Push Factors

Push factors come in many forms. Sometimes these factors leave people with no choice but to leave their country of origin. Following are three examples of push factors driving people to emigrate from their home country.

Lack of Jobs/Poverty: Economics provides the main reason behind migration. In fact, according to the International Labour Organization, about half of the total population of current migrants, 100 million women and men migrant workers, have left home to find better job and lifestyle opportunities for their families. (International Labour Office of the Director-General, 2008).

In some countries jobs simply do not exist for a great deal of the population. In others, the gap between the rewards of labor in the sending and receiving country are great enough so as to warrant a move. India has recently experienced a surge in emigration due to a combination of these factors.

The greatest challenge facing India is creating enough jobs for its burgeoning population. India’s unemployed have never been properly estimated, but they could total one hundred and twenty-one million (Index Mundi 2012). The number of skilled workers coming out of Indian universities has never been higher. Meanwhile, the number of domestic jobs available to them is minimal. Only about 0.7m jobs a year have been created in the past few years, most of them in the public sector. This will not keep skilled workers in the country.

Many instead go to the United States, where their skills and their lower wage demands are sought after by high-tech companies. In fact, about 40 percent of recent immigrants from India to the U.S. have been accepted due to employment-based preferences, thus showing the high degree of American corporation’s demand for Indian skilled labor (Alarcon, 2007). As the population grows at 20 million per year, and more and more students graduate from technical universities, India may experience a great deal more emigration.

Civil Strife/War/Political and Religious Persecution: Some migrants are impelled to cross national borders by war or persecution at home. Some of these migrants end up in receiving countries as refugees or asylum seekers. The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defined the qualifications for such migrants and bound signatory countries not to return these newcomers to places where they could be persecuted.

In 2010, the total number of refugees reached 43.7 million, of which were under the responsibility of the United Nations Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). This is the highest number in 15 years (UNHCR, 2010).
Push Factors

An example of this factor at work is the conflict in Tibet. During the first half of the 20th century, Tibet was ruled politically and religiously by the Dalai Lama, the head of the Tibetan Buddhist religion, but lived in the shadow of neighboring China. In 1950, Chinese troops took over the region, disassembling the existing political structure and persecuting religious figures, and in 1959 a Tibetan rebellion was brutally suppressed. Tibetan refugees assert that a million of their countrymen have died in the last half-century as a result of Chinese rule. To escape this fate, many Tibetans have fled over treacherous mountain terrain to India and Nepal.

In 2007, the Dalai Lama demanded from the Chinese authority “more autonomy for Tibetans to protect their culture.” In early 2008, negotiations between the Chinese government and representatives of the Dalai Lama began again – with little result. The same year, the riots in Tibet once again escalated. With the protests spreading, many more Tibetans were killed in the process. March 2009 marked the 50th Anniversary of Tibet’s failed national uprising and the subsequent fleeing of the Dalai Lama and many of his compatriots across China’s borders. The political deadlock preventing these Tibetan refugees from returning to their country of origin seems to show little promise of easing any time soon. In fact, the Chinese government’s recent application of diplomatic pressure on the government of South Africa to deny a visa to the Dalai Lama is a telling example of the Chinese government’s unwillingness to budge on even symbolic gestures of religious or political freedom with regards to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (The Economist, 2009).

Despite the existence of many real conflicts such as in Tibet, however, many developed countries believe that would-be refugees and asylum-seekers are in fact mere economic migrants looking for an easier way to enter a rich country. For example, the United States has declared that most people from Haiti are leaving the country because it is the most impoverished in the Western Hemisphere and deny that social and political strife is widespread enough there to justify allowing Haitians into the United States. Haitians arriving in the United States after a dangerous trip by sea are therefore detained in secure locations and have to pass a rigorous examination of their qualifications as refugees or asylum-seekers or otherwise they are returned to Haiti.

At the same time, people arriving from Cuba are generally allowed to mix in with the population while awaiting a decision on their status, which is usually granted because they come from a Communist dictatorship. Haitian-Americans and their supporters have protested what they call an unfair distinction between the treatment of the two groups, but the U.S. government maintains that Haiti, though not a perfect democracy, is not a dictatorship such that Haitians deserve immediate consideration as refugees.
Push Factors

In a study by economist Kalena Cortes (2004) on the differences in economic performance between economic migrants and refugees in the United States, it was found that refugees have been able to assimilate into the U.S. economy better than traditional economic migrants. According to Cortes, this is most likely due to the fact that refugees are more likely to expect a longer stay in their country of resettlement, therefore increasing the incentive to invest in skills that will allow them to take advantage of long-term economic opportunities. This finding contradicts the popular notion that refugees exact a serious financial or resource-draining burden on their country of resettlement.

