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Ford, Michele, Lenore Lyons, & Wilem van Schendel. Labour Migration and Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia: Critical Perspectives. London: Routledge, 2012.

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Ford et al.'s collection of essays on human trafficking and migration in Southeast Asia aims to reveal the pitfalls and abuses of anti-trafficking policies and projects in this region encompassing multiple trafficking "hot-spots." In the introduction, the editors note that "critical research shows that these projects are being used to justify state intervention in the lives of migrants and citizens with the aim of 'protecting' the state" (p. 1) but that these interventions can actually lead to an increase in incidences of trafficking and abuse of migrants.

A recurring theme in these chapters is the influence of aid donors in shaping the counter-trafficking agenda, specifically, the roles of wealthy donors, including the United States, Australia, and member states of the European Union. The United States in particular has been instrumental in the fight against human trafficking with the launch of the "three Ps approach" in the mid-1990s. This approach aims to "punish traffickers, protect victims, and prevent trafficking from occurring" (p. 2). The United Nations adopted this three-pronged strategy to its trafficking protocol, creating an international strategy that is shaped by the U.S. perspective. The U.S. further influences anti-trafficking programs around the world via powerful anti-trafficking legislation such as the Trafficking in Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), which essentially elevated the U.S. to the role of international watchdog and enforcer (via threats of unilateral sanctions) of U.S. minimum standards with respect to trafficking around the world. In short, the anti-trafficking discourse is based largely on a U.S. agenda, which, as the chapters in this volume demonstrate, is at times ethnocentric and poorly suited to the realities of life in Southeast Asia, resulting in unforeseen and undesirable outcomes.

In addition to the issues surrounding a largely U.S. driven anti-trafficking agenda are the persistent ambiguities of what, exactly, characterizes "human trafficking," as opposed to smuggling. According to the UN Trafficking protocol, the key elements involved in trafficking are (i) intentional recruitment and (ii) the use of coercion or deception for the purposes of (iii) exploitation (p. 5). The movement of trafficked people may follow legal or illegal migration streams. These elements distinguish trafficked persons from smuggled persons because smuggling, by definition, involves illegal international movement but does not involve an element of exploitation. The aim of smuggling is to cross borders; the aim of trafficking is exploitation of labor. Clarifying boundaries between smuggling and trafficking is important at the policy level, in which smuggled peoples, acting of their own agency to cross borders illegally are criminalized, whereas trafficked peoples (by default, envisioned as women), are without agency and are the vulnerable victims of criminal activity. The moralistic tone of anti-trafficking efforts, efforts that protect vulnerable women from their predators, allows for tighter border control, without the appearance of explicit nativism.

The outcomes of the criminalization of various forms of migration in a narrow security framework include "increasingly restrictive immigration and border control . . . , the implementation of trafficking laws, the punishment of traffickers and smugglers, the repatriation of victims, and the deportation of 'illegals'" (p. 7), as well as the reinforcement of the view of women as "victims" and migrants as "illegals." Although this understanding of trafficking and migration would appear to reduce human rights violations by protecting the most vulnerable individuals (i.e. trafficked women), it may actually increase human rights violations among the many other varieties of migrants who do not fall under the "trafficking" designation.

Another blurring of lines in this discourse involves applying the anti-trafficking perspective to legal labor migrants, who may face abusive and exploitive conditions including non-payment of wages, debt bondage, deception, and many other wrongs also present in trafficking cases. Because of the similarities between temporary labor migrations and trafficking, the International Labor Organization (ILO) advocates adopting a generalized “forced labour continuum,” based on the anti-trafficking framework. In both cases—trafficking and labor migration—the agency of migrants is denied.

The chapters of the *Labour Migration and Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia* illustrate how these overlapping categories and policies play out on the ground. Several chapters provide detailed description of how migrant laborers and sex workers lose personal agency via trafficking policies and are cast as victims and martyrs in need of constant supervision by males or by the state. Other chapters focus primarily on the flows of labor migrants and the complications that they face as a result of policies that are actually quite removed from the people that they are intended to protect.

In all, this book offers a solid collection of papers that illustrate how the anti-trafficking agenda has been inspired by border-security concerns of wealthy countries such as the United States and how this agenda has had far-reaching impacts beyond victims of trafficking. The public understanding of anti-trafficking legislation is that it is a noble effort to protect a vulnerable people. However, as the papers in this book demonstrate, the trafficking discourse has deprived migrants of agency, has cast women in particular as victims, and has contributed to abuses of migrant laborers. Although at times the papers in this book seem to take an overly-cynical view of efforts to stop trafficking, it remains a resource for students of globalization, international relations, Southeast Asian studies, development, migration, and labor, or anyone who seeks to dig beneath the popular discourse surrounding trafficking to better understand the local-level impacts of international policies.

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