Mass migration from Eastern Europe takes many forms in *The Great Departure*. Zahra skillfully traces a wide variety of migrants and migrations, from trans-Atlantic laborers at the turn of the twentieth century to Jews fleeing pogroms, from German expellees after World War II to Cold War defectors, and even young Polish workers in the United Kingdom today. Throughout, she analyzes the changing relationship between mobility and freedom, showing that the ability to emigrate has long been equated with perceptions of freedom and that governments frequently restrict emigration as a tool of social control.

In a book on emigration rather than immigration, Zahra places readers in Eastern Europe looking west. “The great story of immigration,” she explains, “has generally focused on how many persons the United States (or other receiving countries) would allow in, or keep out, not on the situations those migrants sought to escape, or on the impact of their departure on their homelands, or the role of their own governments in keeping them home” (6). These questions are the focus of her story. She argues that European states continually “manipulated” emigration, “encouraging people to stay or go ... as an instrument of policy, to serve both domestic and international goals” (6). *The Great Departure* sets up several juxtapositions featuring Eastern European countries engaging in policies driving people to emigrate, while at the same time trying to block exit or sweeten the return of certain categories of laborers or ethnic groups.

Chapters one through three focus on the attempts of Eastern European governments to limit transatlantic emigration and draw migrants home to achieve a large and homogenous population. Starting with turn-of-the-century restrictions in Austria-Hungary and neighboring areas, Zahra reveals the degree to which authorities attempted to scapegoat emigration “agents,” often Jews, rather than respond meaningfully to migrants’ dissatisfactions with economic opportunities at home. Zahra also shows how several features of the Hungarian emigration law of 1903 became a template for other states in the region that sought to legislate emigration restrictions in the subsequent decades. Although heavy-handed, governmental regulation did sometimes serve migrants’ interests, as Habsburg and other authorities tried to steer migrants away from destinations in Europe, the United States, and Latin America where they considered conditions unsuitable to the health, safety, and well-being of their citizens. Legal protections for migrants in their destination countries were often poor, and public social services like health insurance, unemployment,
and workers’ compensation systems were indeed much more developed in Europe than in the Americas.

Restrictions on emigration continued in the post-World War I era, but were applied selectively as governments pursued “national homogeneity” by “rid[ding] their countries of unwanted national and religious minorities” (110). Leaders argued that encouraging the emigration of minority citizens would make for a more peaceful world. At the same time, governments also engaged in concerted efforts (though largely unsuccessful) to draw emigrants, “bound to their homelands” by “national patrimony,” home to rebuild their counties (110). Only the great economic hardships of the Great Depression eased these restrictions in the interwar period.

Zahra then examines changing approaches to emigration restriction in the World War Two era in Chapters three, four, and five, integrating the stories of the “unsettled millions” in the region with the Jewish refugee crisis. She carefully surveys and connects the fates of thousands of people compelled to move in the course of the war and especially its aftermath. Zahra levies a strong critique against Western governments and agencies for investing so much time in choosing a destination for Jews escaping Eastern Europe that Germany and its allies had, by then, chosen extermination rather than emigration as the solution to the Jewish Question. “At the international level,” she charges, “the most critical years of the Jewish refugee crisis before World War Two were spent searching the globe for a new refuge, dumping ground, or homeland for European Jews” (162), looking everywhere from Hispaniola to Madagascar and mainland Africa. Zahra draws careful comparisons between the regimes of forced migration that affected refugee Jews and other refugees, expellees, and displaced persons (DPS) after the war. The postwar era was characterized by movement, as Germans were forced out of Eastern Europe and other states engaged in population exchanges and efforts to clear away wartime arrivals. Forced labor was tainted by its association with “totalitarian” regimes, but authorities placed a strong emphasis on individuals’ ability to work for the postwar future. “Both work ethic and assimilability ... were typically seen as a function of race or nationality” (194), she explains, allowing authorities to employ supposedly non-racial criteria in selecting those who they perceived to be most worthy of their assistance among Eastern Europe’s displaced.

Chapters five and six focus on the theme of migrants as refugees in the immediate post-war period and the Cold War era. Zahra discusses the intricate similarities and differences in how displaced persons, refugees, and other migrants could be and were categorized by law and were treated by states and international organizations. As Communist governments came to power, they reintroduced many restrictions to emigration, first stipulating that travel could