*Environmental Problems:* Environmental problems and natural disasters often cause the loss of money, homes, and jobs. In the middle of the 19th century, for example, Ireland experienced a famine never before seen in its history. By late fall 1845, the main staple of the Irish diet, the potato, was practically wiped out. With the government not clear on how to respond, people started dying of starvation. The famine killed hundreds of thousands and forced millions of Irish to flee. These emigrants were also encouraged to leave Ireland by their English landlords, who often rented out unseaworthy vessels that became known as “coffin ships,” and by the British government, which offered cheap fares to Canada. The large population of Americans and Canadians of Irish descent, especially in Boston, New York, and Chicago, can trace its ancestry to this period.

In recent years, the concept of “environmental refugees” has gained new importance, as global climate change and desertification have threatened the livelihoods of millions of people, causing many to leave home in search of new opportunities. “Environmental refugee”, a term coined by Essam El-Hinnawi, designates “people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardizes their existence and/or seriously effects the quality of their life.”

As of 1995, the last date where a thorough assessment was undertaken, the number of environmental refugees had reached 25 million, with this number expected to double by 2020 (Huffington Post, 2011). In Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia, for example, over 1,000 square kilometers of productive land is lost annually to desertification, which has led to a wave of North African migrants fleeing to Western Europe in order to escape crop failure and water shortage.

Although many environmental refugees would like to make it to Western Europe, in reality, the vast majority end up migrating to neighboring countries, which tend to be some of the poorest in the world (with the top 20 refugee migration destination having an average annual per-capita income of only $850). In many of these places, environmental refugees are seen as unwelcome guests, putting further strain on already scarce water and land supplies, with this social mistrust and competition escalating to conflict and violence in some cases.

Other push factors include “primitive” conditions, natural disasters, poor medical care, as well as slavery and political fear.

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Push Factors

According to Oxford-based environmental migration expert Norman Myers, when global climate change takes hold, “there could be as many as 200 million people overtaken by disruptions of monsoon systems and other rainfall regimes, by droughts of unprecedented severity and duration, and by sea-level rise and coastal flooding.” This exposure to the negative effects of global climate change will, in many cases, lead to massive waves of migration, with a striking example being the small island of Kiribati, whose 94,000 inhabitants risk being totally submerged in water by 2070 as sea levels continue to rise. In preparation for this outcome, the President of Kiribati, Anote Tong, has proposed a gradual resettlement program, which would see the population of Kiribati slowly relocated to neighboring islands such as New Zealand (Myers, 2008) (Bedford, 2009).

What makes environmental refugees such a difficult problem for governments and policy-makers to cope with is the fact that there are a variety of different types of environmental disaster that can have a dramatic impact on the forced migration of people. In Bangladesh, it is the rising sea-levels that have caused many people to flee across the border to India, as mass flooding has caused many coastal areas of Bangladesh to become uninhabitable. On the other hand, in the Sudan, droughts and increasing rates of evaporation have made access to water for consumption and traditional agricultural and pastoral much more difficult, leaving many people without sufficient access to food or water, thus increasing conflict over these resources.

Other push factors include “primitive” conditions, natural disasters, poor medical care, as well as slavery and political fear.
Pull Factors

Whereas push factors usually drive migrants out of their countries of origin, pull factors generally decide where these travelers end up. The positive aspects of some receiving countries serve to attract more migrants than others. Following are three examples of the pull factors attracting migrants to receiving countries.

Higher standards of living/Higher wages: Economics provide both the biggest push and pull factors for potential migrants. People moving to more developed countries will often find that the same work they were doing at home is rewarded abroad with higher wages. They will also find a greater safety net of welfare benefits should they be unable to work. Aware of this situation, migrants are drawn to those countries where they can maximize benefits.

For example, Mexican migrants coming to America do not move in order to escape unemployment at home. Rather, it has been estimated that 80 percent of those who leave Mexico have jobs before they go. But, the wage gap between American and Mexican workers has widened since the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement. U.S. wages are in fact an estimated 13 times that of Mexico. Thus, Mexican migrants come to America because they are attracted by the higher hourly wages, not simply to find any work at all.

