CISTP Analysis of Global Distribution of Persons of Concern
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Map Analysis: Persons of Concern

The following maps and data visualizations address the global distribution of people and countries in need of international support to establish sustainable and secure peace. If these needs are ignored, many will be left to suffer and international conflicts will be more likely to form or worsen.

Persons of Concern Definition

A person of concern is any person whom the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, considers a refugee, internally displaced person (IDP), asylum-seeker, or stateless person, with some additional persons not fitting these criteria. As of 2015, there were 76.5 million persons of concern.

A refugee is a person who has fled across an international border due to persecution, insecurity, or a conflict. Similarly, an IDP is a displaced person who has not crossed an international border. IDPs and refugees are the two biggest categories of persons of concern. In 2015, 29% of persons of concern were refugees (about 22.5 million people) and 53% were IDPs (about 40.3 million people). An asylum-seeker is a person who has requested sanctuary, but whose request has not been fully processed by the respective national system. Stateless people lack an official national identity. These people are often denied basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment, or the freedom to move. There were 10 million stateless people and 2.8 million asylum-seekers by 2015 (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016).

Figure 1: A picture of Rohingya "boat people" escaping Myanmar, an example of stateless people (UNHCR, South-East Asia Mixed Maritime Movements, 2015).

Methodology of Data Visualization

This analysis utilizes datasets from UNHCR and the World Bank from the year 2015, the most recent year with an almost complete dataset. The collected data was formatted alongside an ESRI shapefile of generalized countries. This data was then displayed on ArcGIS to produce a global map of the distribution of persons of concern based on numbers and proportions relative to a country's population. Though data from every country was not able to be visualized, these maps provide a good visualization of persons of concern across the globe.

For an interactive map of the global distribution of persons of concern, see http://arcg.is/0XjO8j.

Global Distribution of Persons of Concern

Based on the 2015 analysis, persons of concern were spread throughout most of the world, especially in poorer or unstable regions, which often produce environments hostile to human thriving. Some countries, however, had a significant number of persons of concern who did not originate within those countries, but who came to the countries for a variety of reasons.

Number of Persons of Concern inside a Country

Within the Eastern hemisphere's regions, the Middle East (including Pakistan), West Africa, Central Africa, and East Africa saw a historically great number of persons of concern. Europe and Southeastern Asia also had a relatively high number of persons of concern. The Central American Northern Triangle and Northwestern South America were the areas with most of the persons of concern found in the Western Hemisphere (Titus, 2017).
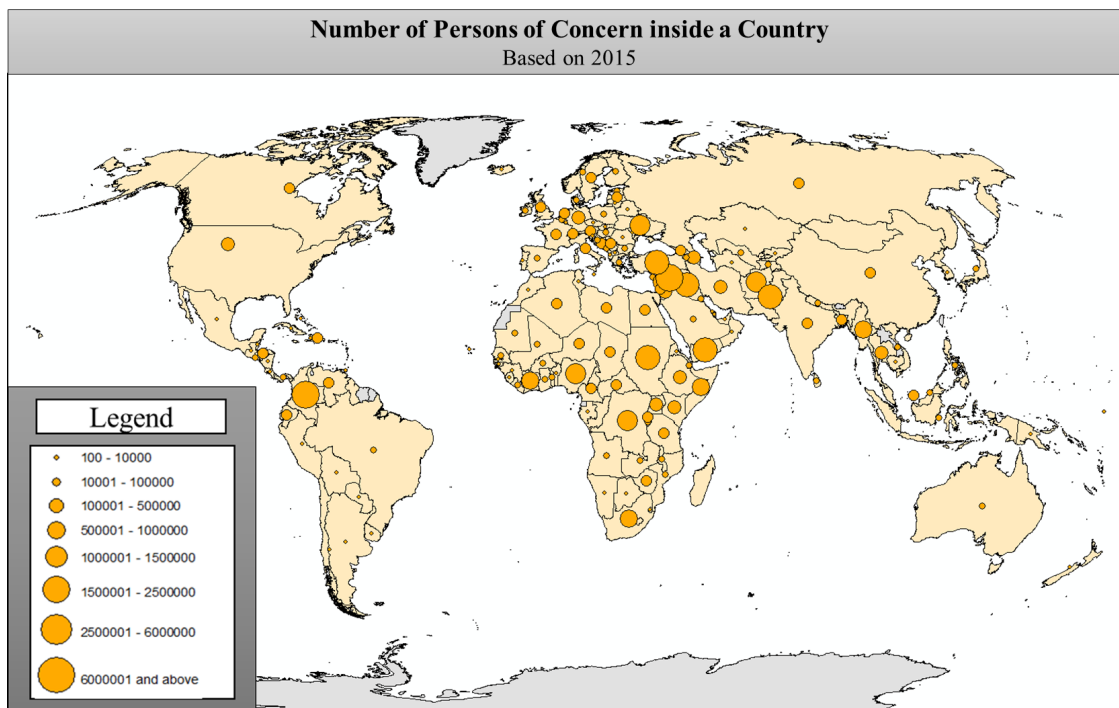

Figure 2: A map visualizing the location of persons of concern globally via graduated circles (Titus, 2017).

Out of all nations, Colombia and Syria possessed the highest number of persons of concern within their borders. Both countries had over 6 million persons of concern, most of whom were IDPs. Iraq, Sudan, Yemen, Turkey, Pakistan and Nigeria also had high numbers of persons of concern (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016).

