

International Migration Policies – Should They Be A New G20 Topic?

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Abstract

International migration should be the quintessential theme for global governance, given its transnational nature, and yet it is its 'ugly duckling' as the global community has consistently shied away from taking any concrete action to regulate cross-border flows of people. In 2015, however, the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, with the security implications that were made clear by the terrorists attacks in Europe, prompted Turkey to include migration in the Antalya agenda. It is naïve to expect the international community to move beyond vague humanitarian principles and recognize the free flow of people as a right on the same level as trade and capital liberalization. At the same time, most criticism of migration policies is misplaced, since the focus should be on improving implementation and fine-tuning in terms of entrance and integration; preferably in cooperation with the country of origin. The refugee crisis and the future youth bulge in developing areas (sub-Saharan Africa in particular) is putting pressure on enhancing international coordination of migration and development projects. The G20 should play a leading role in facilitating such coordination, also taking into account the increasing importance of South-South migration (such as the Chinese in Africa).

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Coping with international migration and refugee flows has always been a very contentious issue and nowadays many people rank it as their top problem. This is particularly true in the European Union, where according to a July 2015 Eurobarometer survey it is deemed to be more important even than economic concerns.¹ The political debate in many countries is dominated by immigration and the refugee crisis, with most policy proposals being in the direction of tightening controls. As the possibility, and indeed the opportunity, of adopting common rules, positions diverge. Taking Europe again, the development of the Common European Asylum Policy has shifted the locus of policymaking on asylum seekers and refugees towards the European Union (EU). However, the focus has been on harmonizing specific policy issues (including border control, the processing of asylum claims, and reception standards for asylum seekers), rather than on deeper policy coordination and integration. The benefits of global cooperation are also rather clear, at least in theory: on the one hand to enhance the benefits that migration unquestionably brings to migrants and host countries, on the other to minimize the costs (human no less than financial) associated to migration crises.

The ongoing refugee crisis in the Middle East and North Africa has led the G20 to first address migration in the 2015 Antalya communiqué, although the separate, but related, topic of remittances had received increasing attention at the international level since the G8 Sea Island Summit in 2004.² We argue that stigmas and misinformation, often relayed on the web and in the media, are major obstacles in clarifying the issues at stake. This in turn has obvious implications for understanding which global policies, if any, should be adopted and implemented.

This paper begins with a rapid overview of the differences between migration and trade, a policy area where a complex institutional setup has emerged over the years, climaxing in the establishment of the WTO. It then points to two reasons why migration discussions at the national level are so heavily charged, namely the increasing diffusion of stereotypes about migrants and the refugees and the role of the media in spreading them. A discussion of the implications of the on-going refugee emergency in the Middle East follows and the concluding section summarizes the main components of a possible G20 agenda, in 2016 and beyond.

1-Trade and Migration: different dynamics?

Following the seminal work by Heckscher and Ohlin, international trade theory considers the flows of goods and the flows of people substitutes in the long run: trade in goods can increase job opportunities and wage increases will discourage migration. In many cases and in the short run,

¹ See European Commission - Press release, Spring 2015 Standard Eurobarometer : Citizens see immigration as top challenge for EU to tackle, Brussels, 31 July 2015

² In the context of the G8, remittances have continued to attract interest and, following a series of negotiations during the G8 L'Aquila Summit in 2009, the member countries committed to reducing the cost of remittances from 10 percent to 5 percent in five years, the so-called "5x5 Objective". A Global Remittances Working Group, led by the World Bank and independent from the G8, was created in February 2009 as a multi-year platform to provide guidance and policy options to the global community. The G20 officially endorsed the GRWG and the international efforts to reduce the cost of remittances during its 2010 Summit in Seoul and further defined their commitment in the area of the reduction of the cost of remittances by formally including the "5x5 Objective" in the 2011 Cannes Summit Final Declaration.

however, they complement each other, either increasing or decreasing as the destination or the sending economy cycle dominates. Even if, in the long run, the two flows can substitute each other, what is relevant for forecasts and policy design are the many short-term deviations from this long-term run. In practice, however, trade and migration are very different. In part this is because the movement of human beings and of goods and services concern different sets of rights etc., but also because they react in different ways to economic development.

