MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH. THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA AS A REFLECTION OF POLICY ALTERNATIVES IN THE FIELDS OF SECURITY, LABOR MARKET, AND SOCIAL WELFARE PLANNING

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Is it possible to distinguish between patterns of migration in the Global South and in the Global North? If so, which indicators should we chose to compare the two? Are the presence of a Northern style active labor market policy, a multi-stakeholder dialogue process, and a comprehensive social welfare system the proper benchmarks for assessing the success or failure of policy makers in these two parts of the world?

Migration and refugee patterns have traditionally been explained by examining the impact of push and pull factors. More recently, a network approach has become prevalent, highlighting the roles played by diaspora communities and extended families, linking the Global South and Global North. Accordingly, migrants and asylum seekers are no longer seen as mere objects of economic, security-related, ecological, or cultural developments, encouraging them to leave one region and migrate or escape to another. They are also studied as the subjects of their own fate, at least to the extent that the respective context allows them to be so.

The societies of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are currently in a state of turmoil, which has accentuated the already existing deficits on the part of their governments with respect to tackling population flows. Whereas the states of the Arab Gulf have attempted to tighten their control over the large numbers of migrant workers in their region and some countries in the Maghreb are cooperating successfully with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in order to better coordinate migration to the EU, countries like Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, and Syria have become transit routes for – as well as the source of – unregulated migration to the North. In this context, Turkey plays a special role as an aspiring EU member state. Although it is an important country of origin for labor migration to the EU and – more recently – has become a popular transit route for illegal migration to the West, its embeddedness within the European accession mechanism, the 'acquis communautaire', places it squarely within the logic of Northern policy development and thus outside the context of this assessment of the Global South. Turkey does illustrate, however, that a Middle Eastern country can develop, given adequate support and the appropriate policy parameters, in the direction of a Northern society based on rule of law.

Following Northern logic, any analysis of migration patterns would assume they are strongly influenced by declared governmental policy goals, corresponding legislation, and transparent implementation. Accordingly, this would lead the casual observer to conclude that many MENA countries have lost control of population flows within and across their borders. From the perspective of the North, any government migration regime which cannot control its borders, register migrants and refugees in the labor market, adequately provide infrastructure services to foreigners living legally within the country, and repatriate those aliens it wishes to get rid of, must be assessed as being either weak or non-existent; one of the indicators of a failed state. From the perspective of the South, however, this is not the case.

Two attributes of policy development and implementation in the South often elude observers from the North. Firstly, taking the MENA region as a case in point, many governments have no intention of providing blanket social welfare services to their indigenous populations. The state is primarily concerned with security issues, i.e. with protecting itself against its own people. When available, quality public health care and education, reliable and affordable access to water, electricity, and waste management, and comprehensive unemployment and retirement benefits are utilized to secure the loyalty of specific segments of the population within the context of a patron-client relationship. A country that only selectively cares for its own people cannot be expected to provide benefits to the migrants and refugees in its midst. Secondly, the traditional assumption amongst policy analysts is that political systems develop policy by first initiating an agenda-setting process, followed by decision-making within the legislative

arena, and finally implementing the laws passed – for better or worse – by the executive branch of government. In the MENA region, as in many parts of the Global South, this scenario does not hold true. The weakest link in the chain of policy development is the actual execution of governmental decisions by state authorities. In countries with a semblance of democracy, such as Lebanon or Tunisia, the will of the people can be freely expressed in the marketplace of ideas. Legislature often follows up on these demands and codifies them into well-crafted laws, based on the French or Anglo-American legal traditions. However, once passed, this legislation is rarely implemented effectively, leading to the suspicion that there was no intention to properly implement it in the first place. A culture of impunity is the norm, rule of law the exception.

The net result of this situation is a *de facto* system in which a laissez-faire approach to migrant and refugee welfare is combined with a securitization of government policy towards its respective foreign populations. The challenges to many of the authoritarian regimes in the MENA during the Arab Spring as of 2011, combined with the protracted conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, facilitated to rise of the Islamic State or "Daesh", as it is referred to in the MENA. The genuine security threats emanating from organized terrorism in the MENA have intensified the logic of state security considerations with respect to migration. There has been no proportional attempt to deal with the human security challenges facing foreigners in the region.

This Global South approach to migration and asylum has enabled the countries of the MENA region to absorb disproportionately large numbers of refugees, first from Sudan and Iraq and more recently from Syria. Whereas Turkey – as an EU accession state – and Jordan – as one of the few authoritarian regimes in the region which has gone unchallenged by the Arab Spring – have dealt with the influx of Syrians systematically through the use of mandatory camp settlements, the rest of the region has assumed a "free market" mentality. This is particularly evident in Lebanon, which has an indigenous population of 4 million and a refugee population of between 1.5 and 2 million. The secret of Lebanon's success is the transfer of

responsibility for the refugees from the central government to the municipal level. However, local governments throughout the country have only been able to provide rudimentary services to their refugee populations because of a massive influx of foreign aid supplied directly to the local level by NGOs, international donors, and individual foreign governments. By pumping huge amounts of revenue into the economy to service the refugees' emergency needs, international aid organizations have distorted the socio-economic balance in the country, leading to a uniquely Lebanese form of "Dutch disease".

In conclusion, it would seem that the very absence of the Northern parameters governing migration and refugee policy in the Global South has enabled many countries in the MENA to cope with numbers of refugees which would have easily overwhelmed countries in the Global North. Currently, various international players, such as the International Labor Organization, the International Organization of Migration, and the Swiss Development Cooperation, are attempting to counter this trend. By encouraging the countries in the MENA region to adopt Northern policy paradigms, they hope to support an active approach to labor-market development, a comprehensive social welfare regime, and a multi-stakeholder approach to governance. One of the main goals of these well-intentioned Global North programs is to give the migrants themselves a say in policy development and implementation and thus promote social justice in the region. Should the initiatives of the ILO, IOM, and Swiss government in the MENA be successful, they might very well undermine the laissez-faire mentality which has enabled the region to cope successfully with otherwise overwhelming migration and refugee challenges up until now.

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