

# Turning the tide? Why development will not stop migration.

Hein de Haas  
International Migration Institute  
James Martin 21st Century School  
University of Oxford  
[hein.dehaas@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:hein.dehaas@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

Article forthcoming in *Development and Change* 38(5), 2007

## **Abstract**

Restrictive immigration policies and the militarization of external border controls by the US and the EU have failed to significantly curb immigration from Latin America and Africa. Rather, they have led to increasing reliance on increasingly risky and costly irregular migration and have paradoxically encouraged permanent settlement. A commonly presented 'smart solution' to curb immigration is to address the perceived root causes of migration through increasing aid given to or liberalising trade with origin countries. Recently, policies to stimulate remittances and promoting temporary and circular migration are also promoted as enhancing home country development, so that migration paradoxically becomes a medicine against migration. However, besides the limited scope and credibility of such policies, empirical and theoretical evidence strongly suggests that economic and human development increases people's capabilities and aspirations and therefore tends to coincide with an increase rather than a decrease in emigration, at least in the short to medium term. Under unfavourable conditions, trade, aid and remittances can be complements rather than substitutes for migration also in the longer term. At the same time, demand for both skilled and unskilled migrant is likely to persist. Trade, aid, return migration and remittances are no short-cut 'solutions' to migration, and sustained immigration seems therefore to be likely.

**Keywords:** international migration, development, migration policies, aid, trade, remittances, temporary migration.

**Acknowledgements:** The author would like to thank Oliver Bakewell, Stephen Castles and two anonymous reviewers for their useful comments on earlier versions of the manuscript.

## **Introduction**

Migration is an issue that raises high hopes and deep fears. The dramatic images of African migrants trying to enter the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on Morocco's Mediterranean coast in the autumn of 2005 by scaling the tall border fences, their more daily attempts to cross the Strait of Gibraltar to mainland Spain or the Atlantic to the Canary Islands by small fishing boats and the persistent attempts by Mexican migrants to cross the Rio Grande or the desert reinforce the perception of increasing pressure on the borders of wealthy nations.

In the West, immigration of people from developing countries is increasingly perceived as a problem in need of control (cf. Castles, 2000:278; Nyberg-Sørensen *et al.*, 2002a: 35-6). Since the mid-1970s, opposition to immigration has been on the rise. Immigration from developing countries has come to be perceived as a burden, and even an outright threat to economic growth and the welfare state. In the post-9/11 era, latent feelings that non-Western immigrants also form an internal threat to social cohesion, cultural coherence, and security of Western societies have increased.

In the past two decades, irregular immigration and related phenomena such as human smuggling and trafficking has become a high ranking issue on national and international policy agendas. Politicians seem increasingly responsive to public fears of being engulfed by immigrants through publicly reasserting the need to stem these flows. The issue has created considerable tension in relations between United States (US) and Mexico as well as between the European Union (EU) and its Mediterranean neighbours. For instance, in 2002, the European Commission proposed to link EU development aid to the willingness to readmit (irregular) migrants originating from these and also third countries (CEC, 2002). At an EU summit in Sevilla in 2002, British and Spanish Prime Ministers Tony Blair and José María Aznar proposed to no longer give aid to migrant sending countries that would not cooperate in containing irregular immigration (cf. Bhagwati, 2003:98).

However, South-North migration has shown an unforeseen persistence over the past decades and even witnessed an increase since the 1990s. Policies to curb migration or incite return migration have generally failed to meet their stated objectives (Castles, 2004). The increasing militarization of border patrols on the Rio Grande, the Strait of Gibraltar and other crossing points has not significantly decreased migration. Countries such as Mexico and Morocco are even evolving into transit and immigration countries for migrants and asylum seekers from more distant Latin American and sub-Saharan African countries (Alba, 2004; de Haas, 2006).

Conscious of the failure of restrictive migration policies, some scholars, development practitioners and politicians have regularly proposed 'smart solutions' to migration. They argue that only by promoting social and economic development in poor countries through development aid and trade liberalisation, can migration be curtailed. For instance, in the aftermath of the dramatic events in Ceuta and Melilla in the autumn of 2005, when at least eleven sub-Saharan African immigrants died, several policy makers, while reiterating the need to intensify border controls and 'combat' irregular migration, rushed to state that the 'root causes' of migration needed to be addressed in order to reduce migration through increasing aid and trade with sending countries.

In October 2005, president of the European Commission (EC) José Manuel Barroso stated that 'The problem of immigration, the dramatic consequences of which we are witnessing, can only be addressed effectively [...] through an ambitious and coordinated development [plan] to fight its root causes'. African Union head Alpha Oumar Konare said that walls and prisons would not solve the problem because people are migrating because of impoverishment. He therefore called on the EU to keep its promises to open its markets, cut subsidies and drop tariffs. Recently, politicians and researchers have put increasing hopes on temporary and circular migration. These would not only serve the interests of the receiving countries, but are also believed to boost development through remittances and investments by return migrants, thus eventually reducing migration pressures in sending countries.

At first sight, such prepositions sound laudable and seem to make more sense than policies that exclusively rely on repression. Yet the belief that aid, trade and migration-propelled development will reduce migration is more problematic than it seems. First of all, it reflects the implicit but contestable assumption that migration is undesirable and is therefore a *problem* – the *antithesis* of development – that subsequently can and should be ‘solved’. This is a doubtful assumption in the light of ample evidence that migration has been a universal feature of humanity.

Second, on the analytical level, this belief is ultimately based on the assumption that development in sending countries will reduce migration. The aim of this paper is to argue why such policies are bound to fail, primarily because they seem to be based on erroneous assumptions about the complex ways and often positive ways in which migration and development processes are reciprocally related. The article will first point out why past policies to restrict migration have largely failed. Subsequently, it will analyse the practical and fundamental reasons why proposals to use aid, trade and temporary migration to reduce migration pressures are based on an inaccurate analysis of the dynamics that drive migration.

