About the Camden Conference

Every year since 1987 the Camden Conference has provided interested individuals from Midcoast Maine and beyond an opportunity to learn first-hand from, and engage directly with, renowned experts on issues of global importance. Each year, a topic is selected and speakers from government, academia, international organizations, the media and business are invited to participate in a three-day conference in Camden in February, which is simultaneously streamed to audiences in Belfast, Portland, and Rockland. Each speaker addresses a facet of the year’s topic, answers questions from the audience in all three locations, and participates in an exchange of ideas throughout the weekend. All the talks are subsequently made available on our website, www.camdenconference.org.

Previous Camden Conference programs have examined Religion as a Force in World Affairs, Global Leadership, and The Global Politics of Food and Water. The Conference has also focused on geopolitical areas including the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and Africa. The February 2017 Camden Conference considered the complex issue of refugees and global migration.

Exciting as the weekend is, the Camden Conference has over the years become a much bigger presence in the educational and intellectual life of our region. Dozens of events related to the annual Conference theme or promoting “informed discourse on world issues” are held in communities across Maine. These “Community Events” include lectures, symposia, and senior-college courses; group discussions of selected articles and film clips; and longer films, art exhibits, and other cultural programs. All are open to the public and most are free of charge. They are led by scholars and other well-informed area residents.

The Camden Conference works to enhance teaching of global affairs in Maine universities, colleges and high schools by subsidizing and encouraging student attendance at the February Conference—often in the context of courses directly related to the Conference theme—staging student-oriented and student-led events around the Conference.

The Camden Conference is a nonpartisan, federally tax-exempt, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. The Board of Directors includes residents of several Midcoast towns, all of whom volunteer their time, talent, and energy to organize the Conference and related programs.

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Moderated by Jeanne Bourgault

From little Alan Kurdi dead on a Turkish beach to 193 members of the UN creating policy guidelines, the 2017 Camden Conference highlighted the complex issue of refugees and global migration. Speakers representing a variety of institutions addressed the wide range of issues involved: the effect of violence and conflict within nations that creates displaced persons, the humanitarian crisis caused by millions of people on the move, the role of the UN in seeking to set guidelines for solutions, the influence of the refugee crisis on politics around the globe, and the economics of migration and immigration.

Many speakers emphasized the importance of a humanitarian response to migration and refugees. Individual stories added a human face to the situation. Two refugees from Ethiopia and Iraq who currently live in Maine shared their stories and the moderator told how a woman she met from Afghanistan gave meaning to the work she does.

The economic impact of refugees and migrants also received attention. While some argued that immigrants contribute positive economic effects, others highlighted the cost of migration and displaced people.

That the issue is complex was highlighted by the fact that several speakers were unable to agree on the scope of the problem, not to mention whether enough is being done and what solutions are possible. What is clear is that all the speakers are passionate about the work they do and the search for solutions. Attendees were left with a better understanding of this urgent problem and what might be done.
The World is on the Move, and We Have No Idea How to Respond

We must include humanity in our solution

Paul James

Early in his address, James emphasized the scope and complexity of the world’s refugee dilemma as “nothing less than a crisis of humanity.” While much of his presentation outlined the details of the crisis that we see unfolding on the nightly news, he also reminded us of our shared responsibility in allowing things to reach such dire levels.

“...we’re blaming the victims... for leaving; for choosing leaky boats; for coming here. And then we say, ‘Somehow they won’t come if we withhold their resources’.”

To emphasize this, James’s second slide—featuring the wrenching photograph of young Alan Kurdi’s body on the beach—highlighted the fact that “of those people who arrive by boat [on the shores of Greece and Turkey], one in four die... and we’re blaming the victims. We blame them for leaving; for choosing leaky boats; for coming here. And then we say, ‘Somehow they won’t come if we withhold their resources.’ It is the kind of thing which leads you to a misunderstanding of the complexity of the situation we are facing.”

Stepping back, James reminds us that internally displaced people are not refugees. Only recently have we considered non-Europeans refugees, and that difference between refugees and internally displaced people is a vital one if we are to understand the complexity of these migrations and decrease the victim blaming.

Shifting the focus to the United States’ approach to immigration and Donald Trump’s 2016 pledge to build a wall on the Mexican border, James observes that walls are not the only means of control. Drawing a parallel to Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s policy of accepting only those refugees who arrive via plane but denying all those who arrive by boat, James apologizes on behalf of Australia. “If anything, we [Australians] are worse than the United States in the way we handle refugees...if you arrive by boat you are reviled.” In both countries, be it by wall or by boat, a locus of control is maintained through the denial of resources.

It is in the allocation of these vast resources for border security that we lose sight of the human factor. “Actually walls themselves are not that expensive to build. It’s the administration of the border security that’s expensive; currently, 70 countries around the world are building walls and borders are increasingly militarized... in the United States alone, more [$3.6 billion] is spent on border security than is spent on the CIA and FBI combined...and yet we have still...
failed. The word ‘humanitarian’ has become lost to us; we’re no longer the Samaritans we once were.”

But it is important to recognize that “we all share some blame for this. Donald Trump is not the architect of this dilemma. He is continuing policies that have been in place for over 20 years.” When confronted with the complexity and enormity of the problem, “we blame the victims of structural situations produced by us. Climate change which produces climate refugees. Structures of rapacious capitalism, which result in people leaving places where they were because they cannot afford to be there anymore. Sufferers of what is called transnational globalized violence that are suffering as a result of wars that we have been a part of.”

It is not simply a crisis of humanity that has befallen us, but a crisis of displacement as well. Recounting a visit to a refugee camp in Lebanon, James recalls meeting a boy whose life is caught up in the violence and way of life of what have become permanent, multi-generation camps. And he describes a process by which displaced people and refugees become “barbarians” that are reviled as security threats rather than human beings.

However, we are briefly reminded, it is important to differentiate between, “those who are displaced and those who are migrants—people who choose to move. In the 1990s, there were 2 million, in the 2000s, 4 million, and today we are holding steady at a little over 4 million migrants.”

James spoke passionately of the need for care. That regardless of numbers or politics, “an ethics of care must underlie an ethics of rights. It is the right of any person who is stateless, who has left their home; it is the right of any person to be received as a non-illegal person if they cross a national boundary if they fear in any way for their person.” Fear is a critical component in the determination of aid. If there is a sense of fear, assistance must be rendered.

“We need a global-national-local institutional structure to manage the crisis.”

Before concluding his address, James’s issued a plea and a solution: “We need a global-national-local institutional structure to manage the crisis. What is required is a global compact...that isn’t a unilateral deal, like the sort favored by Donald Trump or Tony Abbott, but a multilateral method by which countries who can afford to do more, do so. This process needs to follow a framework and a multinational dialogue in which nations work with each other and within their own borders to determine the best allocation of resources to help.”

