United Nations University
WIDER
World Institute for Development Economics Research

Discussion Paper No. 2003/31

Trends in Asylum Migration to Industrialized Countries: 1990-2001

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April 2003

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to outline trends and patterns in movements of asylum-seekers to Western so-called industrialized countries from 1990-2001. The paper begins by characterizing three distinct phases of asylum migration since the end of the Second World War. It then provides background material on global refugee and asylum movements, using statistics from UNHCR. The data for selected receiving countries and regions is discussed, followed by some remarks on changing routes used by asylum-seekers. The selected countries and regions are Australia, Canada, the EU and the USA. Finally, we examine some of the causal factors behind asylum migration and attempt to identify their significance upon flows migration.

Keywords: asylum migration, industrialized countries, root causes, statistical trends

JEL classification: F22, R23

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This study was prepared for the UNU/WIDER project on Refugees, International Migration and Poverty which is co-directed by George Borjas, Harvard University and Jeff Crisp, UNHCR. It was presented at the UNU/WIDER development conference on 'Poverty, International Migration and Asylum' held on 27-28 September 2002 in Helsinki, Finland.

UNU/WIDER gratefully acknowledges the financial contributions to its 2002-2003 research programme by the governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Béla Hovy, Head of UNHCR's Population Data Unit, Population and Geographic Data Section (PGDS/DOS) in Geneva for his assistance in providing much of the data in this paper. We would also like to thank Kate Prudden of the RSC for her assistance in preparing the charts.

UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER)
Katajanokanlaituri 6 B, 00160 Helsinki, Finland

Camera-ready typescript prepared by Janis Vehmaan-Kreula at UNU/WIDER
Printed at UNU/WIDER, Helsinki

ISSN 1609-5774
ISBN 92-9190-444-9 (printed publication)
ISBN 92-9190-445-7 (internet publication)

1 Introduction

This paper outlines trends and patterns in movements of asylum-seekers to Western, industrialized countries from 1990-2001. The receiving countries covered are the USA, Canada, Australia and Western Europe (which here comprises of the Member States of the European Union, Norway and Switzerland). Japan and New Zealand have not been included since the numbers of asylum-seekers involved are relatively small. All sending countries are included in the data, but our discussion will focus mainly on the countries of origin of the largest numbers – generally the 'top ten' sending countries for each receiving area. The aims of the desk study reported here are largely descriptive, and its main substance is contained in the tables and charts (the latter are in the Appendix). However, the paper also has analytical aspects, as it is not possible to describe the evolution of the movements without examining the causes of migratory patterns and the factors responsible for change.

In this paper 'asylum migration' is used as shorthand for 'migratory movements undertaken for the purpose of, or with the consequence of, seeking asylum in another state'. This follows Jeff Crisp's definition for the purposes of the UNU/WIDER Conference. It is a pragmatic usage, based on the recognition that it is often impossible to tell at the time of movement whether an asylum-seeker is actually a refugee in the sense of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. Determining this frequently requires a lengthy and complex process. Moreover, many asylum-seekers will be permitted to stay on humanitarian or other grounds, even if denied refugee status.

In recent years, some politicians and other observers have claimed that many asylum-seekers are really economic migrants who are abusing the asylum process. This has led to increasingly restrictive entry rules. The feedback effect of such policies is that many genuine refugees are unable to make claims, because they cannot enter a potential country of asylum. This in turn has caused some asylum-seekers to enter illegally, often using the services of people smugglers. The result is that the distinction between asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants has become blurred, leading to the notion of the 'asylum-migration nexus'. Ideally, therefore, this study should present data both on asylum-seeker movements and undocumented migration, and then seek to disentangle the two. However, the availability and quality of data on undocumented migration make it extremely difficult to find the empirical information needed for this type of analysis. The data presented are thus mainly concerned with asylum-seekers.

The paper starts by discussing the development of asylum migration, and then provides background material on global refugee and asylum movements. The data for the various Western asylum countries are discussed, followed by some remarks on changing routes used by asylum-seekers. Finally, we examine some of the causal factors behind asylum migration.

2 The three phases of asylum migration

All Western European countries, as well as Australia, Canada and the USA are signatories to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol. This obliges them to provide protection to persons who qualify under the Convention definition, according to which a refugee is a person residing outside his or her country

of nationality, who is unable or unwilling to return because of a 'well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion'. States party to the Convention undertake not to return refugees to their country of origin against their will (the principle of *non-refoulement*). This may require states to grant entry and/or to provide temporary or permanent residence status.

The international refugee regime is based on the principle of different treatment for refugees compared with economic migrants. This worked very well for the classical refugees of the Cold War: the dissidents who voted with their feet against the repressive regimes of the Soviet Union and its satellites. They were welcomed with open arms in the West, as a living proof of the superiority of democracy. Since relatively few got out through the Iron Curtain, the costs of hospitality were limited. The situation became more problematic with the struggles against colonialism and authoritarian regimes from the 1960s onwards. It became extremely difficult to make clear distinctions between asylum-seekers and economic migrants from countries undergoing rapid change and crisis. Political upheavals, economic difficulties and violent conflicts tend to occur simultaneously, so that many migrants have multiple motivations for moving. Governments too may have multiple motivations for admitting migrants.

The migration-asylum nexus is not a new dilemma. Although some people entering Western countries are clearly refugees while others are clearly economic migrants, there have always been people who could not be easily categorized. Often migrants respond to migration rules and policies of receiving states in deciding on their mode of migration. From the migrants' perception such rules and policies can be seen as opportunity structures, rather than absolute definitions. It is possible to identify three distinct phases in the development of the migration-asylum nexus.

Phase one: *treating refugees as migrant workers*. At the end of the Second World War there were over 40 million displaced persons in Europe. The preferred solution was repatriation to their home countries, but many had both political and economic reasons for not wanting to return to countries taken over by Stalinist regimes. Countries like Australia and Canada offered refuge because they needed labour for economic growth and people for demographic growth. Similarly, many of the migrant workers who came to France and Germany in the 1960s and 1970s were escaping authoritarian regimes in Spain, Portugal, Greece and Turkey. However, they were admitted because the receiving countries needed labour, and no-one bothered to examine their need for protection. They were treated as migrant workers and if they lacked passports and visas, regularization programmes were set up (notably in France) to give them a secure status.

Phase two: *migrants with mixed motivations claiming asylum*. This followed the 1973 Oil Crisis, when Western European countries stopped labour recruitment and redefined themselves as 'zero immigration countries'. For many people, claiming asylum became the only legal route to entering and settling in the industrialized world. For instance, when Germany stopped entry of Turkish workers in 1973, the migratory process continued through family reunion and asylum. This does not imply that the asylum-seekers were not genuine: Turkey was beset by political instability, military coups and ethnic conflict. The point is that people who had previously been admitted as workers now had to claim asylum.

Phase three: *asylum-seekers moving as undocumented migrants*. While the right under international law to claim asylum continued to be generally respected by Western states, they also began to restrict entry to eliminate bogus claims. By the early 1990s, many industrialized states, including Western European countries, Australia and the USA (although not Canada) had introduced policies aimed at restricting access to asylum including: temporary protection regimes, non-arrival policies (such as imposing visa requirements on travellers and 'carrier sanctions' on airlines), diversion policies (such as declaring some transit countries as 'safe third countries'), and deterrence policies (such as detention and prohibition of employment). Increasingly during the 1990s, and as an apparent response to tougher rules and regulations, those seeking asylum fled to industrialized countries through ever more sophisticated 'illegal' means, often with the assistance of people smugglers.

3 Global refugee and asylum-seeker movements

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the global refugee population grew from 2.4 million in 1975 to 10.5 million in 1985 and 14.9 million in 1990. A peak was reached after the end of the Cold War with 18.2 million in 1993. By 2000, the global refugee population had declined to 12.1 million (UNHCR 1995; UNHCR 2000a).[1] Refugees came mainly from countries affected by war, violence and chaos. Globally, the ten main places of origin of refugees in 1999 were Afghanistan (2.6 million), Iraq (572,000), Burundi (524,000), Sierra Leone (487,000), Sudan (468,000), Somalia (452,000), Bosnia (383,000), Angola (351,000), Eritrea (346,000) and Croatia (340,000) (UNHCR 2000b: 315).

Annual asylum applications in Western Europe, Australia, Canada and the USA combined rose from 90,400 in 1983 to 323,050 in 1988, and then surged again with the end of the Cold War to peak at 828,645 in 1992 (UNHCR 1995: 253). Altogether, 5 million asylum-seekers entered Western countries from 1985-1995 (UNHCR 1997: 184). Applications fell sharply to 480,00 in 1995, but began creeping up again to 534,500 in 2000 (OECD 2001: 280).[2] Nearly the whole of the decline can be explained by falls in asylum applications following changes in refugee law in Germany (438,200 applications in 1992, but only 127,900 in 1995) and Sweden (84,000 in 1992, 9,000 in 1995). The UK had relatively few asylum-seekers in the early 1990s, with 32,300 in 1992, but numbers increased at the end of the decade to 55,000 in 1998 and 97,900 in 2000 (OECD 2001: 280).

This rise in asylum applications led to considerable concern in Western countries. It became a major policy issue within the European Union. Western leaders called for greater burden sharing between countries of asylum. In fact, however, only a small proportion of asylum-seekers and refugees actually come to the highly developed countries. Table 1 shows the top ten refugee hosting countries in 2000 according to

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1 The broader category of 'people of concern to the UNHCR' (which includes refugees, some internally displaced persons and some returnees) peaked at 27.4 million in 1995, and was down to 21.1 million in 2000.

