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Repatriating by Non-State Actors?
The Emergence of (Skilled) Return Migration Industry in Israel

by Nir Cohen

INTRODUCTION
In 2014, speaking at a national human resource development conference, the Director of Israel’s National Brain Gain Program (INBGP) introduced the government’s program to repatriate highly skilled Israeli migrants by helping them find jobs in Israel.

[T]he program directs great efforts towards employment assistance. These efforts include connecting between [Israeli] academics [abroad] and recruiters and linking them to organizations and [employment] networks. Our objective . . . is to be your employment agency that sends you, recruiters, only relevant and meticulously sorted CV’s [of Israeli academics abroad].

A couple of years later, at a news conference in Boston, American Jewish philanthropist Mortimer Zuckerman announced his $100M plan to reverse Israel’s brain drain by attracting Israeli researchers in STEM disciplines from “Western” countries back to Israeli universities. In a video message to attendees, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked Mr. Zuckerman, proclaiming, “This project will help bring back some of Israel’s most brilliant sons and daughters, allow them to advance their own careers here and . . . contribute to Israel’s growing scientific excellence.”

Both messages attest to the changing institutional make-up of schemes of skilled return migration to Israel. Traditionally state-sponsored and
implemented, they have gradually come to draw upon human and material resources that are availed by non-state actors (hereafter NSAs). From wealthy donors to executive headhunting agencies, civic and private bodies are now full-fledged partners to Israel’s repatriation initiatives. The growing reliance of the government upon NSAs as *inter alia* special advisors to programs, sponsors of recruitment fairs, or potential employers of returnees ought to be understood against the backdrop of two processes, which are linked to the neoliberalization of Israel’s economy. First, the gradual privatization of social and other services, which were historically provided by the Israeli state. Much like in the domain of Jewish in-migration, the state has been gradually handing over some of its traditional financial, organizational and administrative functions in the domain of repatriation to NSAs. Second, the multiplication of NSAs who specialize in the provision of services that are needed by returning migrants. Although their number remains fairly stable over time, the economic potential of returnees, primarily those possessing higher levels of economic and cultural capital becomes clearer to civic and private organizations. Not only do skilled returnees make up a small, but growing market share in the country’s insurance, shipping, and tax consulting markets, but their improved demographic profile makes them an important asset to a range of NSAs, from accountants and lawyers specializing in foreign tax and legal systems to employment agencies matching returnees to firms in Israel’s thriving IT sector. Thus, for example, a study on returning scientists, estimates that in the first five years after repatriation, their overall contribution to Israel’s economy is nearly $750 million. While part of their contribution is reflected in obligatory payments to the government (e.g., income tax and social security), others may well benefit civic and private bodies (e.g., general spending and investments).

The chapter examines the rising engagement of NSAs with Israel’s skilled return initiatives. It argues that the plurality of (not-) for profit groups and individuals who partake in Israel’s hegemonic project of repatriation may be justifiably termed “return migration industry” (hereafter RMI). From private firms who gain financially from service-provision to returnees to non-govern-mental organizations who facilitate migrants’ re-integration in Israel, actors of the industry are in/direct beneficiaries of the increasing commercialization of Israel’s counter-migration regime. It further shows that NSAs who partake in the two phases of the return process, namely recruitment (or mobilization) and re-integration, differ considerably with respect to their engagement levels, functions, and mechanisms and scales of operation.
The chapter is divided to four sections. It first engages with the literature about the changing landscape of the governance of migration, focusing on the rising importance of NSAs in it. It then briefly explores repatriation programs in Israel, attending to their increasingly commercialized nature in recent years. It coins the term “Return Migration Industry” to refer to the multiple civic and private entities whose collaboration with the state at various scales—from the local to the transnational—facilitates the repatriation of (skilled) migrants. The third section classifies actors within the industry through their participation in the two stages within the process of repatriation, namely mobilization and re-integration. The concluding section outlines avenues of further research on the causes and effects of the return migration industry in Israel and beyond.

