

Geopolitics of International Migration and evolving complexities due to COVID 19 Pandemic

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International Migration has been an evolving phenomenon of economic development of the human race. It has both a cause-and-effect relationship with the process of development since it plays a critical role in economic development. 'It is a global phenomenon that is growing in scope, complexity and impact' (United Nations)^[3]. The human rights law advocates freedom of movement within the territory of a country and to choose one's residence, the right to leave any country, and the right to return to one's own country (Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted 10 December 1948) UNGA Res 217(A), Art. 13)^[4]. In addition, several bilateral labor migration agreements ensure state-led cooperation and agreements that are legally binding.

Despite being recognized as a critical aspect of economic development and human rights, international migration has been witnessed as a geopolitical instrument, reflecting many times the preponderance of power, subjugation, or sometimes a repercussion of religious unrest. There are geopolitical implications and questions related to mobility, citizenship, and the nation-state (Allen et al. 2018). The most interesting aspect of the geopolitics of migration is the nature of complexities associated differs across the regions of the world (Collyer, 2016). The formation of the Euro-Mediterranean area is an outcome of migration management strategies. The European policy frameworks have strategically excluded the countries to the South which later evolved and developed into a discourse of partnership emphasizing Euro-Mediterranean character (Collyer, 2016).

The geopolitics of asylum-related migrants either keep these alien asylum populations alive or let them die during the asylum-related journeys (Foucault, 2003). Such asylum-related migrants are highly vulnerable to illness and lack of attention to their illness results in deaths. The influx of people in Turkey before joining the passage to Greece has led to overcrowding. Moreover, the philosophy of othering and not letting these migrants share the same space as EU citizens ultimately witnessed migrants that were alive but not in liveable conditions (Jauhiainen, 2020). Thus, the critical questions related to who is responsible for the miserable conditions of migrants and the ethical judgment that who should take responsibility are some emerging concerns. Several state and non-state actors have extended their



concerns but all the stakeholders responded as passive observers and witnesses. No legal or formal institution has been developed to address the concerns of their deteriorating situation.

With the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, the prevailing economic inequalities have been aggravated (Buffel et al., 2021). Several people have become jobless leading to a detrimental impact on all sectors owing to vulnerabilities in governance and economies (Yong, 2020). In addition, democratic rights are extremely compromised and damaged, restricting mobility to reduce the spread of the disease (Cheibub and Przeworski, 2020). Given such a situation, the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic can be viewed as an unexpected external agent or a factor that can determine the management and regulation of the state of migrants belonging to the borders of the European Union. The situation could have served as a great opportunity to strengthen the people who do not belong to the state and are neglected and utilized to foster one's state and threaten the states of others (Jauhiainen, 2020).

Another interesting impact of the COVID 19 pandemic was that it exposed several prevailing issues between Romania and European Union (Cretan and Light, 2020). A large number of transnational migrant workers had returned to Romania at the beginning of the pandemic while at the same time another set of people migrated from Romania to European countries owing to increasing demand for low-paid agriculture and social care work in western European countries. Further, the internal tensions related to the marginalized Roma community fuelled the emerging crises of migrants (Cretan and Light, 2020). Consequently, Romania will suffer long term serious consequences in the context of the state of migration and the associated vulnerabilities due to geopolitics of migrants between Romania and the European union

The pandemic has exposed the health vulnerabilities of the community, emphasizing the extent of health inequalities and economic vulnerabilities (Thandi, 2021). Such health vulnerabilities during COVID 19 pandemic have brought out ill-being, leading to a disproportionate number of deaths among the Indian diaspora in the USA and UK. This is specifically when the USA is the hardest-hit country globally and the UK at number two and worst affected country in Europe.

Another significant movement referred to as 'Asian -phobia' in Italy and Jiang's silent protest were geopolitical gestures to challenge the racist notion of Asian-ness as a signifier for disease and contagion (Mostafanezhad and Sin, 2020). Such events signify the emerging geopolitical anxieties related to geopolitical narratives and practices. The historically rooted and place-based geopolitical narratives have

taken a centre stage during the COVID 19 pandemic. In the context of Southeast Asia, the prevailing political and economic linkages have determined the response of the COVID 19 pandemic, specifically in the case of Cambodia and Myanmar and in turn their relations with China (Grundy-Warr and Lin, 2020).

