

BOOK REVIEWS

The Uprooted: Improving Humanitarian Responses to Forced Migration

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The number of refugees – persons outside their country of origin – is decreasing. However, as the authors of *The Uprooted* maintain, this statement can be misleading. While refugees are decreasing in number, forced migration is becoming pervasive. Forced migrants are individuals who cross international borders to seek refuge as well as those who are classified as internally displaced. While some of these individuals leave their countries of their own accord, many migrants are forced to flee because of the growing number of conflicts where civilians are targets of military activity. As the authors of this noteworthy volume are quick to highlight, the legal frameworks that address refugee flows developed following World War II provide insufficient protection and assistance to the broad spectrum of persons who fall into the category of “migrant”.

In *The Uprooted*, the authors identify several specific issues that impede the provision of support to forced migrants. They follow this discussion with resolutions describing how to overcome the barriers to effective humanitarian response. This book is the second published product of a collaborative study that examines the current humanitarian regime. The first book – *Catching Fire: Containing Complex Displacement in a Volatile World* – consisted of five case studies from which the team drew their findings: Burundi, Colombia, East Timor, Georgia and Sri Lanka.

As Chapter One outlines, the institutional and systematic holes in the humanitarian system are placing the rising number of forced migrants at risk. The authors maintain that forced migration is rising for several reasons. Internally dis-

placed persons (IDPs) are increasing, and by the late 1990s outnumbered refugees by two to one. Forced repatriation of refugees has also been observed. Many times those who are repatriated return to circumstances similar to that which drove them to leave. Statelessness can be both a cause and an effect of forced migration and can occur when refugees lose their former nationalities but fail to qualify for a new one. Environmental and natural disasters can also spur a rise in forced migration. Migrants also can be uprooted by development projects, manifested in such modern constructs as dams, highways, and urban expansion.

Following this initial discussion, the following chapters engage in a discussion of a specific institutional barrier to humanitarian effectiveness in regards to forced migrants. Chapter Two examines the gaps in the legal frameworks. As the authors emphasize, international law provides for the protection of refugees. The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees maintains that states may not forcibly return refugees to countries in which they are likely to face persecution. While there are limits to this convention, its most obvious fault (evidenced in the growing number of IDPs and wars that target civilians) is its inability to protect displaced individuals who do not cross international borders. Among the resolutions the authors provide to address this obvious institutional gap in the international legal system is the development of a fair asylum system, the development of mechanisms to share protective responsibilities, and the mandated provision of representation to asylum seekers.

As discussed in Chapter Three, one way to address the institutional failings of the international legal system in relations to forced migrants is to create the position of UN High Commissioner for Forced Migrants. Following an examination of the role of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the authors examine other actors involved in the responding to humanitarian emergencies including the International Committee of the Red Cross and various UN offices. They propose that the problem with the multi-actor involvement in humanitarian crises is the problem of coordinating multi-

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ple agencies. While the authors do not address the bureaucratic difficulties in developing a new UN office, they suggest that a Commissioner for Forced Migrants would remedy this coordination problem by serving as a focal point for migrant issues.

Perhaps the most common roadblock that agencies and states experience in responding to humanitarian emergencies is the funding of such operations. While this issue is often the singular aspect of humanitarian responses that the public is made aware of, the authors provide a clear and in-depth description of the international funding environment, including a study of the UN's Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) (this agency's primary fundraising tool) as well as an examination of the donor governments and agencies. As detailed in Chapter Four, the issue of coordination again arises. For instance, donors encourage competition between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international agencies that address humanitarian crises. The purpose, the authors note, is to promote quality assurance. However, as they quickly highlight, such competition can decrease the incentive to cooperate with one another, and often leads to the development of overlapping tasks and the subsequent neglect of other duties. The reader soon realizes that donors are motivated by more than humanitarian objectives. While this should not be surprising, particularly to those who study foreign policy, it is nonetheless disappointing. As the authors relate, foreign policy decisions are central to a donors' choice in funding. That is, donor nations such as the U.S. and the U.K. are more likely to fund programs in countries that have strategic political interests. This chapter thus concludes with a discussion of "good humanitarian donorship" – a topic worthy of its own volume.

Often times, that which agencies and international institutions are meant to provide is the most difficult to obtain. Protection and security of forced migrants and aid workers themselves has become a critical problem following the Cold War. National governments are the entities with primary responsibility to uphold standards of international law and human rights during a humanitarian emergency. However,

many governments are unwilling or unable to offer such minimal assistance during conflicts. Thus, agencies and institutions like the UN have taken on the responsibility of protection. As Chapter Five relates, this outside assistance materializes in two forms: the provision of aid and the dispatching of peacekeepers. This chapter looks at what national governments, international organizations, regional agencies and NGOs can do to address the challenge of providing security in contemporary conflict zones. One of the more interesting groups the authors look at is the Private Military Company (PMC). PMCs have gained notoriety in their effective handling of conflict situations and training in countries that lack the necessary armed forces to carry out effective security for civilians. However, as the authors rightly point out, the use of PMCs brings with it new dilemmas in international law that revolve around issues of legitimacy and accountability. PMCs, though not a new entity in the general sense, are indeed a group of non-state armed actors that are understudied and fast gaining attention.

