

CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS IN FORCED MIGRATION

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Scholars have made rapid progress in establishing the field of Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies over the past 30 years. It has emerged from both the moral imperative of ameliorating the suffering of the displaced and from academic interests of scholars considering involuntary migration from the perspectives of sociology, geography, political science and international relations, anthropology, and international law. In spite of this broad interest, or perhaps because of it, key conceptual issues have seldom been addressed, with the result that there is a lack of clarity on matters of fundamental importance. Greater awareness of general theory and greater analytical rigour is required urgently on issues that bear upon forced migration. This special issue is the outcome of a cooperative effort to initiate discussion on some of these problems. In 2011 a special seminar series was organized by the University of Oxford and the University of East London to consider a series of inter-related issues: problems of choice and constraint, forced migrants and the nation-state, and refugees and history.

Keywords: conceptual issues, problems of choice and constraint, refugees and history, forced migration and the nation-state

Over the past 30 years, scholars have made rapid progress in establishing the field of Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies. It has emerged from both the moral imperative of ameliorating the suffering of the displaced and from academic interests of scholars considering involuntary migration from the perspectives of sociology, geography, political science and international relations, anthropology, and international law. In spite of this broad interest, or perhaps because of it, key conceptual issues have seldom been addressed, with the result that studies in the field have often developed without clarity on matters of fundamental importance. It is rare for conferences on forced migration to tackle conceptual issues and these are seldom addressed directly in journals or in taught courses. The outcome is increasingly serious: issues which should feature centrally within Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies are ignored or evaded. Some become matters for debate within other fields but the problem of under-conceptualisation in Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies means

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that the opportunity for positive feedback to migration researchers is limited. Greater awareness of general theory and greater analytical rigour is required urgently on issues that bear upon forced migration. This special issue is the outcome of a cooperative effort to initiate discussion on some of these problems. In 2011, a special seminar series organized by the University of Oxford and the University of East London, and held at the two institutions, considered a series of inter-related issues: problems of choice and constraint, forced migrants and the nation-state, and refugees and history. Some of the papers presented were the bases for articles in this special issue of *Refugee Survey Quarterly*.

There has recently been a modest increase in interest in conceptual issues in Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies, notably in relation to disciplinary agendas and the implications of distinguishing between these two closely related areas of work.¹ Identification of disciplinary boundaries has often been a pre-occupation for academic researchers in general, especially over the past 30 years as multi-disciplinary projects have proliferated, notably in the Social Sciences. The launch of new scholarly bodies and of academic journals and networks is often accompanied by complex mapping exercises in which those involved set out rationales for particular initiatives. Using metaphors from the field of migration, we might say that like States and other political actors they establish territorial claims by means of inclusion and exclusion, drawing distinctions between subject matter, methodological practices, personnel and professional agendas, and usually establishing specific conceptual agendas. One feature of research on human displacement has, however, been the relatively modest effort devoted to this practice, especially when Refugee Studies emerged as a distinct field in the early 1980s.

B.S. Chimni reflects on the antecedents of Refugee Studies and implications for the field as a formal “discipline” (he places this term carefully within quotation marks).² He sees four distinct phases of development of Refugee Studies: from 1914 to 1945, when “practical issues” of concern to States and the League of Nations were addressed; from 1945 to 1982, when the emphasis was on displacement outcomes of world war; from 1982 to 2000, when Refugee Studies “proper” emerged, with establishment of research centres, journals and professional academic networks; and a subsequent move towards Forced Migration Studies, in which researchers have expanded the focus on refugees to address wider migration agendas. These developments, he suggests, have “evolved in response to the problems of the times”.³ It is only recently, however, that academic responses to mass displacement and questions of disciplinary integrity have been examined critically and self-consciously. Why should this

¹ See, for example, contributions by Hathaway, Cohen, Adelman and McGrath, and DeWind in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(3), 2007.

² B.S. Chimni, “The Birth of a ‘Discipline’: From Refugee to Forced Migration Studies”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 22(1), 2009, 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

be so – and what are the implications for conceptual issues in general in the refugee and forced migration fields?