Proportion of Persons of Concern Compared to Population to Current Hosting Countries

Regions with *higher* proportions of persons of concern as compared to the total population are understandably found in similar areas where there is also *high number* of persons of concern (Titus, 2017). Africa, the Middle East, parts of Southeastern Asia, and Colombia have some of the highest concentrations of persons of concern. Some countries in Europe also have high concentrations, especially in Northern and Northeastern Europe (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016) (Population Ranking, 2016).
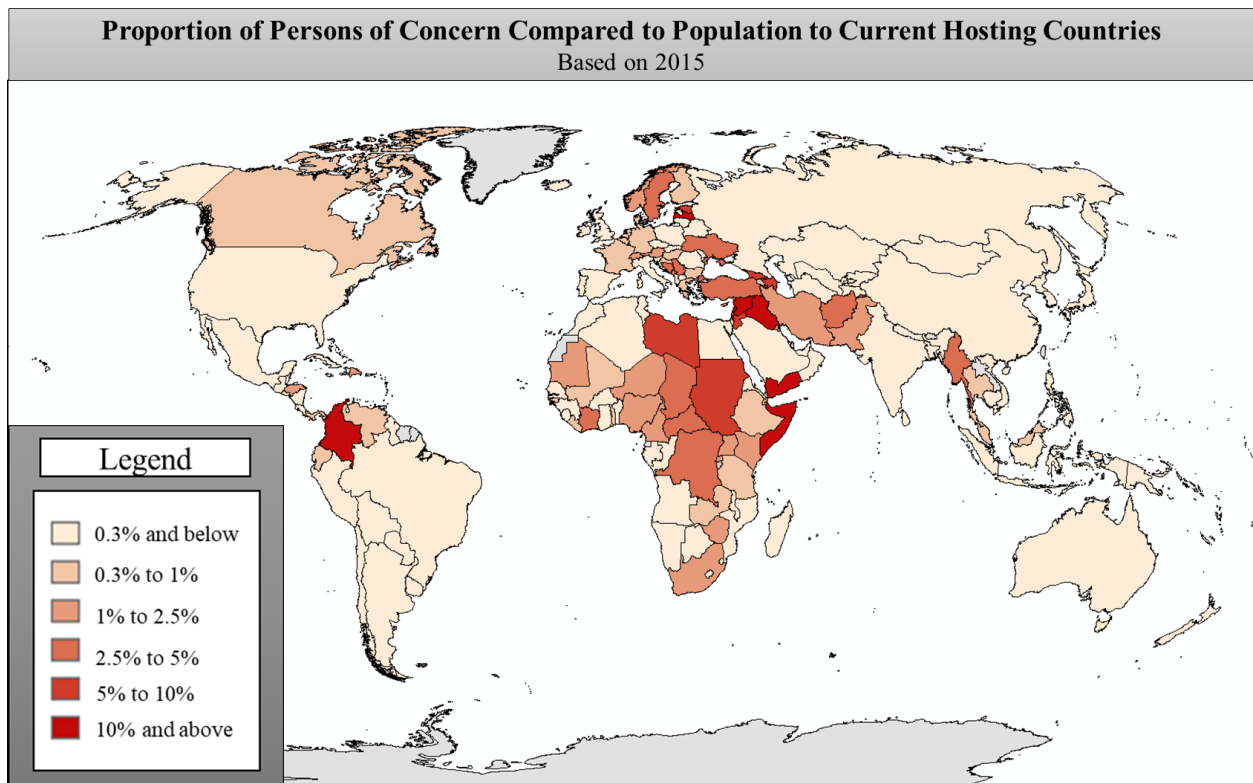

Figure 3: A map visualizing countries' proportion of persons of concern within their border compared to total population (Titus, 2017).

Comparing the number of persons of concern to a country's population reveals which nations require more support for the hardships related to internally addressing persons of concern. This proportion shows that a country can have a relatively low number of persons of concern, but still have a high concentration. For example, Latvia had 252,545 persons of concern, which made up 12.8% of its total population in 2015. Egypt similarly had 250,609 persons of concern, but they only made up 0.3% of Egypt's population. Though both nations hosted comparable numbers of persons of concern, the resulting impact on society differed significantly. Such comparisons demonstrate how a country may have a relatively low number of persons of concern, yet may not have the capacity to address many more; by

contrast, a country may have what would otherwise be deemed a substantial number of persons of concern, yet have the capacity to accept many more (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016) (Population Ranking, 2016). Ultimately, the proportion of persons of concern to total population provides better insight into a country's burdens and national conflicts than does a simple counting of persons of concern.