Chapter Six concludes the book with a look at potential solutions for mending the institutional gaps in the protection and assistance of forced migrants. Many of these solutions stem from the study of the limited successes in assisting refugees. Several lessons were learned from the case studies this study team carried out. For example, in Central America and Africa, local integration of migrants and refugees in reconstruction and development projects allow individuals to earn their livelihood as opposed to the sole dependence on relief. A general finding the authors emphasize, which affects the implementation and success of all humanitarian assistance operations, is the inability and unwillingness to plan for long-term forms of involvement. In the end, it seems, much of the solution lies in the existence of political will. On the surface, this conclusion is quite evident. However, the authors of *The Uprooted* have taken the growing dilemma of forced migration and broken it down into systematic and comprehensible parts. Their analysis of the problems identified through their study of five cases and the po-

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tential solutions is a lucid one and should act as a springboard for further action.

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Human Cargo: A Journey among Refugees

Caroline Moorehead

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Forcibly migrated people are the focus of this detailed account written by Moorehead, an author known for her writings on human rights. Forcibly migrated people are perceived as 'social dangers' in the transit and destination countries. Their arrival is often compared to unstoppable natural phenomena or to invading hordes of terrorists, their number is described as a 'crisis', and their presence is discussed in terms of social and economic burden, unemployment and crime. However, in this book they are viewed from a different perspective.

Human Cargo: A Journey Among Refugees starts with a very short 'refugee story', which could be characterised as the book's preface. When it comes to the main content of the text, there is a prologue followed by ten chapters organised along three general parts. Part one 'A view of history', including chapter one, provides a historical retrospection into the international community's efforts to assist, protect and often exclude forcibly migrated people. Part two, 'Leaving', includes chapter two and three on 'boat people' trying to reach Sicily and migrants trying to reach the US from the Mexican-US border, respectively. Part three, 'Arriving', which includes chapter four, five, six, seven and eight focuses on what happens when forcibly migrated people finally

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reach a transit or destination country, and part four 'Afterwards', which includes chapters nine and ten, is about the situation of migrants who have either returned to their country of origin or patiently wait for a better and more secure future for themselves and their children. The book finishes with an epilogue.

Forced migration is the result of the dynamic interaction between push and pull factors with the push factors often being stronger. All these are evident here; torture, war, genocide, extreme poverty and others. What is also evident in Moorehead's book is the blurred borders between political refugees and economic migrants. Movement across contexts is not easy at all. The strict legal frameworks of migration have made these people to resort to human smugglers; the *scafisti*, the *coyotes*, the *kaçakçı* or whatever else they are called depending on the context. This many times comes with terrible consequences such as the deaths of a number of *extra-communitari*, Sicily's boat people, Mexican migrants in the Mexico-US border, Chinese migrants from Fujian or the SIEVX passengers. But even forced migrants do not reach a 'better' place or a better life automatically. These people are often perceived negatively, demonised, and described as 'illegals' and 'queue jumpers' irrespectively of the transit or destination country. President Conté of Guinea, perhaps forgetful of the fact that Guineans also immigrate to the developed world, declared that refugees are "little better than cockroaches" (p.169). Forced migrants are often detained in degrading conditions, some in distant places such as the bankrupt republics in the Pacific Ocean that are contracted as detentions centres by Australia, and have their basic rights denied. They inevitably face the ethnocentric view of their 'hosts', the cultural and climate differences while they are viewed in a circumspect light in relation to their persecution status. All pass through a stage of uncertainty about their future, but more strikingly a number of them are beaten, others are self-mutilated and some even attempt committing suicide. Some are tortured and bear the psychological and physical traumas for the rest of their lives. A number of them are deported (once again forcibly) to their country of

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origin and have to live in chaotic and dangerous conditions, whilst those who (some may consider lucky as they) avoid deportation, become idle and socially excluded.

This book will perhaps give the readers some information they do not have such as the exact amount of money Canada spends on securing the border from unwanted refugees, and the number of Liberian people having fled their country in a single year in the 1990s. Nevertheless, this is not what this book is primarily about. Moorehead's narratives provide the sad truth behind the scenes. It offers the readers a tour through the troubles and difficulties refugees face in their attempt to escape. I bought this book from an airport newsagent and I started reading it on the plane. The ease in which I travelled, greatly contrasted with the experiences of the three protagonists of the book, Mercy, Happy and Roland, who have stoically suffered staying in ships for days without water and food, and more importantly without even having a safe destination ahead. This is certainly not a book in which the author delves into a great deal of analysis, and unfortunately, this is not a novel. I say unfortunately because the people presented in this book are real and suffer truly. This book is a product of investigative journalism, and to a lesser extent historical research. It is print documentary, disturbing at many points as it is mostly about separation and loss.

Moorehead's book has a number of offerings for its readers. Firstly, it sheds abundant light onto all these humane and intimate experiences of forced migrants that neither the state apparatus in transit and destination countries nor the tabloid media are interested in and/or want to ignore. By providing the stories of individuals and how control structures affect their lives, it counterbalances the general tendency to view forced migrants as a homogeneous, impersonal and potentially dangerous group. Secondly, the author shows that aggressive, excluding and expensive ways of keeping the 'other' out are hardly effective, and that it is the economic, political and democratic deficits in source countries that need to be taken care of. Another significant aspect of the book is that Moorehead presents the experiences of forced migrants not only in the industrially advanced west-

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ern world but also in developing countries such as Egypt, where the authors starts the 'odyssey' from, Guinea, and Lebanon. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only book offering such a balance, and it debunks - to an extent - the myth that forced migrants end up in rich countries only. Additionally, I consider an asset of this book is that it pays attention to the situation of forced migrants when they return to their countries of origin. The readership of this book is not limited to people interested in migration studies but also extends to the lay person. Such a book on this political and social hot potato filled by numerous myths and a great dose of hyperbole is likely to have, at least, some impact even on those people who cynically and misguidedly consider forced migration none of their business.

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