THEMATIC ARTICLES: ECONOMIC MIGRATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalisation and Migration: Is the World Transforming into a Borderless One?[1]

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Abstract. Globalisation has radically transformed the world in many ways, one of which is the unprecedented numbers of people migrating across international borders. Starting from the end of the Cold War, there were scholarly predictions that the forces of globalisation would eventually render international borders irrelevant, leading to a borderless world. Migration, however, appears to be an area where the importance of international borders remains strong. Contemporary developments across the world suggest that real and/or perceived negative effects of international migration often lead to international borders becoming strengthened, disrupting migration flows. This paper examines both sides of the debate about whether we are becoming a borderless world in relation to migration today, in light of contemporary events and developments.

Keywords: *globalization, migration, migrant, borders, nation-state*

The debate about how far and in what ways globalisation has shaped the world has been called "one of the most fundamental debates of our time" (Held and McGrew, 2002). Starting from the early 1990s after the end of the Cold War, an air of triumphalism could be said to have taken hold in Western discourse. Fukuyama (1989) famously proclaimed the "end of history" and that the entire world would eventually adopt liberal democracy and free market capitalism. Other scholars made similar predictions about the "end of the nation-state" and the "end of territory", convinced that we were ushering in a new age of a homogenous world culture, a

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"borderless world" (Antonsich, 2009:789). Cosmopolitan thought was very much in vogue, with its visions of "a borderless and united world in terms of moral obligation and solidarity, if not in terms of actual life circumstances" (Aas, 2011:136).

At the same time, it is also undeniable that globalisation and the numerous changes it has brought have resulted in severe tension, between the global and the local/national (Aas, 2011). The unprecedented September 11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent "global war on terror" were interpreted by some scholars as a return to the "strong state and the closing of borders" (Held and McGrew, 2007:1). More recent events such as the election of Donald Trump as United States President and his emphasis on "America First" (Bryant, 2018), Brexit (Giles, 2017) and the rise of far-right, anti-immigrant parties in Europe (Bremmer, 2018) would arguably further call into question the idea that the world is transforming into a borderless one, despite what some earlier scholars appeared to think.

This paper looks specifically at the phenomenon of migration and seeks to assess the extent to which the claim that the world is transforming into a borderless one as a result of globalisation holds true. In Section I, I will first set out some definitions, statistics and observations about globalisation and migration flows today, drawing upon recent reports from the United Nations. Section II then considers the arguments in the globalisation literature that nation-states and borders are becoming increasingly irrelevant. In Section III, I will consider the opposing arguments by scholars, particularly considering events in recent years, that we are in fact moving in the opposite direction, towards more exclusionary borders and 'de-globalisation', before concluding.

Global migration flows today

The term "globalisation" has been interpreted in different ways, and as globalisation scholars Held and McGrew (2002:2) have noted, there is no single account of globalisation that is regarded as academic orthodoxy. Globalisation can be thought of "the intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural relations across borders" and the onset of a "borderless world" (Dickinson, 2017:4). To discuss the globalist claim that we are moving towards a borderless world, a good starting point would be some statistics regarding global migration flows today. In a 2015 United Nations report on international migration, it was

observed that international migration is a modern reality touching nearly all parts of the world.[2] The number of international migrants worldwide has grown rapidly from 173 million in 2000 to 244 million in 2015, an international migrant being defined as one who lives outside his or her country of birth.[3] High-income countries host the majority of the world's international migrants, with 71% of international migrants living in them.[4] Much of the growth in the global population of international migrants has also been concentrated in high-income countries, with migration to high-income countries accounting for 81% of the growth in the number of international migrants worldwide from 2000 to 2015.[5] 65% of international migrants come from middle-income countries.[6]

Yet, as a 2009 United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report reminds us, international migration is far from a new or novel phenomenon. European colonization, the slave trade and the use of Chinese and Indian contract labourers in Southeast Asia and the Americas all resulted in large migration flows.[7] Taking a longer-term historical view, human migration from one place to another has been theorized to have been taking place since 50,000 years ago.[8] Despite the tendency for historical shortsightedness, Dickinson observes that every person today has an ancestor who migrated from one place to another – the question is only how far back in one's genealogy one needs to go to find that migrating ancestor (Dickinson, 2017:23).

