15 Book reviews on global economy and geopolitical readings

ESADEgeo, under the supervision of Professor Javier Solana and Professor Javier Santiso.
"There are now more than 200 million migrants in the world, making up almost 3% of the world’s population. Migration is a natural and irrepressible force that will only intensify in the coming decades."

"The world has never been more integrated or connected, and yet the movement of people and migration is now more regulated than ever before in history."

"While the global economic gains from free migration would be tremendous, concerns about national or local economic losses and the social impacts of migration are obstacles to more open migration policies."

Basic Idea and Opinion

The authors maintain that international migration is a key factor in human and economic development and predict that our future will be strongly influenced by migration policies. They develop the main idea in three sections: the authors begin by analysing international migration from a historical perspective, from prehistory up to the Second World War. In the second section, they cover the period from the beginning of the 1970s to the present day, focusing on the factors that affect the supply and demand for migrants, as well as the impact of migration on both the country of origin and the host country. Finally, in the last part of the book, the authors suggest that the lack of international leadership in issues related to migration needs to be addressed, and propose five principles required in order to tackle future challenges.

The authors offer a rigorous, comprehensive overview of the historical background as well as a contemporary perspective and a prediction of the future of international migration. Throughout the book, the main objective is to question the conventional viewpoint that an increase in the international migration rate is undesirable and should be prevented at all costs. In their opinion, governments should be able to maximise the benefits of migration and minimise the costs that it involves. In any case,
they affirm that migration is characteristic of today’s globalised world, and is a natural phenomenon that should be viewed as positive by society, since without it we could not understand either the history of our species or the great diversity of human communities. Thanks to the quality of the analysis and the in-depth research, which provides statistics, maps and various informative tables, this book makes a great contribution to the field of migration. It is easy to read, stimulating and even controversial in some respects. Moreover, it succeeds in providing readers with a global perspective and challenging their own beliefs and opinions on migration.

The authors

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Migration: A defining characteristic of human societies and a driving force of global history

In the first part of the book, the authors analyse the pioneering role of migrants over the long arc of history, from the emergence of modern humans until the start of globalisation. Since humans left Africa to populate the rest of the world, around 50,000 to 60,000 years ago, migrant communities have developed through a combination of adaptation and innovation, as well as the pooling of knowledge from different cultures. The Agricultural Revolution and the subsequent development of the first civilisations accelerated the exchange of ideas and technology, creating advanced societies that looked to export their techniques, ideologies, and trade practices to other places, even conquering unexplored territories during the European ‘Age of Exploration’. The Industrial Revolution and international trade intensified competition, promoted innovation and increased production in Europe. Many people decided to cross oceans and continents in search of a better life; others, particularly from Africa, were forced to move under the tyranny of slavery. According to the authors, in this new era of globalisation, both free and forced migrants can be viewed as being both the causes and consequences of great economic growth.

In 1882, the United States began to apply new regulations to manage migration, starting with the attempt to keep out unqualified migrant workers from China, a trend that, over the course of time, would become very common across the rest of the world. During the 19th century, economic growth led to millions of people travelling to
new destinations and, at the start of the 20th century – in order to defend national interests – many countries adopted increasingly protectionist economic measures, which later included immigration control. Countries became progressively stricter in defending their borders in an attempt to control the influx of immigrants. Thus, immigration quotas, passports and guest-worker programmes were introduced (especially during the post-war period in German and France), and the distribution of rights based on nationality was established. Belonging to a country became an essential requirement for living, travelling and working, and international migration began to be regulated at a nation-state level. However, despite increased controls, regulations and the use of the most sophisticated surveillance technology, today the effective control of migratory movements continues to be hard to achieve, in a time when the growing availability of transport, communications and capital facilitates migration enormously.

At present, there are over 200 million migrants in the world, making up almost 3% of the total world population. Through the use of statistical data, the authors show that migration is not a phenomenon exclusive to rich countries, despite the fact that it is in the latter that the highest concentrations of migrants have been recorded over the last two decades. 75% of all international migrants live in just 12% of the countries of the world, and one in five migrants lives in the United States. Whilst the number of migrants in developing countries rose by 2.8 million between 1990 and 2005, the number of those that lived in developed countries grew by 33 million. This trend is due not only to the increase in the movement of migrants away from developing countries, but also to the migration of those inhabitants of developed countries looking for new opportunities, especially within the European Union.

In the second section of the book, the authors focus on the period from 1970 to the present day, which they define as a period of “unprecedented globalisation”, during which the flow of migrants has increased in scale and diversity, entering a new phase marked by the need for state control of migratory movements. Although, a priori, such control constitutes an obstacle for migrants, people continue to look for new opportunities or to escape from situations of political and economic instability. The authors affirm that there are many factors that cause migration and conclude that there is no general model or theory of migration. They maintain that contemporary globalisation is applying growing pressure to the borders of developed countries and examine the ways in which governments currently exercise control over migrants and borders, characterised by the exhaustive selection and definition of different groups of immigrants.

