Progressive Policy Framing: Kofi Annan’s Rhetorical Strategy for The Global Forum on Migration and Development


Des Gasper  (International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam)
Bernice Roldan (Aflatoun, Amsterdam)

Abstract

The paper explores the rationale of the Global Forum on Migration and Development that was launched by Kofi Annan in 2006 as UN Secretary General, as an informal inter-governmental discussion space. It identifies the claims in Annan’s speech to the High-Level Dialogue that he convened in New York: that international migration must be managed; that to proceed beyond the present entrenched disagreements and mistrust requires constructive structured communication; that the Global Forum can provide this and is a feasible way forward, unlike the alternatives; and that through processes of mutual education and mutual acceptance the Forum can be fruitful. Implied are notions of building trust and community amongst migration policymakers. Second, the paper monitors how the hypotheses had fared by the time of the second Forum conference, in 2008, by discourse analysis of its concluding report. The Manila meeting’s declaration of a “focus on the person” came to mean a focus on the migration policymakers and managers and the processes of their intended mutual education and team-building. To clarify this strategy and its mindset and assumptions, the paper uses a series of tools for discourse analysis that are more widely useful in migration policy debate. They include the standard tools of examination of metaphor, of silences, of allocation of roles, and of choice of frames that structure attention; and in addition a tabular form of text analysis that facilitates and organises the use of such tools, and provides the basis for an analysis of argumentative structure and overall rhetorical direction.

Keywords

International migration; Global Forum on Migration and Development; Kofi Annan; argument analysis; frame analysis; metaphor analysis
1 Introduction – “All Talk and No Action”?

In 2006, the United Nations, for the first time in its history, held a high-level multilateral dialogue on international migration and development. With migration trends and issues increasingly common in international discussions—including on remittances, brain drain, feminisation of migration, illegal migration, and violations of migrants’ human rights—sustained pressure had been exerted on the UN to convene a major forum. To some, the Dialogue was a way to address the lack of support by labour-receiving countries for the UN International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Various governments, of major labour-sending countries in particular, lobbied the UN for years to convene a keynote meeting. Eventually a 2003 agreement of the General Assembly led to the High-Level Dialogue on 14-15 September 2006 at the UN headquarters in New York City. The objective was to address how to increase development benefits of international migration while reducing negative impacts.

Given adamantly opposition by major immigration countries to any machinery for binding global regulation of migration, the preparations for the Dialogue led to design of a purely consultative and purely inter-governmental Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The Forum now exists outside of, although in cooperation with, the UN system, and has become a standing inter-governmental forum on international migration, how it relates to development, and the status of migrants’ rights. It aims to build international cooperation on migration, in thinking, policy and practice.

For some civil society groups this outcome was a bitter disappointment. Following the history of non-ratification of the Convention on Migrant Workers, the GFMD remains non-binding.¹ Further, by placing the forum outside the UN and making it a meeting of governments, the voices of migrants, their families and communities, and of civil society are excluded. Many in international civil society hold that issues of human rights are thereby downplayed. A different perspective comes from others such as the Washington-based think tank Migration Policy Institute, which wrote that while many circles had written off the 2006 UN Dialogue as “all talk and no action, it may yet be the beginning of a new era. Nearly all participating countries said they would like to continue a dialogue on migration and development but that such a forum should be state-led and should only promote cooperation, not produce binding agreements” (MPI, 2006).

¹ Opened for ratification in 1990, the Convention only achieved sufficient ratification to come into force in 2003. After twenty years, only 44 State Parties had ratified it, including no major labour-receiving country. That the two most common objections to the migrant rights Convention—concerning limits supposedly placed on state sovereignty, and the provision for family reunification to regular migrant workers already residing in the labour-receiving country—are not supported by a close look at the Convention’s text, shows labour-receiving countries’ degree of suspicion and the extent of domestic political dispute in this area (MacDonald & Cholewinski 2007: 12).
From 2006, the Forum evolved into a significant space for bilateral negotiations on international migration and how it relates to development, in particular concerning migrant labour (MFA 2009). It has held major annual conferences in Brussels (2007), Manila (2008), Athens (2009), Puerto Vallarta (Mexico, 2010), Geneva (2011), Mauritius (2012) and many smaller regional meetings.

This paper looks in detail at two speeches—the opening address to the 2006 High-Level Dialogue by then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and the closing address of the 2008 Manila conference by the conference chairman—each in its entirety, using selected tools of discourse analysis. We aim to cast light on the intended rationale of the Forum, whose proponents see its non-binding, restricted character as a strength and not a weakness, given the starting points of fear and confusion in labour-receiving countries and profound international mistrust. We draw out the requirements for whether the Forum’s approach can significantly build trust and reduce fear. When does talk serve as a pathway to action rather than as a substitute for it?

Discourse analysis is particularly relevant in the field of international migration, given that the field abounds in fears and stereotypes, paradoxes and inconsistencies. The choices of categories and the creation or loss of trust are of central importance for the direction of discussion (cf. Griffin, 2007: passim). To reach a wide and relevant audience, one needs tools of discourse analysis that are relatively accessible and yet take us beyond the level of insight of ordinary reading. The paper provides a method to explore logos, pathos and ethos (appeals to logic and evidence, to feelings, and to the credibility of the author), to attend to the choices made in framing, especially through choices of metaphor, and to combine and organise these various elements, within a pair of work-formats—an analysis table and a synthesis table—derived from the approaches to argumentation analysis by Michael Scriven (1976: passim) and Stephen Toulmin (1958: passim).²

2 Visionary Pragmatism? – the Address by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the 2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

Kofi Annan’s opening address to the New York 2006 Dialogue rewards close attention.³ His core audience was from UN member states at the ministerial and highest civil servant levels. Present as observers were UN agencies and other inter-governmental bodies and organisations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). While civil society and the private sector were not present, everyone was aware that these actors were intensively monitoring the UN process. A UN consultation on migration with international civil society had been held two months earlier.