### **Deflating the migration boom**

First of all, it is important to observe that the actual magnitude of contemporary international migration is not really unprecedented. Modern mass media tend to magnify migration-related crises such as the events in Ceuta and Melilla and the arrival of boat migrants at the Canary Islands through suggestive and dramatic images and the common use of ‘aquatic’ metaphors such as ‘floods’ and ‘waves’.

Concomitant anti-immigrant public discourses of populist politicians tend to further strengthen and justify alarmist perceptions and fears that hordes of Africans of Latin Americans are waiting to swamp Europe and North America.

Also academics regularly contribute to such alarmist images through the use of tempting but inappropriate dramatic metaphors that blow the real magnitude of migration out of proportion. One striking example of such apocalyptic portrayal is the

following grim forecast of global migration trends by Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider (1991: 62-3), founder and secretary, respectively, of the Club of Rome:

‘population pressures, opportunity gradients and conditions of tyranny will have generated waves of migration towards the North and the West, which it will be impossible to contain. Our successors are likely to see mass migration on an unprecedented scale . . . . At the extreme it is not difficult to imagine innumerable immigrants landing on the Northern shores of the Mediterranean and consisting of the hungry and the desperate. Similarly, massive emigration from Latin America to the United States is to be expected, while population pressure in China may seek relief by entering an empty Siberia’

A more recent example is Gallina’s (2006: 17) referral to a Mediterranean ‘demographic bomb’ that would have ‘exploded and can be seen in the daily dramas along the Spanish and Italian coasts’. Environmental crises are also typically linked to mass population movements (cf. Castles, 2002; Homer-Dixon, 1991; Myers and Kent, 1995).

Although it is commonplace to describe such migration as ‘massive’ (e.g., Böhning, 1994:169; Faini and Venturini, 1994:435), this inappropriate term evokes apocalyptic images which are generally far beyond reality. Although ‘globalisation’ is often assumed to have led to unprecedented and skyrocketing migration, there is reason for scepticism. While underestimating levels of past mobility, there is a tendency to overstate the current scale of international migration. In fact, an estimated 2.5 to 3 per cent of the world’s population have lived outside their countries of origin for a year or more (IOM, 2000:1; Nyberg-Sørensen *et al.*, 2002a:6). Between 1965 and 1990, the increase in the global international migration stock has almost kept equal pace with population growth. Although the share of international migrants on the world population witnessed a certain increase in the 1990s, there were periods of equal if not more drastic international migration over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Nyberg-Sørensen *et al.*, 2002a:6-7; Zlotnik, 1998:14).

Rather than a huge increase in global migration, the most fundamental change in the second half of the twentieth century has been the reversal of the dominant trans-

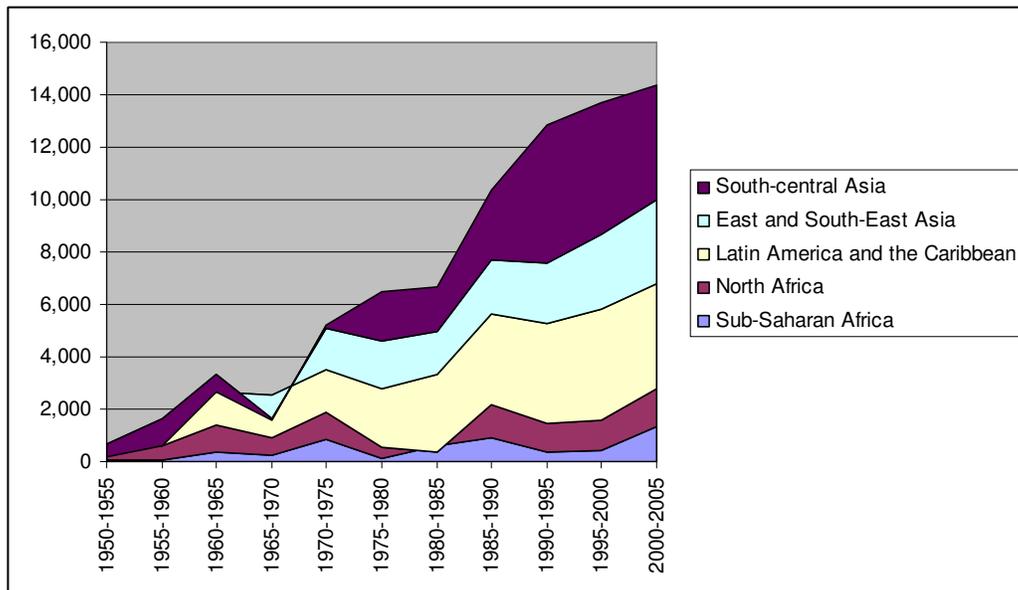
continental migration flows. Whereas in the nineteenth and early twentieth century the main global migration flows used to be predominantly North-North (mainly from Europe to North America), South-South (e.g., migration of Indian and Chinese indentured labourers to British, Dutch, and French colonies), and North-South (from European countries to the colonies in the tropical world), South-North migration was fairly limited. This pattern has completely changed in the post-WWII period, with Western countries facing an unprecedented influx of non-Western migrants (see figure 1).

Rather than the relative number of international migrants, there has been an increase in the number of developing countries that has become firmly incorporated within migration systems that link them to industrialised countries (Zlotnik, 1998). After having been colonised, people living in non-Western countries have emigrated themselves to Western countries. Also several non-Western countries, such as the Asian Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs) and the Middle-East oil states have become labour importers in their own right (Massey *et al.*, 1998).

Another fundamental change has been the increased possibility for migrants and their families to live transnationally and to adopt transnational identities through revolutions in communication and transport infrastructure (cf. Vertovec, 1999). This increasingly enables migrants to foster double loyalties, to travel back and forth, to relate to people, to work and to do business simultaneously in distant places. This *de facto* transnationalization of migrants' lives has also challenged assimilationist models of migrant integration and the modernist political construct of the nation-state and citizenship (de Haas, 2005b: 1273).

