

Migration flows to Europe over the coming decades

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Is the Mediterranean the new Rio Grande?

Hanson and McIntosh (2016) put forward this question in the title of their article.

The empirical evidence that they provide entails a (strong) positive answer to this question: migration flows from Latin America to the United States are expected to decline in the coming decades, while migration flows towards the European countries are bound to increase substantially.

Is the Mediterranean the new Rio Grande? (cont'd)

Three factors jointly make the relationship between Europe and Africa unique:

- Geographical proximity;
- Major economic disparities;
- Strongly diverging trajectories of population growth.

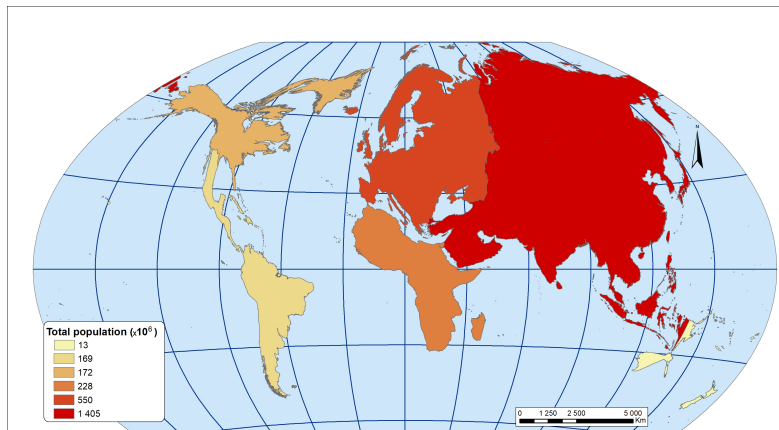
No region in the world will be exposed to similar migration pressure as Europe the rest of this century.

Population growth

Let us consider the population by continent in the past decades, and the projections by the United Nations (median variant) for 2050 and 2100. The total world population is expected to increase from around 7.5 billion (2015 figure) to 10.8 billion in 2100.

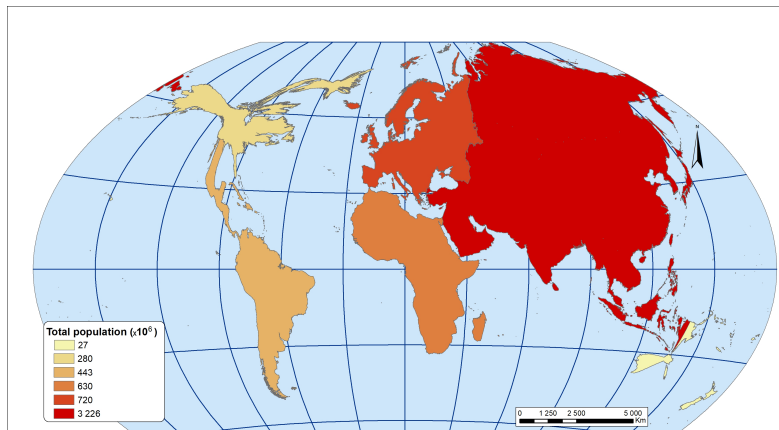
Let us analyze the evolution of the relative size of the population in the various continents through some simple anamorphoses.

Population in 1950



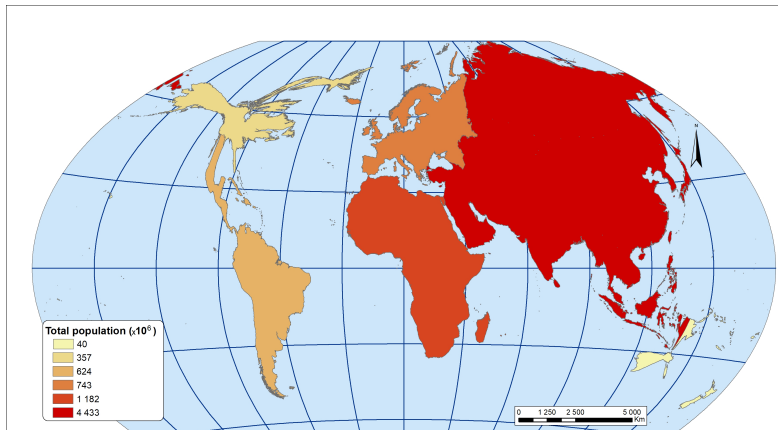
Source: data from United Nations Population Division.

Population in 1990



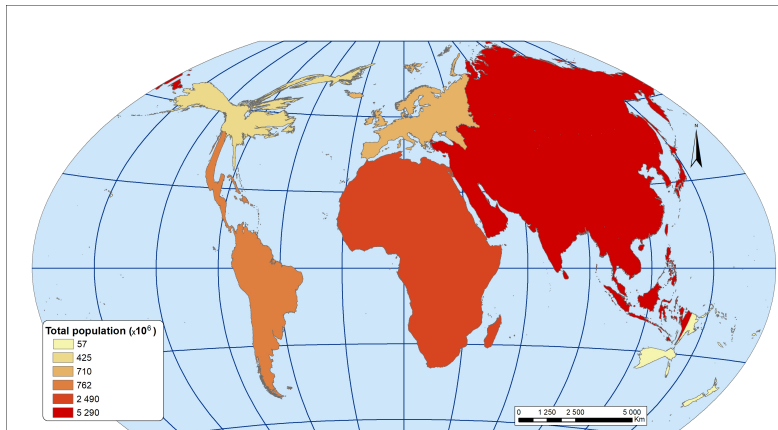
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Population in 2015