Demographically, there is a wide disparity between developed and developing countries. The working-age population in developed countries is expected to decline by 2050,[9] and in some of them, such as Germany, Japan and South Korea, their populations are expected to shrink.[10] The aging of populations,

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[2] United Nations, *International Migration Report 2015: Highlights*, New York: United Nations at p2

[3] *Ibid* at p5

[4] *Ibid*

[5] *Ibid* at p6

[6] *Ibid* at p14

[7] Human Development Report 2009, *Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, New York: UNDP at p28

[8] *Ibid* at p29

[9] Human Development Report 2009, *Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, New York: UNDP at p43

[10] *Ibid*

especially in developed countries, will pose issues such as the funding of care for the elderly as the number of dependents increases vis-à-vis the working-age population.[11] On the other hand, the working-age population in developing countries is expected to increase in 2050.[12] This demographic disparity between developed and developing countries is expected to widen in the future – a decline in the number of people of working-age in developed countries occurs at the same time as an increase in the working-age population in developing countries. It is on this basis that the 2009 United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report predicts that the demographic pressure for international migration flows is likely to increase.[13]

Economically speaking, there remains vast inequality in wealth between developed and developing countries. As Milanovic (2016:132) observes, the country where one lives has an extremely significant impact on one's lifetime income – more so than class, at least for the time being. Given that 97% of the world's population lives in the country where they were born, Milanovic (2016:132) proposes the concept of citizenship 'premiums' and 'penalties'. Through pure circumstance, one who is born in a developed country like Sweden can be said to enjoy a 'citizenship premium', while conversely a person born in a developing country like Pakistan suffers a 'citizenship penalty' (Milanovic, 2016:131). The disparity can be large indeed. To take his extreme example, on average, merely being born in the United States as opposed to Congo would multiply one's lifetime income 93 times (Milanovic, 2016:133). Migrating to another country can thus be extremely attractive to potential migrants, offering the potential migrant the opportunity to greatly increase his income (Milanovic, 2016:134).

Apart from the traditional explanations of wage differentials and a lack of economic development in poor countries, Massey (1990:68) suggests that the increase in capital-intensive economic development in developing countries as a result of globalization has caused economic uncertainty which makes international migration an attractive option. So long as economic development among countries remains uneven, the existence of migrants who wish to improve their economic position with higher wages, coupled with the demand for cheap

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[11] *Ibid* at p44

[12] *Ibid*

[13] *Ibid* at p46

labour in developed countries, is likely to continue to create economic pressure for migration. The number of people who wish to migrate is thus likely to far exceed the number that receiving countries are willing or able to accept (Weiner, 1996:18).

Globalization and the onset of a borderless world

Having set out a brief overview of global migration flows today, I now turn to examine the globalist claim that we are becoming a borderless world, in the context of migration. Numerous scholars have argued that globalization has resulted in a retreat of the state, the rise of international flows and greater economic integration, such that borders are increasingly irrelevant (Paasi, 2009). The "deep drivers" of globalization, such as improvements in communications and transport, the creation of global markets for goods and services, information flows, global divisions of labour and migration and movement of peoples have created "dense patterns of global interconnectedness" (Held and McGrew, 2007:4), such that nation-states cannot be considered in isolation. On the issue of migration specifically, de Wenden (2007) argues that migratory flows have become a part of this globalisation process, with the potential to "undermine the very system of nation-states" (de Wenden, 2007:52). Compared to the past, the globalization of migratory flows is a relatively new phenomenon, characterized by enhanced mobility and migration from new regions (de Wenden, 2007:52). A desire amongst people living in developing countries to live in developed countries, the increased availability of passports in many countries and the emergence of transnational networks facilitating migration have all caused and facilitated migration flows in unprecedented ways (de Wenden, 2007:52). Globalists argue that nation-states are becoming increasingly unable to control immigration flows across their national borders, to stop "unwanted" migration flows (Cornelius and Tsuda, 2004:5). This is despite the fact that control of one's borders is an aspect of sovereignty, which is vital to the existence of the nation-state (Ataner, 2004). A state's ability to control one's borders is never absolute (Sassen, 1998:61), such that attempts to stem migration flows are said to be futile or at least questionable in light of the possibly disproportionate manpower and financial requirements (Pecoud and de Guchteneire, 2007:3). To take a recent example, in the United States, a White House estimate of the costs of constructing the wall along the United States-Mexico border to fulfill US President Donald Trump's election promise is $18 billion US dollars