Number of Persons of Concern Generated from a Country

The countries and regions with the highest number of persons of concern were also commonly the same areas from whence persons of concern originated (i.e. Central Africa, Middle East, Colombia, and so on) (Titus, 2017). This is because most persons of concern were IDPs who never crossed international boundaries (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016).
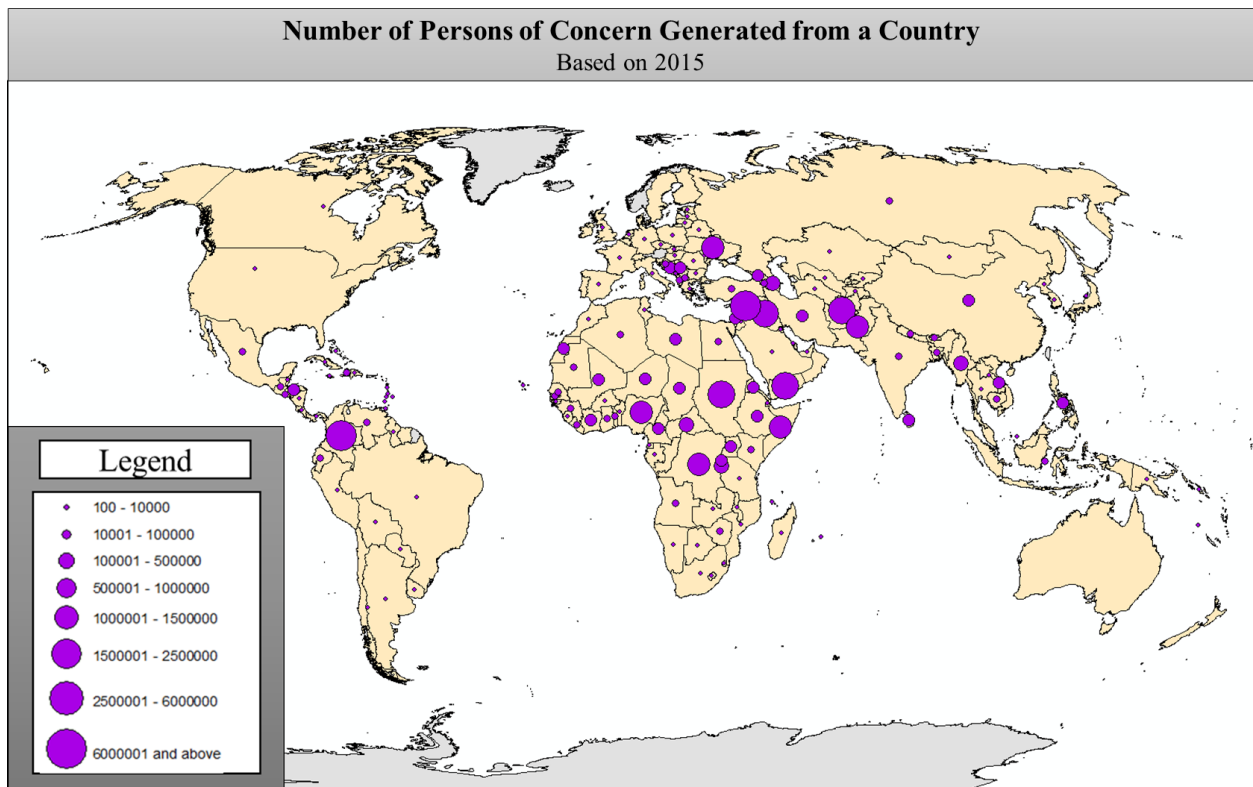

Figure 4: A map visualizing where persons of concern originate from via graduated circles (Titus, 2017).

Some exceptions to this trend existed, e.g. the 2.8 million persons of concern in Turkey who did not originate there. Most European countries also fit this exception. Syria was a significant driver in terms of generating persons of concern who emigrated to other nations (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016).
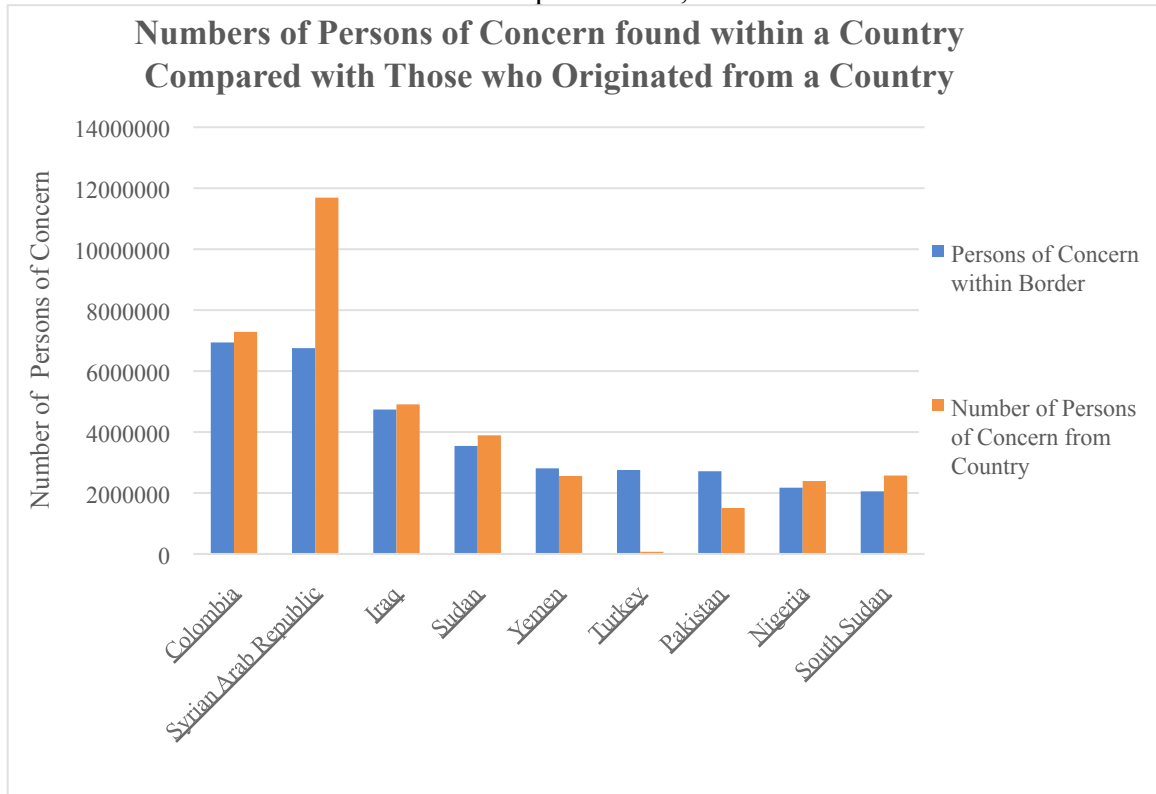
Figure 5: A bar graph comparing the number of persons of concern found within a country's national boundary versus the number of persons of concern that originated from that country (Titus, 2017).