Labor Demand: Almost all developed countries have found that they need migrants’ labor. Rich economies create millions of jobs that domestic workers refuse to fill but migrant workers will cross borders to take. Canada’s migrant population has nearly doubled over the past couple of years.

It was the worst imaginable way to jolt Canadians toward noticing that low-wage foreign workers are an increasingly important segment of the country’s labour force. Ten workers, nine from Peru and one from Nicaragua, recruited to fill jobs vaccinating chickens, were killed, and three others badly injured, when their van ran a stop sign and collided with a truck at a rural crossroads in southwestern Ontario… When Stephen Harper’s Conservatives won power in 2006, 255,440 foreign temporary workers lived in Canada. By 2010, their ranks had expanded to 432,682 (Geddes, 2012).

Political and Religious Freedom: Throughout history, Jews have faced persecution or discrimination in most parts of the world. Especially in the late 19th century, long-standing hatred against Jews in the Russian Empire exploded in “pograms,” attacks on Jews that led to murders, rapes, and arson against Jewish homes and stores, often encouraged and assisted by the government.
Pull Factors

Hundreds of thousands of Jews from across Eastern Europe fled to the United States, Canada, and South America, while others joined the old Jewish community in the Holy Land, then controlled by the Turkish Ottoman Empire, to help reestablish the independent Jewish state the Roman Empire had destroyed almost 2,000 years before.

Hundreds of thousands more Jews moved to Israel in the late 1940s in the aftermath of the Holocaust and after being expelled from Arab countries as a result of the war over Israel’s creation. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Arabs fled from Israel, and they and their descendants live in neighboring Arab countries.

With the expansion of telecommunications technology that has accompanied globalization, migrants have found it drastically easier to stay connected with the religious community that they left behind in their home country, thus making the decision to move away from home an easier one. In places where this “transnational religion” is promoted through financial institutions, sister congregations, community organizations, telecommunications infrastructure, and governmental tolerance, migration by religiously devout persons has followed. For example, a large Muslim community with strong ties to religious leaders and congregations in Pakistan and Bangladesh has sprung up in Britain; they have used their freedom of religious association to press local authorities for changes in religious rights and education.

Other pull factors include superior medical care or education, family links or simply a personal fondness of a certain place, whether it may be linked to culture, language, weather conditions or other influencing factors.

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Economic Effects of Migration

The economic effects of migration vary widely. Sending countries may experience both gains and losses in the short term but may stand to gain over the longer term. For receiving countries temporary programs help to address skills shortages but may decrease domestic wages and add to public welfare burden. A Swedish Professor notes “The problem is not immigration; it is integration, especially in the labour market. If there are no jobs, the consequences are segregation, housing problems and divided cities” (Traynor, 2010).

Nevertheless, most commentators argue that the net effects of migration are generally positive. In the CATO Journal, University of California SanDiego Professor of Economics Gordon H. Hanson (2012) writes “Despite many hurdles to their entry, high-skilled immigrants make important contributions to U.S. productivity growth. By making it easier for talented foreign students to stay on in the country once their studies are finished, their contributions could be even larger.”

For sending countries, the short-term economic benefit of emigration is found in remittances. According to the World Bank (2011), remittances worldwide were estimated at $483 billion in 2011,. This figure though only takes into account funds sent by formal channels, so the number is much larger. The World Bank notes that remittances sent through informal channels could add at least 50 percent to the globally recorded flows (UNCTAD, 2011).

In Tajikistan, remittances from its cheap unskilled labor force abroad in countries like Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan has helped the country rebound from the failures of a planned economy and government instability, contributing around 50 percent of Tajikistan’s GDP in recent years (IMF Working Paper ,2006). Although difficult to measure the impact of remittances on developing countries, one World Bank study has concluded that a one per cent increase in the share of remittances in a country’s GDP leads to a 0.4 per cent decline in poverty (UNFPA State of the World, 2008).

Meanwhile, for developed countries, the positive gains from immigration are a result of the infusion of cheap and eager labor into the economy. In the United States and Canada migrant workers often fill low-wage jobs for which there is not enough local supply of labor, such as farm labor. Just as cheap imports of industrial goods benefit the American economy, so too does the import of cheap labor. Economists who support the notion of these positive gains claim that immigration has little impact on wages or job availability for domestic workers.
Economic Effects of Migration

On the other hand, the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) discounts the positive gains of immigration. Using U.S. census data from 2010 and 2011, a CIS study (2012) found that “immigration has dramatically increased the size of the nation’s low-income population… Moreover, many immigrants make significant progress the longer they live in the country. But even with this progress, immigrants who have been in the United States for 20 years are much more likely to live in poverty, lack health insurance, and access the welfare system than are native-born Americans. The large share of immigrants arriving as adults with relatively little education partly explains this phenomenon.”

