The Role of the Sending State and Society in Immigrant Integration

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CARIM
Euro-Mediterranean Consortium
for Applied Research on International Migration

Analytic and Synthetic Notes

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CARIM

The Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) was created at the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), in February 2004 and co-financed by the European Commission, DG AidCo, currently under the Thematic programme for the cooperation with third countries in the areas of migration and asylum.

Within this framework, CARIM aims, in an academic perspective, to observe, analyse, and forecast migration in Southern & Eastern Mediterranean and Sub- Saharan Countries (hereafter Region).

CARIM is composed of a coordinating unit established at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) of the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), and a network of scientific correspondents based in the 17 countries observed by CARIM: Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Palestine, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.
All are studied as origin, transit and immigration countries. External experts from the European Union and countries of the Region also contribute to CARIM activities.

CARIM carries out the following activities:

- Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan migration database;
- Research and publications;
- Meetings of academics and between experts and policy makers;
- Migration Summer School;
- Outreach.

The activities of CARIM cover three aspects of international migration in the Region: economic and demographic, legal, and socio-political.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: www.carim.org

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Summary

1. By logic and historical trend (state transnationalism), sending states/societies are more liability than resource in host-society integration.

2. There cannot be "partnership" between sending and receiving state/society with respect to managing high- and low-skilled immigration.

3. More important for shaping integration outcomes is what sending states/societies are by way of structure and history than what they can do by way of policy. But then the reflection on sending-society impact on integration is largely academic and devoid of policy relevance.

4. Perhaps the only possibility of host states to maximize sending-society impact is choosing the "right" origin society, to the degree that choice is possible.

5. Integration starts with selection: student-based "two-step migration" is the route that Europe should take.

6. "Partnership" with sending societies is needed above all to manage temporary and circular migration. But this may work better with autocratic than with democratic societies.

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Investigating the role of the sending state and society in immigrant integration is unusual, because integration by definition seems to be a problem of the receiving state and society only. At least, no one has seriously studied, let alone thought about the policy implications, of the sending side in integration. From a classic "immigration" perspective, this concern is non-sensical, because once the migrant is off, never to return, he or she is entirely a problem, or opportunity (depending on the view taken), of the society that receives. From a contemporary "migration" perspective, where there is a circular back-and-forth of moves, it seems even odder to talk about "integration" at all, as the alternative precisely is "circulate or integrate" (to quote a recent *Economist* survey), but not both at the same time.

1.

Having said this, the reality of the sending society cannot be wished away, perhaps even for the integration process. The first question to ask here is: **Is the sending society obstacle or resource in host-society integration?** In my view, by logic and by empirical trend, the "obstacle" view is more compelling than the "resource" view. The sending society is an obstacle to integration by logic, because without a distinction between sending and receiving ends there would not be an "integration" problem to begin with. However, and more interestingly, also by empirical trend there is a stronger case for an obstacle than resource view. This is because sending societies around the world, from Turkey to Mexico, have recently shifted their view towards their emigrants, from "traitors" to "compatriots" abroad. The foremost legal expression of this is an increasing toleration of dual citizenship, sometimes the creation of a passive nationality status that grants most of the rights of citizenship, except political rights. The main motivation for this trend is all-too-known: remittances, which constitutes an ever more significant portion of wealth and income in the world`s developing societies. But there are other factors at play, some of which are less conducive to host-society integration: the need for "good immigrants", as the descendants of former emigrants are presumably easier to absorb than complete strangers—a notorious example is the fast-tracking to Italian citizenship for the descendants of Italians abroad in the early 1990s, which lead to a huge influx of Italo-Argentines a decade later; a second factor is "identity", a kind of state transnationalism in the age of globalization, which sees the state as platform and representation for all co-nationals wherever they reside in the world. State transnationalism is unfailingly a project of the political right, as it builds upon and seeks to strengthen a sense of ethnicity, if not nationalism in their society. It also tends to be accompanied by a negative approach towards integrating immigrants at home, for whom the hurdles to citizenship are often raised in the very moment that this hurdle is lowered for putative co-ethnics. At least such has been the experience of the last Italian citizenship reform, which dates back to 1992. It is obvious that state transnationalism is more obstacle than resource in immigrant integration. Or rather, it makes "integration" a sending-society project, but only for its own ethnics at home.