2 Figures for selected OECD countries, including European Economic Area, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

three different criteria. The first column shows the total refugee population. Pakistan and Iran had by far the largest refugee populations – mainly from Afghanistan. Africa figures prominently in the table, but the USA is also in the list, together with two European countries: Germany and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FR Yugoslavia). However, to understand the weight of the 'refugee burden', it is more useful to relate refugee population to overall population in host countries. This is shown in the second column of Table 1, which consists mainly of very poor countries, with the sole exceptions of FR Yugoslavia and Sweden. Even more instructive is to relate refugee populations to the wealth of the receiving country (third column). This list does not include a single highly-developed country. Refugees are overwhelmingly concentrated in the poorest countries.

Table 1
The top ten refugee hosting countries, 2000

Total refugee population		Refugees per 1,000 inhabitants		Refugee population relative to GDP	
Country	No. of refugees ('000)	Country	No. of refugees	Country	No. of refugees per US$ 1 million of GDP
Pakistan	2,002	Armenia	79.7	Armenia	172.4
Iran	1,868	Guinea	58.5	Guinea	119.9
Germany	906	FR Yugoslavia	45.7	Tanzania	86.0
Tanzania	681	DR Congo	42.5	Zambia	74.9
USA	507	Djibouti	36.3	DR Congo	62.9
FR Yugoslavia	484	Iran	27.6	Cen. African Rep.	52.7
Guinea	433	Zambia	27.3	DR Congo	47.7
Sudan	401	Liberia	21.7	Uganda	35.6
DR Congo	333	Tanzania	20.3	Pakistan	31.3
China	294	Sweden	17.7	Ethiopia	30.1

Source: UNHCR (2001: 28).

4 Asylum migration to industrialized countries

This section describes asylum migration flows to the various industrialized countries. Charts 1-4 (see Appendix) show flows to the USA, Canada, Australia and Western Europe from the 'top five' countries of origin of asylum-seekers for the 12-year period. Annual figures often show fluctuations, with increases in numbers from certain countries, which are not sustained. Chart 5 compares flows to the various receiving areas. The tables (in the text below) show the 'top ten' countries of origin for the four selected countries or regions for the years 1990 and 2001. This enables us to compare the most significant countries of origin at the beginning of the period with those at the end. It also allows us to see certain regional differences and similarities.

We start with the so-called 'classical immigration countries' and then move on to Western Europe. The USA, Canada and Australia have long histories of immigration, welcoming both refugees and economic migrants. Today, these three are amongst only

about ten countries in the world, which have regular programmes for resettlement of refugees in collaboration with the UNHCR. However, these countries have also experienced growing inflows of asylum-seekers since the 1980s. By contrast, most Western European countries have not had resettlement programmes, with the exception of short-term ones for particular emergencies like Indo-China or Kosovo.

4.1 United States of America

Between 1975 and 2000 the USA provided permanent resettlement to over 2 million refugees, including some 1.3 million people from Indochina. The USA accepted more people for resettlement during this period than the rest of the world put together (UNHCR 2000b). The total number of asylum applications rose from 75,600 in 1990 to a peak of 148,700 in 1995, then declined to 32,700 in 1999 before rising again to 59,400 in 2001. In 2001, the USA hosted 396,000 pending asylum applicants, 28,0000 persons granted asylum during the year and 68,500 newly resettled refugees (USCR 2001: 275).

Appendix Chart 1 shows asylum-seeker flows from the top five countries of origin to the USA. Large numbers of persons fleeing conflict and persecution in Central American countries began arriving in the USA in the 1980s. Many of these did so 'illegally' as the USA did not recognize all Central American countries as refugee producing countries. The open door policy towards Cubans fleeing to the USA, in place since 1959, began to be restricted in the 1980s, and interdiction at sea commenced in the 1990s. Large numbers of Haitians attempting to come to the USA during the 1980s and 1990s were generally prevented in doing so.

In the early 1990s, with a weak economy and growing numbers of undocumented migrants, there were strong anti-immigrant sentiments in the USA. As in other industrialized states, the numbers of people seeking asylum in the USA rose sharply during this period, from 20,000 in 1985 to 148,000 in 1995. These sentiments were reflected in the passing of Proposition 187 in California, a popular referendum which sought to make undocumented workers ineligible for most social services. Although this legislation did not apply to asylum-seekers, it sparked a national debate leading to legislation which did directly affect asylum-seekers. In 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), as well as another law severely restricting welfare payments to immigrants. The IIRIRA fundamentally changed the way in which the US government processed asylum claims and the rights afforded to asylum-seekers. It created a new legal standard for screening asylum-seekers arriving at US borders, which aimed to determine whether they should be admitted to the asylum procedure. It also authorized 'expedited removals' and the detention of asylum-seekers.

As Table 2 shows, at the beginning of the 1990s the top three countries of origin of asylum-seekers coming to the USA were all Central American states experiencing civil war: El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. In 1990, asylum-seekers coming from El Salvador were falling in numbers and continued to do so until 1992 when they began to rise again, peaking in the mid-1990s at the highest number coming from a single country during the decade. Their numbers dropped equally dramatically in 1996 and remained at relatively low levels for the remainder of the decade.

Table 2
USA: top ten countries of origin of asylum-seekers in 1990, 2001 and 1990-2001

1990		2001		1990-2001	
Country of origin	Asylum-seekers	Country of origin	Asylum-seekers	Country of origin	Asylum-seekers
El Salvador	22,271	Mexico	8,747	El Salvador	223,887
Nicaragua	18,304	China	8,008	Guatemala	178,047
Guatemala	12,234	Colombia	7,144	Mexico	66,338
Cuba	3,925	Haiti	4,938	China	60,926
Romania	1,593	Armenia	2,147	Haiti	51,308
Liberia	1,572	India	1,894	Nicaragua	34,411
Iran	1,550	Indonesia	1,671	India	30,985
Ethiopia	1,532	Ethiopia	1,467	Russia	20,913
China	1,287	Albania	1,425	Pakistan	16,700
Honduras	1,097	Liberia	1,281	Cuba	16,600
Total top 10	65,365	Total top 10	38,722	Total top 10	700,115
Total asylum-seekers	73,637	Total asylum-seekers	59,432	Total asylum-seekers	997,696
Top 10 as share of total	89%	Top 10 as share of total	65%	Top 10 as share of total	70%

Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva.

Asylum-seekers from Guatemala peaked in the early 1980s during the civil war, but were again increasing in the early 1990s. However, the number of Guatemalans seeking asylum in the USA began to fall significantly in 1992 and particularly from 1994 onwards. Although significant numbers continued to arrive for the remainder of the decade, they were at much abated levels. This drop may reflect the ceasefire and significant moves towards accountable government in Guatemala in 1992, followed by a lengthy peace process which advanced significantly in 1994 and culminated in a final agreement in 1996.

Flows of asylum-seekers to the USA from Nicaragua were dropping in 1990 and did not rise again significantly during the remainder of the decade. Nicaraguans had been fleeing to the USA in significant numbers throughout the 1980s. Then in 1988, in the wake of the Iran-contra affair, the US Congress banned all aid to the Contras. Later that year, the Sandinista government and the opposition began a national dialogue which culminated in a series of agreements the following year and ultimately to a cessation to the conflict.

For the 1990-2001 period as a whole, six out of the top ten sources of asylum-seekers were Latin American or Caribbean countries, which are relatively close to the US. However, there were substantial fluctuations over the period. As Table 2 shows, in 1990, the great majority of asylum-seekers came from Latin America. In 2001 by contrast, the top country of origin was Mexico, followed by China, while the rest of the top ten included a wide range of areas of origin. Moreover the top ten in 2001 made up only 65 per cent of all applications, compared with 89 per cent in 1990, indicating a greater level of diversity in origins. The asylum approval rate for Mexicans was only

7 per cent, compared with 64 per cent for Chinese and 57 per cent for asylum-seekers overall (USCR 2001: 275). Asylum-seekers from Colombia were not coming to the USA in large numbers in 1990 but were by 2001. This appears to reflect the intensification of the armed conflict there. Although this conflict has been going on for close to four decades, with large-scale displacement of the civilian population, the situation has become significantly worse in recent years. The widening of the conflict across the country has meant that the displaced population is increasingly unsafe remaining within the borders of their country.

Entry routes have also changed. Most Central Americans come to the USA by land via Mexico, whereas Cubans and Haitians frequently come by boat. However, numbers have declined due to interdiction programmes of the US Coast Guard. Quite large numbers of Chinese were brought in illegally by ship in the mid-1990s, but the number interdicted in 2001 was only 53, compared with 1,092 in 1999. This indicates a shift to other means of entry, especially by air using tourist visas.

After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the USA halted its refugee resettlement programme. Resumption was authorized in November, but the USA only admitted 800 refugees in the last three months of 2001. An Act of October 2001 introduced much stronger detention powers for non-citizens suspected of terrorist activities. Although these measures were not directed specifically against asylum-seekers, it was feared that they might lead to an increase in the already substantial use of detention: an average of 3,000 asylum-seekers were in detention during 2001 (USCR 2001: 279).

Operation Gatekeeper and similar operations were introduced in 1994, in an attempt to tighten security along the US-Mexico border and reduce the numbers of people entering the USA illegally. The US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has introduced double steel fences, helicopters, high-intensity searchlights and high tech equipment. The number of agents enforcing the border has tripled over the same period. To fund all of this, the INS has seen its budget triple since 1994, to US$5.5 billion. However, there has been no decline in the number of illegal border crossings – indeed official figures suggest an increase. The number of people dying as they attempt to cross the border has also increased as people take ever-greater risks: in 1994, 23 people died trying to cross and this figure has increased every year since then. In 2000, at least 499 died attempting to cross. The cause of death has also altered as people move ever further eastward in attempting to cross the border, they usually now die from dehydration, hypothermia, sunstroke or drowning as they attempt to swim the All American Canal. Finally, the average cost of hiring a ‘coyote’ – who smuggle people across the border – has risen from US$143 to US$1,500 in six years (Cornelius 2001).