James left us with a reading from novelist Yuri Herrera’s Signs Preceding the End of the World. The passage is as follows:

“We are to blame for this destruction; we who don’t speak your tongue and don’t know how to keep quiet either. We who didn’t come by boat, who dirty up your doorsteps with our dust, who break your barbed wire. We who came to take your jobs, who dream of wiping your shit, who long to work all hours. We who fill your shiny clean streets with the smell of food, who brought you violence you’d never known, who deliver your dope, who deserve to be chained by neck and feet. We who are happy to die for you, what else could we do? We, the ones who are waiting for who knows what. We, the dark, the short, the greasy, the shifty, the fat, the anemic. We the barbarians.

Closing the book, James remarked, “That’s what the world has come to, that people in need now think of themselves as barbarians.”

“Reported by Dwight Blue

Paul James is Director and Professor in the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University (Australia). He also serves as Research Director of Global Reconciliation, an international organization based in Australia that has been bringing people together in ongoing dialogue in global zones of conflict, including Sri Lanka and the Middle East. He is the author of many articles and 31 books, including Urban Sustainability in Theory and Practice (2015) and Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism (2006). Dr. James’s research interests include globalization and its impact upon social relations; the impact of modernization on customary and traditional ways of being; and sustainable urbanization. He has been an adviser to agencies and governments, including the Helsinki Process, the Canadian Prime Minister’s G20 Forum, and the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor. An Honorary Professor of King’s College, London, and an editor or board member of 10 journals, he earned his PhD at the University of Melbourne. For the last decade, Dr. James has been engaged in bringing out Central Currents in Globalization, a 16-volume series that maps the contours of a field that now crosses the boundaries of all the older disciplines in the social sciences and humanities.
AbuZayd provided the Camden Conference audience with a summary of the latest agreements and compacts drawn up to support the UN High Commission on Refugees and its agenda. Her theme reflected the recent agreement signed by 193 nations to support and improve conditions for refugees and migrants around the world in the “New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants.” The Declaration defines the two compacts agreed upon by the signatories. The compacts describe in detail the obligations of each member state with respect to refugees and migrants. The commitments inherent in these two compacts are taken from the declaration and summarized as follows:

► Protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status. This includes the rights of women and girls and promoting their full, equal and meaningful participation in finding solutions.

► Ensure that all refugee and migrant children are receiving education within a few months of arrival.

► Prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

► Support those countries rescuing, receiving and hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants by improving the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to those countries most affected through innovative multilateral financial solutions.

► Work towards ending the practice of detaining children for the purposes of determining their migration status.

► Strongly condemn xenophobia against refugees and migrants and support a global campaign to counter it.

► Strengthen the positive contributions made by migrants to economic and social development in their host countries.

► Implement a comprehensive refugee response based on a new framework that sets out the responsibility of Member States, civil society partners and the UN system.

► Find new homes for all refugees identified by UNHCR as needing resettlement and expand the opportunities for refugees to relocate to other countries.

► Welcome the strengthening of the global governance of migration by the recent inclusion of the International Organization for Migration as a related organization in the UN.

“... migration should be a choice not a necessity and ... the contributions of migrants should be recognized.”

Karen Koning AbuZayd

Comparing Responses to Refugees and Migrants: Governments, the UN and Civil Society

The UN is working with 193 members to create a refugee strategy
AbuZayd emphasized that migration should be a choice not a necessity, and that the contributions of migrants should be recognized. She also pointed out that the New York Declaration contains concrete plans for how to build on the commitments outlined above:

- Start negotiations leading to an international conference and the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018. The agreement means that migration, like other areas of international relations, will be guided by a set of common principles and approaches.

- Develop guidelines on the treatment of migrants in vulnerable situations. These guidelines will be particularly important for children on the move.

- Achieve a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world’s refugees by adopting a global compact on refugees in 2018.

AbuZayd returned to how governments, the UN and civil society should and must respond collectively to refugee and migrant problems. She focused on how countries have developed methods and means to integrate refugees by improving policies and through their actions have found ways to make them welcome and safe. She noted the example of Uganda, which she said was taking in thousands of refugees, giving them land and helping them to become part of Ugandan life. She also noted that a number of international and national banks are developing the tools to provide much needed financial support to help countries facilitate the integration of incoming refugees.

AbuZayd noted that she was optimistic about the future for migrants and refugees because of the extraordinary enthusiasm and cooperation of civil society, academia and the private sector and the support and actions of the 193 signatories to the New York Declaration. She did note that there were some unfortunate realities that were evident in the policies and attitudes of the new US President and many of his close advisors. She noted that the UN is trying to develop responses to this new attitude and to find ways to work with the US administration.

She stated that UN efforts are not weakened by the negative reaction of the US. She said; “We are in fact emboldened by the interest of countries and individuals around the world.”

AbuZayd summarized her comments by underlining the importance of the activities of groups such as the Camden Conference. She added that she felt inspired and empowered by the world wide support of groups such as the Camden Conference and she suggested that individuals should adopt the spirit and solidarity demonstrated at the Conference to move the agenda of refugees and migrants forward and to provide people with examples of concrete actions to address the needs of others less fortunate than ourselves. She quoted Antonio Guterres - Secretary General of the United Nations on Xenophobia: “Together: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All”

Reported by Andrew Stancioff

KAREN KONING ABUZAYD was appointed in January 2016 as Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, which culminated in a special United Nations meeting in September 2016. Ms. AbuZayd had previously served as Under Secretary-General and Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA). Based in Gaza, she oversaw education, health, social services, and microfinance programs for 4.7 million Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Before joining UNRWA, she worked for 19 years for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Sudan, Namibia, and Sierra Leone. Since 2011, she has been a Commissioner on the UN Human Rights Council’s Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. Before joining UNHCR, Ms. AbuZayd lectured at Makerere University (Uganda) and at Juba University (southern Sudan). She earned a BS degree at DePauw University and an MA in Islamic Studies at McGill University. DePauw has awarded her an honorary doctorate and the McNaughton Medal for Public Service. She has also received the Spanish UN Association/Catalonia Peace Prize and the Golden Medal with Star for service to the Austrian Republic.
Knaus began by commenting on the “enormous amount of experience and expertise in the room,” but also that he could feel the empathy. He said that the two must be brought together. “Experience without empathy will not lead to a good result.” Explaining why he thinks there is a crisis in Europe, he said the European Union was in a “political struggle that puts at risk the very foundation, the values, the conventions, the institutions and the human rights that emerged from the experience of the Second World War.”

Knaus cited 2015 as an “extraordinary moment,” with the number of refugees seeking asylum in Greece increasing from 57,000 in 2011 to 885,400. He described the increase as having a specific cause, naming Syria as the largest generating source of those refugees and Turkey as the largest host. He showed a photo of a little Kurdish boy lying dead on the beach in Turkey, a photo that went viral around the world but did not lead to action. Pictures and stories of suffering were viewed with empathy in some countries but in others they did not prevent the dramatic rise of the electoral strength of anti-refugee parties. For example, he used a slide showing photos of Marine Le Pen, candidate of the National Front (a far right party in France); Norbert Hofer, candidate of the far right Austrian Freedom Party; officials of a new political party in Germany, Alternative for Germany and Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic.

