1. Migration as a global phenomenon

Anthony M. Messina

Barring an international catastrophe of unprecedented proportions, immigration will most likely expand and grow, for none of the causal forces responsible for immigration show any sign of moderating. . . . The twenty-first century will be one of globalism, and international migration undoubtedly will figure prominently within it. 

(Massey et al. [1999] 2005: 294)

INTRODUCTION

Although the post-2008 global economic and financial crisis briefly abated the flow of international immigration, and especially authorized labour immigration, it did not, as Massey and his colleagues astutely anticipated at the close of the last century, cause it to deviate significantly from its post-1960s, expansionary trajectory (Figure 1.1). At 250 million persons,
or approximately 3.4 per cent of the world’s total population, the ranks of international migrants have recently expanded at an average annual rate of 1.6 per cent (United Nations 2013a: 1). Most migrants (54 per cent) reside in developed countries, constituting 11 per cent of the North’s total population and only 1.6 per cent of the developing South (United Nations 2013a: 2).1 Minimally, there are an estimated 72 million migrants in Europe, 71 million in Asia, 53 million in North America, 19 million in Africa, nine million in Latin America and the Caribbean, and eight million in Oceana (United Nations 2013a: 1).

While expansive, the current ‘age of migration’ (Castles et al. 2014) is not unprecedented (Table 1.1). Indeed, by some measures it is more modest than the great migration wave of 1870–1914, although the former period deviates from the latter with respect to the greater efforts current governments are making to ‘manage’ or ‘control’ immigration (Hollifield et al. 2014: 3; Wynne 2015: 2). Contemporary migrants travel along four pathways (Ratha et al. 2015: 3): South–South immigration, accounting for approximately 37 per cent of all international immigration; South–North immigration (35 per cent); North–North immigration (23 per cent); and North–South immigration (5 per cent). Mexican migrants constitute a plurality (13 per cent) of persons travelling along the South–North pathway, German migrants a plurality (4 per cent) along the North–North pathway, Ukrainian migrants a plurality (4.9 per cent) along the South–South pathway, and American migrants a plurality (7.8 per cent) along the North–South pathway (International Organization for Migration 2013: 62).

Whatever their point of origin or eventual destination, migrants funnel into one of four major immigration streams: *labour immigration* – permanent, temporary, or circular; *secondary immigration*, which is dominated by family reunification; *humanitarian or forced immigration*, including asylum seekers and refugees; and *irregular immigration*, which captures the

Table 1.1  Estimated voluntary international migration movements (millions), 1815–2010

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Number</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Year Population</td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>4,864</td>
<td>6,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Number per World Inhabitants</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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illegal entry, stay, and/or employment of persons within a country. This said, depending upon the country-specific circumstances and opportunity structures, the aforementioned streams frequently intersect (Castles et al. 2014: 2; Gagnon and Khoudour-Castéras 2011: 49; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014: 194–195).

Although Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States have long been categorized as ‘classic’ immigration countries, since the 1950s they have been joined by numerous others that were previously considered emigration countries. Indeed, across the global South there are at least 37 net immigration countries (Gagnon and Khoudour-Castéras 2011: 63); of these, migrants comprise 86 per cent of Qatar’s total population, 68 per cent of the population of United Arab Emirates, and 66 per cent of Kuwait’s population (International Organization for Migration 2013: 63). Moreover, there are now three distinct sets of immigration-receiving countries in Europe: post-World War II immigrant destinations (for example, Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland); relatively new or ‘intermediate’ destinations (for example, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) that have experienced mass immigration only since the 1980s; and the ‘early migration cycle’ countries of Central and Eastern Europe (for example, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland) that have been significant immigrant destinations only since the past decade or so (Okólski 2012).