(Carroll, 2018) while immigration enforcement costs the United States government about the same amount every year (Massey, 2013). Similarly, the 2015 European migrant crisis saw an unprecedented number of people attempting to enter the European Union. Their sheer numbers overwhelmed the ability of border authorities to stop them – the "weight of numbers … [was] transformed into a means of resistance" (Anderson, 2017:1530), jumping fences and breaking barricades.

There are two major ways in which globalization can be said to have limited the ability of nation-states to control their borders, leading to a more borderless world – through economic and normative, international human rights constraints on states' ability to formulate and implement immigration restrictions (Guiraudon and Lahav, 2000). As some sociologists and economists have argued, both market forces and rights discourse has reduced the efficacy of borders as barriers to the movement of people (Lahav and Guiraudon, 2006:206). Freeman (1995:889), for example, posits a theory of "client politics" to explain why immigration policy tends to be expansionist rather than restrictive in liberal democratic states. Under his theory, immigration policy is strongly influenced by pro-immigration groups, especially employers in labour-intensive industries, businesses dependent on cheap labour, and civil and human rights organizations (Freeman, 1995:888). These groups are better able to mobilise and organise politically, exerting pressure on politicians. Together with what he calls the "antipopulist norm" in liberal democratic states, a norm which strongly discourages the exploitation of "racial, ethnic or immigration-related fears" to win votes, immigration policy thus tends to be pro-immigration (Freeman, 1995:885).

The integration of national economies into the global economic order as a result of globalization also means that states are increasingly subject to the vicissitudes of market forces. Sassen (1998:72) notes that economic globalization has led to the emergence of transnational economic spaces, as well as legal and regulatory regimes over which states have much less control compared to the domestic sphere, reducing the ability of states to regulate cross-border labour migration flows. In other words, globalization has transferred functions traditionally associated with state governance from state to non-state entities, reducing the ability of the state to control its borders (Sassen, 1998:69).

Globalist sociologists have also argued that there is a link "between international human rights and the inability of states to control migration" (Guiraudon and Lahav, 2000:189). As a result of globalization, the normative power

of human rights (which by definition includes migrants as opposed to civil or political rights which may be limited only to citizens of a particular nation-state) has led to the emergence of international charters and declarations which provide guidelines to nation-states on how they ought to treat foreigners within their borders, putting normative constraints on the ability of nation-states to stop foreigners from entering or simply expelling them (Guiraudon and Lahav, 2000:165). International agreements such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the 1951 Refugee Convention for example, may constrain a state's ability to act as it pleases (Sassen, 1998:58). International human rights norms have led to judiciaries in France and Germany actually frustrating attempts by their respective legislatures to introduce more restrictive immigration laws (Sassen, 1998:58). Thus, despite the tendency for public opinion about immigration to be negative (as a recent 2017 global Ipsos poll indicates[14]), the constraints as a result of global legal norms have limited the ability of states to police their borders.