This increasing visibility of phenotypically and culturally distinct immigrants, who foster dual links to countries of destination and origin, might explain why people in wealthy countries *perceive* that migration has also globally been on the rise. Now the settled populations of Western states are confronted with permanent settlement of relatively large groups of non-elite, increasingly transnationally oriented immigrants who do not necessarily share their culture and religion, international migration has been defined as a major issue of public concern.

**Figure 1. Net emigration from developing countries, by region, 1950-2005 (thousands per year)**



Source: UNPD, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

### The failure of restrictionism

The primary response of governments to curb unwanted migration since the 1970s has been the imposition of increasingly restrictive immigration laws and regulations (restrictive issuance of visa and residence permits), intensified border controls, carrier sanctions, deterrent policies and return migration policies. Although restrictive immigration policies have undoubtedly had an effect on the number of *legitimate* arrivals, they have also generated the unintended effect of encouraging irregular migration and pushing migrants into *permanent* settlement while interrupting patterns of *circular* migration. They have also increasing financial and human costs and risks of migration, as well as the use of legal channels for family and asylum migration by people who basically migrate to work (cf. Massey *et al.*, 1998; Harris, 2002; Newland, 2003).

The West-European experience with ‘guest workers’ from Mediterranean countries like Morocco and Turkey is a case in point. In the years following the 1973 Oil Crisis, northwest European governments stopped recruiting workers and started to implement increasingly restrictive immigration policies. Governments started to experiment with

measures to discourage family reunification and to encourage and prepare ‘guest workers’ to return to their home countries. This included departure bonuses, mother-tongue teaching for migrants’ children, training programs before return, and investment programs for return migrants (Entzinger, 1985; Penninx, 1982).

However, instead of leading to a substantial increase in return migration, restrictive immigration policies stimulated the permanent settlement of Turkish, Moroccan, and other ‘guest workers’ through massive family reunification. Habituation to the life in receiving countries and the lack of opportunities in origin countries certainly a major role in explaining migrants’ settlement. However, also the increasingly restrictive immigration policies played a significant role in the decision to stay in order ‘to be on the safe side’ (Entzinger, 1985:263-275; cf. Castles, 2006, Fargues, 2004). Such policies could sometimes even trigger unintended forms of ‘now or never’ migration. For instance, when the former Federal Republic of Germany tried to discourage family reunification in the late 1970s, family migration increased, as many migrants feared that family reunification might eventually be forbidden entirely (Entzinger, 1985:267).

Also in the case of Mexican migration, restrictive policies have decreased the probability of return migration, ‘thereby transforming a circular movement of workers into a settled population of families’ (Massey, 2005: 12). In this vein, Harris (2002: 31) argued that

‘the tighter the immigration controls to prevent this, the greater the incentive to stay and settle in order to make access to work more secure ... The result was paradoxical. Preventing people working so that they would not become citizens forced them to become citizens in order to work’.

Immigrants are inhibited from returning because they fear to lose the right to re-emigrate temporarily or permanently to the receiving host state or to freely circulate between sending and receiving countries (Weil, 2002:46-7). The irony is perhaps that irregular migrants – the very product of restrictionism – seem the category that is least inclined to return but does everything to obtain citizenship. Among Mexican migrants, for instance, 95 per cent of those attempting illegal entry succeed with the

help of smugglers, but the increased cost of illegal entry encourages irregular Mexicans to remain in the US. In fact, the probability of returning to Mexico within one year of illegal entry fell from 50 per cent in the mid-1980s to 25 per cent today (Massey, 2005; cited in Migration news, Vol. 12(3), July 2005).

Migrant networks play a crucial role in facilitating continued migration over formally closed borders (cf. Böcker, 1994). Migration movements, once set in motion, therefore tend to gain their own momentum over time through the establishment of such transnational migrant networks and have therefore become notoriously difficult to control (Massey *et al.*, 1998). Increasing border controls aiming at ‘combating illegal migration’ have also been counteracted by the professionalization of smuggling and the concomitant diversification of migration strategies and migration itineraries.

For instance, intensified border patrolling in the Strait of Gibraltar since the mid 1990s has prompted Moroccan and other African migrants to cross from more eastern places on the Mediterranean coast and to explore new crossing points to Europe, such as the Canary Islands (de Haas, 2006). At the US-Mexican border, increased border enforcement has pushed migration flows into more remote regions, which resulted in a tripling of the death rate and a dramatic fall in the rate of apprehension (Massey, 2005). While the probability of being apprehended while trying to enter the US illegally from Mexico was 33 per cent from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, this rate fell to between 20 and 30 per cent from the mid-1980s until 2000 to reached a low of five per cent in 2002 despite the addition of Border Patrol agents (Massey, 2005; cited in Migration News, Vol. 12(3), July 2005). Another survey demonstrated that, among Moroccan migrant workers who reported illegal entry or overstay, the proportion reporting that they have been successful in their attempts to attain legal status is two-thirds or more (Schoorl *et al.*, 2000:xix)<sup>1</sup>.

At the US-Mexican border, after the launching of the new US strategy of prevention through deterrence in 1993, the cost of purchasing a smuggler’s services rose from the previous rate of around \$400 to around \$1,200 in 1999, before levelling off (Massey,

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<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, this estimate is likely to be biased because of an overrepresentation of already legalised migrants in the sample.

2005). In 2003, the illegal crossing by boat from Morocco to Spain cost from \$200 for minors, to \$500 to \$800 for Moroccans up to between \$800 and \$1,200 for sub-Saharan Africans (Lahlou, 2003). The human costs of increasing repression are considerable and increasing. Each year, large numbers of migrants and refugees die and get seriously injured while trying to enter the US and EU. Human rights organisations estimate that 3,285 dead bodies were found on the shores of the Straits of Gibraltar alone between 1997 and 2001 (Schuster, 2005). Between January 1995 and March 2004, at least 2,640 deaths were recorded in the US-Mexico border region (Cornelius, 2004).

