

## **THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE MIGRATION PROBLEM**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The globalizing world, like the one we are living in today, undeniably brings many advantages with it. Examples include faster flows of technology, information and services, and increased employment opportunities to name at least a few. On the downside, globalization has led the gap between the rich and the poor to increase, it compromises the environment and it has brought about unfair working conditions for many employees, especially in the developing world.

As a consequence, the international community finds itself challenged to deal with globalization in a way that reduces the negative effects. In other words, solutions for the issues of the globalizing world need to be found. As mentioned above, globalization does not only refer to free flow of goods and capital, but also to flow of labor, and therewith to migration. The World Humanitarian Summits and the United Nations Summits on Refugees and Migrants account for an effort taken by the international community to deal with migration as one of the critical consequences of globalization. Migration can be understood as critical consequence of globalization insofar as it concerns not only one nation but the entire international community and as it requires regulation in order to prevent negative economic as well as humanitarian consequences.

Accordingly, this article looks at the new economics of globalization to provide an overview of the economic effects. Subsequently the politicization of immigration is deliberated and the global governance of migration discussed. Two recent world summits that address this theme: The World Humanitarian Summit 2016 and the United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants 2016 are discussed.

### **GLOBALIZATION**

#### ***The New Economics of Globalization***

Globalization, as defined by Merriam-Webster refers to “the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets” (Merriam-Webster). The term has made its way to a constant in political debates and agendas, media and academic journals for over three decades now.(Bordo, Taylor, & Williamson, 2005). Modern globalization thus is a relatively new phenomenon which could explain some of the difficulties managing it. In the following, negative and positive consequences of globalization in economic as well as social (humanitarian?)senses are discussed.

The process of globalization has led to the structural interdependence of economies around the world. Through the expansion and development of new technologies, international business operations have become more efficient as well as effective. It is safe to say that one of the major breakthroughs that facilitate international cooperation and trade was the invention of the internet. Modern technology, especially regarding communication has led to increasing consumer demands. People are informed about the products available around the world and thus demand the availability of a vast range of products of good quality for competitive prices. The results are increased global competition and therewith pressure for firms to operate internationally. In order to further nurture international cooperation, many countries decreased restrictions on cross-border trade and economic alliances that ease the movement of resources and labor beyond the nation state were formed (e.g. the European Union). Free trade agreements (FTAs) between countries additionally diminish barriers to trade.(Dunning, 1997).

### ***Free Trade***

But not all FTAs are seen in a positive light, as we can see by the example of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) among many others. The negotiations on this planned partnership between the US and the EU have been a cause for concern and complaint for people on both sides. Criticisms include the fear of corporations dominating over governments with the help of the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism, which would make it possible for corporations to take legal action against states. Furthermore, some fear the privatization of health services and an influx of genetically enhanced meat. Finally, the major point of criticism is that negotiations are held secretly between corporations and the EU commission. Negotiations are thus un-transparent for the population and difference between interests of consumers and corporations are not dealt with to the advantage of the corporations.(Atlantische Initiative e.V. Berlin, 2014).

### ***The Impacts of Globalization***

What should be mentioned regarding the impacts of globalization is that countries are not benefitting from free trade to the same extent. Parts of society, predominantly located in the global South are not involved in the globalization process the same way as others and thus do not profit from it to an equal extent. Enunciated in a more drastic way, Sagini writes that “globalization uses long, global and sleeky tentacles which suck the life, blood and sweat of the livelihood of peoples of the Third World.”(Sagini, 2015, p. 230). This would mean that globalization is connected to inequality and in terms of migration this means that it gives the ones who are left behind incentives and sometimes even forces them, to migrate to economically advanced countries who tend to be the major profiteer of the free flow of goods and capital. (Steger, 2008). Some even speak of ‘capitalistic globalization’, referring to globalization as a system “driven by or caused by capitalist production processes, practices and aspirations; public policies and collective identities and processes in the realm of industrial and information technology, international and internal migration, currency movements, ideas, communication and culture.” (Sagini, 2015, p. 229).

However, opinions differ on this matter. Thus, in contrary to the before mentioned, it has also been argued that the less developed world is profiting from globalization as well. Evidence exists that some of the developing economies do in fact enter the global market from the bottom. Accordingly, countries like for instance China or Mexico went through a process of ‘industrial upgrading’ as a result of globalization. Thus, they “moved from low-value to relatively high-value production”(Ritzer, 2010, p. 92).

