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Project Beyond the East Asian Socioeconomic Crisis:
Lessons toward the New Social Policy Agenda

The 1997–99 East Asian Crisis:
Implications for Policies Affecting Migrants

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1. The European Migration Experience

(1) Postwar migration: After the Second World War, Europe experienced an unprecedented migration of workers to its traditional industrial heartlands, in particular those in Britain, France, the Benelux countries, Germany, and Scandinavia. It was generated by the strong demand for labor in the 50s and 60s. Most migrants came from Southern Europe, i.e. Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, and, in the case of Germany, the Russian-dominated eastern part of the country. France, Britain, and Holland experienced a large influx of migrants from (later former) colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. Other important sources were Turkey, Yugoslavia, and North Africa. In the 1980s, the former emigration countries of Southern Europe – Spain, Italy, and Greece – also became immigration countries, mirroring the rapid growth of their economies. As in the traditional industrial and economic growth centers of Europe, migrants to these countries found employment mainly in semi- or unskilled jobs. The majority of the immigrants are illegal or irregular.

A large share of the labor migration in the 60s was organized within the so-called guest-worker framework, i.e. bilateral agreements between companies and governments. As a consequence of these programs, specific national groups came to dominate the foreign population of different host countries: the Turks and Yugoslavs in Germany, the Algerians and the Portuguese in France, the Moroccans and the Turks in the Netherlands. With rapid automation of manufacturing, mining, and agriculture, on the one hand, and slower economic growth or even recession on the other, contractual mass immigration ended abruptly in the early 1970s. Shrinking demand for unskilled and semi-skilled workers, strong competition for the remaining jobs, and political pressure from electorates led Western European host countries to halt the recruitment of foreign workers. Immigration continued, however, in spite of measures to stop or curtail the influx of foreigners. The modest level of remigration was soon outweighed by new arrivals. Family reunification and, since the 1980s, mounting requests for asylum militated against a decline in the numbers of migrants. Owing to the protection families and refugees enjoyed under the constitutional and legal systems of Western Europe, the inflow of family members of resident aliens became the dominant part of “regular” immigration, reinforced by migration of prospective spouses. In addition, there was a huge increase in the number of asylum seekers. Though only a small minority of them received asylum, many rejected
applicants remained illegally. The outbreak of war in former Yugoslavia caused applications for asylum to soar in the 1990s.

(2) Recent migration:
Despite guarantees of freedom of movement and policies that encourage migration within the European Union, and despite income differentials of as much as one to five (as between Portugal and Germany), intra-EU migration has slowed down. In particular, intra-European mass migration of unskilled and semiskilled workers dwindled and almost ceased in the 90s. Large differences in individual income patterns still existing between European countries cease to function as incentives for migration once the economies of the sending countries starting growing rapidly and, as in the case of Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy, held out for their nationals hopes of individual economic improvement. In general, intra-European migration nowadays is increasingly a movement of highly skilled professionals in commerce, science, and technology.

Due to increased East-West migration pressures and labor needs in certain sectors of the economy, in particular the service sector, guest-worker-style policies have re-emerged, despite the ban on the recruitment of manpower from countries outside the European Union. Germany in particular grants temporary work permits to construction workers, seasonal farm hands and trainees from Eastern Europe, notwithstanding immigration of ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union – more than 2 million since 1992 –, the migration of almost a million East Germans to western Germany and 500,000 East German commuters across the former inner-German border.

Population pressures, growing mobility owing to modernization and better education and professional training, and poverty and political instability around the globe have made Europe a haven for migrants seeking individual economic betterment and protection against political suppression. Thus, in spite of the sharp restrictions on immigration imposed in the 1990s, illegal immigration and asylum claims rose strongly. By blocking possibilities for legal migration (“front door”), illegal routes (“back door”) were bound to expand.

Fostered by the employers' interest in cheap labor, illegal immigration, with its attendant ills of exploitation and crime, has become a major social and political issue.
To some extent these illegal immigrants provide a buffer at the lowest levels of the labor market, a function previously fulfilled by immigrants from southern Europe. Whereas Germany has to deal with immigration mainly from central, southeastern and eastern Europe, the southern rim of the European Union, namely in France, Italy and Spain, is the destination of migrants from Northern Africa.

(3) Admission and coordination: Admission policies for migrants have always varied from country to country in Europe, often changing in accordance with economic and political developments. Today, the logic and dynamic of European integration (free movement of goods, services, capital, and people) places enormous pressure on member states of the European Union (EU) to cooperate in the policing of external borders. The states of the EU need to work with neighboring states (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary) and to assist them in improving border surveillance. The Schengen Agreement distinguishes between EU citizens and non-citizens and is a step toward controlling every person who enters the Union. In the Amsterdam Treaty, the member states of the European Union have agreed in principle on a common access policy. Its content will reflect the complex decision-making process in EU institutions. Although EU institutions have adopted a number of initiatives to harmonize the immigration and asylum policies of member states, harmonization is far from complete. *Immigration has evolved into one of the most important long-term issues in European domestic and foreign politics.*

(4) Social and legal situation of migrants: Under pressure from trade unions and civic organizations (especially churches), all European countries have granted legal migrants equality under their labor and social security laws. The major area of dispute within and between European states is naturalization and security of residence versus enforced repatriation. Millions of permanent residents in the states of Western Europe have still not received citizenship or the right to vote. France and Great Britain are representative of a long tradition of liberal naturalization. The German model, by contrast, considered migrant workers as guests who had to leave after a limited period of time, and hence made no provision for the naturalization of migrants. The general trend in Europe is strongly in favor of liberalizing naturalization. The new nationality law in Germany gives German-born children of foreigners the right to opt for German citizenship. Foreigners now qualify for German citizenship after eight years of residence (formerly 12 years). Various laws already
protect large groups of migrants (e.g. long-time residents with a good civic record and political refugees) against enforced repatriation, although they are not nationals. In the long run, naturalization is the best protection.

