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Book Review

Robin Cohen, **Global Diasporas: An Introduction**, Routledge, London, 08/06/2023, 234 Pages, £135.00 (Hardback), ISBN: 9781032188454

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The concept of global diasporas gained world-wide popularity starting in 1990. After the Cold War, the international system began to stabilize and until 1990, migration was classified according to categories such as “labor migration” and “brain drain migration.” Later, these classifications transformed into “mass movement” and “mass refugee migration.” These two types of migration constitute the main focus of present migration issues. Cases of mass migration have been described using various terms, including “mass uprooting”, “mass dispersion” and “mass relocation”, and then these cases have come to be called “hybrid integration”. However, the term “diaspora” remains the most commonly used term to describe collective groups residing in a homeland that is not their home country.

According to what the author states in the introduction to the book, after 9/11, when a terrorist attack took place in the United States, discourse surrounding diaspora and the security agenda was transformed. In this context, the basic questions that arose on the issue of the collective diaspora were: Do collective diaspora identities imply disloyalty to the countries to which they moved and in which they were formed, or do collective diaspora groups adopt allegiance to the countries to which they moved? Furthermore, do these groups engage in work within global development agencies and the governments of rich countries that have a positive impact on the economic and social development of their home countries, thus benefiting the world?

These are questions that need to be answered, but they are not sufficient to understand the state of global diaspora, particularly after the emergence of other terms that result from this diaspora, such as transnational identity, hybrid identity, multiculturalism, mosaic societies, and globalization, to name a few. Robin Cohen’s book entitled, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*, provides a simplified and comprehensive clarification of the issues raised and the terms mentioned above, specifically as it approaches the topic by presenting examples of diasporas of various peoples throughout history.

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of Oxford. During his career, he worked at several universities, including Cape Town, Ibadan Post, Birmingham, The West Indies, Stanford and Berkeley.

The book is based on the descriptive approach, which describes the research topic as it is on the ground, by collecting data and information that the author added to the book. Data in this book includes numbers of global diaspora groups and their areas of distribution. Additionally, the author revises data and information recorded in past periods providing neutral and objective critiques. The book provides an array of information with evidence, also leaning towards the historical approach.

With the aim of creating a database, as well as a neutral basis for analysis to address the issue of global diaspora and creating a definitional entry similar to a scientific document, the author raises two important questions: "What are the stages and reasons for the formation of diaspora groups throughout history?" And "What is the influence or role of diaspora groups in the policies of the countries in which they reside?"

The book, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*, consists of 9 chapters. The book's chapters are divided into two parts: The first 5 chapters discuss the stages of the emergence of diaspora groups. In this context, the author points out that the conversation on global diaspora began with the Jewish diaspora (p.33, 35, 39). In the 1880s, through the 1970s and afterwards, the term diaspora gained popularity with the emergence of the African diaspora and the Armenian diasporas. This is described as the second phase of the diaspora state (p. 57, 72). The author also pointed out that in the second phase some diaspora groups were formed as a result of seeking work or trade, such as Lebanese and Chinese diasporas and those who went out to serve the goals of empires in achieving colonial interests, such as Indians and British people. A large number of Indians and British still live in the diaspora (p.153, 155, 156).

Regarding the third phase, the author writes that the 1990s saw an intellectual development in the use of the term diaspora, towards a social structural perspective and beyond positivist approaches. That is to say, the term was used to study the state of diaspora by redefining the existing identities in a country in isolation from the concepts of homeland and religious or ethnic groupings, but rather through circumstantial intellectual trends. Thus, diaspora is no longer an existing concept as a result of the emergence of overlapping cultural-intellectual identities on the surface according to many thinkers from a social structural perspective. The fourth stage or the stage of consolidation or unification, as the author describes it, brought the concept of the diaspora back to the scene with a vengeance, as it became clear that there were small minorities who still clung to the identity and culture of their homeland. The intellectual literature of this period was characterized by a treatment of the diaspora and the classifications associated with it based on two elements: Common characteristics and ideal references. The author names the fourth stage, the consolidation stage, because it redefined the global diaspora and established its rules based on the reality of its status quo around the world (p.10-14).


The last 4 chapters focus on the changes that have occurred in global diaspora groups. Here, the author mentions the attempts of some diaspora groups to propose what is called a “return to the homeland”, such as Zionist thought and the Sikh dream. In these chapters, the author also discusses the role played by diaspora groups in the globalized economy, while addressing the new forms of global migration resulting from mass movements driven by the search for a better future or because of war and disasters (p.214). Additionally, the author mentions that there are changes in the nature of some diaspora groups. The Jewish diaspora no longer form a diaspora group because of wars, but rather out of trade (p.247). Finally, the author looks at the role that diaspora groups can play in international politics, summarizing this role based on Gabriel Sheffer’s account of the diaspora between diasporas with a homeland and diasporas without a homeland. While the thinking of those without a homeland range between separation and unity, the thinking of those with a homeland focuses on the idea of developing the standard of living in their country (p.251-252).

As part of a critical outlook, the book tentatively addressed the issue of the Palestinian diaspora. While noting that the establishment of Israel in 1948 created a massive refugee disaster for a large number of Palestinians, it pointed out that there was no scholarly consensus that Palestinians formed a diaspora identity, and the book left this issue unresolved, just as it did with other diaspora groups

In conclusion, the author discusses the stages of the formation of the global diaspora throughout history and then discusses the situation of various diaspora groups at the present time, by pointing out that many of these groups have become an essential element in the advancement activities of developing societies, and this category includes diaspora groups whose homeland enjoys stability. As for diaspora groups whose homeland does not enjoy stability or independence, their focus is on the issues of their homeland and they make a political and societal effort to bring their homeland to its goal of stability and independence.

This book is a neutral, solid academic document for understanding the issue of global diaspora in many of its details and contexts. In fact, the importance of this book as a scientific document in understanding the issues of migration and diaspora stems from its focus on sorting out a wide area in monitoring the historical movement of the diaspora from its beginning until our modern history. The book also did not neglect to establish a precise scientific definition of diaspora groups and the criteria for their formation in a certain place. More importantly, the book discussed the role of diaspora groups in the political and economic contexts of our current time.

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