

Migration and the 'dark side' of globalisation

*Globalisation has had a profound impact on migration, with improving connections between states resulting in more people than ever before choosing to live and work in other countries. Yet as **Leila Simona Talani** explains, this process has been contradictory, with many of the migration crises the world has witnessed in recent decades having their roots in globalisation. Drawing on a new book, she outlines the 'dark side' of the relationship between globalisation and international migration.*

The events unfolding daily in relation to migration, from the crisis at the border between Belarus and Poland, to the never-ending deaths in the Mediterranean, underline the 'dark side' of globalisation. This is the conclusion that I reach in my new book, [The International Political Economy of Migration in the Globalization Era](#), which analyses how the different approaches in international political economy address the relationship between globalisation and migration.

Globalisation emerges from this investigation as a process ridden with contradictions, whose consequences increase social discrepancies and geographical marginalisation. I argue that globalisation manifests its inherent 'dark side' in relation to international migration due to a number of phenomena that escape traditional controls and regulations. There are at least four main components of this 'dark side'.

The loss of political control of international migration

The first aspect of the 'dark side' of international migration in the age of globalisation is whether or not globalisation induced migratory flows can be governed and by whom. It is quite possible, as discussed in the relevant literature, that the forces unleashed by globalisation escape governance as they are structural necessities.

In particular, the structural transformations of the global political economy lead to the structural need for populations to move both within regions and outside them. This is the consequence of three paradoxes of globalisation and their impact on the motivations for migration: the paradox of *marginalisation* and its impact in terms of increased extra-regional permanent migration and brain drain; the paradox of *regionalisation* and its consequences in terms of intra-regional temporary migration; and the paradox of *securitisation* and its consequences in terms of irregular migration.

These paradoxes follow from the structural nature of globalisation and the emergence of a new global division of labour and power, and therefore the urge to migrate cannot be stopped by political entities. From this perspective, migration cannot be controlled, regulated or governed, neither by the state nor by supranational institutions. The only result political institutions can obtain from imposing regulatory regimes on international migration is to transform regular migration into irregular migration.

Moreover, because of the paradoxes of regionalisation and marginalisation, the population of the non-regionalised, marginal areas of the global political economy experience an increased incentive to migrate, thus adding two further elements to the dark side of globalisation: an increase in mass migration and brain drain.

The 'irregularisation' of international migration and the criminalisation of migrants

The 'irregularisation' of migration is another negative consequence of globalisation on migration. This entails the creation of new inequalities in labour markets, the rise of so called 'modern slavery', as well as the death toll that the process of migrating through irregular means inevitably produces.

There is a widespread consensus in the scholarly community that international migration is generally beneficial for the economic performances of host societies. International migration is considered in the literature to be a positive sum game for destination countries as it allows them to cover the gaps of their labour market, complementing the skills of the local labour force and enhancing the productivity and efficiencies of their economies.

This happens despite the fact migrants are often underemployed, have relatively lower levels of employment than the local population, and have to accept working conditions below relevant standards, which is often the case for both regular and irregular migrants. In fact, the negative aspects of globalisation induced migratory flows come from their irregularisation, which substantially contributes to the antagonisation and even criminalisation of international migrants by receiving societies.

The paradox of securitisation and increasing insecurity

The securitisation paradox, which is often justified as a way to limit global terrorism, can paradoxically fuel terrorist tendencies, not only in first-generation but also in second and third-generation migrants. The securitisation of migration policy is counterproductive as it simply results in an increase in insecurity. It does so through the irregularisation of migrants and refugees.

The irregularisation of migrants and refugees leads to dangerous journeys to reach destination countries and to the involvement of organised crime in the smuggling and exploitation of migrants. It also leads to precarious working conditions for both the local and the migrant workforce, which can facilitate modern slavery. It pushes irregular migrants into the underground economy and contributes to their related marginalisation and criminalisation by host societies, increasing the ethnification of prison populations and providing an incentive to commit crime.

Finally, it leads to growing hostility among migrant communities against receiving countries. This hostility has the potential to lead to social unrest or even terrorism. It can also act in the opposite direction by increasing the hostility of 'native populations' to migrant communities, which leads to Islamophobia and the rise of right-wing populism.

All of this is a consequence of the paradox of securitisation within globalisation. If international migration is a structural component of globalisation, political institutions cannot stop it. The policy gap is real. The implementation of restrictive policies only produces the irregularisation of international migration. In a nutshell, increasing securitisation increases insecurity. Yet while international migrants, refugees and local citizens all stand to lose out from this process, there are also some clear 'winners'. These are the populist and right-wing parties that have built support on their opposition to migration.

Populism and the rise of anti-migrant parties

The debate about populism and populist right-wing parties has been revamped by the recent wave of success for such parties in elections worldwide. Populism, in itself, does not need to be considered as a negative consequence of globalisation, although the literature unanimously underlines the authoritarian tendencies of populist ideologies. However, the fact that populism is often accompanied by an explicit anti-migrant, xenophobic discourse is certainly an element of the 'dark side' of globalisation.

But what is the relationship between both the rise of populism and globalisation and between populism and anti-migrant attitudes? Are populist parties inherently anti-migrant and xenophobic or, instead, do they simply adopt these stances to attract voters? Given the delay between the start of globalisation and the electoral success of populist movements, it is questionable whether globalisation alone can be viewed as the origin of the recent populist wave. Instead, I suggest that the global economic crisis and the eurozone crisis acted as a catalyst for the contradictions of globalisation to become salient in Europe.

This is evident because in countries where globalisation did not bring economic difficulties, the populist backlash did not appear to the same extent. Both the global financial crisis and the eurozone crisis had a major impact on the economies of some countries, especially when austerity made it more difficult to compensate the losers through suitable fiscal policies.

From this perspective, the cause of populism cannot be cultural. Rather, populism must have an economic cause and the cultural manifestation of populism, and, in particular, anti-migrant feelings, is a consequence of the worsening of economic insecurity. And once in power, the anti-migrant platforms of populist parties are likely to be further entrenched, not least because the migrants that are the focus of their attention cannot vote.

For more information, see the author's new monograph, [The International Political Economy of Migration in the Globalization Era](#) (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021)

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