

POSITION PAPER

Estoril Conferences 2017

# **GLOBAL MIGRATION**

*Leaving Home in a Globalized World*



## **GLOBAL MIGRATION: *LEAVING HOME IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD***

People migrate. From our predecessor *Homo Erectus*, who moved out of Africa across Europe more than a million years ago, followed by the known expansions of *Homo Sapiens*, to the more recent example of States that have virtually been built upon immigration, humans have always been on the move. People have moved out of their territories for various reasons, both individual and social, claiming the right to search for better living conditions, to escape poverty and hunger, to flee natural or human threats. Even a right to give “new worlds to the world” has been claimed to justify the expansion beyond the national territory.

There is nothing new about human migration. Yet, migration is often perceived as a threat or unique burden with which polities are faced: the idea of a wall fencing the U.S.-Mexican border has been a hot topic in the US Presidential elections of 2016; the process of rural-to-urban migration in China threatens to compromise an entire generation of children who are being left behind by their parents; in Bangladesh, environmental migrants are expected to rise up to 15 million people by 2050; in the United Kingdom, criticism over growing migration and the erosion of national borders were among the main arguments leading to the recent Brexit outcome; even *interstellar migration* is becoming a relevant topic in the scientific community, raising the discussion of whether it presents a viable alternative to a near-exhausted planet Earth.

However ordinary and old the phenomenon may be, we are currently living in times of unprecedented human mobility. Between 2000 and 2015 the number of international migrants in Asia and Oceania grew by an average of 2.8 per cent per year. Latin, American and the Caribbean countries recorded the third fastest average annual growth rate (2.3 per cent), followed by Africa (2.2 per cent). In Europe and Northern America (respectively, the first and third main hosts of international migrants), the rise was slower, with an average annual growth rate of 2 per cent for each (UN International Migration Report 2015). In 2015, 244 million of people (3.3 per cent of the world population) lived outside their country of origin (UNFPA).

Since World War II, the globalization of migration has shaped new shifts in international migration patterns. The old dichotomies are now at stake. Traditionally, workers moved from the Global South to the Global North, were mainly low-skilled and left low or middle-income countries for high-income countries on a relatively permanent basis. Nowadays, the growing complexity of international migratory movements includes the resettlement of both high- and low-skilled workers, from the Global North to the Global South, from countries that may also be experiencing strong economic growth, and that may be envisaged as temporary rather than permanent dislocations. States still enjoy the power to control their borders but the national regulation of migration is bound to respect and protect the human rights of migrants, particularly illegal migrants, which thus pose as constraints on national sovereignties. Furthermore, the globalization of human trafficking and terrorism reinforce interdependence and stress the need for cooperation between States. Non state actors and global civil society have also risen as crucial players in the international arena which is no longer left to the single rule of States.

In this growingly interconnected world, migratory flows are increasingly seen as multi-faceted challenges to States and polities. Mass movements of people are highly contested for interfering with national sovereignty and security, national and cultural identity, rule of law and human rights, sustainability of the welfare state, employment policies, population, public health, international relations, national and international security and public order. But migration is also affiliated with opportunities such as the correction of labor market imbalances, spur innovation and economic growth. Accordingly – and not surprisingly – it is one of the most debated issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and one of the most relevant aspects of international and global politics posing a challenge to regional and global governance.

Two major topics must be addressed: **firstly**, the question of migration as a *challenge per se*. The goal is to reflect upon migration outside a crisis conjuncture – what challenges does regular migration bring to the world and to the States? **Secondly**, we wish to address challenges that are brought by a scenario of migration crises, as the current refugees' crisis – and that place higher demands not only on transit and host countries but also on the global level.

## A) **MIGRATION AS A CHALLENGE**

The first main topic will discuss the several challenges that emerge from migration in general as a complex phenomenon, outside crises scenarios. In this context, the subjects will include:

### 1. **MIGRATION AND NATIONAL POLITICS**

Due to globalization, migration ceased to be regional and became globalized. National populations became increasingly confronted with the arrivals of people sharing different cultures, religions and beliefs. If some countries were born as countries of immigration and were faced with a multicultural society from the outset, others have faced recent large shifts of population, evolving from quite homogenous to highly diverse societies. This shift on the very composition of national residents leads to several challenges on social cohesion. Some claim that *civilizations may clash*. But, on the other hand, democracy and pluralism urge the respect of the cultural identity of each individual.

Are these two premises irreconcilable? How can social cohesion be safeguarded in countries that have a strong tradition of homogenous population? How should migrants be integrated in the host communities? How can religious and cultural differences and beliefs be protected without eroding the destination societies? Has multiculturalism failed? And what about illiberal democracies and non-democratic States: how do they cope with migration shocks in their societies? Are they better or ill-equipped to deal with diversity?