Understanding the point of origin of persons of concern is crucial to deciding where to leverage aid and policies, whether humanitarian, diplomatic, economic, or security oriented, so as to stop the cycle that produces persons of concern and motivates them to immigrate, which can have an international impact. The Syrian crisis, which has produced over 10 million persons of concern, demonstrates this effect through its impact on the European Union (Edwards, 2015; Laub, 2017).

Proportion of Persons of Concern as Compared to Country of Origin Population

The countries and regions with higher proportions of persons of concern compared to their respective populations were often the same countries that had hostile environments that produced high numbers of persons of concern (Titus, 2017).
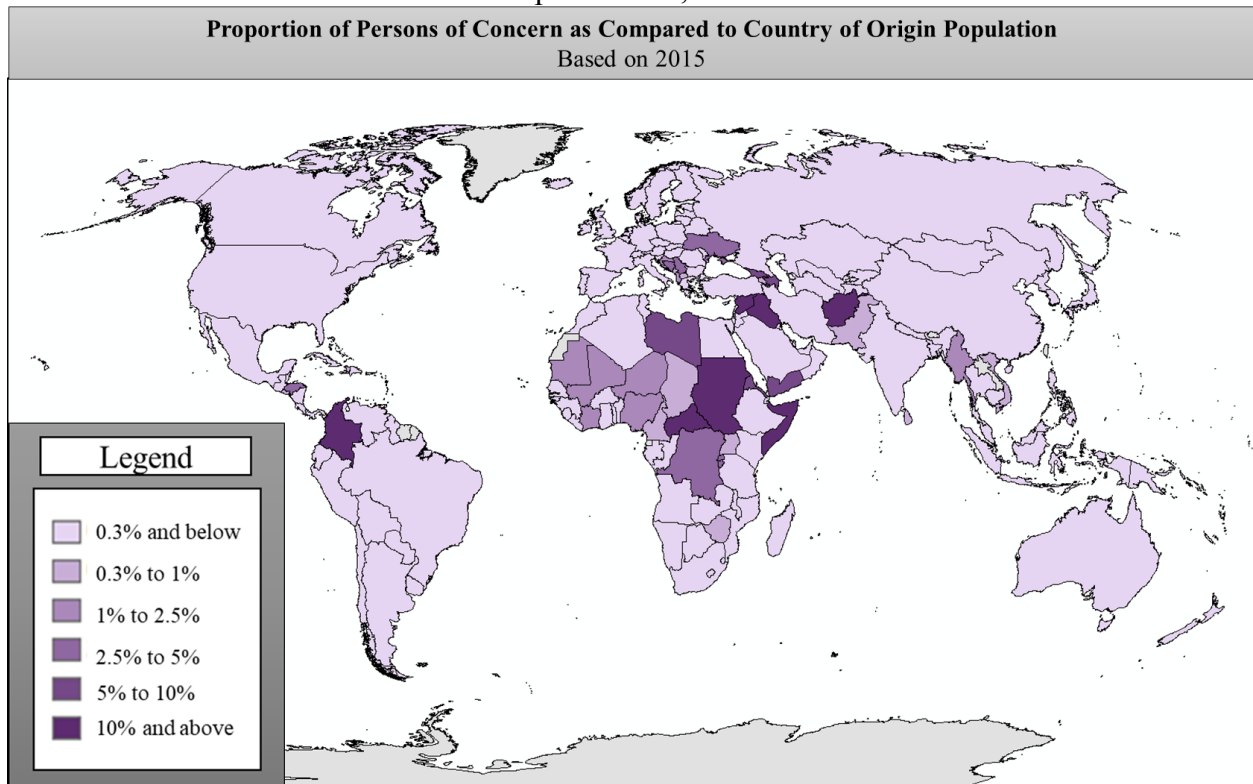
Figure 6: A map visualizing the proportion of persons of concern that originated from a country compared to that country's population (Titus, 2017).

Syria, South Sudan, Somalia, Colombia, the Central African Republic, and Iraq had the highest proportion of persons of concern as compared to their respective populations. (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016) (Population Ranking, 2016).

Persons of Concern that Originated from a Country Proportion to that Country's Population
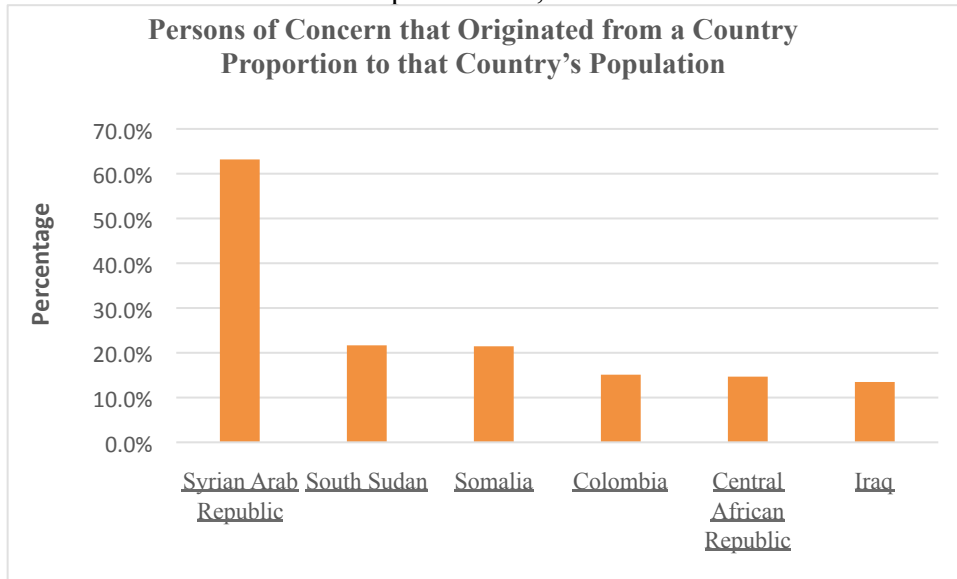
Figure 7: A bar graph showing the top six countries with a high percentage of persons of concern within the population (Titus, 2017).

