Immigration and State Power

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I. Introduction

For the past thirty years or so, the study of economic migration has been almost exclusively preoccupied with the social and economic impact of immigration on labour-receiving countries (as opposed to, for example, the impact of emigration on labour-sending countries). But now, in the new century, it seems that the key issues are not economic but rather concern the *political* implications of immigration for State sovereignty, for the viability of nation-States. The processes associated with economic globalization make the questions at stake much more urgent than before, progressively raising immigration as an issue in the policy agenda of almost all developed countries.

Globalization, as understood here, is the beginning of a process that creates a single global economy, by implication superseding the old world of separate and politically defined national economies. Such an economic order implies the increasing mobility of capital, goods and labour, just as the earlier creation of national economies required the increasing mobility of the factors of production within national borders. However, whereas the creation of national economies usually enjoyed the supervision of one governing authority, the political State, economic globalization has no such single supervisor. On the contrary, the world remains politically governed almost exclusively by a mass of separate States, each in principle limited to a geographically defined fragment of the whole, and each therefore immobile in a world of growing mobility. To put it in a simplistic form, the economics of the new system collide directly with the politics of the old.

This question is briefly explored here in three parts, relative to internal migration, to international migration, and finally to the "integration" of immigrants.

II. Internal Migration.

A central concern of the State, one of the underpinnings of its capacity to rule, is control of the country's population. One component of this historically has entailed attempts to regulate or prevent movement, at an extreme, to enforce on the inhabitants, a measure of immobility. Efforts vary over time and in impact, limited always by the administrative capacity of the State relative to its many other objectives.

Some of the more extreme historical cases occur in authoritarian regimes, requiring the inhabitants to carry internal passports (the identity card is perhaps the relic of this order), permits or visas to move, domestic and inter-provincial check points, and in some cases direct prohibition on movement between provinces, districts, parishes, between villages and cities. There are many examples here but some of the best known might include medieval France, Tsarist Russia, seventeenth and eighteenth century Prussia, and, outside Europe, Tokugawa Japan. More generally, serfdom in European feudalism – tying the worker to the soil - illustrates an extreme form of legal immobilization, the subordination of the labour force to the will of the lord.

In the twentieth century, comparable regulatory regimes existed in, for example, the former Soviet Union and its allies. Tying the population to its place of registration or birth survives in the identity card or *propiska*. Such an immobilization of the workforce is economically tolerable only when married to forced labour or worker conscription, directing workers to move to places where they are required (to, for example, the large construction projects, dams, power stations etc undertaken in the 1930s in the Soviet Union). In essence, the difference between the soldier and the civilian is eliminated; the workforce is reduced to being an army, subject to State orders, with severe penalties for those who move without permission.

There are more homely examples of the difficulties arising under such regimes. In the late 1980s, Boris Yeltsin, then Mayor of Moscow, grumbled publicly at the difficulties of keeping Moscow clean; he was then importing young workers from the provinces on temporary work permits to do jobs Muscovites refused, only to find them disappear (becoming thereafter illegal migrants, working in the black economy).

In a number of newly independent developing countries, governments assumed they knew where the population should be best located, and proceeded to try to employ police power to enforce this – as with *transmigrasi* policy in Indonesia, Malaysia's FELDA programme to populate the western provinces; policies to prevent urbanization in many countries (for example, the Philippines); *ujaama* in Tanzania etc.

More brutally, the apartheid regime in South Africa endeavoured to control the black population by classifying them as foreigners (citizens of the bantustans), and enforcing exclusion from white areas through the notorious pass system and extensive internal police checks. A comparable system is enforced in the occupied Palestinian territories (the West Bank and Gaza), again through identity cards, numerous check points, controlled routes and other obstructions to movement.

While there may be different local justifications for internal migration control, in all cases the mobility required for rapid economic development – the creation of a national labour force with the ability to move to wherever work is created - is sacrificed to the need for political control.

One of the more interesting cases in this connection is the evolution of migration policy in China. On the eve of assuming power, Mao laid out the Party's programme in **On Coalition Government.** It is clear there that the new Republic took for granted that tens of thousands of rural dwellers would move to the cities in the normal process accompanying industrialization; by implication, freedom of movement was assumed. A decade later, following the extraordinary growth of the first Five Year Plan period (and the major effort required by the Korean war), the government's nerve seems to have failed in the face of a major surge of urbanization (a panic replicated in many other developing countries at that time). Freedom of movement was ended. The urban population was registered, and registration entitled the legal urban-dweller to *hukou, (*social security, pensions on retirement, to housing, education and medical care) rights denied to those registered as rural inhabitants (as it were classified as foreigners). Elaborate controls were introduced to prevent transfer from rural to urban residence – non transferable food ration cards; requirements for permission to leave the rural commune, to travel, to enter urban areas, to reside and work there. Police raids at railway and bus terminals and in poor city areas were designed to enforce this regime and expel the illegal migrants to their place of origin or registration.