² For a discussion of the work-formats, see Gasper (2000); for the theoretical background see Gasper & George (1998); for applications see Gasper (2002, 2004).
In the analysis table below, we divide Annan’s text into sections and comment on the choices of focus, language and structure. Such an analysis table forces the reader to examine a key text in a different way from normal reading. It slows one down, ensures that one gives attention to all elements and provides a more reliable route in looking for themes. One gains more insight into the layers of tacit meaning. One can then reconstruct the patterns of argumentation-cum-suggestion conveyed by the speech, more revealingly than one could through ordinary reading.

We identify five stages in the speech, through thematic analysis. The five stages bear a resemblance too to the classic parts of a speech – introduction; narration of facts; overview of claims; core argumentation; dealing with qualifications and/or counterarguments; conclusion – with the introduction and narration being combined for such a short statement. First comes an unusually bold and unapologetic opening, that describes international migration in language that brings legitimacy in most rich countries, not least the country where the speech was given: individual striving, opportunity and creative identification of possibilities for mutual benefit. Second, given the widespread recognition now of the great potential that migration offers for joint advantage between countries, the speech gives reasons for the timeliness of the Global Forum initiative. The third and central aspect is a perspective for the ongoing management of the migration arena through creation of such a continuing forum for voluntary inter-state sharing of ideas. Fourth, reassurance is given that the Forum would not be an international mechanism to exert pressure on states to move in directions they do not wish, but yet could rely on support from the established UN system to make progress. Finally, as the send-off to his audience: Annan gives a gentle call for maturity by governments and a pointer to the benefits for all that migration can, potentially, bring. Later we will investigate the central, third, section of the speech in more detail, using a refined format.

TABLE 1: Analysis table for Kofi Annan’s New York speech, 14 September 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI ANNAN’S ADDRESS TO THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT. 14 SEPTEMBER 2006</th>
<th>COMMENTARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: Migration is a courageous expression of an individual’s will to overcome adversity and live a better life. Over the past decade, globalization has increased the number of people with the desire and capacity to move to other places. This new era of mobility has created opportunities for societies throughout the world, as well as new challenges. It has also underscored the strong linkages between international migration and development.</td>
<td>We have inserted in square brackets five implied section headings. Italics in this column indicate a paraphrase or implication of a part of the speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Governments start to see migration as an opportunity] After the conventional formal greetings, a bold opening captures attention and legitimacy, by direct reference to individual humans and their aspirations and choices, and unapologetically praises migrants. In addition, Annan links migration to globalization. Opportunities are highlighted before challenges; opportunities for all.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Just a few years ago, many people did not think it possible to discuss migration at the United Nations. Governments, they said, would not dare to bring into the international arena a topic on which their citizens are so sensitive.

Yet here you are, and I sense that the mood is changing.

More and more people are excited about the ways in which migrants can help transform their adopted and their native countries. More and more people understand that governments can cooperate to create triple wins—for migrants, for their countries of origin, and for the societies that receive them.

No one can deny that international migration has negative aspects—trafficking, smuggling, social discontent—or that it often arises from poverty or political strife. But by being here today you show yourselves willing to tackle migration’s challenges through dialogue and cooperation, rather than antagonism and isolation.

Your presence is also a tribute to the infectious energy and visionary pragmatism of my Special Representative, Peter Sutherland. His efforts have reassured and inspired everyone. I am deeply grateful to him.

As you begin your Dialogue, let me suggest three reasons why this is the right moment for it.

First, to put it simply, we are all in this together. More countries are now significantly involved in, and affected by, international migration than at any time in history. And they are no longer so easily divided into “countries of origin” and “countries of destination”. Many are now both. Countries that are very different in other respects face surprisingly similar migration challenges.

Second, the evidence on migration’s potential benefits is mounting. With their remittances reaching an estimated 167 billion dollars last year, the amount of money migrants from the developing world send back to their families exceeds the total of all international aid combined. And money is far from being the whole story. Migrants also use their skills and know-how to transfer technology, capital, and institutional knowledge. They inspire new ways of thinking about social and political issues. They form a dynamic human link between cultures, economies, and societies. As a result, we are better positioned than ever to confront the challenges of migration, and seize its opportunities.

You [the assembled governments] have been daring. Annan establishes a tone of confidence, openness. He makes the audience individually self-reflective by saying “you” are here, not here “we” are. “Mood” - emotions are involved; “excited” - the alternative mood. “More and more” is said twice, to build a sense of a new majority.

The use of “understand”, not merely “feel” or “hope”, acknowledges that cognition as well as emotion is involved. “Triple wins” - confidence-raising business jargon. “Their countries of origin” is used, not “their countries” as if they did not belong also in the country of arrival.

Again the use of “you”, not “we”; this puts each of the audience in the spotlight rather than hidden in a crowd.

Sutherland: the Irish former head of WTO – a Northern advocate of free trade, who is thus better able to reassure rich nations.

“You have made the right choice, to participate in this event and process” The first use of “we”. Until this point the Secretary-General stressed the Dialogue as the product of the choices of individual governments (e.g., “your Dialogue”). Now, as the speech moves from the chosen entry of each government to the Dialogue, on to the substantive issues for the Dialogue, he stresses what all countries share.

International migration is now central to economic, social and political development of poor countries, and in many vital global interlinkages.