The proportion provides a better representation of which countries struggled to resolve internal crises, which related to persons of concern in variety of ways. Higher proportions suggest that these countries were less capable of resolving their conflicts since much of their populations and resources were incapacitated and displaced. This trend exists because of the proportion. A country of 28 million people will struggle more to care for 2 million persons of concern than a country of 100 million people. There are additional factors to consider such as GDP and wealth distribution, climate change impacts, scarcity of resources, religious /identity conflicts, and political unrest, all of which can affect a country's capacity to govern and respond to crises.

Identifying countries with a high proportion of persons of concern is important, because more IDPs will flee across international borders as refugees, if internal conflicts persist or intensify within the origin country. The Syrian conflict and the violence in the Central American Northern Triangle demonstrate this trend well (Edwards, 2015) (Córdova, Hiskey, Orcés, & Malone, 2016). Thus, a national conflict can grow into an intense international crisis.

Brief Case Studies

A brief analysis of Colombia, Syria, Sweden, and the United States provides four examples of countries with persons of concern, each for distinct reasons. Of the first three cases, the countries have a high proportion of persons of concern within them compared to their other populations, while the fourth case is a country with few persons of concern compared to its own population, and therefore arguably more capacity to accept additional persons of concern.

Colombia

Colombia illustrates the case of a nation with a high level of internal strife that may go relatively unnoticed by the international community and yet carry a high potential for an international humanitarian

crisis. Many countries like Colombia struggle with an internal crisis producing persons of concern, however, they receive scant attention in the international arena due to either the lack of refugees produced by a conflict or due to the nations' minimal impact on the international economy (IRIN, 2015).

The current violent civil war between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has created over 7 million persons of concern (Spindler, 2017). Colombia had the highest number of persons of concern within it in 2015. This included approximately 6.9 million people, most of which were IDPs. Only 4.7% of them left the country (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016) (Population Ranking, 2016). Colombia demonstrates the trends previously described concerning high proportions of persons of concern in their origin countries. This trend is due to the reality that most persons of concern are displaced, but have not yet crossed an international boundary. The wider international community has widely left the Colombian conflict unaddressed since the country has not yet caused an international economic or migration crisis (IRIN, 2015) (Spindler, 2017).
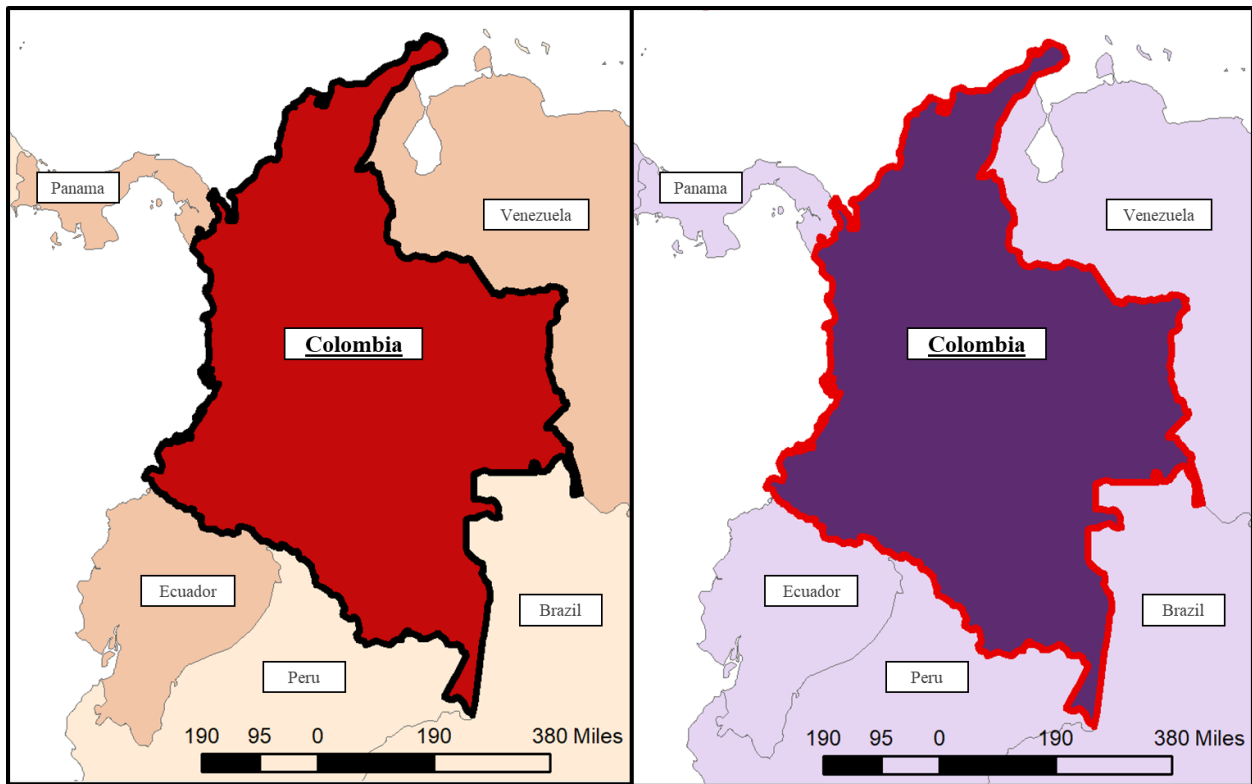