As the above-cited data make clear, immigration is truly a global phenomenon. Moreover, even in today’s challenging international economic environment immigration flows of all types remain robust (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014: 13). Against this backdrop this chapter has several goals. First, it will weigh the relative benefits and costs of each of the aforementioned immigration streams. Second, it will posit a course along which the contemporary politics and policies of immigration and immigrant settlement tends to proceed, especially but not exclusively within the advanced democracies (Gagnon and Khoudour-Castéras 2011: 46; Hollifield et al. 2014: 3). Finally, it will evaluate the appropriateness of framing the multifaceted phenomenon of contemporary immigration within the research paradigm of securitization (Bigo 2001; Bourbeau 2011; Huysmans 2006; Wæver et al. 1993).

Informing these objectives is the supposition that although contemporary immigration and its domestic political and social fallout everywhere pose a similar set of policy challenges, relatively few of these challenges are beyond the capability of sovereign states to resolve (Messina 2007: 224–232). Contrary to the claims of some scholars (Bhagwati 2003; Heisler 1986; Sassen 1996) and not withstanding the unanticipated, post-2015 surge of humanitarian migration to Europe (Economist 2015), most
states retain sufficient sovereignty to define and pursue their respective immigration-related objectives. Of course, at any given point in time no state can unilaterally dictate immigration outcomes nor completely insulate itself from the exogenous and endogenous forces that might compromise its preferred policy goals. In short, state control over immigration and immigrant policy outcomes never has been, is not now, and can never be absolute (Zolberg 1999: 81). Nevertheless, as indicated by the self-reported satisfaction of governments with their respective immigration levels and policy objectives (United Nations 2013b: 30), such outcomes typically reflect, and are likely to continue to reflect, the interests and preferences of sovereign states (Freeman 1994; Messina 2007: 224–5; Zolberg 1999: 91).

RELATIVE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF IMMIGRATION

Although inextricably interlinked, the aforementioned immigration streams are not equally beneficial nor do they engender identical economic, political, and social costs (Freeman and Hill 2006; Hanson 2007: 19–26). Rather, from the perspective of the receiving society, authorized labour immigration yields the most positive, wanted, and permanent returns, secondary or family immigration generates the second greatest net benefits, irregular immigration affords the next highest net returns, and humanitarian immigration is the least positive stream.

Labour Immigration

Why authorized labour immigration yields the greatest net economic benefit across countries and time is no mystery. Uniquely, labour immigration serves the economic interests of both the immigration-receiving and sending societies. Moreover, it precipitates the least political resistance and, very often, even the immigration-receiving public’s approval (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014: 158).

Authorized labour immigration typically yields four major payoffs for employers and the host macro economy. First, most labour migrants disproportionately gravitate towards low-skilled but, nevertheless, indispensable jobs that native workers eschew. Second, unskilled migrants in particular are often cheaper to hire and easier to terminate than native workers, especially in Europe where cumbersome labour restrictions make it relatively expensive for employers to employ and difficult to fire native workers. Third, unlike natives, foreign workers are highly flexible about the conditions and geographical location of their employment. Finally,
labour migrants are often a good short-term economic investment over potentially labour-saving but expensive technological innovations. As Castles et al. (2014: 260–261) summarize their value to the macro economy:

migrant workers – both highly skilled and less skilled – provide additional labour at a time of high demand resulting from economic, demographic, and social shifts. They also provide special types of labour to plug gaps that native workers are incapable or unwilling to fill. Migration thus helps to maintain labour market flexibility, encouraging investment and economic growth.

Authorized labour immigration is also a boon for most immigration-sending countries. Specifically, labour emigration tends to reduce unemployment in the sending society, increase trade between sending and receiving countries and, as skilled migrant workers repatriate, facilitate the transfer of skills and expand the stock of local human capital (Sriskandarajah 2005: 15). Moreover, migrants’ remittances provide a substantial external source of capital for developing countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006: 140), thus facilitating the latter’s economic development (Gagnon and Khoudour-Castéras 2011: 88). Along these lines migrant remittances to less economically developed countries (LEDCs) were $436 billion in 2014 and are expected to grow to $440 billion by the end of 2015 (Ratha et al. 2015: 1).

