

I. Introduction

The global movement of people has been one of the most crucial upheavals of humanity's modern era. From the Bantu expansion to the Italian diaspora, migration has spurred the exchange of vast swaths of knowledge, cultural innovations, and technologies. Even today, more people are on the move than ever before: there are roughly one billion migrants, a quarter of which are international (World Health Organization). While some migrate in search of opportunity, others are forced to abandon their homes—and are not always met with open arms. In recent years, the world has also seen an alarming uptick in anti-migrant rhetoric, marked by the pervasive wave of nationalism flooding through all corners of the globe. With heavy moral and political quandaries involved, this debate centers around which side can create the most sustainable policy for both migrants and nations: international norms or self-interests. When weighing the two, international commitments offer the most productive means of solvency, whereas self-interests have empirically hindered its potential.

When leaders consider the implications of putting their nation's interests ahead of their international commitments to migrants, they must recognize that this policy will come at great costs. Thus, we firmly negate the 2019-2020 International Public Policy Forum resolution: “Resolved: When in conflict, a nation's self-interest should outweigh its international commitments to migrants.”

II. Framework & Observations

Due to the plethora of political systems on which nations' sovereignties are based, the Negative shall attempt to best reflect the most amount of nations. Therein:

- a. “Self-interest” is in the eye of the beholder. Therefore, only the nation itself can decide what is or isn’t in conflict with its self-interest.
- b. A nation's self-interest, or national interest, is parallel to Machiavelli's theory of *raison d'état*, defined as action taken based on purely political reasons, often ignoring other principles of justice (Kissinger).

The Affirmative has the burden to prove that when in conflict, self-interest should always outweigh regardless of the scope and magnitude of either side. Additionally, while no international commitment to migrants is legally binding, negating the resolution means that countries not only sign-on but also adhere to the legislation. Any other interpretation would make the affirmative and negative nearly indistinguishable. Finally, owing to the moral implications of the resolution, the best way to comprehensively evaluate the debate is on the principles of universal human rights and equality.

III. Negative Case

Short-Termism and Stagnation in the Status Quo

A nation’s self-interest is often incredibly short-sighted due to actors’ efforts to generate electoral clout and political capital. As such, politicians are incentivized to zero-in on the most straightforward or self-advantageous issues in the current political climate, often at the expense of prior commitments and customary law. The United States reneged the 2015 Paris Accords with economic motives, considerably weakening the legitimacy of global climate efforts (Roberts). China is exerting its influence in the South China Sea, violating its obligations to the Law of the Sea treaty. Thus, the vast majority of global investment is short-term-oriented and not

focused on sustainable development (United Nations). Inconsistent levels of compliance have slowed progress, especially in the field of migration.

Routinely, economic migrants who push forward short-term national interests are accepted while those who are perceived as harmful are barred (Waibsnaider). Although reluctant to accept Syrian refugees, the fiscally-capable Persian Gulf States—namely Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—have absorbed millions of migrant workers from Southeast Asia, revealing that their self-interests are primarily driven by economic and security concerns (David). These countries have the full capacity to relieve the Syrian crisis (Al-Khateeb), but self-interests have prevented them from taking initiative. Meanwhile, neighboring Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey have accumulated a combined total of over six million refugees since 2011, generating subpar conditions as resources are stretched thin. With Lebanon on the verge of economic recession, attention has been sequestered from the more than 73% of migrants living in makeshift shelters, lacking basic necessities (ACTED). In the Affirmative world, wealthy countries will continue to ignore crises and shift their burden to nations incapable of helping refugees, while countries in the Negative world recognize moral obligations to sacrifice marginal self-interests in favor of saving countless lives.

The Human Rights Imperative

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was unanimously adopted by the United Nations (Glass). Article 14 of the Declaration states that “everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution,” and the 1951 Refugee Convention compounded this by further specifying the rights of migrants. Over time, the UDHR

has developed from a normative framework to a binding UN document, enshrined in both domestic and international legislature (Vosyliūtė).

While it remains blisteringly clear that many members of the UN ignore Article 14, some understand that upholding human rights is morally imperative, accepting destitute migrants with open arms. Last August, Colombian President Iván Duque pledged to receive over a million refugees originating from the protracted Venezuelan crisis (Kurmanaev). While this commitment certainly yielded fiscal hardships, the alternative would have been hundreds of thousands of stateless migrants.

In stark contrast, self-interested nations deliberately forgo their responsibilities. Over the past few years, hundreds of thousands of Middle Eastern and sub-Saharan migrants fleeing persecution, conflict, and ecological strife have arrived on the Mediterranean coast, attempting to seek refuge in Europe. Under the pretense of border security, the European Union has shirked from humanitarian assistance and has instead forged partnerships with authoritarian nations. The bloc has financed the de-facto Libyan government with hundreds of millions of euros, stipulating that it must intercept and indefinitely force migrants into overpopulated detention camps where they are subject to disease, torture, and slavery (Human Rights Watch). As Libyan policy expert Tarek Megerisi explains, “This dark reality of European migration policy exposes tension between the EU’s ambitions as a normative power and its perceived self-interest in reducing migration at any cost.” (Fine & Megerisi) EU member states refuse to acknowledge that their actions towards migrants can often be a death sentence, yet the Affirmative side has the burden to prove that the bloc should continue to pursue self-interest over international norms.

