

Khalid Koser

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD
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Abbreviations

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
EEA	European Economic Area
ELR	Exceptional Leave to Remain
EU	European Union
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HTA	Home Town Association
ICT	Inter-Corporate Transferee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Office
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPS	International Passenger Survey
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIC	Newly Industrializing Country
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRD	Pearl River Delta, China
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America

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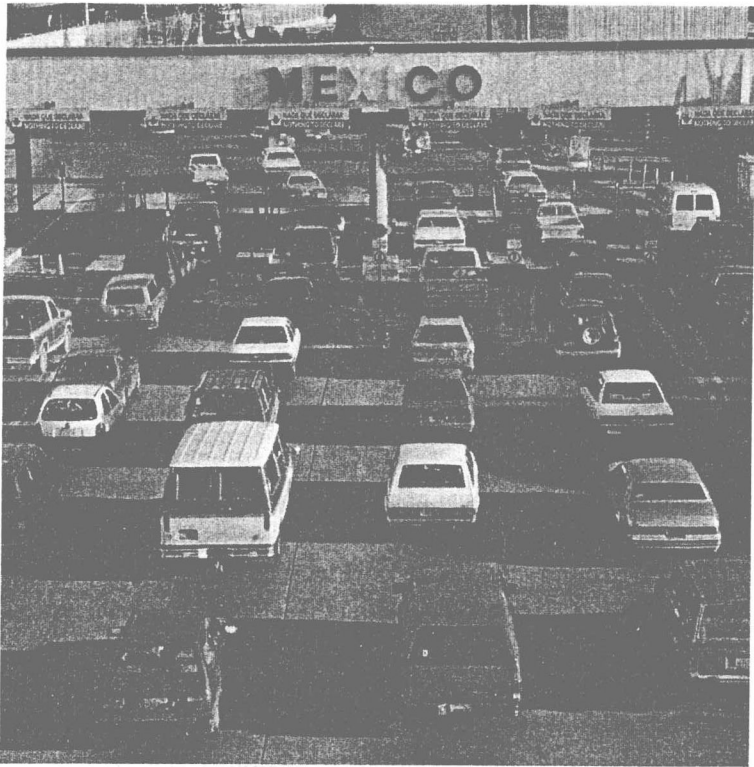
Chapter 1

Why migration matters

There are more international migrants today than ever before, and their number is certain to increase for the foreseeable future. Almost every country on earth is, and will continue, to be affected. Migration is inextricably linked with other important global issues, including development, poverty, and human rights. Migrants are often the most entrepreneurial and dynamic members of society; historically migration has underpinned economic growth and nation-building and enriched cultures. Migration also presents significant challenges. Some migrants are exploited and their human rights abused; integration in destination countries can be difficult; and migration can deprive origin countries of important skills. For all these reasons and more, migration matters.

A brief history of international migration

The history of migration begins with the origins of mankind in the Rift Valley in Africa, from where between about 1.5 million and 5000 BC *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* spread initially into Europe and later into other continents. In the ancient world, Greek colonization and Roman expansion depended on migration, and outside Europe significant movements were also associated with the Mesopotamian, Inca, Indus, and Zhou empires. Other significant



1. The US-Mexico border is the most frequently crossed international border in the world – about 350 million people cross it each year

migrations in early history include that of the Vikings and of the Crusaders to the Holy Land.

In more recent history, in other words in the last two or three centuries, it is possible to discern a series of major migration periods or events, according to migration historian Robin Cohen. Probably the predominant migration event in the 18th and 19th centuries was the forced transportation of slaves. An estimated 12 million people were forced from mainly western Africa to the New World, but also in lesser numbers across the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. Besides its scale, one of the reasons this migration is so important is that it still resonates for descendants of slaves and

among African Americans in particular. After the collapse of slavery, indentured labour from China, India, and Japan moved in significant numbers – some 1.5 million from India alone – to continue working the plantations of the European powers.

European expansion was also associated with large-scale voluntary resettlement from Europe, particularly to the colonies of settlement, the dominions, and the Americas. The great mercantile powers – Britain, the Netherlands, Spain and France – all promoted settlement of their nationals abroad, not just of workers but also peasants, dissident soldiers, convicts, and orphans. Migration associated with expansion largely came to an end with the rise of anti-colonial movements towards the end of the 19th century, and indeed over the next 50 years or so there were some significant reverse flows back to Europe, for example, of the so-called *pieds noirs* to France.