He said the EU needed to deal with three questions:

1) Is the EU capable of controlling its external borders?
2) Will 2017 see the end of EU support for the refugee convention?
3) Can border regimes combine empathy with control?

Knaus reflected on borders and asylums by offering antidotes about the Finnish and Swiss borders. The point was that a free flow of migrants is allowed based on the Refugee Convention of 1951 adopted as a consequence of border closings, as between Austria and Switzerland during WW II. Article 33 says “No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”

Knaus went on to describe the election in Germany and quoted Merkel’s rival, Viktor Orbán of Hungary, directly, “If we step back from the whole issue and its specific features and conceptually reflect on what is happening, then we see that we have a huge opportunity, if we fight well in this debate, to restore the prestige and appeal of national identity and Christian identity, in opposition to the liberal identity.”

After the bombing in Paris in November of 2015 he said, “Which approach is more humane: to close the borders in order to stop illegal immigration, or to put at risk the lives of innocent European citizens? The right to life takes precedence over all other rights, as does the right to self-defense ...” and “Mass migration appears in the guise of humanitar-
ian action, but its true nature is the occupation of territory; and their gain in territory is our loss of territory." Knaus referred to that statement "as the language of war" that one or two refugees out of 800,000 might be a terrorist.

To which Angela Merkel, said (quoting her directly), "We must better protect our external borders, but this is only possible if we reach agreements with our neighbours, for example with Turkey, on how to better share the task of dealing with the refugees. And this will mean more money for Turkey. This will mean that we will accept a set number of refugees, in a way so that the human traffickers and smugglers in the Aegean will not earn money, but in an orderly way."

Merkel’s plan was outlined as:

- **Push-back is unacceptable—losing control of borders is unsustainable**
- **Reduce irregular arrivals: fast return of everyone safe in Turkey**
- **Resettle refugees from Turkey**
- **Support Turkey hosting refugees**

Then came the EU agreement in March, 2016. "In order to break the business model of the smugglers and to offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk. Migrants arriving in the Greek islands ... any application for asylum will be processed individually by the Greek authorities in accordance with the Asylum Procedures Directive. Migrants not applying for asylum or whose application has been found unfounded or inadmissible in accordance with the said directive will be returned to Turkey."

“Once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU are ending or at least have been substantially and sustainably reduced, a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme will be activated.”

The effects:

- **Crossings:** 115,000 in January and February 2016
  - 3,300 in June and July 2016
- **Drownings:** 366 in months January-March
  - 7 in months May-July
- **Push-backs:** None

The situation in Italy is different. In 2016, 125,000 refugees crossed the Mediterranean in small, often unseaworthy boats from Libya. Where can they go? A candidate for the presidency in the Netherlands says “Let the European marine patrol in front of the North African coast and return all immigrants without exceptions.”

Ending his presentation Gerald Knaus advised the audience “Expose populist proposals: They are immoral and they do not work. ... convince majorities of proposals to protect the right to asylum, save lives and control borders humanely. Find allies!”

GERALD KNAUS is founding Chairman of the European Stability Initiative (ESI), a nonprofit research and policy institute focusing on South East Europe, Turkey, and the South Caucasus. From offices in Berlin and Istanbul he has coordinated field research and provided strategic analysis to policymakers throughout these regions and Central and Western Europe. A native of Vienna, he studied at Oxford University, the Free University of Brussels, and the Johns Hopkins SAIS Bologna Center, and he taught economics at a Ukrainian university. In Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina, he worked for NGOs and international organizations, including the International Crisis Group, the Office of the High Representative, and the International Mediator. From 2001 to 2004, he was the director of the “Lessons Learned Unit” of the European Union Pillar of the UN Mission in Kosovo. He coauthored (with Rory Stewart) Can Intervention Work? as well as more than 80 ESI reports and scripts for 12 TV documentaries on South East Europe. A founding member of the European Council on Foreign Relations, Mr. Knaus spent five years as an Associate Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School. His current observations on migrant and refugee issues appear in the blog www.rumeliobserver.eu.
Yahya focused on the source of the refugee and displacement crisis. Internally displaced persons and refugees in Arab countries are the result of conflict and violent uprisings during this “transformative period” which began around 2010-2011. She noted that there are currently eight countries in the Middle East experiencing violent conflict due to pushback against autocratic governments seeking to hold on to power. This has led to large masses of people, millions per country, being forced out of their homes. Fifty percent of the global refugee population is citizens of Arab countries, despite Arab citizens only comprising five percent of the global population. To be more specific in terms of quantities of those affected, there are 147 million people living in countries experiencing war or occupation, and about 17 million who have been forcibly displaced from their homes. The majority of Yahya’s talk was focusing on addressing the refugee and displacement crisis in proximity to where the problem originates and what action needs to be taken towards solving those problems.

Yahya specifically addressed the ongoing conflict in Syria, particularly how the consequences have a ripple effect. This speaks to the conference’s theme of how this really is humanity’s crisis on a global scale; eighty percent of people in Syria, seventy-one percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and two-thirds of Syrian refugees in Jordan live below the poverty line. This, combined with the millions of people in Arab countries who are food insecure, creates a “widespread vulnerability” in the region. Surrounding host countries are also feeling the effects of these conflicts. In the neighboring country of Lebanon, for example, refugees comprise half of the population. One out of every five persons is a Syrian refugee. This is extremely draining on Lebanon’s resources, (as it would be for any host population to support an additional population) and it leads to an increase in unemployment and poverty for its own citizens. “While the arrival of refugees is not itself the cause of problems, the presence of an additional one million people in the country has exacerbated structural challenges that the country was already facing in infrastructure and other areas: economic growth, employment, so on and so forth.”

Another point of interest highlighted by Yahya was that concerning “what many people have called a lost generation.

“... 80% of people in Syria, 71% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and two thirds of Syrian refugees in Jordan live below the poverty line. This, combined with the millions of people in Arab countries who are food insecure, creates a ‘widespread vulnerability’ in the region.”
There are huge numbers of children who are out of school.* Forty-eight percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon of primary school age are not in school. This, too, has a ripple effect, by which younger refugees who have been traumatized are continuing to feel marginalized, financially strained, and hopeless. “[Refugees] live in a situation, in a context where they are not allowed to work. The government of Lebanon’s policies towards refugees has been ad hoc at best, but one defining element has been that they have looked at refugees from a security perspective. If you travel around the country, you will see a lot of banners that municipalities have put up creating a curfew on refugees moving around in cities and towns. So the idea is that they are living in a very incredibly strenuous context, and yet they see no options for the future.” The critical age, Yahya forewarned, is that of those over the age of 12, who may not be in school and have nothing with which to fill their days. They are traumatized from the violence of their past, and feeling hopeless toward the future; they believe their only option in fighting back against a government that has taken everything from them is to join the jihad in an effort to resist the Syrian government.