Chimni's periodization of developments in Refugee Studies might be challenged on the basis that interest in refugees in the early and mid-20th century was restricted to conjunctural engagement with migration issues among a scattering of academic researchers. In the 1940s and 1950s there had been a number of studies of mass displacement, most examining events in Europe during and after the two world wars.⁴ As recently as 1981, however, leading researchers commented that the phenomenon of forced migration had suffered from “decades of scholarly inattention”.⁵ There had indeed been little focused research and no effective liaisons among those who addressed mass displacement, primarily because “refugees” were a loose, ill-defined category of persons whose existence had historically been marked more emphatically in popular culture than on official agendas or in scholarly work. In the case of Europe people identified variously as refugees/exiles/political exiles (*réfugiés*, *Flüchtlinge* etc) had a long history in the pre-modern and modern eras. From the moment of emergence of the nation-state in the 17th and 18th centuries, and its appropriation of powers of protection of certain groups of vulnerable people (such powers being seized from religious authorities), ideas about sanctuary, refuge and asylum were recognized most fully in popular practice.⁶ Although they claimed powers of protection, paradoxically modern States did not recognize refugees formally in legal or even quasi-legal terms, and “asylum” was offered on a contingent, changing basis.⁷ Meanwhile, professional academics, writers and others who contributed to the mainstream of national discourse barely noted displacement or the fate of those affected. When semi-formal approaches to certain displaced groups began to emerge in the early 20th century they were mobilized selectively and instrumentally by States and international bodies, and largely ignored by scholars.

Given the scale of mass displacement in the mid-20th century, especially in Europe, South Asia and the Middle East, the lack of academic interest was striking. In 1939, J.H. Simpson published *The Refugee Problem*, a report for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and in 1948 Kulischer's *Europe on the Move* examined displacements associated with the world wars:⁸ a handful of

⁴ Among isolated studies were those of Vernant, who documented refugee needs, Stoessinger, who examined international responsibilities for forced migrants, and Proudfoot, Chandler, and Kee. See J. Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 1953; J. Stoessinger, *The Refugee and the World Community*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1953; M. Proudfoot, *European Refugees: 1939–52: A Study in Forced Population Movement*, London, Faber and Faber, 1957; E.H.S. Chandler, *The High Tower of Refuge: The Inspiring Story of Refugee Relief Throughout the World*, New York, Praeger, 1959; and R. Kee, *Refugee World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961.

⁵ B. Stein & L. Tomasi, “Foreword”, *International Migration Review*, 15(1–2), 1981, 6.

⁶ P. Marfleet, “Refugees and History: Why We Must Address the Past”, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 26(3), 2007, 136–148.

⁷ For a terse account of how the early modern State addressed asylum issues see P. Marfleet, “Understanding ‘Sanctuary’: Faith and Traditions of Asylum”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(2), 2011, 440–455.

⁸ J.H. Simpson, *The Refugee Problem*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1939; E. Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes 1917–1948*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1948.

other studies addressed similar themes. It was not until 1951, with publication of Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, that an analytical work identified refugees as people confronted by problems, which could be understood by reference to wider political agendas.⁹ For Arendt, refugees were part of the modern socio-political order – people whose predicaments were imbricated with the nation-state and with state-making agendas. These insights were not pursued systematically by scholars who took up other key aspects of Arendt's work (notably issues of power, the State and totalitarianism) and displaced people remained at the extreme margins of research in the few disciplines, which periodically addressed migration and migrants – Political Science, Anthropology, and History. This was not because of the low profile of refugees in contemporary affairs: on the contrary, in the wake of world wars and the development of highly charged Cold War agendas, there was much wider consciousness of displacement and its impacts. For key state actors in the international political arena, and for partisan national media, displacement was an opportunity to solicit “the enemy's enemies” and to celebrate their presence as an affirmation of domestic political values.¹⁰ Refugees were rarely a matter of intrinsic interest; their experiences were rarely recorded and almost never examined as means of securing insights into displacement in general.¹¹

For 30 years after the Second World War academic networks in general expanded rapidly in Western Europe and North America. Institutions of higher learning proliferated; agendas of traditional disciplines were extended and new disciplines emerged, especially in the Social Sciences, among which several focused on international affairs, notably International Politics, International Relations, International Sociology and Development Studies. Area studies began to take the place of the various Orientalisms and Africanisms, as researchers adjusted to post-colonial realities, including the emergence of a host of independent States in the Global South. Still mass displacement and its impacts failed to prompt focused academic interest: more studies were undertaken but almost all addressed what researchers saw as discrete episodes rather than as phenomena in relation to which comparative and systematic analysis might be possible.