Taken together, it would thus appear that the dominant views of political elites, influenced as they may be by powerful economic and human rights considerations, tends to be pro-immigration (Citrin and Sides, 2008:51). Yet, the applicability of Freeman's theory to non-liberal democratic states can be questioned. One could think of democratic states where, as Cornelius and Tsuda (2004:12) observe as a counter to Freeman's argument, the pro-immigration lobby is not as capable of influencing government policy, such as in countries like Japan and Korea where immigration policymaking is largely in the hands of career bureaucrats, more insulated from pressures from pro-immigration groups. One could also conceive of states which may be willing to ride roughshod over concerns about human rights and capitalist economies by further increasing migration controls (de Haas, 2007:826).

However, even where political elites actively adopt anti-immigration policies, by introducing more restrictive immigration legislation and stepping up enforcement significantly, migration flows may not be able to be controlled as expected and may actually result in *more* unwanted immigration. Massey (2013), in a study of United States policies to stop Latin American immigration to the United States, comes to the conclusion that the policies have not only failed, but have in fact

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[14] Ipsos, *Global Views on Immigration and the Refugee Crisis*, September 2017 <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2017-09/ipsos-global-advisor-immigration-refugee-crisis-slides_0.pdf> (last accessed 16 October 2018)

proven counterproductive, on two separate fronts. On one hand, the restrictive policies encouraged a surge in the number of documented Latin Americans in the United States seeking to naturalize as United States citizens (Massey, 2013:9). On the other hand, given the increase in costs and physical danger in crossing the United States-Mexico border illegally, Latin American migrants, upon crossing into the United States, began to settle permanently in the United States so as to minimize journeys, whereas previously they would move between their home countries and the United States in a circular fashion (Massey, 2013:9). As a result, both the proportion of Latin Americans amongst the United States population and the number of undocumented Latin Americans living in the United States increased to unprecedented levels – the exact opposite of what the stricter border controls were meant to achieve (Massey, 2013:5). Restrictive immigration policies are thus argued to have the effect of encouraging even more irregular migration amongst those who have not made the journey yet, while those already within a country illegally would be more likely to settle down permanently (de Haas, 2007:824).

As an alternative to restrictive immigration policies, some states have attempted to tackle immigration at the source – at the 'sending' countries. Through developmental aid, some developed countries have attempted to stimulate economic and social development in poor countries. This is based on the understanding that "poverty, crises and general misery" are the reasons why people migrate to more prosperous countries (de Haas, 2007:832). The effectiveness of this is questioned by de Haas (2007), who argues that policies to encourage development in poor countries are fundamentally misguided. The paradox, he argues, is that economic and social development is generally associated with *increased* mobility and migration (de Haas, 2007:832). By increasing income, education and improving access to information, people not only become more capable of migrating, but also more *motivated* to migrate – development increases the *aspirations* of people (de Haas, 2007:833). Indeed, those who remain in their own countries, even if their absolute incomes have increased as a result of development, may perceive themselves to be relatively deprived (de Haas, 2007:833). Thus, de Haas (2007) predicts that the forces of globalization and development in poor countries "are likely to increase people's capabilities and aspirations to migrate". He concludes that continued migration flows from the global South to the North is both a cause and effect of the broader processes of economic globalization, and is likely to continue to remain a characteristic of our world (de Haas, 2007:838).

Is the world really becoming more borderless?

I now turn to the other view, that instead of the world becoming a more borderless one, it is in fact becoming increasingly divided into various nation-states. Is migration truly an unstoppable global phenomenon today, which will characterize all human societies? For all the observations about greater economic interdependence, human rights constraints on the ability of states to act as they please and the practical difficulties and limitations in controlling one's borders, there are arguably good reasons to be skeptical of the globalist claim. Kuper (2007:225) bemoans the shortcomings of the current global order, and attributes this to how the world is "stuck with an ineffectual multilateral state system", where "states, and only states, [are] at the centre of things". States remain the primary political actors in the world at present, despite some globalist visions for a future world government. All modern states draw distinctions between citizens and foreigners (Polakow-Suransky, 2017:20). As Hindess (1998:62) observes, the discourses of modern citizenship suggest that such distinctions are "normal and acceptable", and that states not only can, but often *should* treat citizens differently from foreigners. To be a citizen of a state is to be part of a political community that is territorially bounded (Yarwood, 2014:18). Citizens of a state possess rights and duties vis-à-vis the state (Yarwood, 2014:18), which foreigners do not.