The issue with this massive influx of refugees and internally displaced persons cannot be solved without changing the conditions that lead to the violence and crime in their countries of origin. Specifically in Syria, one million civilians were besieged in the year 2016 alone. Eighty-five percent of the violence and crime was committed exclusively by the Syrian government, while the rest was committed by ISIS and other armed groups. “The idea that populations have become bargaining chips in a vicious proxy and civil conflict in Syria is going to have long lasting repercussions.” There has also been a prominent militarization of society, through which various government-affiliated groups emerge, operating under ethnic and sectarian lines. This is why civilians do not trust their governments to protect them, nor do they even trust their own neighbors.

In order to put an end to this corruption and oppression, Yahya makes the case that there must be a global effort to combat authoritarianism and promote open communities and democracy. She states, “At the global level there definitely was a failure in the responsibility to protect citizens who were being attacked... The countries in the region definitely do not have the capacity to address the fallout of the crisis. More critically, there is also collective responsibility to address the fallout of the conflicts, not only on moral grounds, but also as a question of common interests. In today’s world the fallout from this crisis, this increase in vulnerability, in poverty, the militarization of society, the kind of trauma and injury that has befallen entire societies is not one that will remain restricted to a region. The anger and increasing sense of marginalization across the region is quite palpable, and will only increase as the assault on the liberal order and values of open borders and open societies continues.”

Yahya concludes by posing the question, “Where do we want to go next?” in terms of addressing this crisis at its point of origin. She says there is a great need for a “just political settlement,” and not just another political transition, as that allows for the conflict to start up again. Additionally, refugees that she interacts with indicate that most of them would like to return home. However, in order to feel safe, they need the following:

- security for themselves and their families
- to know that they will be protected by their government
- the end of conscription for army recruitment
- a transitional government system
- international guarantees by other global actors that they can trust to enforce peace agreements in their best interests
- implementation of a justice system to hold those accountable for atrocities committed against civilians
- livelihoods upon their return.

She concludes with the reminder that all refugees want is freedom, and that we have a collective responsibility, as countries and individual communities, to assist refugees and help them rebuild their lives in an attempt to attain that freedom.

*Reported by Hannah Paradis

MAHA YAHYA is director of the Carnegie Middle East Center, where her work focuses broadly on political violence and identity politics, the challenges of citizenship, pluralism, and social justice after the Arab uprisings, and the political and socio-economic implications of the migration/refugee crisis. Prior to joining Carnegie, Dr. Yahya led work on Participatory Development and Social Justice at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) advising on social and urban policies and spearheading initiatives to address the challenges of democratic transitions in the Arab world. She has been a consultant for international organizations and the private sector on projects related to socioeconomic policy analysis, development policies, cultural heritage, poverty reduction, housing and community development, and post-conflict reconstruction in various countries, including Lebanon, Pakistan, Oman, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Her recent publications have included Great Expectations in Tunisia (March 2016) and Refugees and the Making of an Arab Regional Disorder (November 2015). She earned a Ph.D. at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Ph.D. at the Architectural Association in London and was the founder and editor of the MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies.
Mudde focused his remarks on the connection between the refugee crisis and the radical right movement. He laid out the history of the radical right, its three components or features, and how the refugee crisis fits with those components, “creating the perfect storm.” He did end on a positive note, although adding, “maybe I am doing this more for myself than for you.”

Mudde began by noting that many people believe the radical right movement started in the US with the rise of Trump. The media have reinforced that idea but “that is not the case.” In its present form “it predates the refugee crisis and the Great Recession as well. ...Post-War Europe was very much defined by the Second World War and by the Holocaust. After the War, all political initiatives for decades were set up with the mindset never forget, never again. ... Fascism was seen as The Evil and any Nationalism was seen as a threat to the new order and the first step to Auschwitz.”

In the first 10 years after the war, Fascism existed as a very minor movement, only really in Italy and Germany. In the 50s and 60s there was a second wave of right-wing populism primarily made up of farmers in the Netherlands and France and anti-tax, anti-welfare parties in Scandinavia. It was weak and had little success. But the movement returned with greater strength in the 1980s and continues. This third wave was linked to mass immigration and political resentment. But it is not just a function of crisis. Because most countries in Western Europe have parliamentary systems of government with proportional representation, 15% of the votes makes a party a major player. The radical right parties in Western Europe, which represented 1.7 percent of the electorate in the 1980s and 4.8 percent in the 1990, today represent 10-12 percent of the population, although “its power is very uneven from country to country. In roughly one-third of countries there is no radical right to speak of and in others it is the biggest party.”

Moving on to the structure of the radical right, Mudde explained that it encompasses three different ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism and populism. The refugee crisis “triggers concerns and action in all three components.”

Nativism is the idea that a state, a political unit, should be congruent with a nation, a cultural unit. A state should be monocultural. Nativists fear difference, not just different people but also different language, religion, ideas. Fear of immigration “is at the heart of the issue for nativists” –fear that the state can’t stop “others” from coming in. In Europe the majority of refugees have been Muslims or come from Muslim majority countries, triggering increased nativism and concerns of immigration in general.

Authoritarianism doesn’t necessarily mean an undemocratic state. Authoritarianism argues that states have the responsibility to enforce order and discipline to keep the country safe. It has been easy for the far right to link refugees and nativism to crime and fear of the other. Terrorism has been co-incident with the refugee crisis; 2015 started with terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. Politicians as well as the media focused on this co-incidence which has encouraged more centrist politicians to speak of the benefits of closed borders.

Populism, the third component, distinguishes between pure people on one hand and the corrupt elite on the other. Populism claims policies should be made that benefit all people in the same way and the reason we don’t have these policies is that there is a corrupt elite that holds people back. That elite, which is seen as monolithic, regardless of political
party, works for itself and against the people. The radical right argues that the EU, which is run by the corrupt elite and which allows freedom of movement among countries, does not allow states to protect their borders from refugees who are “other” and who bring crime and terrorism. “Our national politicians don’t stand up for our country and our nation, rather they are chummy with their elite friends in Brussels protecting their own interests,” proponents claim. The radical right in the US, similarly, groups all mainstream politicians together as the corrupt elite.

“The political fallout from the refugee crisis has been a surge in popular support for far right parties.” It hasn’t created new parties; rather existing far right parties have benefitted and there has been a shift to the right in more borderline right parties. Many of these borderline parties were single-issue parties that have become full-blown radical right parties. We see this movement in England, in Germany and, more importantly, in Central Eastern Europe where Prime Minister Victor Orbán in Hungary has moved far to the right. Orbán started as a libertarian anti-communist dissident. In the late 90s, he was seen as moving toward the west. He lost power and when he came back in 2010 he was “deeply nationalist, and authoritarianist.” With the Refugee crisis, “he became the voice of opposition to immigration and to multi-culturalism.” His position and popularity have provided a shield for more mainstream politicians to move right, arguing that there is a position besides the usual tradition in Europe.

