shocks represented by events like storms and stressors represented by long term strain such as incremental sea level rise (Oakes, Milan & Campbell 2016; Arup & The Rockefeller Foundation 2014). Kiribati does not have a culture of international out-migration, but due to sea level rise, soil salination and ocean acidification many I-Kiribati have begun migrating internally to larger spaces and the capital, South Tarawa (Oakes, Milan & Campbell 2016). From the added pressure of internal migration- 5 times as many internal migrants as opposed to international, South Tarawa is experiencing high unemployment and limited water availability (UN ESCAP). International migration would be a relief to Kiribati economically, but many I-Kiribati do not have the financial means to migrate out to regional hegemonic powers like New Zealand or Australia (Oakes, Milan & Campbell 2016). Traditional economic labor migration schemes are available, but these are limited and not viable solutions for the younger or older I-Kiribati (Oakes, Milan & Campbell 2016). Without significant innovative solutions, many I-Kiribati will have to resort to dangerous relocation efforts by sea.

There is a desire by the regional hegemonic powers and the government of Kiribati to find solutions for the population. The Kiribati government famously launched the "Migration with Dignity" to address the "baki-aba" or "land hunger" issue (Government

of Kiribati 2018; Walsh 2017). The plan focuses on strengthening opportunities to migrate for “those who wish to [migrate]” to establish expatriate communities and ethnic enclaves while also making the I-Kiribati attractive to receiving countries, while keeping in mind that without international migration routes, it will be impossible to relocate 100,000 people rapidly (Government of Kiribati 2018). What we will hopefully see is the expansion or loosening of traditional economic or refugee recognition on a bilateral level. Famously, Ioane Teitiota from Kiribati attempted to claim asylum in New Zealand referencing climate change and sea level rise as the many reason (Anderson, 2017). The claim was denied, but the New Zealand Government did make gestures that they may create the world’s first “climate visa” (Anderson, 2017).

5.2 New Zealand

New Zealand is uniquely situated to provide examples of how states can move toward a holistic approach to migrant resettlement within the context of climate change and environmental displacement. With a population of 4.8 million people and a per capita GDP of \$42 thousand USD, New Zealand enjoys global North status and is a major migration destination for many Pacific and Small Island nations (World Bank 2019). As noted with the Kiribati case above migrants have applied for refugee status in New Zealand citing habitability and quality of life issues. Migrants from Kiribati are not the only migrants to attempt this route. In 2014, a Tuvaluan family sought relief from a New Zealand tribunal on the grounds that due to sea level rise and water salinization they could no longer expect to live peaceably and with a good quality of life (McAdam 2015). The family even acknowledged that their government was not actively persecuting them along the guidelines stipulated in the Convention (’51) and Protocol (’67) for Refugee Status, but still believed their relief was warranted on humanitarian grounds (McAdam 2015). The case involved a deep analysis of international laws and the tribunal ended up granting a permanent status but on the family unification and cultural grounds; the family’s extended family lived in New Zealand and the petitioning children knew no other home than New Zealand (McAdam 2015).

Though the petition was not successful on “climate refugee” or “environmental refugee” grounds, the tribunal’s legal process is perhaps the most significant portion of this

story (aside from the family receiving permanent status). This particular tribunal took extreme care to go through a broad range of international laws, conventions, agreements, etc. to begin to build a framework for environmental displacement. The tribunal very easily could have ended their deliberation after finding that the family did not meet persecution requirements, but their care with the case tells us about their future acing approach to environmental displacement. The tribunal walked the family's case through the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* under the aegis of the family's 'right to life' as well as the *International Covent on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* protection of the right to adequate food to see if a combination of international guidelines could support a case for persecution (McAdam 2015; UNGA 1976; UNGA 1966). Unfortunately, the tribunal decided that for even with tying several conventions together the Tuvaluan government would have had to have been inept or overtly careless in their administrative capacities; a mere lack of resources did not warrant justifying persecution (McAdam 2015).

6. Conclusion

Migration policies need to be rectified to manage the growing movement of people in response to climate disruption, through international accords as well as bilateral agreements between states. Policy makers need to keep in mind that the global North nations have benefited unequally from the use of fossil fuels to industrialize and advance their economies, and the global South nations are bearing a major share of the burden of climate change impacts. As the UNFCCC emphasizes, each state within the international community is responsible for finding solutions to climate change within their means as well as in relation to their responsibility for causing the problem. While mitigation of climate change is ongoing, responses to survival migration are needed now. The humanitarian implications of weak migration responses will become exponentially worse as the effects of climate change intensify. Ultimately, climate change mitigation and migration will need to be addressed in tandem to reduce future inequities while also ensuring the least possible loss of land, culture and life to the most vulnerable states.

Global policies will need to harmonize with the realities that climate change will force upon us. Global South communities, like Kiribati and Tuvalu, are already using out-

migration as a climate change adaptation strategy as the lands they live on become uninhabitable and dangerous due to sea-level rise, storm surge, and saltwater intrusion. Global North communities need to act like New Zealand and recognize this reality and begin moving their migration policies toward inclusive future thinking policies. National climate change mitigation and resiliency plans must begin accounting for in-migration. This is crucial on a humanitarian level as well as an administrative level. The Global North will have more and more migrants and they must accept these migrants recognizing their journey for survival.

It is crucial that states and global regions begin piloting expanded migration schemes. These schemes may follow Betts' "survival migration" principles and assert the primacy of human rights, or they may seek to expand "traditional migration" avenues through labor and family unification models or perhaps states will decide to reduce or do away with completely the burden of proof for refugee and asylum. The international community and the supranational organizations that have traditionally created frameworks for states to address state level policy, may be hard pressed to meet a consensus with the rise of anti-global sentiment, but bilateral and regional diplomacy may prove to be the best routes for migratory relief. There may be potential models from existing human rights agreements to use as frameworks for a comprehensive global migration and environmental scheme, but that potential is far from a reality. In the meantime, receiving states should follow New Zealand's example and begin crafting legislation for refugees and migrants that is not beholden to the outdated guidelines from the Convention and Protocol on Refugees. New Zealand does not yet have the perfect grasp of what a humanitarian response to environmental displacement will look like, but they are at least having the discussion at the policy level. Whether a humanitarian visa is added to their immigration regime, or New Zealand takes a totally radical approach and does away with legalized migration is to be seen.

Strong inclusive leadership is crucial in the fight to recognize migration as survival. Front-line communities like Small Island States must continue to lead on all aspects of both climate change and migration solutions. By asserting their right to exist free from destructive storms and climate events, to move across arbitrary boundaries and to have a

voice that represents the millions of people who are the most impacted by climate change, front-line communities will be able to provide a perspective that is rooted in agency. The international community must create space for leadership from these communities or else any potential solution will be unsustainable and only serve those in power.

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