

Global Migration: A Managerial “Cultural” Perspective

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the reality of migration from the perspective of the United Nations. By surveying a UN report provided by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, this paper attempts to offer a managerial perspective on the cultural aspects of migration, as effected by the involvement of the United Nations in handling this global crisis. Particularly, this study focuses on raising the cultural question about the managerial methods used by the UN in calibrating this reality within the framework of the historical and territorial perspective of the phenomenon itself. The findings of this study are relevant in the context of developing new tactics for managing migration, applicable to specific international institutions and geographic areas.

KEY WORDS: migration, culture, management, statistics, international, United Nations DESA.

Introduction

Although the human beings have migrated for thousands of years, the last decades brought to the forefront an unprecedented upheaval of this phenomenon. Migration had proliferated as an effect of an increased awareness of more promising economic opportunities elsewhere, and as a result of communal violence and environmental threats and degradation. As a phenomenon, migration received an extreme attention not only from the established media but also from the social media. Faced with this reality, international

organizations such as the United Nations are now charged with the legal and moral obligation to oversee and perhaps offer logistics in a way that human rights are safeguarded, and the dignity of the migrant is respected. By deciphering the media reports and by trying to understand the phenomenon itself one could easily conclude that migration cannot be simplified to the movement of population from one country to another, without a wide understanding of the economic and social particularities, as well as without considering the religious implications.

In general, migration has been considered a “major source of human survival, adaptation, and growth across the centuries and millennia.”¹ By analyzing all its indicators the perspectives taken and along with the data chosen to be analyzed could yield different results to the study of the same subject. Regardless of how one may analyze the data, along with the analyst’s agenda it is certain that the phenomenon of migration remained one of the top subjects on the agenda of prominent global institutions.

The Management of Migration and UN DESA

Viewing the management of migration through the lenses of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, one cannot but attempt to introduce and evaluate one of the main departments of this international institution; that is the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (DESA). The mission of DESA consists in promoting development for all people. UN DESA is involved in global politics and economics, as well as in the social and environmental spheres. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs works in its main areas as described below:²

- a) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and take stock of policy options;

- b) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges;
- c) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programs at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.³

UN DESA has a number of divisions such as: Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Division for Sustainable Development, Population Division, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Financing for Development Office, Division for Social Policy and Development, Statistics Division, Development Policy and Analysis Division, United Nation Forum on Forests, and Capacity Development Office.⁴

The Population Division of UN DESA monitors and studies the dynamics of demographic trends of policy worldwide. And another very important work of DESA consists in studying population dynamics and monitors demographic trends and policies worldwide including the international migration studies.⁵

According to the 2015 revised version of a report titled, *World Population Prospects | Key Findings & Advance Table*, economic migration had been regarded in positive terms. As the report states,

“Internal and international migration can be positive forces for economic and social development as they offer a mechanism to rebalance labour markets in areas of origin and destination, and to accelerate the diffusion of new ideas and technologies. Migration can also result in significant flows of remittances to areas of origin.”⁶

However, the report is more concerned with population increase, as it notes that the economic benefits do not resolve the dilemma of population increase. However, the report recognizes that the economic benefits affect particular areas which became destinations of various economic migrants and flow of refugees. Within this

phenomenon, UN has been an institution with limited authority and interest in proposing international legislation. It rather reacted to various crises, as the natural flow had been monitored and regulated by the member states. More concerns with the flow of economic migration were expressed by West European states and by US and Canada, which had the advantage of being more developed compared with the rest of the world, had a lower population density, a lower demographic growth, more economic resources and opportunities, and were in need of migrant labor. According to this UN report,

“Overall, between 1950 and 2015, the major areas of Europe, Northern America and Oceania have been net receivers of international migrants, while Africa, Asia and Latin and the Caribbean have been net senders, with the volume of net migration generally increasing over time. From 2000 to 2015, average annual net migration to Europe, Northern America and Oceania averaged 2.8 million persons per year. When countries are grouped by income rather than geography, the attraction of high-income countries is even more evident: from 2000 to 2015, high-income countries received an average of 4.1 million net migrants annually from lower- and middle-income countries.”⁷

This report states that projected migration for the next three decades will continue to be driven by demographic asymmetries, and economic opportunities.⁸

By simply surveying this report, UN appears to continue to remain a passive observer, with no realistic authority to manage the flow of migration. It does well gathering and analyzing data provided by the member states and by various entities involved in monitoring this process, but has no power to look beyond and interpret what these numbers mean, beyond the limits of income versus spending.

Furthermore, UN has no power to broker regulations apart from what is able to negotiate with particular states or groups of states when faced with humanitarian crises. In spite of its usefulness, this data is also limited, for it provides no information on aspects of migration triggered by identity.

Nevertheless, what UN can do is to look deeper into these numbers and find new tools for negotiation with the nation states. Economic migration has its own political effects as it triggers clashes of worldviews and threats to cultural identity.

