

# International Migration Policies: Should They Be A New G20 Topic?

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## Abstract

International migration ~~should be a core subject for~~ global governance, given its transnational nature, and yet ~~its “ugly duckling.”~~ The global community has shied away from taking any concrete action to regulate cross-border flows of people, at least until 2015, when the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean prompted Turkey to include migration in the Antalya agenda. It is unlikely that the international community will move beyond the current consensus based on humanitarian principles and recognize that the free flow of people is a right, on the same level as trade and capital liberalization. At the same time, ~~most~~ criticism of migration policies is misplaced: efforts should ~~go on improving~~ implementation of existing policies and fine-tuning them in ~~terms of~~ entrance and integration, preferably in cooperation with the country of origin. The G20 should play a leading role in facilitating such coordination, also taking into account the increasing importance of South–South migration (such as ~~Chinese migrants in Africa~~).

Key words: G20, migration, population growth, refugees

JEL codes: F22, J6

## I. Introduction

Coping with international migration and refugee flows has always been a contentious issue and nowadays many nations rank it as their top problem. This is particularly true in the European Union (EU), where according to a July 2015 Eurobarometer survey it is deemed to be more important even than pure economic concerns.<sup>1</sup> The political debate in many countries is dominated by immigration and the refugee crisis, with most policy

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<sup>1</sup>See European Commission Press Release, “Spring 2015 Standard Eurobarometer: Citizens see immigration as top challenge for EU to tackle,” 31 July 2015, available from [Europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-5451\\_en.htm](http://Europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5451_en.htm).



proposals being in the direction of tightening controls. As the possibility, and indeed the opportunity, of adopting common rules, positions of actors diverge. Taking Europe as an example, the development of the Common European Asylum policy has shifted the locus of policy-making on asylum seekers and refugees towards the 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 economic theory of migration also highlights the benefits for home countries, which could facilitate cooperation and policy coordination. Global cooperation would also help to minimize the costs (human no less than financial) associated with migration crises.

The ongoing refugee crisis in the Middle East and North Africa led the G20 to address migration in the 2015 Antalya communiqué, although the separate, but related, topic of remittances has received increasing attention at the international level since the G8 Sea Island Summit in 2004.<sup>2</sup> 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 should be adopted and implemented.

This paper begins with a brief 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 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 final section summarizes the main components of a possible G20 agenda in 2016 and beyond.

## II. Trade and Migration: Different Dynamics?

Following the seminal work by Heckscher and Ohlin (see Ohlin, 1933), international trade theory considers the flows of goods and the flows of people as substitutes, each other in the long run: trade in goods can increase job opportunities and wage



<sup>2</sup>In the context of the G8, remittances have continued to attract interest and a Global Remittances Working Group (GRWG), which 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 in Seoul and further defined their commitment in the area of the reduction of the cost of remittances by formally including the “5 × 5 Objective” (an initiative to reduce remittance cost by 5-percentage point within 5 years) in the 2011 Cannes Summit Final Declaration.

increases will discourage migration. In many cases and in the short run, however, they complement each other, either increasing or decreasing as the destination or the origin economy cycle dominates. Even if, in the long run, the two flows can substitute each other, what are relevant for forecasts and policy design are the many short-term deviations from this long-term trend. In practice, however, trade and migration are very different. This is not only because the movement of human beings and of goods and services concern, for instance, different sets of rights, 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 migration flows. In Europe, emigration from Southern to Northern countries started to decline when origin countries entered the EU, at a time when the income differential with destination countries was approximately 30 percent (Venturini, 2004). However, income levels in the country of origin had reached the migration threshold. What does this mean? Riccardo Faini in his seminal talk in 1993<sup>3</sup> explains 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 origin country is still positive, not when it is equal to zero (Faini and Venturini, 1993, 2010). This implies, however, that mass emigration is a transitory phase of economic development that is followed by smaller outflows and returns home. This is not true of trade in goods and services.

