

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS:

TRENDS IN MIGRATION AND MIGRATION POLICY

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Worldwide, more than 215 million people have left the countries of their birth and moved elsewhere (World Bank, 2011). These migrants make up more than 3 percent of the world's population. Another 700 million adults say they would migrate to another country if they could, according to polls conducted by Gallup (Esipova & Ray, 2009).

Almost all of the world's nations are either sending or receiving countries, or both. As of 2010, the world's top three migrant sending countries were Mexico (about 12 million), India (about 11 million), and Russia (about 11 million). The top regional destinations were North America, Europe, and the Gulf States, which together contained about 44 percent of the world's migrant population. The United States, alone, had more than 42 million migrants, making it the world's top receiving country. As a region, though, Europe (depending on how defined), had about as many migrants. Germany, France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, together, had about 38 million migrants in 2010. The Gulf States of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, combined, had more than 15 million migrants (World Bank, 2011).

Public attitudes toward migration differ among receiving countries. In 2011, for example, a majority of adults in Spain, the UK, and the U.S. told the German Marshall Fund's (GMF) Transatlantic Trends Survey (2011) that "immigration is more of a problem" than "an opportunity" (p. 5). In other countries, such as Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, opinion was split: just about as many adults said "immigration is a problem" as said "immigration is an opportunity" (p. 5). Only among Canadian adults (surveyed through 2010) did a majority see immigration as more of an opportunity (German Marshall Fund, 2010, p. 4). These differences are likely the result of the receiving country's social values and economic situation, as well as the history and characteristics of migration in that country.

Views in sending countries are also mixed. In a 2012 Pew Research Center survey, half of Mexican adults (50 percent) said "people leaving [Mexico] for jobs in other countries" was "a very big problem" for Mexico (Pew Global Attitudes, 2012, p. 15). The same survey, however, found other issues more likely to be rated as "very big problems" (p. 16) for Mexico: cartel-related violence (according to 75 percent of Mexican adults), human rights violations by the military and police (74 percent), crime (73 percent), corrupt political leaders (69 percent), economic problems (68 percent), illegal drugs (68 percent), terrorism (62 percent), and pollution (58 percent).

In 2010, the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM), the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, and the University of Maryland School of Public Policy held an international conference on migration in Maastricht, the Netherlands. Titled: *Migration: A World in Motion: A Multinational Conference on Migration and Migration Policy*, the conference brought together a worldwide audience of academics and professionals from think tanks, government agencies, the private sector, and civil society.

Papers were presented in topic-oriented sessions with presenters and discussants who explored lessons and experiences from around the world. Here are some highlights.

MIGRATION TRENDS

In “Global Desires to Migrate,” Gallup researchers Neli Esipova, Rajesh Srinivasan, and Julie Ray use poll data to estimate that nearly one in seven adults worldwide said that they would migrate to another country permanently if they had the opportunity to do so; that’s roughly 700 million adults. The desire to migrate was greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, where 36 percent of adult respondents said they would migrate if given the opportunity. Following were the Middle East and North Africa, where 21 percent said they would migrate. Rates were lower in other parts of the world: 19 percent in Europe, 18 percent in the Americas, and 10 percent in Asia.

Among the preferred destination countries named, the U.S. was the top desired destination, named by almost one in four potential migrants. That’s 166 million adults wanting to move to the U.S. After the U.S., came Canada (7 percent), the UK (7 percent), and France (6 percent). By region, however, Western Europe was the top desired destination; about 25 percent of potential adult migrants (or 174 million) named the UK, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, or Switzerland as their preferred destination.

In “Patterns of Global Migration,” Ellen Berg and Douglas Besharov of the University of Maryland highlight six major patterns of current international migration: (1) to developed countries, largely for economic gain (about 70 percent of all migration); (2) from one developing country to another, or “South-South” migration, again for largely economic reasons (almost one-third of migration); (3) intra-regional migration, with almost 50 percent of migrants remaining in their region of origin, while some 40 percent cross just one border into a neighboring country; (4) the result of changing national boundaries and the political turmoil that can result; (5) recruitment of low-skilled workers to fill labor gaps, especially for domestic and manual labor; and (6) special entry for high-skilled workers. Berg and Besharov conclude that these patterns of migration could change if current economic and social factors shift.