Figure 8: Two zoomed in maps to Northwestern South America in reference to figure 3 (map on the left) and figure 6 (map on the right). The left map represents the proportion of persons of concern within a country as compared to the country's populace; the right map represents the proportion of persons of concern compared to the country's populace from whence they originated (Titus, 2017).

Syrian Arab Republic

Syria is the greatest generator of refugees and IDPs in the last half a century, producing over 11.5 million persons of concern. The case of Syria illustrates how an internal national conflict may quickly

escalate into a greater international crisis. Ideally, the world community may act to provide stability and peace through security, humanitarian support, and diplomacy before the cycle generating persons of concerns and subsequent emigration and immigration becomes overwhelming. However, Syria's humanitarian crisis is due to a complex, intense, and multi-sided war. Complicating an arena with multiple factions from a variety of geographic regions are conflicting religious, political, ethnic, and terrorist identities existing among and even within parties (Laub, 2017). The result may be seen in Figure 7 illustrates, which shows that over 60% of Syria's population became persons of concern. About 42% of these, a total of 5 million people, have left the country as of 2015 (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016) (Population Ranking, 2016).
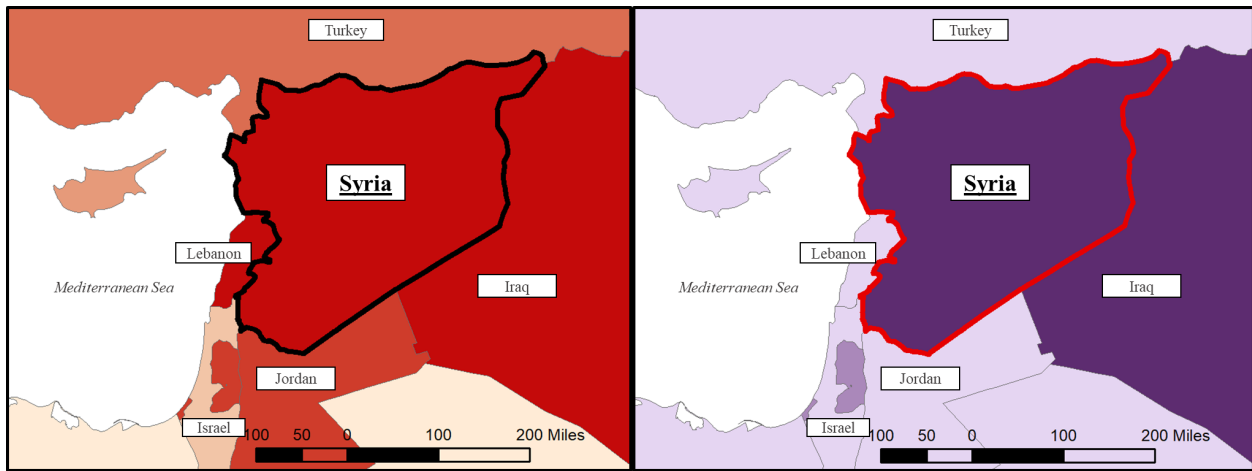

Figure 9: Two zoomed in maps of Middle Eastern countries directly adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea in reference to figure 3 (map on the left) and figure 6 (map on the right). The left map compares the proportion of persons of concern within a country with the country's populace; the right map compares the proportion of persons of concern compared to the country's populace from whence they originated (Titus, 2017).

Sweden

Sweden provides an example of how a crisis in one country can have far reaching impacts on another foreign country. The refugee situation in Sweden demonstrates that ignoring conflicts, natural disasters, or resource scarcity that generate persons of concerns can have serious international impacts elsewhere.