Again he uses the unifying “we”, though for the last time (apart from one use of “us”). In the rest of the speech, the Secretary-General returns to using “you”, to strengthen the feeling of Forum ownership by individual states.
Third. Governments are now beginning to see international migration through the prism of opportunity, rather than of fear. You are focused on magnifying the positive, mutually beneficial aspects of migration: on sharing your experiences, developing practical ideas, building partnerships.

For all these reasons—and also because people migrate not only between neighbouring countries or within regions, but from almost every corner of the world to every other—international migration today cries out for a global discussion.

Of course, it also stirs passionate debate. It can deprive countries of their best and brightest. It can divide families. It can generate social tensions. Sometimes criminals and terrorists exploit it. But the answers to many of these problems can be found through constructive engagement and debate.

That’s why I think the dialogue you are starting today should not end tomorrow. I am especially delighted that so many of you have embraced my proposal for a Global Forum on Migration and Development, and asked me to help set it up. And I am particularly grateful to the Government of Belgium for offering to host the first meeting next year.

I believe such a Forum can foster practical, evidence-based cooperation among governments. It can give you a chance to frame the issues in a way that allows you to move forward together, to discover areas where you agree, and to find ways of improving cooperation.

Clearly, there is no consensus on making international migration the subject of formal, norm-setting negotiations. There is little appetite for any norm-setting intergovernmental commission on migration. But, as I understand the thinking of the countries that back it, the Forum would be the opposite of that. It would be informal, voluntary, consultative. Above all, it would not make binding decisions.

The Forum would allow us to build relationships of trust, and to bring together the best ideas that different countries have developed: facilitating remittances; engaging diasporas; exploring new ways to reduce poverty; building educational partnerships; and so on.

Finally, it would show that Governments are now willing to address this complicated, volatile issue in a thoughtful, constructive fashion.

The third use of “opportunity”?/“opportunities”.

Having unified the audience by the terms adopted in his presentation, he reinforces this by praising their bold and constructive stance. The sentence “You are focused…” is a garland of praise-terms: “positive”, “mutual”, “sharing”, “practical”, “building partnerships”.

Again, implicitly: we are all in this together.

Of course” makes an appeal to shared knowledge, shared experience, shared understanding and shared challenge.

“Best and brightest” – he implies that the term does not apply only in rich Northern countries.

The three-fold repetition of “It can” adds emphasis. “Constructive” figures as favourable counterpoint to the earlier “passionate”.

He takes upon himself responsibility for proposing the initiative on this issue “so sensitive” that others said Governments would not dare to discuss it together. Hence, no one can say it is only an initiative from Government X or Group Y.

From here onwards, he conveys how the Forum he proposed is now owned by the governments, not by the UN: “you” frame, consult, and choose.

The paragraph supplies a nourishing diet of praise-language: from “practical” and “evidence-based”, through “move forward”, to “cooperation”.

“Clearly” is added to help avoid spending time on a supposedly non-productive issue, and to instead sweep on towards more “visionary pragmatism”.

“Little appetite”, a gentler phrase than “intense opposition”, eases the way towards cooperation. He now presents the plan as being that of the Forum’s backers, not his own; ownership has been transferred. The Secretary General presents himself as a modest global facilitator, working with the grain and not against it.

The sentence is another treasure-house of praise language: “build”, “trust”, “bring together”, “facilitating”, “engaging”, “exploring”, “building partnerships”.

The praise accompanies an elegant implied criticism—that governments were previously unwilling to deal thoughtfully and constructively—and thus again serves to promote self-reflection.
The Forum must be led and overseen by States. But the United Nations System, and I personally, stand ready to support it. I have decided to extend the mandate of my Special Representative on Migration beyond this Dialogue. I trust that the Special Representative will form an essential link between the proposed Forum and the entire United Nations system. Also, I stand ready to create a voluntary Trust Fund to help support the Forum’s work, should you find this useful.

The United Nations is rising to the challenges of international migration in other ways as well. Last spring, I established the Global Migration Group, which brings together UN offices, Funds, Programmes, and Agencies engaged in various aspects of international migration and development, as well as the International Organization for Migration. You are no doubt familiar with the important work done by the constituent members of the Group — from supporting labour migration to helping developing countries connect better with migrant communities abroad, from outstanding demographic analysis to research on remittances, from efforts to secure the rights of migrants to combating trafficking in human beings. The Global Migration Group is working to ensure stronger coordination and greater coherence among its members.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This High-level Dialogue will succeed to the extent that it ushers in an era of sustained, thoughtful consideration of international migration and development issues. For far too long, migration policy has been based on hunches, anecdotes, and political expediency. It is now time to turn to the evidence, and use it to build a common understanding of how international migration can bring benefits to all.

Thank you very much.

Annan’s speech is well suited to its audience composed of senior government figures and representatives of inter-governmental and international agencies. The language is diplomatic, with judicious use of metaphor (“little appetite for”, “prism of opportunity rather than fear”, “move forward together”), juxtaposition (volatile problems, constructive solutions), a cast of characters suitable for motivating the audience (courageous individuals, visionary pragmatists, dangerous criminals and terrorists), and hints of pathos. Praise and criticism terms provide familiar signposts, and are often used in partnership. Having praised governments for their boldness in joining this new process—“you have been daring”, he implies early on—Annan underlines that the process represents their
intelligent self-interest—for “we are all in this [intensively interconnected world] together”—and gently criticises the previous lack of intelligent, well-informed and constructive attention.