Others disagree. Professor Anthony Davies of Duquesne University states there is no correlation between immigration and U.S. income distribution and unemployment rates (Davies, 2011).

At the same time, developing countries can suffer from “brain drain”—the loss of trained and educated individuals to emigration, an example of the possible negative effects of emigration for developing countries. For example, there are currently more African scientists and engineers working in the United States than there are in Africa, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a worldwide agency that assists migrants. In Zambia, emigration has reduced the number of practicing doctors from 1,600 a few years ago, to a mere 400 today. The IOM estimates Africa’s brain drain has cost nearly $9 billion in lost human capital and growth potential since 1997. According to the United Nations Population Fund, 2006 State of the World Population report, Africa only retains 1.3 percent of the world’s health care practitioners. Thus, despite having over a quarter of the world’s tuberculosis cases and 64 percent of the total numbers of people infected with HIV, Africa only has, on average, a mere one nurse per 1,000 people (Shiner, 2008).

In recent years, Kenya has been working hard to combat this trend. The Kenyan government, in partnership with international aid organizations, created the Emergency Hiring Plan to increase nursing staff in public health facilities. International donors helped cover the cost of workforce recruitment, employment contracts, salary subsidies and staff deployment. The plan used public–private partnerships to fund and increase health-care worker deployment. The WHO found that EHP nurses were absorbed into civil society and accounted for a 12 percent increase in nursing staff. This model increased Kenya’s health service capacity in rural and underserved areas over the short-term (WHO, 2010). Recent strikes by Kenyan doctors and nurses show that the country still has a long way to go to improving pay and other incentives that encourage health practitioners to stay and work in the country (Dogbey, 2012).

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Cultural Effects of Migration

Countries like the United States, Argentina, and Brazil have always included a large immigrant population. Citizenship in those countries is based not on ethnic grounds but on a different sort of national identity in which commitment to certain values and ideas is paramount. But for European countries, the nation is often defined in a cultural way—by a common language, heritage, and ethnicity. This raises important questions for countries that do not have long traditions of immigration. How long does an immigrant have to live in Germany to become a German? Can a person be French without speaking French? Should immigrants be forced to take citizenship classes that teach them “how to be Dutch”?

Indeed, cultural issues are a significant factor in the response of Europeans to global migration. In recent years, the European public has questioned immigration’s effect on culture and national identity. Fear and distrust of immigrants has fueled the creation and success of anti-immigrant political parties in several European countries. Many of these parties have linked social ills, such as unemployment and crime, to immigration.

In Britain, Switzerland, Denmark, Italy, and Sweden, opposition to immigration has become a central issue in many elections. France’s Jean-Marie Le Pen has been Europe’s most outspoken anti-immigration politician, declaring that immigration will lead to the “submersion of our country, our people, our civilization.” In the 2002 presidential elections, running on an anti-immigration platform, Le-Pen garnered sufficient votes to challenge President Chirac in the second and final round.

In 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy, son of a Hungarian immigrant, was elected new President by his French voters. In the words of Sarkozy: “Immigration will be among (our) priorities. […] In all the world’s great democracies, immigration presents the possibility of bringing in new skills, new talents, new blood.”

Despite these words of acceptance, Sarkozy has been the main driving force behind the EU’s more restrictive stance towards immigration in the past two years. In October of 2008, Sarkozy’s political “pact” on immigration and asylum was adopted by the European Union, which seeks to not only make migratory entry into Europe more limited and selective, emphasizing the acceptance of more high-skilled workers, but also to repeal mass amnesties and unconditional asylum for illegal immigrants, through mechanisms as strict as enforcing departures, in an attempt to discourage incentives for illegal immigration (The Economist, 2008).

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Cultural Effects of Migration

In May 2012, Sarkozy lost the presidency to François Gérard Georges Nicolas Hollande. Hollande’s new Interior Minister Manuel Valls wants to get rid of many of Sarkozy’s controversial immigration policies. Valls wants to re-centralize decision-making on naturalization (as was the situation before 2010) so that there is one policy that applies to all immigrants. The French culture and history will no longer be required (Hamza, 2012).