Faini also paves the 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 emigration.<sup>4</sup> Martin and Taylor (1996), along similar lines, identify the mechanisms behind the migration hump caused by the increase in trade of goods and services that resulted from the US–Canada–Mexico North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As a general rule, it seems that in poor countries labor migration 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 there is also smuggling). They can come through

<sup>3</sup>The talk was followed by the article by Faini and Venturini (1993).

<sup>4</sup>More recently see also Clemens (2014).

the front door as labor migrants, or through family reunification schemes, or as asylum seekers; or they can come through the back door, which George Borjas referred to as the irregular entrance (Borjas, 1999). 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 percent of all inflows, while labor migrants account for approximately 30 percent and refugees around 20 percent (OECD, 2014). This means that for each legal labor migrant, there are two or three more individuals that arrive. Thus, even if a country closes its frontier to new labor immigrants, the total stock of the foreign population will increase as family members follow already established migrants. These family members will not necessarily find job.

### III. Media and Perceptions

In *The Globalization Paradox*, Dani Rodrik (2012, p. 266) observes 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). If this is not the case for migration it is largely because trade and migration are very different flows, but also because people perceive migration and trade differently and, thus, politicians are obliged to approach the two issues in different ways. Often the media transforms small episodes related to immigration (in particular crime news) into big, nationwide stories, thus influencing the perception of citizens. Policy-makers are obliged to take the perceptions of their citizens into account, but rarely do they consider improving the information that citizens receive: some politicians feed the public's migration prejudices, which are rooted in a limited knowledge of the dynamics and the effects of migration. **In fact people's attitudes and government policies towards immigration ~~try to be~~ generally aligned.** When public opinion towards immigration is generally negative, governments may adjust policy or at least the narrative of policy in that direction by decreasing the level of immigration to



their countries.<sup>5</sup>

The public generally perceive trade more favorably than migration, as shown by Mayda (2007) using data from the International Social Survey Programme covering 22 countries. There are many reasons, one being working in export sectors (Mayda, 2007); another key element is having incorrect 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 USA that have anti-immigration as their main, and indeed quasi-exclusive, campaign topic. Hatton (2016a) uses the European Social Survey to examine whether the recession has produced a change in public opinion on immigration. From 2002 to 2014, there was, in aggregate terms, a decrease in the anti-immigration opinion in the European countries, with large variations across countries.<sup>6</sup> 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-percent increase in negative sentiment towards immigrants coming from poor countries, while there was a reduction in negative sentiment towards 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 percent of the population deem their country too generous (Sweden is well-known for its comprehensive welfare system), whereas in Germany 46.2 percent view this to be the case; in all likelihood the population is worried about the recent decision to accept 900 000 Syrian refugees (Hatton, 2016a).


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. However, the comparative results of the surveys are questionable as there are no controls on the events which took place the 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.<sup>7</sup> This increases the difficulty of using surveys' results for policy purposes because many omitted variables influence public opinion.

The increase in mortalities at sea is another example of the distortions that are




<sup>5</sup>See IOM (2015).

<sup>6</sup>For example, there was a sharp increase (19.4 percent) among Czech citizens compensated by a roughly equivalent reduction among Norwegians Eurobarometer 2015.

<sup>7</sup>For example, the arrival of boat people in Italy is less relevant for Polish people than the arrival of asylum seekers in Hungary: Poland is closer to Hungary and has, to some extent, a shared history and national narrative.

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 out of control. Analyzing the share of people who lose their life while attempting to cross the Mediterranean, the impression is that the management of this phenomenon is improving: 31 per 1000 persons died in 2012 and 3 per 1000 in 2015. However, considering the figures in absolute terms, 3000 individuals perished in 2014 and another  in 2015; this figure is high compared with 686 in 2013, because the total flows are increasing (IOM missing data-base) and of course the media report **only the number.**

#### IV. Migration Stereotypes

 Migration stereotypes explain why people perceive migration so ~~differently from what it is and~~ negatively. One of the ~~best-known~~  stereotypes is that there are hordes of people ~~coming~~ from the South to the North, who ~~come and exploit welfare systems and take jobs. This simple sentence, which is so frequently expressed,~~  flawed in a number of ways.