Fundamentally, the very concept of international migration across borders presupposes the existence of the state (King, 2016:4). It is undeniable that the state specifies and regulates nearly all kinds of daily activity, from the issuance of birth certificates to death certificates, the provision of education, healthcare, public infrastructure and the maintenance of law and order – indeed, Held and McGrew (2002:9) call the growth of the state "one of the few really uncontested facts of the last century". The regulation of migration flows across borders is a matter well within a state's sovereignty (Xu and Halsall, 2018:50) - indeed, amidst the transformations brought about by globalization, controls over the movement of people have even been described by Dauvergne as "the last bastion of sovereignty" (Bauder, 2016:69). Cunningham (2009:145) argues that state borders have become "repoliticised" – issues relating to migration and the movement of people, far from disappearing, have once again become politically salient. In contrast to the elimination of barriers perhaps most notably encapsulated in United States President Ronald Reagan's call to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall" in Berlin towards the

end of the Cold War, a "fortress mentality" (Marshall, 2018) has arguably emerged. I suggest two reasons why we may not be moving towards a borderless world in terms of migration - firstly, unlike flows of capital or goods in a globalized world, the movement of people is far more politically problematic. Secondly, the contemporary global trend appears to be strengthening of borders rather than the disappearance of them.

As Dickinson (2017:7) points out, a key distinguishing feature of the relationship between globalization and migration is the centrality of actual humans. It is unlike the flows of capital, goods or political ideas like democracy – migrants are not inanimate objects or abstract concepts, but instead bring with them their "cultures, languages, customs, ideas, ways of life" and even diseases and prejudices (Dickinson, 2017:7). It is perhaps unsurprising that migration has thus been described as "the most intimate form of globalization" (Dickinson, 2017:7). While some manifestations of globalization may be welcomed, even celebrated, such as the convenience the Internet and smartphones bring or fresh seafood products from halfway around the world, the movement of people can be said to be more intrusive – a question of who we allow "into our political, economic and social spaces" (Dodgson and Auyong, 2017). One might enjoy imported Darjeeling tea without much thought, but the noticeable presence of Indian foreigners might be food for thought, possibly provoking "astonishing fears" due to how different they are from the local population (Harris, 2007:39). As Pecoud and de Guchteneire (2007:13) pointedly observe, globalization has brought about "a growing consensus in the community of states to lift border controls for the flow of capital, information, and services and, more broadly, to further globalization. But when it comes to immigrants and refugees … the national state claims all its old splendor in asserting its sovereign right to control its borders". Migration "generates a high degree of social complexity and raises political challenges that cannot be ignored" (Pecoud and de Guchteneire, 2007:13).

The political and social issues associated with migration thus merit consideration in a discussion about whether we are moving towards a borderless world. This is because the responses that have been adopted to address these issues can and do take the form of barriers to migration flows. Lesinska (2014:41) summarizes the main issues posed by modern migration flows as such – the economic costs of immigration, concerns about security and crime and the threat to national culture and identity. These issues are interconnected. Economically, while

there are undeniable benefits which migration can bring to the economy as a whole (Borjas, 1995), the effect of migration at the level of ordinary citizens 'on the ground' may not quite be as sanguine. The actual or perceived competition for jobs, strain on scarce resources like education and welfare benefits and infrastructure such as housing and transport can and does lead to severe anti-immigration sentiment amongst citizens. In Denmark, for example, refugees and asylum-seekers have created a Catch-22 situation. These migrants are much more willing to work for lower wages, causing a fear amongst many Danes that allowing them to do so will lower the wages of native Danes (Polakow-Suransky, 2017:200). Due to this, many of these migrants are prevented from working – but these results in them being provided with state welfare, which makes them appear like a burden to society (Polakow-Suransky, 2017:200). In Singapore, the focus has been mainly on how migrants have been perceived as taking away jobs (especially higher-paying, white-collar ones) from Singaporeans and creating an infrastructure crunch (Yeoh and Lam, 2016).