Joerg Haider’s Freedom Party, known for its anti-immigrant stance split in 2005 and the new offshoot party, Alliance for the Future of Austria, is now part of the government coalition instead of the Freedom Party. Since the party came under new leadership when Haider died in a car crash, the party has moderated its stance on immigration. The Freedom Party still lives on with and it is still anti-immigrant though focuses more on economic issues. It received about 25 percent of the vote in 2010.

Italy has also lurched towards an anti-immigration stance with the 2001 electoral victory of Silvio Berlusconi, where his ruling coalition has gone as far as to stand solidly behind “one of the toughest anti-immigrant crackdowns in Europe, mobilizing troops to control crime attributed to foreigners”, according to Newsweek (Nordland, 2008). The government’s coalition partners and cabinet ministers include members of the Northern League, a virulent anti-immigration party.

Despite the tough stance against immigration, inflows into Italy rose between 200 to 400 percent from 2000 – 2010 (Bozzo, 2012). In November 2011, Mario Monti became prime minister. Italy now ranks in the top 25 around the world for net migration (Bozzo, 2012).

In Greece, a 2009 attack on a courthouse housing 600 immigrants by far-right protesters was allowed to occur unimpeded by police, who just stood there and watched. This is a reflection of the Greek government’s policy of discouraging immigration and asylum-seeking through both discontinuing temporary work permits and social security benefits to those seeking work opportunities, as well as granting less than one percent of applicants immediate refugee status (thus relieving the Greek government of its responsibility to protect these asylum-seekers) (The Economist, 2009).

Despite the Euro Crisis, Greece continues to face illegal immigration problems that impact the rest of Europe as well. In 2011, 140,980 people entered Europe illegally, a 35 percent increase from 2010. Of those who came illegally, 40 percent came through Greece. The country’s economic problems and budget restrictions hampers its efforts to stem the tide of illegal immigrants. Greece’s border with Turkey is particularly problematic and many come there fleeing Afghanistan or Pakistan (Stevis, 2012).

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Cultural Effects of Migration

An ultranationalist party in Greece called Golden Dawn won enough votes to gain seats for the first time in Parliament. Members of Golden Dawn are implicated in racially motivated attacks though no charges have been filed against the members. Greece’s immigrant centers are known for their deplorable conditions. Unfortunately, Greece cannot return illegal immigrants to Turkey because the EU and Turkey have no readmission agreement (Stevis, 2012).

Pim Fortuyn, a popular Dutch politician who was assassinated in 2002, had been amongst the most outspoken. Fortuyn was particularly concerned that immigrants—mainly from the Muslim world—were eroding Dutch national identity and threatening the traditional liberal Dutch tolerance for homosexuality and commitment to equality for women. (Indeed, Fortuyn was not a “conservative” politician in the standard sense of the word; openly homosexual, he was actually a radical libertarian, who believed in no government regulation over individual citizen’s private lives.)

In response to these types of concerns, the Dutch government has embarked on a program called “inburgering” (literally “citizen-making”), in which potential immigrants cannot become citizens until they have passed courses in Dutch culture and societal norms. Tough policies toward immigrants are still in place in the Netherlands. Immigrants must be able to speak Dutch to receive welfare and must be in the country for seven years before they can apply for nationality.

With increasing numbers of asylum seekers Britain is imposing stricter immigration and naturalization policies. With the austerity measures in place, many Britons would like to see immigration reduced, though socially beneficial immigrants would be welcome (BBC, 2012).
## Push and Pull Factors

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Push and Pull Factors

- Not enough jobs
- Few opportunities
- Primitive conditions
- Desertification
- Famine or drought
- Political fear or persecution
- Slavery or forced labor
- Religious persecution
- Lack of religious freedom
- Lack of political freedom
- Loss of wealth
- Natural disasters
- Pollution
- Poor housing
- Discrimination
- War

- Job opportunities
- Better living conditions
- Political freedom
- Religious freedom
- Better medical care
- Attractive climates
- Security
- Family links
- Industry
### Examples of Historical Migrations

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<td>1500s - 1800s</td>
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<td>12 million Africans were enslaved and</td>
<td>Sold as slaves in the “New World”</td>
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<td>million dying during transport.</td>
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<td>1620-1660</td>
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<td>Approximately 50,000 Puritans, Pilgrims,</td>
<td>Escape from religious persecution</td>
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<td>and Quakers moved to the British</td>
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<td>1945-1950</td>
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<td>1947</td>
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