

## Book recommendation by Omar Sayfo

### **Jake Bittle: *The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration*. Simon & Schuster, 2023**

The term “climate migration” seeks to elucidate the reasons behind individuals relocating from one place to another. It ascribes a primary motivation to movements that can be undertaken either willingly or unwillingly, temporarily, or permanently. Nevertheless, even when the primary reason for migration is clear, numerous additional elements affect the timing, destination, and manner in which an individual responds to a disaster by moving. Such complexity is mirrored in the concept of “displacement”: the migratory changes brought about by climate change are as turbulent and unpredictable as the weather events that instigate them.

Jake Bittle’s “*The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration*” is a bold and ambitious journalistic account that offers a comprehensive picture of the profound transformations climate change is causing in American society. Unlike academic volumes on migration forced by climate change, Bittle’s book provides a human-centered narrative with an American focus. Among many others, we accompany Patrick Garvey and Jen DeMaria as they gaze into the eye of a hurricane ravaging their Florida Keys community. Through their perspective, we witness the unimaginable devastation, with sailboats overturned, trees uprooted, and streets rendered unrecognizable. We join the Tran family in their car as they speed through the streets of their California neighborhood, fleeing an approaching wildfire. The following day, we scroll on Google Maps to locate the scorched, vacant lot that once held their home.

The title of the book is a reference to the Great Migration, a movement whereby approximately six million Black Americans left the South to evade Jim Crow laws and seek economic prospects in cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York from the early 20th century to the mid-20th century. However, the forthcoming displacement forecasted by the author for the 21st century is poised to surpass this historical migration, giving rise to what he characterizes as a “generation of domestic climate migrants”. Climate change is expected to force the relocation of a minimum of 20 million Americans by the end of this century. The book sensitively narrates the experiences of those who have already suffered such trauma, all the while illustrating the profound impact climate change is poised to have

on American lives. This impact includes the obliteration of longstanding towns and villages, the migration of people towards new regions, and the fundamental reshaping of the geographical landscape in the United States. What makes “The Great Displacement” outstanding is its ability to go beyond the overwhelming and ungraspable statistics, and this is largely attributed to Jake Bittle’s unwavering investigative work. Through the narratives he has gathered, we gain insight into human nature in its unfiltered and fundamental form. In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals, breathing life into the human dimensions of climate change, offering a vivid portrayal of the trials faced by those forced to abandon their homes. The book encompasses accounts of Americans displaced due to wildfires in California; drought in Arizona; rising sea levels in Norfolk, Virginia, and southern Louisiana; as well as storms such as Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Hurricane Irma in the Florida Keys, and Hurricanes Fran and Floyd in North Carolina. Regrettably, it is often the economically disadvantaged and marginalized who bear the brunt of these impacts, while the affluent and privileged tend to receive the most substantial support from the disaster relief system. Bittle advocates government intervention, arguing for the implementation of policies to tackle the scarcity of affordable housing, ensuring that housing accessibility is a reality for everyone both before and after disasters occur.

While the portraits may become somewhat overwhelming, there is a clear rationale behind this approach. Bittle’s strength as a journalist lies in his ability to construct human-centered profiles of his subjects by meticulously collecting and presenting intimate details within just a page or two. Additionally, he adeptly formulates compelling narratives about the catastrophes that have dramatically altered the lives of his sources.

“The Great Displacement” is a timely contribution shedding light on the climate-change-driven mass migration that is already in motion, and of its strong potential to bring societal upheaval. It serves as a reminder that Americans and non-Americans alike bear a direct responsibility to take action in order to mitigate the most dire consequences of this crisis. Bittle’s concluding recommendations encompass a call for the reduction of climate-altering emissions, an escalation in investment in post-disaster assistance and climate adaptation strategies, a reform of the National Flood Insurance Program and the private fire insurance sector, an expansion of opportunities for international climate migrants to enter the United States, and a resolution to the shortage of affordable housing by ensuring housing accessibility for everyone, both before and after disasters.

The book offers a riveting examination of the evolving landscape of America, highlighting the ongoing and forthcoming transformations as climate change inflicts upheaval on the nation and its residents. While Bittle concludes the book on an optimistic note, he remains mindful of the considerable impact that has already been inflicted: “When a community disappears, so does a map that orients us in the world.”