In sum, by logic and by empirical trend, the sending society is more liability than resource in the integration process. This is not to say that the retaining of ties (both economic and ideational) with the sending society is ipso facto inimical to host-society assimilation. At least, the notion that migrant transnationalism and assimilation are mutually exclusive or contradictory processes has long been abandoned in American migration research. Take the example of Cuban or Indian immigrants, who have retained strong links with their origin societies (or ethnic enclaves, as in the case of Cuban refugees), while at the same time naturalizing in high numbers and identifying strongly as Americans. The picture is less rosy for economically distressed immigrants, such as Dominicans or Puerto Ricans, whose offspring often undergo "segmented assimilation" into the urban underclass while their parents retain strong links with home.

2.

This first stab at the matter still rests on a few questionable generalizations that need unpacking. The first is the "immigrant" or "migrant" category, against which one may object in the spirit of E.Burke who had never seen "human beings" but only "Englishmen", "Frenchmen", etc. In this case, a **necessary distinction has to be made between high- and low-skilled immigrants**. Both entail fundamentally different interest constellations of and between sending and receiving society, as well as different legal regimes and political discourses that process them. The favorite slogan of the European Union is that of "partnership" with sending societies in managing migration. However, very simple interest arithmetic with respect to the two migrant types reveals this to be empty of meaning and merely rhetoric, including the kindred Euro-notions of "co-development" etc. With respect to low-skilled immigrants, supply vastly exceeds demand. Accordingly, it is in the interest of sending society to get rid of them, while the opposite interest of most receiving societies is warding them off. By contrast, with respect to high-skilled immigration, there is an opposite constellation of demand vastly exceeding supply. Here the interest of the sending society is to keep them at home, while the interest of the receiving society is to lure them away, both from their origin societies and from competitors. Absent a common interest, how could there ever be "partnership" between migrant-sending and migrant-receiving states? Of course, the "co-development" approach bets on the long-term reduction of incentives to move through creating wealth at home, but in the mid-term, as one knows, development spurs migration, and politics is notoriously short-term. How "co-development" could be the result of this is rather unclear. Overall, it is a long-deplored fact that there is, in contrast to international regimes for the regulation of capital, finance, or trade, no international regime for the regulation of migration (with the exception of refugees)—some of the same reasons that render this regime impossible also stand against the possibility of "partnership". As "partnership" is a chimera with respect to migration management, it is not likely to be a realistic expectation for immigrant integration.

3.

A second distinction that needs to be introduced is between origin state/society impact on integration that stems from **what they *are* by way of structure and history against what they *do* by way of policy**. The entire European debate surrounding immigrant integration suffers from too much focus on specific policy to further integration, thus overlooking that it is non-immigrant-specific structures, such as labor markets, educational systems, but also culture and belief systems, that are more important than by nature paltry "integration policies" to shape integration outcomes. The United States is much superior to all European countries in assimilating immigrants despite the complete absence of an integration policy. And within Europe, a country like Germany, which has never had an integration policy until recently, does better at fulfilling a pivotal integration function: getting immigrants into work, than some of its more policy-conscious neighbors, including France, which suffers in this respect from an overregulated labor market and misguided urban planning that not even a hyper-muscled integration policy could ever undo.

Applying this logic to sending-society impact, vastly more important to what the sending society does or can do by way of policy to influence host-society integration may be what it is by way of structure. But then it is moot to reflect much on this, because structure is beyond the scope of policy intervention.

4.