Although there is a positive relationship between income *per capita* and trade in goods and services, this is not necessarily the case with emigration flows. In the European case, emigration from Southern to Northern countries started to decline when sending countries entered the European Union, at a time when the income differential with destination countries was about 30%³. But income level in the country of origin had reached the no migration threshold. What does this mean? Riccardo Faini in his seminal 1993⁴ work explained that people receive a higher utility from consumption at home, with their relatives: thus the same amount of goods consumed at home produces more happiness and migration flows stop when the income differential between the destination and sending country is still positive, not when it is equal to zero. This implies, however, that mass emigration is a transitory phase of development which can include smaller outflows and returns home. This is not true of trade in goods and services.

Faini (1993) also paved way for another important argument, namely that given the cost of migration, there is a minimum amount of resources needed to be able to move, so it is not the very poorest who emigrate. This dynamic means that as development increases and income *per capita* increases, the budget constraints of the migrant (or migrant's family) are relaxed and more people will be able to move abroad. Thus, in poor countries, traditional development policies lift the income *per capita*, and spur emigration⁵. Martin and Taylor (1996), along similar lines, identified the mechanisms behind the emigration hump caused by the increase in trade of goods and services that resulted from the US-Canada-Mexico NAFTA agreement. As a general rule, it seems that in poor countries labour emigration increases with income growth.

Another important difference between migration and trade is that migrants may arrive in a given foreign country through different channels (whereas most trade is through standard legal routes, although of course there is also smuggling). They can come by the front door as labour migrants, or through family reunification schemes, or as asylum-seekers; or they can come by the back door. They can also be permanent migrants investing in citizenship, or they can be circular migrants coming and going. In quantitative terms, the most significant legal channel is family reunification: in OECD countries, it represents at least 50% of all inflows; while labour migrants account for about 30% and refugees around 20%. This means that, for each legal labour migrant, there are two or three more individuals that arrive. Thus, even if a country closes its frontier to new labour immigrants, the total stock of the foreign population will increase as family members follow already established migrants. These family members will not necessarily find employment.

2. Media and Perceptions

³See Venturini 2004

⁴See Faini R., Venturini A., 1993 and Faini R. Venturini A. 2010.

⁵ More recently see also Clemens 2014.

In *The Globalization Paradox*, Dani Rodrik observed that while “problems in international trade and finance arise from too much globalization, not properly managed [...] labor markets are not sufficiently globalized. [...] The transaction costs associated with crossing national borders are much larger in this segment of the world economy than in any other. Moreover, these costs are created for the most part by explicit government barriers at the border, namely, visa restrictions. They can be lowered at the stroke of a pen”.

The political economy of the regulation of trans-border flows is complex and there are notoriously high obstacles to trade liberalization. Nonetheless many of them have been overcome in the post-1945 period (Irwin 1996) and if this is not the case for migration it is largely because trade and migration are very different flows (see above). But also because people perceive migration and trade differently and thus politicians are obliged to approach the two issues in different ways. Often times, the media transform small, relatively episodes related to immigration (in particular crime news) into a big, nation-wide story thus influencing the perception of citizens. Policy-makers are obliged to take the perception of their citizen into account, but rarely do they invest in improving the information that citizen receive: some feed the public’s migration prejudices, which are rooted in a limited knowledge of the dynamics and effects of migration. In fact people’s attitudes and government policies towards immigration try to be generally aligned. When public opinion towards immigration is, on average, negative, government try to adjust the policy or at least the narrative of the policy in that direction by decreasing the level of immigration to their countries⁶.

People consider trade more favorably than migration, as shown by Mayda (2007) using data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) covering 22 countries. There are many reasons, one being working in trade (Mayda 2007), but another key element is having wrong information about the social costs of immigration (Hanson et al. 2007). At the same time, public perception of migration has become increasingly important in politics, as exemplified by the surge of populist parties in Europe and the US that have anti-immigration as their main, and indeed quasi exclusive, campaign topic. Hatton (2016a) uses the European Social Survey (ESS) to understand if the recession has produced a change in public opinion on immigration. From 2002 to 2014 there has been, in aggregate terms, a decrease in the anti-immigration opinion in the EU countries, with large variations across countries.⁷ Differences among European countries are to be expected given their different geographical position and their consequently varied exposure to immigration inflows.