Researchers in the United States were first to call for focused attention to displacement. In 1981, Charles Keely argued that agendas for world development should accommodate understanding of international refugee crises.¹² In the same year an issue of *International Migration Review* for the first time

⁹ H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951.

¹⁰ See P. Tuitt, *False Images: Law's Construction of the Refugee*, London, Pluto, 1996; P. Marfleet, *Refugees in a Global Era*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2006.

¹¹ Interest in the fate of refugees from mid-20th century fascism, notably Jewish victims of the Nazis, is an exception that emphatically marks the absence of work on other displacements.

¹² C. Keely, *Global Refugee Policy: The Case for a Development-Oriented Strategy*, New York, Population Council, 1981.

addressed refugee movements, its editors noting both the increased importance of forced migration and the absence of a coherent framework for analysis:

Traditionally viewed as localized, non-recurring and isolated flows, refugees and refugee movements stand singularly undefined and notably undocumented. Today, religious, ethnic and political conflicts, persecution, tyranny and war all combine to leave no region or continent without refugees. . . The magnitude and number of these movements is unknown. Data may range by source and definition, and journalism is too often deputed as research.¹³

It was now a matter of urgency to develop a new approach, they argued: “a comprehensive, historical, interdisciplinary and comparative perspective which focuses on the consistencies and patterns in the refugee experience. . . Ideally such work should build the foundation of a new field of Refugee Studies”.¹⁴

Almost 40 years after the historic refugee tragedies associated with European fascism, with decolonisation and the upheavals that produced Partition of British India and the Palestinian *nakba*, mass displacement was still barely visible to most researchers in disciplines that might have addressed the issue. Contemporary displacements associated with anti-colonial struggles and with the emergence of independent States were still treated as local episodes – those affected were seen as little more than collateral damage produced by specific conflicts. When Refugee Studies finally appeared in the 1980s as a multi-disciplinary project it marked belated recognition of the scale of mass displacement worldwide and – implicitly – of the failure of established academic networks to address a major historic issue.

1. “Policy studies”

Those who now established research centres, journals, and eventually teaching programmes on refugee themes were confronted by a large conceptual deficit. Existing disciplines had barely touched on the character, causes and outcomes of mass displacement, and reflection on these pressing questions might have been seen as a key task in hand. Conceptual matters were not a priority, however. As a number of friendly critiques from within Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies have observed, key research issues were influenced by demands of States, transnational agencies and relief/aid bodies concerned at a rapid increase in numbers of displaced people worldwide and at the sharp change in direction in refugee movements – from the East–West journeys of the Cold War era to the South–North journeys of a new “global” era. Chimni comments bluntly that expansion of Refugee Studies “was a function of the anxieties and concerns of Western states” in the wake of these changes.¹⁵ Researchers at last focused on

¹³ Stein & Tomasi, “Foreword”, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Chimni, “The Birth of a ‘Discipline’”, 14.

refugees and their predicaments; at the same time they were encouraged by state authorities, influential policy-makers and funding bodies to participate in the project of “political humanitarianism”¹⁶ – intervention in the then Third World which sought to address destabilising impacts of mass population movements. Black comments in a similar vein on problems presented by what he calls “refugee policy studies”.¹⁷ For the first 20 years of its existence as a formal field of research, he suggests, Refugee Studies was profoundly influenced by those who wished to co-opt academic enquiry for purposes shaped by “particular political or bureaucratic interests”.¹⁸ There were numerous dangers for researchers – notably that their work would focus on narrow outcomes, especially upon collection of empirical data that could be processed in the context of preconceived categories and strategic assumptions about migration policy. Modest attention was paid to conceptual matters, said Black, including to general conceptual advances in the social sciences. “Refugee policy studies” produced work that was under-theorised, time-limited and geographically specific – “fundamentally unsuited even to the task of influencing the policy world”.¹⁹