The greatest, perhaps only, possibility that receiving states have in maximizing origin-society impact on integration is to **choose the "right" origin societies**, to the degree that "choice" in this realm is possible. "Choice" was certainly involved in the guestworker and postcolonial policies that brought about the immigrant Europe of today. As Europe's contemporary immigrant problem is largely one of

failed Muslim integration, one cannot avoid the question whether it was a mistake to enter into recruitment arrangements with ever more culturally, if not civilizationally remote origin countries, once the more proximate (European) countries were depleted. This is tricky terrain, mined with knee-jerk "racism" charges whenever ethnic selectivity is raised as possibility. The author of this brief remembers a European Commission meeting in this very building about a decade ago, when the Bologna Cardinal Biffi's suggestion to admit preferentially Catholic immigrants from the Philippines raised the ire of all card-carrying liberals assembled there. But he was right, as one has not heard about an "integration problem" of the sizeable contingent of Philippine *domesticas* that clean houses, watch children, and care for the elderly from Turin to Palermo.

5.

Smug Canadian migration officials tend to lecture European audiences that **"integration" begins with the right "selection" of immigrants**. This lesson has generally not been heeded in Europe. On the contrary, French President Sarkozy's logo to move from "suffered" to "chosen" immigration has been widely ridiculed, partially rightly so because the French policy is marred by singular ineptitude (mostly of a bureaucratic nature) to get the people they want.

Of course, Canada, like all classic immigrant nations since the 1960s (with the exception of the US), does not select newcomers by what they are by way of origin but by what they have achieved in terms of skills. This notably neutralizes the impact that origin societies have on host-society integration (an impact that could be either positive, as in getting the northern Europeans that are considered the best fit with English-speaking settler societies, as was the policy in North America and Australia until the 1960s and early 1970s, respectively; or negative, as in the case of low-skilled postcolonial immigrants who mobilize their cultural or: religious origin markers in a context of marginalization and discrimination, which has been the more recent European experience).

The Canadian experience is worthwhile to be considered further. Because even the selection by skills, which is the gist of its fabled points system, is increasingly considered insufficient for guaranteeing the desired integration outcomes. The proof are taxi-driving engineers and doctors in the streets of Toronto or Montreal, because their foreign credentials are either not recognized or don't match advanced Western standards or both. As a result, Canada—much like Australia—has recently moved to so-called "two-step migration", which resembles the European logic of only gradual status consolidation for at first only temporarily admitted migrants. The key to two-step migration, of course, is university study. At first, students are recruited, and upon successful graduation they are offered the possibility to look for work and obtain a permanent resident permit. Almost as a byproduct, the standards and visibility of Canada and Australian universities are raised by the internationalization and increasing competitiveness of their student populations. This is the route that European countries should go, as the key resource in knowledge societies are universities, whose excellence in turn is a function of the internationality of their faculties and their student bodies. Note that in such system the impact of origin societies on host-society integration is further reduced, and this is exactly what European states should try to achieve by way of optimized selection policies.

6.

But not all immigrants are high-skilled, and the phenomenon of low-skilled immigration has to be reckoned with, in part because even knowledge societies are in need of them. This is where temporary and circular migration moves into the picture. **Temporary/circular migration is the one migration that requires co-ordination, or "partnership"** in Euro-jargon, between sending and receiving states. But what is the gist of this "partnership"? It is providing a necessarily coercive framework and incentive structure to ensure return and forestall the rendering permanent of host-society residence (and the integration that goes along with it—so, strictly speaking, this section is "off" the topic). The

regulation of temporary or circular migration is ethically problematic because such migrants necessarily enjoy only lesser rights than other people (both *de souche* and permanent immigrant). However, such ethical concerns are outweighed by the benefits that this migration procures to those who voluntarily engage in it. The touchier question is whether the democratic regimes that hopefully will gain ground in North Africa and the Middle East will be equally prepared than its autocratic predecessors to guarantee the exit controls that are required for temporary-cum-circular migration. Free societies cannot prevent their members from moving at their own whims. Among other uncomfortable revelations of the North African revolutions, one is the collusion between European states and the ousted autocratic regimes in the management of migration, where development aids (to use an euphemism under the cleptocratic circumstances) and limited migration quotas were traded against exit restrictions and readmission of expelled illegal migrants. The "partnership" between European states and the—hopefully—democratic states of North Africa and the Middle East will be more legitimate, certainly, but also more brittle because of the lesser possibilities of the latter to control their populations.