However, it is very important to distinguish between refugees and immigrants in general. There was a 4% increase in negative sentiments towards immigrants from poor countries, while there is a reduction against refugees (Hatton, 2016a). The correlation between the two answers is very low (0.24) suggesting that anti-immigration sentiment varies according to how foreign nationals enter a given country. In Sweden 8.6% of the population deem their country too generous – Sweden is well-known for its comprehensive welfare system – whereas 46.2% think this in Germany; in all likelihood the population is worried about the recent decision to accept 900,000 Syrian refugees.

Migration is always at the top of the policy-maker’s agenda because the media cover it daily and replicate the news many times a day: this naturally alters general perceptions. The comparative results of the surveys are, however, questionable as there are no controls on the events which took place the

⁶ See for instance IOM 2015.

⁷ For example, there was a sharp increase (19.4%) among Czech citizens compensated by a roughly equivalent reduction among Norwegians.

week or the month before the interview: these, of course, will be different in different countries or, at least, will be perceived in different ways.⁸ This increase the difficulties of using surveys results for policy purpose because many omitted variables are influencing the public opinion.

The increase in mortalities at sea is another example of the distortions that are produced by the media when reporting certain events using questionable data. It is a very sensitive issue, which depending on the way in which data are analyzed may seem under or without control. Analyzing the share of people who lose their life while attempting to cross the Mediterranean, the impression is that the management of the phenomenon is improving: 31 per thousand persons died in 2012; and 3 per thousand in 2015. If, instead, the metrics is the absolute size of the phenomenon, 3000 individuals perished in 2014 and another 3000 in 2015, i.e. the figure is high and growing from 2013, but that is only because the total flows are increasing⁹.

3. Migration stereotypes

Migration stereotypes explain why people perceive migration so differently and negatively. One of the best-known stereotypes is that there is “a horde of people coming from the South to the North, they come to exploit our welfare systems and they will take our jobs”. This simple sentence, which is so frequently heard, contains four mistakes.

First of all, there is the erroneous idea that we live in a period of mass migration. According to the United Nation Population Division data, while international migration has increased in absolute number, it was 3.1% of the world’s population in 1960, declined to 2.7% in 1980, and bounced back to 3.3% in 2015. Thus in the last fifty years the share of migrants has been relatively stable¹⁰.

Second, it is not true that most, let alone all, migrants move from South to North. South-South migration is actually larger (84 million versus 81 million) and many people (37 millions) are internally displaced in developing countries.

Third, research on the use of welfare in destination countries is as extensive as mostly uninformed debate on the same topic. That research shows that, in general, foreign citizens do not use the welfare state more than natives, even if frequently they are more eligible being on the lower rungs of income distribution. However, even when studies suggest a larger use of welfare, the effect is very small both in the US and in European countries¹¹.

Fourth, the role of migrants in the labour market has also excited the attention of researchers in all destination countries. Research explains that the conditions necessary for foreign labour to produce a reduction in native employment and in wages are very strict. Insofar as migrants are imperfect substitutes for natives, the negative effect on the employment of natives in the destination labour markets is very limited, even in periods of very large inflows¹². Not only are highly-skilled migrants in

⁸ For instance, the arrival of boat people in Italy is less relevant for Poles than the arrival of asylum-seekers in Hungary: Poland is closer to Hungary and has, to some extent, a shared history and national narrative.

⁹ IOM Missing data base.

¹⁰ See De Haas (2014), Fargues (2013), OECD (2016). According to the United Nations Population Division, an international migrant is someone who has been living for one year or longer in a country other than the one in which he or she was born. This means that many foreign workers and international students are counted as migrants.

¹¹ See Barret (2012) for an accurate survey.

¹² See Brücker (2012).

demand, low or medium–skilled workers are also needed in agriculture, construction and the care sector. Population aging and the increase in female labour participation boost the demand for health and care sector support, which can be met only through additional workers.

An additional important point concerns migrant assimilation in the labour market of destination countries. Research shows that migrants are rarely able to reach the same wage level as natives, even if they have the same labour market characteristics. “Brain waste” becomes a core issue of the debate on the pro-migrant side. In most cases the problem depends on the lack of jobs of the same level as migrants’ fields of qualifications in the destination country. Even if qualifications are recognized, there is a relative lack of jobs needing these qualifications: this causes brain waste among migrants, which is less common among natives who know the labour market options in advance and can direct their education path towards the appropriate choices.