Our commentary in the right-hand column of Table 1 is guided by the three central categories of classical rhetoric: logos, the direct arguments provided, which will be examined in detail below; pathos, the emotions appealed to, as in the opening and concluding sections where Annan extols the courage and enterprise of migrants, and then quietly calls for courage, enterprise and intelligence from governments too; and ethos, the role adopted and authority acquired by the author in relation to the audience. Some key aspects in his construction of ethos are as follows. Annan shows that he understands the worries and concerns of rich countries, as well as those of migrants; he calls for evidence; he buttresses the credentials of the UN as a wise and helpful support of governments, that does not infringe their sovereignty but strengthens their rationality. He presents the United Nations system as deserving the standing that he individually had gained: as endowed with a global perspective and substantial relevant expertise, and sufficiently broadly accepted and trusted.

We now look in detail at the central section of the speech. Having already encouraged, praised and unified the audience, the Secretary-General here moves to identify the required work that lies ahead and how it should be structured and conducted. As is usual in political speeches, many of the assumptions and suggestions remain tacit, only hinted at, for it could be clumsy, unnecessary or counter-productive to make them explicit. Table 2 employs a more refined, three-column, analysis format, that provides dedicated space for identifying his assumptions and conclusions, including both the stated and unstated, the definite and the only hinted at. This will give us a basis for specifying the logical structure of the core of the speech, as the system of propositions shown in Table 3.

The value-added from the more detailed analysis provided in Table 2 is seen in the synthesis of Annan’s arguments that we arrive at in Table 3. That crucially relies on the unstated assumptions, conclusions and hinted suggestions that we only find systematically by doing this detailed analysis.
**TABLE 2: More detailed analysis table for the key central passage of Annan’s speech**

Stated assumption = SA.  Stated conclusion = SC.
Unstated assumption = UA. Unstated conclusion = UC.  Unstated suggestion = US.
Italics in the second column indicate a paraphrase or proposed implication of a part of the speech.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of the text</th>
<th>Further comments and clarification of meanings</th>
<th>Identified assumptions/ conclusions/suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Challenges of migration</strong></td>
<td>Acknowledges the strong sentiments on migration in international debate</td>
<td>US: “I understand your worries” in in-migration countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of course, it [international migration] also stirs passionate debate.</td>
<td>Pathos of labour-sending countries.</td>
<td>US: Migrant-sending countries have a difficult situation. The UN understands that too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It can deprive countries of their best and brightest. It can divide families. It can generate social tensions. Sometimes criminals and terrorists exploit it.</td>
<td>Migration is presented like an omnipresent force, that can deprive and divide. But what are its underlying causes? “Generate social tensions”: a vague description (and without clear causality), unlike “deprive” and “divide”.</td>
<td>US: If we do not manage migration, criminal groups will manage it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But the answers to many of these problems can be found through constructive engagement and debate.</td>
<td>“the dialogue you are starting today”; having provided an optimistic perspective, he links it to the work of those assembled in the Dialogue</td>
<td>US: Member states have ownership of the dialogue, not the UN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s why I think the dialogue you are starting today should not end tomorrow.</td>
<td>“delighted”, “so many”, “embraced”, “particularly grateful” – things going great</td>
<td>US: Governments are in control, while the UN will provide support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am especially delighted that so many of you have embraced my proposal for a Global Forum on Migration and Development, and asked me to help set it up. And I am particularly grateful to the Government of Belgium for offering to host the first meeting next year.</td>
<td>“Asked me to help set it up” – I am your agent. A rich country takes the lead.</td>
<td>US: Other rich countries can feel secure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe such a Forum can foster practical, evidence-based cooperation among governments.</td>
<td>Soothing, encouraging words.</td>
<td>UA: Member states start with different views, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It can give you a chance to frame the issues in a way that allows you to move forward</td>
<td>He uses a panoply of praise terms, linked to: You, you, you.</td>
<td>SC: cooperative work will increase the areas of agreement, which will reinforce the cooperation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 organises the Secretary-General’s points in this central passage into a logical system. The first row below the column headings shows how the overall proposal, that governments should proceed to cooperate within the new Global Forum, stems from a set of more factual claims (Data) and a series of posited principles or judgements (Warrants), very largely those which we identified in the final column of Table 2. Each of those supporting elements rests in turn on some other background posited Data and Warrants, as we show in the other rows for most of the elements. The procedure—
adapted from Toulmin’s schema by rearrangement into a more helpful tabular format—helps us to draw out further the unstated assumptions and conclusions that we sought in the final column of Table 2, to show the interconnections, and to better assess what Annan said. Assessment is the task of Table 3’s last column, where we present possible qualifications and objections.

Overall, Annan argued that in the global system of nation states, a Global Forum for inter-state mutual familiarisation and cooperation is the best available option. The United Nations, itself an inter-state organisation, offers no route for accelerated promotion of migrants’ rights. An attempt to take such a route raises fears and will be obstructed by labour-receiving countries. His problem analysis indicates fear and mutual ignorance as central constraints, including fear that global-wide principles are too standardised and unconditional. His solution analysis points toward countering the fears and ignorance and promoting “sustained, thoughtful consideration”.