**CHANGING LANDSCAPES OF MIGRATION GOVERNANCE**

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in the role of NSAs in the process of governing. From world politics to climate change, civic and private entities have taken an increasingly salient part in public policy-making. Explanations for this shift from government to governmentality center on statist aspirations to “govern at a distance.” This new framework, it is argued, allows the state to transfer some of its exclusive responsibilities to an ensemble of loosely connected actors, while simultaneously continuing to shape their conduct and ensure their compliance with its own interests. As E. Sørensen and J. Torfing argue, “The mobilization of free action of resourceful and energetic actors within a framework of norms and rules that ensures a certain degree of conformity with the overall objectives of government can relieve the state from some of its regulatory burdens and help to reach various target groups with the deployment of less resources and less display of control from above.” The art of governing also reflects a statist faith in the efficiency of markets and civil societies to mediate between state and citizens, lending itself to a new regime of “governing through networks.”

In the field of migration, the dislocation of state intervention presents opportunities for NSAs, thereby increasing their involvement in the provision of multiple related goods and services. Whether they detain the undocumented or recruit the highly skilled, NSAs are now closely entangled in en/disabling international mobility. While states continue to retain high levels of control over migration procedures, scholarship has shown that many
NSAs are involved throughout its various phases, including admission and re(integration). G. Lahav,\textsuperscript{15} for example, shows that in Europe, the regulatory “playing field” includes rent-seeking bodies like airlines, shipping carriers, transport companies, security services, and hotels, as well as not-for-profits like universities, churches and trade unions. The shift by which states delegate monitoring and execution powers upward (to intergovernmental agencies [e.g., EU]), downward (e.g., to cities) and outward (to non-state actors), creates “a vertical chain of policy making,”\textsuperscript{16} which reflects statist efforts “to extend the burden of implementation away from central governments . . . and towards the source of control, thereby increasing national efficacy and decreasing costs in the process.”\textsuperscript{17}

Others also noted the facilitative role of migration intermediaries, namely those “key actors that facilitate, and sometimes drive, migration within and across borders,”\textsuperscript{18} who work at the meso-level alongside macro- (e.g., state institutions) and micro-level (e.g., kinship networks) agents.\textsuperscript{19} G. Menz,\textsuperscript{20} for example, focusing on the role of trade unions and employer associations in the migration process, argues that on account of being delegated selective roles, both groups “are becoming involved in various forms of co-managing migration flows, ranging from a proactive role in setting annual migration quotas to representation in steering committees and active informal lobbying.”\textsuperscript{21} Yet, these new regimes of migration governance\textsuperscript{22} do not necessarily signal the retreat of the state. In fact, they sometimes facilitate the expansion of repressive policies, as well as the shedding of functions and services long characteristic of the Keynesian state.\textsuperscript{23}

The migration industry has recently emerged as a productive conceptual lens through which to explore the role of NSAs, or intermediaries, in migration policy-making. R. Hernández-León,\textsuperscript{24} locates the migration-facilitating industry in the private and specialized services rendered by private, profit-seeking entrepreneurs. These include, for example, “trafficking and labor recruitment, the lending of funds to finance migration, passenger transportation and travel agencies, the sending of monetary and in kind remittances, application for and production of authentic and counterfeit documents, legal counseling, and telecommunications services for emigrants and their home communities.”\textsuperscript{25} Services provided to prospective migrants, including marketing of potential destination or housing opportunities within them, may also be considered part of the industry. While not dismissive of “the other engines of migration,” including NGOs and migrant networks, he argues that in the absence of the purported pursuit of financial gain, their engagements with all migratory
forms—from temporary to permanent and from unidirectional to cyclical—are fundamentally different.\textsuperscript{26}