To further investigate this argument, it is worthwhile mentioning Jeffrey Kentor’s research on “The Long Term Effects of Globalization on Income Inequality, Population Growth, and Economic Development”. Kentor included 88 less developed countries in his analyses on the effects of globalization. The results suggest that while foreign investment dependency has a significant positive effect on income inequality, gross domestic investment has a negative effect on income inequality. This, as the author argues, could have to do with the expansion of employment opportunities as a result of gross domestic investment. The findings further show a negative long-term effect of foreign capital penetration on the growth of the countries’ gross national product per capita. A positive impact on that could be found for trade openness. The study shows that it is not possible to label globalization as ‘bad’ or ‘good’ but it suggests to focus on understanding “the (sometimes competing) effects of the various components of this global process”(Kentor, 2001, p. 451). (Ibid.).

### ***Globalization and Migration***

Although globalization is usually associated with free trade and free capital, migration is also a key factor because the economic consequences of a free flow of goods and capital are equivalent

to those of a flow of labor. This means that when a country opens its borders to the global market it at the same time opens its borders to migrant labor. Thus, one of the consequences of globalization and the opening of markets is the increasing demand for flexible, mobile workers. An example would be the demand for Information Technology (IT) specialists in the US and Germany. The European Blue Card Visa Program for instance is a program that provides skilled non-EU nationals with a work-and residence permit. Programs like this aim at closing the gap between supply and demand of qualified labor, which the European Union estimated at 20 million over the next 20 years in 2007.(Solimano, 2010).

An IT specialist migrating to the US or Germany would account for a regular migrant who responds to the global demand for flexible workers. And so do irregular migrants, yet oftentimes they are “subject to highly exploitive forms of labor”(McNevin, 2011, p. 40) with menial pay and no social protection.(McNevin, 2011). In contrast, immigration policy can also be understood as a protective mechanism to domestic markets. Through restrictive immigration policy, states can protect parts of their markets that they do not want to open to foreign labor.

Through the mobilization of labor, money flows back to the guest workers’ countries of origin. In terms of the effects of globalization on developing countries mentioned earlier, one could argue that this opens markets in developing countries that allow them to import goods from developed nations and therewith contributes to their development.

As a consequence of the critical points mentioned, the issue of migration became a political one. In the following, the politicization of immigration is elaborated upon, tackling the questions how and why countries politicize this issue and in what way it influences politics in the EU and the US.

## **The Politicization of Immigration**

### ***Why Countries Politicize Immigration***

A social topic becomes politicized when it is defined as a political issue that requires action from public officials and policies are formulated as a result. Attention drawn on the issue usually emerges through public opinion that the media catches and transfers via party politics to the government that finally deals with it through policies. Also, different positions between competing parties on a topic can lead to the politicization of it (polarization). (Van der Brug, D'Amato, Berkhout, & Ruedin, 2015).

As to why countries would have an interest in politicizing immigration, German political sociologist and Professor Christian Joppke refers to three aspects migration has an impact on. According to Joppke, a country could have an interest in politicizing immigration; because of the

impact migration has on (a) a country's sovereign control over external borders, (b) the regulation of access to citizenship, and (c) a nation's cultural self-understanding.

The first aspect refers to the fact that the control over who is allowed to access a state remains one of the few "domains in which states can still be strong – 'renationalizing' immigration policies as an antidote to the 'denationalizing' logic of globalization"(Joppke, 1998). Looking at the European Union, this aspect becomes even more relevant, since countries could feel "threatened" not only by the 'denationalizing' logic of globalization, but also by the European Union as a body of supranational institutions itself. Under the pretext of the European Union, Member States continue to transfer sovereignty to the supranational institutions like the EU council, parliament and commission. This transfer of sovereignty, despite of the advantages it has, can lead to states experiencing the feeling of loss of control over its territory and the disappearance of national identity. As the 'nation-state' vanishes, "many people experience a loss of identity and of control over their destinies. At the same time, there so far is nothing beyond the nation-state that can serve as a new anchor for collective identities and can renew the sense of control."(Koopmans, Statham , Giugni, & Passy, 2005, p. 4).