This all reveals that it is very difficult for receiving states to severely limit immigration (Bhagwati, 2003; Weil, 2002:43-4). As long as global disparities in life perspectives and the persistent demand for migrant labour in both the upper and lower ends of the labour market of wealthy countries persist, restrictionist immigration policies have a limited and largely damaging effect. The *de facto* continuation of immigration has regularly forced Western governments to regularise irregular migrants, confirming their actual status of permanent settlers (cf. de Haas, 2006; Fargues, 2004). In fact, a higher-than-present level of migration control appears to be impossible without drastically curtailing civil and human rights at odds with enlightenment values and the open nature of modern capitalist economies.

It is also important to mention that low skilled immigration is probably not always as 'unwanted' as politicians officially proclaim, as employers might benefit from cheap, irregular workers lacking rights, and governments tacitly permit such movements (Castles and Miller, 2003:283; cf. Castles, 2006). In fact, 'elected leaders and bureaucrats increasingly have turned to *symbolic* policy instruments to create an *appearance* of control' (Massey et al., 1998:288; emphasis in original). Yet 'harsh' political discourse on immigration which systematically obscures the real demand for migrant labour can be a catalyst for the same xenophobia and the concomitant apocalyptic representations of a massive influx of migrants to which they seem a political-electoral response.

## Smart solutions to migration?

Confronted with the inability to manage (read curb) migration by legal and repressive means, politicians, academics and development NGOs have advocated development aid as a means to curb future immigration (cf. Stalker, 2002; Böhning and Schloeter-Paredes, 1994). In the same vein, people advocating trade liberalisation with developing countries typically assumed that this would boost development, and, hence, lower South-North migration. Trade policy has been advocated by the European Union (EU) (e.g., association agreements with southern and eastern Mediterranean countries), the US (e.g., the North American Free Trade Agreement – NAFTA) and multilateral organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as a means to reduce migration (Schiff, 1996:4; Martin, 2002:2). The underlying assumption is that aid and trade will policies will result in migration reduction (Böhning, 1994). This is supposed to ‘generate rapid economic growth in the countries of origin. Broad-based and rapid development will induce potential poverty migrants to stay at home’. (IOM and UNCTAD 1996).

Also at the national level, development aid and trade have been advocated as substitutes to migration. More than one decade ago, former Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark already used the threat of immigration as an argument to increase foreign aid: ‘if you don’t help the third world ... then you will have these poor people in our society’ (Migration News, April 1995). In 1994, the European Ministers for Development Cooperation requested the European Commission to investigate the possibility of using development aid to diminish migration pressures (DGIS, 1996). Similarly, at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference which was held in Barcelona in 1995, it was agreed to ‘strengthen cooperation in order to ease migration pressure’ (DGIS, 1996; for other examples see Ghosh, 1992).

In recent years, the EU has increasingly attempted to link migration and development policies through integrating migration (control) issues in its relation with third countries (CEC, 2002; Weil, 1999: 42). In Morocco, for instance, European funds channelled through the MEDA (*mésures d’accompagnement*) aid program target the stated goal of immigration reduction. Of the total MEDA aid budget of 426 million

euros for 2000-2006, 115 million euros (27 per cent) are being spent to ‘break out of the circle of weak growth, unemployment, poverty, and migration’ through support for intensifying border controls, the control of irregular migration and the development of rural areas seen as a source of poverty, drugs, human smuggling, and irregular migration (de Haas, 2005a).

Recently, politicians have also advocated temporary and return migration as a development policy. This coincides with the recent resurgence in the interest in migration, remittances and development by governments of sending and receiving countries. For instance, the Dutch government envisages intensifying existing voluntary *and forced* return migration programs as a means to promote development in migrant sending countries (DGIS, 2004). Through remittances and their know-how (‘human capital’), return migrants are believed to become significant development actors. Such migration-driven development would then eventually take away incentives to migrate, so that migration paradoxically becomes a medicine against migration (de Haas, 2005b).

One concrete example of *de facto* ‘return and stay-at-home’ policies are the French co-development programs. The French-Senegalese co-development program promotes the voluntary return of Senegalese by providing assistance to migrant workers for reinsertion, in the forms of credit funds, training-for-return programs, and so on. The program aims to ‘reverse the exodus of the Senegalese’, by ‘explain[ing] to people the problems and hazards of emigration. . . . [and] demonstrate to them that their territory is full of gainful opportunities’ (Diatta and Mbow, 1999:251). In order to convince the Senegalese that it is for their own good not to go abroad, and to urge migrants to ‘return and invest’, they advocate, amongst others, the ‘publication of a brochure on business opportunities’ in Senegal (*ibid*: 253).

Also the Malian government is open to co-development and cooperates with assisted return programs for unauthorised Malians in France, and works with international organisations to attract educated Malians back to Mali. About 500 unauthorised Malians in France agreed to return in exchange for \$3,600, and open various types of businesses (Martin *et al.*, 2002). Also recent EU policies seem to increasingly

embrace the concept of co-development, thereby employing a narrow focus on the 'return potential' as a development factor (Nyberg-Sørensen *et al.*, 2002b: 56).

Fundamentally, the argument that promoting development in sending countries is an effective means to reduce immigration is based on the underlying assumption that migration and development are negatively and linearly correlated processes and, hence, each other's substitutes. Following this logic, migration can be reduced by addressing the alleged 'root causes' of migration, such as economic underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment. Boosting 'development' in sending societies seems the key, to quote the title of Böhning's (1994) article, to 'helping migrants to stay at home'. However, there is no empirical evidence that aid and trade policies have had any significant effect on reducing people's propensity to migrate (cf. Nyberg-Sørensen *et al.*, 2002a; Stalker, 2002). There are a number of practical and more fundamental reasons why 'development instead of migration' programs are bound to fail, which will be addressed in the following sections.