The Chinese immigrants on the east coast of the USA, particularly in New York, are largely from Fujian province on the southeast coast of China. Snakeheads (smugglers) play an important role in facilitating their migration out of China. Smugglers of Chinese migrants are particularly sophisticated and have access to advanced communications technology and the ability to make false passports and visas. Most Chinese travel to the USA by air, whether directly or through transit countries and possibly with some passage by land. According to a study by Chin (1999) on Fujianese Chinese, 47 per cent entered the USA by air, 41 per cent entered the USA by land, and only about 12 per cent by sea. A more recent strategy of transporting undocumented Chinese to the USA, as well as to Canada and European countries, has been to smuggle them on aeroplanes and in cargo ships and trucks. According to one study, more than 43 countries have played a

transit role in airborne and seaborne smuggling of Chinese (Myers 1997: 117). Given the variety of transit routes, no attempt has been made to map the individual pathways used. However, it has been reported that Thailand and Mexico are particularly important transit countries (Kyle and Liang 2001).

As well as tougher border control measures in the USA, new legislation was also introduced in China in 1999, which allows the government to put illegal migrants in prison for one year plus impose a heavy fine. Prior to that, China's policy was to mainly punish only the smugglers. Despite efforts by law enforcement officials in both countries, the flow of undocumented workers from China to the USA does not seem to have abated. The smuggling fee, however, is reported to have risen from US$28,000 in the early 1990s to US$60,000 in 2001 (Kyle and Liang 2001). One of the most frequently used justifications for the basis of asylum claims of Chinese in the USA is China's 'One Child Policy'. The practice of the outlawed Falun Gong has also been used as a basis for claims of asylum more recently.

4.2 Canada

Like the US, Canada accepted large numbers of people from Indochina: some 200,000 between 1975 and 1995. During the 1980s, Canada offered resettlement to an average of 21,000 refugees per year. Between 1989 and 1998, resettlement admissions fell from 35,000 to under 9,000. However, they rose to 17,000 in 1999 as a result of the humanitarian evacuation programme for refugees from Kosovo (UNHCR 2000b). The resettlement figure for 2001 was 10,900 (USCR 2001: 263).

As Table 3 shows, the number of asylum-seekers coming to Canada declined from 36,700 in 1990 to 20,300 in 1993, increased again to 39,400 in 1999, and then reached its highest annual level ever of 44,000 in 2001.

In contrast to the USA, only one out of the top ten countries of origin for the 1990-2001 period was a Latin American country: Mexico. Most asylum-seekers in Canada are from the Indian sub-continent or China, with Sri Lanka consistently near the top of the list. The general picture is one of considerable and increasing diversity over the whole period. Again, a change over time can be seen. The large numbers of asylum-seekers from Hungary (which Canada did not recognize as a refugee-producing country) and Zimbabwe in 2001 were new developments in response to unusual circumstances, leading Canada to impose visa restrictions for both countries. This trend has since reversed and it seems to have been exceptional to Canada. See Appendix Chart 2 for asylum migration flows from the top 5 countries of origin.

In 2001, Canada made decisions upon 22,887 refugee claims, with an approval rate of 58 per cent. The highest approval rates were for Afghanistan (97 per cent), Somalia (92 per cent), Colombia (85 per cent), Sri Lanka (76 per cent), and Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) (76 per cent). The lowest success rates were for Hungary (27 per cent) and Mexico (28 per cent) (USCR 2001: 261).

Table 3
Canada: top ten countries of origin of asylum-seekers 1990, 2001 and 1990-2001

1990		2001		1990-2001	
Country of origin	Asylum-seekers	Country of origin	Asylum-seekers	Country of origin	Asylum-seekers
Sri Lanka	4,548	Hungary	3,895	Sri Lanka	40,009
Somalia	3,856	Pakistan	3,192	Somalia	21,120
China	3,086	Sri Lanka	3,001	Pakistan	18,680
Bulgaria	2,514	Zimbabwe	2,653	China	17,651
Lebanon	2,316	China	2,413	Iran	15,590
El Salvador	2,137	Colombia	1,831	India	14,106
Iran	2,101	Turkey	1,755	Mexico	8,940
Argentina	1,175	Mexico	1,669	Hungary	8,915
Ghana	1,149	Argentina	1,456	Israel	8,527
Pakistan	988	India	1,300	DR Congo	8,229
Total top 10	23,870	Total top 10	23,165	Total top 10	161,767
Total asylum-seekers	36,735	Total asylum-seekers	44,038	Total asylum-seekers	355,425
Top 10 as share of total	65%	Top 10 as share of total	53%	Top 10 as share of total	46%

Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva.

Claims for asylum in Canada from people originating from the Indian sub-continent have remained consistently high between 1990 and 2001. Whereas in the USA, numbers of asylum-seekers from Central America have reduced and those from Mexico and Colombia had increased significantly during the same period. Asylum-seekers from the Americas tend to come by land. But most asylum-seekers coming to Canada come much larger distances and by necessity travel by sea or air. It is difficult with the information available to make generalizations and identify patterns about many such asylum-seekers. A factor seems to be Canada's programme of resettlement of refugees and asylum-seekers. Many asylum-seekers going to Canada appear to be from the elite sectors of their societies of origin and they frequently fly there.

4.3 Australia

Australia has a Humanitarian Program, designed to bring in refugees from overseas, with fairly constant targets of around 12,000 per year since the early 1990s. Until 1999-2000 the Humanitarian Program had three components: *Refugees* as defined by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, to resettle refugees in collaboration with the UNHCR; the *Special Humanitarian Program* (SHP) for people who suffer gross human rights violations but would not qualify under the 1951 Convention; and the *Special Assistance Category* (SAC) which was established to allow people displaced by violence in such countries as Former Yugoslavia to join relatives in Australia. In 2000-2001 the SAC was phased out. In recent years an additional non-Program category has grown in importance: *Onshore Protection Visa Grants*, for people who claim asylum after arriving in Australia.

The Humanitarian Program arrival figures show an apparent decline in recent years, falling from 13,824 in 1995-1996 to 8,779 in 1997-1998 and 7,625 in 2000-01 (DIMIA 2002). This is due to the increase in Onshore Protection Visas from 1,588 in 1997-1998 to 1,834 in 1998-1999, 2,458 in 1999-2000 and 5,577 in 2000-2001. Some of these visas were granted to people who arrived by air on a visitor visa and then claimed asylum, but increasing numbers have gone to boat people. The number of persons arriving in Australia by boat without permission averaged only a few hundred per year up to the late 1990s, but went up to 920 in 1998-1999, 4,175 in 1999-2000 and 4,141 in 2000-2001 (Crock and Saul 2002: 24). Although these numbers are low compared with other parts of the world, the growth is seen as undermining the tradition of strict government control of entries, which has hitherto been possible because of Australia's remote location.

The illegal entrants fell into two main groups: Chinese people smuggled in mainly for purposes of undocumented work; and asylum-seekers from the Middle East and South Asia (Iraqis, Iranians, Afghans and others) brought in from Indonesia, usually on fishing boats chartered by people smugglers. In 1999, the Australian Government introduced a number of deterrent measures, including a 3-year Temporary Protection Visa (TPV), which confers no right to permanent settlement or family reunion. Another deterrent is to stop boat people from landing on Australian shores, and to try to send them back to Indonesia. Those who do land are detained – sometimes for years – in isolated and remote camps, where they are isolated from lawyers, the media and supporters. Hunger strikes, riots, self-inflicted injuries and even suicide have become commonplace. The government has also introduced legal measures to limit the power of the courts in asylum matters (Crock and Saul 2002: Chapter 5).

Matters got even worse in August 2001, when the Norwegian freighter *MV Tampa* picked up over 400 asylum-seekers (mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq) from a sinking boat off Northern Australia. The government refused the captain permission to land, and the *Tampa* anchored near the Australian territory of Christmas Island. This was the start of a saga involving international diplomacy, heated public debates in Australia, and feverish political activity. In the 'Pacific Solution', Australia tried to export the asylum-seekers to its neighbours, Nauru and New Guinea – and was willing to spend vast sums of money to do so. Asylum became the central issue in the November Election, giving victory to Liberal-National Prime Minister Howard. Before the *Tampa* affair, a Labor victory had been predicted. The 2002-2003 Federal Budget included A$2.8 billion for border control measures – an increase of A$1.2 billion over the previous year. Even stricter border control legislation was introduced in 2002 (Castles and Vasta 2003).

Table 4 shows the top ten countries of origin of asylum-seekers in 1996 and 2001, while Appendix Chart 3 shows the flows for the top 5 countries from 1996-2001.

In the case of Australia, comparable figures are not available for the 1990-1995 period. Asylum-seekers were more numerous in the early 1990s than later on – probably due to arrivals from the Former Yugoslavia. Some 12,100 asylum-seekers arrived in 1990 and 16,700 in 1991. The numbers dipped to 6-7,000 annually in the mid-1990s. Despite the recent asylum panic, the number of asylum-seekers only rose to 13,100 in 2000 and 12,400 in 2001.

Table 4
Australia: top ten countries of origin of asylum-seekers 1996, 2001 and 1996-2001

1996		2001		1996-2001	
Country of origin	Asylum-seekers	Country of origin	Asylum-seekers	Country of origin	Asylum-seekers
Philippines	1,630	Afghanistan	2,161	Indonesia	7,529
Indonesia	1,420	Iraq	1,784	China	6,649
Sri Lanka	1,096	China	1,176	Iraq	5,378
China	1,007	Indonesia	897	Philippines	4,665
India	339	Fiji	799	Afghanistan	4,241
Turkey	269	India	650	Sri Lanka	4,025
Lebanon	262	Iran	559	India	2,873
Thailand	253	Sri Lanka	397	Fiji	2,134
Fiji	221	Malaysia	261	Iran	1,910
Iran	215	Bangladesh	261	Thailand	1,263
Total top 10	6,712	Total top 10	8,945	Total top 10	40,667
Total asylum-seekers	9,758	Total asylum-seekers	12,366	Total asylum-seekers	62,153
Top 10 as share of total	69%	Top 10 as share of total	72%	Top 10 as share of total	65%

Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva.