To stimulate managerial creativity, or perhaps to justify the name of the "Department of Economic and *Social* [my emphasis] Affairs," DESA ought to engage cultural or religious identity as a trigger for migration. This is because the cultural and the religious identity of the migrant *is* a social affair. Anthropologists have long demonstrated that humanity itself has an inherent nomadic culture which is genetically embedded by the struggle for survival and search for resources. In spite of the advances of civilization the nomadic culture of humanity remains visible today in particular cultures—such as the Roma, and the Bedouin—cultures that assign their own meaning to the relationship with land that they temporary enjoy. Because the meaning that a culture or subculture assigns to life and territory often represents a group's *raison d'être*, this it is often embedded into the group's cultural and religious narratives. If some cultures are detached from the land that they enjoy under the belief that their true *patria* is a metaphysical reality, others have developed a deeper connection with the sacred grounds. Such religious natives can be found for example in Judaism, which share a particular affection for Jerusalem:

"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, May my right hand forget her skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy."
(Psalm 137: 5-6)

In light of the protracted religious conflicts of the Middle East, one can clearly understand not only the complexity of the relationship between the identity of a group and a particular sacred land, but more so the opportunity to tackle the meaning of migration.

Therefore, beyond historical determinations and sacred mandates, cultural identity plays a very important role, and as such, it has to be engaged. Retreating into secularism, and refusing to become creative on handling issues of religion and cultural identity

within the management of migration crises, is not the way forward. It limits one's ability to diagnose and provide the cure to what is generally considered a crisis of migration.

The United Nations and the Reality of Migration

On the positive side, however, there is a real interest for the UN to be involved in the study and the coordinating efforts of the phenomenon of the migration. According to the UN Statistics the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly over the past fifteen years reaching 244 million in 2015, up from 222 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000.⁹ In 2015 about 67% of international migrants were living in 20 countries. In United States there are 47 millions,¹⁰ followed by Germany, Russian Federation,¹¹ and Saudi Arabia.¹² The number of refugees was estimated at 19.5 million in 2014, Turkey has become the largest recipient of refugee worldwide. About half of all refugees worldwide came from just three countries: Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, and Somalia.¹³ Female migrants outnumber male migrants in Europe and North America, while in Africa and Asia migrants are predominantly men.¹⁴ Due to the transformation of social environment and improved conditions of migration, more women are joining the migrant labor force.¹⁵

In 2010 the median age of the migrants worldwide was 38 years in 2015 this increased to 39 years.¹⁶ Most migrants worldwide originate from middle-income countries. In the last 6 years, the number of migrants originating from middle-income countries increased more rapidly than those from countries in any other income group.¹⁷ In 2015, the largest number of global migrants came from India¹⁸ followed by Mexico,¹⁹ Russian Federation,²⁰ China,²¹ Bangladesh,²² Pakistan, and Ukraine.²³

In many ways, for the countries listed above, the migrations could be considered as a double-way profit; so that the gain of migrants by one country which receive migrants affects the demography and economy of the hosting country.²⁴ During the experience of migration, people are faced with various situations beyond their control as communities are uprooted, the expectations

are stretched, and some people either cannot, or simply refuse to meet their obligations and responsibilities.²⁵ In this situation, the process of migration takes longer and becomes harder for the local authority to monitor and process.

Conclusions

International migration can be considered a wide, very dynamic, and unpredictable, while in many situations this phenomenon could also be considered uncountable and so on. But the migration can not be ignored or denied. As the UN migration reports reveal, the trends of international migration are as clear as are the rationales for it. It is a considerable phenomenon which has affected hundreds of millions of people and it could move forward economies of many countries. The UN reports usually take a broad approach as they capture many details of the international migration such as nationality of migrants, age, gender, religion, financial income in different countries and so on.

The future of the migration could be seen as one which is more dynamic because of growing financial gap between nations, and because the desire of people for a better life. It is obvious that due to migrating talent, the migration itself could contribute in more areas, beyond the economy, demographic growth, religion, political orientations, and so on.

NOTES

¹ Leonore Loeb Adler (ed), Uwe P. Gielen (contrib.) *Migration: Immigration and Emigration in International Perspective* (Praeger: Westport, CT, 2003), 3.

² These definitions of the areas work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are described as the official declaration.

³ According with: www.un.org

⁴ www.un.org

⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/about/desa-divisions/population.html>

⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables*. Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP.241. p.6.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 11.

⁹ www.un.org

¹⁰ It is considered that United States have the largest number of international migrants conform www.un.org.

¹¹ Conform ww.un.org there are 12 million in each country.

¹² The number of migrants in Saudi Arabia are about 10 million conform UN statistic.

¹³ Conform www.un.org there are about 3.9 million refugees form Syrian Arab Republic, 2.6 million Afghanistan, and 1.1 million from Somalia.

¹⁴ See, 2015 UN Report.

¹⁵ Nana Oishi – Associate Editor, *Women in Motion: Globalization, State Policies, and Labor Migration in Asia*. Publisher: Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2005, pg. 177.

¹⁶ Conform www.un.org

¹⁷ In 2015 there were about 157 million from middle-income countries who were living in high-income countries: conform www.un.org.

¹⁸ The Indian's Diaspora had 16 million migrants in 2015 conform www.un.org.

¹⁹ The Mexico's Diaspora had 12 million migrants in 2015 conform www.un.org.

²⁰ The Russian Federation Diaspora had 11 million migrants in 2015, conform www.un.org.

²¹ The Chinese Diaspora had 10 million in 2015, conform www.un.org.

²² The Bangladesh Diaspora had 7 million people in 2015, conform www.un.org.

²³ Both Pakistan and Ukraine Diaspora had 6 million people each, conform www.un.org.

²⁴ Çağlar Özden and Maurice Schiff, *Editors International Migration, Economic Development & Policy*, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development - The World Bank, Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2007, Washington DC, pag.161.

²⁵ Doreen Indra – Editor, *Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice*, Publisher: Berghahn Books, New York. Publication year, 1999, pg. 23.