The issue of security has also been of increasing salience in relation to immigration, resulting in much academic interest in the 'securitisation of immigration' (Messina, 2014). Security here refers not just to conventional concerns about territorial sovereignty, but about the "ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats" (Messina, 2014:530). Despite much debate about the extent to which the securitisation of immigration has taken place, Messina (2014:533) observes that the scholarly consensus on the issue is that this phenomenon is "inextricably linked to the political and social conflicts precipitated by the arrival and permanent settlement of ethnically, culturally, and/or religiously distinctive minority populations" within immigration-receiving states. Weiner (1996:24) notes that migrants and people of migrant origin have launched terrorist attacks in host countries (a recent and prominent example being the wave of terrorist attacks across Europe in 2015-2017[15]), leading rather unfortunately to immigration being linked with terrorism in public discourse (Messina, 2014:534). It is arguably this concern about security in particular which led, for example, to the implementation of "extreme vetting" (DeCell, 2018), as United States President Donald Trump promised, for people seeking admission into the United States.

Lastly, concerns about national identity can lead to powerful opposition to migration. Migration scholar Castles (2000:187) observes that national identities are
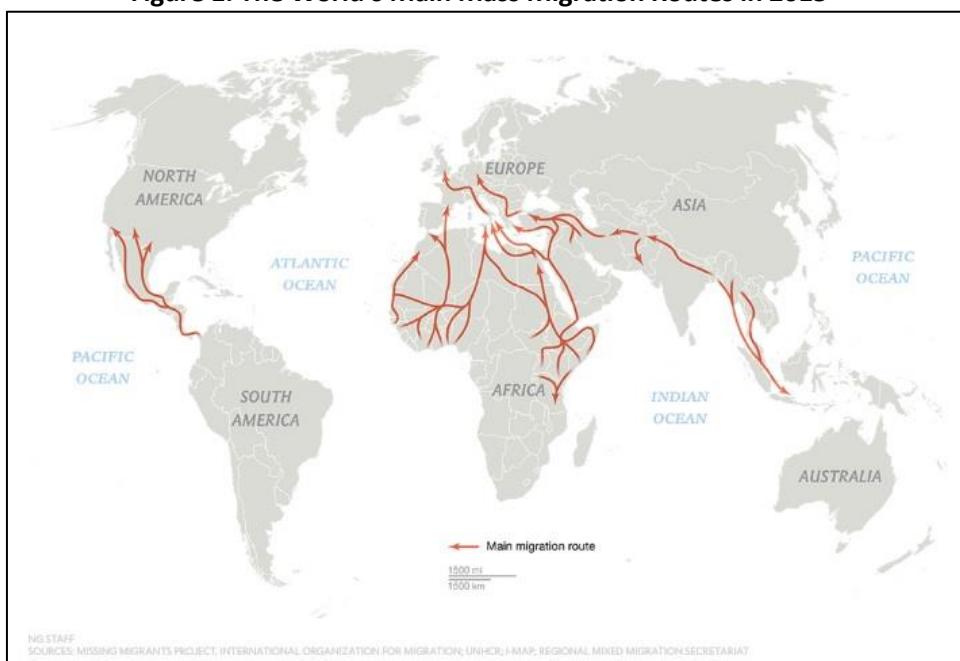
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[15] See Guerisoli (2017)

