

US, G-8 immigration affected by rapid economic globalization

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Few can doubt that the global immigration system is built on the old adage of Adam Smith namely that "Man is of all sorts of luggage the most difficult to be transported." The rise in global immigration across borders, particularly to G-8 countries such as the United States, Canada, Britain, Germany, and France and to the super Asian industrial economies such as Japan and South Korea can be considered a growing phenomenon that has been propelled by the rapid economic globalization of the world economy in the past decade.

Recently Leif Brottem, a scholar in the field of migration studies, mentioned that lately politicians around the world were focusing on the national security aspects of immigration and neglecting the development angle which can constrain national growth. Brottem noted in a recent issue of *Foreign Policy in Focus*, "The free flow of capital and information is the visible and oft-celebrated face of globalization. Hidden behind the flash of supply chains and e-commerce are countless people that migrate annually from the Global South to North America and Europe in search of work. These economic migrants form an immensely important but largely hidden side of globalization." In recent years, world leaders and celebrities have been making vocal pledges to address poverty, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, but there is very little discussion of migration and its economic effects. According to the Organization for International Migration, over 1.6 million people immigrate to the U.S. and Canada each year, the vast majority from developing countries. Handling immigration flows smoothly, maintaining higher economic growth with integrated national security systems and borders, safely absorbing guest workers or permanent immigrants and maintaining a country's societal harmony by discouraging illegal migration by promoting legal steps to their absorption, have become a major priority of countries such as the US, Canada, Germany, Japan and Britain, which welcome the best and the brightest of global talent to their shores each year.

But sometimes, some interest groups within national societies are bent on opposing new immigration intake, and develop hostile policies and attitudes towards immigrants, not knowing that this can also impact negatively on economic development, sometimes taking jobs away from the host country, since labor skills and capital are available at competitive value in foreign shores or a second country that is willing to absorb both the capital and labor resources at a near competitive or cheaper price. Also the rising cost of oil prices globally have made the Middle East and newly industrialized economies a much more lucrative destination for immigrant populations.

The US for instance always prides in calling itself a Land of Immigrants, where the

Statue of Liberty still beckons the world's poor, hungry, prosecuted, despised, and provides hope to thousands of refugees who have lived torn lives affected by civil conflicts in various global trouble spots. Many of these victims have seen the wrath of civil conflicts, loss of human dignity, human rights, political and religious persecution and a taste of democracy until they reach US shores. This is true for those migrating to other G-8 countries as well. In fact, the US leads among the industrialized countries in taking in new immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers every year, whose costs to the national economy amount to billions of dollars but is done on the basis of American pride and dignity, since it is the number one preserver of global freedom and democracy .

International labor migration is hitting a global boom at the end of this decade. Often developing countries leaders point out that migrant remittances have contributed positively to their national economy overshooting foreign development assistance. For them, the trend of promoting overseas employment continues at the national and regional level. In 2006, for instance South Asian countries made nearly US\$ 46.6 billion in foreign remittances, of which India was the world's global topper. Earlier in 2004, developing countries' remittance totaled \$160 billion exceeding development aid from all sources by 50 percent. With the adoption of more formal labor contracts, total remittances are expected to rise significantly in South and South East Asian countries in the current decade. The World Bank has recognized the valuable role of remittances in motivating national development in the poorer developing world. Various studies done under its auspices show that policies to reduce poverty are directly related to migrant remittance investments in productive and viable economic sectors, including motivating rural income generation in agriculture and local resource use.

However, managing international migration flows is also proving a complex global challenge, as many of the world's 190 sovereign states issue passports for their citizens travelling abroad and visas for those entering their borders. In the past, private racketeers have given headaches to transnational immigration authorities and the international police force by either manufacturing fake travel documents, issuing bogus visas, or smuggling people to destination countries where there is a shortage of labor in the unskilled and lower categories. Besides, international crime and terrorism witnessed at the start of this decade has also created further barriers to the regular safe flow of global immigrants. Therefore, halting human trafficking and illegal immigration remain two top agenda issues in many developed countries. More than a decade back, in 1985, the UN estimated that nearly 3 percent of the world's residents, a figure around 175 million migrated abroad for work and pleasure, but today the figure is almost in two digits at around 22% according to informed global immigration experts. China, India, US, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia and Pakistan have seen some of the highest global migration movements in modern history.