### 2. **FROM EMIGRATION TO IMMIGRATION**

Many countries have experienced a major shift on their role as actors on the global migration challenge. The traditional distinction between countries of origin, transit and destination has proven largely obsolete. How should this change be faced? Where do international migrants come from? And where do they go to? Why are some States simultaneously immigration and emigration territories? What are the consequences, for the emigration countries, of brain drain of their highly skilled professionals? How can public policies be designed to enhance the opportunities of migration? What can be done to attract the type of manpower that is needed for the host countries' development and economic growth (brain gain)?

Is international migration a viable alternative to reducing old-age dependency and balancing the demographic pyramid?

### 3. MIGRATION AND GLOBAL AND NATIONAL ECONOMIES

Migration is now global, comprised by a worldwide circulation of experiences, know-how, education and ideas. It is said that migration not only benefits the migrant but the entire world. It may contribute to the economic development of receiving countries, to competitiveness and innovation potential. There are plenty of examples of immigrants flourishing into highly entrepreneurial communities. International migrants also contribute to the development of home countries by creating international networks, getting access to advanced education or generating foreign direct investment. In 2014, migrants from developing countries sent home an estimated US \$436 billion in remittances, which far exceeds official development assistance (UN International Migration Report 2015). In 2015, 72 per cent of all international migrants were of working age.

Immigrants have a wide impact on public budgets, especially regarding taxes and social security. They also have impact on the labor market, leading to more competitiveness. However, the positive consequences of migration rely, to a great extent, on adequate public policies in areas like education and employment. These policies are designed to minimize the short-term impact on labor markets and social benefits systems and to enhance the integration of migrants in the national community (good examples can be found in Uganda, the USA, Germany, Australia and Canada).

Are immigrants an opportunity or a threat to national economies? How do they affect salaries both in the host and home countries? What threats may migrants present in States with high levels of unemployment? What is the potential of migrants to create employment? What is their level of entrepreneurship? How do migrants impact on the shape of the population of product-consumers and even at the imports level? How can migratory flows be economically fair for both host and home countries?

### 4. QUALIFIED AND NON-QUALIFIED MIGRATION FLOWS

Traditionally, migrants would leave their countries of origin in order to seek better economic and social conditions of living, or even in order to survive. Currently, a different kind of migration is also taking place, characterized by movements of highly qualified professionals, including skilled academics, researchers and practitioners. The USA, Canada, Australia and the EU compete amongst themselves to attract this type of migration. Civil society has adopted different terms according to the migrant population concerned, preferring the term *expatriates* to designate those that come from developed countries and correspond to “highly skilled migrants”, as opposed to those that come from developing countries (*immigrants*).

Several questions may then arise. Is it ethically correct to filter the types of migrants that the countries are willing to receive according to their economic and labor preferences – the *immigration choisie*? Is it acceptable to remove from the countries of origin the human capital that could contribute to the development of such already fragile societies? Is the distinction between *expatriates* and *immigrants* a reality or just a discriminatory label?

## 5. MIGRATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY

One traditional concern with the erosion of national borders is with security and public order protection. Current threats to national and international security pose challenges which are hard to tackle. The introduction of diversity in previously homogenous populations leads to fears that immigration will increase the risk of attacks. Furthermore, public opinion circles combined with populist political leaders have set the debate on global migration on a prejudiced tone, leading to over-nationalist claims and the spread of xenophobic and hate speech. From the rise of extreme-right parties in Europe, to the popularity of anti-Mexican speeches in the USA, a strong anti-migration narrative is on the move.

What may be the connection between migration and threats to public security? Should transnational terrorist threats lead to the reinforcement of national borders? What is the reality of hate speech and xenophobia worldwide? Why are they growing nowadays? Can populism and xenophobia change the face of democracy and irrevocably condemn mainstream parties to irrelevance? How do migratory issues influence national politics?

## B) **MIGRATION IN TIMES OF CRISES**

The second main topic is focused on forced migration and migration that takes place under exceptional scenarios. Whereas the previous topic was focused on migration as an ordinary event, *migration in times of crises* point to different challenges. Migration crises are also a worldwide phenomenon: they may occur periodically and take place in virtually every region of the world. In 2015, there were 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, 21.3 million refugees and 10 million stateless people (UNHCR 2016). Several regions of the world such as Europe are facing big migratory pressures due to the rising flood of refugees which has reached its highest level since World War II, representing almost 8 per cent of all international migrants.