4.4 Western Europe

The data presented for Western Europe refer to asylum-seekers making applications in the 15 member countries of the EU, as well as Norway and Switzerland, from 1990-2001.[3] Table 5 presents figures on the top ten countries of origin of asylum-seekers for Western Europe. Again the figures are ranked by size for 1990, 2001 and for the aggregate of the 12 years. The top ten countries of origin for the period 1990-2001 were the Federal Republic (FR) of Yugoslavia, Romania, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sri Lanka, Iran, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo). The flows for the top five countries for the period are to be seen in Chart 4 in the Appendix.

The data shows the dominance of the FR Yugoslavia as a country of origin with almost 936,000 asylum-seekers over the period. The two peaks of asylum-seekers from the FR Yugoslavia coincide with the wars in Croatia and Bosnia in 1991-1993 and the war in Kosovo in 1998-1999. The next country of origin is Romania, with a total of over

3 Some of the material presented in Western Europe in this paper is based on a study carried out by the authors together with Heaven Crawley for the Institute of Public Policy Research (London) on behalf of the European Commission. See (Castles *et al*. 2003).

Table 5
Western Europe: Top ten countries of origin of asylum-seekers in 1990, 2001 and 1990-2001

1990		2001		1990-2001	
Country of origin	Asylum-seekers	Country of origin	Asylum-seekers	Country of origin	Asylum-seekers
Romania	62,194	Iraq	42,834	FR Yugoslavia	935,973
Turkey	48,771	Afghanistan	39,756	Romania	412,326
FR Yugoslavia	33,216	Turkey	29,458	Turkey	392,867
Lebanon	29,881	FR Yugoslavia	27,169	Iraq	272,918
Afghanistan	21,420	Russia	14,380	Afghanistan	192,581
Sri Lanka	19,279	Iran	12,802	Bosnia & Herzegovina	184,005
Iran	18,451	Somalia	11,320	Sri Lanka	169,666
Viet Nam	13,466	Sri Lanka	10,858	Iran	143,651
Bulgaria	13,020	Bosnia & Herzegovina	10,623	Somalia	142,148
Somalia	12,296	Algeria	10,056	DR Congo	123,441
Total top 10	271,994	Total top 10	209,256	Total top 10	2,969,576
Total asylum-seekers	441,711	Total asylum-seekers	402,399	Total asylum-seekers	5,052,783
Top 10 as share of total	62%	Top 10 as share of total	52%	Top 10 as share of total	59%

Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva.

400,000 concentrated overwhelmingly in the early part of the 1990s, at a time of marked persecution of Roma and other ethnic minorities. Next comes Turkey, with over 392,000 asylum-seekers quite evenly distributed across the period. Most appear to be Kurds, fleeing violent conflicts involving government forces in areas of supposed support for the Kurdish separatist party, the PKK.

All the countries of origin in the chart show considerable fluctuations, linked to the development of internal conflicts and civil wars in the countries concerned. Together the top ten countries of origin accounted for almost 3 million asylum-seekers entering Western Europe from 1990-2001. This is 59 per cent of the total number of asylum-seekers in the period. Just over one third of these asylum-seekers came from three European countries: FR Yugoslavia, Romania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As an earlier study conducted by the same authors shows (Castles *et al*. 2003), in some individual years during the period 1990-2000 other countries of origin also appear in the top ten: for example China, Vietnam, Algeria and Nigeria. The next ten countries of origin for this 11-year period were Bulgaria, Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Russia, Vietnam, Algeria, China, Albania and Lebanon. Together they accounted for about 18 per cent of all asylum-seekers. Of these just under a quarter were from European countries, if Russia is not included. If Russia is counted as Europe, the share goes up to one third.

The top 20 countries together make up 77 per cent of all asylum-seekers entering Western Europe during this 11-year period.

There is no space for a detailed analysis of the figures for each Western European country here. In general, the top ten countries of origin for asylum-seekers coming to Western Europe as a whole also usually appear in the top 15 countries of origin for each individual country in the region. However, there are significant national variations. These appear to be linked to a number of factors. The first is geographical position (or proximity): countries towards the eastern borders of Western Europe are more likely to receive asylum-seekers from Eastern Europe, such as Russians and Bulgarians in Finland and Austria. Southern European countries, such as Greece, are more likely to receive asylum-seekers from South-eastern Europe (Albania, Romania) or the Middle East (Iraq, Iran). Other factors include pre-existing links, especially through a former colonial presence, and a common language. Belgium is host to many asylum-seekers from the DR Congo, its former colony of the Congo; France has many asylum-seekers from Mali and Mauritania.

5 Routes used by asylum-seekers

Increasingly in recent years, much asylum migration is conducted clandestinely, often with the assistance of smugglers. By necessity, these routes are often complex, kept as secret as possible, and are ever-changing. For example, in the case of Chinese travelling to the USA, the use of air, sea and land-based forms of transport through over 43 transit countries, makes it difficult to generalize about the routes used in any meaningful way.

In 1990, most people seeking asylum in the USA, and significant numbers in Canada, were from Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua) and Cuba (see Tables 2 and 3). These are all neighbouring countries from which asylum-seekers could travel to the USA by land or by a relatively short sea crossing. Many Central Americans travelled up to the USA via Mexico. Although many Mexican immigrants (documented and undocumented) went to the USA, relatively few sought asylum until a few years later. By 2001, comparatively large numbers of Colombians and Mexicans were seeking asylum in the USA and Canada, also largely travelling by land. However, by this time a much larger proportion of asylum-seekers to North America were coming from a greater diversity of countries and from much further affield.

While concrete evidence is often difficult to come by, most people seeking asylum in Western Europe from other European countries (such as the FR Yugoslavia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and West Asian countries (Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan) arrive by land, often following long and sometimes indirect transit routes. For those travelling longer distances, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, strong colonial links and direct flights often to go hand-in-hand. Mode of transportation is often clearly influenced by economic status. The better off are more likely to fly, and to go to a country of their own choosing. The poor may be smuggled in boats and trucks, and the smugglers may strongly influence the choice of destination.

Many asylum-seekers pass through other countries before arriving in Western Europe. Some of these transit countries, which are often very poor, host large refugee populations of their own. For some 40 years, Tanzania has received some of the largest

refugee inflows in Africa from its troubled neighbours, including at various times the Republic of South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and the DR Congo. Today Tanzania – one of world's poorer nations – still has the largest refugee population of the continent: at least 500,000. Other important transit countries include Guinea, Kenya, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Thailand and Turkey. In what are already impoverished countries, the refugees live in cramped conditions without access to legal rights and basic services, placing huge burdens upon their host states. While EU states have increasingly resisted resettling refugees from these 'safe third countries', they have also provided insufficient support to the states hosting them. This was recognized in a European Commission report in 2000 (European Parliament 2000).

Most asylum-seekers going to Australia seem to have been doing so by often-perilous voyages on fishing boats and similar craft across the Timor Sea or the Indian Ocean. The adoption of very tight monitoring and interdiction policies by the Australian authorities over the past couple of years seems to have considerably restricted such flows.

6 Causes of asylum-seeker movements to Western countries

To explain the changes in asylum migration flows for the various receiving areas, it is important to understand their causes. The following section is based on an analysis of causal factors for main source areas for the EU from 1990-2000 (Castles *et al*. 2003). To get a full picture it would be necessary to examine causes in all significant countries of origin. However, for reasons of time and resources, our discussion focuses on just the top ten. It is our view that the diverse profiles of the top ten are reasonably representative of the sending countries as a whole. We also assume that the factors relevant for asylum migration to the EU apply reasonably well to the other destination countries. We distinguish here between 'push factors', 'pull factors' and 'intermediate factors and migration mechanisms'. This distinction is useful for a discussion of the various factors, but it is important to realize that specific migratory processes are always shaped by a combination of these factors. The main emphasis in our account is on push factors.

6.1 Push factors

We identified the following as possible key push factors:

(1) Repression of minorities or ethnic conflict
(2) Civil war
(3) High numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) relative to total population
(4) Poverty as reflected in low per capita income
(5) Low position on the Human Development Index (HDI)
(6) Low life expectancy
(7) High population density
(8) High adult literacy rate

Factors 1, 2 and 3 relate directly to persecution and conflict. We should expect these to be significant, since flight is generally a survival strategy in the face of threats to life

and personal safety. Factors 4, 5 and 6 are indicators of underdevelopment, and would be important if migration were mainly economically motivated. Factor 7 needs to be considered, as some analysts claim that both economic and forced migration are linked to high population density. Factor 8 relates to the importance of human capital in giving people the ability to migrate. It is obviously significant for economic migration, but should be less so for forced migration.

Factor 1: Repression of minorities or ethnic conflict

There is no single statistical indicator for this type of conflict. We have used reports produced by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the UK's Home Office, the US Department of State, and the US Committee for Refugees. These show that issues of persecution of minorities or ethnic conflicts exist in all the top ten countries of origin. This is indeed the only common factor in all the cases. In several cases these have taken the form of all-out internal war. In other cases, there has been persecution of ethnic or religious minorities by dominant groups, or by leaders using ethnicity as a way of consolidating their own power.