First, there is the erroneous idea that we live in a period of mass migration. According to the United Nations Population Division data, while international migration has increased in absolute number, it ~~was~~ 3.1 percent of the world's population in 1960, declined to 2.7 percent in 1980, and bounced back to 3.3 percent in 2015. Thus, in the past 50 years the share of migrants has been relatively stable.<sup>8</sup>

Second, it is not true that most, let alone all, migrants move from South to North. South–South migration is actually larger (84 million vs 81 million) and many people (37 million) are internally displaced in developing countries (de Haas, 2014).

Third, extensive research on the propensity of immigrants to use the welfare system has proven insufficient ~~which caused the public debate in destination countries~~. The research shows that, in general, foreign citizens do not make use of welfare systems more than natives, even if they are more eligible (being on the lower rungs of income distribution). ~~And~~ even when studies suggest greater use of welfare by migrants, the effect on the public spending is very small both in the USA and in European countries (Barrett, 2012).

Fourth, the role of migrants in the labor market has also attracted ~~more~~  attention by

<sup>8</sup>See de Haas (2014), Fargues (2014) and OECD (2016). According to ~~the definition for migrants by~~ the United Nations Population Division, an international migrant is someone who has been living for 1 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.

researchers in all destination countries. Economic research explains that the conditions necessary for foreign labor to cause 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 labor markets is very limited, even in periods of very large inflows (Brücker, 2012). Not only are highly-skilled migrants in demand, low and medium-skilled workers are also needed in agriculture, construction and the care sector. Population aging and increases in female labor 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 labor 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 labor market characteristics. “Brain waste” becomes a core issue of the debate on the pro-migrant side. In most cases, the problem derives from the lack of jobs ~~at the same level as~~ migrants’ fields of qualifications in the destination country. Even if qualifications are recognized, there ~~is~~ a relative lack of jobs requiring ~~these~~ qualifications: this causes brain waste among migrants, which is less common among natives who know the labor market options in advance and can direct their education path towards ~~the~~ appropriate choices.

There are also stereotypes about the effect of migration on origin countries, where the positive effect of remittances and the negative effect of the “brain drain” with the migration of the highly-skilled are frequently flagged. Highly-skilled emigration frequently produces a brain gain because it incentivizes secondary school attendance and results in a more educated labor force, which favors, 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 drain. 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, with excellent returns on investment and trade.

Remittances, in contrast, if the country is small with a large section of the population abroad, risk creating a subsidized economy where remittances are only used for consumption and where productive activity is reduced significantly.


## V. 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 labor market and limited integration in the labor market, which, in turn, can cause immigrants to make greater use of the welfare system. All in all, national migration policies are largely appropriate and the focus should be on better management, not really on any revolutionary change. Improving the efficacy of migration policies has long been high on the political agenda, which involves defining 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 in the labor market, in particular the highly-skilled (Alesina *et al.*, 2013; Fassio *et al.*, 2015).<sup>9</sup> For example, in the USA, the magnitude of the cap on employer-sponsored working visas (H-1B) for STEM (PhD in statistics, technology, mathematic and science) workers has attracted a great deal of attention in the past couple of years, while in Europe it is the number of Blue Card visa holders that has drawn attention (Martin *et al.*, 2015). Certainly, these areas need revision. However, migration policies encompass more than just the “who” of migration and “how” a foreign national can enter a country. Migration policies also determine the path that defines the rights of foreign citizens in the destination country, such as citizenship paths, access to welfare services and to education. All these rights are part of what makes a destination country attractive.

When these policies are unable to deliver immigration within the integration capacity of the destination country, specific integration policies have to be implemented at the local level. These policies need to address, for instance, unemployment and lack of language proficiency. ~~These past used policies tend to~~ follow a universalistic approach to avoid conflict among the neediest. In addition, few activities are tailored to the needs of foreign nationals, such as linguistic support or cultural integration programs.