There are also stereotypes about the effect of migration on sending countries, where the positive effect of remittances and the negative effect of “brain drain” for the migration of the highly-skilled are frequently flagged up. Highly-skilled emigration frequently produces brain gain because it incentivizes secondary school attendance and produces a more educated labour force, which favours, in turn, economic growth. In addition the return of migrants after a period abroad is positive for the country of origin. Of course, the smaller the country and the larger the outflows of highly-skilled nationals, the likelier the brain waste. However, Lebanon’s experience is instructive here. Very high probability of unemployment at home and of employment abroad transformed its education system into the most productive industry of the country, something with excellent returns on investment and trade. Remittances, instead, if the country is small with a large section of the population abroad, risk creating a subsidies economy where remittances are only used for consumption and where productive activity is dampened down.

4. Migration Policy in the G20 countries: Current Trends and Looming Challenges

Major migration problems are *prima facie* limited to potential competition with natives in the labour market and limited integration in the labour market, which in turn can cause immigrants to make a greater use of the welfare state. All in all, national migration policies are largely appropriate and the focus should be on better management, not really any revolutionary change is needed. And it is true that improving the efficacy of migration policies has long been high on the political agenda, especially the definition of entry channels and the size of those channels.

In all destination countries, there are selective migration policies that attempt to attract those workers most needed on the labour market, in particular the highly-skilled¹³. In the US, for instance, the magnitude of the cap on employer-sponsored working visas (H-1B) for STEM workers has attracted a great deal of attention in the last couple of years, while in Europe it is the number of Blue card visa¹⁴. Certainly, these areas needed revision. But migration policies are more than just the ‘who’ of migration and the ‘how’ a foreign national can enter a country. Migration policies also determine the path that

¹³ Fassio et. al 2015, Alesina et.al. 2015. The share of the highly-skilled among total migrants is increasing in all destination areas: 34% in North Western Europe; 32% in non-OECD Europe; 29% in North America; 14% in Latin America; 12% in Southern Europe; but just 8% in Africa (OCDE 2016).

¹⁴ See European Parliament, Director General for Internal Policies, Martín, I. et al., 2015., Exploring New Avenues for Legislation for Labour Migration to the European Union, LIBE Committee, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536452/IPOL_STU\(2015\)536452_EN](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536452/IPOL_STU(2015)536452_EN).

defines the rights of foreign citizens in the destination country, namely citizen paths, access to welfare services, to education etc. All these rights are part of what makes a destination country attractive.

When these policies were unable to deliver immigration within the integration capacity of the destination country, specific integration policies had to be implemented at local level. These had to cope with unemployment, lack of language proficiency etc. These last policies tend to follow a universalistic approach to avoid conflict among the neediest. And few activities are tailored to the needs of foreign nationals, like linguistic support, or cultural integration programs.

More and more programs are designed for migrants' children given that early integration is very important for good educational performances, and constitute a prerequisite for full socio-economic integration. First movers do not know if they want to stay and frequently circular migration models are adopted which reduce investment in the destination language and citizenship projects. However, the second generation needs to be proficient in the language of the country where they live and in the human capital demanded in the labour market to fully integrate: the second generation and the early years of the second generation deserves special attention to assure future citizens.. This dimension was under considered in the past, while it deserves specially tailored policies and important investments. An interesting MPI study (2016) shows that low language knowledge is an important reason for the limited integration of foreign workers in the USA. This limited knowledge ends trapping migrants into low skilled occupations with no career path. Thus, if early employment insertion is successful, then investment in the destination language should be part of the long-term integration pattern.

There is another major actor in the migrant process: the country of origin (see Fig. 1). Migration starts in the sending country and partnership agreements (as in the EU) or bilateral agreements can solve many problems that migrants in the destination country face. Labour migration should be better organized for sending countries, involving them in pre-departure training of migrants in order to manage expectations and help in acquiring the skills demanded abroad¹⁵. Better information on legislation and the languages of the destination countries should be part of the pre-departure training so as to discourage migrants from irregular labour. This type of pre-departure training should be extended to reunified family members to help avoid their segregation into ethnic communities and to help them to integrate socially but also economically. Research reveals that migrants who come as family members suffer from over education more than labour migrants (Lemaître G., 2014, p.351). One of the main causes is the limited training they receive at home and the limited labour training they receive in the destination country, which limit their job search ability.