On the political/social side of the immigration equation, authorized labour migrants are fairly well tolerated by the public in the receiving countries (Blinder 2014: 7; Gorodzeisky and Richards 2016).2 This is so for several reasons. First, due to population ageing and/or decline (United Nations 2013a: xx–xxiii) numerous countries in both the global North and South self-evidently need foreign workers (Asis 2004: 23; Castles et al. 2014: 319; International Organization for Migration 2013: 25; Roper and Barria 2014). As a consequence, most of the public in Europe and the United States accurately perceives that immigrants ‘help to fill jobs where there is a shortage of workers’ and that they generally facilitate job creation (Table 1.2). Second, unlike other migrants, labour migrants are most often actively recruited and/or their entry into the economy facilitated by government (Challinor 2011; Messina 2007: 20–33). In short, they are officially ‘wanted’. Third, regardless of their formal status – that is, whether they enter the host economy as guest workers or enjoy a more permanent status – the public in the immigration-receiving countries, especially early in the immigration cycle, is inclined to assume that the presence of labour migrants is temporary (Messina 2007: 23). Finally, of the four major streams, labour immigration is the most amenable to political manipulation and control (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014: 133–220). Given this context it is no coincidence
that the publics of Australia and Canada – that is, countries with long-established labour migration recruitment regimes – are especially tolerant of migrants and receptive to new immigration (Markus 2014a).

Of course, authorized labour immigration is not always and everywhere a net economic benefit for either the immigration-receiving or sending society; moreover, the substantial presence of labour migrants within a receiving society will inevitably precipitate some degree of political and social conflict. Among the most obvious costs incurred by the immigration-receiving societies are the economic competition that ensues between low skilled, native workers and migrants and alarm within all socio-economic classes about the cultural and social implications of permanent immigrant settlement (Amit et al. 2015). Rather, it is merely to underscore that, on balance, authorized labour immigration is the most interest driven and least politically charged of the four major immigration streams (Freeman 2002: 94).

### Table 1.2 Public attitudes towards migrants in Europe and US, 2013 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Immigrants Fill Jobs Where Shortages of Workers</th>
<th>Create Jobs as They Set Up Businesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary Immigration

Secondary immigration, the largest immigration flow to the OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014: 3), too yields considerable economic and social benefits. However, as compared with labour migrants, family migrants are not automatically embraced by governments and the general public.

Family immigration primarily benefits the immigration-receiving countries by accelerating the economic and social integration of settled migrants, especially in countries lacking a coherent or comprehensive immigrant integration regime. According to Larsen (2013: 8), family ties facilitate the formation of stable ethnic communities, with ethnic migrants acting as ‘bonding agents for the next wave, thereby assisting their cultural and economic integration in ways that are difficult to measure’. Moreover, secondary migrants ‘operate as sources of critical resources for newcomers, including opportunities for employment, access to credit, and different kinds of support’ (American Immigration Council 2013: 1). Family unification and settlement also create a fertile environment for establishing migrant-owned businesses (American Immigration Council 2013:1).

On the negative side of the ledger, family immigration cements the establishment of permanent immigrant communities and, consequently, introduces intra-societal ethnic, racial, and/or religious tensions into the receiving societies as well as a need to manage these tensions politically (Messina 2007: 57). The reluctance of so-called native populations to embrace family immigration is illustrated in the public opinion survey data represented in Figure 1.2. As the data indicate, despite the persistence of a weak economy following the 2008 financial crisis, a supermajority of Britons in 2011 supported increasing the number of high-skilled foreign workers and students in the UK. In contrast, only a minority favoured allowing more non-British immediate family members into the country and even fewer Britons (31 per cent) advocated increasing the number of extended family members.