### **Development aid and co-development**

With regard to aid, the very scope and duration of aid programs seem too limited to have any significant effect. For Central America, for instance, it has been estimated that aid would have to be almost US\$ 100 per person per year for the duration of 20 to 30 years to eliminate economic incentives to emigrate (Martin 1994:246; Weintraub and Díaz-Briquets, 1994:147). This leaves aside more general doubts over the effectiveness of aid.

Second, despite stated intentions to create coherence between migration and development policies, there is a considerable gap between discourse and practice. Official Development Assistance is generally not concentrated on migrant sending countries. Poverty reduction remains the dominant goal of development cooperation (Nyberg-Sørensen *et al.*, 2002a: 35), while immigrants mostly do not originate from the poorest communities and countries. In general, there is a lack of any credible coherence between aid and migration policies (Stalker, 2002). Furthermore,

development assistance has also often been a political instrument leading to ‘aid’ in the form of weapons and other forms of support to autocratic regimes that often disregarded human rights. This increased insecurity, provoked armed conflict, created refugee problems and exacerbated rather than decreased problems of underdevelopment (Castles and Miller, 2003).

Third, one can raise doubts on the very credibility of certain ‘aid instead of migration’ policies. Their stated development intentions often seem to camouflage a hidden agenda of forcibly returning irregular immigrants or rejected asylum seekers after providing them some modest financial assistance or a rapid and often ineffective professional formation (Weil, 2002). Considerable suspicion remains that the goal is much more strongly to curb immigration than to contribute to development (Newland, 2003). For instance, of the 934 million Euros the EU programmed for external aid in 2000-2006, only 13 per cent is allocated to ‘development’, and that for only two countries, Morocco and Somalia. The major share of the budget goes to ‘management of migration flows’ (i.e., strengthening border control and the mitigating irregular immigration) (Russell, 2003).

Notwithstanding their official referral to development objectives, receiving countries have so far not shown any serious commitment to a veritable policy that addresses the linkages between migration and development beyond the narrow perspective of stimulating the return of unwanted migrants. This one-sided emphasis on (forced) return migration is obvious from the operationalization of French (Weil, 2002:42) and Dutch (DGIS, 2004) migration and development policies. This is also exemplified by the built-in contradiction between voluntary and forced migration in the Dutch policy memorandum on migration and development:

‘Effective return policies are a condition for policies to promote temporary labour migration and circular migration. It is important to encourage *voluntary* return through a combination of policy elements, such as *forced* return where necessary, agreements with countries of origin, support to or pressure on countries of origin, support to migrants and migrant organisations, support to activities of the Dutch civil society in the field of education and re-integration, support to temporary labour migration including effective return, and support

to (temporary) return for the benefit of the (re)building of the country of origin' (DGIS, 2004:8; translated from Dutch and emphasis by author).

In 1998 the European Commission set up the High Level Working Group (HLWG) on Asylum and Migration as a second path to developing a rather explicit *migration prevention policy* besides its development aid and 'root causes' policies. The HLWG was charged with preparing Action Plans on countries from which large numbers of refugees and migrants come to Europe. Initially, the plans were meant develop measures for cooperation with sending countries regarding foreign policy, and development and trade. However, in practice the action plans emphasize measures such the readmission of rejected asylum-seekers and securing protection in the conflict region, without addressing the question how this coincides with human rights abuses in a given country (cf. Council of the European Union, 2000; Van Selm, 2002).

Moreover, the scale and funds allocated to such programmes are generally too modest to warrant any expectations on significantly diminishing immigration, increasing return migration, let alone 'bringing development' and addressing the root causes of migration (cf. Olesen, 2002). For instance: is the mere dissemination of a brochure on business opportunities in Senegal or information campaigns to 'reverse the exodus of the Senegalese' and convince emigrants to return and stay at home (Diatta and Mbow, 1999:251), really likely to have any significant effect without altering the structural conditions which make people want to leave the country? The new Dutch government policy on migration and development has been proposed without allocating any additional budget for this purpose (DGIS, 2004).

### **Temporary migration: old wine in new bottles?**

In recent years there has been a remarkable resurgence in interest in 'temporary' migration as a perceived solution to migration dilemmas (cf. Castles, 2006). Various bodies such as the Dutch government (DGIS, 2004:77-8), the European Commission (CEC, 2005) the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM, 2005), and the World Bank (2006) have suggested boosting temporary migration, in particular of

the low skilled, as a kind of optimum strategy to reconcile the interests of the migrants, sending and destination countries.

Recent proposals by the EC focus on stimulating the ‘development potential’ of temporary migration through encouraging circular migration, by giving priority to temporary employment schemes, stimulating short-term and seasonal migration and facilitating return migration through assisted return and reintegration programmes (CEC, 2005). It is striking that the analytically distinct concepts of circular and temporary migration are mostly used interchangeably. For instance, while the Dutch government aims at stimulating circular migration, it narrowly interprets circular migration as ‘temporary’ migration, as an ideal solution to fill shortages on the domestic labour market while avoiding the nuisances of permanent settlement. Meanwhile it reassures the public that these temporary labourers shall return. Also the World Bank (2006: xv) recently expressed its belief in

‘managed migration programs between origin and destination countries that combine temporary migration of low-skilled workers with incentives for return ... it is easier for destination countries to suspend temporary programs than to expel immigrants. Overall, however, such programs do represent a feasible approach to capturing the efficiency gains from labour migration.’

Sending countries would also benefit from the return of their migrants, whose financial and human resources are believed to contribute to development. Temporary migration is therefore sometimes believed to create a ‘win-win-win’ situation from which both migrants, receiving and sending states would benefit (cf. Ruhs, 2005:20).