A more structural approach is advocated by M. P. Garapich, who defines the industry as “a sector of service markets that uses human mobility, adaptation in the host country and the sustenance of a transnational social field as its main resources.”\textsuperscript{27} Immigration advisors, tax refund offices, travel agents and ethnic media are all integral to the industry, which is distinct from “the ethnic enclave” because of its “explicit and direct role [is] in stimulating further flows, . . . [which] lowers the risks of migrating.”\textsuperscript{28} A. Betts,\textsuperscript{29} similarly suggests that the industry encompasses actors who play a salient role in facilitation, control and rescue in the domain of migration. Alongside smugglers, travel agents, airline companies, or recruitment organizations,\textsuperscript{30} it includes those whose functions range from funding (e.g., philanthropists seeking to improve the rights of refugees) and lobbying (e.g., trade unions) to monitoring, enforcing (e.g., anti-immigrant vigilante groups) or supporting (e.g., refugee aid organizations) migration. Inasmuch as actors operate at various scales and engage differentially throughout the migratory process, they are not merely “economic actors” oriented exclusively towards a financial bottom line, but “are directly involved in agenda setting, negotiation, implementation, monitoring and enforcement activities.”\textsuperscript{31}

Actors operate along the three phases of Hernández-León’s migration system’s cycle, namely \textit{initiation}, \textit{takeoff}, and \textit{stagnation and decline}.\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Initiation} sees the involvement of head hunters, recruiters and smugglers who search for, identify, stimulate, guide and move migrants from their point of origin. \textit{Take off} does not see the disappearance of brokers, who change their chief function and location to become providers of services in destination points. It is in these new environments that “contractors and transporters can recruit immigrant labor, while immigrant banking, remittance and courier services provided thrive and operate intermingled with other ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurs.”\textsuperscript{33} Finally, as cross-border streams \textit{decline}, some migration entrepreneurs go out of business while others shift attention to diasporic “nostalgia markets,” satisfying increasing demands for ethnic food, music and other cultural goods and services.

Yet, to date no studies have paid attention to the industry’s role in facilitating return migration. This lacuna is surprising given both the quantitative surge in (in)voluntary migrant repatriation,\textsuperscript{34} and the qualitative contribution of returnees to homeland development. Studies have long shown that returnees, especially skilled, exhibit high levels of business entrepreneurship, and possess
higher than average economic, cultural (foreign language command) and professional (knowledge of new technologies) capital. It is primarily for this reason that diaspora strategies of multiple countries currently include special incentive-oriented return migration schemes (known as SARPs, State-Assisted Repatriation Programs). These initiatives have traditionally drawn on a range of non-state actors—from migrant organizations to relocation consultants who assist the (re)integration of returning households. In Israel, economic neoliberalization of the 1990s has precipitated a change in the politics of diaspora strategies, return programs included. As N. Cohen shows, one of the primary characteristics of the new politics has been the increasing involvement of NSAs in return schemes. In what follows I briefly attend to the changing landscape of skilled return in Israel, explaining how it brought about the emergence of RMI, namely private and civic actors partaking in state-sponsored repatriation schemes.

**Returning Skilled Israelis: From Government to Governance**

The repatriation of skilled Israelis began in the 1950s, when David Ben-Gurion’s government offered (returning) academics teaching in American and British universities employment and housing benefits in Israel. In the 1960s, different state institutions were established which sought to repatriate migrants, including the Bureau for the Academic Worker (1965) which courted highly educated Israelis living abroad. Later, the Ministry of Immigration and Absorption (1968), implemented a series of state-assisted return programs. In May 1968, for example, it oversaw an incentive-based program aimed at returning nationals residing abroad more than four years. It set a two-year “window of opportunities” for those wishing to return, and announced it would provide them with various tax, housing, and employment benefits. A decade later (1978), it announced a nearly identical program, which offered returnees generous benefits, including a special bonus for those settling in peripheral areas. These—and most subsequent—programs, targeted primarily a narrow segment of highly skilled migrants, including researchers, scientists, (graduate) students and those with technical and technological skills. In the words of Yigal Alon, Israel’s first Minister of Immigration and Absorption, “It is imperative that we create opportunities for those with talent and knowledge that wish to return.”