Irregular Immigration

Capturing approximately 10–12 per cent of all international immigration (Düvell 2011a: 60), unauthorized or irregular immigration raises a thorny dilemma for governments across the world. On the one hand, in countries plagued by rigid labour markets (Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini 2011), demographic ageing, and/or a deficit of low-skilled, low-paid workers (Hanson 2009) irregular immigration yields modest but ultimately positive economic returns. Moreover, as Düvell (2011a: 63) reports, irregular
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immigration ‘contributes to economies of scale, larger domestic markets, higher gross domestic product, and an enriched and more dynamic environment’. Hanson (2007: 5) further argues that by responding to ‘market forces in ways that legal immigration does not’, irregular immigration has an especially compelling economic rationale. Far from the economic scourge that its critics claim it to be, Boswell and Straubhaar (2004: 1) suggest that there is an ‘economically optimal level’ of irregular immigration.

On the other hand and despite the facts that the financial costs of aggressively policing territorial borders and reducing illegality are often unjustifiably high (Angeli et al. 2014: 11; Hanson 2007: 32), no government in the world explicitly embraces irregular immigration (United Nations 2013b: 92). Moreover, no immigration stream enjoys less public support and precipitates greater overt social and political conflict (Casarico et al. 2015: 8;
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The breadth and depth of the general public’s hostility to irregular immigration is reflected in the opinion survey data presented in Table 1.3. As the data indicates, irregular migration to the OECD countries, on average, is more than twice as great a cause of public concern as authorized immigration, with more than three times as many Italians, Portuguese, and Spaniards anxious about illegal as legal immigration. Unauthorized migrants are especially perceived as a threat and are a target of prejudice relative to other migrants in the United States (Murray and Marx 2013: 338) where approximately 80 per cent of its estimated 11.1 million unauthorized immigrants are of Hispanic origin (Passel and Cohn 2010).

Table 1.3 Public attitudes towards legal and illegal immigration in Europe and US, 2013 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Worried by Immigration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
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Duffy and Frere-Smith 2014: 82; Hanson 2007: 3). Given this hostility, it is more or less inevitable that public discourse pertaining to irregular immigrants is highly politicized virtually everywhere (Ambrosini 2013a: 30–51). Whether undocumented African migrants in Israel (Jewish Virtual Library 2014), Mexican workers in the United States (Martin 2014: 53–4), Bolivians in Brazil (Baer 2011: 5), or Albanians in Greece (Angeli et al. 2014: 2) the presence of a critical number of irregular migrants within the receiving society feeds the public’s unease with every immigration stream (Ramakrishnan et al. n.d.).
Humanitarian Immigration

Evaluating the claims and accommodating the needs of refugees and asylum seekers are costly for both governments and host societies. In addition to the often considerable financial burdens associated with humanitarian relief are the administrative costs incurred in assessing the merits of migrant petitions for refugee status or asylum and, in the developed countries, the political costs of effectively responding to the anti-refugee rhetoric of far right political actors. As Boswell (2003: 52) described the toxic political environment within which asylum seekers and irregular migrants were received in Western Europe during the early 2000s:

Since the 1980s both groups have been systematically stigmatized by sections of the popular media and more populist political parties. Asylum-seekers and irregular migrants have been linked to problems of unemployment, overstretched welfare systems, rising criminality and internal insecurity. This has often, though not exclusively, been in supposed contrast to tax-paying legal immigrants or ethnic minorities.

Humanitarian migrants are resented by the general public for several reasons. First, as Boswell suggests, humanitarian migrants are widely perceived as contributing far less to the welfare of the receiving society than authorized labour migrants and their dependents. Second, the public almost always and everywhere overestimates the number of asylum seekers and refugees (Finney 2005: 2). Third, asylum seekers and refugees are widely suspected – not always unfairly (Messina 2007: 44–46) – of primarily having economic motives and, thus, undeserving of the host society’s protection (Markus 2014b: 40). Finally, the significant influx of humanitarian migrants into the host destination is frequently unanticipated and such migrants often emigrate from source countries with few ties to and/or even hostile relations with the receiving country.

Public attitudes, of course, are not always or everywhere ungenerous towards humanitarian migrants (McKay et al. 2011: 129). Nevertheless, the political and social environments in which humanitarian migrants are typically received is less benign than that in which labour and secondary migrants respectively are received.