Sweden is a developed and stable country that does not have a hostile environment producing any persons of concern. Instead, it has a high number of persons of concern due to its acceptance of refugees, specifically Syrians (Park J. , 2015). Sweden represents the situation that obtains for many peaceful countries that are becoming willing or unwilling hosts for persons of concern who have other points of origin.
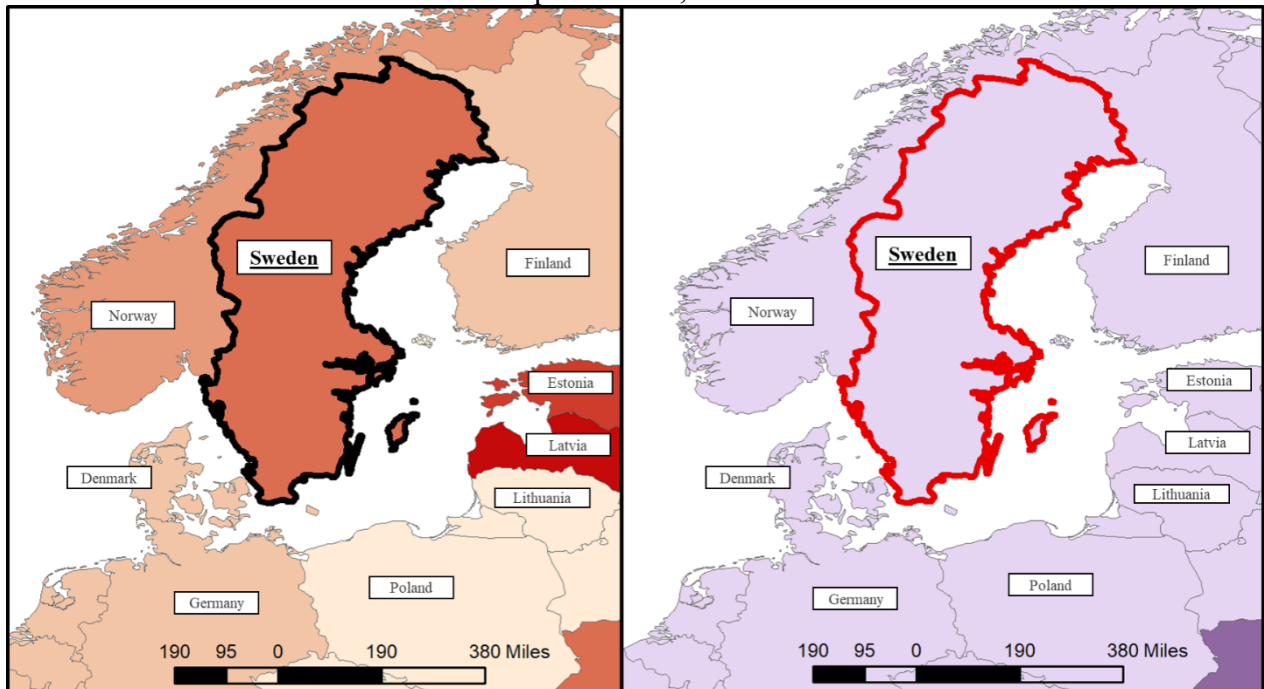
Figure 10: Two zoomed in maps of Northern Europe in reference to figure 3 (map on the left) and figure 6 (map on the right). The left map compares the proportion of persons of concern within a country with the country's populace; the right compares the proportion of persons of concern compared to the country's populace from whence they originated (Titus, 2017).

United States of America

The U.S. is a case that demonstrates a low proportion of persons of concern with total population. Additionally, the thorny political context in the U.S. exemplifies the challenges of determining the criteria for defining persons of concern.

Countries like the U.S. appear to have a higher capacity to care for persons of concern as compared to some of their European counterparts, yet they are not equitably hosting as many persons of concern. Numerically, the U.S. has accepted more persons of concern than Sweden (about 20,000 more people), however, it has a lower proportion of persons of concern compared to its population; the U.S. has a much larger population consisting of over 320 million people whereas Sweden has just under 10 million people (UNHCR, Population Statistics, 2016) (Population Ranking, 2016). There are at least three reasons for this low proportion in the U.S. in 2015. First, the Atlantic Ocean separates the U.S. from regions producing the highest number of persons of concern. Second, the U.S. has a rigorous and extensive refugee vetting system (Park & Buchanan, 2017). Third, political factions differ greatly with respect to how many persons of concern to accept as immigrants and which points of origin are acceptable.

The U.S. is expected to reduce by about half the number of refugees it accepts under the Trump administration that started in 2017. Presently, the executive government wishes to limit the acceptance of refugees to 45,000 in comparison to the 80,000 refugees admitted under the Obama administration in 2016. In addition, President Trump has continuously laid down executive orders that ban immigration

from some of the countries producing the highest numbers of persons of concern, including Syria (Davis & Jordan, 2017)

The U.S. is a nation facing the challenges of defining persons of concern, specifically regarding illegal immigrants. About 11.3 million people (3.4% of the United States' population) are considered unauthorized immigrants. As of 2016, these persons come primarily from Mexico and Central American countries (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2017). Though the U.S. considers many of these people illegal immigrants, most of them are fleeing from hostile and crime-ridden environments. In particular, the Central American Northern Triangle (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala) contains countries with some of the most consistently high, violent crime rates. Though it is difficult to determine how many of these immigrants are migrating because of a dangerous environment, one investigation (LAPOP) found that in 2014, 24% of non-victimized Hondurans had intentions to migrate whereas 56% of Hondurans who had been victimized in the past year had intentions to migrate. They also found that those Hondurans intending to migrate were aware of the risks of migrations (e.g. smuggling, human trafficking, deportation), but decided the journey was worth the risk. Similar statistics are reported for El Salvadorans (Córdova, Hiskey, Orcés, & Malone, 2016).
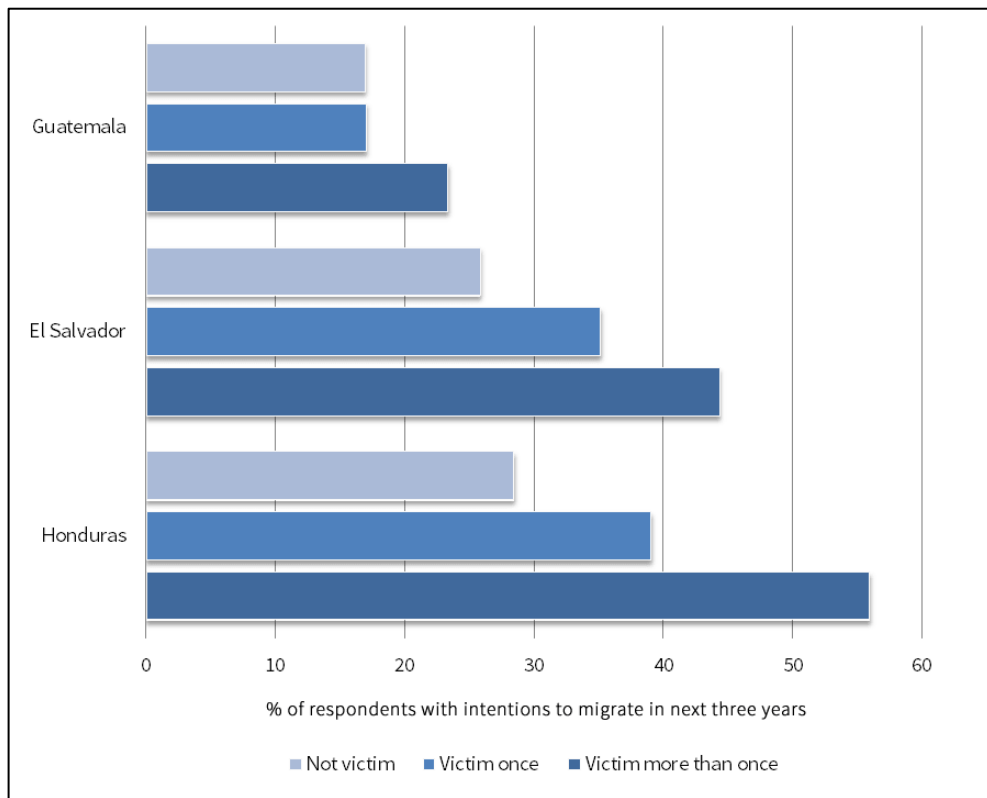