The real question today is whether “this shift to the right represents a short term, or shock, reaction or a transformation.” The refugee crisis has brought to the fore the prime issues of the radical right—refugees, Islam, terrorism, crime” thus allowing the radical right to frame the narrative in which the discussion takes place. Before the refugee crisis, people talked about immigration and claimed that although multi-culturalism needed corrections, the goal was still an open society with different people in it. Now, the conversation is whether multi-culturalism is good; “can Islam be integrated.” This position is taken not only by the far right; Social Democratic parties are shifting right on this issue. “But that shift of the mainstream helps far right parties win,” as voters support the parties who made the argument in the first place.

However, Mudde ended, “I do believe that the success is fragile. In Western Europe voters believe politics is a craft and they like stability. We have a narrative that the radical right is really successful now, but if they don’t deliver, they will lose. Trump is seen as erratic and relatively amateursitc,” which Europeans find more problematic than do Americans. If Trump is perceived as someone who “pretty much doesn’t know what he is doing and messes up,” Mudde believes that by later this year there may be another narrative in the European elections; “if we elect the Far Right they might shake things up too much;” better to avoid what the US has.

Reported by Judith Stein

“The real question today is whether this shift to the right represents a short term, or shock, reaction or a transformation.”

C A S M U D D E is Associate Professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia and Researcher at the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) of the University of Oslo. His research focuses on extremism and democracy and is guided by the question: How can liberal democracies defend themselves without undermining their core values? Before moving to Georgia in 2012, he held tenure-track and visiting positions at a number of universities in Europe and the United States. His recent publications include: On Extremism and Democracy in Europe (2016); SYRIZA: The Failure of the Populist Promise (2017); The Populist Radical Right: A Reader; and Populism: A Very Short Introduction (2017). He is working on four new books: The Radical Right in America (2017); Politics in Populist Times (2018); The Israeli Settler Movement: Assessing and Explaining Social Movement Success (2019), and The European Populist Radical Right Parties in the 21st Century (2020). Professor Mudde is co-editor of the European Journal of Political Research, columnist at HOPE not hate, and blogger at Huffington Post. His new ambition is to create a Center for Analysis of Democracy and Extremism (CADE) at the University of Georgia.
Stagno began his talk with a dramatic photo from atop a freight train car looking across at a man hanging with his back against the rear of the next car, his hands clinging to a metal bar along the top of the car. The man’s head is facing skyward, eyes closed, mouth wide open, body hanging along the rear of the car’s wall with rails and grass below. Stagno said: “This man is on no pleasure ride. He is riding the freight train known as The Beast, La Bestia in Spanish.”

“Every year, tens of thousands of migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers mainly from an area known as the Northern Triangle of Central America including El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, climb into or onto The Beast in desperate efforts to cross Mexico and reach the United States.”

La Bestia transports migrants on one of four routes crossing Mexico to the United States. Each route crosses territory controlled by ruthless drug cartels. Stagno cited the 2010 San Fernando Massacre as the best-known example of this ruthlessness: 58 men and 14 women were shot in the head by the Los Zetas drug cartel for refusing to be enslaved or pay money for their release.

Stagno described a sequence of events beginning July 8, 2014 that led to US externalization of refugee prevention along its Southwest border. After a six-month apprehension of 162,700 non-Mexican, Central American migrants along that border, President Obama called upon Congress for a $3.7 billion emergency supplemental request to address this “urgent humanitarian situation.” Also on July 8, 2014, President Peña Nieto issued a decree establishing a program entitled Programa Frontera Sur or Southern Border Program with a purpose to boost the enforcement efforts along the borders with Central America. Stagno called this a joint US and Mexican effort to “externalize the apprehension and deportation of these Central American migrants.” An effort that Stagno describes letting “Mexico do the job.”

This joint American-Mexican effort did the job it was intended to do. Apprehension of Central American refugees January-June 2015 in the US dropped 57%, from the prior year’s same period. Apprehensions in Mexico increased 75% from the prior year’s same period. And the level of deportations from Mexico rose 79%. “So Mexico was stopping the migrants in their tracks as they were trying to reach the US.

2016 – The Year the World Stopped Caring about Refugees: Central America and Beyond

Countries are turning their backs on refugees

Bruno Stagno

Bruno Stagno has been Deputy Executive Director for Advocacy at Human Rights Watch since September 2014. Before joining Human Rights Watch, he was Executive Director of Security Council Report, 2011–2014. He was Foreign Minister of Costa Rica from 2006 to 2010, Ambassador to the United Nations from 2002 to 2006, and Chief of Staff of the Costa Rican Foreign Ministry from 1998 to 2000, among other foreign service postings. Ambassador Stagno also served as the President of the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court from 2005 to 2008, Co-President of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Article 14 Conferences from 2007 to 2009, and Vice President of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development from 2002 to 2004. He is a graduate of Georgetown University, Université de la Sorbonne, and Princeton University and author or editor of several books, chapters, and articles, including The UN Security Council in the Age of Human Rights, published in 2014. Ambassador Stagno’s article on the plight of the Rohingya refugees, “The Other Refugee Crisis,” appeared in the October 2015 issue of Foreign Affairs. In 2011, he received France’s highest honor when he was designated an Officier de la Légion d’Honneur.
And in exchange, Mexico got $194 million in fiscal year 2015 in order to help it secure its Southern border. The objective of the so-called joint effort between the United States and Mexico was not humanitarian, but rather externalization or “extraterritorial state actions to prevent migrants, including asylum seekers, from entering the legal jurisdiction or territories of destination countries or regions or making it them legally inadmissible without individually considering the merits of their protection claims. Externalization is deceptively framed as either or both a security imperative or a life-saving human endeavor when in fact it is nothing more than enhanced migration control.”

Stagno pointed out that the practice of externalization is not limited to the US. Australia was using the practice as early as 2011 when “with a stroke of a pen, part of the island territories of Australia were excised from the country for all immigration purposes.” The practice involves interdicting and transferring migrants arriving by sea to the islands of Nauru and Manus, holding them indefinitely under “truly appalling conditions.” Stagno added that these refugees are not allowed to settle in Australia and the current prime minister vaunts the practice as a model for others to follow. Fortunately, in 2016, a Supreme Court ruling of neighboring Papua New Guinea declared the practice on Manus unconstitutional and in violation of international obligations.

Furthuring his contention that 2016 was the year the world stopped caring about refugees, Stagno described two actions taken by the European Union to “deflect responsibility and legal obligations away from itself and onto transit or other countries.” First, an EU-Turkey deal that effectively turned some Greek Islands into “islands of detention” and second, an EU arm twisting forcing Afghanistan to “readmit any Afghan citizen who has not been granted asylum in Europe and who refuses to return to Afghanistan voluntarily.”

