



Book review of Dickinson, Eliot 2023. *Human Migration and the Refugee Crisis: Origins and Global Impact*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 256 pp.

BOOK REVIEW

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Human Migration and the Refugee Crisis: Origins and Global Impact, by Eliot Dickinson, Professor of Political Science at Western Oregon University, provides a wide-ranging account of international migration and displacement, with case studies across the Global North and the Global South (e.g. Australia, South Africa, and Germany). Drawing on both original research and grey literature, the book is written in accessible language intended for a broad non-specialist audience. It includes illustrations, maps, and a recommended reading list.

The book is divided into five chapters, starting with a historical account of migration from the 16th century, then moving to contemporary events and ‘crises’, and finally to future implications. The first chapter sets the scene by introducing migration as a defining feature of a ‘broken planet’. It frames displacement as systemic and ongoing, contributing to rising global inequalities and driven by (social and political) conflict, climate change, and capitalism. Chapter 2 discusses the origins and causes of human migration and includes examples such as British migration to Australia, war and displacement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Arab Spring. Chapter 3 focuses on the global impact of migration, and Chapter 4 on responses, using examples from South Africa, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Turkey, Syria, Venezuela, Australia, and New Zealand. This chapter also discusses Brexit, the rise of nationalist political parties in Germany, and Donald Trump’s anti-immigration policies in the United States. In the final chapter (Chapter 5), Dickinson outlines what he considers to be the future implications of global migration and reviews the international instruments designed to protect the rights of displaced people.

The environmental refugee dimension highlighted in Chapter 5 is a valuable and robust addition. The Kiribati example is excellent for introducing the topic of environmental refugees and climate change as a growing reason for seeking asylum. The section on eco-anxiety is comprehensive and contextualises the causes, urgency, and significance of climate change for displacement in an informed and critical manner. The sections

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on the Nansen initiative, the UN Global Compact, and other international instruments are useful and informative. They could have come earlier in the book to frame and contextualise some of the discussions. Notably, the part on 'India's population bomb' (p. 87) is rather general and does not reflect the diversity of Indian societies, norms, and customs, from North to South, urban and rural areas, and across religions, castes, and classes. The picture portrayed is based largely on rural customs and social norms. Despite this, the discussion on population growth and demographic pressures in the context of migration, the range of case studies, such as Japan, Germany, the United States, India, and Nigeria, and the consideration of a future pandemic provide a comprehensive and interesting conclusion to the volume.

That said, the book presents some important limitations, first regarding terminology. It starts with a rather alarmist framing of migration and its impact, referring to a 'broken planet' and a 'global refugee crisis'. Although the latter term is established in media and political discourse, migration scholars tend to opt for different terminology that shifts the emphasis to the impact on the refugees themselves rather than on the political scene. The crisis is experienced by the displaced people first and foremost and then by governments and societies. [Nowicka \(2020\)](#), for example, refers to the phenomenon as 'Europe's refugee drama', referring to the politicisation of the crisis and the political clashes regarding asylum seekers and refugees. [Almustafa \(2021\)](#) proposes reframing the 'crisis of migration' as a 'crisis of protection', since host countries in the Global North are failing to protect asylum seekers detained in inhuman conditions. [Cantat, Pécoud, and Thiollet \(2023: 627\)](#) also criticise the narrative of crisis related to migration and instead propose a reframing of *migration as crisis*. It must also be noted that certain key terms used in the book are outdated, for example, the use of 'non-whites' or 'the age of discovery'. At the same time, there are some interesting insights regarding terminology, such as certain governments' preference for using the terms 'guest workers' or 'language students' instead of 'immigrants' to refer to the same category of people (p. 177).

A further limitation is the book's use, in certain parts, of anecdotal and unsubstantiated claims to illustrate key arguments. Examples include 'Russian soldiers, many of whom were ill-equipped and drunk on vodka' (p. 54) and 'for beyond its shores live millions of people who, given the chance, would gladly leave their homes behind and start again in Australia' (p. 155). Including references or data would make many of the book's sections better substantiated and more robust. Generally, the author tends to rely on grey literature, opinion pieces, and social media posts to support certain points where academic research might have been more appropriate. There are also some outdated sources; for example, the source cited for the monthly cost of childcare in Tokyo (Chapter 5) dates back to 2010.

Moreover, some of the topics and case studies in the book are framed in ways that may simplify or limit the reader's understanding of the wider context and ongoing scholarly discussions. When discussing the economic impact of immigration in Chapter 3, the focus is on low-skilled workers who 'keep business costs down' (p. 95) and the positive economic impact of unauthorised migrants (p. 97). There is no mention of skilled migrants at all, which would have provided a more comprehensive picture of the economic impact of immigration in the United States and the other countries studied. Furthermore, when discussing the massacre in Christchurch in New Zealand in Chapter 4, two paragraphs are devoted to the 'egg-boy' incident with Senator Anning, and only a couple of lines on Jacinda Ardern and her globally acclaimed handling of the situation, which showed empathy and was pivotal in community relations. Lastly,

the section on food is important; however, there is wide-ranging scholarship on food, heritage, and belonging that could have been cited and therefore enriched this section.

Overall, *Human Migration and the Refugee Crisis* is highly readable and suitable for non-specialists seeking an introduction to the topic of human migration and forced displacement. It is also useful for students looking for chronological accounts of world migration and examples from around the world. The book presents a clearly structured and engaging narrative, with vivid examples that enrich the discussion. The tone is generally informal and, in some instances, even tongue-in-cheek. In a few places, these illustrative elements appear intended to provide context rather than serve as evidence. Incorporating supporting data or references in these sections could further enhance the work's overall rigour. The book is also timely and relevant, as migration and refugee policies are central in global politics and constitute one of the most controversial and hotly debated topics. The discussion on climate migration and the evolving policy landscape adds value to the broader debate.

Despite the range of examples and case studies, however, the book remains largely Anglo- and West-centric. The inclusion of work by minoritised scholars with lived experiences of displacement and migration, such as Chinmay [Tumbe \(2018\)](#) and Rima [Saini \(2017\)](#), to name but a few, could have enriched the analysis. Additionally, engaging with scholarship on transnationalism and refugees ([Nowicka, Krzyżowski & Dennis 2019](#); [Nowicka 2020](#)), refugee camps ([Agier 2008, 2010](#)), and migration and refugee studies ([Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014](#)), particularly in Chapter 3, would have added critical depth and brought in important and currently missing perspectives. The acknowledgements thoughtfully recognise the contributions of two research assistants, and it might have been helpful to emphasise their input in specific chapters.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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