IMMIGRATION POLITICAL-POLICY COURSE

Whatever the benefits and costs of a given immigration stream or the streams combined, the politics of immigration within the receiving societies tend to follow a similar course (Messina 2009). Such a political-policy
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LEGAL ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION ➔ FAMILY REUNIFICATION ➔ PERMANENT IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT ➔ RISING XENOPHOBIA AND POLITICAL BACKLASH ➔ IMMIGRATION RESTRICTIONS/NEW IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION MEASURES ➔ ADDITIONAL ILLEGAL ECONOMIC AND NON-ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION ➔ FURTHER POLITICAL BACKLASH/NEW IMMIGRATION RESTRICTIONS/REGULARIZATION OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS ➔ SELECTIVE ECONOMIC MIGRATION ➔ ADDITIONAL ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION ➔

Note: *Across Europe, and especially for the CCE countries (Górny et al. 2009: 94), this course is influenced by the numerous directives promulgated by the European Union (Peixoto et al. 2012: 127).

Figure 1.3 Migration political-policy course*

course, which circumscribes but does not completely undermine the latitude of governments to formulate and implement self-serving immigrant and immigration policies, is punctuated by discrete stages during which labour immigration is primarily embraced for economic reasons (Ambrosini 2013b), labour and secondary migrants permanently settle in the host society, and the often tumultuous processes of receiving, accommodating, and integrating migrant populations more or less predictably unfold (Faßmann and Reeger 2012).

Informed by the experience of the classic immigration countries, the various stages of this course are represented in Figure 1.3. As this figure suggests, the initial stage is the onset of economically motivated mass immigration (Garcés-Mascareñas 2013: 6; Messina 2007: 20–24). Due to rapid economic growth, labour bottlenecks, low fertility, and/or demographic ageing, the destination economy attracts and employs a significant number of authorized foreign workers (Loyal 2011: 154). As migrant workers incrementally settle into the host society, they are driven by inertia, family-related considerations, and/or the explicit or implicit threat of future government-imposed entry restrictions to establish permanent roots (Castles et al. 2014: 292; Messina 2007: 35–36). Once a critical number of migrants have demonstrated an intention to stay indefinitely within the host society, a minority of the so-called native population evinces xenophobic behaviour (Murad 2014: 217–219) that, in turn, causes anxious governments, often at the risk of compromising macroeconomic growth (Messina 2001: 264–265), to restrict most new labour immigration while simultaneously imposing formal integration requirements on settled migrants.

While occasionally effective in the short term, the aforementioned
restrictions rarely stem the tide of new immigration over the medium to long term. They fail to do so because as the legal entry channels for foreign workers constrict, prospective migrants pursue irregular routes into the host society or violate the terms of their formally restrictive residence and/or work permits. According to Düvell (2011b: 293), the ‘effect of limiting regular immigration and restricting employment is that migration is driven into informal, shadow and niche activities’. Facilitated by the continuing need of employers for foreign labour, the ebb and flow of irregular immigration at this juncture of the political-policy cycle are most sensitive not to formal government policies but, rather, to the variable demands of the economy (Ambrosini 2013a: 30). So long as employer demand for immigrant labour remains robust (Boswell 2003: 122), especially in the primary and/or tertiary sectors of the economy in which a flexible labour force is particularly valued, the flow of migrant workers and their dependents persists (Palidda 2009: 358; Zanfrini 2011: 61).

The continuing influx of migrants, however, only further fans the flames of anti-migrant popular sentiment within the receiving society and, in so doing, spurs governments to pursue a two-track strategy. First, to appease the most vociferous critics of its past and current immigration policies and in an attempt to stem the tide of popular resentment and xenophobia, governments further restrict, but do not entirely prohibit, new immigration. More or less simultaneously, a complimentary strategy, and one particularly likely to be executed within the developed countries, offers irregular migrants a path to regular status (Ambrosini 2013a: 30: 51; Garcés-Mascareñas 2013: 14–16) and even full citizenship in the expectation that doing so will accelerate their integration into the host society (Castles et al. 2014: 218–219; Garcés-Mascareñas 2013: 15; Venturini 2007: 8). Governments expect both strategies to extricate immigration-related issues from the political agenda (Palidda 2009: 359–360), that is, remove them from the arena of competitive political party politics (Messina 1989: 21–52).

