

**Refugees, Migration and Global Governance: Negotiating the Global Compacts. By Elizabeth G. Ferris and Katharine M. Donato, Taylor & Francis, 2019, 232 pp.**

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# Refugees, Migration and Global Governance: Negotiating the Global Compacts

Christina Velentza<sup>a</sup>

## BOOK REVIEW

Elizabeth G. Ferris and Katharine M. Donato. *Refugees, Migration and Global Governance: Negotiating the Global Compacts* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2019, 232 pp.  
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*Refugee, Migration and Global Governance* is an exciting and interesting read. Not only for those interested in the policy and legislative frameworks on refugees, migrants and the global compacts, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), but also for those working in human rights practice and humanitarian projects on displaced populations in different parts of the world. The theme of the book is the negotiation of two global compacts by the United Nations General Assembly on 02 August 2016, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and their commitments to refugees and migrants, their commonalities and differences, the processes towards their adoption, implementation, and the steps forward in the policy sphere on migration and refugees.

The [Global Compact on Refugees](#) is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognizing that

a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. It provides a blueprint for governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives. [The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) is the first intergovernmental agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

The authors narrate how the New York Declaration set out two separate processes for the development of the two global compacts (GCR and GCM). Further on, the authors criticize that there are two compacts – rather than one – which seem to solidify the binary distinction between refugees and migrants, even though almost one-third of the commitments in the New York Declaration apply to both refugees and migrants. The authors point out that both the Global Compact on

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Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) are based on the principle that international cooperation is necessary to uphold the rights of refugees and migrants and to strengthen the management of national borders.

The book has six chapters (A Tale of Two Compacts, the International Refugee Regime, the International Migration Regime, Pressures for Change, Negotiating the Global Compacts, Towards the future). The most insightful parts of the book are the analytical and thorough descriptions of the legal framework on migrants and refugees, the part about pressures for change and steps forward for the future. In addition, the authors critically explore the European crisis which “was not a crisis of numbers” truly but rather a crisis of the European system’s inability to respond appropriately and effectively. The authors underline that the European states failed to respond immediately or adequately to the long-standing refugee situations.

The authors underline that, when people cannot find protection at home, they often try to leave their countries and most of the times “resort to more dangerous means of seeking protection in other countries”. When borders were hardened after 2015, making it more difficult for people to seek refuge in other countries, the consequences were twofold: the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) increased and people resorted to more dangerous means of seeking protection in other countries. The authors explain how the 27 refugee-hosting states decided to convene the Global Summit on Refugees and Migrants in June 2018. This decision was driven by both the growing number of people arriving on European borders and by the perception that the flows were uncontrolled.

The authors underline that the widespread use of the term *refugee crisis* is also mislead-

ing in that it implies that refugees are the problem; yet the crisis narrative was caused mainly by the inability of both national governments and international systems to prevent, respond to and resolve the situation. The crisis narrative leads to security-driven responses that put asylum seekers’ rights and dignity second.

The authors also stress the contribution of developing countries to provide effective and efficient solutions to displaced populations, many of whom hosted a large number of refugees for decades. Developing countries such as Pakistan, Iran and Kenya, which had each hosted more than one million refugees for decades saw this development as an opportunity to draw attention to the particular pressures they had faced for years. On the other hand, Europe and the US portrayed the situation as a global crisis (this was not the case for Canada, however, since Canada had its own particular political dynamics).

In addition, the authors point out that developing countries also took the lead in insisting that if a global summit was held, it had to consider both migrants and refugees. The book assesses the refugee situations and the policies and measures adopted by various non-profit organizations and institutions in different parts of the world (Europe after 2015, Central America, Australia). Each of these refugee contexts is different, marked by regional particularities, but taken together they illustrate the increasing restrictionism, securitization and inadequacy of response mechanisms.

Another informative part of the book was that containing a vast number of figures and tables. These figures aimed to inform the reader about the recent trends in international migration (1997–2017) as well as the number of asylum applications by Syrians in the European Union. The figures are based on UN data on distribution of

asylum seekers, refugees, IDPs in different regions of the world (Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe including Turkey, the overall share in high-income and low-income countries and the respective nationalities in each region including Palestinian refugees who fall under the the UNRWA mandate). The book's valuable contributions are that the authors recognize that there is a necessary need for serious independent academic research on the many issues addressed in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). This book is a good start towards the evaluation of the implementation of the two global compacts, as well as the role of international organizations and different stakeholders in their implementation. Academic research is yet to be done on this issue.

States responses to mixed movements (migratory population movements including refugees, asylum seekers, and other types of migrants) are a major global governance challenge. The authors criticize the fact that in the two compacts states evade discussion

of this issue. There is also a valuable critical aspect within the book which reaffirms the importance of international cooperation and responsibility sharing in addressing refugee and migratory movements. In the book, there is a pragmatic affirmation of the global state of play in migration. The authors assume that there is unlikely that the global compacts will make much of a difference in resolving conflicts that displace people or structural economic forces that lead migrants to leave their countries in search of better opportunities.

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