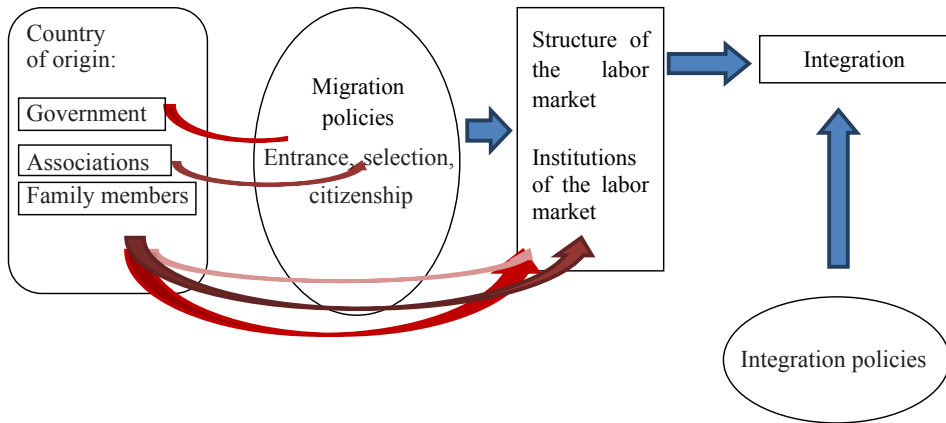
Increasing numbers of programs are being designed for migrants’ children, given that early integration is important for educational performance and constitutes a prerequisite for full socioeconomic integration. First movers do not know if they want to stay and frequently circular migration models are 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 professional skills demanded in the labor market to fully integrate; the second generation deserves special attention to assure future citizenships. This dimension ~~was under considered~~ in the past, while it deserves specially-tailored policies and  important investments. An

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<sup>9</sup>The share of the highly-skilled among total migrants is increasing in all destination areas: 34 percent in north-western Europe; 32 percent in non-OECD Europe; 29 percent in North America; 14 percent in Latin America; 12 percent in Southern Europe; but just 8 percent in Africa (OECD, 2016).



Figure 1. Factors Affecting Integration of Migrants in the Destination Countries



interesting Migration Policy Institute (MPI) study (McHugh and Morawski, 2016) shows that poor knowledge of the English language is an important reason for the limited integration of foreign workers in the USA. This limited knowledge ~~straps~~ migrants into low-skilled occupations with no career path. Thus, if early entrance in the labor market 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 Figure 1). Migration starts in the origin country and partnership agreements (as in the EU) or bilateral agreements can solve many problems that migrants in the destination country face. Labor migration should be better organized for origin countries, involving them in pre-departure training of migrants in order to manage expectations and help ~~them in acquiring~~ the skills demanded abroad.<sup>10</sup> Better information on legislation and the languages of the destination countries should be part of the pre-departure training to ~~reduce migrants irregular labor~~. This type of pre-departure training should be extended to reunified family members to help them avoid segregation into ethnic communities and to integrate socially and economically. Lemaître (2014) reveals that migrants who enter destination countries as family members suffer from over-education more than labor migrants. One of the main ~~causes~~ is the limited training they receive at home and the limited labor training they receive in the destination country, which limits their job search ability.

There are three migration pillars: partnership with origin countries, admission

<sup>10</sup>See the *INTERACT Project* (2015, available from: <http://interact-project.eu/>), Martin and Makaryan (2015) and Garces-Mascarenas and Penninx (2016).

policies and integration policies. These pillars could possibly be successfully implemented in various countries with different geographies, labor legislation and agency of border control. However, the recent surge in asylum seekers has challenged all the policy mechanism and requires a much greater effort to share responsibility, not only in the EU but also at the international level.

If we consider labor migration both the labor market needs of destination countries the reasons behind emigration play an important role in defining the total amount of inflow ~~at the last only under the constraint of destination country's possibilities.~~

With asylum seekers, the scenario is the opposite. The surge in asylum seekers has already pushed the limits of the nation state's responsibility for migration inflows. However, now the asylum crisis has shown that Europe cannot rely on intra-EU, let alone international, solidarity (Fargues, 2015).