The second aspect refers to a country's ability to regulate access to citizenship. Citizenship within this context can be defined as "the set of rights, duties, and identities linking citizens to the nation-state" (Koopmans, Statham , Giugni, & Passy, 2005, p. 7). Through the politicization of immigration and with the help of policies, a nation defines under which circumstances an immigrant is granted the right to citizenship and therewith access to rights and the responsibilities or duties attached to it. Countries are dealing in different ways with this issue, meaning criteria for citizenship vary significantly.

The third aspect refers to a nation's cultural self-understanding and identity. Accordingly, as one of the consequences of immigration within the wider frame of globalization, national cultural self-understandings and identities are challenged. The influx of people of different cultures to a country requires a certain degree of flexibility regarding established cultural norms. Thus, receiving nation-states could feel the need to politicize immigration in order to somewhat control or manage either the conservation of the existing cultural norms or the integration of foreign cultural aspects into the established culture. This particular aspect of immigration could either be received as an opportunity to create a diverse cultural landscape or as a threat to a nation's cultural identity. (Koopmans, Statham , Giugni, & Passy, 2005).

Furthermore, countries could politicize the issue of immigration as a reaction to security concerns. Consequently, it can be argued that immigration controls serve the purpose of crime prevention and security. This particular argument is frequently used in the right-wing of the political spectrum as we can see by the example of the European refugee crisis and the reactions

of right-wing parties of different European countries such as the *Alternative für Deutschland* in Germany, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* in Austria, or the *Nye Borgerlige* in Denmark. (FPÖ Kärnten, 2016);(Steuer, 2016); (Sirleschtov, 2015). Frauke Petry, leader of the *Alternative für Deutschland* for instance called for “the protection of the national security” and “the restoration of public order” in response to the current German government allowing refugees to apply for asylum in Germany (Sirleschtov, 2015). Similar arguments were brought forward by republican presidential candidate Donald J. Trump, who within the frame of his “10 Point Plan to Put America First” elaborates on the correlation between crime and vague immigration policies(The Trump Organization, 2016).

Summarizing, as for why countries would politicize the issue of immigration, it becomes clear that the act of politicization in this case is connected to the exertion of power and control. However, it is important to mention that politicizing the issue of immigration does not automatically mean restricting or decreasing immigration. Politicizing the issue means that it becomes part of the political agenda and that it requires action from political officials, yet it does not provide inside on the outcome the process of politicizing the issue is supposed to have (stimulating versus restricting immigration). In the following, the focus thus lies on the impact the migration problem has on politics in the EU and the US.

### ***The Impact of Immigration on Politics in the EU***

With the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, the Member States of the European Union decided on a common stance regarding free movement, immigration and asylum. In other words, “immigration and asylum policy became matters of common interest” (Geddes, 2005, p. 268).

Yet, until today, there is no common EU policy that regulates immigration and asylum and as a result neither exist supranational institutions with the authority to enforce them. Furthermore, third country nationals, meaning people who are not a citizen of an EU Member State, are excluded from the free movement scheme. In conclusion this means that every EU Member State handles third country immigration on a national level. (Geddes, 2005).

Most recently this has been visible in the way the refugee crisis is dealt with in Europe. The European Union and its Member States have been struggling to come to an agreement on how to handle the current refugee crisis. In 2015 alone, almost 1.5 million refugees claimed for asylum in the EU-countries, with more people arriving in 2016. (BBC News, 2016). While most refugees seek to claim asylum in the countries of Western and Northern Europe, such as the Scandinavian countries, Germany, or Austria, Hungary was the country with the highest proportion of asylum claims as measured against the country’s population. (ibid.). This has to do on the one hand with the geographic location of the country and the refugee route, and on the

other hand with the Dublin Regulations, which grant EU Member States the right to require another EU country a refugee entered first to take on responsibility for an asylum claim. The results are the disproportionate allocation of refugees in the European Union and tensions between the Member States that are destabilizing the Union.

In response to the refugee crisis, the EU Commission, the executive body of the European Union, has proposed a quota system according to which every member state of the Union would have to accept a certain number of refugees “scaled to a member state’s population and wealth” (Auley, 2016). In case of non-compliance with the agreement, states would have to pay a penalty of approximately \$287,000 per migrant. While German chancellor Angela Merkel supports the idea of a quota, many other country leaders, especially in Eastern Europe, oppose it. Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski even stated that the proposal “[...] sounds like an idea announced during April Fools’ Day.” (ibid.). Thus, opinions on how to govern the crisis are deeply divided among the European leaders. While Angela Merkel put forward a ‘welcome culture’, Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orban was warning against a “growing migrant menace” and decided to build a fence at the border to Serbia. (Lebor, 2016).