often based on exclusion – to say one is Japanese, for example, is not simply about having Japanese characteristics, but being able to say who is *not* Japanese. The migration of people problematizes simplistic notions of national identity – it erodes the idea of a distinct national identity (Castles, 2000:187). Practically all states today claim to represent more than mere groups of people desiring protection in a Hobbesian world of all-against-all – rather, states claim to represent distinct peoples with distinct characteristics, as opposed to foreign "others" (Gibney, 2004:204). Polakow-Suransky (2017:301) argues that it was not merely economic concerns about immigration, but cultural anxiety, that led to the election of United States President Donald Trump. As White Christian Americans increasingly lost their majority status in the United States, many such people were fearful that the America they "knew and had once dominated was disappearing" – thus making Donald Trump and his election promises extremely attractive to many (Polakow-Suransky, 2017:301). In the case of Europe, anti-immigration discourse often pits the "Christian West" against non-Christian, usually Muslim, "enemies" (Lesinska, 2014:43).

These political and social concerns about immigration cannot be ignored. Opposition to immigration, once associated with far-right, extremist parties and politicians, has become part of mainstream political debate and is no longer something from the political margins. Anti-immigration politicians have adroitly appealed "to fear, nostalgia, and resentment of elites" to increase voter support (Polakow-Suransky, 2017:15). Anti-immigration sentiment undergirds much of the increased barriers to migration which have come up in recent times. There are numerous examples, perhaps the most notable being the proposed border wall between the United States and Mexico noted earlier. In response to the 2015 European migrant crisis, an agreement was reached between the European Union and Turkey 2016, whereby significant funding was promised to Turkey in exchange for Turkey securing its own borders (mainly the border with Syria) and keeping any irregular migrants sent back to Turkey from Greece within Turkey (Leiserson, 2017). To address large numbers of migrants attempting to enter Australia by boat, the Australian government led by then-Prime Minister Tony Abbott launched *Operation Sovereign Borders* in 2013, right after it was elected (Chia et al., 2014:33). A military-led operation, *Operation Sovereign Borders* involved the interception of boats before they could reach Australian waters, turning the boats away (Chia et al., 2014:29). It has been a tremendous success, with zero successful cases of migrants entering

Australia by boat from 2014-2016.[16] Indeed, in a speech to British politicians, Tony Abbott praised the success of Australia's restrictive policies as the only way "to prevent a tide of humanity surging through Europe and quite possibly changing it forever" (Polakow-Suransky, 2017:90). I cite these examples from the developed countries in the global north, because the world's main mass migration routes involve migration flows to these countries in particular, as Figure 1 shows.

Figure 1. The World's Main Mass Migration Routes in 2015[17]

That said, border walls and increased border security are by no means unique only to the countries of the global north. To name but a few examples, Saudi Arabia has fenced up its borders with two of its neighbours plagued by violence – Iraq and Yemen. The Pakistan-Iran border is similarly fenced (Marshall, 2018).

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[16] Prime Minister of Australia, The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, Media statement, *Operation Sovereign Borders: no successful people smuggling boats in two years*, 27 July 2016 <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/2016-07-27/operation-sovereign-borders-no-successful-people-smuggling-boats-two-years> (last accessed 20 October 2018)

[17] National Geographic, *The World's Congested Human Migration Routes in 5 Maps*, 19 September 2015 <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/09/150919-data-points-refugees-migrants-maps-human-migrations-syria-world/> (last accessed 20 October 2018)

