

[Satyogi on Kaushal, 'Blaming Immigrants: Nationalism and the Economics of Global Movement'](#)

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Neeraj Kaushal. *Blaming Immigrants: Nationalism and the Economics of Global Movement.* Columbia University Press, 2019. . \$30.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-231-18145-7.

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Neeraj Kaushal's book, *Blaming Immigrants: Nationalism and the Economics of Global Movement*, could not have been timelier. With fear and anxiety about immigrants framing key questions of national politics in many countries, Kaushal's book provides a picture of immigration and global politics that not only challenges these anxieties, but argues that immigration, when compared to foreign direct investment and global exports, remains the most sluggish and inadequately tapped aspect of globalization. The number of immigrants as a proportion of world population remained at 3 percent in 2015, which is where the number stood in the year 1900. In setting up the argument, therefore, Kaushal is asking if it is at all possible to imagine a future for global capital without a corresponding drive for immigration since immigration is absolutely essential for labor supply, aptitude, and entrepreneurial creativity. Most immigration takes place through legal means; therefore, there is "neither crisis nor chaos" (p. 7). What seems to be causing "discontent" and "disaffection," then, is not immigration but "the appetite of nations to accept and absorb new immigrants and their political and administrative ability to manage immigration" (p. 7). The book questions "populist critiques of immigration globally" (p. 15), but also argues that there will be little change in immigration worldwide, at least in the short run.

Given the populist and right-wing rhetoric around the need for policing undocumented immigrants particularly, it would appear that many countries would work on bringing more efficiency in their immigration systems, but Kaushal shows that in order to achieve even modest success in this matter, countries would also have to restrict most cross-border travel for employment, education, and tourism, which they are unlikely to do. Meanwhile, even where countries face unprecedented demographic and economic pressures, which could be eased with immigration, there would be hesitation to accept immigration as a solution for growth in the economy. Citing the International Monetary Fund's own research, Kaushal shows that a one-percent increase in the share of migrants in the adult population could raise labor productivity in the host economy by up to 3 percent in the long term through both higher human capital and improved total factor productivity (p. 25). However, the steps needed to ensure this are stalled both politically and practically, Kaushal argues, even as it is clear that immigration itself is a driver for economic growth.

In chapter 2, Kaushal argues that economic slowdown, income inequality, and stagnation in the living standards of people in North America and western Europe are crucial reasons for the public's loss of faith in governmental policies. However, this is to be attributed to the lopsided effects of global

capitalism. Citing research by economists, Kaushal shows that in the United States alone, between 2000-07, 1 percent of families shared two-thirds of the gains and the remaining 99 percent shared the leftover of one-third. The effect of immigration, Kaushal shows in chapter 6, on wages and inequality in the host country remain mixed in the sense that although costs often remain concentrated, the benefits are, in the long term, “quite large and transformative” (p. 37). The politics of adverse effects of immigration is also a deflection of the larger questions about inequality and stagnation in the economy, as can be seen more recently in the attempts by the Indian government to create a National Register of Citizens. Non-economic factors, Kaushal contends, get articulated as “Islamic terrorism” (p. 31) (even as immigrants are seldom involved in acts of terror), flow of refugees (again, Kaushal shows in chapters 7 and 8 that refugees tend to settle in places adjacent to their countries of origin and the non-West has absorbed more refugees than the West), and aversion to social and demographic change (with less than 2 percent of their populations being of foreign origin, Poland and Hungary seem to be the most vocal about not allowing immigrants). Since immigrants move to places where they are most likely to be productive, Kaushal argues in chapter 3, they bring immense “demographic dividends” (pp. 49-52) and have since the year 2000 contributed to approximately 37 percent of the labor force in the US alone. She argues that with acute labor shortages projected in the US, Europe, and many Asian countries, immigration is primarily the only way to address questions around economic growth. Therefore, rather than militarizing borders to reduce illegal immigration or planning mass deportations—both of which are economically unfeasible and full of loopholes—it might be better to provide avenues for migrating legally to medium- and low-skilled aspirants. Kaushal tells us that under the US-Mexico border itself, some seventy-five tunnels have been found, with many more likely to be discovered at some point!

The book has two chapters devoted to the US immigration system. This is because the United States provides a model of immigration that may be called the best in the world, for it is decentralized and allows for permanent residency and citizenship status. This is quite unlike many European countries that only allow work rights. Whether it is through permanent legal migration, or through sixty-two visa types, or illegal entry, all forms of workers have served the US economy well, Kaushal argues. When compared with the points system entry in countries like Canada, Kaushal shows that the US system of immigration allows for greater parity between the immigrants and the native-born, as opposed to Canada where wage gap between the two has widened. Countries like China, Germany, United Kingdom are now adopting the US Green Card model to allow for permanent residency. For all its successes, however, many things remain “broken” (pp. 74-76) in the US immigration system. These include the provision of fewer visa options for low- or medium-skilled workers, absence of mechanisms to provide permanent residency to skilled foreign workers and graduates from American universities, lack of administrative capacity to process the volume of applicants who seek admittance, porosity of the US-Mexico border, and inability of the system to provide documents to illegal residents. Both mass deportation and legalization of close to eleven million undocumented persons create problems of scale, as Kaushal delineates brilliantly in the book. Through her own research on the Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) data of 1990-99 discussed in chapter 4, Kaushal shows us that undocumented immigrants strive to acquire legal status and do not constitute a stagnant pool, as the right-wing politicians tend to characterize them.

Kaushal ends the book by arguing that restrictions on immigration would only drive the activity underground. Perhaps a better management of irregular immigrants and flow of refugees could relieve anxiety, as would granting visas to workers of heterogeneous abilities. All too often, Kaushal

says, immigration is blamed for problems caused by changes in technology, international trade, and a decline in public confidence about governmental policies. As a question of method, the book uses public opinion surveys to demonstrate populist sentiments, which are then refuted by research produced by economists, but this needed to be delineated at the beginning of the book. The book is well written, accessible, and should be essential reading for undergraduate courses on global capitalism, politics of migration, and the status of refugees in contemporary times.

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