State-sanctioned programs continued in the 1980s. The appointment of Dov Shilanski as Deputy Minister for Emigration (1981) was a sign that
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Repatriation had become a national priority. As he declared, “Returning emigrants, our children, is a key role of this government.” The establishment of the Unit for Returning Residents in the MOIA and the Inter-Ministerial Committee to Streamline Anti-Emigration Policy were some key steps taken to consolidate state efforts in this domain.

Plummeting emigration rates in the 1990s also relieved state concerns over repatriation. As Israel’s economy neo-liberalized quickly, skilled return budgets were significantly reduced. Outsourcing and privatization of project management ensued, as in other domains, and state programs were subjected to principles of economic rationalism. Consequently, state officials began conceiving leaner programs aimed at repatriating those whose expected contribution to the national economy was predicted to be the highest. The new approach was accompanied by two processes. First, a vigorous segmentation of the target group, namely emigrants. Traditional labels (e.g., “the academically educated”) were replaced with a system of classification and, subsequently, repatriation initiatives aimed at them. By the end of the decade, smaller repatriation projects were tailored for specific sub-groups, including business owners, scientists, physicians, artists, and (post)-graduate researchers. Second, the state has increasingly drawn on a growing number of NSAs in the conception, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of repatriation projects. From policy-oriented think-tanks to emigrant organizations, the number and involvement of NSAs has increased considerably, evolving into what I call the “return migration industry.” The next section describes some key actors, and identifies their main characteristics and tasks throughout the two phases of the return process, namely recruitment and (re)integration.

**RMI between Recruitment and Reintegration**

Following N. N. Sørensen and T. Gammeltoft-Hansen, I define the return migration industry as an array of NSAs who, operating at scales ranging from local to transnational, provide services that facilitate, or assist international return migration along its two main phases—recruitment/mobilization and (re)-integration.

Recruitment of skilled Israeli migrants is still primarily a state function. Yet, increasingly NSAs take a more proactive approach, inducing return independently of official agencies. This is done, for example, by offering migrants different forms of direct material support, from reduced airfares to lucrative job offers. These actors may sometimes contribute indirectly to official repatriation
programs, thereby brokering relations between state and migrants. Both forms are applicable in both sending and destination countries. Acts of indirect recruitment may include, for example, political lobbying for tax or labor market reform which specific segments of migrants would benefit from. This was the case several years ago when a number of key Israeli professional associations (e.g., The Manufacturers’ Association, The Association of Banks, The Institute of Certified Public Accountants and The Bar Association) have rallied to support the legislation of Section 168 of the Income Tax Ordinance. The contested reform (aka Milchan Law, after the Billionaire Israeli-American film producer whose lawyers lobbied for it feverishly), provides for an extensive tax exemption—including waiver of any reporting requirements of income and gains of new and returning migrants for up to ten years—was approved by the Israeli parliament (Knesset) in August 2008. Other acts, which prompt skilled return indirectly may take place in destination countries and include, for example, hosting or sponsoring of state-led repatriation events.

Key actors in this phase include, for example, international recruitment agencies. These agencies offer various services in the field of human resources and have recently “discovered” the potential of Israeli migrants who wish to return. Corporate Resource Group and HR Global Services are examples of human resource agencies specializing in talent acquisition management. They identify and recruit Israeli talents overseas for their corporate clients in Israel, including Amdocs, Nice Systems and Siemens. Their transnational connections enable them to repatriate “[Q]uality Israeli workers in the fields of high-tech, bio-tech and finance who reside in the US.” Their clients are both long-time Israeli migrants as well as former expatriates whose “mother companies relocated . . . but forgot to return.”

