International Migration in the Age of Crisis and Globalisation. By Andrés Solimano. 2010. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. xv + 223 pp. Paperback.

The most recent UN estimates tell us the number of international migrants around the world reached approximately 214 million in 2010. That is 4.02% of the world's population, up from 2.26% in 1990. Unfortunately, as an attempt to illuminate this phenomenon – or even merely to describe it – this is a deeply flawed work.

A quick glance at the seven-page table of contents will reveal that this is not so much a book as a badly organised outline. Altogether there are 205 pages of text in seven chapters, with each chapter broken into as many as eleven sections, and some sections further divided into subsections. The first six chapters each begin and end with a brief summary of the chapter's main idea. In between we find repetitive and occasionally contradictory arguments which primarily summarize results from other, more scholarly work.

The main themes of the first six chapters can be summarised as follows:

1) Unskilled workers move from poor countries to wealthier ones to earn higher wages.
2) For skilled emigrants, the developed world offers the attractions of greater scope for professional advancement, more investment opportunities, and better protection of property rights.
3) Sending countries benefit from remittances their emigrants send back, but at least some of this benefit is cancelled out by the concomitant brain drain.
4) Receiving countries benefit from the human capital, creativity and entrepreneurship provided by skilled immigrants. The benefits from unskilled immigration are somewhat ambiguous.

What any of this has to do with our 'age of crisis and globalisation', as the author (or perhaps the publisher) has chosen to label it, is never addressed in the book. None of these points is particularly

unique to our time, and all should be fairly obvious not only to a trained economist, but to any educated layperson. Over the past forty years, what most of those engaged in studying the economic aspects of immigration have been up to is building theoretical and empirical models to measure their effects and/or relative magnitudes. In Solimano's book most of this research is ignored or mentioned only in passing. Moreover, throughout the book, the author drifts between contradictory assumptions depending on the argument he is making, and often ignores events, however momentous, if they are not consonant with his main thesis. For example, is illegal immigration a problem the developed world would like to but simply cannot control (p. 47)? Or do developed countries tacitly encourage illegal immigration in order to exploit its benefits (pp. 17, 41 and 203)? The rapid growth of first China and now India's economy is hardly mentioned, lest it contradict the author's *weltanschauung* of ever-diverging world incomes. And what are we to make of the assertion that Mexican immigration to the US is still rising inexorably, when in fact such immigration, both legal and illegal, declined sharply in the last decade?

As the last point suggests, even as a description of international migration, the book disappoints. If globalisation means anything in this context, it in the way migration is facilitated by the sharply declining cost of transportation and communications. Yet this aspect of international migration is largely absent from the book. Moreover, despite the `global` title this is a remarkably parochial book---stubbornly hewing to the experience of the half-dozen Spanish-speaking countries of South America on either side of the Andes. As a result, we have a description of international migration during the twentieth century that tells us little or nothing about (among others) the movements of Southern and Eastern Europeans to the US and Western Europe before WWI; the mass migration of displaced people in the aftermath of WWII; the *Gastarbeiter* of the 1950s and 1960s in West Germany; the migrations to Europe that followed the independence of former colonies such as Algeria; the waves of migration to the Arab Gulf states starting with Egyptians in the 1960s and culminating with South Asians today; and the migration of millions of Africans not only to the developed world, but in far larger number across frontiers within Africa.

The particular circumstances of Argentina's last century loom especially large. Here the author tries, and almost manages, to capture a fascinating story. During a few decades at the turn of the nineteenth century, the fraction of immigrants arriving as a percentage of the total receiving population was perhaps nowhere higher than in Argentina. More remarkable is the subsequent periods of political turmoil and economic stagnation, culminating in the economic meltdown of 1999-2002, that saw so many descendants of these immigrants, often well-educated professionals, queuing outside the embassies of Spain, Italy and Germany to apply for the right of residence in the countries their ancestors had left generations earlier. Yet though the author returns over and over to his Argentinean example, we learn few actual details. A more modest book exploring this interesting history, one investigating how unskilled immigrants from elsewhere in South America continued to flock to Argentina even as skilled citizens were leaving the country, would have made a worthwhile contribution.

The seventh chapter is perhaps weakest of all. The author believes that a central authority ought to manage the movements and ensure the rights of people who migrate across international frontiers, and that a new international body should be created to regulate such movement. Let us leave aside the fact that it is precisely such institutions---the 'IMF, the World Bank, the regional development banks, the United Nations and the plethora of multilateral organizations and development agencies', with their '"*merit elite*"...of economists, engineers, social scientists, health experts, [and] environmental specialists'---that the author holds partly responsible for the brain drain afflicting developing countries (pages 170-171). There are currently three major international bodies that deal with migration: the International Social Service (originally the International Migration Service), an NGO founded in Rome in 1924; the International Organization for Migration, founded in 1951; and the International Migration Programme of the International Labor Organization, established in 1919, but part of the UN since 1946. I am in no position to pass judgement on the efficacy of these bodies. However, it is simply wrong to assert there is an "institutional vacuum" (page 203) while ignoring their very existence. More troubling still is the lingering sense that the creation of just such a new

organisation, one not “hampered by lack of budgets, limited tools, and insufficient human resources” (page 205), is the main purpose behind the publication of this very flawed book.

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