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**Worlds on the Move: Globalization, Migration and Cultural
Security**

A Review Article

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Book Reviews

Worlds on the Move: Globalization, Migration and Cultural Security. Edited by JONATHAN FRIEDMAN and SHALINI RANDERIA. I. B. Tauris, London. 2004. 372 pp., £47.50.

In the simplest economic model of migration, with regional specificity of capital, an efficiency gain will be reaped if workers migrate from a region where the marginal product of labour is low to a region where the marginal product of labour is high. The gain will be maximized when M workers migrate such that the marginal products of labour (wage rates) across the two regions are equalized. Any level of migration that falls short of M is too low from the point of view of productive efficiency. In the simplest cultural model of migration, with regional specificity of culture (and ethnic identity), it is anything but clear under what conditions migration will confer 'cultural gains', let alone what the optimal level of migration is. An obvious difficulty will arise from the vagueness in the grading or ranking of cultures, and from the ambiguity regarding the optimality of ethnic compositions and the extent of inclusion. The difference between economics and culturalism is conceivably the reason why, in the very first page of the book under review, migration is referred to as 'a problem', whereas in an economics textbook migration is probably described as a solution.

Correspondingly, throughout the book there is much interest in, and considerable concern about, issues of integration, fragmentation, assimilation, and conformity. On several occasions, surprise is expressed at the tendency of migrants nowadays to assume and maintain 'multiple identities'. Presumably, history plays a role: in past centuries, migration was motivated by a fundamental search for new habitats and resources. Migration was, by definition, an act of disconnection. Presumably, modern communication technologies also play an important role: migrants can simultaneously and effectively be members of multiple reference groups, and it is not necessary for them to give up membership of one group for the sake of belonging to another. Indeed, co-membership (with adjustable weights) in a multiplicity of reference groups serves to maximize the wellbeing of migrants. Put differently, 'migrants' would not have moved in the first place if they had not been able to maintain affiliation with their origin while forging new links with their destination community. This preference implies that attempts by the host society to 'integrate' migrants by making the host society the migrants' exclusive reference group are doomed to fail: a vigorous pursuit of integration and assimilation by the host country is incompatible with the migrants' optimal portfolio of affiliations. To the migrants, 'psychological fragmentation' can be a source of gain rather than a purveyor of pain. There is a difference between migrants having difficulty in identifying themselves with the place to which they have migrated and of migrants having little incentive to identify themselves with the place to which they have migrated. In the latter case, integration policies will be largely futile.

Consequently, the book is particularly interested in 'transnational' issues, that is in the *joint* roles that countries can effectively play in the integration and assimilation of migrants. This is wise, since it is better to realize that sometimes it is not only the state hosting the migrants that determines how far they will integrate or assimilate. Often, the nation or society of origin will seek to preserve the migrants' allegiance and association, for reasons ranging from remittance flows to political leverage. When migrants are keen to preserve their affiliation with their country of origin as a reference group, and when the country of origin is keen to foster their attachment to it, the scope for countries of destination to pursue successful 'integration' policies, transforming migrants into 'ethnics' and then on into 'nationals', will be quite narrow. In other words, the 'old programme' of the nation state concerning the creation and safeguarding of the 'cultural homogeneity' and 'social integrity' of the population residing therein, is incompatible with the 'new programme' whereby migration networks and the associated flows that transcend the borders of the nation state come hand in hand with cultural heterogeneity

and social diversity. It is as if, in the face of migration, the ‘inclusive capacity’ of the nation state shrinks and the definition of the state requires revision, rather than requiring migrants to be ‘revised’ so as to fit into the original blueprint for the state.

Economists may consider expenditure of energy on these and related themes superfluous at best, and purely philosophical at worst. Not so. It is important to learn how the minds of fellow social scientists who are keen students of migration perceive the migration scene and its tensions, and what the inquiries of these colleagues have been yielding.

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