However, besides serious doubts on the proposition that temporary migrants would be better development agents for origin countries than integrated and settled migrants (cf. de Haas 2005b), this creates false hope by ignoring repeated past experience that migration almost inevitably goes along with the settlement of a significant proportion of migrants, and that enforcement of ‘revolving door’ policies tends to be extremely difficult (Castles, 2000: 277-8; Castles, 2006; Ratha, 2003:168). This is somehow reminiscent of the efforts in the 1970s and 1980s to stimulate return of European ‘guest workers’. The reasons for failure are also likely to be similar. More in general,

although migration and remittances have a significant potential to contribute to development in countries of origin, it is clear by now that migration is no panacea for development (Taylor, 1999). Unattractive investment environments in sending countries and restrictive immigration policies which interrupt circular migration patterns prevent the high development potential of migration from being fully realised (de Haas, 2005b).

### **Trade as an alternative to aid?**

Confronted with the often disappointing effectiveness of aid policies, and corresponding with the general neoclassical turn in development thinking, boosting free trade and foreign direct investment has gained popularity as a perceived means to promote economic growth and hence reduce migration. For instance, the International Labour Organization (ILO) concluded that targeted interventions to boost employment in high-emigration areas in the Maghreb countries usually have no perceptible impact on migration pressure. It therefore argued that a more fruitful option would be for the richer countries to open their markets so as to promote export-led growth that could give a substantial boost to both wages and employment (Abella, 2002, cited in Stalker, 2002: 171).

However, there is a similar credibility problem as is the case with aid policies. The protectionist trade policies of wealthy countries that prevent migrant sending countries from exporting agricultural and industrial products are often inconsistent with their explicit policy aims of promoting development in poor countries (Faini and Venturini, 1993; Russell, 2003; Russell and Teitelbaum, 1992). Besides directly impeding imports through trade barriers, subsidies and other forms of support to the agricultural sector in particular keeps world commodity prices artificially low, which harms economic growth in developing countries. For instance, the EU spent €1.1 billion on development aid to 77 poor ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries in 2002, against €47.6 billion, 49 per cent of its total budget, in support to its own agricultural sector, mainly in the form of subsidies. While discouraging the expansion of labour-intensive exports in developing countries, protectionist trade policies foster

growth in low-skilled labour-intensive sectors in industrialised countries and sustain the demand for new immigrant workers.

### **More development, less migration?**

Besides their limited scope, consistency and credibility, the more fundamental reason why 'development instead of migration' policies, even if they would encourage development, are unlikely to curb migration is that they are based on an inaccurate analysis of the developmental causes of migration. It is often implicitly or explicitly assumed that development has the effect of linearly decreasing emigration, which tends to be seen as the outflow of poverty, crises and general misery. However, the paradox is that the process of social and economic development in its broadest sense tends to be associated with generally higher levels of mobility and *more* migration at least in the short to medium term (Faini and Venturini, 1993; Martin and Taylor, 1996; Rotte *et al*, 1997; Russel and Teitelbaum, 1992; Skeldon, 1997; Vogler and Rotte 2000; Weintraub and Díaz-Briquets, 1994).

The idea that development leads to less migration is based on the popular notion that the poorest, 'the hungry and the desperate' (King and Schneider, 1991:62-3) have the highest tendency to migrate. However, in reality, migration is a selective process. The poorest tend to migrate less than those who are slightly better off. This seems particularly true for relatively costly and risky international migration. International migrants generally tend to come neither from the most deprived and isolated communities within countries, nor from the most deprived families within communities. Labour migrants generally do not flee from misery, but move deliberately in the expectation of finding a better or more stable livelihood, and of improving their social and economic status (Stark, 1991). Moreover, in order to migrate, people need both the human, financial and social resources as well as aspirations to do so.

With regard to the considerable *resources* necessary to migrate abroad, Schiff (1994) demonstrated that in a labour-abundant economy, trade liberalisation, foreign aid, and remittances will increase income from labour and improve workers' ability to cover

the costs of migration. Consequently, South-North migration will increase. Thus, the mistaken assumption of trade and aid policies to reduce migration is that economic development will lead to significantly decreased migration. More generally, migration is not just an (unwanted) by-product, but an integral part of broader processes of social and economic change and should therefore be considered as an almost inevitable outgrowth of nations' incorporation into the global economy (cf. Massey, 2000a).

Hence, the factual inability to 'turn the tide': As experience in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe, North-America and East-Asia has shown, development processes not just facilitate migration, but the very process of development is even conditional on the transfer of rural labour to urban sectors within and across national boundaries (cf. De Soto, 2000; Skeldon 1997:196; Todaro 1969:139). Migration and development are functionally and reciprocally connected processes.

This seems to apply to international as well as internal migration. Rural development and infrastructure programmes – such as the proverbial road construction project – can have the contradictory effect of *stimulating* migration at least in the short to medium term (cf. Beauchemin and Schoumaker, 2005; Rhoda, 1983). In this light, it is not surprising that the attempts by urban-based elite groups, development NGOs and governments in developing countries to stop the *rural exodus* and to 'fix' rural populations on their homesteads through development projects typically fail, or even have the opposite effect (cf. Bebbington, 1999; De Haan *et al.*, 2000). Similarly, urban-based *citoyens* and governments in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe – who equally perceived large-scale rural-to-urban migration as a threat to their established lifestyles – were unable to stop rural-to-urban migration because it was intrinsically tied up with more general processes of industrialisation and urbanisation (De Soto, 2000).

Besides the material and non-material benefits people expect to reap from migration, the propensity to migrate crucially depends on *aspirations*, which are typically *not* constant, but tend to increase with 'developmental' improvements in education and access to information. In this context, it is important to observe that *relative deprivation* (cf. Skeldon, 2002) associated with global disparities in life perspectives

rather than absolute or chronic poverty is a major drive behind migration. Therefore, poverty reduction is not in itself a migration-reducing strategy (Nyberg-Sørensen *et al.*, 2002a:35, see also Castles, 2000). Alleviating absolute poverty and some degree of ‘development’ in the form of increasing income, education and access to information not just enable, but also motivate more people to go abroad.