To date, state policies and practices have induced much of existing migrant vulnerabilities (Atak et al.). Considering that hostile attitudes towards migrants persist, “only an

effective human rights framework” would achieve the goals required to improve migrant vulnerabilities, beginning with improved collaboration mechanisms and international platforms (Atak et al.). Fortunately, a renewed global discourse has already begun to take steps towards this realization.

The Power of International Cooperation

Collectivism in the wake of World War II—through a new system of shared rules, principles, and institutions—has delivered impressive social and economic feats, lifting millions of people out of poverty (Gaspar et al.). Time and time again, global cooperation has disentangled urgent issues through the development of stringent mechanisms and coordinated solutions. In light of rapidly-increasing migration waves, world leaders adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, recognizing the lack of consensus for migration strategies (UNHCR). Two years later, talks culminated in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM), which 152 nations have ushered in. The GCM is a non-binding framework that firmly establishes the groundwork for further migration agreements, as well as consolidating decades-worth of past agreements into the most holistic and comprehensive framework to date—marked as “the beginning for the global regulation of migration,” (Jubilut et al.) (McAdam).

Soon afterward, Ethiopia implemented a groundbreaking law improving refugee rights and allowing over one million to enter the workforce (Bhalla). Crucially, the GCM has outlined measures ensuring that future decisions are in the realm of the practical and well-informed; the African Union and Latin American countries have unveiled monitoring platforms to strengthen data-gathering on migration trends (Migration Policy Institute).

Despite the Compact's explicit reaffirmation of states' sovereignty, several countries abandoned negotiations under the auspices of self-interest. Before rescinding Australia from the agreement, Prime Minister Scott Morrison claimed that it would "compromise our successful way of doing things," (Sherrell). Alarmingly, the extensive disinformation campaign of right-wing nationalist actors played a "disproportionate role" in why countries left the GCM (Cerulus). Falsehoods over border security could have been dispelled by "simply reading the text of the GCM" (Vosyliūtė). In retrospect, these withdrawals will "frustrate future action, on matters such as building capacity to shape regional migration governance and engaging with other countries to promote orderly migration," (Sherrell). By refusing to cooperate internationally, politicians were conversely calling for more 'irregular, unsafe and unregulated migration.'

The incessant push for self-interests has historically contributed to the detriment and even outright collapse of pacts. As a result of World Trade Organization members unwilling to make concessions in 2016, negotiations of the ambitious Doha Round broke down, which persists to undermine the multilateral trading system and "hurt the least-developed countries, which are desperate to export more of their goods to richer countries," (*The New York Times*). Migration policy must be all-inclusive, seeing as 84% of all refugees are located in developing countries (Edmond). Insofar as nations continue to simply opt-out in the name of self-interests, treaties and their original intents will continue to be drastically subverted.

Global cooperation is required to create long-term sustainable migration and address underlying factors, including climate change and sustainable development. In the coming years, environmental transformations will become primary drivers of migrants in Central America, Sahel Africa, and South Asia. Therefore, migration policies will need to adapt to evolving issues

and outline protocols for coordinated mitigation and prompt responses (Lundstrom). A vote in negation ensures that states will participate in these vital international mechanisms.

IV. Refutation to the Affirmative Case

The Current State of Agreements

In their essay, the Affirmative asserts that all agreements ignoring self-interests are unsustainable. However, the lack of sustainable commitments in the status quo is the consequence of prioritizing self-interests. They pin the fault on supranational bodies when, in reality, it is nations' leaders who have forgone the long-term in favor of self-enriching diplomacy. In fact, our opponents concede that the true problem undermining treaties is “a lack of political will on the part of states.”

The Affirmative then presents an erroneous assessment of the International Labor Organization (ILO); exploitation *vis-à-vis* undocumented migrants runs rampant, but the authors never attribute poor labor standards to ILO policies (Benach). More precisely, states' interests have hindered ILO efforts to create protective standards. In 1990, the ILO drafted the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Family Members (ICMW) (Donato & Ferris); while over fifty countries of origin have since “welcomed and ratified the ICMW,” wealthier countries of destination refrain from ratification, perceiving it as “too ambitious” (Vosyliūtė). As a legal instrument, the ICMW lacks legitimacy, being deterred chiefly through the implicit assumption that self-interests should be placed above migrant commitments (Pécoud).

In the context of its EU actions, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has represented some states more than others (Pécoud). According to Georgetown Professors

Elizabeth Ferris and Katharine Donato, the IOM's "earmarked funds from wealthy countries facilitate [...] norm-setting, which to date has been documented around best practices, border enforcement, and capacity-building," (Donato & Ferris). Nations like Australia or Italy do not "commit" to the IOM; rather, they use it to secure their borders, which is why many of the IOM's containment policies are merely projections of states' wills, as referenced in the European migrant crisis. Revolving solutions around the posit that national interests must first be satisfied only enables this self-interested approach. Ergo, current commitments are not inherently unsustainable—self-interests are impeding on cooperation and compliance.

