

STRATEGIC COMMERCIALIZATION OF MIGRANT

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ABSTRACT

With immense challenges to rising poverty and inequality, migrants present an opportunity for strategic commercialization. This study aims to examine the strategic commercialization of migrants in Europe based on a literature review and 27 interviews. According to the respondents, migrants' flow is facilitated by a network of governmental and private constituents who invest in victims of economic, social, political, and environmental calamities. Once the victims are loaded with debt and compounded interest in their country to pay for their journey, they are pushed out of their habitual setting and lured to a predetermined destination that preconditions them for involuntary servitude.

Keywords: Commercialization, Migrants,

Introduction

The geographical pattern of migrants to Europe is a network clustered from many nations with diverse populations. Often the victim of economic, sociopolitical, racial, or environmental hardship, the migrants abandon their habitual setting in the quest for utopia (Transatlantic Council on Migration, 2014) facilitated by the International Organization for Migration, leading governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental partners in the field of migration.

Since 1995, with the abolition of border controls within European countries and the cooperation of 22 European governments (European Commission, 2011), a host of opportunities was publicized that worked as a magnet attracting massive migrants from less developed countries (King & Skeldon, 2010). According to the International Organization of Migration (2022), the number of international migrants was 281 million in 2021, 9 million more than in 2019. The consequences of access to leverage of such magnitude over the migrants have been substantiated over decades of migrants' commodification conducive to economic and sociopolitical maneuvers.

As an economic maneuver, the strategic commodification of migrants covers the skill gaps and scarcity of the workforce in Europe (Cedefop, 2015). At the same time, mass mobility has led to circumscribed employment rights and benefits. That, in turn, fueled the emergence of vibrant entrepreneurship sectors while relying on millions of migrants for developments touted as a triple-win: A win for dispatching governments and private entrepreneurs generating revenue by the commodification of their migrants in exchange for fees, loans with interest and remittances flowing to their countries; a win for migrants in quests for prosperity, security and equality; and, a win for the European and countries in transforming the upper socio-political class to a manic burst of riches.

This strategic maneuver, by design, has transferred the responsibilities of migrants from government agencies to private sponsors for some elements of the identification, pre-departure, and integration process of beneficiaries. Government authorities, however, retain the ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of the sponsorship scheme (European Commission, October 2018). Thus, sponsors systematically replace selective laborers from a diverse pool of contenders based on their nationality, capability, age, gender, race, and ethnicity to fulfill three of the government's ulterior motives: to deter populism; to embrace rentier capitalism, and to fortify supremacism.

Still, governments' motives are bound to a tiered structure with socioeconomic inequality (Therborn, 2013; Stiglitz, 2015; Piketty, 2014). The first tier is the entrenched elites occupying prominent positions with a de facto hierarchical primacy and supreme rights and privileges. The captivating characteristic of this tier is materialism and luxurious lifestyles as a symbol of status. At the same time, they control their country's financial system as well as constitutional branches on pillars of supremacy.

The second tier is the national populace structured in layers of the socio-economic divide, not only about juxtaposing "the rich" and "the poor" regarding wages or incomes but also involving accumulated wealth or debts. It also relates to the health status, affecting the type of jobs, education, and social background. In an affluent European society, for example, 73.1% of the 513 million population are employed, and 2 million are entrepreneurs, representing 10% of all businesses supported by more than 11 million employees contributing to socially inclusive wealth creation (Statista, 2020). There is also a noticeable gap in the age

profile, with young people replacing the elderly as the group most at risk of poverty (The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016).

Bellow these two tiers lie migrants who unconsciously believe in the trickle-down theory that toiling in alienation and isolation along the social class will eventually improve their lives. Nevertheless, this impressive image of riches does not trickle down as migrants pay tax, government fees, food, and shelter from their rill of pay before paying off their obligations for their pre-departure loans. As natives indulge themselves through the labor of millions of young, fit, functional, flexible, leasable, controllable, replaceable, and expendable proletarians, organized commodification of migrants grows throughout Europe.

However, migrants' plights are marked as a political menace, a malevolent crime against Europe security, except in what are considered audacious reports from human-rights activists (EU Fundamental Rights Agency, 2011; International Organization of Migration, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019). These reports are neither trivial nor discrete. Thus, five contextual questions should be answered to prevent an inevitable collapse of capitalism: Who are these migrants, and what separates migrants from refugees? How many migrants are there? What are their motives? Who facilitates their flow? How does migrants' commodification occur?

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1. Who are these migrants and refugees?