Therefore, as long as aspirations increase faster than the livelihood opportunities in sending regions and countries, social and economic development tends to coincide with sustained out-migration.

This points to the fundamental importance of applying a broad concept of development in conceptualising the causes of migration, which goes beyond a narrow focus on income indicators and integrates the reciprocally related economic and social dimensions of development. Not only increases in wealth, but also improved education, infrastructure, security, access to media and other information sources tend to stimulate migration because it both raises people’s (1) aspirations and actual (2) capabilities to migrate<sup>2</sup>.

Through such development and the establishment of migrant networks, which lower the material and mental costs and risks of migrating, an increasing proportion of sending populations tends to be able and willing to migrate. This explains that the selectivity of migration, *ceteris paribus*, tends to decrease over time. Moreover, exposure to the relative wealth of international migrants and their families is likely to increase the relative deprivation of ‘staybehinds’. Therefore, the process of development initially tends to lead to an increasing diffusion of migration across space and communities (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1998; Skeldon 1997; Zelinsky, 1971). This process normally starts with increasing internal migration. International

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<sup>2</sup> Such a more comprehensive conceptual approach to development is offered by Amartya Sen (1999), who conceives development as the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Sen argued that income growth itself should not be the litmus test for development theorists, but more the question of whether the capabilities of people to control their own lives have expanded. This ‘capabilities approach’ contrasts with narrower views of development that are largely restricted to income indicators (e.g., GNP per head).

migration, which is often preceded and facilitated by internal rural-to-urban migration, tends to take off only in a somewhat later stage.

This initially positive association between development and migration processes seems valid both on a regional and national scale. It is striking that the countries with the lowest GNP and the highest population growth generally do *not* exhibit the highest rates of (trans-continental<sup>3</sup>) out-migration to the Western world (cf. Böhning, 1994; Olesen, 2002). Instead, the world's main labour exporters are typically upper-lower to lower-middle income countries (such as Mexico, North African countries, and the Philippines), which are generally located in a zone that Skeldon (1997:53,144-170) has conceptualised as the global 'labour frontier'. Labour frontier countries generally experience falling birth rates but a high growth of their working age populations, at least moderate economic growth, urbanisation and de-agrarisation. From the poorest countries (less than \$1,500/capita in PPP terms) we see comparatively limited South-North migration, and if substantial trans-continental migration occurs, it often concerns refugee movements (Olesen, 2002:141).

### **The migration hump and the migration plateau**

In an attempt to further conceptualise the fundamentally non-linear relationship between migration and broader development processes, Martin (1993) and Martin and Taylor (1996) have described the anatomy of the 'migration hump'. They argued that increasing migration during an initial period – a migration hump – has been a usual part of the process of economic development. Economic development in combination with a parallel demographic transition (cf. Zelinsky, 1971) and decreasing expected income differentials with destination countries tend to have an inverted J-curve or U-curve effect on emigration, steeply increasing in the initial phases of economic development and only later gradually decreasing.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that there is significant "South-South" mobility of labour migrants and refugees. It is rather the more costly and risky trans-continental migration to wealthy countries that is generally more limited from the poorest countries. I am indebted to Oliver Bakewell for drawing my attention to this point.

The migration hump reflects rather adequately past (Massey, 1991; Hatton and Williamson 1998) and contemporary (Olesen, 2002) migration patterns, in which countries witness accelerating out-migration in early phases of development. Only after a longer period of sustained development, they transform from net labour exporters to net labour importers. This is what happened in the past few decades in southern European countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece, and, recently, Portugal and Ireland as well as several southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan, and South Korea.

In their analysis of European mass emigration between 1850 and 1913, Hatton and Williamson (1998) showed that emigration usually *increased* as wage rates in source and destination countries *converged*, because declining wage differentials initially tend to be outweighed by the mass arrival of cohorts of young workers (as a result of past fertility) on the labour market. Simultaneously, the growth of emigrant populations leads to the accumulation of social capital in the form of migrant networks, which promoted substantial chain migration irrespective of the declining wage gap (Massey 2000b).

Only after a longer period of sustained growth and decreasing wage gaps with destination countries does labour migration tend to decrease (cf. Martin and Taylor, 1996; Rotte *et al.*, 1997). Emigration tends to decrease steeply if the income differential between sending and receiving countries declines to 4 or 5 to 1, provided that the emigration country is growing fast and offering hope and opportunity (Martin and Taylor, 1996:58). Others have determined that this migration turning point occurs at income differentials of 3 to 4.5 to 1 (Böhning, 1994:196; Olesen, 2002:141)<sup>4</sup>. It has been argued that this transition occurs first for internal migration, then for international unskilled migration, and finally for migration of the highly skilled (Fischer and Straubhaar, 1996, cited in Stalker, 2002:171)

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<sup>4</sup> It is not entirely clear whether this pertains to income gaps based on absolute income or income adjusted to purchasing power. Instead of using relative income gaps, some studies in the mid-1990s have suggested an average real per capita income threshold of around \$4,000 at which migration transitions would occur (Stalker, 2002: 171).

The result of the complex interplay of demographic, social and economic forces is a 'stylized emigration curve characterized by an introductory phase of slow development, a growth phase of rapidly accelerating emigration, a saturation phase during which emigration approaches a peak and levels off, and a regression phase when rates of emigration rapidly fall' (Massey 2000b: 497, referring to Hatton and Williamson 1998).