Most asylum-seekers from Romania belong to the Roma (or gipsy) minority. Intense persecution of this group after the collapse of the pro-Soviet Ceaucescu regime in 1989 led to a mass exodus, mainly to Germany. The improvement of the human rights situation in the late 1990s led to reduced emigration. Many asylum-seekers from Turkey, Iraq and Iran belong to the Kurdish minority, which experiences discrimination and persecution in all three countries. Violent repression of Shi'a Muslims by the Sunni Muslim ruling group is also a cause of flight from Iraq. Identifying ethnic conflict as a key factor does not imply that we see ethnicity itself as an explanation for conflict. Ethnic conflict is often a surrogate for other problems: political entrepreneurs have used ethnicity in the post-Cold War period as an effective tool of mobilization, but the underlying aims are often economic or political (Gallagher 1997; Turton 1997).

Factor 2: Civil war

Major internal wars occurred or continued in the period 1990-2001 in the FR Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Somalia and the DR Congo. Some of the conflicts were at least in part hangovers from the proxy wars of the Cold War period. The conflicts in Eastern and South-eastern European countries were linked to problems of transition following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. Some of these conflicts have in the meantime been resolved or reduced in intensity.

In the post-Cold War period, ideological conflict has been replaced by more localized conflicts connected with identity struggles, ethnic divisions, problems of state formation and competition for economic assets. Internal wars are simultaneously transnational as they are linked to international economic and political interests, and draw in a range of international actors, both military and humanitarian. The means of warfare have also changed. The protagonists are not large standing armies but irregular forces. The aim is not control of territory, but political control of the population. Mass population expulsion is often a strategic goal, which is why the 'new wars' have led to such an upsurge in forced migration (Kaldor 2001). Ninety per cent of those killed are civilians. Both government forces and insurgents use exemplary violence including torture and sexual assault as means of control. Genocide and ethnic cleansing are systemic elements

of the new form of warfare, rather than expressions of 'age-old hatreds' (Summerfield 1999).

Factor 3: High numbers of IDPs in the country

A large population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in a country can provide a reservoir of people seeking to escape misery at home through finding asylum in industrialized countries. All the top ten source countries of asylum-seekers going to the EU, except Romania and Iran, have substantial IDP populations. Clearly there is a link between IDPs and asylum-seeking, although an IDP population is not a root cause, but rather a symptom of conflict within a country. IDP populations alone cannot explain asylum-seeking in the EU, for there are many countries with huge IDP populations, which do not move to the EU or other industrialized countries (Table 6).

Table 6
IDPs in 2000

Country of origin	Total no. of IDPs	No. of IDPs per 1000 of population
FR Yugoslavia	480,000*	45
Romania	0**	n.a.
Turkey	400,000-1,000,000*	6-16
Iraq	700,000*	31
Afghanistan	375,000	14
Bosnia & Herzegovina	518,000	133
Sri Lanka	600,000	32
Iran	0**	n.a.
Somalia	300,000	32
DR Congo (Zaire)	1,800,000*	36

Source: US Committee on Refugees (2001), *World Refugee Survey 2001*, Washington DC: USCR.

* These figures are rough estimates

** The figure zero here does not mean that there are no IDPs at all in the country concerned, but rather that they are not present in significant numbers.

Factor 4: Standard of living as shown by low per capita income

Politicians and the media assert that many asylum-seekers are in fact economic migrants, who misuse the asylum system to circumvent immigration restrictions. If this were the case, one might expect migrants to come primarily from poor countries with large unemployed populations. One way of testing this is to look at the GDP per capita of the main sending countries. The figures in Table 7 are based on 'purchasing power parities' (PPP) – that is they are corrected to indicate relative living standards. Unfortunately, data is not available for all ten countries.

Table 7
GDP per capita 1992 and 1999

	GDP per capita (PPP in US Dollars)	
Country of origin	1992	1999
FR Yugoslavia	-	-
Romania	2,840	6,041
Turkey	5,230	6,380
Iraq	3,413	-
Afghanistan	819	-
Bosnia & Herzegovina	-	-
Sri Lanka	2,850	3,279
Iran	5,420	5,531
Somalia	1,001	-
DR Congo (Zaire)	523	801

Sources: UNDP (1995; 2001).

These figures appear to offer no support for a simple connection between low income and propensity to seek asylum in the EU. Asylum-seekers come from both middle-income countries like Turkey and Iran, and from low-income countries like Afghanistan, Somalia and the DR Congo. However, the figures should not be read as indicating the absence of a link between the economic situation and forced migration. Rather the link appears to be more complex. For instance, relative deprivation might be more relevant than absolute income levels: where income has declined or inequality increased due to economic problems this might lead to out-migration, even if absolute income is at relatively high levels. The figures for Romania show a strong growth in income from 1992 to 1999, which coincided with a decline in out-migration. This indicates that economic improvement may be linked to reduced forced migration.

Factor 5: Low position on Human Development Index

A more sophisticated measurement of development and social well-being is provided by the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI), which assigns countries a HDI-value on the basis of a range of indicators including: longevity, as measured by life expectancy at birth; educational attainment; and standard of living. We have used figures for 1995, when 174 states were included in the HDI, and for 1999, when 162 states were included (UNDP 1995; 2001) (Table 8).

Again, the Table shows no simple link between HDI scores and forced migration to the EU. None of the sending countries are high on the HDI, but several are at an intermediate level, notably Romania, Turkey, Iran and Sri Lanka. Somalia, Afghanistan and DR Congo are very low on the HDI. But there are many countries with low HDI scores which are not significant source countries for asylum-seekers. Underdevelopment in itself does not appear to be a major push factor for forced migration. Again, we would speculate that there are links, but that they are more complex in nature. It is well established in migration theory that most economic migrants do not belong to the very

Table 8
Human Development Index (HDI) values and rankings for 1995 and 1999

	HDI value		HDI ranking	
Country of origin	1995	1999	1995	1999
FR Yugoslavia	-	-	-	-
Romania	0.703	0.772	98	58
Turkey	0.792	0.735	66	82
Iraq	0.617	-	106	-
Afghanistan	0.228	-	170	-
Bosnia & Herzegovina	-	-	-	-
Sri Lanka	0.704	0.735	97	81
Iran	0.770	0.714	70	90
Somalia	0.246	-	166	-
DR Congo (Zaire)	0.384	0.429	143	142

Sources: UNDP (1995; 2001).

poorest strata in the lowest-income countries. Rather migrants tend to come from intermediate groups, who have the economic and cultural capital needed for mobility (Chiswick 2000; Martin and Taylor 2001; Massey *et al*. 1998). By contrast, refugees and IDPs often include the very poorest people from very poor countries. Such people are likely to remain in the region of displacement, as they lack the resources to move further. This explains why relatively few refugees from some of the world's largest displaced populations – such as Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Angola – have come to the EU (Schmeidl 2001).

It is helpful to separate between why people leave their countries, and why they come to industrialized countries. Refugees and asylum-seekers flee their countries of origin because of persecution or threats to their very existence. They often seek immediate protection in neighbouring countries. However, many countries of first asylum cannot offer effective protection or assistance, due to their own political and economic difficulties. The displaced people may therefore continue their flight. In this process, a certain selection takes place: those with the greatest financial resources and human capital are more likely to move onwards, and a small proportion of these will seek protection in the developed world.

Factor 6: Low life expectancy

We now turn to demographic and social indicators thought by some to show possible causes of forced migration. Table 9 presents data for the next three indicators.

Low life expectancy can be taken as indicative of poor health conditions, poor nutrition and similar social ills. However, the figures presented in Table 7 show no clear pattern. Life expectancy ranges from very low in Afghanistan, Somalia and DR Congo to quite high in the FR Yugoslavia, Romania, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sri Lanka and Iran. High mortality and low life expectancy could obviously be a result of protracted conflict, as is probably the case in the countries mentioned, but it is interesting to see how relatively high life expectancy has been maintained in certain conflict areas.

Table 9
Population density, illiteracy and life expectancy at birth

Country of origin	Population density (1999)	Adult illiteracy (% of pop.)		Life expectancy at birth	
		1992	1999	1992	1999
FR Yugoslavia	104	-	-	-	72
Romania	97	3	2	70	70
Turkey	84	19	16	67	70
Iraq	52	45	46	66	59
Afghanistan	40	71	65	44	46
Bosnia & Herzegovina	76	-	-	-	73
Sri Lanka	294	11	9	72	73
Iran	39	35	26	68	71
Somalia	15	73	-	47	48
DR Congo (Zaire)	22	26	41	52	51

Sources: World Bank (2001); UNDP (1995).

Definitions: *Population density* represents the total number of inhabitants per square kilometre of the surface area. *Life expectancy at birth* represents the number of years a newborn infant would live if prevailing patterns of mortality at the time of birth were to stay the same throughout the child's life. *Adult illiteracy* represents the percentage of people aged 15 and above who cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life.

Factor 7: High population density

The figures on population density show considerable variation, ranging from high density in Sri Lanka, through intermediate levels in most of the countries, to low density in DR Congo and Somalia. Population density in itself seems to have no explanatory value. However, it might be argued that it is not population density itself, but rather population growth that is important. Some analysts claim that rapid population growth is leading to resource competition, economic decline and conflict in many less developed countries (Zolberg 2001). To test this relationship, Kritz carried out a quantitative analysis of demographic indicators in countries of origin of migrants to the USA. She found: 'no support for the claim that population growth drives US immigration. Indeed migrants are more likely to come from countries with low to moderate population growth rates rather than ... from countries with the highest growth rates' (Kritz 2001: 36). She also found no link between total fertility rates or population density and migration. This analysis concerns all migrants, but is likely to be valid for forced migrants too.

Factor 8: Adult illiteracy rate

A high degree of literacy might be seen as conducive to economic migration as it helps potential migrants obtain the 'cultural capital' (that is the knowledge of opportunities and mechanisms of migration) needed for mobility. It should not in principle be relevant for asylum-seekers who move out of sheer necessity. The figures presented on adult illiteracy in Table 9 show considerable fluctuations, from very low in Sri Lanka and

Romania, to very high in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. However, most of the countries have reasonably high rates of literacy – defined here as illiteracy rates of less than 25 per cent of the population.