CONTROLLING ENTRY

Most destination countries have active policies designed to control the entrance of migrants, generally seeking to limit migration by the low-skilled, refugees, and asylum seekers, and to encourage the migration of the high-skilled. In “Searching for New Policy Frameworks in the Wake of the Great Recession,” Roberto Suro of the University of Southern California notes that U.S. policy since the 1970s has been characterized by debate about two elements: control of unauthorized entry at the border and authorized admission of new immigrants. He argues that the Great Recession revealed the relative ineffectiveness of U.S. policy in controlling the flow of unauthorized migrants, and that the ups and downs of the U.S. labor market have done more to determine the rise and fall of migrant flows than control of the borders. Yet, in the current downturn, many unauthorized migrants have not left the U.S., but rather stayed despite economic hardships. Hence, U.S. policy may have inadvertently encouraged many unauthorized migrants to stay in the country, because crossing the border became more costly and more difficult.

In “European Union Policies,” Anja Wiesbrock of Maastricht University explains how, before the 1990s, migration policy in Europe was driven by the

essentially independent policy developments of individual countries, resulting in a myriad of varying regulations and policies developed. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, however, and a growing flow of migrants from Eastern Europe, EU member states began working to establish common migration policies. Nevertheless, because migration policy is still politically sensitive, most European policymaking remains at the individual EU-member state level.

In “EU External Migration Policy and Migration Synergies,” Katharina Eisele of Maastricht University outlines the evolution of EU migration policies toward non-EU countries. In 2005, the EU established the “Global Approach to Migration” framework, a comprehensive approach that sought to focus migration policy in three areas: economic legal migration, illegal migration, and migration as a means of development in non-EU sending countries. Despite the broader framework, migration policies have tended to focus on irregular migration, such as human trafficking, illegal migration, and granting asylum.

As early as the 1970s, the oil-rich Gulf States attracted many migrants to work in their oil fields. These were mainly low-skilled construction and domestic workers drawn from countries like Algeria, Morocco, Bangladesh, and India. These migrants often faced challenges including work without pay, unsafe working conditions, and poor physical treatment of workers. In “Middle East Country Policies,” Binod Khadria of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India, describes the migration challenges of countries in the Persian Gulf region, specifically in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). During the 1970s oil boom and the 1980s, as infrastructure projects expanded, more skilled labor was needed than was available from the native-born. As economic conditions changed, however, and unemployment rose among locals the demand for foreign workers declined, leading to restrictions on the number of new arrivals.

ATTRACTING THE HIGH-SKILLED

At the same time that countries are seeking to control the overall flow of migrants, competition for high-skilled workers is heating up in a global race for talent. In “Highly-Skilled Migration to the EU and the U.S.: The Legal Framework,” Metka Hercog and Anja Wiesbrock of Maastricht University describe the EU’s recently created fast-track system for highly skilled migrants: 2009’s “Blue Card Directive.” This EU-wide work permit program allows the entry of highly skilled workers and is designed to address shortages of highly skilled workers that European companies have faced in recent years. According to Hercog and Wiesbrock, many European countries are now more attractive from a legal perspective than the U.S. for highly skilled workers because of the ease of entry and benefits that are given. However, few have taken advantage of the new program. Instead, the U.S. still attracts more high-skilled migrants, likely because of other reasons, particularly the reputation of the U.S. as a migrant-friendly country, subsequent residency and family reunification policies, and greater education and employment possibilities.

Mary Breeding of the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group examines temporary labor programs in “Indian Migration and ‘Temporary’ Labor Programs in the United States, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands: Costs and Benefits.” Utilizing data on visas and work permits issued by all three countries, Breeding finds that for high-skilled Indian migrants, the U.S. remains the top destination, but recent changes in programs in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have made temporary worker policies there more flexible—resulting in an increase in the number of work permits given to high-skilled Indian migrants.

INTEGRATION POLICIES

Receiving countries take different approaches to helping new arrivals adapt and adjust to their new homes. Some governments have formal integration programs and policies, but others, like the U.S., do little to help migrants integrate, leaving such efforts to the private sector or nonprofit organizations, and some countries have no wish for migrants to integrate—as they see them as only temporary workers who will soon leave.