Other recruitment agents are Israel-based branches of multinational corporations who scan the global job market in search for Israeli migrants in senior positions who wish to return. Their transnational reach allows them direct access to a global pool of return-interested skilled migrants. In contrast to external recruitment agencies, their engagement with returnees (and their household members) does not stop at the recruitment stage. Multinational corporations like Intel and Siemens, for example, provide skilled migrants hired by their subsidiaries in Israel, assistance in a range of areas, including *inter alia* home-finding, children's schooling, tax benefits, health insurance, and shipment. While some corporations deliver such services in-house by their respective departments of human resources, others prefer to outsource them to specialized agencies who constitute “one-stop-shop” for relocation services.
The latter is more common among very large corporations who often use the same agencies to handle all their intra-corporate relocations. Recruitment of skilled returnees is not limited to large corporations. Smaller firms, like Bell Labs Israel, have occasionally utilized their cross-border professional networks to develop limited “brain return” programs. These small-scale initiatives, which typically lead to the repatriation of a handful of skilled workers, are nonetheless important, because they indicate the still dominant position of the Zionist Ideology in Israel, and its repatriation discourse specifically. As Teva’s VP for Human Resources argued in this respect, “One cannot depend on the government all the time [to combat brain drain]. Any mid-size to large firm can repatriate [skilled] academics.”

In some cases, NSAs have been collaborating with each other on self-sponsored repatriation initiatives. A case in point is a series of roundtables hosted by Motorola during the 2008 global financial crisis. Under the heading of “Talent flow/return to Israel,” local firms in the fields of InfoTech, BioTech and Finance sectors have deliberated how “[T]o return quality and excellent workers living in the US to Israel’s labor marker.” Participants deliberated best recruitment practices of workers, “[W]ho accumulated extensive experience in the international market and may be strategic assets to any . . . [Israeli] firm.”

Civic organizations, including non-governmental, migrant, and diasporic organizations also partake in recruitment efforts. On account of their limited resource, they typically take auxiliary roles, including compilation and maintenance of skilled migrants’ online databases, organizing, sponsoring and hosting of repatriation events abroad, and lobbying for and marketing state-led campaigns among relevant constituencies. The Organization of Israeli Scientists Abroad (aka Science Abroad) is by far the most salient civic actor. With its three thousand members and twenty-five branches in North America and Europe, it aims “[T]o harness the power of senior Israeli scientists abroad . . . [and] facilitate the return of great minds to Israel.”

To do so, it (co-)organizes recruitment fairs in Israel and overseas, circulates job listings among its members, and provides financial support to those travelling to Israel for job interviews. It is funded by the Government of Israel (through the MOIA), The Israeli American Council (IAC), public Israeli universities and multiple commercial and philanthropic bodies. Thanks to these ties, Science Abroad has recently obtained an “exclusive supplier” status, for different services pertaining to skilled migrants. This privileged status has allowed it to forge strong partnerships with civic, public and private agencies to recruit skilled migrants. A recent example is its partnering with Bar Ilan...
University in its $150 million plan to repatriate in the next decade 150 Israeli STEM researchers who live abroad. According to the plan, the university will use the organization's branches (located at university campuses abroad) to hold a series of career fairs. Vice President for Research at Bar Ilan thanked the organization for its role in the plan, saying it would help the university “become the ideal academic home of returnees.”

IAC, mentioned above, is another key player in Israel’s RMI. It was established in 2007 in Los Angeles and has since become the most powerful Israeli diasporic organization in the world. With generous donations from Jewish philanthropists, notably Sheldon Adelson, it aims “to build an engaged and united Israeli-American community.” Although most of its projects were set to institutionalize Israeli migrant communities in the US, in recent years it has become increasingly involved in nation-wide enterprises to promote Israeli-related causes, repatriation included. For example, in each of its recent annual conferences, special panels on brain return to Israel were held, as well as informational sessions on InfoTech job opportunities in Israel.