As in the Soviet case, mentioned earlier, such an order could work only with forced labour to direct workers to the places where the State required them (for example, for oil or other resource

exploitation in under-populated areas, to settle areas with low population density – for example, Inner Mongolia, Tibet etc). During the cultural revolution, there were also, for political reasons, mass expulsions of the urban population to temporary exile in rural areas. However, accelerated economic growth also raised the demand for unskilled work in existing cities in jobs the urban dwellers refused (as in the Moscow case cited). The regime allowed cities to import rural labour on temporary contract (and without access to *hukou*), what the regime called a "worker-peasant system", supposedly a revolutionary attempt to overcome the ancient contradiction between town and country. The scale of resentment among the g*astarbeiters* concerned exploded in the Shanghai general strike of 1966 during the early phases of the Cultural Revolution.

The controls on mobility were completely incompatible with accelerated and sustained economic growth, and while, following the Deng reforms of the late 1970s, they were not formally removed (and *hukou* was not ended), they were allowed to lapse, or applied only selectively. The sheer pace of economic growth washed away the politics of mobility control.

The cumulative costs of immobilization must have been considerable, not just in terms of foregone economic growth, but in losses to the rural population in earnings from migration. Consider the 2003 Ministry of Agriculture rural household survey. This suggested that the 192 million Chinese working outside their province of domicile (that is, an underestimate of China's migrant population since it excludes people who migrate within their home province) contributed in remittances close to 60 per cent of rural household income. The costs of State policies to restrict or prevent migration were born by the poorest segment of the Chinese population, the rural inhabitants.

In sum, the State's efforts to control, curb or prevent internal migration provide suggestions on the issues at stake in international migration – and the sacrifice of the immense potential to reduce world poverty to the maintenance of the world political order. It is thus not entirely fanciful to identify rising immigration and free world mobility as an existential threat to the inherited forms of the State.

II. International Migration

The creation of national economies – the forced growth of economic activity within now sharply defined political boundaries – forced radical change to an inherited hitherto borderless economic geography. It forced also an increase in the mobility of the factors of production, capital and labour, within national boundaries, severing linkage that had hitherto extended beyond the borders. It also created new patterns of domestic interdependent economic specialization at the expense of what had now become external transactions. This experience provides us with some suggestions as to the results of globalization, the creation of a single global economy.

However, some aspects of economic globalization featured even as national economies were being created, particularly when much of the world was dominated by European empires. Thus, large scale movements of forced and free labour took place in the modern period – of slave labour from Africa to the Americas, and following the end of slavery, of indentured labour. Furthermore, in the first great surge of economic globalization in the second half of the nineteenth century, there were unprecedented flows of migrant workers from Europe, to the Americas, the Antipodes, and to Africa. The second surge, in the second half of the twentieth century, led to some 150 million living outside their country of birth (the UN figure is an underestimate since it excludes returnees, whereas gross figures must be very much larger). Again, these are figures that cover only countries, excluding the very much larger numbers who migrate within countries (as we have seen in the Chinese example mentioned earlier).

The present phase of steady growth in global migration is, so far as the developed countries are concerned, much exaggerated by two special features:

1. The demography of the developed countries (and China), leading to a decline in the active population. This is threatening the end of self-sufficiency in the national labour forces of the developed countries and, other things being equal, a growing incapacity to sustain current output with existing levels of technology and capital-output ratios. Indeed, to sustain current output requires the developed countries either to locate activity to areas where workers are available ("out-sourcing") or create mechanisms for the permanent recruitment of additional workers from abroad, whether as permanent or temporary residents.

2. However, there is an additional complication here. The long-term emphasis in the developed countries on raising the skill-intensity of their respective national outputs, is producing almost perpetual scarcities of workers with the appropriate skills (even in conditions of recession). Furthermore, the continual enhancement of the skills of the native-born workforce is exaggerating the scarcity of workers willing to undertake unskilled work, or at least undertake it at the wages on offer. This has produced a growing dependence by developed countries on foreign-born skilled workers, a growing competition for the world's stock of skilled (to the relative impoverishment of many developing countries), and the establishment of mechanisms for permanent recruitment (now affecting the recruitment of foreign students to higher education in developed countries). The dependence is most pronounced for the most highly skilled, as US figures suggest – the US Census records that in the year 2,000 nearly 47 per cent of the US stock of scientists and engineers with doctoral qualifications were foreign-born (as were two thirds of the net addition of such workers to the labour force in the last half of the decade of the 1990s). It seems that the foreign-born contribute disproportionately, and increasingly so, to innovation in the United States (where in 2006, the foreign-born were included on a quarter of applications for patents, up from 7.6 per cent in1998).

Within a global economy, one would expect patterns of territorial specialization to emerge to contribute to a global output. The same phenomenon might emerge relative to skilled labour, whether as the result of deliberate government policy or a global market organizing the distribution of training facilities. A striking, if limited, example of government initiative here is the Filipino supply of two categories of workers (albeit not necessarily counting as "skilled") - nurses and merchant mariners, both produced by Filipino training institutions in numbers far in excess of the domestic requirements. In the future, given current investment in higher education, possibly China and India will come to provide the world's main supply of engineers and medical doctors.

