

Risk Factors of Unmanaged Migration

Summary of national risk factors: High unemployment rates; Slow economic growth; Youth bulges; Religious freedom; Personal safety; Unstable social conditions; Ethnic conflict; Civil conflict; Drought; Famine; Floods; Earthquakes; Arable farmland; Level of governance; Level of fragility; Neighbor conflict; Terrorism

Summary of subnational risk factors: Level of urbanization; Distance to borders, Distance to valuable resources; Density of population; Extent of rough terrain.

Aim: To assist analysts with the identification of risk factors for the production of risk terrain maps. Specifically, this brief provides an annotated review of the factors related to unmanaged migration and the settings and times for which some factors may be most relevant. This information should be especially useful to help choose a time period for creating risk terrain maps (i.e., Stepⁱ 3), to identify aggravating and mitigating risk factors to include in your risk terrain model (i.e., Steps 5 and 6), and to inform the operationalization of your risk factors to risk map layers (i.e., Step 7).

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Migration is a naturally occurring phenomenon that has occurred for thousands of years. Migrants are no longer welcomed with open arms by states as they once were. Beginning in the 1960s, unmanaged migration came to the forefront of international politics. It receives attention from the security sector due to four processes; an increase in the scale of movements, the increase in the diversity of populations, the increase in the number of global institutions aiding in unmanaged migration, and increased government involvement in stopping migration. Census information from 2008 demonstrates that 1 out of 10 migrants were part of the unmanaged migration population, equivalent to 20 to 30 million unauthorized or undocumented people.

These statistics prompt the following questions:

- What are the factors pushing and pulling unmanaged migration that makes it a security risk?
- What conditions increase the unmanaged migration population?
- What data, if any, are available to track the changes in the unmanaged migration population?

In answering these questions, the current research brief identifies risk factors for the production of risk terrain maps

(Risk Terrain Manual, Rutgers Center on Public Security). A review of literature about unmanaged migration will be used to identify factors related to migrants' choice to leave a particular area and factors in the incoming area that encourage migration to the region. The brief will provide an annotated review of factors most relevant for analyst preparing risk terrain maps in the settings of unmanaged migration.

Operational definition: Unmanaged migration is sometimes referred to as irregular migration, as it is migration that occurs outside the legalized norms established by a particular state. According to Vogel (2009, 1), irregular migration occurs when "residents without any legal resident status in the country they are residing in, and those whose presence in the territory – if detected – is subject to termination through an order to leave and/or an expulsion order because of their activities".

Irregular migration is defined according to the International Organization of Migration: "migration that takes place outside the norms and procedures established by States to manage the orderly flow of migrants into, through, and out of their countries".ⁱⁱ

Aggravating/Mitigating Risk Factors Based on a Review of Empirical Literature

There are three main ways that unmanaged migration occurs: overstaying (i.e. students and workers overstaying permitted time); fraudulent entry/entry without proper authority (i.e. forged documentation); and illegal border crossing (i.e. human trafficking).ⁱⁱⁱ Irrespective of the methods of migration, unmanaged migrants threaten state sovereignty and security (Koser 2005; Dirks 1998; Weiner 1995) in five security sectors: military, political, economic, societal and environmental (Stivachtic 2008). The current response of governments to these threats is to tighten control of their borders and restrict access into the country (Dirks 1998).

There is general consensus that many unmanaged migrants are not recorded (Stivachtic 2008). The lack of detailed statistics makes it extremely difficult to account for the overall number of unmanaged migrants and where they are likely to migrate from. To better respond to the problem, it is essential to advance the methodologies for forecasting unmanaged migration. There is very little quantitative work attempting to forecast unmanaged migration. However, academic literature has identified predictive indicators of unmanaged migration that generally fall into one of the following categories: economic, societal, political and environmental. Geographical indicators that predict the onset of unmanaged migration is a less explored area of academic literature. To analyze the geography of unmanaged migration locations, two main methodologies have been utilized: 1) the use of national level (aggregated level) geographical data to substitute for socio-economical and geopolitical characteristics and 2) the use of sub-national level (disaggregate level) data to directly reflect the local differences.

There are systemic “Push” factors that encourage migration from one location to another. These include chronic fiscal failure, severe economic disparity, and high levels of organized crime occur over long periods of time, all of which affect migration choices (Schwab & Lee 2012). The following risk factors prompt abrupt unmanaged migration.

National Level Geographical Data

Economic factors: One of the most researched factors of unmanaged migration is economic factors pushing populations to migrate (Back 2003). According to Dirk

(1988) residents of the “global South” migrate out of necessity to find immediate work. High unemployment rates are attributed to the more immediate choices of migrating. Slow economic growth is also an indicator of economic problems. Youth bulges are associated with a large population of young individuals that will not be placed in the job market, further pushing higher unemployment rates and influencing migration.

Societal factors: Massey et al. (1993) note that conditions beyond the labor market affect migration. Systemic factors such as religious freedom, personal safety, and stable social conditions are part of the long term choice to migrate (Schwab & Lee 2012). Social networks established in other countries or violent ethnic disputes within a country can promote migration. Societal factors inciting unmanaged migration include the onset of ethnic conflict and civil conflict. The immediate threat of violence prompts migration from a place experiencing violence to an area of relative peacefulness. Ethnic conflict drives minority groups to seek protection in neighboring countries with communities occupied by people who are similar to them (Stivachtis 2008).

Environmental factors: There are environmental factors that propel unmanaged migration. Drought or the lack of potable water forces people to uproot and relocate. Famine, floods, earthquakes and the amount of arable farm land are also environmental factors of unmanaged migration (Schwab & Lee 2012).

Geopolitical factors: Portes and Rumbaut (2006) note that beyond economic factors, geopolitical factors influence unmanaged migration. Political factors of unmanaged migration include level of governance; level of fragility as a state, presence of neighbor state conflict, and terrorism.

Subnational Level Geographical Data

Sociodemographical factors: Unmanaged migration is likely to be dependent upon urbanization or population density of the location (Schwab & Lee 2012), as cities become more congested individuals may leave for more job opportunities of better living conditions.

Geographical and geopolitical factors: Factors such as the extent of rough terrain, distance to the nearest border and distance to valuable resource deposits are believed to influence unmanaged migration (Schwab 2011).

References & Recommended (Publically Available) Readings

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Endnotes

ⁱ For steps of risk terrain map production, download the RTM Manual at www.riskterrainmodeling.com

ⁱⁱ International Organization on Migration: Irregular migration. Retrieved from <http://www.iom.int>

ⁱⁱⁱ International Organization on Migration