## VI. European Refugee Crisis and Future Migration Pressure


In 2014, 210 000 unauthorized migrants arrived by boat in Italy (140 000), Greece, Spain and Malta; in 2015, the total was 900 000 (mainly in Greece).<sup>11</sup> This massive inflow is taking place following 15 years in which arrivals have never been more than 100 000 a year. The extraordinary pressure of the increasing number of asylum seekers has placed the resources and organization of the border countries to the test.

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

The non-border countries are already now investing in the integration of refugees and providing skill assessment and training for their long-run assimilation into the destination labor 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 provide with first-instance assistance and employ the European social fund (or similar funds) to support targeted measures to integrate migrants into the labor market. Therefore, current and future asylum assistance will increasingly see large differences among countries in regards to the type and volume of assistance and integration support offered and the attempts to enter border countries to move into non-border countries will continue.

<sup>11</sup>Data are from UNHCR, available from: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>.


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

 However, coordination should be 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 percent of asylees (IOM, 2015). In 2015 the United Nation High Commission for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (UNHCR) resettled 90 000 individuals, mostly in the USA, Canada and Australia, with only 10 000 settling in Europe. All in all, almost 70 000 persons were admitted to the USA as refugees during 2014, principally from Iraq, Burma, Somalia and Bhutan (US Department of State, US Department of Homeland Security and US Department of Health and Human Services, 2015).

The low capacity of the UNHCR to resettle asylum seekers directly from origin countries shows how much has to be done together by destination countries. However, 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, there are 7 million internally displaced people (IDP), plus 4.7 million Syrians are in countries of first asylum, with fewer than 1 million Syrian refugees in Europe (IOM data-base).

Anticipating asylum dynamics is crucial for providing timely assistance, avoiding deaths at sea, and conserving economic and human resources. To some extent, modeling future asylum inflows is possible. The estimates by 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. Bilak *et al.* (2015) estimate the number of asylum seekers globally to be 37 million in 2016. The newly displaced amount to 3.8 million in the Middle East, 3 million 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 in 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.

 However, the future of migration is not only on the refugees' side and based on conflicts. Emigration flows are dependent on the demographics of origin countries and future trends can be forecasted well in advance. Fertility rates are declining worldwide but they are still well above the replacement rate in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern

Asia. Thus, in sub-Saharan countries the total population is projected to increase by 350 million by 2030 and in Southern Asia by a little more (UN, 2015). While in Europe the population will shrink by 8 percent and in China by 3 percent, in India it will increase by 62 percent and in sub-Saharan Africa by 31 percent by 2030 (OECD, 2016). Employment prospects in sub-Saharan Africa are pretty dire: the workforce increased by 50 percent in 2015, but only 60 percent of youth manage to find jobs; others have moved abroad, not only to Europe but also to richer neighboring countries (OECD, 2016).

To some extent, it is also possible to project future needs in host countries. Even if Europe is aging, the number of potential migrants in Africa and the Middle East vastly exceeds the potential demand for migrants. The same is true in Russia where the recession has reduced the demand for labor; likewise, in the Gulf countries, foreign labor represents 20 percent of the population in 2014, down from close to 40 percent in 2010 (OECD, 2016).

## VII. International Migration Policies: Principles, Priorities and Institutions

By definition, international migration is not a domestic issue, but it has been managed mostly through a bilateral process with most power in the hands of destination countries. The refugee crisis, not only in the Mediterranean but also in South-East 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. It is unfair that the total number of resettlements from Syria per year are capped at just 100 000 persons, while nine or ten times as many refugees are arriving in Italy and Greece each year and the numbers of those fleeing to neighboring Middle East countries are 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 intervening in this process should be widened outside the traditional circle of North Atlantic recipients and selected Southern countries of origin, in particular Mexico, Turkey and some Mediterranean 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, 86 percent of the world’s displaced were living in developing countries (IOM, 2015): in the case of Afghans, 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. Of course, the same is true further from Eurasia, for example in South-East Asia with the Rohingya minority of Myanmar, labeled the world’s most persecuted people.