The IAC also promotes brain return indirectly by supporting other organizations, which contribute—administratively or financially—to Israeli state-sponsored repatriation initiatives. These include, for example, Jewish federations and community centers who typically operate at the metropolitan scale (e.g., The Jewish Federation of the Greater Atlanta), as well as smaller 501c organizations like Tarbuton, which supports grassroots projects in San Diego or Dor Chadash (Hebrew for New Generation), a network of young Jewish professionals who set up Israel-related educational and social projects. The latter organizations fulfilled different auxiliary roles in Israel’s NBGP, including the sponsoring of info-sessions at university campuses across the US. The American Friends of Tel Aviv University (AFTAU), another beneficiary of the AIC, recently kicked-off a repatriation fund raising campaign, pleading its members “to turn brain drain into brain gain” by helping Tel Aviv University “bring . . . [Israeli] academic all-stars home.”

Organizations are also involved in the second phase of the return migration process, namely (re)-integration. Re-integration, “the re-inclusion or re-incorporation of . . . a migrant into the society of their country of return,” spans social, economic and cultural domains, which allow migrants to brace for—and accomplish—a successful re-adaptation to their countries of origin. While some preparatory measures of re-integration are typically applied in destination countries, before physical departure, the majority occur after one’s arrival in her country of origin. However, both types of measures, from
acquiring information about employment and housing opportunities to applying for children's educational institutions back home, require considerable investment by (prospective) returnees, aim to reduce levels of uncertainty and diminish the costs, material and psychological, associated with return.

Traditionally, the literature on re-integration focused on the experience of migrants from developing countries, many of whom have had irregular legal status in destination countries. For those, re-integration was often mediated by state personnel in countries of destination and/or origin, specialized agencies (e.g., United States Agency for International Development), or multilateral organizations like the International Labor Organization. In contrast, most Israeli returnees receive little—or no—assistance from state agencies. Indeed, public assistance to returning migrants has been quite limited, and typically included minor measures like subsidized air travel or customs-free (sea) shipping. For different reasons, Israeli migrants have traditionally relied on their Israel-based social networks, including family, friends, and former colleagues in preparing for—and following—return. These patterns are consistent with a recent study showing that compared with skilled Israelis who opted to stay abroad, skilled returnees enjoy significantly higher levels of homeland-based social—but also economic and cultural—capital.

In recent years, a growing number of returnees have been seeking assistance beyond their social networks. This tendency is undoubtedly related to the surge in the “basket of services” offered by the Israeli state in the context of SARPs. However, it is also attributed to the transformation (from government to governance) described earlier, by which non-state return-supporting agents have proliferated. Both processes have made the provision of return-oriented services, like tax consulting or talent recruitment, more efficient, facilitating (potential) returnees’ access to them and smoothing their overall re-integration process. In the context of the NBGP, for example, a range of placement agencies and mostly private employers—from small Israeli startup firms to multinational corporations like Intel, Teva Pharmaceuticals, and Citibank—were mobilized by the state, forming a pool of job listings for returning migrants. Vacancies were listed using online platforms, thus allowing returnees to browse through them, contact employers and interview for specific positions before physically returning to Israel. It is estimated that between August 2013 and December 2016 more than 600 Israelis received at least one job offer from employers associated with the program. In 2016 alone, employers brokered nearly three hundred migrants’ (and families) way back home.
In recent years, the domain of employment services has gradually been outsourced to NSAs. The MOIA, for example, increasingly subcontracts not-for-profit organizations, private firms, and individual advisors to provide returnees with an array of products and services. Using Request for Tenders (RTFs) suppliers are invited to place bids on the establishment and operation of national call centers for returning entrepreneurs (Business-IL), provision of consulting services to returnees on how to improve their skills in using social media (e.g., LinkedIn), leads on job-search workshops, and organization of preparation courses for certification tests in legal and financial professions (MOIA Website). These initiatives facilitate labor market reintegration of returnees by allowing them better access to employment services, prior to and in the aftermath of their physical return.