**TABLE 3: Synthesis table to show logical structure of key passage of Annan 2006 speech**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I propose that (Claim)</th>
<th>Given that (Data)</th>
<th>And the principle that (Warrant)</th>
<th>Unless (Rebuttal / Qualifications/Queries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Claim:</strong> You should go ahead to work in the Global Forum for Migration and Development</td>
<td>D1. Disagreements exist; and a heritage of casual, non-thoughtful, non-constructive behaviour. D2. Alternatives to GFMD are not feasible. D3. GFMD is feasible.</td>
<td>W1. We must manage migration. W2. Controversial emotive problems require calm, structured communication. W3. GFMD will be fruitful.</td>
<td>[See below, for possible objections and queries concerning the inputs to the claim/proposition.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W1. We must manage migration</strong></td>
<td>Migration arouses strong sentiments and has many associated problems.</td>
<td>Migration yet offers great opportunities (see elsewhere in speech). US: Unless we manage migration, then criminal groups will.</td>
<td>We = who? For Annan, ‘we’ = all governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D2. Alternatives to GFMD are not feasible</strong></td>
<td>SA: There is little demand to set up such an intergovernmental migration norm-setting commission</td>
<td>UC: It is not feasible to implement binding resolutions and sanctions at present, as there is insufficient acceptance.</td>
<td>Do binding general rules depend on having a norm-setting commission?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D3. GFMD is feasible</strong></td>
<td>US: Member States have ownership of the dialogue, not the UN. US: Governments are in control, while UN will provide support. US: Rich countries will feel secure.</td>
<td>Various other stakeholders want an intergovernmental commission: migrant organisations, some labour-sending countries, some human rights groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W3. GFMD will be fruitful</strong></td>
<td>UA: The non-binding character of the Forum is seen positively by</td>
<td>SC: Cooperative work will increase the areas of agreement, which</td>
<td>Provided that civil society consultations take place and feed into the inter-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let us move to look at the character in practice of the Forum, the proposed solution.

3 Frame and Metaphor Analysis of the Report of the 2008 Manila Global Forum on Migration and Development

Our second text for analysis is the concluding report by Esteban Conejos, Jr., the Philippines Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs, at the GFMD conference in Manila in October 2008 (Conejos, 2008). He was the focal person from the Philippine government in the GFMD process and the Chair of GFMD Manila. He presented the report at the closing of the intergovernmental meeting, to more than 600 delegates (government leaders and representatives) from 164 countries. More than 1,100 delegates participated in the meeting as a whole.

Migrant associations were kept out of the inter-governmental meeting but this provided a focus and inducement for an enormous wider forum. The event organisers provided for:

a section dedicated to civil society participation: the Civil Society Day(s) held before the government meeting. While there had been only one day provided for migrants’ representatives to meet in Brussels, this part was expanded to two days in Manila, including an ‘interface’ session with the representatives of government. Here, the topics of the Roundtable sessions mirrored the ones from the government meeting, thus Roundtable 2.2. dealt in both cases with ‘Managing Migration and Minimizing the Negative Impacts of Irregular Migration’ and so forth. Apart from the ‘interface’, a delegation of civil society representatives was given [30 minutes] during the government meeting to present its recommendations.… [In addition the] 2nd GFMD would see an especially wide scope of parallel events; in fact, the impressive level of activities taking place over nine days from October 22 until October 30

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amounted to a more comprehensive, more inclusive and one might even say: 
more relevant event than the GFMD proper (Rother 2009a: 101)

In an interview with the Philippines’ leading news network, when asked 
what would be discussed at GFMD Manila, Mr. Conejos had replied, “We 
are going to shine the spotlight on the human face of migration. In the first 
meeting in Brussels, they were [very much] concerned with the economic side: what the economic benefits of remittances are, the transfer of skills, 
the diaspora contributions to the communities. But in Manila, we will not 
focus on the money. We will focus on the person itself” (sic).5 Despite this, 
when compared to Kofi Annan’s speech, in terms of “visionary pragmatism” his closing report leans far towards the pragmatism side. As 
we will see, the “focus on the person” seems to concern especially the 
officials involved in inter-governmental and inter-organisational processes 
of mutual education and negotiation on migration, and their trust-building 
direct interaction.

3.1 Frames and framing

The Conejos report is three times as long as Annan’s speech. We will not 
employ the same micro-textual analysis and argumentation analysis formats, 
for that would be arduous and would still require use of complementary tools to seek out general themes and principles guiding this larger text’s construction. For this complementary type of investigation, we use frame analysis methodology to comment on aspects of inclusion, exclusion, 
prioritisation and patterning of choices in the speech. Following Rein and Schön’s “frame-reflective policy analysis” approach (Rein and Schön 1977: passim; Schön and Rein 1979, 1994, passim; also de Bruijn 2011: passim), 
we trace how the report uses a series of framing devices to transform worries over a complex policy issue into an orderly problem formulation.

In policy development, problem setting is the stage of inquiry to arrive 
at a problem definition and diagnosis, in preparation for moving towards a prescription for action. It starts from a problematic situation, where our existing knowledge is not sufficient to cope with the problem, so that worries ensue, which we attempt to overcome through ordered formulation of the problem (John Dewey, in Rein and Schön 1977: 238). Conceptual frames guide us towards a problem definition and diagnosis. They focus our thoughts by highlighting and including certain things, while omitting and ignoring others. They link together certain features to create a pattern, thus suggesting relationships and creating order and making sense out of complexity. Policy frames build a particular orientation towards action.

To make tacit frames implicit, we can look for what is the remedial action proposed, for that typically implies a perceived flaw that needs correcting, and the perception of flaw typically reflects a whole system of perceptions. In this case, some of the remedial actions to correct perceived

flaws were highlighted in the themes for the Manila roundtable discussions (RTDs) – RTD 1: ‘Migration, development and human rights’ (paragraph 14); RTD 2: ‘Secure, regular migration can achieve stronger development impacts’ (paragraph 24); RTD 3: ‘Policy and institutional coherence and partnerships’ (paragraph 31). The third title is of particular importance: the master theme of the report appears to be communication, and the belief that a consultative process can gradually improve everything and bring advantages to everyone. Supporting this master theme are sub-themes, concerning particular aspects of the process, necessary supportive structures, and the expected fruits.