Migrants are individuals crossing the international territorial boundaries of their nations for multiple opportunities over their productive lifespan. Article 2(1) of the United Nations (1190) defines migrant workers as people who are engaged in employment based on the skills needs of the economy and identified as unskilled, low-skilled, and skilled jobs they perform. They move systematically from their origin to destination, offering their services by accepting temporary contracts presumed to be valid with a specific job, beginning and ending dates, and remuneration that does not violate the law by deception or induced requirements, acceptable accommodation, health insurance, transportation, gratuities, vacation and holiday benefits (Abella & Martin, 2014) and maintain their affiliation with their country of origin (Castles, Stephen, 2002). However, refugees are people outside their country of origin for feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection.

2. How many are there?

According to the International Organization for Migration (2022), the total number of international migrants in 2021 was about 281 million. Asia, Europe, and North America each hosted 29%, 30%, and 29% international migrants, respectively, followed by Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Of which nearly two-thirds were workers between the age of 20 and 64 years old including 52% male and 48% female (UN-IOM, 2019).

. In 2017, around 4.4 million people migrated to one of the 28 European Union Member States. An estimated 2.0 million were from non-EU countries, 1.3 million with citizenship of a different EU Member State from the one to which they immigrated, and 0.7 million migrated to an EU Member State of which they had the citizenship (returning nationals or nationals born abroad). According to the International Organization of Migration (2019), by 2019, 22.3 million people, or 4.4 % of the 513.5 million population in the EU, were non-EU citizens (Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, 2018). Of these, 12% were self-employed, 20 % were temporary

employees, and 25% part-time migrants between the age of 20 to 64 (Eurostat, 2019). The United Nations refugee Agency by the end of 2021, from **447.2 million** inhabitants living in Europe, 23.7 million were non-European citizens (5.3%), 37.5 million people were born outside Europe (8.4%), 26.6 million were refugees, and 48.0 million were internally displaced persons

3. What are their motives?

Today, the motives of migrants are shrouded in a myth of livelihood propagated by their forebears and governments. However, separating myth from reality, Adam Smith (1776) marked migrant laborers as workers taking advantage of employment opportunities with regional-earning differentials in the Wealth of Nations. In 1997, Greenwood listed the laws of migration as I) migration is commonly from overpopulated to underpopulated regions that lack workforce; II) migration arises among adults who commonly live in low economic conditions, who migrate to sound economies, particularly to laborer-intensive industries; III) in-and-out laborer migrations are inversely proportional; IV) the majority of laborers, particularly low-skilled individuals, prefer shorter distance migration; V) among those who prefer longer distance migration, especially males, they tend to choose centers of commerce and economic activity; VI) urban laborers are less migratory than rural laborers, and VII) females tend to be less migratory than males.

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The neoclassical theories pertinent to migrants' motives are in the works of Flatau (2016), Lewis (1954), and Harris and Todaro (1970) at the macro and micro levels. Zipf (1946) replicated Newton's law of universal gravitation. The intuition is that temporary laborers gravitate toward a region with a low population lacking workforce and dynamic economy, while the distances between the regions are proxies for their costs. In the extended neoclassical models, Borjas (1987) stated that laborer migration is not only influenced by earnings and cost differences between origins and destinations but also by the degree of skill transferability. However, the new-economics theory presents the idea that laborers are under the influence of their families and communities to maximize their income and minimize lost opportunities (Stark & Taylor, 1991). A subsequent new-economics theory postulates that the existing migration cluster in a region influences laborers' decisions in selecting a specific destination (Faist, 2000). Additionally, the historical-structural theory states that in the 21st century, individuals are swayed by globalization and open borders. They utilize advanced information technologies to communicate and integrate with other societies (de Haas, 2008).

4. Who facilitates their flow?

Due to increased demand from under-populated nations, the labor supply has evolved from a simple sequential process to a complex network. This network consists of a multitude of interconnected heterogeneous individuals in public and private organizations cross-linking with one another for coordination with internal and foreign authorities to facilitate the flow of migrant laborers. The coordination is organized through transnational networks of the most varied kinds, ranging from intergovernmental entities to international non-governmental organizations organized locally, nationally, and internationally (Held et al., 1999).

The structure of the public organization, which determines how it operates and performs, is viewed in the vertical, horizontal, and spatial dimensions: The vertical dimension constitutes a hierarchical configuration with power emanating from the top. In contrast, the horizontal

dimension differentiates the heterogeneous constituents on the same level of establishments by their specialization, which are grouped into different categories for operations. With the amplification of demand, the mechanism is made effective by extending the horizontal responsibilities to third-party private suppliers who initiate the migration through services they offer (Cranston, 2016), from before migrants move (Alpes, 2012) to their journeys abroad (Spain & Hillmann, 2013), and after they have arrived (Glick-Schiller, 2009) operated by, agents, sub-contractors and informal agencies. This creates the spatial dimension while adding to the diversity and complexity, with an underlying foundation that is formed of a social network (United Nations, Vienna 2015),

5. How does migrants' commodification occur?

Collective expenses and fees charged for mediating migration by the diverse entities in public and private network extends to the financial control of migrants in origin and destination (Nyberg-Sorensen, 2012) that marks the beginning of the commodification of migrants allows for the journey to progress by surrendering to the charges. According to Kuhn (1970), this issue is preparadigmatic since it prompts the mechanism into action with no historical or scientific trace in the literature. To grasp the paradigm, an empirical study is extended in the methodology.