Whatever their designers’ intentions, neither of the aforementioned strategies can indefinitely disregard two realities with which host governments must eventually come to terms. First, once established, migrant destinations almost inevitably become sites for further immigration (Waters and Jiménez 2005: 107). The concentration of a critical number of migrants within a given society facilitates new immigration, including secondary and irregular immigration, by lowering the cultural, psychological, and material barriers to entry for additional migrants. Primarily as a consequence of chain migration (Tapinos 1982: 339–357), migrant communities regenerate themselves. Second, at this juncture along the immigration political-policy course migrant workers have become important
and often indispensable economic contributors. Indeed, even when the host economy contracts and and/or native unemployment rises, private employers continue to court migrant workers in large numbers (Bonifazi and Marini 2014; Nagel et al. 2012: 30).

In response to these challenges, governments adopt selective immigration policies in the expectation that they can satisfy the labour needs of employers and the economy as a whole without precipitating the popular backlash that accompanied the onset of permanent migrant settlement (Loyal 2011: 174–176). More specifically, they pursue a range of public policies, including seasonal, circular, and guest worker immigration policies, to discourage permanent migrant settlement (Cassarino 2013: 25). However, the obvious contradiction embedded in this strategy is that it does little, if anything, to depress demand for workers in low-paid, temporary, and/or illegal employment (Palidda 2009: 365). Consequently, irregular immigration more or less continues unabated which, in turn, further fans the fires of popular xenophobia (Gagnon and Khoudour-Castéras 2011: 22). Moreover, it does nothing to address the increasing concern of many political elites and ordinary citizens that established migrant communities pose an economic, cultural, and/or physical safety threat to their society (Goodhart 2014; Huntington 2004; Roper and Barria 2014: 50–51).

SECURITIZING IMMIGRATION

Whenever a critical number of political elites – especially, but not exclusively extreme right political actors – within the receiving countries attempt to exploit the general public’s unease with immigration by rhetorically framing migrants as a threat to its economic, cultural and/or physical security they are said to be ‘securitizing’ immigration. What is specifically meant by this concept? As interpreted by the Copenhagen School of security studies (Buzan 1983), securitization is the process by which ostensibly non-security issues, such as immigration, are transformed into urgent security concerns as a result of securitizing speech acts. Adherents of this school typically distinguish between ‘state security’, which is primarily concerned with territorial sovereignty, and ‘societal security’, which focuses on ‘the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats’ (Wæver et al. 1993: 23).

Securitization purportedly commences whenever elite actors inject ‘low politics’ public policy issues into the domain of ‘high politics’ by adopting existential threat rhetoric. Wæver (1995: 5) goes so far as to argue that ‘by definition something is a security problem when elites declare
it to be so’. Although elite ‘securitizing moves’ – that is, mostly pre-
meditated initiatives that usually take the form of a speech, a report, or
legislation – must be supported by objective evidence, the securitization
process is ultimately intersubjective. Thus, in order for a securitizing actor
to mobilize her/his target audience, the latter must accept the legitimacy of
the former’s claims (Balzacq 2005). If and once the general public widely
validates such claims, decision makers purportedly are then at liberty to
transfer the affected issue out of the realms of conventional politics and
policymaking and into the domain of emergency politics, where it can be
expeditiously resolved. Although the practice of conflating immigration
with security purportedly predates the events of 11 September, 2001, most
securitization-of-immigration scholars either implicitly or explicitly agree
that the post-11 September period is witness to a “‘problematization” and
“securitization” of . . . [immigration] that is new in its scope and scale’
(Freedman 2004: 1).