Master frame: Collegial consultative process will bring benefits for all

Staying close to the GFMD’s character as a forum that is “informal, voluntary, consultative”, the Manila report’s style is relatively informal and easy to grasp. Paragraph 3 sets the tone. It invokes “an ongoing process that is changing our thinking and actions on migration and development, but more importantly, that is changing the way we deal with each other on these two complex, but interrelated, issues”, migration and development (emphasis added). Paragraph 9 elaborates, as follows: “The informal nature of the Forum has allowed new friendships and partnerships to blossom between migrant-sending and -receiving countries” (emphasis in the original). Paragraphs 10, 13 and 40 continue the mood. Interaction unpressured by fear of imminent worldwide legal instruments provides the space for sharing information and for growth of mutual and joint understanding, leading to identification of mutually beneficial options, case-by-case. The final paragraph (47) restates the theme of a flexible discussion process, providing ongoing opportunity-oriented dialogue rather than attempting to specify a standard worldwide regime of rules.

Secondary theme 1: Win-win solutions, doing well by doing good

The theme of benefits for all is elaborated in paragraphs 14, 16 and 29. By a harmonising hand, the protection and empowerment of migrants will benefit not only them but also their countries of origin and destination (paragraph 14); the right thing to do is presented as also the smart thing to do (paragraph 16); and new smarter policies such as planned circular migration and “market-based migration policies” (paragraph 29) will benefit all these groups, by precluding the activity of smugglers and traffickers, who constitute the real alternative if instead of orderly managed migration the governments of labour-receiving countries attempt to limit migration drastically.

Secondary themes 2, 3: Changing perceptions of possibilities and of “we”

Finding benefits for all relies on patient joint work, which rests on and in turn promotes a mutual acceptance, the formation and strengthening of some feeling of “we”. The theme recurs again and again, from paragraph 1 on
“harvest[ing] the fruits of our labour together” and paragraph 3 on “changing our thinking and actions” by “changing the way we deal with each other”, through paragraph 9 on “new friendships and partnerships” and paragraph 30 on “the theme of partnership and cooperation”, to paragraph 38 on handing on “the GFMD torch” from low-income Philippines to high-income Greece. The cooperative “we” is described as engaged in a process that changes and generates ideas (paragraphs 2, 3, 13, 22) and moves towards increased shared understanding and concrete agreements.

**Secondary theme 4: Jointly approved research and dissemination**

The speech repeatedly states a need for research related to migration and development (paragraphs 21-23, 28, 32, 33 and 37), to provide evidence to guide policymakers. Paragraph 32 echoes Kofi Annan on the previous fear-based reliance on “intuition and anecdote”, which is the reason why the GFMD is needed. Paragraph 21 is silent on whose research results and information will be disseminated and used. Will it be that of a labour-sending or labour-receiving country? Policy-oriented research is often criticised as being used merely to legitimate government action and discredit other courses of action, to support limited reforms that have already been formulated along preconceived lines, and to mobilise belief to back up such action. The GFMD appears in contrast to aspire to be a source or channel for more broadly acceptable research, including through commissioning or assembling studies on matters of widely shared interest, notably on “good practices”.

Paragraph 28 says that both regular and irregular migration will be studied, to analyse their costs and benefits. However, a line of action is already implied in RTD 2, whose title asserts, “secure, regular migration can achieve stronger development impacts”. Although irregular (i.e. outside the law) migration also needs some “overdue research”, paragraph 24 declares that “the best frameworks to protect and empower migrants for development are likely to be regular migration programs that are accessible, transparent, and non-discriminatory”.

**Secondary theme 5: A flexible approach to policy; “good practices” not “best practices”**

Undersecretary Conejos twice uses the stereotypical jargon term “best practices” (paragraphs 12, 20), a notion that can transfer authority to global centres of research and research funding like the World Bank that claim to synthesise global experience and, on that basis, declare what are best practices. However, his report largely shifts instead to a far more flexible, case-specific concept of “good practice” (paragraphs 20, 23, 26, 27), and explicitly opposes a “one size fits all” approach (paragraphs 26, 36).
Secondary theme 6: A light supportive structure

The report combines a predominant language of ‘flow’ that stresses informal process, with a secondary language of solidity (“building on the substantive achievements…and consolidating the structures”, paragraph 4). The open ongoing process requires some supportive structures (paragraphs 4, 38-39, 40-42), including ad hoc working groups and good working links with the UN system, but not a new, large and costly bureaucracy. Implicitly such an organisation would become financially beholden to rich countries, and would be largely staffed by rich country professionals and/or cut off from the urgency of action, lost in “the usual talk-fests of international conferences” (paragraph 40). The International Organization for Migration, with almost 7,000 staff, headquartered in Geneva, receives no mention in the report.

3.2 Generative metaphors - “Continuing the Journey” and “Harvesting the Fruits”?

A metaphor is a device of seeing something abstract or less familiar in terms of something else that is more familiar, generating in the process new insights. The metaphors we use function as various sorts of “mirrors” (that may reflect the plain truth, lie, or take us beneath the surface), “magicians” (that transform realities), and/or “mutinies” (that expose and help to mobilise against forces considered to be oppressive) (Kornprobst 2008).

Metaphors typically play a central role in the frames and stories used in public policy for problem setting and for pointing towards solutions (Schön and Rein 1979). Frames usually “contain generative metaphors that enable us to reason from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Familiar concepts are brought to unfamiliar situations and in the process transform the unfamiliar, providing a way of organizing and understanding it, while they are themselves transformed” (Rein and Schön 1977: 240-241).