“There is no sugar coating how bad 2016 was for refugees.” Kenya is trying to expedite the “voluntary” relocation of refugees to Somalia. In Pakistan the largest “unlawful, forced return of refugees in recent years” began in 2016. More than 700,000 registered and unregistered Afghans are being forced to join an existing group of 1.5 million internally displaced in Afghanistan.

Stagno said that the actions of many of the 2016 UN Refugee Summit participants leading to more migration control and less protection sums up why he contends 2016 to be the year the world stopped caring about refugees.

2017 is beginning with further evidence of continued metastasis of the externalization of dealing with refugees. He pointed to Bangladesh’s current efforts to relocate Rohingya Muslims, fleeing neighboring Myanmar, to a “remote, muddy, featureless, flood-prone stain in murky waters of the Bay of Bengal.”

Stagno expressed concern that the upcoming national elections in the EU could result in “anti-Muslim, anti-refugee, anti-EU parties” gaining majority or plurality status, “spewing hate, intolerance and platforms of division on the basis of racist claims and the promise of returning to a pristine native past.” Stagno reminded the audience “we’ve been there before” with the result being “some of the worst catastrophes of the past century.”

Yet Stagno is not convinced that the strategies of the far-right parties will prevail. He cited recent successes of mainstream candidates in Vienna and Austria, the promise of leaders in Germany, the UN and Canada and the fact that the “fear monger” US president did not win the popular vote as reason for his belief that fear mongering and scapegoating of refugees are not winning strategies.

Stagno concluded with his hope that people like the Camden Conference attendees “will mobilize here and everywhere to make a difference and assure that the integrity of the 2016 UN Refugee Convention survives the perfect storm that is buffeting its foundation.”

In answer to a question regarding how to redeploy resources, Stagno cited the waste of resources when using the externalization strategy. He said Australia is spending $265,000 per refugee to keep them in Nauru and Manus—enough to offer each one of these individuals an undergraduate education from Harvard. Australia also paid Cambodia $35 million to take four refugees, three of whom have returned to their home countries because they could not stand to be in Cambodia. Stagno conclude that using resources in this manner makes no sense and are self-defeating and could be redeployed to longer term solutions.

Reported by Richard Anderson
Bilak began by urging the audience to take a step back to look at the wider picture of displacement around the world. The refugee problem that we have been focusing on is the endpoint of a process that begins as people are displaced from their homes. Their stories start when they become Internally Displaced Persons (IDP’s).

She organized her talk around three points:

1) The scope of displacement vs. the relative lack of attention to the problem;
2) The question of why the problem matters, and what the causes and consequences of internal displacement are;
3) What should be done. There are no easy solutions.

She began with the definition of an IDP. The definition includes two critical elements: that the person was forced to leave their home (i.e. they did not leave voluntarily); and they did not cross an internationally-recognized border. That means that the state (not the international community) has legal responsibility for them. But the problem is that the state and its actions are often the reason the person was forced from their home in the first place. Syria is a clear example.

What is the global scale of the problem? Her organization (the Norwegian Internal Displacement Monitoring Center) collects and publishes data about the scale of the problem. They estimate that there were over 27 million IDP’s in 2015 (more recent figures are not yet available).

The Middle East has the largest number, most of whom have fled from conflict. Flight from disasters is the major reason for IDP’s in South Asia and Asia. In Syria, there are far more IDPs than refugees. There are very large numbers also in Yemen and Iraq. There were 1.1 million in Iraq in 2015 alone. Nigeria has 700,000 IDPs as a result of conflict; there are another 100,000 displaced for other reasons.

Natural disasters—floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and the like—are a major cause of internal displacement. Since 2008, there have been 200 million IDPs around the world displaced by natural disasters; many of these are from “big events,” i.e. massive disasters. For example, Nepal had 2.8 million IDPs as a result of its earthquake in 2015. But there are also slow-onset, slow-moving disasters, such as desertification and drought. We do not have exact figures on this, but it is estimated that in eight months in Ethiopia alone there were some 280,000 people displaced. And millions of people are displaced as a result of development projects, such as dams and cities, even Olympic facilities.

Why does the problem matter? Bilak said that her organization was disappointed by the UN discussion that resulted in the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migration in 2016 (the subject of the morning talk by Karen Koning AbuZayd) because the participating governments refused to
allow the topic of IDPs to be discussed. They objected that such a discussion would infringe on state sovereignty.

But, in fact, the IDP problem implicitly threatens state sovereignty because of the knock-on effect, as IDPs move on to other countries and become refugees. This creates a "vicious cycle of crisis and vulnerability." "Today’s IDPs are tomorrow’s refugees." They keep moving, often because they have no other choice.

One indication of this is that seven of the 10 countries that produce the largest number of refugees are also the seven out of the 10 countries with the largest number of IDPs. These include Sudan, South Sudan, the DRC, and the Central African Republic.

So internal and cross-border movements are closely related. This is not to say that IDPs will always or inevitably become refugees, but the phenomena are closely connected. This is because IDPs are in a situation where they have no choice over their circumstances. So a vicious cycle of crisis results.

The example of Boko Haram in Nigeria is a case in point. As a result of its activity, people are displaced, education and economic activity are undermined. People are made more vulnerable to threats of all kinds, including natural disasters. The risk of displacement from disaster has doubled in the last 14 years. We are also now becoming aware that it is rare for IDPs’ cases to be resolved in less than one year; many continue to be displaced for years.

What can be done? We need to focus on the root causes of the problem. For one thing, we need better data showing how the problems of IDPs and refugees are related. So we need solutions dealing with governance and politics, as well as economic development. We need a broad “multi-mandate” approach, a global multi-dimensional policy perspective that takes into account the many portfolios that are related to IDPs, including climate change, development, disaster relief, disaster prevention, and human rights. Needed are political will and political leadership. The investment must go toward alleviating the root causes of the problem. The key principle is that “no one should be left behind.”

Reported by Tom Remington

ALEXANDRA BILAK is the Geneva-based Director of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), a program of the Norwegian Refugee Council. She has more than 15 years of experience in international NGOs and research institutes in Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, working on strategy, policy development, and program design and delivery. She has directed a number of programs on forced migration in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and has published extensively on these themes. Prior to becoming IDMC’s director, Ms. Bilak had been in charge of the organization’s projects and research on displacement in the context of conflict and violence, disasters related to natural hazards, and development projects. She has a particular interest in understanding the drivers of protracted and chronic internal displacement, and in finding solutions that will bridge the gap between prevention and risk reduction, humanitarian action, and sustainable development. Ms. Bilak lived and worked in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya from 2004 to 2014 and has worked extensively across Central, East, and West Africa. She earned an MA in International Politics from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London and a DEA in African Studies and Political Science from the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne.
Clements began by emphasizing humanity’s collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level and the importance of the principle of solidarity, which asserts that “global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.” She noted, pointedly, “this sentiment is obviously noble but it is also pragmatic... It means pulling our own weight by supporting countries that benefit us when they confront and address forced displacement.”