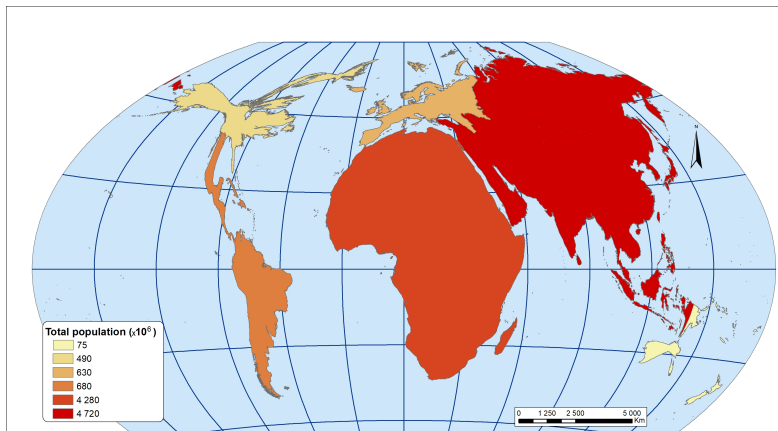
Source: data from United Nations Population Division.

Population in 2050 (projection)



Source: data from United Nations Population Division.

Population in 2100 (projection)



Source: data from United Nations Population Division.

Population growth

According to these projections, [Africa](#) by itself should account for around [90 percent of the growth in the world population](#) between 2015 and 2100, i.e., 3.0 out of 3.3 billion.

The ratio between population in Africa and in Europe, which rose from 0.4 in 1950 to 1.9 in 2015, should further increase to 6.3 by 2100, i.e., 4.3 billion in Africa and 680 million in Europe.

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From population size to migration flows

To what extent this major (and historically unprecedented in size) demographic imbalance will translate into increased migration flows directed towards Europe?

How can we go beyond a positive qualitative answer to the question set by Hanson and McIntosh? What is the role played by economic development in Africa?

Income at origin and intentions to migrate

Data on migration intentions from the Gallup World Polls strongly suggest that the share of the population intending to migrate strongly declines with income at origin, e.g., Bertoli and Ruysen (2018); the share of intending migrants is around **50 percent of the population aged 15 to 49** in a large number of Sub-Saharan African countries.

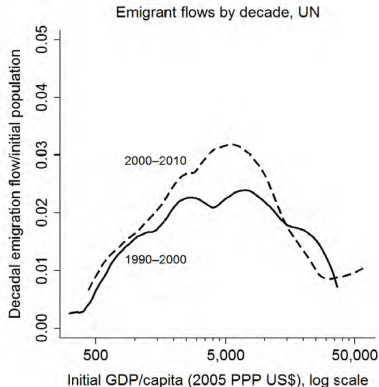
No evidence of a systematic overestimate of earnings at destination (McKenzie, Gibson and Stillman, 2013) or underestimation of the risks associated to undocumented migration (Shrestha, 2019).

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Income at origin and migration rate



Source: Clemens (2014).

Income at origin and migration rate (cont'd)

Which factors can explain the upward-sloping portion?

- Relaxation of binding liquidity constraints.
 - See Angelucci (2015) for evidence from Mexico.
- Temporary migration to overcome lack of access to credit.
 - See Severino and Hajdenberg (2017), *Entreprenante Afrique*.
- Changing distribution of the population by level of education.
 - See Dao, Docquier, Parsons and Peri (2018).
- Endogeneity of bilateral policies, i.e., visa waivers.
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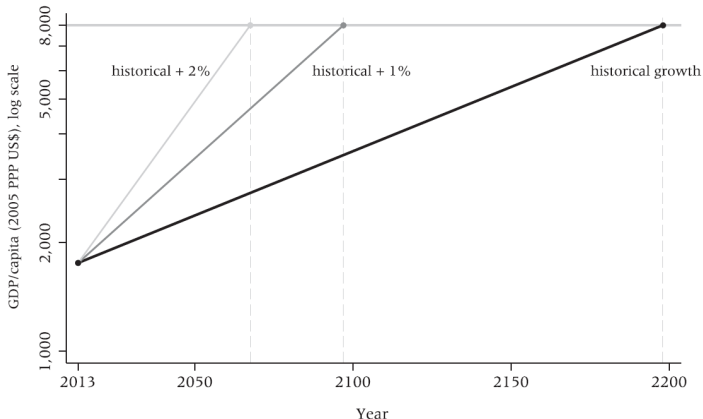
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How long would it take to reach the peak?



Source: Clemens and Postel (2018).

Opportunities for intra-regional migration

Most African migrants currently move towards other African destinations, partly because of the effect of liquidity constraints that hinder migration towards other higher-income destinations.

Economic growth in some lower-middle income countries (e.g., Ivory Coast, Nigeria) or upper-middle income countries (e.g., South Africa) could influence the scale of migration flows from **other** African countries towards Europe.

Xenophobic attacks against immigrants in South Africa

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South Africa: How common are xenophobic attacks?

By Reality Check team
BBC News

2 October 2019



Global warming

Worsening economic conditions because of global warming are unlikely to induce a major increase in international migration flows out of Africa (Burzynski, Docquier, Deuster and de Melo, 2019).

There is a major caveat here, as global warming could increase the incidence of armed conflicts, which exert a major influence on the scale of migration flows.

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