These comments are appropriate but should be set alongside a more nuanced understanding of the circumstances in which Refugee Studies emerged as a formal area of study. Researchers had their own humanitarian concerns – anxieties about the circumstances of large numbers of displaced people whose needs (or even their presence – see below) went unrecognized by governments and other influential actors. And although academic research on displacement was grossly inadequate, in the non-governmental sector it had been advancing rapidly. This was largely an outcome of the growth of the non-governmental organization (NGO) and “third” sectors. From the early 1960s, NGOs emerged as significant players in relation to human rights and relief/aid. Amnesty International was established in 1961 as a pioneering human rights network. Within seven years it had organized over 500 groups, becoming an effective influence on governments worldwide.²⁰ The human rights lobby grew with startling speed: soon there was a host of groups specialising in particular countries and regions, and a stream of reports and bulletins, including many on refugees.²¹ At the same time leading charities took on new roles in humanitarian and relief work. Oxfam, Save the Children Fund and many others became

¹⁶ This term is used by Chimni to describe “humanitarian” interventions in the Global South consistent with the legitimisation of “a new imperial world order”: *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷ R. Black, “Fifty Years of Refugee Studies: From Theory to Policy”, *International Migration Review*, 35(1), 2001, 67.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ J. Power, *Like Water on Stone: The Story of Amnesty International*, London, Allen Lane, 2001, 132.

²¹ By the early 1990s Amnesty International had more than 8,000 local groups in over 70 countries (Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 1999*, London, Amnesty International, 2000, 332); by 2000 it had over a million members and subscribers (*Ibid.*, 273).

key players in crisis situations that often involved huge displacements of population.²² Together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which had massively expanded its activities,²³ their staff were to be found in refugee camps, holding centres and transit stations. They actively researched the conditions of refugees and produced a stream of reports and analyses, as well as the first systematic work on refugee themes on film – an important influence on general perceptions of displaced people, their needs and futures.

A new body of material on forced migration was emerging, facilitated by rights activists and aid workers who were in direct contact with refugees worldwide. Some of those who entered academic research, beginning in the early 1980s, originated in these milieux; many were influenced by its assumptions about humanitarianism, refugee support and management, and their role as lobbyists in relation to institutional actors. Refugee Studies therefore began with (in academic terms) a conceptual deficit; at the same time the field was strongly influenced by discourses of humanitarianism, welfare and advocacy, and by a strong sense of altruism. If – to mix metaphors – there was a conceptual vacuum about some key issues, it was filled by ideas about engagement with refugees associated with institutional bodies, including those that sought to undertake ameliorate “policy” projects.

2. Space, place, visibility

As Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies has become more reflective about research there has been a series of exchanges about ethical issues and in relation to the value of research undertaken in the context of policy. In 2004, David Turton reflected on three decades of research in anthropology and migration.²⁴ Like Black, he observed that definition of subject matter and execution of academic research on the basis of policy concerns had failed even to serve policy outcomes, especially outcomes of benefit to those ostensibly the focus of research.²⁵ Among academic researchers these practices had also embedded concepts that inhibited understanding of migration and the circumstances and

²² Oxfam first engaged in refugee support in 1961, sending funds for support of displaced people in Angola (Catholic Herald, 16 June 1961, archived at: <http://archive.catholicherald.co.uk/article/16th-june-1961/1/oxfam-sends-g50000-aid> (last visited 7 Feb. 2013). Save the Children Fund had been active in refugee support since 1919 – a rare example of a voluntary organization with decades of continuous work in relation to forced migrants. It began work in Africa in 1963. See K. Freeman, *If Any Man Build: The History of the Save the Children Fund*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1965.

²³ By the early 1970s, UNHCR had taken on responsibility for intervening in crisis zones in which millions of people were displaced. In the case of the Bangladesh conflict of 1971, a turning point for the agency, it took the lead role in co-ordinating relief efforts. Loescher comments on the “huge leap” involved: an organization with an annual budget of \$7 million was required to organize operations costing some 60 times that amount (G. Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics: A Perilous Path*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, 15.)

²⁴ His 2004 Elizabeth Colson Lecture for the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University was revised and published in D. Turton, “The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement: Lessons from Long-term Field Research in Southern Ethiopia”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 18(3), 2005, 258–280.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 277.

experiences of forced migrants. Turton was especially concerned about an idea that underpinned mainstream approaches to migration and to migrants – the notion of an organic, enduring relationship between particular places and specific groups of people – the conviction that “place and personal identity is ‘natural’... that sedentarism is the ‘natural’ condition of human life”.²⁶ He noted that in some disciplines, researchers had critically examined these assumptions, attempting to develop new approaches to ideas of place and “home” in a globalised environment:

Over the past decade a number of anthropologists, spurred on by what globalization seems to be doing to the nation-state, have got down to the serious business of constructing, or at least laying the groundwork for, a theory of place that would serve precisely this purpose.²⁷

He noted the apparent reluctance of colleagues who focused on forced migration to engage with similar issues:

For it is an interesting and, at first glance, a surprising fact that those who write about the displaced have, with a few notable exceptions, not exactly welcomed with open arms the burgeoning anthropological literature on the construction and maintenance of a sense of place.²⁸

Turton concluded that researchers on displacement demonstrated a practice of “avoidance” in relation to critical thinking about place. The explanation, he suggested, lay in the same engagement with policy driven research that others viewed as a key weakness in the field of Refugee Studies.²⁹

For Bakewell, writing in 2008, many displaced people remained “invisible” to researchers, whose work continued to focus on specific categories of persons defined by institutional actors and on “institutional notions of policy”.³⁰ In the case of Africa, he said, a focus on people living in formal camps meant that larger numbers of displaced people not categorised as refugees had been neglected. In effect, academics had addressed a research agenda deemed appropriate by States and agencies for which evidence about increasing numbers of “self-settled” refugees in Africa was uncongenial.

There was ample evidence that “invisibility” was a problem at the global level. Key agencies, notably UNHCR, had adopted a posture of outright denial that numbers of “self-settled” or “spontaneous” refugees worldwide had been increasing rapidly and outnumbered those administered by the agency and similar bodies. Its official view, set out in a document published in 1997 – *UNHCR’s*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 259.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 270.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 276.

³⁰ O. Bakewell, “Research Beyond the Categories: The Importance of Policy Irrelevant Research into Forced Migration”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(4), 2008, 433.

Policy and Practice Regarding Urban Refugees – proposed that only a fraction of the global total of refugees were city-dwellers. Many were “illegal”, it observed, and of dubious character: they should be treated with caution and (even more controversially) some should be subject to “curative measures” (sic).³¹ Marfleet comments that the agency saw urban refugees as “calculating, aggressive, and undeserving”: it proposed “a policy of denial and of rejection”.³²

Like the politicians of Europe and North America, UNHCR officials were prepared to accept the presence of closely managed refugee communities in remote locations; when refugees appeared elsewhere, however, they became objects of suspicion and the focus of punitive action: in particular, when they entered urban networks which facilitated movement to the North they were to be treated as dangerous and threatening.³³

Academic researchers had been aware for many years that large populations of refugees were concentrated in regional centres of the Global South.³⁴ They were part of new migration networks associated with changes in global economic and political arrangements, with major crises of displacement, and with problems of refugee management in camps administered by States and agencies. To record their presence, and to examine their circumstances, experiences and aspirations, challenged the agendas of key institutional actors and raised pressing questions about the conduct and the interests of the latter. Why did States and agencies render forced migrants “invisible”? What were the consequences for those affected? What were the implications for researchers – and for research agendas shaped by policy concerns?

A series of workshops, conferences and academic publications eventually addressed the issue of urban refugees. It had taken some 20 years for researchers to record publicly that tens of millions of people who might be viewed as refugees now lived in cities of the Global South – a development that expressed outcomes of globalization about which institutional bodies were clearly in denial. Patterns of displacement worldwide have been reshaped and required new thinking about States, borders, urban life, and migration networks. In 2009, UNHCR produced a statement to replace its document on urban refugees of 1997,³⁵ though as some of its leading officials admitted, there was little change in the agency’s policy and practice.³⁶

³¹ UNHCR, *UNHCR’s Policy and Practice Regarding Urban Refugees, A Discussion Paper*, Geneva, UNHCR, 1997.

³² P. Marfleet, “‘Hidden’/‘Forgotten’: Predicaments of the Urban Refugee”, *Refuge*, 23(2), 2007, 41.

³³ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁴ As evidenced by discussion at an international symposium on urban refugees held at the American University in Cairo in 2003, some aspects of which are addressed in K. Grabska, *Living on the Margins: Livelihoods of Sudanese Refugees in Egypt*, Cairo, American University in Cairo, 2003.

³⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*, Geneva, UNHCR, Sep. 2009, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ab8e7f72.html> (last visited 7 Feb. 2013).

³⁶ Discussions with UNHCR officials, Cairo 2008 and London 2012.