The migration hump theory predicts that growth following trade liberalisation, foreign direct investment (FDI) or aid is likely to lead to more migration in the short to medium term. For instance, when Martin (1993) examined NAFTA's likely impacts, he concluded that the flow of Mexicans to the US would *increase* instead of decrease in the first 15 years after implementation of NAFTA in 1994. Contrary to expectation, Mexico-US migration rose in the 1990s with closer economic integration. Emigration from South Korea – which has experienced one of the world's fastest migration transitions – to the US was 25 per cent *higher* during the 1980s than in the 1970s, despite rapid economic growth (Martin and Taylor, 1996:46). Similarly, migration from most North African sending countries to Europe is likely to initially increase in response to further growth (Faini and Venturini, 1994).

In an attempt to mitigate exaggerated hopes of 'trade instead of migration', Martin and Taylor (1996) put forward several compelling arguments why trade and migration can be complements in the short to medium run beyond the fact the economic development materially enables more people to migrate abroad. Higher productivity and efficiency, technological advantages, and economies of scale in the North may harm the competitiveness of the South even in the production of labour-intensive goods. Under such circumstances, trade liberalisation can lead to concentrations of highly productive economic activities in the North along with more immigration of labourers to support them. Furthermore, adjustment to new market and policy environments is never instantaneous. While the negative impacts of trade liberalisation (on protected sectors) are often immediate, the expansion of production in sectors potentially favoured by trade reforms always takes time. There may be a long lag between investment and the creation of new jobs, which seems a recipe for a migration hump in the wake of trade reforms (*ibid*, 1996:52).

Migration is a constituent part of broader development processes and economic restructuring, because of the accompanying disruptions and factor movements between economic sectors and from rural to urban areas (Weintraub and Díaz-Briquets, 1994; Massey, 1991). If economic growth – whether driven by aid, trade or remittances – is accompanied by increasing income inequality, relative deprivation might even further increase people’s incentives to migrate abroad even if absolute incomes increase (cf. Martin and Taylor, 1996). The exact size, length, and duration of the migration hump cannot be predicted since this crucially depends on many external factors notably the pace and character of economic growth. There is evidence that this process takes at least 15-20 years, but the period between the migration take-off and the in-out migration break-even point is likely to take several decades (cf. Russel and Teitelbaum, 1992:33; Weintraub and Díaz-Briquets, 1994: 141).

It is also important to note that the relation between development and migration is not unidirectional, because a decreasing development level relative to other countries may also transform an immigration country into an emigration country, as the case of Argentina has recently shown. Moreover, the right tail of the migration hump (decreasing emigration, increasing immigration) is by no means inevitable: poor infrastructure and public services, political instability, failure of public policies to boost economic growth, and protectionism by developed countries’ trading blocks may discourage investments and retard expansion of new employment. Under such unfavourable conditions, a trade-induced migration hump may be extended or transformed into a semi-permanent ‘migration plateau’ of sustained out-migration (Martin and Taylor, 1996:57) which might last for an undetermined period of several decades or even centuries. The protectionist trade politics of wealthy countries might indeed produce such a migration plateau in sending countries, and migrants are unlikely to return and invest massively under such circumstances.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the assumption that migration can be ‘managed’ to a considerable extent seems overly optimistic. In particular through the inherently open character of Western societies and economies and the establishment of transnational migrant

networks, migration movements have become notoriously difficult for governments to control. Restrictive immigration policies fail since they ignore and cannot address the root causes of migration. Rather than curbing immigration, restrictive immigration policies have unintended effects by stimulating irregular migration, discouraging migrants' circular mobility and pushing them into permanent settlement. Moreover, restrictive policies and the anti-immigrant public discourses that usually accompany them might further contribute to the marginalisation of immigrants and stir up xenophobia and racism, with potentially harmful consequences for social cohesion.

While in the developed world demand for skilled and unskilled immigrant labour will persist, the forces of globalisation and socio-economic development in poor countries are likely to further increase people's capabilities and aspirations to migrate. As long as Western economies keep growing, it is more likely that (regular and/or irregular) low skilled labour migration will persist or perhaps even increase, while highly skilled labourers will continue to be welcomed (Bhagwati, 2003; Harris, 2002; Martin, 2002).

Trade, aid, return migration and remittances are no short-cut 'solutions' to migration. There are serious doubts in the credibility of such policies. First, protectionist trade policies of wealthy countries are often inconsistent with their stated aims to promote development in poor countries. Second, receiving countries have not shown any serious commitment to a real migration and development policy beyond the narrow perspective of stimulating the return of unwanted migrants. Fixating on temporary migration as the ideal solution to prevent permanent settlement ignores repeated past failure with 'revolving door policies' and their perverse effects on circular mobility.

However, even if they were successful in bringing about development, 'development instead of migration' policies that try to use aid, trade and remittances as substitutes to migration are likely to fail to curb migration. This is because they are based on the inaccurate assumption that (absolute) poverty breeds migration. In contrast to received knowledge, social and economic development, whether a result of economic integration and aid or not, tends to *stimulate* rather than reduce migration at least in the short to medium run. Thus, migration is *not* simply a linear function of global disparities in life perspectives

In particular in the poorest countries (e.g., the sub-Saharan African target countries of much international aid), any take-off development is likely to lead to accelerating take-off emigration for the coming decades, which is the opposite of what 'development instead of migration' policies implicitly or explicitly aim to achieve. Of course this should be no reason not to promote development in poor countries. However, development is important in its own right because it improves people's wellbeing and freedom, regardless of its impact on migration. Therefore, advocates of stay-at-home development policies seem to be right for the wrong reasons.

At a more fundamental level, South-North migration is an outflow of the progressive incorporation of societies in wider, often global, economic, political and social contexts, as well as increases in wealth and access and exposure to education, information and images, which increase both the *capabilities* and *aspirations* to migrate. In its own turn, migration itself tends to reinforce the very processes of global integration of which it is an outflow. So, migration is both cause and effect of broader development processes with which it is intertwined. Assuming continued globalisation and global economic integration, it is unlikely to expect a general decrease in mobility and migration. Migration will in all likelihood remain an intrinsic feature of our world.

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