

# COUNCIL OF COUNCILS

*An Initiative of the Council on Foreign Relations*



Panelist Paper

## **Toward A Global Governance of Migration?**

Council of Councils Regional Conference

November 17–19, 2019

French Institute of International Relations, Paris, France

**Ricardo E. Lagorio**, Argentine Council on Foreign Relations

I will approach the topic of global governance of migration from two perspectives: on a macro-systemic level and on the specific issue of migration. Of course, the latter is highly influenced by the former. Therefore, this paper will be in broad brush strokes, at the risk of generalizing. The main points are as follows.

- The world is going through a reckoning. To quote Dean Acheson, we are once again “present at the creation.” There is a gap between our perceptions and reality. For example, we are moving back toward dysfunctional concepts such as the Cold War as we postpone the real challenge of seeking to design, define, and implement multilateral cooperation.
- I want to stress that this session title is written as a question —like Francis Fukuyama’s “The End of History?” I think this is the correct approach because, personally, I do not feel comfortable, today, with the concept of global governance.

- My skepticism derives from the fact that we are going through a low-tide period of multilateralism, which is not a new phenomenon: perhaps the novelty is multilateralism.
- Insufficient commitment toward effectively cooperating on global issues such as climate change, disarmament —both conventional and nuclear— human rights, and trade, among others, is causing the low tide of multilateralism. Examples abound of the current crisis of global governance: the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the Paris Agreement. Unfortunately, this is not a modern phenomenon, more *deja vu*. It is a remake of what I experienced in my first days as a diplomat at the Argentina Mission to the United Nations in the 1980s, which was also pervaded by a crisis of multilateralism.
- The reappearance of nationalism is also harming multilateralism, and, in turn, feeds on the lack of commitment to multilateralism.

### **Excursus**

Today, about 250 million people are living in a country they were not born in. In other words, they are immigrants. But the term immigrant also includes a different category of the more than 78 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. I fear that this last figure does not include the more than 4 million Venezuelans who have left their country.

We are addressing as a whole two totally different categories of migrants and forcibly displaced people, with different origins, evolutions, and policy options. History shows that the tragedies that force people from their homes can only be avoided by preventing conflicts and promoting development through international cooperation. Furthermore, and although these two categories have different reasons for leaving their country —voluntarily or not— once they reach another country, their needs and expectations are often confused.

Historically, migration flows contributed to development and progress and were not perceived as a threat. For example, between 1881 and 1914, more than five million immigrants arrived in Argentina —and, at that time, there were more immigrants than native Argentinians.

*We must overcome the perception of us versus them.* Migration brings new culture, religion, and ethnicities to countries, enriching the society, not threatening it. We need to at least create the proper environment for progress and development. We must overcome the psychological remnants of the Cold War that permeate many decision-makers and their policies. For example, the guiding questions for this session reference “if not, what other policies are needed,” and “where can the necessary international leadership emerge to bridge divides between the Global North and South.” We cannot frame all conflicts in terms of a Cold War. War has winners and losers. If global policy efforts take the same approach, it assumes the world and international cooperation are a zero-sum game.

*What is in crisis is not the global liberal order.* I sincerely have my doubts that a liberal global order has been in place since 1945. It was hardly global given the decolonization process only ended in the 1960s. The concept of a liberal or Western order is also questionable given that

until 1989, two blocs existed: one around the Warsaw Pact and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the other around the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and, to a lesser extent, the European Union.

The WTO, created over twenty-five years ago, is paralyzed today. In addition, a modern conceptual rift exists between the international rules-based system and the global order based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law.

An interdependent world lacks the solidarity necessary for cooperation, dialogue, and peaceful resolutions. If we say that the global liberal or Western order is in crisis, we are leaving aside the other half of the world, which does not necessarily share the same social contract.

### **Recommendations**

- In this new environment of changing attitudes and diminishing commitment toward multilateralism, the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is a positive framework. However, now comes the time for implementation. The mere adoption of a global agreement is not a guarantee of its applicability.
- Real commitments are needed to make progress toward effective and efficient multilateralism. You do not cheer on multilateralism, you practice multilateralism.
- It is necessary to generate and foster a culture of multilateralism. Civil society, academia, nongovernmental organizations, and the media should be part of a renewed constituency of multilateralism.
- Regarding the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, some questions and issues arise. Some of the most relevant countries are not party to the Compact. Beyond adoption of the Compact, is there willingness to implement it? From my perspective, the Compact does not give enough attention to what actually generates migration and displacement. Frameworks should address root causes, such as:
  - The renewed deterioration in living conditions, in some cases related to economic inequity and the uneven distribution of the benefits of globalization;
  - The lack of and diminishing prospects of finding proper jobs; and
  - The increasing number of failed states that are not in a position to guarantee the basic needs of their populations and their increasing demands.
- Today's generation of migrants is different from previous generations. After September 11, 2001, for psychological reasons (prejudices), destination countries have perceived migrants differently. We should discuss attitudes and habits (in the spirit of Montesquieu) as underpinnings of our policies.
- Migrants and forcibly displaced people should be clearly distinguished.
- The international governance system's decision-making process remains centered around the nation-state. It is necessary to involve nonstate actors —subnational, private sector, civil

society, and non-governmental organizations, among others— and the new social movements mobilized through social networks. Due to the urgency and importance of this matter, we must resort to greater use and institutionalization of the Arria Formula at the UN Security Council. The UN Security Council only activated it once in June 2019. This is insufficient.

- The French and German proposal for an Alliance for Multilateralism is a necessary and good first step toward furthering a culture of multilateralism. But it should by no means be rules based. We cannot take for granted that a rules-based multilateral order exists. Although it may not be its purpose, some countries could perceive starting from a rules-based multilateral order as an intention to marginalize the UN Charter and international law and replace it with something different. That is why we must convene an Alliance for Multilateralism without conditions. The creation of a coalition of the willing requires an open-minded approach. We have to disaggregate multilateralism; otherwise we are discussing an ethereal concept. Multilateralism is cooperation, dialogue, and diplomacy, and these are the three vectors upon which we have to work.

- I want to stress that there is a deficit of diplomacy, and a greater recourse to the militarization of political responses, which, in the short term, generates some results, but is not sustainable over time. Look no further than the third session of this conference, “The Weaponization of Economic Interdependence.”

I want to end with some words from Albert Camus’ *Vers le Dialogue*: “Ce qu’il faut défendre, c’est le dialogue et la communication universelle des hommes entre eux.” Roughly translated as: “What must be defended is the dialogue and the universal communication of men among themselves.”