The next period of migration was marked by the rise of the United States of America (USA) as an industrial power. Millions of workers from the stagnant economic regions and repressive political regimes of Northern, Southern, and Eastern Europe, not to mention those escaping the Irish famine, went to the USA from the 1850s until the Great Depression of the 1930s. Some 12 million of these migrants landed at Ellis Island in New York harbour for immigration inspections.

The next major period of migration was after the Second World War, when labour was needed to sustain booming post-war economies in Europe, North America, and Australia. This was the era when many Turkish migrants arrived to work in Germany and North Africans in France and Belgium, for example. It was also the period when about one million Britons migrated to Australia as so-called ‘Ten Pound Poms’. Their passage and a grant of £10 were paid by the Australian government in its efforts to attract new settlers. During the same era decolonization was still having a migration impact in other parts of the world, most significantly in

the movement of millions of Hindus and Muslims as a result of the Partition of India in 1947 and of Jews and Palestinians after the creation of Israel.

By the 1970s the international migrant labour boom was over in Europe, although it continued into the early 1990s in the USA. The engine-room of the global economy has begun to shift decisively to Asia, where labour migration is, in contrast, still growing. As we shall see later in this volume, the movement of asylum-seekers and refugees and irregular migrants has also become increasingly significant across the industrialized world in the last 20 years or so.

The purpose of this inevitably selective overview of international migration in recent history is not simply to make the point that migration is not a new phenomenon. It is also intended to signpost themes that will recur throughout this volume. That migration is associated with significant global events – revolutions, wars, and the rise and fall of empires; that it is associated with significant change – economic expansion, nation-building, and political transformations, and that it is also associated with significant problems – conflict, persecution, and dispossession. Migration has mattered through history, and continues to matter today.

Dimensions and dynamics of international migration

The United Nations (UN) defines as an international migrant a person who stays outside their usual country of residence for at least one year. According to that definition, the UN estimated that in 2005 there were about 200 million international migrants worldwide, including about 9 million refugees. This is roughly the equivalent of the fifth most populous country on earth, Brazil. One in every 35 people in the world today is an international migrant.

Another way to put this is that only 3 per cent of the world's population today is an international migrant. But migration affects

far more people than just those who migrate – as will be explained in detail later in this book, it has important social, economic, and political impacts at home and abroad. According to Stephen Castles and Mark Miller, authors of the influential book *The Age of Migration* (2003),

There can be few people in either industrialized or less developed countries today who do not have personal experience of migration and its effects; this universal experience has become the hallmark of the age of migration. (p. 5)

The number of international migrants has more than doubled in just 25 years, and about 25 million were added in only the first five years of the 21st century (Table 1.1). Before 1990 most of the world’s international migrants lived in the developing world; today the majority lives in the developed world and their proportion is growing. Between 1980 and 2000 the number of migrants in the developed world increased from about 48 million to 110 million, compared with an increase from 52 million to 65 million in the developing world. In 2000 there were about 60 million migrants in Europe, 44 million in Asia, 41 million in North America, 16 million in Africa, and 6 million in both Latin America and Australia. Almost 20 per cent of the world’s migrants in 2000 – about

Why migration matters

Table 1.1. International migrants by world region, 1970–2005 (millions)

Year	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
World	81.5	99.8	154.0	174.9	200 (estimate)
Developed	38.3	47.7	89.7	110.3	no data
Developing	43.2	52.1	64.3	64.6	no data

Source: UNDESA, *World Economic and Social Survey: International Migration* (New York: UN, 2004)

35 million – lived in the USA. The Russian Federation was the second most important host country for migrants, with about 13 million, or nearly 8 per cent of the global total. Germany, the Ukraine, and India followed in the rankings, each with between 6 and 7 million migrants.

It is much harder to say which countries most migrants come from, largely because origin countries do not keep count of how many of their nationals are living abroad. It has been estimated nevertheless that at least 35 million Chinese currently live outside their country, 20 million Indians, and 8 million Filipinos.