Uzbekistan, a landlocked country with five neighbours, has also closed itself off.18 Polakow-Suransky (2017) reminds us that anti-immigrant sentiment and state measures to remove those who entered the country illegally do exist, in perhaps equally virulent forms, in the global south. Writing about the example of South Africa, he notes that anti-immigrant sentiment is very powerful in South Africa, where "over half of South Africans surveyed want to deport all migrants not contributing to the economy, and one in four would prefer to expel all foreigners" (Polakow-Suransky, 2017:248). The South African government has engaged in crackdowns on immigrants, deporting many who were in the country illegally (Polakow-Suransky, 2017:248). In the Americas, the attention given to the United States-Mexico border leads to comparatively much less attention being paid to the Mexico-Guatemala border, the site of recent 'unprecedented' clashes in October 2018 between Mexican border guards and Central American migrants attempting to cross the border, on their way to the United States.19 Indeed, Mexico deports more than twice the number of Central Americans that the United States deports (Marshall, 2018). In Malaysia, the number of illegal immigrants, mainly from nearby Indonesia and Bangladesh, has led the government to recently pledge measures to deport them to their home countries.20 This would not be the first time the Malaysian government has attempted to deal with those within the country illegally – in 1998, it conducted Operation Go Away, where tens of thousands of foreigners were deported (Hahamovitch, 2003). The countries of the global north are thus arguably not the only ones preoccupied with ensuring they maintain control over their borders and removing those in the country irregularly. Rather, the desire to regulate migration is common to countries in both the north and south, especially in contemporary times, for a variety of political and social reasons noted earlier.

Conclusion

Where, then, does that leave us – how true is the claim that borders are increasingly irrelevant in today's globalized world? As the late United Nations

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[18] *Ibid*

[19] BBC, *Migrant caravan halted by Mexico police on Guatemala border*, 20 October 2018 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45920624> (last accessed 20 October 2018)

[20] Straits Times, *Malaysia's immigration department pledges to rid country of illegal immigrants*, 21 July 2018 <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysias-immigration-department-pledges-to-rid-country-of-illegal-immigrants> (last accessed 20 October 2018)

Secretary-General Kofi Annan once said, "arguing against globalization is like arguing against the law of gravity".[21] The forces of globalization have linked the states of the world in unprecedented ways and continue to do so. The push-pull dynamics of migration between rich and poor countries look set to stay so long as the vast inequalities between the north and south remain, and as de Haas (2007:832) points out, even development in the global south may not reduce but instead increase migration flows towards the north. These economic and demographic pressures for migration are simply facts – and thus we can perhaps safely assume that in the years to come, there will always be more people attempting to migrate than receiving states are willing to accept, and this will continue despite state attempts to strengthen their border controls.

Yet, on the issue of migration specifically, even globalist scholars like Pecoud and de Guchteneire (2007:1) concede that a world of "migration without borders" is unlikely anytime soon. As observed earlier, global flows of goods and capital have certainly been liberalized, but the free movement of *people* is a rather different kettle of fish. In *The Wealth of Nations*, written over two centuries ago, Adam Smith remarked that "a man is of all sorts of luggage the most difficult to be transported". Such a statement seems most prescient in a world where, as Battistella (2007:217) pointedly observes, "we have a World Trade Organization but no World Migration Organization". While increased migration flows may well strain the capacities of states to control their borders and call into question whether attempts to control one's borders are a fruitless exercise, successful examples where migration has been cut drastically, such as Australia's *Operation Sovereign Borders* and the European Union's 2016 agreement with Turkey, deserve consideration and problematize globalist claims that attempting to stop migration is a fruitless exercise.

Weiner (1996:33) argues that the only solution to truly addressing the large number of people who wish to migrate is the "obliteration of international boundaries and sovereign states". Indeed, if nation-states no longer existed, international migration as a phenomenon would *ipso facto* also cease to exist. This is, however, an extremely unlikely scenario. For the foreseeable future, one could agree with the globalist claim that we are becoming a borderless world *in general*. Looking at circumstances in a historical perspective, the borders between nation-

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[21] Kofi Annan, Opening address to the fifty-third annual DPI/NGO Conference, United Nations, 2006 <http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/annualconfs/53/sg-address.html> (last accessed 21 October 2018)

states have certainly become less relevant insofar as the flows of goods, capital and ideas are concerned. Even when it comes to people, the past few decades have seen enormous increases in migration flows. However, these flows have long been the subject of state attempts to restrict and regulate them, and have intensified significantly in recent years. The borders have not become *closed* – the economic and demographic interconnections have arguably made a return to self-sufficient autarkies and hermit kingdoms very unlikely. The borders are, however, certainly not disappearing anytime soon, insofar as migration is concerned.

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