2 Global Migration: Current Trends and Issues

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“Travelling to anywhere in the world costs a maximum of $2.500. Getting smuggled into a country costs $20.000 with a faster payback time.”
– International Organisation for Migration

I. Introduction

Reduction in transport costs have increased the willingness of people to move over larger distances. It is estimated that over 3 percent of the world population live outside their country of birth.1 Migration has itself become more global as many countries are participating in the process both as sending and receiving nations. Colonial linkages provided the first tracks for movement for the migrants from the colonies. This has been replaced with countries that have immigrants from many different countries, social and cultural backgrounds. Compared to earlier governance mechanisms that facilitated or controlled migration the Nation state has become predominant in the policies to govern the inflow of migrants. Interestingly there are very few countries which control the outflow of migrants. There are countries such as Philippines and Indonesia which encourage emigration for the benefits of remittances that the migrants would send back. In countries such as Moldova remittances form a major portion of the country’s gross domestic product whereas for countries

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such as India and China who top as remittance receiving countries remittances form a very small part of their gross domestic product. The flow of remittances also plays a major role in politics and social development in the ‘home’ countries. The ability to travel and move between two cultures, two economic and political contexts, leads to enduring relationships between the two societies at the same time. Individual having such multiple identities learn to negotiate between them and inhabit an in-between liminal space. The scope of global migration is humongous in nature thus cannot be captured in its entirety in one chapter. Thus in this chapter I provide a brief overview on the current trends of global migration, a specific focus on Europe and Asia, current issues in migration research and further conclude with some pointers for new directions in research related to global migration.

II. Current Trends

1. Global stock

The United States of America hosts the largest migrant stock compared to any other single country. As seen in Figure 1, of the top ten countries having the largest stock many of the countries are in Europe followed by Saudi Arabia and India in Asia. In the high-income countries migrants make up to 10 percent of the total population. When we compare the migrant population as a percentage of a country’s population the picture changes drastically. Qatar (86 percent), United Arab Emirates (70 percent) and Kuwait (68.8 percent) are the top three countries who have more than half or their population who are foreign-born.