Coordination should support countries facing large numbers of claims from spontaneous asylum applicants to embark on substantial resettlement. This would allow refugees to avoid perilous journeys to safe countries and to mitigate the stress on reception centres. The responsibility is global, because political conflicts are distributed around the world (Pettersson and Wallensteen, 2015). It is not exclusively for Europe to feel responsible for the Middle East refugee crisis; similarly, when the Vietnamese boat people fled through China in the 1970s, this was also an international issue.

The best strategy for asylum claims is clear and uncontentious (see Hatton, 2016b). It should include the following basic elements: (i) resettlement from areas of conflict for people in need of protection; (ii) shared border controls to better understand the dimensions of the phenomenon and its complexity; and (iii) a burden-sharing rule to allow countries to work together.

Similarly, multilateral coordination of labor migration is needed and should link development policies to migratory propensity and focus on development programs that 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 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 populations.<sup>12</sup> Negotiators should be cautious and recognize that different welfare states have different labor 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 International Labor Organization, the World Bank and, obviously, the International Organization for Migration and UNHCR should be involved. However, 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 G20 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.

### 1. Short-term Migration Issue

The G20 should intervene in the resettlement process of asylum seekers by increasing

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<sup>12</sup>See the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and West Africa, which entered into force in 2015 and includes free trade areas in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement.

the number of countries involved in the procedure and the total number of asylum ~~demand~~ that each country accepts, and by speeding up the procedure. All countries should be involved in this process and the 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. The UNHCR should be supported by a research unit to provide accurate analysis of flows and set up resettlement organizations, possibly including the private sector, ~~more proactive in intervening in all emergency areas.~~

## 2. Medium-term Migration Issue

The demographic transition is surely the most acute issue in Africa, ~~with a large increase in population,~~ but will also be important for many countries experiencing ageing and 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: there should be 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 finding employment.** There must also be recognition that better border controls, no matter how important in favoring legal migration, will ultimately be insufficient given the projected scale of population growth, especially in Africa.



## 3. Permanent Migration Issue

Deeper investments in migrant integration should be also undertaken by destination countries. Current migrants will be the citizens of the future, and are especially important given the aging and shrinking nature of destination populations. The integration process for labor and for family members' migration starts in the origin countries: bilateral agreements and partnership agreements should be implemented to ease the process at departure. Pre-departure training with instruction in the destination language, legislation and culture should become routine. For asylees, integration interventions need to start in the resettlement phase before the asylum process is completed, not least because in this phase tailored policies can be more easily designed and implemented. This will produce common aggregate benefits, reducing the mobility of marginal groups that can export conflict from one state to another (as in the 2015 and 2016 attacks in France).

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 percent of the world's migrants come

from China, the fourth most important source country (it was the seventh most important 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, the characteristics of Chinese emigration are rapidly changing: ~~the highly-skilled workers are nowadays five times more chances of migrating than the averaged Chinese.~~<sup>13</sup> Low-skilled or unskilled migrants are increasingly moving to developing nations in Asia and Africa, whereas until recently Japan and Korea were the main destinations for these migrants.

One case has received particular attention, that of Chinese migrants to sub-Saharan Africa. ~~Estimates of number differ, but there are approximately currently 1 million Chinese migrants in sub-Saharan Africa.~~ At any rate, there is no doubt that the Chinese diaspora is only second to ~~the Indians in stock terms~~ and is way ahead of any other in terms of recent flows. The phenomenon has ~~attracted wide attention~~ in North America and Europe, where the media spread stereotypes of empire building and land grabbing, but is 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.<sup>14</sup> However, the numbers remain small: 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.

## VIII. Conclusions

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

<sup>13</sup>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.

<sup>14</sup>See “Xi announces 10 major China–Africa cooperation plans for coming 3 years,” Forum on China–Africa Cooperation, 8 December 2015, available from: [http://www.focac.org/eng/ltada/dwjbzjjhys\\_1/t1322068.htm](http://www.focac.org/eng/ltada/dwjbzjjhys_1/t1322068.htm).

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 continue to increase over the next few decades, mostly from the South to the North and mostly from Africa to Europe. Therefore, labor migration should also be included in the G20 discussions and a broader range of countries and stakeholders should be involved in discussing and managing the issue.

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

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

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