Research Methodology

Three sources (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1984) are cited to support the study's methodological justification since no theoretical framework from which to make predictive hypotheses has evolved in the literature. There are, however, three propositions that can be advanced to answer the "where do migrants' commodification occur."

- P1: Migration is a voluntary relocation;
- P2: The flow of migrants is based on a push/pull system;
- P3: Commodification of migrants lies in their country of origin.

Data Collection

Two primary data collection methods have been selected for a detailed analysis of the above propositions. First, there was a review of internal documents produced by the public sectors in the European Union to provide background information on the general state of the labor migrant flow.

Second, 27 face-to-face interviews and online meetings were conducted between November 2019 and February 2022 with migrants and affiliates involved with the recruitment and employment process of laborers within the European Union and outside countries. Since this study is exploratory, the authors exceeded the twelve interviews recommended by Mentzer and Flint (1997) and McCracken (2011) to attain information saturation.

The geographical region of each interviewee from the European Union was Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Romania, Netherlands, Malta, Portugal, France, Poland, and United Kingdom. Interviewees from outside Europe were from the Middle East and North

Africa, including United Arab Emirates, India, Nepal, Egypt, Yemen, Oman, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Palestine, Sudan, and North Africa.

Other considerations included participants' age, gender, employment sectors, and religion. Of the respondents, 31% were aged between 23 and 33, 50% between 34 and 44, and the rest between 44 and 54. The religion of respondents from the European Union was Christianity, while people from the Middle East and North Africa were Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist. The gender selection was 55% male, mainly working in food, fishery, retail services, and construction, and 45% female in domestic, food, and custodian.

Results of the Interviews

Respondents in all 27 interviewees favored propositions one and two, but proposition three was partially approved. They explained that strategic commodification starts in their country. That preconditioned them for commodification and often servitude and exploitation in the host nations.

Discussions:

Proposition one: migration is a voluntary relocation to the European Union. Respondents endorsed proposition one (P1) by stating that low-skilled workers, often from impoverished environments, are searching for employment opportunities outside their place of birth. There are four common reasons they cannot find employment in their own country: 1) structural unemployment, 2) the Hindu caste system, 3) cyclical economy, and 4) frictional unemployment from temporary transitions. In this environment, any opportunity with wage disparities is desirable.

Proposition two: The flow of migrants is based on a well-organized push/pull system. The interrelated factors that push citizens out of their place of birth in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka and Philippines are identified by the 27 respondents as: Financial inequality; Inflation; Foreign government debt that reduces investment in employment; Overpopulation; Mass poverty; Low standard of living; Lack of investment in human development; Gender / ethnic / religious discrimination; Burden of intergenerational residence; Regional isolated laborers; Poor communication system; Poor sanitation and hygiene practices; Low life expectancy; Political instability; Social diversity; Natural calamities; Deforestation and soil degradation, combined with unplanned growth proliferation, and non-engineered constructions; Lack of nonrenewable energy; Lack of budgetary allocation for disaster prevention and appropriate emergency management; The irreversible impact of globalization; The fall of small businesses; Inadequate investments in infrastructure development; Lack of economic diversification; Trade barriers; Denial of economic and energy connectivity within the region; Market liberalization and structural adjustment policies; Fragmented industrial composition; Lack of participation in the supply chain network; Aspiration to economic empowerment/government push.

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Commented [PGA4]: 1) Structural unemployment (define), 2) the caste system – where or what are 3) and 4) ? Is 3) cyclical unemployment? Is 4) frictional unemployment? Either way this must be subdivided into several shorter sentences somehow. It's utterly cumbersome and unintelligible even to a brilliant mind. There is no need to introduce unnecessary complexity to an already complex subject.

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Pull Factors

Information from interviews revealed that factors that induce labor migration to Europe include: A stronger economy in Europe; a Low European labor population; Lack of skills among nationals; Barriers to female participation in the country of origin; Lack of support for people with disabilities in the country of origin; Political system; High demand for low-skilled migrants; Higher pay, freedom.

Proposition 3 (P3): The Dilemma of the laborers lies in the irregular labor-supply network.