In this context, the addressed themes will include:

### **1. REFUGEES, GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY**

Traditionally, refugees flee to neighboring States in order to seek protection. In consequence, countries such as Jordan, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey are currently faced with extraordinary migratory pressure. They do not have the means to accommodate all those who seek their borders for protection. The current European migratory crisis, for example, cannot be seen exclusively as a local or regional problem. The High Commissioner for Refugees has systematically emphasized the need for a multilateral approach to refugees and forced migration since the traditional intergovernmental tools have fallen short in providing acceptable solutions.

Are States prepared to deepen integration and cooperation in this context? In what practical ways must other States be solidary with the most affected host and transit countries? What tools should be developed to enhance cooperation between States in order to tackle the refugees' global problem? Is it feasible to design and enforce permanent programs of refugees' resettlement worldwide? What support to the countries of origin and transit should the global community provide? Is it morally correct to negotiate agreements with the transit countries in order to prevent refugees from searching other territories? What are the role and powers of supranational organizations and NGO's in these processes?



## **2. HUMAN RIGHTS OF ILLEGAL MIGRANTS**

In times of migratory crises there is a higher risk of disrespecting human rights. This is particularly threatening for societies' most vulnerable persons which include migrants, especially illegal migrants. States faced with extraordinary human pressure may adopt standardized procedures – for example, treating every migrant as an “illegal immigrant”, proceeding to collective expulsions or constructing physical barriers to safeguard the national territory. On the other hand, they may be faced with strong difficulties on dealing with all the asylum requests in a humane manner, or receiving all migrants in adequate and humane conditions. Furthermore, the globalization of human trafficking unveils the dark side of increased international mobility, and reveals the striking division between winners and losers of globalization.

In this context, one must recall the human rights that claim protection, namely in what regards especially vulnerable persons such as women and children. What threats to the respect of human rights of illegal migrants may be at stake? Who are the actors in charge of enforcing such rights? How can global cooperation be enforced to tackle transnational criminal networks? Who is accountable for human rights violations under these circumstances?

## **3. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF STATES TO PROTECT REFUGEES**

Usually, only refugees that have arrived in the territory are granted international protection. However, this traditional form of triggering a duty to protect may lead to some perverse effects, such as the development of networks of facilitators of illegal immigration, designed to transport migrants to the countries where they can ask for asylum. The trafficking of immigrants is one of the major characteristics of migration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Are States bound to a duty to protect refugees even outside their own sovereign territory? What is their responsibility in engaging in rescue operations outside of their borders or within their maritime jurisdictions? May States proceed to push-back operations in order to prevent refugees from entering their territories? Are States bound to protect those who are outside their territory, namely by receiving them through resettlement in order to avoid smugglers' operations? Does the doctrine of R2P apply in these situations?

#### **4. MIGRATIONS FORCED BY CLIMATE CHANGE, POPULATION GROWTH, FOOD INSECURITY OR OTHER DISPLACEMENT CRISES FACTORS**

The legal concept of refugees concerns forced displacement by conflict, fear of threat or persecution. However, forced displacement may be caused by other factors like climate change, food or water insecurity, population growth or poor urban planning. These groups of population typically migrate in large numbers and face pressing threats on their survival although without triggering the protection system of asylum seekers.

Is an extension of the traditional concept of refugees the best tool to afford protection to these fragile groups? Or should a new normative framework be developed to deal with these phenomena? How can preventive tools be designed to avoid the recurrence of displacement factors?

#### **5. “ECONOMIC REFUGEES” AS A WAY TO BOOST EQUALITY?**

The so-called “economic” migrants, v.g. people that migrate in order to find better conditions of living are still considered to be “voluntary” migrants, not qualifying for the status of refugee and, therefore, not entitled to claim a right to asylum. Therefore, even when living in extremely poor conditions, with scarce access to food, water, health care or education, and forced to leave their country, they are not entitled to enter and live elsewhere. The need to find better conditions of living is still the main reason why people migrate. Migration may thus be seen as a way to rebalance fair sharing of the global resources and opportunities between people within the framework of a global social contract.

Is there a right to immigrate for survival reasons? Is migration a tool for repositioning equality of rights and opportunities between people? Should we enlarge the concept of refugees in order to encompass some “economic migrants”, namely those who abandon their countries of origin for the sake of survival? Does development-induced migration enhance inequality for already disadvantaged groups? What is the possible link between these subjects?

## Academic Partners



## Folow Us



[www.estorilconferences.org](http://www.estorilconferences.org)



[Youtube.com/estorilconferences](https://Youtube.com/estorilconferences)



[Twitter.com/estorilconf](https://Twitter.com/estorilconf)



[Facebook.com/EstorilConferences](https://Facebook.com/EstorilConferences)



[Instagram.com/estoril\\_conferences](https://Instagram.com/estoril_conferences)

• FROM KNOWLEDGE TO IMPACT •

CASCAIS