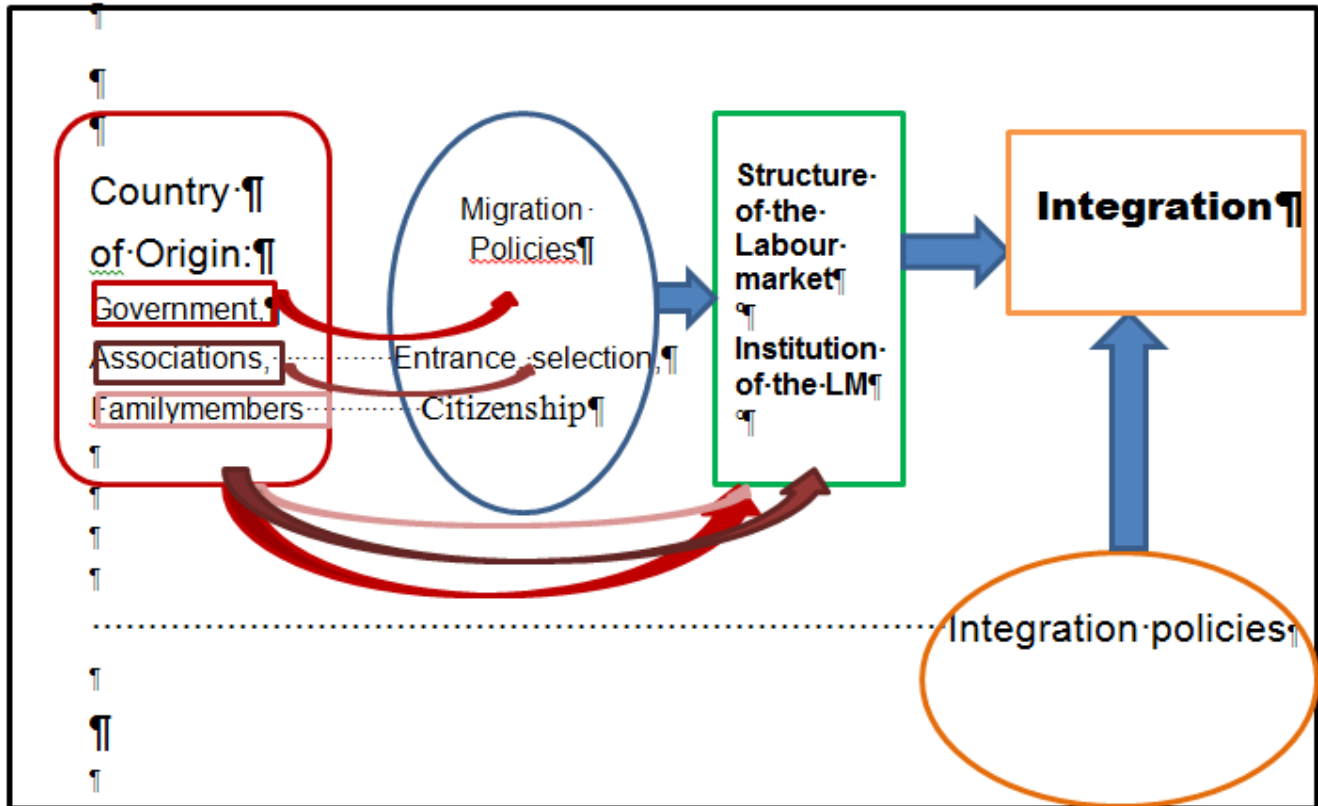
There are, then, three migration pillars: partnership with sending countries; admission policies; and integration policies. Possibly these could be successfully implemented in different countries with different geographies, labour legislation, and stringency of border control. However, the recent asylum seekers' surge challenges all this and requires a much greater effort to share responsibility, not only at the EU but at the international level too.

If we consider labour migration, the labour market needs of destination countries play an important role in defining the total amount of inflows and the push reasons behind emigration are taken into account but only under the constraint of destination country possibilities.

¹⁵ See Interact project <http://interact-project.eu/> and Mismess research project <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/mismes/> and Martin Makarain 2015 , and Garces-Mascareñas B., Penninx R. (eds.) 2016

With the asylum seekers the scenario is the opposite. The surge in asylum seekers has already stressed the limits of the nation state's responsibility for migration inflows. But now the asylum crisis has shown that Europe is unable to depend on intra-EU, let alone international, solidarity.