What are the objective foundations of securitization? The consensus
view among invested scholars is that the phenomenon is inextricably
linked to the political and social conflicts precipitated by the arrival and
permanent settlement of ethnically, culturally, and/or religiously distinc-
tive minority populations within the immigration-receiving countries
and, in particular, the objective (for example, employment, housing,
and welfare) and subjective (for example, cultural homogeneity, societal
values, and/or national identity) challenges that migrants pose for poli-
cymakers and native publics (Alexseev 2005; Bigo 2002). The concept of
security as it has hitherto been applied to immigration thus suggests a
triad of intersecting popular fears (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2006). First,
native publics purportedly are anxious that mass immigration and perma-
nent migrant settlement are undermining their collective cultural, ethnic,
linguistic, religious and/or national identity (Wæver 1993: 23). Second,
the presence of labour migrants in particular is believed to undercut the
wages and employment prospects of native workers and undermine the
foundations of the existing welfare state by either overtaxing its resources
and/or eroding general public support for it (Freeman 1986). Finally,
migrant settlement is perceived as a physical safety threat. On this last
score the general public’s chief concern is the threat of terrorism posed
by migrants who are alienated from the host society and aspire to inflict
physical harm on its members. Also included in this group are migrants
whose non-terrorist inspired, criminal acts threaten public order and/or
private property.

In light of these claims, two critical questions can be raised: Have elite
speech acts in the immigration-receiving countries in Europe and North
America persuaded either a majority or large minority of the public that
immigrants pose a social-cultural, economic, and/or physical safety threat? Does the opinion survey evidence reveal that the public feels especially economically, socially, and/or physically insecure post-11 September? There is little doubt that a minority of European and American politicians has employed inflammatory rhetoric about matters of immigration and/or prescribed illiberal immigrant and immigration policies both before and after 11 September. Moreover, as predicted by securitization theory, the shared experience of mass immigration has indeed precipitated popular insecurities across the receiving countries, including the public’s perception that migrants negatively impact employment, national culture/identity, and/or physical safety (Ederveen et al. 2004). Although the foci of their insecurities vary across countries, and despite differences of perspective among the various income groups, social classes, and so on within each country, a substantial minority to a majority of the public within the immigration-receiving countries are undeniably receptive to the illiberal rhetoric of political elites on immigration-related matters.

Nevertheless, as I’ve argued elsewhere (Messina 2014), there are no longitudinal public opinion surveys that support the thesis that elite securitizing speech acts have swelled the ranks of citizens who view migrants as an economic, sociocultural, and/or physical safety threat. Indeed, there is no empirical support for the supposition that elites have rhetorically framed a ‘convenient linkage’ between national security and immigration that, in turn, has been widely embraced by the public in the affected countries. To the contrary, the trajectory of public opinion in Europe and the United States has not been significantly altered by the trauma of 11 September and more recent acts of terrorism (Messina 2014: 540–541). Instead, public perceptions of immigration have largely continued along national trajectories established years and, in some cases, decades ago.

How can these counterintuitive findings be explained? One possible answer is that in light of its inclination to discriminate among immigration streams (Figure 1.2 and Table 1.3), its general lack of physical safety fear of legal migrants (Table 1.5), and its proclivity to deny that migrants pose a threat to native workers and the national culture (Table 1.4), the public in the major immigration-receiving countries is more deaf to the siren calls of securitizing political elites than is commonly supposed. If so, we may conclude that popular fears about migrants are not equally salient politically. For example, although a majority of the aggregate public in Europe and the US perceives migrants as posing a ‘burden on social services’, a slightly greater majority disagree migrants ‘take jobs away from the native born’; moreover, a supermajority rejects the suggestion migrants pose a ‘threat to national culture’, including three-quarters or more of Germans, Italians, Romanians, and Spaniards (Table 1.4). As presumed correctly
by securitization of immigration theorists, the presence of migrants does increase the public’s anxiety about physical safety, and specifically that it increases crime. Yet, as Table 1.5 illustrates, even on this dimension of the immigration–security nexus Americans, Canadians, and Europeans can and do distinguish between legal and illegal migrants. While seven of eight national publics agree that illegal migrants increase crime in their respective countries, an equal number disagrees that legal migrants do so.

