

The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World

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Abstract

This review is of the most recent version of The Age of Migration, a book that has informed our thinking about global migration over the past 30 years. The authors present a good argument that migration is not simply an economic factor or a personal decision. It is connected to capitalism, colonialism, and governments. The book is strong in policy comparison and theory, but it could use more on gender, climate change, and the influence of technology on migration in modern times. Nevertheless, it is a book worth reading by those concerned with migration.

Keywords: Migration, Globalization, Labor Markets, Policy Analysis, Displacement

1 Introduction

The Age of Migration has been the book to refer to since 1993 for understanding why people cross borders. The sixth edition changes the analysis to reflect the current moment, when migration debates are more prevalent than ever. Castles, de Haas, and Miller make a valid point: migration is not arbitrary. It adheres to tendencies shaped by the functioning of the global economy, the power of those in control, and the policies governments adopt.

The book walks through migration trends, explains various theories, examines what drives people to move, and explores how states try to control these flows. Each chapter builds on the last. What makes this book different from others is its refusal of simple explanations. Yes, people move for jobs. But they also move because of family connections, political violence, environmental disasters, and historical ties

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between countries. Understanding migration means seeing all these pieces together.

2 What Works Well

The strongest part of this book is its connection of migration to globalisation. The authors show that while money and goods flow freely across borders, people can't. This creates problems. Companies want cheap labour from abroad, but voters want closed borders. Governments end up with contradictory policies that satisfy no one. This tension runs throughout the book and helps explain why migration policy so often fails.

For policy researchers in India, the chapters on labour migration are handy. The book discusses temporary worker programs, circular migration, and bilateral agreements. These issues matter for Indian workers in the Gulf, Southeast Asia, and beyond. India sends millions of workers abroad each year, and the remittances they send back support entire regions. Yet we don't have good frameworks for understanding how this system works or what happens when it breaks down. This book provides those frameworks.

The comparative approach is another strength. By looking at many countries, the authors show that there's no single right way to manage migration. What works in Canada might fail in Germany—context matters. For India, which is both a significant source of emigrants and increasingly a destination for migrants from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Myanmar, this comparative lens is valuable. We can learn from others' mistakes without copying their solutions.

3 What's Missing

The book refers to the gender, however it does not go deeper. Women do not migrate as other men do. They are employed in house service, care, nursing, and teaching. Much attention should be paid to their experiences of being exploited, trafficked, and separated with their families. The few isolated cases are not sufficient in case women constitute almost half of all international migrants.

The same is done to climate change. The authors admit that the environmental disasters make people move but they do not fully incorporate this to their central argument. As the coastal lands are sinking and the farmlands are being killed by

drought, and other strange weather patterns become the norm, the migration of the climate will continue expanding. This has to be central and not peripheral in future editions.

The book also fails to highlight the changes in migration brought by technology. Migrants can now cross boundaries using their smartphones, remit money back home instantly or keep in touch with their family. The digital platforms pair employees with companies in different nations. Protests and mutual aid are held in WhatsApp groups. The information (and misinformation) on the migration routes is disseminated through social media. These aren't minor details. They are changing the nature of migration.

Finally, the book relies heavily on examples from Europe, North America, and Australia. Migration between developing countries gets less coverage. Yet most migration occurs within regions, not from poor to rich countries. Bangladeshis move to India, Nicaraguans to Costa Rica, Zimbabweans to South Africa. These movements follow different patterns, creating additional challenges. The book would be stronger if it took South-South migration more seriously.

4 Should You Read It?

Yes, absolutely. Despite its gaps, this remains the best single-volume introduction to migration studies. The writing is clear, the arguments are well-supported, and the policy insights are practical. Students will find it accessible. Researchers will find it comprehensive. Policymakers will find it relevant.

For Indian readers specifically, the book offers tools for thinking about our own migration challenges. We're dealing with the return of workers from the Gulf during COVID-19, the National Register of Citizens controversy, and debates over illegal immigration from Bangladesh. We're also becoming a destination country as our economy grows. Understanding migration as a global process, not just an Indian problem, helps us see these issues more clearly.

The book won't answer every question. It won't tell you precisely what policy India should adopt. But it will help you ask better questions and avoid simplistic answers. In a field full of heated opinions and poor data, that's worth a lot.

Reference

Castles, S., de Haas, H., & Miller, M. J. (2020). *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (6th ed.). Guilford Press.