The officials and executives in private organizations believe that the predicaments of South Asian laborers are rooted in their nation of origin. The labor-supply network in South Asia is a complex configuration of multiple layers of constituents grouped into governments and private businesses that are in chaos, disorder, and independent of any cohesive theme. Each government interfaces with private constituents is not ideological but is rather a pragmatic reaction to the labor market to fulfill its constitutional role: 1) to control the flow of migrants, 2) to reduce undocumented migration, and 3) to create a formal structure in the temporary labor market.

The second constituents of the labor-supply network are private establishments, including agents in sending nations. According to officials, these agents are “merchants of laborers” who are expected to act on behalf of individuals to bind them in business transactions with sponsors legally. The third constituents are sponsors who are “entrepreneurs of laborers.” This is a corporate instrument of regulatory access to any human resources. Sponsors are entities driven by the private sector of rentiers whom their government empowers to control the labor-labor market on foreign labor legal.

Thus, the characteristics of the labor supply network from South Asia are configured vertically and horizontally. Special dimensions that are decentralized, flexible, agile, and unpredictable of heterogeneous constituents with the complexity of the supply network often go beyond the behavioral variability to anarchy with a common doctrine (i.e., all forms of government and laws are unnecessary, oppressive, and undesirable, and there is no hierarchical superior who can resolve disputes, or punish predators). That is when unethical recruiters play an illegitimate role, presenting falsified information.

This process is heavily saddled with high fees that exceed legal limits. The fees escalate when agents’ responsibilities extend to subagents and recruiters summon laborers from remote and economically depressed areas. Unscrupulous agencies take advantage of individuals looking for jobs, especially if they are unfamiliar with the legal employment process, language, and type of job available in destination, contributing to corruption, bribery, and exploitation.

Unpaid debt results in threats to laborers’ family members or loss of family property, adding further pressure for workers to work with no wage until they pay back their loans. If the bonded laborer becomes disabled or dies, debts are often passed on to the spouse and the next generation.

Although the United Nations have described debt bondage as a form of “modern-day and forced labor,” the practice is still prevalent in South Asia. The respondents estimated that around 85% of laborers from these countries leave for employment while heavily indebted. Thus, this practice rehashes Lenin’s doctrine (1963) that the seal of parasitism is carved into a society where laborers are legally unprotected, economically pressured, mentally shattered, and tragically betrayed by their people to escape from perpetual poverty.

Proposition 3 (P3): Interviews with South Asian Officials and Executives

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Commented [PGA21]: The plight – singular always.

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Commented [CMA28]: I have added the hyphen for consistency.

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Commented [CMA30]: Please check your wording. I'm not sure that you can describe the entrepreneurs as a corporate instrument.

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Commented [CMA37]: One does not 'become deceased', one simply 'dies'.

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Commented [CMA40]: As Vladimir Ilyich Lenin died in 1924, I assume you are referring to someone else here? Or a work on the subject of Marxist-Leninism written by another author later? Please check.

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South Asian interviewees agreed that the existing laws have failed to regulate recruiting processes to protect workers. However, they added that sponsors derail the legal structure of the Federal Labor Law by regularly trading laborers in a competitive labor market. They force different work-contract issues, confiscate workers' passports (that are incompatible with Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), increase their work hours, sub-lease them to work for a third party, offer no occupational safety and enforce restrictions on laborers' movement. Despite often being over-qualified, laborers are assigned dangerous, dirty, and degrading jobs; they are contained in overcrowded labor camps on the periphery of cities which are segregated from the nationals both geographically and socially, with inadequate sanitation, sewage, and ventilation. These camps are ideal incubators for the spread of communicable diseases, with high humidity and temperature. Thus, epidemics of diseases are the norm.

The situation for domestic workers is more drastic. Once they arrive, they automatically become part of the home structure: a form of gender-based dual-deprivation which has been diagnosed as a multi-layered circle of constraint, restricting female laborers in their ability to make decisions concerning their own lives. This setting prevents their access to legal channels for addressing the exploitation and violation of their human rights.

Results

The migration flow stems from the scarcity of a low-skilled native workforce for economic diversification in Europe. Migrants are often from impoverished environments where their options are limited to more meager earnings. They are pushed outside their place of birth and into migration for economic, social, environmental, and political reasons. While attracted to Europe by the possibility of better opportunities, a higher standard of living, and safe and clean working environments, their movements are facilitated by multiple constituents grouped into governments and private establishments in pursuit of the commodification of migrants. Thus, the desperation of the world's poor puts millions of migrants at risk of becoming trapped in a cycle of indentured labor in privileged societies.

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Commented [PGA50]: Idiom

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