Fig.1 Actors-affecting-integration-of-migrants



From: A. Venturini, 2016, 'Immigrant assimilation in the labour market: what is missing in economic literature,' in INTERACT-Project eds. Ph Fargues, A Weinar.

5. The European Refugee Crisis and Future Migration Pressure

The numbers of the current refugee crisis are impressive. In 2014, 210,000 unauthorized migrants arrived by boat in Italy (140,000), Greece, Spain and Malta; one year later the total was 900,000 (mainly in Greece). This massive inflow is taking place after fifteen years in which arrivals were never more than 100,000 a year. The extraordinary pressure of asylum-seekers put the resources and organization of the border countries to the test.

Let us look closer to some dynamics. Until 2014, EU border controls were exclusively in the hands of border countries. But since 2015 European states work together in patrolling and rescuing people on the sea. However, border states cannot be the final destination of all arrivals and a form of redistribution inside the European states should be implemented.

The *non-border countries* already now are investing in the integration of refugees and providing skill assessment and training for their long-run assimilation in the destination labour market. By doing this they are transforming a challenge into a likely success story. The *border countries*, meanwhile, use national public and private resources to cope with first-instance assistance and employ the European social fund (or similar funds) to provide targeted measures to integrate migrants into the labour market. Thus, current and future asylum assistance will increasingly see large differences between countries in the type and volume of assistance and integration support offered and will continue the attempt to enter border countries to arrive in non-border ones.

European Common Asylum had the aim of harmonizing different national legislations. The present phenomenon has shown, though, that something more is needed, a real European Asylum system with strong coordination at the European level, to redistribute those in need of protection in all European countries; and to reduce the individual involvement of border countries.

Coordination should, however, change the kernel of European intervention from rescuing people on the sea or by land, into efficient resettlement from the origin countries. There is a long tradition of resettling asylum-seekers directly from countries of first asylum, which host 86% of asylees. In 2015 the UNHCR resettled 90,000 individuals, mostly in the USA, Canada and Australia, and only 10,000 in Europe. All in all, almost 70,000 persons were admitted to the United States as refugees during 2014, principally from Iraq, Burma, Somalia, and Bhutan.

The low capacity of UNHCR in resettling asylum-seekers directly from sending countries shows how much has to be done together by destination countries. But the UNHCR is conditioned by the availability of destination countries in its practices and this is quite embarrassing given the large number of refugees hosted in developing countries. There are 1,200,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 800,000 in Jordan and 2,500,000 in Turkey. In Syria itself there are 7 million Internally Displaced People, plus 4.7 million are in countries of first asylum and fewer than a million are to be found in Europe.

Anticipating asylum dynamics is crucial for providing timely assistance, avoiding deaths at sea, wasting economic and human resources. To some extent, modeling future asylum inflows is possible. The estimates by Tim Hatton (2016b) are a good point of departure for understanding the dynamics and forces at play. Asylum outflows can also be forecast, on the basis of IDP information. The International Displacement Monitoring Center (2015) provides alarming numbers, 37 million in 2016. The newly displaced are 3.8 million in the Middle East, 3 millions in Central Africa, 1.4 million in South Asia, 1 million in West Africa, 700,000 in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, 400,000 in East Africa, 400,000 in the Americas and 200,000 South-East Asia. To say nothing of the possibility of a North Korean refugee crisis in the not-so-distant future. Crises are, in short, to be found in almost every corner of the world.

But the future of migration is not only on the refugees side. Emigration flows are dependent on the demographics of sending countries and future trends can be forecasted well in advance. Fertility is declining worldwide but it is still well above replacement rate in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. Thus, in sub-Saharan countries total population will increase by 350 million in 2030 and in Southern Asia a little more (see figure above). While in Europe the population will shrink by 8% and in China by 3%, in India it will increase by 62% and in Sub-Saharan Africa by 31%. Employment prospects in sub-Saharan Africa are pretty dire: the work force has increased by 50% in 2015, but only

60% of youth find jobs, while others moved abroad, not only to Europe but also to richer neighboring countries¹⁶.