Relative importance of the push factors

Table 10 summarizes which push factors are present or absent in each country of origin. A number of assumptions have been made for indicators for which we have no hard data (such as GDP in the FR Yugoslavia). HDI scores are not included in this Table, as they are a composite of other factors.

It is quite obvious that indicators of conflict are far more significant than indicators of development. Repression of minorities and ethnic conflicts are the only factor present in all the top ten sending countries. Civil wars are present in seven cases. A high number of IDPs is also to be found in seven cases. Low income is to be found in only half the countries, while high population density exists in only one – Sri Lanka. Low life expectancy is only to be found in three of the top ten countries of origin. The only social indicator of any real significance seems to be the relatively high literacy levels (over 75 per cent of the population) found in six cases, with Iran on the borderline.

A factor not addressed in this study, is the importance of gender-related violence and persecution for forced migration. Gender-based violence plays a major part in many ethnic conflicts and internal wars. Systematic rape of women on the basis of ethnic group belonging or minority status took place in Bosnia, Rwanda and many other places in the 1990s. Domestic violence and female genital mutilation are on-going phenomena in many societies – often closely linked to underdevelopment, absence of the rule of law and deprivation of human rights. Gender-based persecution has been recognized in refugee jurisprudence as a grounds for granting asylum, usually on the basis of the 1951 Convention category of membership of a specific social group. There is a need for detailed research on the links between gender-based persecution and the other factors dealt with here.

Table 10
Push factors in top ten countries of origin of asylum-seekers coming to EU countries, 1990-2000

Push factors	FRY	ROM	TUR	IRQ	AFG	BOS	SRL	IRA	SOM	DRC
1. Repression of minorities/ethnic conflicts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Civil war	X	0	0	X	X	X	X	0	X	X
3. High no. of IDPs	X	0	0	X	X	X	X	0	X	X
4. Low per capita income	0	0	0	X	X	0	X	0	X	X
6. Low life expectancy	0	0	0	0	X	0	0	0	X	X
7. High population density	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	0	0	0
8. High literacy rates	X	X	X	X	0	X	X	0/X	0	0

Sources: Data from Tables 6-9.

X = significant factor; 0 = not a significant factor.

6.2 Pull factors

In the context of this paper, 'pull factors' refers to factors which influence forced migrants to seek asylum in a given country or region. Despite the fact they are fleeing violence or persecution, some asylum-seekers may have a degree of control over where they go and how they travel. In general, people seek asylum in industrialized countries mainly because they hope to obtain protection and security for themselves and their families. The high level of peace and public order, democratic institutions and the rule of law constitute attractions for people who have been persecuted by their own governments or by insurgent forces. Economic factors play a part too, even for refugees. Strong economies and developed welfare and health systems offer the chance of reasonable living standards for people originating in countries with high degrees of inequality, corrupt administrations and war-devastated economies.

These are constant factors, which make industrialized countries attractive. However, most asylum-seekers come from a fairly small number of countries. Other countries, which generate large numbers of IDPs and refugees, are not the source of major flows to Western Europe, North America and Australia. Clearly there are selective factors at work. Geographical proximity is clearly very important: asylum-seekers from Eastern and South Eastern Europe tend to go to Austria and Germany, while North Africans are more likely to go to France, Italy or Spain. Central Americans mainly go to the USA. By contrast, Canada and Australia seem to attract asylum-seekers from a wide range of origins.

Past colonial links, common language and diaspora communities are very important. For instance, asylum-seekers from the DR Congo tend to go to Belgium, while Nigerians appear to favour the UK. The lack of proximity in these cases is often compensated for by direct airline connections. Another factor is past labour recruitment: for instance the high proportion of Turks and people from former Yugoslavia coming to Germany is linked to the 'guestworker' recruitment of the 1960s and 1970s. Thus the presence of an existing ethnic community can be an important pull factor for others from the same country of origin. It is important to realize that asylum-seeking is part of the dynamic social process of migration: once a migratory flow is established it tends to continue even if policies change. This does not imply that the quest for asylum is not genuine, but rather that it is part of a broader process of social transformation.

6.3 Intermediate factors and migration mechanisms

The distinction between push and pull factors is useful for descriptive purposes, but is too schematic to be maintained in an analysis of any specific migratory movement. The decision to migrate – even for purposes of seeking asylum – is the result of consideration of a wide range of factors by the potential migrants, their families and their communities (Bissell and Natsios 2001). Typically, refugees are forced to flee by violence and persecution and have no time to plan their departure. However, as they move on from the initial place of refuge, people consider conditions and opportunities in both sending and receiving areas, as well as the costs and risks of the travel. This is why intermediate factors are important in deciding where forced migrants go. The presence of a pre-existing ethnic community in a potential destination was discussed above as a pull factor, but it can also be seen as the basis for a transnational migrant network – and thus as an intermediate or facilitating factor. Communication with previous migrants

can be seen as a type of social capital, since it can provide the means of obtaining advice and support to enable a person to move, and of finding shelter, work and protection on arrival.

Such networks take on a more formal shape in the so-called 'migration industry'. This term embraces the many people who earn their livelihood by organizing migratory movements as travel agents, bankers, labour recruiters, brokers, interpreters, and housing agents. Such people range from lawyers who give advice on immigration law, through to human smugglers who transport migrants illegally across borders. Some migration agents are themselves members of a migrant community, helping their compatriots on a voluntary or part-time basis: shopkeepers, priests, teachers and other community leaders often take on such roles. Others are unscrupulous criminals, out to exploit defenceless migrants or asylum-seekers by charging them extortionate fees for non-existent jobs. Yet others are police officers or bureaucrats, making money on the side by showing people loopholes in regulations. In many cases, it is the people-smugglers who decide where people will go – the migrants themselves may have little choice, and may not even know where they are going. Government attempts to crack down on illegal operators, are not likely to have much success as long as there are powerful reasons to move. Facilitating migration has become a major international business partly as a result of attempts at border control and regional restriction. By making it harder for people to move legally to meet an existing labour demand, opportunities for alternative modes of migration have been expanded (Castles and Miller 2003: Chapter 5).

7 Conclusions

There is nothing new about the blurring of distinctions between economic migration and refugee movements, but this asylum-migration nexus has gained added significance in the current climate of concern about the possibility of controlling cross-border flows in an epoch of globalization. Our description of asylum migration to the main industrialized receiving countries shows a high degree of fluctuation in numbers and source countries, as well as trends towards increasing diversity in areas of origin. However, there are also some constants, such as the importance of proximity, prior linkages (such as colonial presence or cultural affinities) and diasporas (or migration networks). Many of the principles of migration theory, though based on the experience of economic migration, are also relevant for analysing asylum migration.

In comparing migration asylum flows to Western Europe the USA, Canada and Australia for the period 1990-2001, we found that Western Europe is the destination of most asylum-seekers going to industrialized countries. The next most significant destination is the USA, followed by Canada and finally Australia. To a greater or lesser extent, asylum migration to Western Europe, the USA and Canada have all followed a similar pattern in annual volumes of flows during the period. This pattern involved an upsurge in total numbers in the early 1990s, followed by a levelling off and a reduction around the mid-1990s. Beginning in 1996 in Western Europe, and 1998/1999 in the USA and Canada, these numbers were rising again at the decade's end.

A comparison of the numbers of asylum-seekers coming to individual industrialized countries relative to the populations of these receiving countries is informative. For

example, while the USA receives more asylum-seekers in absolute numbers than any other country included in this study, it receives a relatively low number in proportion to its overall population.

For most countries of asylum in this study the numbers of asylum-seekers from the top ten countries of origin as a proportion of the total numbers coming to these countries had reduced significantly in 2001 compared with 1990 (from 1996 to 2001 in the case of Australia). This indicates that there was an increasing diversity in countries of origin of asylum-seekers during this period.

Finally, as the countries of origin in the Tables indicate, asylum migrants generally came from further afield in 2001 compared with 1990. Although asylum migration from neighbouring countries, often travelling by land, remained significant for many receiving countries, it was less so in 2001 compared with 1990. There has been a trend to ever more sophisticated and expensive ways and means of travelling from countries of origin to countries of asylum. Increasingly people have been travelling by air, using false visas and passports and using intermediaries, including people smugglers. There appears to be much more diversity and complexity in routes used, involving the use of more people to guide, transport and shelter migrants.

The policies of receiving countries, though not analysed in detail here, are important in shaping asylum migration. Attempts to control migration or to stop certain flows may have unforeseen results in changing the direction and characteristics of mobility. Migration rules should be seen not as rigid barriers, but as elements in opportunity structures which help influence how, and where, people move.

The analysis of the causes of forced migration to the EU shows the complex relationship between push, pull and intermediate factors. The main focus was on causes in the countries of origin. We found that indicators of conflict (repression of minorities or ethnic conflict, internal wars and IDP populations) were the best predictors of outflows of forced migrants. However, to explain why most migrants remained within the region while others went to specific EU countries, it was necessary to look at pull and intermediate factors as well. In fact, the separation into these types of causal factors, although useful for analysis, cannot be sustained in practice, for every migratory movement is the result of a dynamic interaction between a multitude of factors. Economic and political causes form not a pair of opposites but a continuum. Similarly, the distinction between conflict and development indicators needs to be questioned, because conflicts are often the expression of failure to bring about economic and social development, to introduce democratic institutions and to safeguard human rights. Multiple causes for migratory movements and multiple motivations on the part of migrants are very frequent.

