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Global Mobility Regimes

Advances in transportation and communications technology increase the potential for international migration around the world. As international migration becomes less inhibited by physical or economic constraints and becomes more of a function of legal constraints imposed by states, it becomes an increasingly important issue in politics among states. As such, international migration is an issue area for possible international cooperation within international organizations and/or through the formation of less formal international regimes. If one follows the UN definition of international migration as referring to those who have lived outside of their country of nationality or birth for more than one year, aside from cooperation on refugee protection, there is relatively little international cooperation on international migration at the global level – there is no international migration regime. If we think about international migration as a subset of all movements of people across international borders, the possibilities for cooperation among states expand. In contrast to the UN definition of migration, “global mobility” refers to movements of people across international borders for any length of time or purpose. In addition to the world’s estimated 191 million migrants, there are billions of border crossings by tourists, students, business people and commuters who travel internationally for stays of less than a year. Given that contemporary migration often begins as tourism, study or temporary work abroad, *international mobility* is a more all-inclusive category for understanding the dynamics of international migration and the potential for its regulation by states. This project will analyze a set of interacting global mobility regimes: the established international refugee regime; an emerging international travel regime and a non-existent but potential international labor migration regime at the global, as opposed to regional, level. Although the issue areas of these three regimes overlap somewhat and this overlap can lead to misunderstandings and policymaking at cross-purposes, potential issue linkages can also be leveraged for widening the scope of international cooperation, perhaps even to form an international labor migration regime.