3. Conceptual agenda

Chimni proposes that academics should “speak truth to power” – a proposition that is especially appropriate when the lives of millions of vulnerable people are the focus of research.³⁷ What is required for effective engagement by researchers on forced migration with those who hold power, he suggests, is “critical reflection on the origin, evolution and character of [‘Refugee Studies’]”.³⁸ Such a practice is important but needs to be accompanied by a parallel project – examination of key issues marginalized or ignored by researchers for some 30 years. If it is now clear that policy agendas and institutional categories have inhibited critical thinking, discouraged conceptual work and distanced researchers from innovative work in other disciplines (as well as producing “policy” outcomes of dubious quality), focused discussion on key conceptual problems is a priority. This is given added importance by the impacts of global economic crisis on vulnerable regions of the Global South and the development of complex new “mixed migrations”, often associated with irregular networks. The same crisis has produced regimes of austerity in the Global North, a general contraction in higher education and academic research, and an emphasis on “outcomes”, including policy implications, of scholarly work. Applied research is often directed to the elaboration and maintenance of regulatory and discursive regimes of exclusion. Academic researchers face increased pressure to accede to the demands of institutional bodies and to underplay or to ignore the need for independent conceptual investigation, including that which is ultimately of benefit to those affected by mass displacement.

Issues, which demand attention, include those most obviously marginalized by the state-centred policy agenda:

- the nature of the modern State and its relationships with forced migrants;
- processes of construction of the nation-state and the character of inclusion and exclusion;
- States, borders and the process of “bordering”;
- refugees and history;
- choice and constraint in forced migration;
- space, place, and emplacement.

The articles in this special issue address a subset of these questions – some directly, some by means of specific case studies or on thematic lines. Deeper and wider analysis is required: these articles, focusing on problems of choice and constraint, forced migrants and the nation-state, and refugees and history, provide some reference points for further discussion.

Firstly, problems of choice and constraint are fundamental to understanding what is meant by the term “forced migration”. In some quarters – for example transnational institutions such as the World Bank – the terms voluntary and

³⁷ Chimni, “The Birth of a ‘Discipline’”, 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

“involuntary” are applied unproblematically to migrants. The issue of compulsion at both micro and macro levels needs careful consideration, however. What is “choice” in circumstances in which human actors are under extreme constraint? Is decision-making an individual matter – as in dominant traditions of moral philosophy – or a group decision? What do we mean by this term? Recognizing the complex circumstances in which choice and constraint operate together, we need to address notions of “voluntary” and “involuntary” in relation to individuals and collectives of migrants. Is migration under coercion a key feature of the contemporary world? Or is migration a logical outcome of an increasingly globalised world?

Secondly, refugees are intimately associated with the nation-state: their politico-legal, social and cultural statuses are constructed in the context of “statecraft”. Yet the relationship of refugees to the State is rarely addressed critically within Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies. Political science and moral philosophy have engaged with the nature of the State and its people and in recent work considered *homo sacer* and the bare life that entails. The presumption of universality of the nation-state system is increasingly challenged, however, as growing numbers of people who leave the hegemony of the State and fail to gain patronage under another. These individuals are often considered “liminal” as they fall outside the system of nation tied to territory. What can we learn from historical constructions of exile and the refugee during early phases of the nation-state – and how have these been modified by States under various and changing circumstances? What are the implications of supra-national initiatives for categorisation of the refugee? Can we clarify understandings of the nation-state by reference to the refugee and to exile?

Thirdly, Refugee and Forced Migration Studies have rarely addressed historical matters. Although ideas about exile, banishment, sanctuary, refuge, and asylum have an ancient lineage, they are largely ignored by scholars who address forced migration today. And although mass displacement is intimately associated with the making of the modern world, the circumstances, experiences and influences of refugees even in the recent past are largely ignored. This amounts to what one historian calls “a collective amnesia”. Why are historical traditions of asylum seldom researched? Why are refugees written out of most national histories? What accounts for the apparent reluctance of Refugee Studies/Forced Migration Studies to tackle history and historiography?