While the concept of the European Union is based on shared values and to some extent on shared policies that apply to every member state, as for instance the Schengen agreement or policies related to the monetary union, general policies take away sovereignty from the individual administrations of the countries. This in turn can lead to the fear that the European Union is taking on the form of a supranational government, strongly influenced by the more powerful European states like France or Germany. One of the consequences of the disagreement on how to react to the influx of refugees to Europe is the so called Brexit. Great Britain’s decision to exit the European Union has led to the discussion if the refugee crisis is going to tear the EU apart. President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker warned earlier this year that “the central economic achievements of the common market and the euro are at risk from incoherent, nationalistic reactions to migration and other crises” (MacDonald & Barkin, 2016). As of today, the European Union and its member states have not come to an agreement in terms of a common policy regulating the refugee crisis.

## **Global Governance**

### ***The Global Governance of Migration***

One aspect of globalization as outlined above is the need to jointly address certain issues that arise as a consequence of increased interconnectedness. In the beginning, the economic aspect of global governance was addressed. However, the “growing volume of and variety of cross-border flows of finance, investment, goods and services as well as the rapid and widespread diffusion of

technology” marks only one dimension of globalization(Weiss, 2013, p. 12). Other dimensions are the international movement of ideas, information and the movement of people. As related to the latter, the global governance of migration will be discussed in the following.

Global governance combines two different concepts. One refers to space, concerning

“everything happening worldwide”(Weiss, 2013, p. 28), and the other one to the business usually executed by governments, namely “the exercise of steering and control mechanisms for the purpose of maintaining the stability and order of the society in which it operates”(Whitman, 2005, p. 16). In other words, global governance refers to “cooperation between sovereign states on shared challenges”(EurActiv, 2013).

As mentioned before, one of the consequences of globalization is the movement of people from one country to another. Since the phenomenon of migration is way older than the concept of globalization, first reactions by states to the need to control the movement of people date back to the invention of the passport in the nineteenth century.(Weiss, 2013). In order to understand why there is the need to globally govern migration today, the reasons for why people decide to migrate should be considered. As outlined before, we are living in a world of development gaps between industrialized and developing nations, differences in income and wage, international differences in the availability and quality of health services, different crime rates and levels of democracy, and so on. All of these differences among others account for reasons why people decide to migrate. It has to be noted that globalization is of course not to blame for all of these differences, but it certainly plays a role.(Solimano, 2010).

Yet, one of the major if not the biggest challenge, the world is facing today in terms of migration is forced migration. A report released by the UN refugee agency UNHCR in 2015 addresses global forced displacement. The report shows record-high numbers for people forcefully displaced due to persecution, conflict and violence: “On average 24 people worldwide were displaced from their homes every minute of every day in 2015.” (UNHCR , 2016, p. 2). Whereas one might think that these people receive refuge in the richest countries of the world, the numbers show that 86 percent of the world’s refugees were hosted by developing countries, and 26 percent of these by least developed nations. (Ibid.). These numbers show how desperately needed the global governance of migration is.

Due to the conflict in Syria, Europe, home to some of the wealthiest nations in the world, is currently facing the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War. As mentioned before, the European Union which accounts for an example par excellence for global governance in many aspects(e.g. in terms of issues like trade, climate, human rights and financial management)is struggling with the governance of the refugee influx.

Yet, the European Union is only one of the many players in the global spectrum and does only include 26 nations. Looking at the broader picture, issues that need to be addressed on a level that includes almost all nations of the world are dealt with through international organizations and institutions such as the United Nations (UN) or the World Trade Organization (WTO) and through “more informal summits” such as World Humanitarian Summit and the United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants. These two summits account for two approaches to cooperate on a global level tackling the question on how to globally govern the refugee crisis.

### ***The World Humanitarian Summit 2016***

In May 2016 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon convened a World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey. This was the first time in seventy years that this type of summit was held. What brought it about are more than 130 million people worldwide needing humanitarian assistance to survive. (WHS, 2016). The purpose of the summit was to collectively take action in order to reduce and prevent human suffering. World leaders, as well as representatives of the civil society and the private sector came together collectively commit to an action plan, share good practices and create new partnerships.(Secretary-General of the United Nations, 2016).

