

Global Migration Challenges Speaker Series

The Global Migration Challenges series offers accessible, policy-focused conversations with leading experts, civil society, and practitioners. The series is presented with support from Immigration, Refugees, & Citizenship Canada, and the Canada Research Chair in Global Migration.

This report was prepared by students from the Lab's Graduate Student Research Initiative. For more information please email: migration.munkschool@utoronto.ca.

Report 8

Hysterical Borders: Barriers, Incarceration, and Migration Deterrence Policies

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Prepared by: Rachael Webb & Heejae Yang

Participants:

Philippe M. Frowd: Assistant Professor in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa, *"Playing the numbers game in Europe's African borderlands"*

Dr. Luis Campos: Immigration Counsel to Haynes and Boone LLP and former Assistant Professor of Law at the University of New Brunswick, *"Broken Borders and Broken Promises: An Update on U.S. Asylum Law and Policy and the Legal Resistance at the American Southern Border"*

Craig Damian Smith: Associate Director, Global Migration Lab, *"America First, Canada Last? The Effects of US Policy Change on Emerging Irregular Migration Systems to Canada"*

Discussant:

Alison Mountz, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Global Migration at the Balsillie School of International Affairs at Laurier University

Issue

Irregular migration represents a tiny fraction of overall global mobility, but nonetheless plays a disproportionate role in political discourse, leading politicians in liberal states to

embark on progressively more restrictive policies to close borders, detain migrants, and extend controls to transit and host states. These policies can have far-ranging effects, including more lethal migration routes, larger markets for smugglers and traffickers, undermining liberal international norms, and fostering hysterical domestic responses to irregular migration.

This discussion will look at the effects of EU attempts to externalize migration controls in West Africa, unpack the Trump administration's policies of deterrence, detention, and family separation, and present evidence about how changes in US policy affect irregular migration to Canada.

Discussion Summary

Professor Frowd discussed the importance of irregular migration data on policies in the EU-Niger relationship, beginning with an example of a statistical error leading to wrong evaluations of European Externalization Programs. Professor Frowd specifically elaborated on four steps of the data collection process: first, data measurement, with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration; second, data utilization of a border management and securitization context.; third, the claims enabled by data, particularly in terms of funding, at the local, national, and transnational levels; last, the use of international targeting policies and international aids to create benchmarks to evaluate successful programs.

Describing a case involving an unregistered Salvadoran migrant and her daughter, Dr. Campos discussed the current American approach to irregular migration from Latin America. His first point surrounded assaults on law and individuals under the current administration, through systematic efforts to decrease asylum availability in the country, as well as the geographic and social isolation of detention facilities, and the poor quality of life within them. Also highlighted was the impact of private ownership of detention centres on migrants, particularly those from the Northern triangle; the profitability of long-term detainment

Dr Smith discussed his current research on irregular migration trends to Canada from the United States. Dr Smith's research examines the measurement of irregular migration into Canada and compares the political reaction to that in Europe. Furthermore, Dr Smith analyzed increasingly anti-migration policies in the USA as a cause the irregular migration, and the elements of Canadian policy that act as pull factors for migrants. Dr Smith also explained the impact of irregular migration in Canada, and factors that currently mitigate this impact.

Lessons Learned

This discussion highlighted state and non-state reactions to irregular migration as well as the politics of asylum. Whether it be the manipulation of data for policy creation, the protest of an administration's stance by a series of powerful legal organizations, or the collection of information for a better understanding of irregular migration trends, approaches to asylum is highly impacted by political dynamics.

The discussion on April 18th, as well as all the panels throughout 2019, was highly relevant in the current international political context. Importantly, elections in the European Union, the United States, and Canada within the next two years may have crucial impacts on migration hysteria. Keeping migration at the forefront of informed conversations may be beneficial in allaying fear and exaggeration of the dangers that irregular migrations pose to host societies.