However, we should note in passing that we are still employing the "archaic" concept of countries, politically-defined units, to identify what are often borderless economic transactions. Outsourcing now covers global networks of interdependent collaborative activities in many countries where the States concerned may be entirely unaware of the economic logic involved. What has happened in advanced manufacturing and services, may now be affecting what were formerly identified as "non-tradeables" - for example, medical services (where patients are treated in different locations internationally, according to local specializations) or higher education (where students travel between different campuses for different special fields of a global university). Such developments might well reduce the need for workers to travel to different countries.

Will the present economic conjuncture affect these trends, restoring the old national economies? There is certainly evidence that governments have reached for economic nationalism to offset the

slump – from trade protection measures to national financing of banking. However, I believe, governments have left it far too late to restore the old order. The attempt itself would be economically – and therefore, politically – devastating. Whenever the world resumes growth, as it certainly will, it will start from where it left off which suggests that while economic globalization (and its relationship to national States) may be changed in important ways, it will be a process in substance resumed.

In sum, whatever the current position, the developed countries will be obliged to establish mechanisms for the permanent recruitment of workers (if not settlers) if governments are going to be able to meet the welfare expectations of their inhabitants and thus secure political survival.

III. The integration of immigrants

If mobility of the factors of production remains a fundamental feature of the new global economy, States remain preoccupied with their own immobility – not with facilitating circulation in the interests of the welfare of the world and their own populations, but with migrants as settlers, new members of the national political club. The economic question of facilitating mobility is subordinate to the political issue – migrants as new citizens or as invaders. Such an approach almost completely dismisses the economic benefits of migration for the native-born to concentrate on the fears of losing political power. It is this context which in the developed countries leads to a preoccupation with the "integration" of immigrants, turning them, whether they wish it or not, into citizens.

However, as many people have discovered it is almost impossible to say what constitutes a native, a rightful member of the national club. Most of us have no choice – we are born into the club and spend our lives within it whether we approve of it or not. It is an existential condition, not a free choice. Some of us, in random swings of the political pendulum are violently excluded – as were the German Jews under the Nazis, and with a terrible shock bludgeoned into being foreigners. Fortunately most of us never have to face this crisis (unless you live in the Balkans or Rwanda etc). But the occasional violence of exclusion justifies the earlier point that immigration constitutes an existential threat to the nation-State.

There are various approaches to trying to define what constitutes a true member of the club and a loyal citizen (even though the majority of the native-born are not required to adhere to the club or declare their loyalty).Let us restrict ourselves to two extremes:

1. The nation is defined by a common culture, adherence to a common set of values. However, in practice it is impossible to make explicit this common culture, or to specify what values all or a majority of the inhabitants share. Either the specification is impossibly vague (and does not exclude things shared by many non-natives), or it is subject to the prejudice or vanity of the person concerned – we are all kindly and truthful. More to the point, the native-born are not obliged to accept either the culture or the principles. Governments retreat to the archaic – all newcomers to Britain are expected to swear loyalty to the monarch although there are no explanations to why republicans are excluded from British nationality (and natives are not).
2. The second approach lays down no such conditions for acceptance; the newcomer has to do no more than accept the rules until changed.

The first approach illustrates, in my view, a dangerous authoritarianism, an illiberalism, implicit in

the procedure, and its dependence on hypocrisy about the status quo. By contrast, liberal principles might suggest as long-terms objectives:

1. In general, people should be free to travel, to work and settle where they choose, and to be able to do so with their rights protected by the State in whatever country they reside. In essence, the conditions of international migration should be the same as those for domestic migration.
2. People should have freedom of thought, and not be obliged to abandon their existing beliefs or adopt other beliefs because these are locally fashionable;
3. All residents should be treated equally – nothing should be required of the foreign-born which is not required of the native-born.

Implicitly, joining the national club means accepting the club rules, paying club dues etc, without necessarily sharing the same opinions or customs as existing members. These were broadly the conditions that pertained in parts of Europe in the past.

In current conditions, such principles are completely utopian. In Europe, the legacy of xenophobia and hundreds of years of internecine war makes foreigners potential or actual enemies. Furthermore, human rights are currently secured only by States, and those without citizenship may be severely disprivileged.

However, the attempt by many governments now to make the conditions of entry to citizenship both onerous and expensive, is liable to considerably increase the disincentives to try. Even now passports are no longer sacred badges of identity so much as simple conveniences for travel.

Given what has been said before about increasing mobility in the world, the disincentives to seek citizenship might suggest increasing numbers of inhabitants will choose not to naturalize where they live and work. In addition, the growing bureaucracy seeking in vain to match labour demand and supply will give great incentives to move illegally or move legally and work illegally. Such workers will accordingly slip out of whatever control the State retains until such time as governments recognize reality and assume responsibility for all who live within their domains, regardless of origins. But there may be many who are severely damaged before such a state of affairs comes to prevail.