Some metaphors in the GFMD text are perhaps only decorative, like paragraph 9’s “blossoming of friendships and partnerships”. However, some are generative: notably, “harvesting the fruits of our labor” (paragraphs 1 and 11), “passing the torch” (paragraphs 38 and 45), and most pervasive and basic: “moving ahead”. Each indicates a system of ideas and a course of action.

“Harvesting the fruits of our labor” likens the GFMD process to painstaking, productive work that is for the eventual benefit of all, building mutual understanding and trust (paragraph 3). Compared to Kofi Annan’s address, the report is relatively silent on the labour of the migrants themselves. The focus is on governments, portrayed to be working with as much effort as the migrant workers, towards a goal that will benefit the migrants too.

The metaphor of “passing the torch”, from Brussels to Manila and from Manila to Athens, conveys perseverance, victory and legacy. It mobilises the imagery of the Olympic Games: heroic endeavour, within a community of international cooperation. The broader metaphor of a journey is central to
the whole speech, from paragraph 1’s “endings and beginnings”, through to “the road ahead” (paragraph 41) and the very final paragraph (47). Whereas the penultimate paragraph (46) resorts to a hackneyed military metaphor (“We have gained much ground”) to convey pride in GFMD effort and achievements, the final paragraph reverts to the primary theme, ongoing process: “The GFMD remains a ‘work in progress’ – to be completed… to be continued”.

While “change” is repeatedly emphasised (paragraphs 2, 3 [twice], 29 and 40), we are secured along the journey by the partner emphasis on “continuity” in the process (paragraphs 2, 4, 11, 29). The terms provide more than decorative relief and reassurance. A journey suggests exploration and advance, and hence praise. In paragraph 2, for example, we find a great cache of praise terms: achievements, continuing, advancing, consultation, collaboration, changing. Some of the praise may be intended for the Philippines host, for the Brussels meeting in 2007 had concentrated on other things and did not bring the process as far as Manila claims to have done: “changing the way the world looks at migration and development” and, “more importantly…changing the way we deal with each other on [migration and development]” (paragraph 3).

3.3 Silences

Identifying which topics are excluded or downgraded, and assessing this, is part of a frame analysis. Especially given the 3,000-word length and considerable repetitions in the 2008 GFMD Chair’s report, we are entitled to remark that several major issues and actors received little attention.

First, while traffickers and smugglers are in the frame, other villains or challenges received little or no mention: human rights violations against migrants; poverty, unemployment and underemployment in the home country that push migrants to resort to irregular migration; the global systems that contribute to these pressures; and the inability of national police forces, as well as lack of political will, to prosecute transnational human trafficking and smuggling.

Second, paragraph 25 presents “growing crimes of smuggling and trafficking” as a threat to the migrant worker’s capacity to “earn and support families back home”. Left out are other villains such as the extremely high charges that money transfer companies impose on clients who send remittances home. Another villain could be the lack of training for migrants and their families in financial literacy, management and sustainable entrepreneurship, to help them to manage their remittances (Villalba 2002).

Third, the role of civil society, including non-governmental organisations, is only touched on. Paragraph 18 states that civil society and NGOs have an important role to play in the “shared responsibility” of protecting the rights of migrant workers, but no detail is given. Paragraph 42 adds that as governments, “We need to continue working on our relations with…Civil Society. We are still feeling our way in this process…”.
Fourth, the importance of institutionalising human rights treaties for the protection of migrant workers is mentioned once, in paragraph 19, but only in the form of referring to “some recommendations”, calls and “suggestions” from some of the delegates, without any explanation, emphasis or endorsement.

Migrants, their organisations and their formal rights receive little emphasis, in comparison to the continually repeated praise for ongoing discussions between government officials presented as Olympic athletes.

3.4 ‘Development’

We could extend the analysis in many ways, including through exact examination of how key terms are used. Let us illustrate with one central term: “development”. It appears 34 times (apart from the uses implied in the name GFMD). Half of these uses are in conjunction with “migration”, as in “migration and development” (paragraphs 2, 3, 13, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 42), “empower[ing] migrants for development” (paragraphs 7, 23, 24), “impacts of migration on development” (paragraph 28), and “development friendly migration” (paragraph 29). The other uses confirm the treatment of migration as instrumental to development (e.g., “development benefits they can bring” – paragraph 7; “contribution to [economic] development” – paragraphs 16, 21, 23 [twice]; “development impacts” – paragraph 24; “development needs” – paragraph 26). In particular the implied definition of development is that human development is only a “facet of development” (paragraph 7); so ‘human development’ is treated not as the encompassing UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) concept but as the narrower concept used in development banks: “human beings who are healthy, educated, employed, and able to care for their families” (paragraph 16), which is contrasted to “economic development”, towards which it is considered instrumental (paragraph 16). Thus, overall, migration is discussed in terms of instrumentality towards economic development.

4 Is “The Mood…Changing”?

The Manila Forum Chair’s report maintained the perspective presented in the Secretary-General’s New York speech, but without Annan’s flair and authority. It reflects a subsequent stage of routinisation. Amongst intended audiences, the report may have achieved the desired effect. “Development” is a potent idea; few oppose the benefits of “development”. The needs that are then articulated (for particular policies, better research, partnerships and so forth) are plausible, but limited and thus potentially misleading.

How much will be generated by the GFMD process in the longer-term remains to be seen. This would be no surprise to Kofi Annan and his advisers. His 2006 speech concluded: “This High-level Dialogue will succeed to the extent that it ushers in an era of sustained, thoughtful consideration of international migration and development issues.” It did not guarantee such an era. As we have seen, the proposed logic of his position
was to start from where we are, from conceptions of “development” that remain dominated by economic measures and from a system of nation-states that guard their sovereignty, and to establish improved channels of regular and constructive communication that have some potential to bring evolution. The GFMD is part of this. As Rother suggests (2009a: 95): “…it provides a perspective, albeit a vague one, for a possible way out of the gridlock between the sending and receiving states of migrants”.