Tax planning and consulting is another domain in which NSAs have become progressively salient. According to Israel Tax Authority, between 2008 and 2014 the total volume of tax planning in the country has reached $21 billion. The surge is attributed in part to the growing number of relocated employees in the InfoTech—and other—industries, as well as the aforementioned Amendment 168 to the country’s Income Tax Code. The legislation, which has turned Israel into “the world’s best tax haven,” exempts returning migrants (but also Olim Chadashim, new immigrants) from tax payments on their passive foreign-earned income (e.g., capital gains, business revenue) for a maximum of ten years. The amendment is part of the government’s plan to incentivize in-migration of wealthy Diasporic Jews and return migration of skilled Israelis. Its enactment has led to a surge in the number of (prospective) returnees who sought tax consulting and planning. As a result, international taxation, specifically for returning migrants has become a significant market niche for certified accountants, many of whom devised marketing campaigns tailored for the needs of this growing segment.

Finally, children’s education is another dimension of re-integration, which NSAs are slowly becoming more engaged with. Since the 1990s, the Israeli government has introduced a series of de-regulatory measures to the once exclusively public education system. One of the results is that Israel currently has multiple (semi)-private educational streams (e.g., Democratic, Waldorf, and Montessori). Each of these streams, or movements, oversee dozens of primary, middle, and high schools throughout the country that are managed and operated by either private or not-for-profit groups. Although they must conform with national educational standards set by the Ministry of Education, they often enjoy a certain degree of flexibility in designing their
own curricula. Importantly, they charge significantly higher tuition than public schools and, as a result, are biased towards students from privileged socio-economic backgrounds. Prospective returnees, especially those possessing high cultural and economic capital, whose children seek admission to (semi)-private schools, engage with their staff ahead of their return. Engagements—either electronically or physically (e.g., during visits to Israel)—typically begin months before the family’s return date and may involve intense negotiation (for instance, when mid-year admission is sought). The outcomes of negotiations are key not just to the process of children’s re-integration in Israel, but to their parents’ return and destination selection decisions.

CONCLUSIONS
NSAs have been increasingly involved in migration governance. However, studies have thus far focused primarily on flows of incoming (mostly non-citizen) migrants, paying little attention to their brokering role in return migration of nationals. This chapter sought to begin filling this gap by attending to the ways in which NSAs mediate Israeli skilled repatriation. From individual philanthropists who fund—almost single-handedly—repatriation projects to migrant organizations who broker between returnees and Israeli InfoTech firms, these civic and private bodies form Israel’s return migration industry.

Israel’s return migration industry is a fairly new phenomenon, and most of the agencies mentioned in this chapter have only been established in the last two decades. However, it has since grown considerably, in both size and reach. Small increments in emigration and—at times—return, the economic potential of (skilled) returnees, and the intensifying shedding of responsibilities by the Israeli state, have created multiple opportunities for the engagement of non-state actors in the repatriation process. Insurance, shipping, tax and legal consulting, children’s education, talent management and real estate are some of the fields in which new opportunities have been presented for the involvement of non-state actors. Importantly, some actors do not operate in a single location (e.g., country), but develop transnational and, sometimes, global strategies, to court (returning) migrants and/or offer them their services prior to or in the aftermath of repatriation. Lessons from Israel could be useful for scholars working in other contexts. Three are worth mentioning in brief; first, although NSAs are instrumental in en/discouraging migration flows, their involvement
varies with different types of migration. Aid organizations are justifiably more engaged with inflows of asylum seekers, whereas recruitment agencies often spearhead efforts to mobilize skilled migrants. Indeed, the desirability of specific migrant groups is a decisive factor not only in state policy, but also in the extent to which its agents may choose to delegate responsibility to NSAs for their mobilization and (re)-integration. Students of migration should further map out and study these migration sub-industries and, where possible, assess—both qualitatively and quantitatively—the variegated strategies employed by actors in them, as well as their impact on repatriation of skilled Israelis.