International recognition of the duty to cooperate on the problem of refugees and displaced people has a long history, which has often been reaffirmed; for example, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the statute establishing the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Refugee Convention (“the bedrock of international protection”), and the Millennium Declaration. But it also has a long history of only partial fulfillment and even outright neglect.

Clements acknowledged that part of the problem is that the goals can be ambiguous and lack immediate enforcement mechanisms. “I am sure we can all point to countless examples of when one country did not fully cooperate with its partners or support a neighbor who struggled to cope with displacement. But, despite short-sighted political gains and other perverse incentives that encourage us to shrink from these obligations, the world continues to value solidarity enough to reaffirm it time and time again.” For these reasons, “the UNHCR stresses keeping open lines of communication with states, even, perhaps most especially with those who shirk their responsibility.”

Turning to the current crisis, Clements reminded her audience that there are 65 million forcibly displaced people in the world today, half of them children. “The long-term trends are equally alarming. We know that forced displacement has risen sharply since 2011, it has doubled in the last two decades, and it affects a higher percentage of the world’s population than at any time since the end of World War II.”

“The most troubling aspect of this crisis is the lack of solutions for these people ... the inability of governments to come together and find just political solutions to displacement.” In 2015, barely one percent were able to return home in safety and dignity and less than an additional one percent were resettled to third countries like the United States. “With the remaining 98 percent in uncertain limbo and with no end to reasons for flight, we can expect that this crisis will worsen.”
“restoring dignity and resilience requires long-term planning to find solutions from the very onset of an emergency, not just the humanitarian band-aid as soon as one flees.”

The overwhelming majority of refugees are residing in low- to middle-income countries that are already struggling to meet the needs of their own citizens. Clements declared “these countries are providing a global public good. The open question remains, however, whether the rest of the world will step up fully to share this responsibility.”

The UNHCR and its partners “represent the world’s commitment to its collective responsibility to address and find solutions for displacement.” Clements pointed out that the UNHCR’s funding is primarily from voluntary contributions, not assessed, and the organization is currently working with only half the resources it needs. The UNHCR supports operations in 128 countries, including 26 countries with active emergency operations. Clements acknowledged that the UNHCR’s role is “necessarily palliative because the long-term resolution of the refugee crisis depends on circumstances that only states can provide such as the political will to end an armed conflict.” Operating on the front lines of the forced displacement crisis, the UNHCR, with the help of over one thousand partner NGOs, provides short-term, much-needed aid in such locations as Greece, Afghanistan, Jordan, Turkey, and northern Uganda. The UNHCR aims to help countries provide refugees with resources to rebuild their lives. “This is especially important in regions where armed groups such as the Taliban and al-Shabaab feed on instability to recruit new members, sometimes by force, from among the most vulnerable in society. The world’s efforts to combat such vulnerability is key to combatting extremism.”

Clements laid out the plans for a new initiative, the Comprehensive Refugee Response, that is being put into motion now. The focus is on Uganda, Tanzania, and Somalia, and potentially other countries. “It makes clear that displacement is not just a humanitarian issue but it is also a development issue.” A key to this response is that it involves not just refugees, but also host countries and focuses on practical strategies. It is based on the idea that “restoring dignity and resilience requires long-term planning to find solutions from the very onset of an emergency, not just the humanitarian band-aid as soon as one flees.” Clements cited the successful resolution of the Kosovo crisis in 1999 as a model.

“Failing our collective responsibility imposes dangerous consequences on future generations.” Today the most dramatic failure is the international community’s inability to disrupt trafficking networks. The current large-scale flight out of Africa, dating from 2013, is not due to new and unique push factors in African countries such as Eritrea and Somalia, but, rather, due to the availability of smuggling networks. “It was not their reasons for flight that had changed, but, rather, their opportunities to move.” Similar networks have emerged, with tragic consequences, as the Syrian conflict has escalated. “Can we afford to let displacement fester and morph into something more sinister and dangerous?”

In conclusion, Clements stressed that “collective responsibility is more than an uncertain obligation to help others. It is a moral imperative to address how our choices have contributed to harming innocent people and to not stand by while immeasurable deprivation is imposed on others... Our collective responsibility appeals to our moral sense and to our selfish concerns for our own security and safety, if we take the long view. Propelled by these interests, I am hopeful that these ideals will endure because solidarity is more than sentimental, it is strategic.”

KELLY T. CLEMENTS is United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees. Before assuming this position in June 2015, she had been US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), with responsibility for humanitarian issues in Asia and the Middle East. Ms. Clements has been closely involved with refugee and displacement issues throughout her 25-year career. She had previously led PRM’s Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources, where she oversaw the Bureau’s strategic planning, policy development, and financial resources to protect and assist refugees, conflict victims, and vulnerable migrants worldwide. She also served as Acting Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Beirut during 2014. Her prior experience in working with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees included a temporary assignment in the UNHCR office in Bangladesh during the 1990s, to assist and protect refugees fleeing Myanmar (Burma). In 1991, she was a member of the State Department’s Iraq Task Force on Kurdish Refugees and Displaced Persons, which coordinated the US Government’s emergency response to the flight of 1.8 million Kurdish refugees to Turkey and Iran. She received a BA in International Studies and an MA in Urban Affairs from Virginia Tech.
American Attitudes toward Immigration

Tim Kane

Kane opened his remarks by pointing out that while there are still failed states in the world, there has been a global tidal wave of prosperity over the past 50 years. Development economists would never have said in 1950 that Asia, particularly China, would be an engine of the global economy.

He underlined that he was a strong believer in American exceptionalism. First, the US is a nation of immigrants, with diverse roots. Everyone is family; all comers aspire to the statement on the Statue of Liberty. Second, “there is evil in the world.” The US is “good,” and, unlike other states, “does not pursue a selfish national interest” in the world. Since World War II, the US goal has been “to secure victory, peace, and prosperity.” Third, the US is continually in search of a “more perfect union,” seeking to perfect its democracy, system of laws, property, etc. Fourth, US technology continues to “skyrocket ahead” of the world—the iPhone is only ten years old and the US continues to be a global leader in technology.

America should be proud of its special place in the world, a place everyone wants to come to. Of the six Nobel prizes that went to Americans last year, all were given to immigrants. The US is number one in taking in immigrants, in raw numbers—one million immigrants a year obtain legal green cards. That number, he said, should not go down. Over the past decade most of these came from Cuba, with Burma second and Iraq third. He was hopeful the Trump administration would not lower this number.