To some extent it is also possible to project future needs in host countries. Even if Europe is aging, potential migrants in Africa and the Middle East vastly outnumber the potential demand. The same is true in Russia where the recession has reduced the demand for labour; likewise, in the Gulf countries where foreign labour represents 20% of the population, down from close to 40% in 2010 (OECD, 2016).

6. International migration policies: principles, priorities and institutions

By definition, international migration is not a domestic issue, but it has been mainly managed in a bilateral process with most powers in the hands of destination countries. The refugee crises (not only in the Mediterranean but also in Southeast Asia) has already shown the limits of the current system and it is easy to predict that the youth bulge on the horizon in many developing areas will result in wider humanitarian problems which cannot be solved by destination countries alone. Just to mention the most pressing emergency, it is simply impossible and unfair to see the total number of resettlements from Syria per year capped at just 100,000 persons, while nine or ten times as many are arriving in Italy and Greece and those fleeing to neighboring Middle East countries are counted in the millions.

International coordination is needed to help nation states to seek a coherent answer to some enormous economic, development, and governance challenges. In fact the range of countries which should intervene in this process should be widened outside the traditional circle of North Atlantic recipients and selected Southern senders (in particular Mexico, Turkey and some MENA countries) to reflect the changing geography of international migration. The current Syrian refugee crisis aside, there are crisis loci in other regions, from Myanmar to Ethiopia, from Sudan to Afghanistan. At the end of 2014, some 86 percent of the world's displaced were living in developing countries: in the case of Afghanis, the largest refugee communities are in Iran and Pakistan, while the three countries that sheltered the most Syrian refugees as of mid-2015 were Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. And of course the same is true further from Eurasia – for instance in Southeast Asia with the Rohingya minority of Myanmar, labelled the world's most persecuted people.

Coordination should convince countries facing large numbers of claims from spontaneous asylum applicants to embark on substantial resettlement. This would allow refugees to avoid the perilous journey to a safe harbour and mitigate the stress on reception centres. And the responsibility is global, since political conflicts are distributed around the world (Pettersson and Wallenstein 2015). It is not exclusively for Europe to feel responsible for the Middle East refugee crisis, just like Vietnamese boat people fleeing to China became an international phenomenon in 1978.

The best strategy for asylum claims is clear and uncontentious (see Hatton 2016b). It should include the following basic elements:

- resettlements from the area of conflict for people in need of protection;
- shared border controls to better understand the dimensions of the phenomenon and its complexity;
- a burden-sharing rule to allow countries to work together.

¹⁶ See OECD 2016.

Similarly, multilateral coordination of labour migration is needed and should link development policies to migratory propensity and focus on development programs which connect job creation and production in origin countries. A joint development-migration project is needed to reduce mounting pressure, trumping other priorities of developed countries such as, for instance, those included in free trade agreements. The precedent of the post-NAFTA “migration hump” from Mexico to the US suggests what could happen were similar agreements be concluded with African and Asian countries, given the size of their populations¹⁷. Negotiators should be very cautious and recognize that different welfare states imply different labour costs and pace of gradual transition to free trade.

The global governance implications of this approach are much less clear. At a rather general level, multilateral organizations like the OECD, the ILO, the World Bank and obviously the International Organization for Migration and the UN High Commission for Refugees should be involved. But what can the G20 do? The major humanitarian, political, social and economic consequences of the refugee crisis were first mentioned as a global concern in the 2015 Summit communiqué, with the perfunctory call for “a coordinated and comprehensive response”, but also a commitment “to strengthen our long term preparedness and capacity to manage migration and refugee flows”. A working agenda for the G20 should consist of a number of actions to tackle different problems.

Short-term migration The G20 should intervene in the resettlement process of asylum seekers by increasing the number of countries involved in the procedure and the total number of demand that each country accept and by speeding up the procedure. All countries should be involved in this process and UNHCR should be provided with more staff and appropriate funding to perform its role in a more efficient way. Alternatively, other institutions should be involved in the process. Forecasting future flows should also be made a strategic priority to anticipate and organize immediate assistance and burden sharing. UNHCR could be supported by a research unit which provides accurate details on flows and make resettlement organizations, possibly including the private sector, more proactive in intervening in all emergency areas.