These collected papers attempt to raise further questions for discussion. The article by Mattahew Gibney examines the nature of forced migration by taking a political theory perspective on acts of deportation by the liberal democratic State. Here we see the lawful expulsion of non-citizens from the territory of States under threat of coercion. Gibney asks if this should be viewed as part of the broad category of forced migration. Most forced migrants have at least some kind of choice over whether they remain in the State they flee, however undesirable the choice to stay may be. Deportees, however, are forced migrants par excellence; if they do not leave by their own volition, they will be shackled, bound and literally carried out of the State. Gibney’s article explores why, despite the fact that it is on

the rise as a practice across Western States, deportation has generally failed to draw the attention of forced migration scholars. His answer to this puzzle is that deportation is implicitly accepted as a legitimate form of forced migration. Examining the normative framework of forced migration, he argues that many States permit deportation because it does not violate the principles of liberal statism. He concludes that even if we accept the legitimacy of this particular normative framework, problematic boundaries between deportation and other forms of forced migration (on issues like the deportation of rejected asylum-seekers and long term non-citizen residents) provide powerful reasons for treating deportation as a fitting subject for examination by forced migration scholars.

Nira Yuval-Davis and Helen Taylor examine aspects of refugee relations with the national society. Yuval-Davis focuses on a spatial/territorial form of migrants' racialization in the context of autochthony. It examines the constructions of defensive identity which have been rising among majorities and minorities alike, at least partly as a response to processes of globalization. It relates autochthony to notions of multi-layered citizenship and belonging among migrant and non-migrant communities, and asks whether there are particular issues in this arena which are specific to forced migration. Taylor focuses on the concept of "home" in the study of forced migration. One thing refugees have in common is the experience of leaving a home against their will and seeking emplacement elsewhere. Taylor argues that a nuanced appreciation of what home represents is essential if we are to better understand the experience of exile. While home often features in studies of refugee communities, she observes, it most often appears as a shorthand term for homeland or nation, or as a euphemism for the lost house. But home amounts to much more than either of these readings. In state-centred discourses of home the focus is on the people contained within the nation-state, with immigrants are seen as socially marginal. This article argues that moving beyond a structural assessment of home is essential if we are to arrive at a more satisfactory understanding of exile and its challenges. Moving away from a preoccupation with the State reveals that home for the refugee is often complex, contradictory, multiple, and in progress.

Articles by Philip Marfleet and Dawn Chatty use the long lens, examining the contribution of situated history in understanding contemporary forced migration. Marfleet's article places history at the centre of analysis. If the past is "everywhere", he asks, why is it largely ignored by forced migration scholars and why are there so few focused historical studies in the forced migration field? In this exploratory essay he examines the apparent paradox whereby mobile people in general, and refugees in particular, are seen to pose profound threats to certain States – and may also be integral to their processes of nation-state construction and reconstruction. The Chatty article argues that experiences and influences of refugees and exiles even in contemporary modern history are largely ignored. It attempts to contribute to an exploration of the past and to examine the responses of one State – the Ottoman Empire – to the forced migration of millions of largely Muslim refugees and exiles from contested borderlands shared with Tsarist Russia. The article focuses on a particular meta-ethnic group, the

Circassians, exploring humanitarian responses to their movement nationally and locally as well as their concerted drive for assisted self-settlement. The Circassians are one of many groups which were on the move at the end of the 19th century: their reception and eventual integration without assimilation in receiving regions provide important lessons for contemporary humanitarianism.

Articles by Ruba Salih and Sophie Richter-Devroe examine the nature of choice and societal cohesion in relation to problems of historicity in forced migration and the politics of return. Salih examines how political contingencies and forms of sovereignty impinge upon diasporic political cultures and refugee-hood in the Palestinian contexts. In particular, she investigates how Palestinian refugees reconcile the right of return with strategies of political and civil integration in the contexts in which they have been forced to live for more than 60 years. In order to keep alive and politically visible the Palestinian refugee tragedy and “the right of return”, refugees are urged to integrate – but not assimilate – and are producing political narratives which see “integration” and “return” as compatible and desirable. By virtue of their paradoxical positionality as displaced and rooted, insiders and outsiders, Palestinian refugees are among the most interesting actors of a new political culture that offers potentially emancipatory and transformative political thought. Richter-Devroe examines differing political cultures relating to the right of return as articulated and practised by refugees across three different locations and three generations. Going beyond territorially-based nationalist frames, she is able to show that these political narratives offer critiques of classical political theory as well as in relation to elite politics. They prompt us to rethink what the imagining and practising of Palestinian politics means today.