The Nature of Populist Backlash

The Affirmative proceeds to argue that "unsustainable" global migration policies are the sole cause of populism. Problematically, the first sentence of their cornerstone article states, "It's not about immigration, the financial crisis, globalisation or inequality, but evidence of a broader, older social fragmentation." (Goodwin). When keeping the true message of Goodwin's message intact, it becomes clear that abandoning migration commitments will not minimize the risk of populism. Furthermore, populists do not necessarily take power as a result of migrant influxes; Rodrigo Duterte campaigned against crime and corruption while Narendra Modi ran on the economy and India-Pakistan relations, not immigration (Gabrillo) (Frayner).

Some of the radical populists mentioned were able to seize more power even after migration was limited. Despite Hungary no longer facing a large influx of refugees, "Orbán hasn't slowed down the anti-migrant rhetoric. If anything, he's stepped it up," (Beauchamp). By shifting the Overton window—the range of policies that is politically acceptable to the

mainstream—towards fringe right views by affirming, right-wing populists gain the ability to pass the very policies the Affirmative warns of.

The Affirmative hopes that appeasing the irrationalities of populists will somehow cease irrational tendencies. In reality, pandering to these fringe ideals legitimizes the opposition and undermines sensible and ethical policymaking.

Limitations of the Affirmative Solutions: In Principle and Practicality

Foremost, the implementation of Moraga’s hypothetical “free-market solution”—tradable refugee quotas coupled with a matching system—is inherently an international obligation because a share of migrants is initially decided by a supranational body which it is a member of. The subsequent “trading” of these quotas may consider self-interests but only comes *after* quotas are allocated. Even though countries will theoretically have to dedicate fewer resources to accommodating migrants, sacrifices will still have to be made for the sake of an international commitment. Nevertheless, its pitfalls deem it inefficient compared to existing international frameworks.

With regards to the matching component, international refugee expert Kayvan Bozorgmehr writes that, ethically, countries should not express preferences over refugees, whereby markets based on such preferences could give rise to “discriminatory cherry-picking” (Bozorgmehr). This can be witnessed in the aforementioned Gulf States’ acceptance of South Asian workers, juxtaposed with their rejection of Syrian refugees.

Frighteningly, tradable quotas also risk similar human rights violations to those in Libya. Fiscally-incentivizing countries to take in migrants encourages them to allocate as little social spending per refugee as possible in pursuit of maximizing profit. Accepting refugees must not be

spurred by a price tag, but rather be inspired by the same moral virtues that ushered in the UDHR and the many other human rights doctrines.

Furthermore, as a specifically EU-tailored approach to the Syrian crisis, the Affirmative hinges the fragile political situations of the rest of the world on a single, empirically-unsound apparatus, raising the valid question of whether all countries and migrants are willing to commit to these risks. Instead, Bozorgmehr writes that policies “should aim to produce global public goods” with “politically feasible instruments.”

In addressing West-Oram’s healthcare proposal, it is vital to recognize that a purely self-interested approach is counterproductive. The author invoked by the Affirmative goes as far as to concede that “a reliance on self-interest risks stigmatizing vulnerable people, and tacitly accepting that wealthy countries should exclude refugees and migrants if doing so would generate greater benefits,” (West-Oram). In a self-interested world, the philosopher suggests “framing the discourse surrounding the provision of health care to refugees and migrants in terms of solidarity, rather than self-interest,” (West-Oram). However, while it may be possible to contort the inner motivations of selfishness, a vote in Negation is the only true vote of solidarity. Solidarity requires empathy for the suffering and the marginalized. Solidarity requires the nations of the world coming together rather than turning inward. And most importantly, solidarity requires occasionally sacrificing self-interest for the common good.

The Affirmative rightly spotlights that realism and self-interests have dictated much of global aspirations. However, negating ensures nations take on a proactive stance and follow through with current and future commitments, instead of pursuing lopsided unilateral deals. The 2016 EU-Turkey deal, which prevents refugees from crossing the Aegean Sea to Greece, exemplifies that sole countries cannot be counted on to relieve migratory instability (Taylor).

While quotas and matching systems are untested, international commitments such as the environmental Montreal Protocol and the six core treaties of the UN General Assembly demonstrate the sheer potential of global cooperation. Only by setting aside self-interests and collaborating on safer migratory channels will overarching international frameworks effectively function to their fullest potential.

V. Conclusion

Given its complexities and nuances, global migration is not an issue that can be tackled simply by looking inward—nor by condemning treaties or accords. A collective will is crucial to solving problems that span continents and cannot be tackled effectively by any single nation, yet a glaring deficit in cooperation has largely defined the status quo. A free-market solution will not fix Lebanon's woes nor improve the South American response to the Venezuela crisis. On the contrary, commitments such as the GCM recognize the moral imperative of accommodating migrants, while respecting rational prerequisites such as sovereignty and encouraging procedures to address root issues. In the interests of migrations, nations, and the world, policymakers must subscribe to realistic international commitments in order to usher in an age of safe and fruitful migration.

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