

## **GEG Global Migration Governance Project Background**

International migration has increased rapidly in the context of globalization. It increased markedly from 82 million international migrants in 1970 to over 200 million in 2007. Growing trans-boundary interconnectedness created by new transportation and telecommunications networks, an emerging global media, a globalized labour market, growing diaspora links, and the proliferation of human smuggling, for example, have encouraged and enabled people to move across borders and regions in greater numbers than ever before. As this trend has grown, migration has become an increasingly important political and social issue, affecting nearly all states. The effects of migration have not been evenly distributed. Different states have been affected in different ways depending upon their geographical location, domestic economic and social structures, and their capacity to control their borders, for example. Meanwhile, for both sending and receiving countries, some categories of migrant have been perceived as a benefit and others as a burden. In attempting to engage with the challenges and opportunities posed by the trans-boundary consequences of migration, states have resorted to a range of different strategies, varying in the extent to which they have been unilateral or cooperative.

In contrast to many other policy areas which have a significant trans-boundary dimension, however, what has been striking about migration governance is the absence of a coherent, overarching global governance framework. There is no integrated migration regime, nor a United Nations Migration Organization. Instead, global migration governance is characterised by a range of multiple institutions and contested sites of governance. Governance structures exist on both a regional and global level, and fragmented governance structures exist that relate to refugee protection, the protection of internally displaced people, human trafficking and smuggling, environmental migration, development-induced displacement, remittances, irregular migration, and labour migration, for example. The institutions regulating states' responses to different aspects of migration vary greatly in scope, formality and their degree of inclusiveness. In some areas, such as labour migration and irregular migration, there is virtually no formal institutional framework at the global level, leaving policy to be created either unilaterally or through ad hoc coalitions of Northern states. In other areas such as refugee protection, the existing institutions have been designed in a very different historical context and are ill-adapted to the current era. With no overarching framework for migration governance in the UN system, there remains little coordination between the governance of different aspects of migration. Migration governance is characterised by significant linkages to other core areas of governance such as management of the global economy, the environment and trade. These linkages mean that regulation of migration is often determined within a range of institutions in which migration is not the primary focus.

In the absence of a coherent international migration regime, a range of constantly evolving and adapting formal and informal institutions have emerged, often competing for authority. Formal UN institutions exist in some areas of migration (such as refugee protection) but not others (such as skilled labour migration). Formal regional governance has been particularly developed in the EU but not to the same extent in other regions. Meanwhile, a panoply of informal regional processes (e.g. the Bali and Manila processes), inter-regional summits (e.g. the Rabat and Tripoli Summits between the EU and African states), networks of 'likeminded states' (e.g. the Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum and Migration), bilateral North-South partnerships (e.g. between Spain and Morocco or France and Senegal), and informal global dialogues (e.g. the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development and

the Global Forum on Migration and Development) have emerged, incorporating some of the same actors and debates, while selectively excluding others. There is also fragmentation amongst NGOs. Although NGOs represent powerful constituencies pressing for the rights of certain migrant groups such as refugees, their role and influence are unevenly distributed across migration governance. They are also often marginalized by other parts of the NGO world such as human rights governance.

Despite the growing political prominence of migration and the issue's trans-boundary scope, there has been very little political endeavour to create a more coherent multilateral governance framework. The UN Secretary-General's Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) which reported in 2005, the High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development which took place in New York in 2006, and the Global Forum on Migration and Development which began in Brussels in 2007 have initiated a multilateral debate on international migration, and a degree of reflection on the existing governance structures. However, these initiatives have largely been exploratory and consultative. No state or group of states have emerged as vocal advocates of migration governance reform, and no coherent vision for global migration governance has yet emerged. Most Northern states instead continue to either use and adapt the existing fragmented structures or resort to unilateralism in order to address migration. This means that in practice the perspectives and input of Southern states are often sidelined from debates on global migration governance.

Given the trans-boundary nature of international migration, the absence of coherent multilateral governance and the prevalence of evolving multiple and contested sites of governance at a range of levels is a paradox which requires exploration. Yet, in contrast to other trans-boundary policy areas such as the environment or terrorism, international migration has been under-explored by political science and international relations. Academic debate on migration has been dominated by anthropologists, sociologists and geographers, and there has been surprisingly little attention paid to migration by scholars of governance, politics and international relations. Analysis of the international politics and global governance of migration therefore remains underdeveloped. This lack of academic work has significant practical and policy implications. This is because it contributes to an absence of effective leadership and vision in attempting to create and facilitate more effective, efficient and equitable migration governance. This project therefore attempts to understand the nature of migration as a global political issue, the reasons for and consequences of the current fragmented governance structures, and the barriers to and impetuses towards inclusive multilateral governance.