These facts and figures convey a striking message, and that is that international migration today affects every part of the world. Movements from 'South' to 'North' have increased as a proportion of total global migration; indeed as I shall explain in Chapter 3 there are powerful reasons why people should leave poorer countries and head for richer ones. At the same time, it is important not to ignore the significant movements that still take place within regions. There are about 5 million Asian migrants working in the Gulf States. It is estimated that there are somewhere between 2.5 million and 8 million irregular migrants in South Africa, almost all of them from sub-Saharan African countries. As we shall see in Chapter 6, there are far more refugees in the developing world than the developed world. Equally, more Europeans come to the UK each year, for example, than do people from outside Europe; and many of these Europeans are British citizens returning from stints overseas.

Besides the dimensions and changing geography of international migration, there are at least three trends that signify an important departure from earlier patterns and processes. First, the proportion of women among migrants has increased rapidly. Very nearly half the world's migrants were women in 2005; just over half of them living in the developed world and just under half in the developing world. According to UN statistics, in 2005 there were more female than male migrants in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean,

North America, Oceania, and the former USSR. What is more, whereas women have traditionally migrated to join their partners abroad, an increasing proportion who migrate today do so independently; they are often the primary breadwinners for the families they leave behind.

There are a number of reasons why women comprise an increasing proportion of the world's migrants. One is that the demand for foreign labour, especially in more developed countries, is becoming increasingly gender-selective in favour of jobs typically fulfilled by women – services, healthcare, and entertainment. Second, an increasing number of countries have extended the right of family reunion to migrants – in other words allowing them to be joined by their spouses and children. Most often these spouses are women. Changing gender relations in some countries of origin also mean that women have more independence to migrate than previously. Finally, and especially in Asia, there has been a growth in the migration of women for domestic work (sometimes called the 'maid trade'); organized migration for marriage (sometimes referred to as 'mail order brides'), and the trafficking of women into the sex industry.

Why migration matters

Second, the traditional distinction between countries of origin, transit, and destination for migrants has become increasingly blurred. Today almost every country in the world fulfils all three roles – migrants leave, pass through, and head for all of them. Perhaps no part of the world better illustrates the blurring boundaries between origin, transit, and destination countries than the Mediterranean. About 50 years ago the situation was fairly straightforward. All the countries of the Mediterranean – in both North Africa and Southern Europe – were countries of origin for migrants who mainly went to Northern Europe to work. About 20 years ago Southern Europe changed from a region of emigration to a region of immigration, as increasing numbers of North Africans arrived to work in their growing economies and at the same time fewer Southern Europeans had an incentive to head north for work

any more. Today, North Africa is changing from an origin to a transit and destination region. Increasing numbers of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa are arriving in countries like Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Some remain, others cross the Mediterranean into Southern Europe, usually illegally, where again some stay and others try to move on into Northern Europe.

Finally, while most of the major movements that took place over the last few centuries were permanent, today temporary migration has become much more important. Even people who have lived abroad for most of their lives often have a 'dream to return' to the place of their birth, and it is now relatively unusual for people to migrate from one country to another and remain there for the rest of their lives.

Furthermore, the traditional pattern of migrating once then returning home seems to be phasing out. An increasing number of



2. A truck loaded with migrants leaving Agadez in Niger and bound for North Africa

people migrate several times during their lives, often to different countries or parts of the world, returning home in the intervening periods. Even those who are away for long periods of time return home at more and more frequent intervals, as international travel has become so much cheaper and more accessible. 'Sojourning', involving circulation between origin and destination and only a temporary commitment to the place of destination, has a long history: much of the Chinese migration to South-East Asia and Australia in the 19th and early 20th centuries, for example. However, this circulation is now occurring on an unprecedented scale and has been facilitated by developments such as transport and communications revolutions.

'Circular' migration

In his 2005 report to the Council of Europe on *Current Trends in International Migration in Europe* (OECD) migration expert John Salt identifies several new types of flow in Europe (p. 19): 'Algerian migratory routes have undergone radical change. The traditional labour migration into France has been replaced by forms of circulation in which many Algerians have become suitcase traders throughout the Mediterranean region. Often serving tourist markets, their moves take place within family networks which allow them to seize trading opportunities in whichever city they are presented. Romanians have also been observed to circulate within informal transnational networks which they use to exploit whatever work niches are opened to illegal workers. The migration of ethnic Germans from Transylvania to Germany in the early 1990s has also become a circulatory movement with periods of work in Germany interspersed with living back in Romania.'