
Book Review

Exceptional People: How Migration Shaped Our World and Will Define Our Future

Goldin, I., Cameron, G. and Balarajan, M. (eds.)

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The link between migration and economic growth in receiving and sending countries has been widely explored from the academic and policy perspectives. With this in mind, the most important contribution of this book is related to its interdisciplinary approach. The book goes beyond the economic analysis, integrating successfully the social and political implications of migration. Previous works in the literature have tackled, in a very complete manner, the main theoretical approaches explaining the relationship between migration and economic growth, as well as a review of the main empirical studies exploring that linkage. The work by Goldin *et al* introduces the reader to a multidimensional analysis where the effects of migration are explored from the point of view of different disciplines. An important message is conveyed along the book: migration, rather than being considered as undesirable, should be perceived as a global opportunity.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first section, a very careful and detailed historical overview of migration patterns and trends is conducted, starting with the early human migrations in prehistory, and continuing with the emergence of the first sedentary communities in the Middle East, the emergence of agrarian civilizations, the associated migration flows and the appearance of growing trade networks among them. The analysis of the increasing exchange of ‘migrants, goods and ideas’ – as expressed by the authors – includes a large variety of important milestones in the history of human migration until the early 1970s. This review of 60 000 years of human migration, besides being pertinent, plays a very important role in terms of explaining to the reader how migration has ‘fueled the engine of human progress’, as expressed by the authors. The basic idea underlying this assumption is that migration should be considered as a key driver of economic development, taking into account its positive effects on both sending and receiving countries. Since the very beginning of the book, the idea that migration has propelled the diffusion not just of goods and people, but also of new ideas, technologies, is strongly defended. By studying different significant events in world history, the reader is invited to consider that migration flows have accelerated learning and innovation globally, and that history shows that migration ‘has been an engine of social progress’.

Part two starts with an analysis of different factors at the micro levels, meso levels and macro levels that are supposed to influence the decision to move. Within that framework, some theories of economic migration are reviewed, such as the neoclassical approach. But something you miss in this section is a more profound debate concerning the different theories that explain migration. Are all of the main theories that account for migration included? How is the debate between these theories structured? As mentioned above, it is clear that the authors’ arguments support migration

and that they consider it as beneficial for growth. But for the layman, it would have been very useful to understand how the main paradigms clash, and where the authors stand in that debate. In other words, to gain a better understanding where the authors' research orientation stands within the theoretical framework.

Later, the current channels and flows of migration are presented, as well as an illustrative typology of the different classes of migration: economic migration (high-skilled, low-skilled, visa-free, student migration), social migration (family channels, ancestral channels) and refugee migration. In addition, a set of policies and mechanisms currently implemented by nation states to control their borders is explained. A powerful and convincing argument is presented in this section: despite the fact that the political agendas and debates in many developed countries are strongly influenced by the fears of massive immigration by asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented aliens, the evidence shows that 'these movements constitute less than a third of total flows'. Moreover, stylized facts show that migration does not follow a trend just explained by the movement from developing to developed countries: migration between developing countries is almost equal to migration from developing to developed countries. As stated by the authors, migration should therefore be considered as a normal effect associated with the increasing process of interdependence and globalization. Finally, part two explains the most relevant economic and social impacts of migration on receiving and sending countries. In line with the principal idea defended through their work, the authors assert that the economic effects are globally beneficial, in terms of income generation and inequality reduction. A pertinent comparison is established with the free trade cause: in order to reap the benefits of international migration, governments need to take action and lessen negative impacts on regions and groups that could be affected. However, on the aggregate, migration should be considered as beneficial for growth in the global economy.

In part three, the reader is invited to consider some future trends in migration. As a result of an increasingly connected and interdependent world, one should expect the transportation costs to continue falling down, as well as the individual risks associated with the movement of people. Reasonably, we can expect more diverse societies and increasing migration flows in the future. Taking these trends into account, an invitation is extended: the world needs an institutional framework to regulate migration, just in the same manner that global trade or other issues within the international economic order are treated. Considering its global scope, effects and implications, migration is a process that surpasses the borders of nation states. A relevant international migration organization is needed, accompanied with a rules-based regime where labor could benefit from the increasing global cooperation.

The book by Goldin *et al* is a stimulating work that takes the reader on a very complete journey along the past, present and future of international migrations. As mentioned before, besides offering a very careful and elaborated historical review, its main contribution lies in offering an interdisciplinary analysis of these processes. Very well and clearly written, the book is interesting and captivating for a very wide audience, not just for the scientific community or the experts in migration studies.

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