Conflict, he argued, is not the source of most of this migration. In reality, the current era is one of the most peaceful in human history, as Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker pointed out in his book The Better Angels of our Nature. Although the media focus on violence, there are large areas of the globe that are historically at peace. The basic source of refugee flows is the reality that it is easier for people to move in this modern era and a broader flow of information.

In reality, despite the images of hostility and fear, Americans welcome immigrants; polls show overwhelming popular support for legalizing most of the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country. This is just common sense. The public also supports a large goal for the flow of refugees, over 100,000, the last Obama administration target for refugees. At the same time, the fear of ISIS and terrorism via immigration is a real concern. This has led to a very small inflow of Syrian refugees into the United States.

In sum, Kane is an optimist. The US needs to stay engaged globally, stay open to immigration, and continue to serve as an exceptional nation and a global leader.

Reported by Gordon Adams

TIMOTHY J. KANE is the JP Conte Fellow in Immigration Studies at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. Since 2013, he has been editor of Peregrine, an online journal devoted to US immigration policy. In addition to senior research roles at the Hudson Institute, the Kauffman Foundation, and the Heritage Foundation, Dr. Kane has
The US Immigration Debate: Facts, Policies, Politics

“The US immigration quota system was set up in 1921, setting numerical limits on immigration that remained low until 1965. Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson opened the system to the world in the 1960s, with support from Republicans.”

Muzaffar Chishti

Chishti pointed out that the US has always been ambivalent about immigration. George Washington and Ben Franklin worried about “Germanizing” America. The 19th century Know Nothing party was concerned about Irish and German immigrants. The first immigration law was passed in 1875; in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed and later extended to all Asians. In the 1890s and early 20th century, Americans were concerned about Jewish and Italian immigrants.

America acted on this ambivalence in the 20th century. The US immigration quota system was set up in 1921, setting numerical limits on immigration that remained low until 1965. Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson opened the system to the world in the 1960s, with support from Republicans. The resulting inflow changed the character of the nation. There are now 43 million foreign born US citizens, especially in California, New York, Illinois, Texas, New Jersey, Florida, and Massachusetts.

High rates of growth since then—as high as 270% in the border states, mostly from Mexico—have been important to the politics of the issue. The racial/ethnic mix has also had an impact. This has been especially true for immigration into ethnically homogenous states like Idaho, Vermont, and Maine. He noted that states with high flows in recent years from ethnic communities tended to vote for Trump.

At the same time, the flow of undocumented immigrants has actually declined in recent years; the estimated numbers of undocumented have fallen one million in the last six years. And those flows are largely driven by immigrants from Mexico and Central America.
Overall, immigrants account for a significant share—17% of the US labor force, and 53% of the low wage labor force. A large number of the undocumented immigrants are in those low wage jobs. They are filling holes in the labor force due to an aging population—one-third of Americans will be over 55 by 2030. The presence of undocumented workers in the labor force is sharply indicated by the very large sum, $1.7 trillion, in the Social Security Suspense File—an account at Social Security holding Social Security funds for which names and social security numbers do not match. In addition, overall, immigrants are ambitious, not a population that draws benefits without contributing to American society. Over 85% hold high school degrees and have aspirations for higher wages. Crime rates among immigrants are also lower than for the population as a whole.

He underlined that the US immigration selection system is now outdated; it is a 1952 architecture being applied to a 21st century issue. It is important to bring the undocumented in from the shadows through a path to citizenship. It is also important to strengthen the enforcement system, especially in the work place. But overall, the US needs a robust immigrant flow and the system should be adapted to this need.

The resistance to these changes is political. The 9/11 attacks created an atmosphere of fear. Congress’ failure to legislate reform in 2006-07 added to the resistance. The recession which followed led to growing concern about jobs. Reform efforts simply froze; Speaker Boehner could not get a majority of the Republican caucus to agree on a reform bill. By 2014-15 it was clear that Republicans opposed any immigration reform that might lead to a path to citizenship, while Democrats resisted tougher enforcement rules.

Chishti remained optimistic, however. The US will need more high-skilled workers and low wage workers as the economy grows. The diversity of the immigrant population is making the US the first truly universal society. Immigration enriches American culture, transforms American society and strengthens the American economy.

> Reported by Gordon Adams

MUZAFFAR CHISHTI is a lawyer and Director of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) at New York University School of Law. Prior to joining MPI, Mr. Chishti was Director of the Immigration Project of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial & Textile Employees (UNITE). He has authored or coauthored a number of publications on the US immigration selection system, immigration enforcement, rights of immigrants, and immigrant integration. Mr. Chishti serves on the boards of directors of the National Immigration Law Center, the New York Immigration Coalition and the Asian American Federation. He has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Immigration Forum, and as a member of the American Bar Association’s Coordinating Committee on Immigration. He has testified extensively on immigration policy issues before Congress and is frequently quoted in the media. In 1992, as part of a U.S. team, he assisted the Russian Parliament in drafting its legislation on forced migrants and refugees. He is a recipient of the New York State Governor’s Award for Outstanding Asian Americans and the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. Mr. Chishti was educated at St. Stephen’s College, Delhi; the University of Delhi; Cornell Law School; and the Columbia School of International Affairs.
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An Unstable World: Shifting Power, Volatile Politics

February 16, 17, 18, 2018

Ideas, institutions, and international relationships which have anchored the Western world since at least the end of the Second World War are under siege. From the election of a president with new ideas about America’s relations with the world to political turmoil in Europe and the expanding North Korean nuclear arsenal, events around the world are illustrating the inescapable fact that institutions and solutions designed to resolve 20th century global crises are unequal to today’s problems.

Meanwhile, significant shifts in military, economic and soft power are underway. Whether there is still such a thing as “the West”, founded on a common commitment to the value of democracy, military alliances, free trade, and the protection of human rights, is now debatable. The appeal of populist, anti-establishment parties and movements has fostered a new nationalism that may prove to be a barrier to collective action to solve problems. Many smaller states remain very fragile, and international institutions appear unable to prevent ethnic and religious violence.

Globalization—once viewed with confidence as the engine of global economic growth—is now perceived by growing numbers of people as a threat to jobs and the cause of social instability and widening inequality. The viability of traditional international financial institutions becomes uncertain as countries such as China aggressively create opportunities for countries to collaborate in new financial institutions. New technologies, and new initiatives, are needed to deal with challenges that cross borders, from cybersecurity, climate change, weapons of terrorism, to the spread of nuclear weapons, but who will develop and manage their use?

The 2018 Camden Conference will explore how the distribution of power in the world is changing, and what these changes mean. Speakers will discuss how major players such as China, Russia, the leading European countries, and the United States have responded to the new environment, and what effects these changes will have on conflict-ridden regions such as the Middle East. What risks and opportunities will the US face because of global power shifts? Should it still aspire to be “the one indispensable nation”—using its resources to guarantee global security—stabilize the global economy, and promote democracy?

Check the Camden Conference website for updates on speakers, programs, community events, and registration: www.camdenconference.org