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Book Review

Hein de Haas, **How Migration Really Works: A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics**, Penguin, London, 09/11/2023, 464 pages, £25.00 (Hardback), ISBN: 9780241632208

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International migration is a major global issue. It is estimated that 3.6% of the world's population live outside their country of birth. While most of these immigrants migrate voluntarily and legally, some of them are asylum seekers and illegal migrants. At first sight, it appears that the number of migrants emigrating from poor and middle-income countries to wealthy countries for work or living is steadily increasing and many of these migrants attempt to cross international borders illegally into the western countries. However, this myth-based portrayal of immigrants increases fears about their uncontrollability, and it reinforces strict immigration policies at the borders. As a result, such policies push immigrants to use dangerous land and sea routes, and the number of deaths and disappearances of the migrants along these routes is increasing.

Events like these need to be discussed, but the most important issue is to understand the factors and myths that lead to the creation of harsh immigration policies and the connection between these policies and heartbreaking incidents on migration routes and at borders. Hein de Haas' new book, titled '*How Migration Really Works: A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics*' provides clear answers to questions on the topic.

Hein de Haas is a Dutch sociologist and geographer who teaches at the University of Amsterdam. He was a founding member of the International Migration Institute (IMI) at the University of Oxford between 2006 and 2015. He is also a Professor of Migration and Development at the University of Maastricht.

De Haas's new book, *How Migration Really Works*, is divided into three sections, and contains 22 chapters. In the first section, titled (Myths of Migration), he examines the global migration trends, and the changes in the number, scale, and destination of migrants by discussing seven myths. In the second section, (Immigration: Threat or Solution), de Haas analyzes the impact of migration on both origin and destination societies, and the factors contributing to the success or failure of integration policies through eight myths. In the third section titled (Migration Propaganda), de Haas addresses how

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politicians, interest groups and international organizations distort the facts about migration by relying on some popular ideas. In other words, based on three decades of research, de Haas debunks the myths propagated by politicians, interest groups, international organizations, and the media in the context of immigration and related issues.

It is true that all of the myths in this book are important in the context of international migration and the immigration policies of the countries, but given the controversial nature of issues such as border control, strict immigration policies, xenophobia, and the role of climate change in migration in recent years, paying attention to myths such as “migration is at an all-time high”, “borders cannot be controlled”, “immigration sends crime rates soaring”, “mass migration has produced mass segregation”, “border restrictions reduce immigration”, “public opinion has turned against immigration”, and “climate change will lead to mass migration”, are particularly noteworthy.

The book follows a specific formula in the structure of each chapter. At first, de Haas presents each myth separately and elaborates how they are formed in relation to immigration. Following this, the author introduces the facts in this field by focusing on the research conducted. He primarily focuses on general examples, but specifically emphasizes patterns and processes of immigration to America and Europe from the Second World War to the present day.

With the purpose of clarifying misconceptions and debunking myths about immigration and border control propagated by pro and anti-immigration camps and by the media in Western countries, this is one of the most important points that Hein de Haas focuses on in his illuminating book. In other words, de Haas' new book, *How Migration Really Works: A Factual Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics*, aims to answer questions about immigration and highlight the difference between common misconceptions about immigration and reality. The book examines a highly divisive political issue and is seen as an important resource on the subject.

De Haas notes that Western governments face a trilemma when implementing their immigration policies. In his view, these governments, whose immigration policies are based on myths, cannot focus on protecting the country's open economy, respecting, and protecting the basic rights of foreigners, and at the same time satisfying the anti-immigration preferences of their citizens. De Haas points out that it is impossible for any immigration policies to achieve all these goals simultaneously. He says: “One of the three has to go”, and “so, the most attractive option for politicians is to suggest that they clamp down on immigration through bold acts of political showmanship that conceal the true nature of immigration policies.” (p.273)

These governments demand to divert public attention from these challenges by implementing strict immigration policies that create more noise. Moreover, he argues that

the main victims of these strict and noisy policies are often asylum seekers and illegal immigrants by identifying: “Another way politicians have tried to find a way around this trilemma is to adopt tough rhetoric and to resort to highly visible border-enforcement measures such as building walls and fences.” (p.283). Furthermore, he debates “While border enforcement targets asylum seekers and illegal migrants, it leaves the general set of rules and regulations for (the numerically much more important) legal immigration unaffected.” (p.283). Implementing populist immigration policies may be a preferred option for politicians, but it puts the lives of thousands of asylum seekers and illegal migrants who aims to cross the borders at risk and deprives them and their relatives of their right to life.

De Haas remarks that the fear of uncontrollability of immigration can prevent immigrants from integrating into the society and culture of the host country. The author believes that the use of the term immigration crisis may result in the adoption of stringent immigration policies, including border enforcement: “All of this has amalgamated in the notion of a ‘migration crisis’ that requires drastic countermeasures – such as stronger border enforcement, refugee resettlement schemes, and development aid for poor countries” (p.283).

Although in this book de Haas focuses on the Western countries when discussing the problems caused by immigration policies based on myths and does not mention the situation of other countries that receive immigrants, the book still contains many interesting facts and useful details for scholars, researchers, and students. Beyond the common narratives about immigration based on an in-depth understanding of recent research, the book presents an objective view of trends, patterns and reasons of international migration and the issues caused by immigration policies in Western countries. It also provides a novel and distinctive platform for new research.

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