### DISCUSSION

What are the implications of the public’s preference for and its propensity to be more wary of some immigration streams more than others? The most obvious implication is that to the extent that its fears about immigration provide fodder for securitization they do so discriminately; that is, there appears to be a pyramid of public anxiety in which irregular migrants are seen as the greatest threat source, humanitarian migrants are perceived with suspicion, secondary migrants are viewed as useful but nevertheless a cause of intra-societal tensions, and authorized labour migrants, compared to other migrants, are viewed relatively positively. Moreover,
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high-skilled workers are much more widely tolerated than low-skilled workers (Figure 1.2) and irregular migrants perceived as a greater physical safety threat than legal migrants.

A second implication is that because of its diffuse and discriminating nature, anti-migrant popular sentiment likely constrains policymaking on some immigration streams more than others. If so, contemporary governments and states have much greater latitude to formulate and implement their immigration-related policy agendas, especially with regard to authorized labour immigration (Iyengar et al. 2013: 660), than many scholars commonly assume.

As cited in the introduction, the vast majority of contemporary governments are relatively satisfied with their respective immigration levels and policy objectives (United Nations 2013b: 30). Most likely as a direct consequence, in 2011 ‘two thirds of governments in the more developed regions and three quarters of those in less developed regions either had policies to maintain the current level of immigration or were not intervening to influence it’ (United Nations 2013b: 31). Indeed, between 1996 and 2011 the percentage of governments that had implemented policies to decrease immigration levels actually declined while the percentage intending to raise or maintain their immigration levels increased (Figure 1.4).

However one interprets the aforementioned data, it is evident that the claim that contemporary governments and states have ‘lost control’ of immigration are not empirically well-grounded. Despite the inevitable challenges associated with the immigration political-policy course, the purported global ‘crisis of immigration’ (Huntington 2004; Weiner 1995) is less of an objective, unrelenting, and universal emergency of unavoidable

Table 1.5 Public attitudes towards migrants in Europe and US, 2013 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Legal Immigrants Increase Crime</th>
<th>Illegal Immigrants Increase Crime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and unwelcome migration outcomes than it is a subjective, episodic, and selective set of challenges predominantly founded upon unrealistic and/or contradictory immigration expectations (Chebel d’Appollonia 2015: 141; Zolberg 1999: 91). The pertinent questions contemporary immigration and immigrant settlement patterns therefore raise are not why immigration occurs (Martin et al. 2006: 3–13), why countries tolerate unwanted immigration (Joppke 1998), and/or how migrants precipitate societal and/or state insecurity (Huysmans 2006); instead, they are: why don’t more people migrate (Faist 2000: 4; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014: 160); why do most migrants settle in relatively few countries (United Nations 2013a: 5); and/or why are migrants so frequently cast as a threat to states and societies (Chebel d’Appollonia 2015; Messina 2014)? On this last score it is pertinent for ultimately assessing the robustness of securitization theory as it has been applied to immigration that the illiberal rhetoric of some political elites on immigration-related matters in recent years seems to have had little if any effect on public attitudes towards and tolerance of immigrants (Dunn and Singh 2011).

Figure 1.4 Government policies to influence level of immigration, 1996–2011

NOTES

1. The South includes countries in Africa, the Americas (excluding Canada and the United States), Asia (excluding Japan) the Caribbean, and Oceana (excluding Australia and New Zealand). There are no fewer than 56 countries in the North (Australia, Europe, Japan, New Zealand, and North America) (International Organization for Migration 2013: 43).

2. This assumes that all else is equal, especially with regard to the migrants’ country or region of origin (Ford 2011; Sniderman et al. 2002: 34).

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