At one level, a sustained track of meetings between government delegates is expected to gradually create its own chemistry, generate expectations, proposals and alliances and, establish a more constructive dynamic. “…as Peter Sutherland phrased it, it can be seen as an advancement when sending, receiving and transit countries of migration sit around the same table ‘instead of yelling at each other’. Indeed, the fact that e.g. the Saudi Arabian government showed willingness to speak about migrants’ rights at all should be seen as an, albeit small, progress” (sic; Rother 2009a: 104).

At a second level, the GFMD meetings become a catalyst and focal point for much more. Non-governmental organisations target the meetings, commission research, initiate campaigns and grab some of the attention. That different NGOs pull in different directions on this stage can be seen not as a problem but as part of the “cunning of history”: it creates pressure for information and innovation, change and creativity; and it ensures that positions are tested hard. At the Manila Forum,

[S]ome associations were pursuing an ‘inside-outside’ strategy: while taking part in the GFMD process, they also founded the Peoples’ Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights (PGA), which then organised workshops – as well as public rallies for migrants’ rights. … However, the movement is split. The International Migrants’ Alliance (IMA), which was founded in Hong Kong in 2008, opposes the PGA because it considers the GFMD unacceptable. The IMA argues that the GFMD treats people as commodities and promotes neoliberal policies. (Rother 2009b: 333)

Both approaches may be necessary, as complementary forms of pressure and sources of innovation. Both are catalysed by the presence of the Forum.

5 Conclusion

This paper has had two sets of objectives: to explore the proposed rationale of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and to show the relevance of accessible tools of discourse analysis for better understanding of and better participation in migration policy. We took first Kofi Annan’s speech in which he launched the Global Forum. Through use of analysis tables for comprehensive precise attention (Tables 1 and 2), we identified the speech’s resources and themes, both those stated and those unstated but implied. We saw Annan’s skilful use of appeals to governments’ self-image as intelligent and constructive, his confidence- and responsibility-building allocation of Forum ownership to the governments, and his reassuring
lending of his own authority and commitment of support from the UN system. We then organised the elements from the central part of the speech as an explicit logical system, in a synthesis table (Table 3). Annan’s advocacy of the Forum was seen to rest on a series of claims: that migration must be managed; that the present position is one of entrenched disagreements and mistrust; that to proceed will require constructive structured communication; that the Global Forum can provide this and is a feasible way forward; that alternatives to the Forum are at present less feasible; and that the Forum will be not merely feasible but fruitful, through processes of increased mutual education and mutual acceptance. Expression in this synthetic form helps us to clarify content, assess cogency and compare criticisms and alternatives. While not always feasible for longer texts, the approach is helpful for key passages; and such use strengthens one’s awareness and skills for when tackling longer texts in ways that are more selective. In the case of the Global Forum, drawing out this series of claims, and starting to reflect on the families of assumptions that appear required for the Forum to achieve its intended effects, makes clear its considerable degree of optimism.

While Annan’s position could be expressed as a logical system, some of the component meanings were not openly or emphatically stated in the speech and we could draw them out fully only through the unusual form of reading done for the more detailed analysis table. Further, much of his work of persuasion is seen to be done not through bald logic but through a combination of suggested causal linkages with effective use of pathos— mobilisation of relevant values (including here: respect for migrants, respect for nations, respect for open communication, and appealing to the self-respect of governments, in calling for them to exercise intelligence, initiative and determination equal to those of the migrants)—and skilful construction of ethos, reasons for giving trust and credence to the speaker (including respect for not just his experience, his post, and his organisational resources but his range of sympathies and understanding, his combination of boldness and finesse). Central was Annan’s subtle alternation between “you” and “we” in addressing the assembled government representatives.

How does Annan’s case for the Forum fare in practice? Does it outlast Annan’s presence in an important facilitating role? We looked for evidence from the second GFMD conference. While it was too early to identify success, it might have been soon enough to sense failure. There were few signs of that yet in the Manila concluding report, which gave an upbeat restatement and emphatic elaboration of the proposed rationale of the Forum: that from a starting position of major divergence and mistrust between national governments in a world of nation states, a non-coercive forum of open communication can help to identify mutually beneficial good practices and in the process strengthen mutual trust and solidarity. Discourse analysis helped us clarify both the imaginative and emotional content of the claims for the Forum, with their talk of moving forward, passing on torches, and reaping harvests, the central hypothesis of gradual growth of collegiality, and the silences, the issues neglected.
The GFMD is a forum for government officials and migration managers, representing nations who meet not in a Habermasian ideal discourse situation (Habermas 1990, passim; Stanford 2011, sections 3.2, 3.4) but instead with very unequal powers. Further, migrants and civil society are involved at best only in consultations and lobbying. However, the Forum provides a valuable focal point for their mobilisation and for wider public attention. No one format or line of action will suffice, but the GFMD adds a space for migration officials too to “see the world”, mix, and enrich their understanding, as well as be subject to public pressures.

Much more can be done in trying to understand, monitor and assess the Global Forum. We can examine its other meetings, relate it to the preceding and parallel other fora and events in the international migration policy scene, and compare their respective impacts. We can employ more complex forms of discourse analysis. We hope though in this article to have illuminated central aspects of the speeches by methods that are widely accessible. In doing so, we aim to facilitate involvement from all actors in a more informed and creative fashion in these realms of meaning-making and world-making.
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