



**The Migration Myth in Policy and Practice. Dreams, Development and Despair**, AKM Ahsan Ullah, Md Shahidul Haque Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2020. ISBN 978-981-15-1753-2 (print), ISBN 978-981-15-1754-9 (eBook)  
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Although population mobility has been part of human society since the earliest times, migration today is considered by the United Nations (UN) to be a global issue given its magnitude (3.5 percent of the global population) and the factors that determine it: in 2020 “the number of international migrants was estimated to be almost 281 million globally in 2020” (IOM, 2021), from which nearly two-thirds were labor migrants (UN, 2020). At the end of 2021, 89.3 million people were forcibly displaced, from which 27.1 million were refugees (UNHCR, 2022 a). These data still do not include the 7.83 million Ukrainian refugees across Europe (UNHCR, 2022 b).

Not all migration is forced or occurs by necessity, but it is also a “visible effect of the disillusionment of citizens in some Central and Eastern European states, disillusionment with their governments and living standards in their home countries” (Camară, 2022). The book reviewed here is not about all types of migration and its associated processes, but it focuses on the migration-development debate and on “the invisible cost migrants pay in pursuing migration” (p. vii); there is certainly a cost, given the fact that migrants are involved in two current competing narratives: the first narrative is that migrants are stealing jobs and destabilizing the host country, and the second one is that international migration is a boon (p. 163).

This book is a relevant contribution to the academic literature because the authors conduct their analysis by approaching important and uncomfortable questions, such as that of the remittances: “Many scholars tend to term migrant remittances as development mantra. Evidences for such claim are not in shortage. We have never challenged this either. What we attempted to do is to contribute to the migration knowledge by sharing experiences, concerns and perceptions about what development is in reality to them” (p. viii). The issue of remittances is also questioned by other authors, such as Wihtol de Wenden (2021), which dedicates a chapter to the relationship between development and remittances. This author states that in fact, the remittances create long-term dependence on receiving countries and

communities.

The text contains both conceptual and empirical perspectives, because it is grounded in the academic literature and it also does not focus on a particular country, but it provides practical examples worldwide, its relevance for many countries facing migration being undeniable. The remittances and other controversial and interesting aspects connected to migration are studied in this book, because “these facts are no way trivial in migration research. This volume tries to touch upon these facts critically with hopes that policymakers and policy takers come to a common ground for a greater cause of the world” (p. ix). From this statement, it can also be deduced the targeted readership of the book and its scope.

The content is structured into six chapters, including the introductory and the conclusive chapters.

Chapter 1, Introduction: Migration – Development Debate, is interesting and useful for understanding the correlations between migration and development: migration has not been discussed academically within a development framework until recently, but things began to change “as remittances, international trade, labor market, development and security issues associated with migration have taken lead in the globalization and development discourse” (p. 1). The opposing views of the migration optimists and migration pessimists are also highlighted, as well as the authors’ approach: “The book does not mean to undermine migration or to glorify it. We tend to investigate the long-term rather than the short-term impact of migration on development – income, life standard, education, health, infrastructure, etc. We delve into the facts that the social costs [female] migrants and the left (or remained) behind pay in the long run. To that end, we engage in an analysis of the costs the migrants pay throughout the migrancy” (p. 2).

In Chapter 2, Underlying Methodological and Theoretical Aspects, the authors state that this book is an outcome of research conducted from 2014 to 2018 in several countries: Bangladesh, Brazil (on Dekassegui), India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Netherlands (on Surinamese).

Chapter 3, Migration: A Long-Term Alternative?, studies the hypothesis that migration could be a long-term strategy for development in developing countries; the results show that in some cases remittances have a positive impact on long-run economic growth, but “the impact differs based on the country’s economic development level, governance, size of the economy, and the abundance of

remittances in the economy” (p. 21).

Chapter 4, *Extraordinary Agents and Expensive Adventure*, engages in an analysis on gender sensitivity of remittances: women constitute around half of the total international migration flow, but the amount of the remittance that they are exposed to is considerably lower than that of males; it also explores the fact that migrants in some countries are considered as heroes, risking their lives for their families and their contribution to the economy.

Chapter 5, *Political Economy of Migration, and Social Force*, advances with an approach to researching and analyzing migration processes and provides predictions concerning the costs and benefits of migrants to home and host countries, as, for example, the pattern of divorces due to migration.

Chapter 6, *Inevitability of Migration: Conclusions and Policy Options*, deals with an important phenomenon, xenophobia, with a strong prevalence in South Africa during the 70s, and reported in Europe during the influx of Middle Eastern migrants into Europe.

Through the chapters interesting information is provided, such as data regarding the countries most dependent on remittances in 2016 (Table 3.2, p. 54); it seems that Tajikistan was the most dependent, with 42.1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contributed by remittances; this book and other information from supplementary sources deconstruct a myth about Romanian migrants’ remittances: their financial contribution is about 2% of Romanian GDP (OECD, 2019), despite an exaggerate perception on its impact.

The book does not contain many figures, but they are relevant and interesting, such as Map 1.1, which contains the pattern of global migration, or Fig. 6.1 Cost of remittances – one cost being “Loosing roots, connections and networks” (p. 150). There are more tables, also relevant and with surprising information, such as Table 1.1 Features of migration in Asia, Africa and Latin America (p. 9), which is a very useful synthesis about the migration in these regions: it contains features such as dominant flows (which despite a general perception they are not only inter-regional, such as South-North, but also intra-regional, South-South), main destinations inside and outside the region, inducing factors, and so on.

Given the nature of the subject, the book is interesting for everyone – academics, policymakers, and also the general public – especially for those who want to understand what migration involves and which are its social costs.

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