Khan and Sharma (2020) contended that misinformation and fake news related to COVID 19 became a critical factor in responding to the crises of health catastrophe in the region of South Asia. The COVID 19 pandemic has placed human security at the center stage of all political, economic, and international agendas. It has challenged institutional and political regimes, threatening multilateral and bilateral cooperation at various levels such as trade, investment, and migration (Khan and Sharma, 2020). Bangladesh is expected to remain as a centerpiece of US engagement in the Indo-Pacific, the post-COVID 19 Bangladesh will require the US and its other allies to do more to advance the common interests of peace and stability in the Bay of Bengal region (Khan, 2020).

In addition to the geopolitical impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, the genesis of the COVID 19 pandemic pertains to the heart of globalization, embarking on free mobility of people across countries. It is this essence of free mobility that leads to the evolution of the community and environment. However, the COVID-19 health catastrophe has exposed all the countries to altogether new challenges. Firstly, the spread of the disease itself was immensely guided by the high frequency of mobility across nations. Secondly, the world experienced substantially diverse repercussions not only across countries but also within the region. These two testimonies administer the bottom line of the ongoing transformation and challenges related to migration, community, and environment. Such evolving dynamics between migration, community, and environment demands immediate attention. Against this backdrop, the issue of responsibility needs to be addressed to ensure equality, justice, and human rights. Consequently, the entire discourse of ethical issues of responsibility is provoked. It ranges from an academic and practical inquiry from humanities, social, and natural science, addressing diverse aspects of responsibility. It is imperative to explore some of the critical questions such as who or what is responsible for doing what for whom?

The present outbreak of pandemic has further affirmed health security as a fundamental cause of internal migration, referred to as the “severe crisis of mobility” of migrant laborers. This unique challenge of Internal labor migration was observed mainly in developing countries of South Asia. A substantial proportion of such migrant workers are seasonal migrants (Keshri and Bhagat, 2013). The prevailing inequality across the regions coupled with political economy remains the driving force for spurring

informal sector migration. Like any other migration, there exists an inherent interlinkage between the phenomena of migration, community, and environment.

Apart from typical causes of migration such as economic crises, political oppression, violence, internal conflicts, etc., globalization has emerged as a phenomenal cause for increased mobility of people across the globe (Akopari, 2000). Migrants are not only the product of globalization but also the key drivers or instruments of international relations and geopolitics. Collyer (2006) develops a critical security approach that combines the security with the constructivist approach to unfold the recent developments in the attitudes to migrants and migration in Europe.

One can view the migration process as an outcome of the unequal endowment of natural resources as well as the socio-political environment. Environmental sustainability entails a world that is devoid of war, insecurity, and unrest. Besides, it implies less pollution, fewer emissions, and waste accumulation. Several state and non-state actors such as civil society, local representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have contributed immensely in resolving issues related to internal migration, migration laws, human rights, etc. An intervention of the constructive programs initiated by such actors holds significant influence on migration policies, human rights, and governance. It is these constructive programs that unfold all challenges and advocate responsibility in the processes related to governance.

Against this backdrop, this special issue is dedicated to appraising not only the causes of migration but also delving into the implicit interlinkages between migration, community, and environment. This special issue will explore the underlying objective of exploring the implicit impact of migration on the community and environment. The submissions (empirical, conceptual, case studies-based research, review articles) concerning the various multidisciplinary domain of migration are invited for contribution to this special issue. All research articles presenting the upcoming discourse on the responsibility dimension, emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic are invited. The discourse on responsibility can revolve around the following sub-themes.

Beginning from the Geopolitical complexities of migration aggravated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the special issue continues the discussion on the historical and political perspective of migration with special reference to India and Bangladesh political framework and its evolution. Maintaining the continuity of discussion, the political and geopolitical underpinnings in European regions are discussed in the next articles. Critically examining the COVID 19 policies and their impact on the European region,

the articles emphasize the role of Civil society in the European region. Evolving the discourse on migration to the next level of analysis related to the psychological impact of migration, the articles address the psychological well-being of migrants and trauma-related challenges. The strategies for mitigating the psychological impact of migration and the role of culture and traditions in the phenomenon are emphasized in the articles. Finally, the articles take forward the much-needed discussion on development discourse, interlinking the internal migration, economic inequality, and COVID-19 pandemic. In the end, a most sustainable Gandhian model is proposed that mitigates the ecological footprint associated with migration by adopting resilience, tolerance, and non-violence.

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