The Secretary General introduced the Agenda for Humanity consisting of five core responsibilities which the global leaders were asked to commit to. The five core responsibilities are (1) Global leadership to prevent and end conflict, (2) Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity, (3) Leave no one behind: A commitment to address forced displacement, (4) Change people’s lives: from delivering aid to ending need, and (5) Financing: Invest in humanity.

The course of the summit was that participants were attending seven thematic roundtables. The themes consisted of the five core responsibilities in addition to “Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality” and “Natural Disasters and Climate Change: Managing Risks and Crisis differently”. The participants were asked to align themselves with in total 32 core commitments and were invited to formulate additional commitments individually or in partnership with other stakeholders. These commitments are” intended as tangible actions that support the implementation of a core commitment, or more broadly to help achieve the Agenda for Humanity.”(United Nations, 2016). The results show that on average stakeholders agreed with eleven core commitments. (Ibid.).

The first of the five core responsibilities ‘Global leadership to prevent and end conflict’ could be understood as the one with the most time pressure. Maybe because of that and considering the reports on the Syrian conflict’s scope over the last year, it was very disappointing to ascertain that this was one of the points not much progress could be achieved on. The absence of for this theme especially important leaders “made the high-level roundtable on “political leadership to

end and prevent conflict” a bit hollow, despite some interesting pledges” (Aly, 2016). Furthermore, it was hoped for “a better deal for refugees, displaced people and their hosts” (ibid.). In other words, no concrete suggestions were made on how to better address the issue of forced displacement. Other aspects that were not addressed to the expected extend include a plan on how to better protect civilians in war, to put people at the center of the discussions and the summit, to reform the UN Security Council and UN agencies, and to road map what happens next.

Manuel Bessler, head of the Swiss government’s humanitarian aid unit stated in conclusion that “There were a lot of commitments, but commitments of those who are committed. We need commitments of those who are not, or not yet, or have to be convinced. On this front, we have to do more; do better.”(Aly, 2016). Thus, it remains questionable how successful the summit was and what is going to improve. For now, the main question is what is going to happen with the commitments, meaning how they will be put forward, how they will be implemented and how accountability will be ensured. All of these questions, as for now, remain unanswered; however, the UN is currently reviewing the commitments and will put forward a plan which addresses these questions soon.

### ***United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants 2016***

The United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants, which was held for the very first time in September 2016, concentrated exclusively on the issue of large movements of refugees and migrants. The aim was to strengthen international cooperation regarding the response to these movements. Accordingly, a more responsible and predictable system to efficiently respond in a humane way to large movements of refugees and migrants was aimed to be created. World leaders, ministers and leaders of the UN attended, as well as international organizations, representatives of the civil society and the private sector. (UN Refugee Agency, 2016).

The summit was structured similar to the World Humanitarian Summit. Accordingly, six round tables discussing different aspects of the issue that need to be addressed existed. The themes were (1) The root causes of large movements of refugees, (2) Drivers of migration and the positive contributions of migrants, (3) International action and cooperation on issues related to displacement, (4) Global responsibility sharing for refugees and respect of international law, (5) Safe, regular, and orderly migration and the respect of Human Rights, and (6) Vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants on their journeys. (ibid.).

In comparison to the themes of the round tables at the World Humanitarian Summit, the UN summit on refugees and migrants focused more closely on particular issues related to large refugee movements. “States should vow to end immigration detention, particularly of children,

by implementing alternatives to detention; counter intolerance and the social exclusion of migrants through sustained initiatives to build empathy and confront discrimination; and give specific protection to all migrants in a vulnerable situation.”(OHCHR, 2016).

Critical voices after the summit stated that the declaration does not contain binding obligations for states to implement and enforce the commitments that were made and that little progress was made regarding new innovative approaches and mechanisms to tackle the crisis. On the other hand it was said that the summit was successful in the way that the scope of activities regarding the response to large refugee movements was widened and that the collective development of the declaration could lay the foundation for future legally binding commitments. (Stevens, 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

The article argued that globalization should not be only associated with free trade and free capital. Migration is also a key factor of globalization because its economic consequences have also economic consequences that extend beyond geographic borders. The article looked at the politicization of immigration and discussed the global governance of migration. It analyzes the results of two recent world summits that address this theme: the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 and the United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants 2016. These Summits are a perfect illustration of the globalization of the migration problem.

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