Secondly, examining industries at both origin and destination countries is imminent in order understand the transnational reach of actors in migration industries, links between them and the extent to which they benefit from (often the very same) migration flows. Future studies should explore their links and mutual functioning across national borders in order to better understand how they conjointly (re)produce distinct trajectories of migration and return.

Finally, despite the growing size and reach of the industry, it should be clear that the state still dominates the legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks necessary for repatriation. As such, relations between the state and the industry are best characterized as complementary (rather than mutually exclusive). Yet, complementarity does not always eliminate differences with respect to organizational positions or motivations. Indeed, in some instances, the “ideological” stance advocated by the state—or parts thereof, may clash with the financial interests that drive at least some private actors. A more critical approach is therefore needed to examine the effects of these differences on (re)turn migration policymaking, and the mechanisms through which conflicting interests are aligned. In light of the increasing involvement of both state and non-state actors in migration governance globally, such an approach may prove particularly useful to deciphering the power relations between the main forces that continue to “oil the wheels” of international mobility.
Notes

7. Between 8,000 to 10,000 migrants, defined as those who had been away for a minimum of one year, returned annually to Israel in the period 2004–17 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). These are slightly lower annual figures than the 12,000 quoted by S. J. Gold, *The Israeli Diaspora* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 217 for the mid-1990s.


21. Ibid., 323.


25. Ibid., 10.

26. Ibid., 12–17.


28. Ibid.


40. Toren, “Return Migration to Israel.”
42. The portfolio was a governmental response to rising emigration rates after the 1973 War. Between 1978 and 1983, nearly 100,000 Israelis left the country.
44. Israel’s (Jewish) immigration (*Aliya*) and integration policies had undergone similar processes at that time. Non-state organizations like *Nefesh B’Nefesh* (Hebrew “soul to soul”) and *AMI* (My People) have assumed exclusive responsibility over the recruitment and integration of Jewish migrants from North America and France, respectively. For an excellent discussion of these processes, which are beyond the scope of this article, see Shpaizman, “Load-shedding and Reloading.”
47. Hernández-León, “Conceptualizing the Migration Industry.”
48. Cohen, “From Nation to Profession.”
50. Recent reports showed that the reform failed completely. Although it managed to attract some high-profile Israeli migrants, including business-owners in media and telecommunication, most re-migrated shortly before exemptions expired (E. Neuman, “We Came, Abused, Left: How Israel Became a Tax Haven for the Rich, Thanks to Milchan Law,” The Marker Online, December 3, 2019).


52. Ibid.

53. A case is point is the Netanya-based O.R.I. Relocation, to which corporations like Teva, Strauss and ECI have outsourced all their relocation services.


57. Science Abroad: The Organization of Israeli Scientists Abroad, https://www.scienceabroad.org.il

58. In Israel, an Exclusive Supplier (Hebrew Sapak Yachid) is a local firm or organization which is designated by the state as the sole provider of certain goods or services. Those obtaining the desired status are exempted from tendering for public sector contracts.


60. “Bar Ilan University and the Organization of Israeli Scientists Abroad in a Campaign to Return and Recruit 150 Israeli Scientists,” Bar Ilan University Spokesman’s Office, August 5, 2018.


65. Dr. Nurit Eyal estimates that less than a quarter of migrants who returned to Israel during the duration of the program have sought state assistance (Interview, July 15, 2016).


70. Cohen & Kranz, “State-assisted Highly Skilled Return Programmes.”


76. Some measures were aimed at the tertiary (academic) system and included, for example, the opening up of private colleges, which have since been competing with the more established, public universities in Israel (A. Volansky, *Academia in a Changing Environment: Israel’s Policy of Higher Education, 1952–2004* [Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Ha-me’uchad and the Shmuel Nee-man Institute, 2005]).


78. A study conducted among skilled migrants who returned to Israel found that children’s education was the second most important factor in their return decision (Midgam Consulting and Research, “Determinants of Migration”).
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