Why does global migration take place and where are the migrants headed? Global migration is a movement of people to access better opportunities, jobs and a better quality of life elsewhere. It can happen within states and regions, conditioned by seasonal or permanent employment opportunities, better incomes, more security, better quality of

life, and better geographical and natural resource outlay which attract a new labor force. The World Bank states that population density is higher in developing than developed countries – almost half less in the developed world than the developing world. At the turn of 1999, the world's population had reached 6 billion and is growing at around 1.5 percent every year.

Recently, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency of the US, Gen. Michael V. Hayden, spoke at the Landon Lecture Series at Kansas State University on global trends and its dangers where he also touched on immigration and its global implication. Director Hayden stated, "Today, there are 6.7 billion people sharing the planet. By mid-century, the best estimates point to a world population of more than 9 billion. That's a 40 to 45 percent increase, but most of that growth is almost certain to occur in countries least able to sustain it, and that will create a situation that will likely fuel instability and extremism—not just in those areas, but beyond them as well." He also projected that in many poor and fragile states, governance is getting difficult where populations are growing rapidly such as in Afghanistan, Liberia, Niger, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the population is expected to triple by mid-century. Dr. Hayden pointed out, for instance, the number of people in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Yemen is likely to more than double. According to his analysis, just beyond the raw numbers, all these countries will have a large concentration of young people, and if their basic freedoms and basic needs such as food, housing, education, employment are not met, can attract violence, civil unrest, and extremism. He also delved on the wider scope of maintaining new strategic partnerships with emerging global economies such as India and China in preserving US interests, but which are significantly harbored by growing mutual economic interests in international relations. These important remarks have drawn positive global feedback since it is quite true that millions of young people from fast-growing, poorly developed countries will emigrate—legally and illegally—in search of economic opportunity, security, or political freedom, most coming from Africa or Southeast Asia. The receiving countries, on the other hand, in the process of integrating immigrants, can be affected by potential unrest and extremism.

The fact is current global economic trends are likely to increase migration in the 21st century. The world's GDP was \$30 trillion in 2000, and is expected to double by 2030. At the start of this decade, the World Bank calculated that global per capita income averaged \$5,000 a year, while per capita incomes in the 25 high-income countries averaged \$26,000 a person in 1999, versus \$1,200 in low-and middle-income countries. This means that an average person moving from a poorer to a higher income country can increase personal income 22 times, which substantiates the high risks taken by some to enter high-income countries, turning to smugglers or buying false documents.

In 2008 global migration scholars project international migration movements in terms of the movement spurred by demographic growth in the developing countries, difference in incomes and the prevailing insecurity and threat to human rights and the global freedom agenda, which makes workers and families seek safer ground. However, there is a continued need to develop effective systems of monitoring these flows so that both the receiving and sending countries benefit in the end without offsetting national economic or

political stability.

The Nineties saw differing views between technology transfer and labor substitution model advocates which still preoccupy global immigration debates and policy analysis in both labor sending and labor receiving countries. But increasingly, the financial benefit of attracting fresh ideas, thoughts, talent and expertise to one's shores is considered more lucrative than transferring technology to the immigrant labor sending countries, which not only takes a big chunk of labor away, but results in external capital accumulation which propels other countries' growth at the cost of one's own. Thus, Increasingly, G-8 countries' immigration experts are focused on brainstorming a more flexible immigration system that will allow the transfer and rotation of global expertise that will benefit both ends, without offsetting the growth of the lesser developed economies, as recent ILO and IOM studies have also pointed out.



American Chronicle Biography

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From M.David Posner, Editorial Coordinator of the American Chronicle, National Media Network of American Writers and Journalists, Hollywood, Los Angeles,

" Surya B. Prasai is a globally accomplished international strategic communications, media and international development resource expert and serves as Regional Contributor to the American Chronicle from Maryland. Surya is also a popular Google Global Commentator and Discussant on Global Climate Change, Water, and Bio-diversity and has written many important pieces with global policy ramifications on HIV/AIDS impact mitigation, Global Climate Change, halting illegal labor immigration, U.S. and Asia-Pacific immigration reforms and stopping global trafficking of women and young children. Surya's writings are usually marked with in-depth understanding on the above issues and the global compact required for developing further progress. He is noted for his unique, concise and innovative thinking on international affairs!"

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As an influential top level Asian media commentator, Surya B. Prasai's articles have appeared regularly in a host of important American and Asia-Pacific media networks. He has contributed in the past three decades in The Bangkok Post (Guest Columnist), The

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