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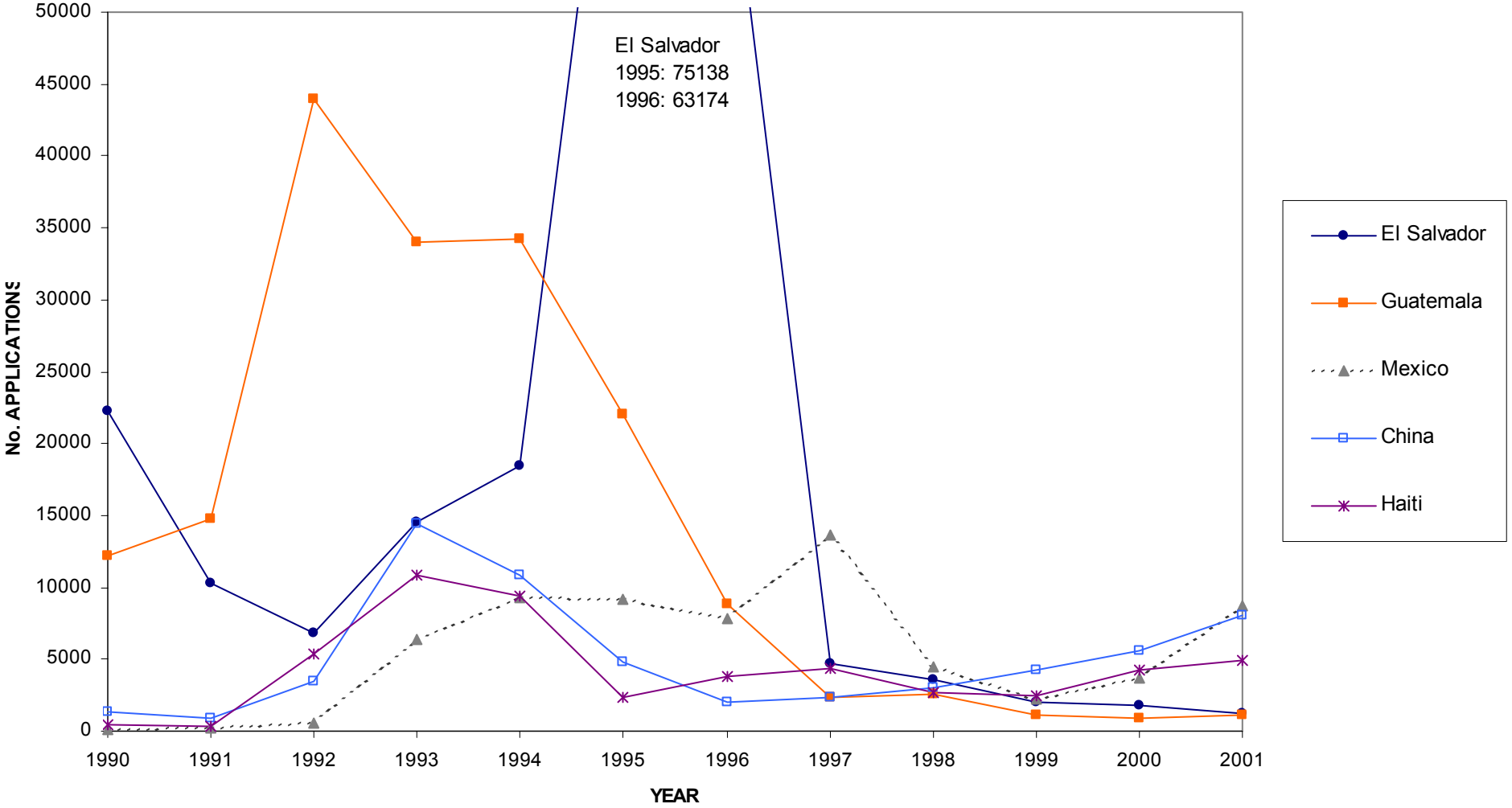
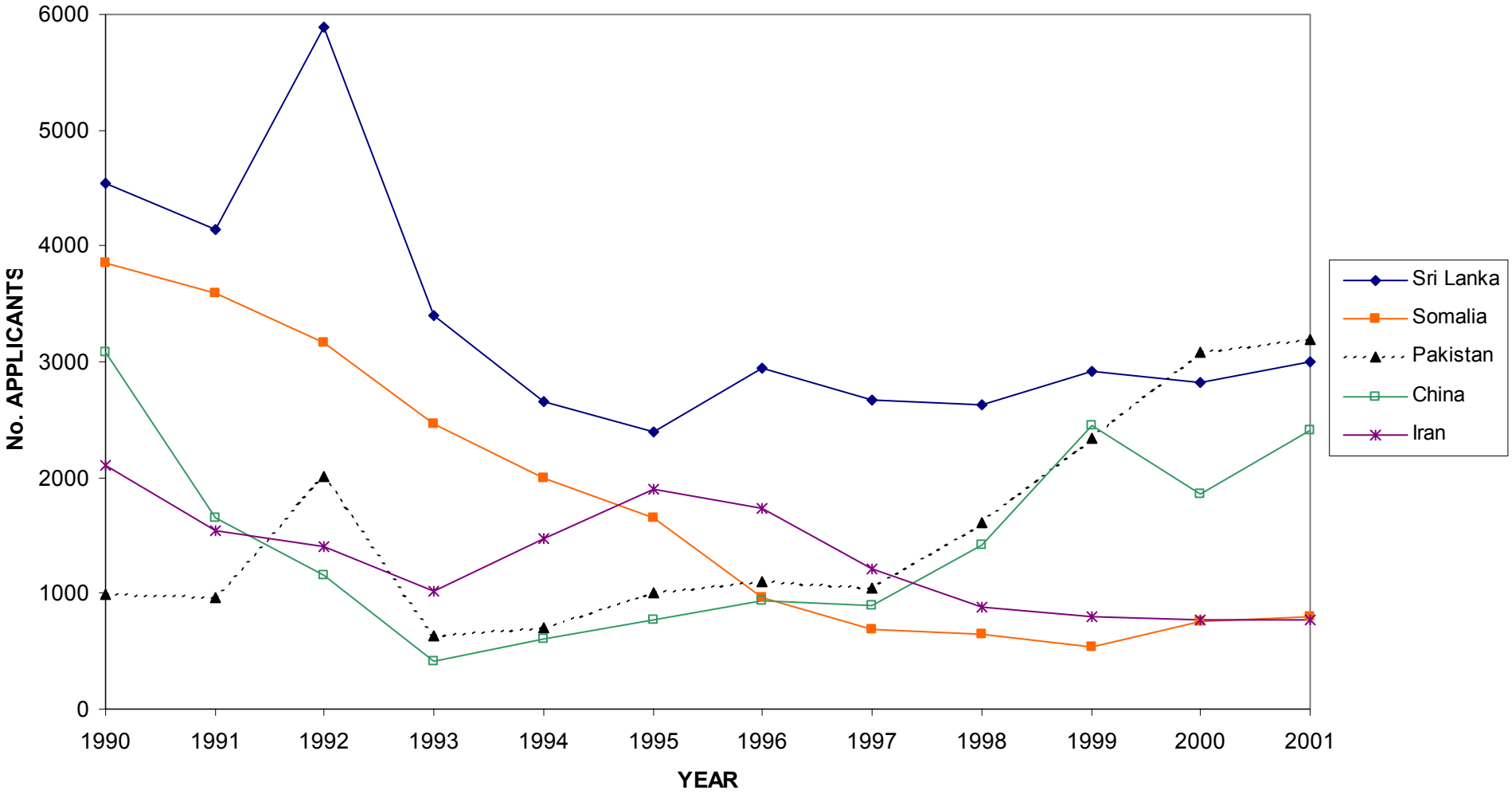
Chart 1. Annual asylum applications submitted in the USA from 5 most significant countries of origin: 1990 to 2001



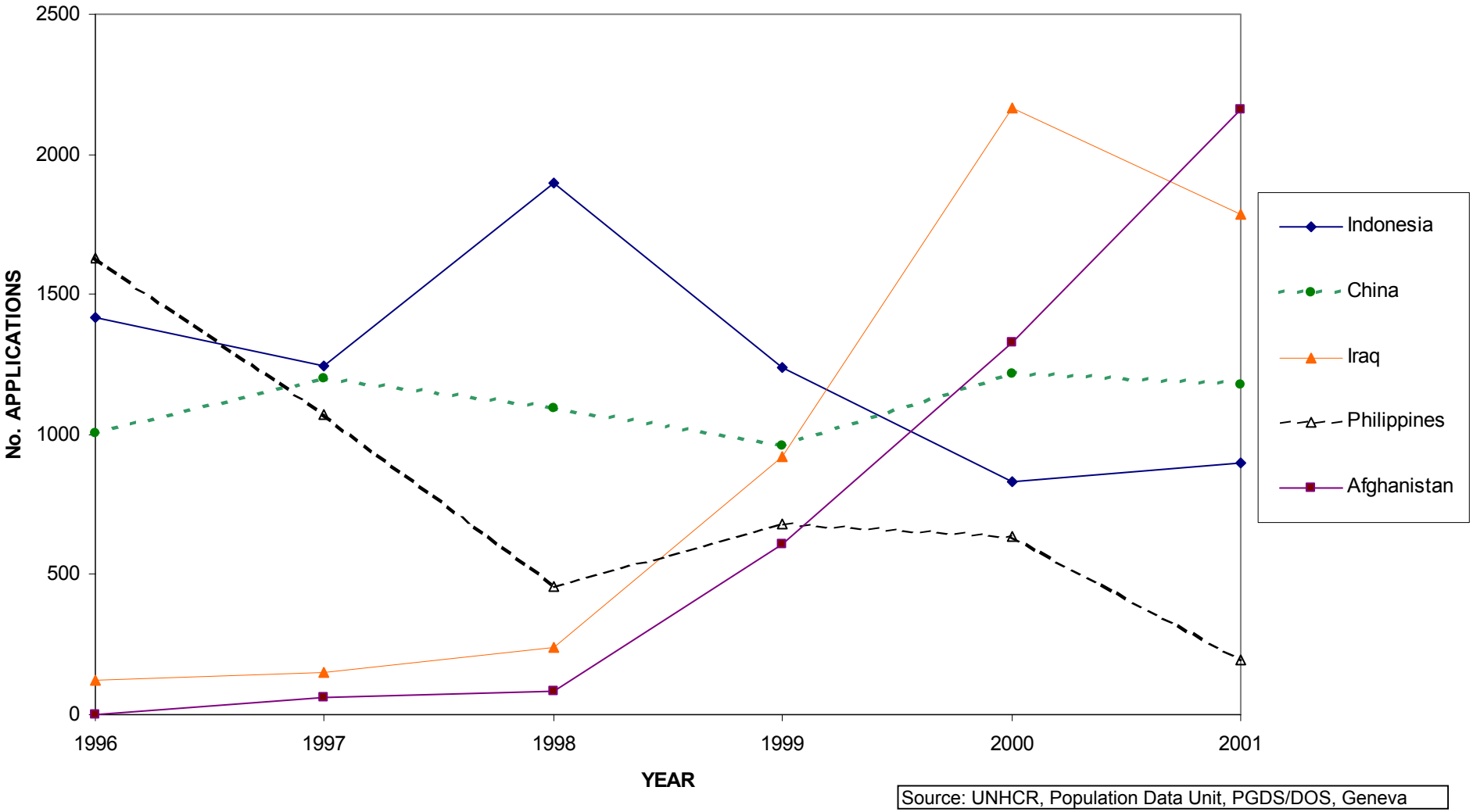
Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva

Chart 2. Annual asylum applications submitted in Canada from 5 most significant countries of origin: 1990 to 2001



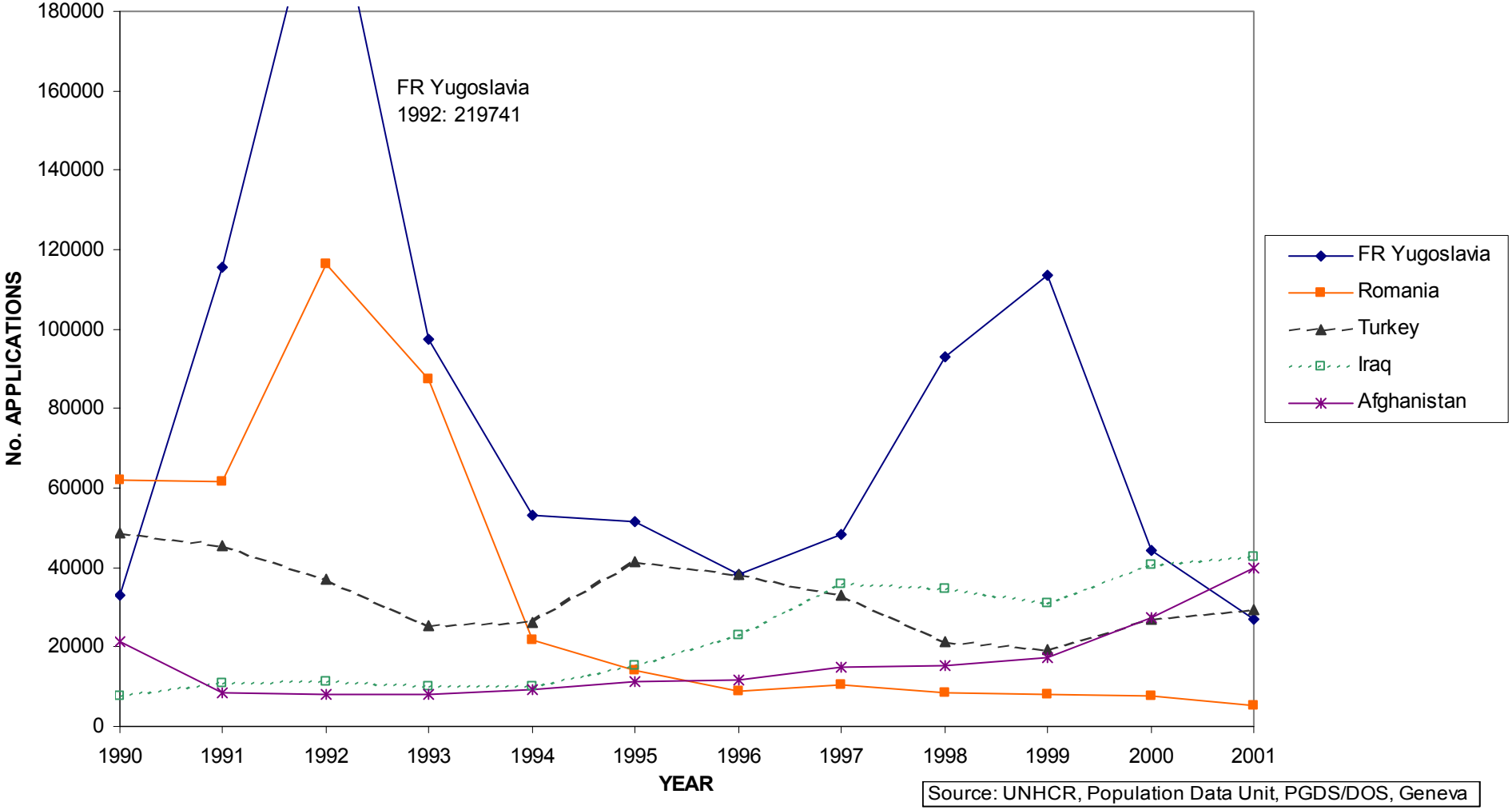
Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva

Chart 3. Annual asylum applications submitted in Australia from 5 most significant countries of origin: 1996 to 2001 (no data by country of origin available for 1990-1995)



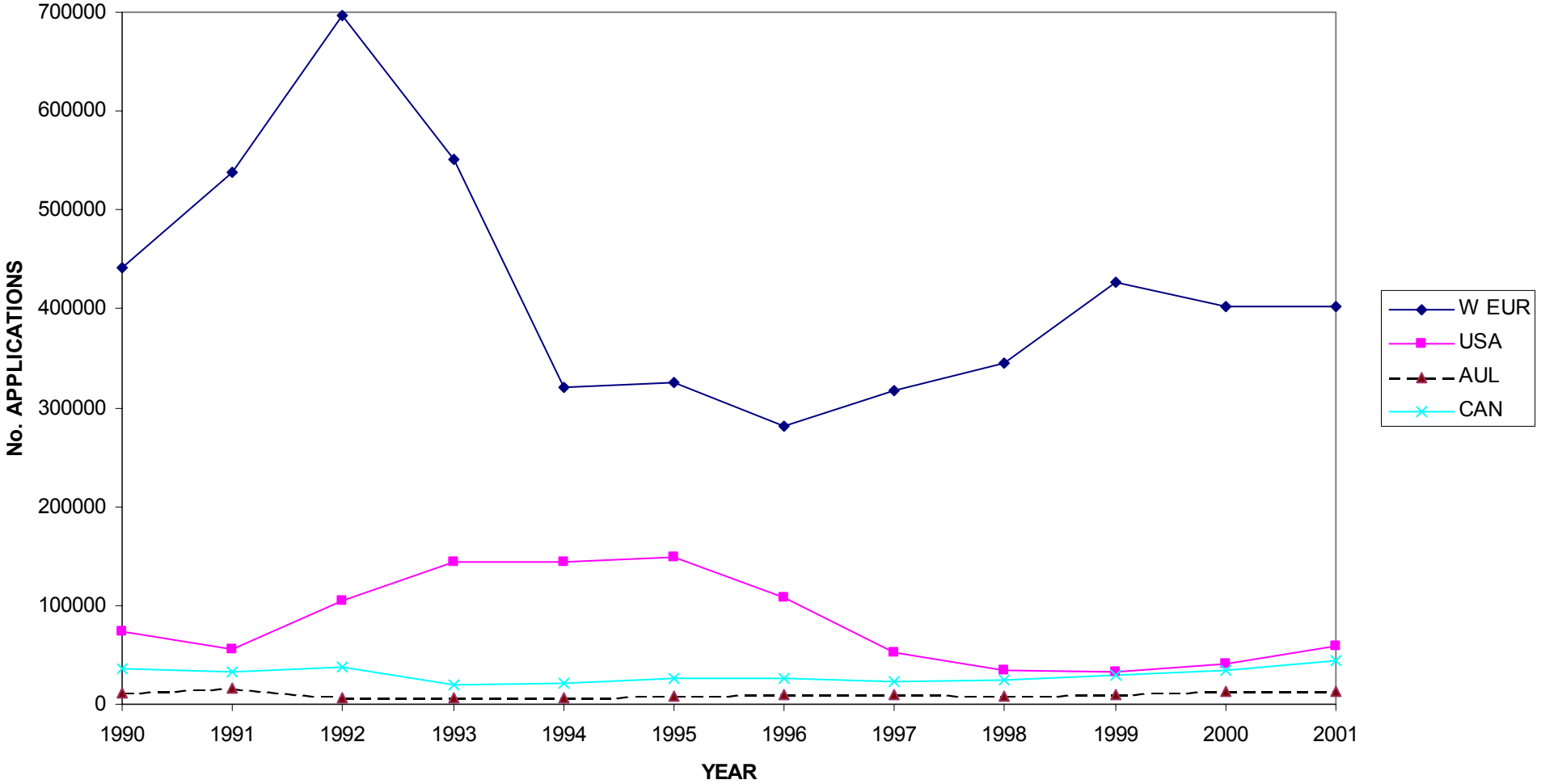
Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva

Chart 4. Annual asylum applications submitted in Western European countries from 5 most significant countries of origin: 1990 to 2001



Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva

Chart 5. Total annual asylum applications submitted in Australia, Western Europe, Canada and the USA: 1990 to 2001



Source: UNHCR, Population Data Unit, PGDS/DOS, Geneva