Additionally, having more level-headed discussions on this topic could help diagnose the problems in current migration systems worldwide, while highlighting potential solutions. For example, further discussion with Dr Campos underlines the need for legislative change in American asylum procedures, particularly at the municipal level where there is more likelihood of change (see interview below). Additionally, Professor Frowd, prior to the attention on collection and use of data, emphasized the importance of framing migration as a securitization issue for the successful border management in the field and institutions managing irregular migration.

Mitigating hysterical claims about irregular migration with information and hard data, while challenging in the current climate of mistrust of media and the 'elite', is incredibly important to the overall creation of a welcoming and secure environment for those fleeing from difficult or dangerous homes.

In Conversation

Professor Philippe M. Frowd and Dr. Luis Campos engaged with students from the Global Migration Lab Student Research Initiative after the event to take the conversation ahead and answer some more pressing questions.

The students asked Professor Frowd about the root of his interest in West Africa and Niger specifically. Professor recalled that during his master's and Ph.D., at the moment, critical security studies were mainly focusing on how mobility, security, and surveillance work within the EU. As migration became a more pressing issue, he started to look at how the external border of the EU manifests itself in a place we do not expect. For example, In Senegal which does not even share the border of the EU, he was wondering

how actual practice of Senegal, such as police cooperation, diplomacy, or mission agreements lead to the de facto externalization of the border function of EU.

Furthermore, Senegal had been recognized as an original transit country to the border of the EU, yet in the mid-2000s, Senegal turned into a vital security partner with the EU. Professor Frowd, thus expanded his interest to Niger which was sharing a similar mechanism of Senegal.

The students further enquired about EU security and irregular migration and its effect on the election for EU migration. Professor Frowd began by saying that the EU parliamentary election is often understood under the national election. Also, the EU parliamentary election is dependent on the member state's relationship, for instance, for Hungary, the coming EU election is the chance to vote for parties challenging the current mechanism to manage migrants. In his opinion, the election would be more the chance to send a message, so it can be interpreted by the member states rather than expecting to see an actual change from the change of EU parliamentary election, as the EU parliament is relatively weak.

The students were curious about Dr. Campos's view on the after-effects of the Trump administration's deterrence policies on the upcoming election and on the future. Dr. Campos said opined that the current approach to irregular migration into the United States is likely to change for the better under a new administration, should this be the case following the elections next autumn. There have already been drastic changes to the migration landscape, however; the current administration's policies are affecting the perceptions and attitudes held by Americans towards migration. Physical border checkpoints have crept inland from the borders themselves, and this has been accepted as a necessary movement. Meanwhile, a human rights discourse plays little part in the arguments for migrant rights.

He further stated that there may also be longer-term political effects of the Trump government's stance on migrants, however. The question of migration has caused significant fractionalization on the left, with representatives like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez calling for significant reforms such as the removal of ICE, while more centrist Democrats have been driven farther to the right with calls for tougher securitization.

They further followed up with asking him about the long-term changes that he deems possible to improve the system. Dr. Campos stated that the legislation is important but being able to commit to something realistic at the federal level is next to impossible. Lobbyists on the Hill are already trying their best to push forward pro-migrant legislation, but there is only so much that can be done.

One possibility that may be more effective is to work at the municipal level to change things. Initiatives like sanctuary cities are a good start.

Another important change, again at the local level, is to deal with the backlog of cases. Currently, migrants into the USA have to wait about 2 years for a hearing by an immigration judge. If someone in the USA wants to sponsor someone like a family member to come over and join them, there is a wait that can last over 20 years. Even once initial hearings are done, migrants are in a limbo as they wait for more information or further court dates, as they are not allowed to work. It's important to note that no one is jumping a line to get in – there is no line. He concluded saying that we need to deal with these perceptions and hurdles to make a real change in the current system.

The Global Migration Lab Student Research Initiative thank Dr. Campos and Professor Frowd for sharing their insights.