Education is a key indicator of, and vehicle for, integration for both first-generation but especially second-generation migrants. In “Immigrant Children and Education in the United States,” Dylan Conger of George Washington University and Rebecca Hinze-Pifer of the University of Chicago provide an overview of research on migrant education and a demographic portrait of immigrant children in the U.S. They describe a number of policies that are directed specifically at foreign-born students, and find that, especially in the area of English acquisition, evidence on the effectiveness of methods for teaching English is mixed. They conclude that it may be more effective to promote programs that help disadvantaged students generally, which would include migrant students, than to promote migrant-specific programs.

In “The Educational Performance of Children of Immigrants in Sixteen Organizations for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Countries,” Jaap Dronkers of Maastricht University and Manon De Heus of the University of Stockholm focus on the influence of macro-level factors of educational performance. They find that destination country factors such as teacher shortages can negatively affect immigrant student achievement. Conversely, test scores are higher if the receiving country has a long-standing immigrant community from the sending country, and immigrant children do better in receiving countries that have longer periods of compulsory education.

In “Citizenship Policies in the European Union: The International Framework and Domestic Trends,” Maarten Peter Vink and Gerard-Rene De Groot, both of Maastricht University, highlight the convergence of recent EU policy developments while noting that substantial differences among member states remain. It is, for example, much easier to gain citizenship in Spain than in Germany. They trace six broad trends in EU citizenship policies: (1) more equal treatment of women and men for descent-based citizenship; (2) convergence among EU countries regarding birthright citizenship (*jus soli*) and citizenship based on the origin of one’s parents (*jus sanguinis*), with many EU countries having some mix of the two policies; (3) greater acceptance of dual citizenship; (4) greater use of tests (language, citizenship) and setting of other conditions for naturalization such as requiring a certain number of years of legal residence in an EU country; (5) greater attention to statelessness, now including provisions for children born abroad to citizen parents to be registered as citizens in a country’s consulate; and (6) taking more account of their membership in the EU when modifying citizenship policies, so that there is likely to be more convergence of policies in the future.

DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT POLICIES

Diaspora engagement has become increasingly important for sending countries as they have come to see their diaspora as agents of their own development and stability. As a result, many countries attempt to maintain ties with their diaspora that are cultural and political as well as economic (that is, beyond remittances, investment, and knowledge transfers). India, Morocco, and Turkey, for example, have established government agencies with the main mission of reaching out to their diaspora. Some countries, like Mexico, provide a range of protective and supportive

services through networks of consulates in receiving countries. (Mexico has over 50 consulates in the U.S.)

In “Diaspora Engagement Strategies of India and Ethiopia: The Power of the Strong State,” Katie Kuschminder and Metka Hercog of Maastricht University describe how both countries seek to use their diasporas as a development resource. India’s diaspora is well-educated (most are economic emigrants) and has a greater capacity than Ethiopia’s to give back to the home country (for example, in the form of remittances). Hence, diaspora engagement is an Indian national priority, and India extends all the rights of citizenship, including voting rights, to those abroad. By contrast, Ethiopia, although it looked to India when creating its own diaspora policies, did not go as far. It extends only some of the rights of citizenship to its emigrants, not, for example, voting rights. (Ethiopia’s emigrants are more likely to be political refugees.)

In “Diaspora Engagement Policies after Conflict: Burundi and Rwanda,” Sonja Frensen and Melissa Siegel of Maastricht University describe how Burundi and Rwanda have the same development and social engagement goals for their diasporas, but Rwanda has done more and has been more successful due to its greater capacity and government management. Its diaspora policy is a key part of its development plan and has three elements: (1) greater cohesion of the country’s diverse diaspora, (2) greater communication between Rwanda and its diaspora, and (3) stronger engagement of the diaspora in Rwanda’s socio-economic development. By contrast, Burundi has relied on nonprofit and voluntary diaspora groups to maintain connections to its diaspora.

In “Diaspora Engagement Policies of Countries with Similar Emigration Histories: Morocco and Turkey,” Ozge Bilgili and Silja Weyel describe how both have long had policies to engage their diasporas. But the multiplicity of policies and of agencies responsible for managing these policies have often led to uncoordinated, and sometimes conflicting and counterproductive, efforts. Both Turkey and Morocco recently established umbrella government institutions, but it remains to be seen if this will strengthen either country’s efforts.

CONCLUSION

At this time, the global economic downturn seems to have reduced, at least temporarily, migration in many regions of the world (as is the case for Mexico/U.S. migration). Hence, the conference provided a timely review of past migration trends and policy responses.

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