

SEMINAR SERIES ON FORCED MIGRATION

GOVERNANCE OF FORCED MIGRATION IN SOUTH ASIA: NEED FOR A DECOLONIAL APPROACH?



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The world has been witnessing frequent mixed and massive flows of population in the recent times, when refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants on the move together can hardly be differentiated. The New York Declaration 2016, and its two Global Compacts—the “Global Compact on Refugees” (GCR) and the “Global Compact on Safe Orderly and Regular Migration” (GCM)—raised expectations for better governance of international human migration by committing itself to securing the rights and protection of refugees and migrants in the context of human rights discourse and working toward sustainable development. But even this laudable initiative seems to have been triggered specifically by Europe’s reaction to its 2015 “crisis” and the disconcerting images that circulated as migrants and refugees from different parts of the world crossed the Mediterranean to reach European shores, with many perishing in the sea. Interestingly, like all other previous attempts at the international level to formulate rules and norms for the governance of the people on the move, this effort turned out to be predominantly influenced by developments in the Global North.

The borders and boundaries redrawn in the Indian subcontinent after partition were primarily determined by British colonial rule and its legacies. Today, given this context, a deeper understanding of the governance of migration in South Asia requires that we dismantle haunting colonial structures and thinking in the field of migration and citizenship. In these neoliberal times, suspicions about “unchosen” migrants are on the rise, fuelled by the securitization of migration and rise of populist-nationalist politics. Postcolonial South Asia has become closed to “the other” by demanding that indigenous inhabitants provide detailed proof of family history as the evidentiary basis for reclaiming citizenship, thus expelling them to a world of unfreedom and precarity. Against this backdrop, in this paper, first, we shall examine the nature of migration governance in South Asia in the postcolonial, neoliberal times; second, we shall explore the possibilities of an emancipatory blueprint for the governance of migration, and finally, attempt to consider the efficacy of a decolonial approach to governing human migration in South Asia, in particular, and the Global South, in general.

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