In order to illustrate all this, the authors highlight three migration channels: economic channels, which bring in students and skilled migrants as well as low-skilled workers to meet temporary labour demands; social migration channels, which refer to families and certain ancestral groups; and refugees or asylum seekers, people who have been
compelled to move because of civil conflict, persecution or other intense pressure. According to the authors, current state migration policies in developed countries have a twofold objective: on the one hand to be more penetrable – or open, influenced by the migration policies in other developed countries – but, on the other hand, to be highly regulatory.

They believe that public opinion on migration is influenced by globalisation, insecurity – symbolised by the attacks of 11 September 2001 – and the cultural differences that challenge national identities. Moreover, they claim that migration is a natural and irrepressible force and predict that it will only intensify in the coming decades. They criticise the fact that the migrants’ contributions are often underestimated, especially in today’s society, in which multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism are treasured features. Migration stimulates the economies and cultures of both the migrants’ countries of origin and the host countries. Therefore, the authors consider that governments and public opinion should allow migrants to participate fully in mainstream society, rather than focusing on controlling the perceived threats that they pose.

**What of the future? The five principles of international migration**

In the final part of the book, the authors consider the economic, political and social factors that will influence the increase in the number of migrants in the future. They predict that in the coming 50 years, the supply of potential migrants will expand due to gradual economic growth, increased urbanisation and rising educational attainment in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. Factors such as persistent inter-country inequality and wage disparities between countries will be decisive, as will be both the growing working-age populations in developing countries and environmental strain. Similarly, they predict that the demand for migrants will grow dramatically in most developed countries as well as in many developing countries, mainly due to the dramatic rise in ageing populations, the progressive drop in birth rates, growing demand for low-skilled workers, the importance of attracting qualified high-skilled workers in promoting national competitiveness, and increased mobility among qualified workers.

At a national level, public policies should take into account the fact that migration is an irreversible social process. Therefore, countries should reorient their migration policies to progressively embrace international mobility as an integral and welcome feature of globalisation. For both economic and ethical reasons, the authors argue that the most desirable future scenario involves freer movement across borders. In fact, the World Bank estimates that, if the developed countries were to allow a 3% increase in migration from developing countries, global gains would amount to $356 billion per
annum between 2005 and 2025. On the other hand, progress must also be made at an international level, given that migration has always been “the orphan of the global institutional architecture”, and since no international agencies have been created with a clear mandate or capacity to address key global concerns regarding migration. The lack of fair regulation in this area means that the richest and most powerful nations are able to create their own laws.

The authors criticise the fact that the international institutional and legal framework in fact protects only one category of migrants, namely refugees. Therefore, they propose a global migration agenda that should be framed around principles that guide pragmatic steps toward a more open global economy that serves our collective interest: in the first instance, extending transnational rights, addressing several key areas such as the portability of pensions and benefits, remittances and political rights. Only 25% of migrants work in countries where they are covered by bilateral pension agreements, whilst 75% of migrants working abroad while paying taxes in their country of origin do not receive any social benefits. The second principle is the stimulation of social and economic progress for migrants, in order to help them acquire much-needed knowledge and skills, and to invest in their future, in collective prosperity and in the social cohesion of the host country itself.

Thirdly, the authors propose widening the umbrella of legal migration. Host countries should establish a time limit for migrants’ stay and estimate the total number of undocumented migrants, as well as, for example, extending temporary guest-worker programmes. Many developed countries have policies to try to reduce illegal immigration. The Global Commission on International Migration estimates that between 2.5 and 4 million people move across borders every year without authorisation.

Fourthly, it is necessary to fight xenophobia and migrant abuse. This is an obligation for host countries and involves the media informing the public of the benefits of migration and the inclusion of minority groups in the symbolic representation of the nation. It also means the regulation of the outcomes of xenophobia, such as stereotyping and discrimination in the workplace. Combating xenophobia requires shifting public discourse to focus on the merits of pluralism, the value of equality and the hazards of prejudice.

The final principle refers to improving data collection, given that reliable data are necessary in order to analyse the causes, dynamics and impacts of international migration as well as the role of government policies. This has been a goal since 1980, but not much progress has been made since then. In 2009, the Center for Global Development found that only six countries (four of them small island-states) gathered the data required for conducting a comprehensive analysis of international migration. At present, we still lack an adequate picture of cross-border movement around the
world. Therefore, we know less than we should about how to maximise the benefits of migration and minimise its risks and costs.

One of the key challenges for the future is the **global governance of migration**, a concept that is still relatively underdeveloped and immature, especially in comparison with trade and financial flows, issues for which governments have established international agreements. The authors envisage the real possibility that in the area of migration – as has occurred in the past with free trade, democracy and global peace – it will be possible to achieve international cooperation and, in time, the free movement of people with an international organisation in charge of managing this effectively.

This book is a must for anyone interested in international migration, thanks to its in-depth examination of the past, its special contribution to the study of the present and its clear vision of the future. For the authors of this book, “**the earth is one country and all of humanity its citizens**”.