Figure 11: A bar graph showing the percent of LAPOP survey respondents from the Northern Triangle who were victims of crimes (Córdova, Hiskey, Orcés, & Malone, 2016)

Considering the UNHCR's definition of refugees or asylum seekers, many of these illegal immigrants arguably meet the criteria to be defined as persons of concern. This has become a point of controversy in U.S. politics. Unfortunately, many of these illegal immigrants are too fearful to go through

the asylum system because they would risk an expedited deportation back to their hostile environments if they are not accepted as asylum seekers or refugees (Campos, 2014).
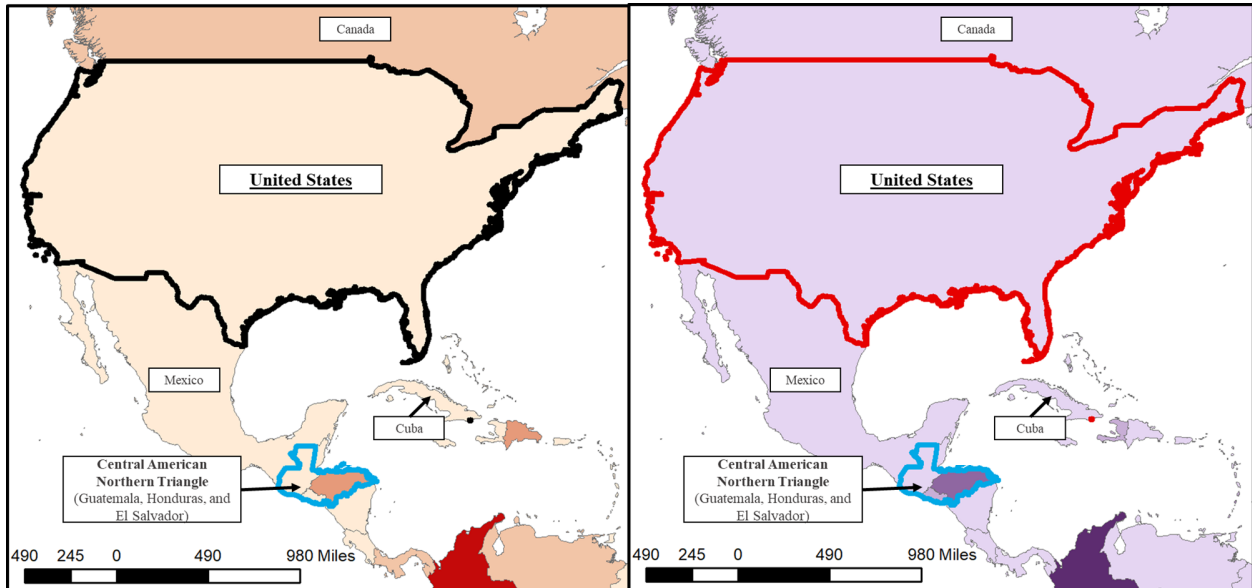

Figure 12: Two zoomed in maps of Continental U.S. and nearby countries in reference to figure 3 (map on the left) and figure 6 (map on the right). The left map compares the proportion of persons of concern within a country with the country's populace; the right compares the proportion of persons of concern compared to the country's populace from whence they originated (Titus, 2017).

Conclusion of Map Analysis

The overall map analysis of the global distribution of persons of concern provides insight into global patterns and situations regarding people and countries in need of international aid. The analysis also suggests which countries may have the capacity to take in more persons of concern seeking refuge. In conjunction with this map analysis, examining factors like GDP, climate change, political environment, famine, infrastructure, identity conflicts, and religious identity/divisions that affect countries' capacity to govern will give a fuller scope of which countries are struggling to resolve their humanitarian crisis, and which countries have the capabilities to aid these struggling nations and peoples. The CISTP System Dynamics Model for Refugee Creation and Resettlement (SDM-RCR, forthcoming) explores such factors in further depth. If the international community ignores the stressed environments that produce persons of concern, an international crisis will be more likely to occur. In order to prevent such far-reaching events, the international community must equitably share its resources and energies to help resolve and promote peace within conflict-ridden nations.

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