## Book recommendation by Klaudia Tóth

### **Ingrid Boas: Climate Migration and Security: Securitisation as a Strategy in Climate Change Politics. Routledge, 2017**

In a world grappling with the urgent challenges of climate change, the nexus between climate migration and security has become an increasingly pressing concern. In her thought-provoking book, “Climate Migration and Security: Securitisation as a Strategy in Climate Change Politics”, Ingrid Boas delves deep into the intricate relationship between climate-induced migration and the security discourse surrounding it. Boas’s work offers a comprehensive examination of how governments and international organizations frame climate migration as a security issue and explores the implications of such securitization for those affected by climate-induced displacement.

Boas, a respected scholar in the field of environmental migration and climate change politics, draws upon extensive research and empirical data to present a compelling argument. She skillfully navigates the complex terrain of climate migration, security studies, and political discourse, shedding light on the multifaceted dimensions of this critical issue.

One of the book’s standout features is its meticulous examination of the concept of securitization. Boas provides a clear and concise explanation of securitization theory and its relevance in understanding how climate migration is framed as a security issue. Through detailed case studies and analysis, she elucidates how climate migration is presented as a threat to national and international security and how this framing influences policy decisions and public perception.

Boas argues persuasively that the securitization of climate migration is not merely an academic exercise but has profound real-world implications. By portraying climate-induced migration as a security concern, governments and institutions may justify harsh measures such as border closures, restrictive immigration policies, and the militarization of borders. The consequences of these policies are far-reaching and often detrimental, particularly for vulnerable populations already displaced by climate change.

One of the strengths of Boas’s book is her global perspective. She explores a wide range of case studies from different regions, highlighting the various ways in which

climate migration is securitized. From the Pacific Island nations facing rising sea-levels to African countries grappling with desertification, Boas provides a nuanced understanding of the diverse challenges posed by climate-induced displacement. This global approach underscores the universality of the issue and its relevance to policymakers and scholars worldwide.

Furthermore, Boas delves into the role of international organizations in shaping the discourse on climate migration and security. She examines how organizations like the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration navigate the securitization debate and the implications of their actions. This analysis is particularly insightful for readers interested in the role of global governance in addressing climate-related challenges.

Boas does an exceptional job of balancing theory with real-world examples. Her case studies bring to life the abstract concepts of securitization and climate migration, making the book accessible to both experts and newcomers to the field. Readers will find themselves immersed in the stories of individuals and communities affected by climate change, which humanizes the issue and underscores its urgency.

One of the book's key contributions is its exploration of the ethical dimensions of securitization. Boas provocatively raises questions about the moral implications of framing climate migration as a security threat. She challenges readers to consider whether securitization is a responsible and just response to a humanitarian crisis. This ethical inquiry is a critical aspect of the climate migration debate and adds depth to the book's analysis.

Boas also addresses the role of climate-induced displacement in exacerbating existing conflicts. She examines cases where competition for resources, displacement, and security concerns intertwine, leading to complex and volatile situations. Her insights into these dynamics are crucial for policymakers and analysts seeking to understand the broader implications of climate migration in conflict-prone regions.

While "Climate Migration and Security" is a thorough and insightful book, it is not without its limitations. Some readers may find the theoretical discussions challenging, particularly if they are new to securitization theory or climate politics. However, Boas makes a commendable effort to explain complex concepts in a clear and accessible manner.

In terms of policy recommendations, the book primarily focuses on critiquing existing securitization practices rather than offering concrete solutions. While this is a valid approach, some readers may wish for more guidance on how to navigate the delicate balance between security concerns and humanitarian responses in the face of climate-induced migration.

In conclusion, Ingrid Boas's "Climate Migration and Security" is a timely and indispensable contribution to the literature on climate change, migration, and security. Her rigorous analysis, global perspective, and ethical inquiry make this book a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and anyone concerned about the profound implications of climate-induced displacement. Boas challenges us to critically examine the securitization of climate migration and encourages a more compassionate and ethical response to one of the defining challenges of our time. This book is a must-read for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the intersection between climate change, migration, and security.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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