Medium-term migration The demographic transition is surely the most acute in Africa, with a large increase in population, but will also be important for many countries experiencing ageing and/or a fall in absolute numbers, such as China, Russia, the Gulf countries and the EU. African development is already on the agenda of the G20, but the link to demographics and migration should be made more explicit: a collective effort to invest in education and gender equality to reduce fertility and migration propensity, because migration should not be the only solution to find employment. There must also be a recognition that better border controls, no matter how important in favouring legal migration, will ultimately be insufficient against the project scale of population growth, especially in Africa.

Permanent migration Deeper investments in migrant integration should be also undertaken by destination countries. Migrants will be the citizen of tomorrow, given aging and shrinking of destination populations. The integration process for labour and for family members’ migration starts in the sending countries: bilateral agreements and partnership agreements should be implemented to

¹⁷ See for instance the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and West African countries, including free trade areas agreed in the framework of the Cotonou Agreements, entered into force in 2015.

ease the process at departure. Pre-departure training with instruction in the destination language, legislation and culture should be made routine. For asylees, integration interventions need to start in the resettlement phase before the asylum process is completed, not least because in this phase they have limited mobility and tailored integration policies can be more easily designed and implemented. This will produce a common aggregate benefits reducing the mobility of marginal groups which can export conflict from one state to another as in the last French attack.

China, as the world's most populous country and the second-largest individual economy, obviously has a great deal at stake from the promotion of a more efficient global migration regime. It is estimated that 4% of the world's migrants come from China, the fourth most important source country (it was the seventh in 1990), although it remains a secondary destination (Xiang 2016). The magnitude of the phenomenon is uncertain, but it is easy to predict that fast population aging and the need to contain production costs will lead to an increase in immigration (Bruni 2013). At the same time, there is rapid change in the characteristics of Chinese emigration, with highly-skilled being five times as likely to leave than the overall population.¹⁸ Low-skilled or unskilled migrants, on the other hand, are increasingly going to developing nations in Asia and Africa, whereas until the recent past Japan and Korea were main destinations.

One case has received particular attention, that of Chinese migrants to sub-Saharan Africa. Estimates of their size differ, but **about one million** and at any rate there is no doubt that the Chinese diaspora is the Indians as the largest in stock terms and is way ahead of any other in terms of recent flows. The phenomenon has received wide attention in the West, where the media spread stereotypes of empire building and land grabbing, but is also being promoted by Chinese government as a model for South-South cooperation, technology transfer, and agricultural development. The reality is probably more mundane, made of informal networks and independent operation from the Chinese government (e.g. Cook et al. 2016). There is possibly more government involvement in flows in the opposite direction, especially in the framework of people-to-people exchanges promoted under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).¹⁹ The numbers remain tiny, however: only 200,000 Africans are in China. Attention should also be paid to policy coherence in South-South economic relations, as in North-South ties. At present African exports to China face a high degree of tariff escalation, which may offset the potential benefits of Chinese migration in terms of skills and technology transfers.

7. Conclusions

The time has probably come for the G20 to include international migration in its policy menu. The risk of course is to add to the already complex architecture of global governance summitry, but doing nothing carries even greater risks.

It is easy to understand why this is happening now, under the motion and the very real consequences of the Syrian refugee crisis, but managing short-term emergencies should only be the starting point. On the basis of demographic and economic trends it can be said with a fair degree of certainty that migration flows will keep increasing in the next few decades, mostly from the South to the North and

¹⁸ It is important to note that high net worth individuals are also increasingly migrating from China, some of them being highly educated, but not necessarily so.

¹⁹ "Xi announces 10 major China-Africa cooperation plans for coming 3 years", 8 December 2015, http://www.focac.org/eng/ltda/dwjbzjihys_1/t1322068.htm, retrieved 28 May 2016.

mostly from Africa to Europe. So labour migration should also be included in the G20 discussions and a broader range of countries and stakeholders should be involved.

An additional issue is that, even compared to other policy domains where the G20 has had a mixed record so far, migration is a much harder nut to crack. At the national level, policies that may impact on sovereignty have to take into account their public opinion: policy makers should invest in informing their citizenry about the needs for international assistance, which is a universal right for people in search of protection (Hatton 2016b). On this account, the media have played an important role in better informing Western audiences about life in camps in countries of first asylum and understanding the difference between illegal migrants and asylum-seekers.

Better policies through international coordination is the only option -- closing the frontiers for the majority of the countries is simply impossible, to say nothing of the morality of such a policy.

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