(5) Impact on receiving countries: In many European countries, foreigners or naturalized foreigners make up 8–10 percent of the population. In Switzerland the proportion of foreign nationals reaches 19 percent. In Spain, Italy, and Greece, the proportion of foreigners is rising rapidly from its still low level of 2–3 percent. As a rule, the constant in- and outflows of migrants result in a net gain in the receiving countries. In West Germany alone, 35–40 million migrants entered the country from the 1960s onward on short-term work permits. Seven million of them and their offspring have stayed on more or less permanently.

Many observers considered immigration to be a passing phenomenon in the history of European nations. Immigration would be limited in scope and cease once migrants were no longer needed for the national economy. All these assumptions have been proved to be wrong. A large number of migrants have settled and the number of migrants will continue to grow strongly.

The presence and growth of new ethnic minorities has led to difficult debates over assimilation (incorporating the ethnic groups into the larger society) and multiculturalism (promoting minorities’ cultural rights).

There is no dominant model for integration in Western Europe today. Cultural assimilation of immigrants will be much slower than in the past, as modern media (e.g. satellite television) and cheap transport enable migrants to keep closer social and cultural contact with their home societies. Non-Christians will add to religious diversity in formerly religiously fairly homogeneous societies. In France, Muslim immigrants now form the second biggest denomination. The continuing impact of media, travel, and heavy immigration from abroad will continue to dilute cultural homogeneity. Thus, traditional national identities will be challenged even more strongly than in the past. In order to minimize possible ethnic or cultural conflicts, European countries must seek to create new political identities that recognize full and equal citizenship regardless of racial and cultural origin.

The advent of immigration and the impact of modern media and tourism have brought about drastic social and cultural changes. Nowadays, all European countries have a multicultural face. “Interrmarriage” between natives and people with an
immigrant background is on the rise (e.g. in Berlin now 25 % of all marriages). The migrants have enriched Europe economically and culturally, but immigration is also associated with severe conflicts. “Native” nationals have to compete on the labor market with foreigners from all over the world, which is a constant source of potential xenophobia. Cultural antagonisms and entrepreneurs of religious fundamentalism have fanned the conflicts engendered by economic competition. As the number of naturalizations and agglomeration of migrants in urban areas grows, migrants’ votes will become politically important in local and national elections, which will change the terms of the political arena.

(6) Demography and immigration: The permanence of strong immigration will be dictated by demography. European birth rates are far below the statistical reproduction rate of 2.1 children per woman needed to sustain the present population. Immigration is the only way to mitigate the negative impact of a declining population on many sectors of the economy and the social fabric (e.g. aging, domestic consumption, housing, pensions, etc.). The constant demand of Europe’s economy for skilled and unskilled or semiskilled labor can be satisfied only by higher immigration.

The pivotal importance of scientific and technological innovations for economic growth will drive strong global competition for highly skilled labor. This is reflected in the German government’s recent proposal to attract information technology specialists to Germany to fill the shortfall of experts by granting 20,000 special visas to computer specialists from non-EU countries, giving them five-year work permits will a good chance of extensions. This so-called German Green Card bill, and subsequent “blue cards” of the German länder for various groups of highly skilled workers, reopened the debate on immigration regulations and the integration of foreigners in Germany. There has been a significant shift in opinions. Politicians and industrial associations are pushing for a new law to regulate overall immigration into Germany. Facing up to demographic trends, immigration is increasingly considered to be of vital national interest. Only through immigration will it be possible to finance Germany’s welfare and pension system in the coming decades. It is estimated that stabilizing Germany’s population at its present level will require net immigration of 300,000–500,000 people annually.
(7) *Future competition for immigrants*: The dramatic and rapid decline of European birth rates began in Germany in the early 70s. Consequently, the impact will be felt there first, and quite soon, followed in most other European states some 10 or 15 years later. It will be particularly dramatic in countries like Italy or Spain, whose fertility rates are now significantly below that in Germany. In the long run, all European states need massive immigration to cushion the economic and social consequences of their shrinking and aging populations. According to one study, Europe will need net immigration of 40–50 people in the coming decades. Considering that birth rates and life expectancies in some eastern European countries, particularly Russia, are already lower than those in western Europe, it is improbable that Eastern Europe can supply the number of immigrants needed.

Shrinking and aging populations are the pattern in all highly industrialized countries. This may well give rise to strong global competition for qualified immigrants. It may also become an important issue in Asian emerging markets, from which most of the immigrants will come, as shortages of skilled labor and falling birth rates make themselves felt there too.

2. The East Asian Migration Experience

2.1. Migration Patterns and their Structural Profile

(1) *Patterns of labor flows*: East Asia is just beginning to experience large-scale labor migration, which has brought immigration and integration issues toward the top of the sociopolitical agenda. The process through which doors to foreign workers were opened in Asia was similar to that in Western Europe. Asian countries with a large supply of unskilled and semiskilled workers became labor exporters, relying on migrants' remittances to finance their immediate needs as well as economic development – a pattern typical for southern Europe in the early stages of European labor migration. Later when, e.g. in South Korea, domestic reserves of flexible and cheap labor in specific sectors of the economy were exhausted, the recruitment of foreign workers was permitted or tolerated. Hence, it can be argued that labor migration is a normal part of economic development. So far, not more than one percent of the populations and two percent of the labor force of the Asian receiving countries discussed in this paper are foreigners. That will change.
A number of factors promise to increase labor migration in East Asia significantly: uneven population and economic growth, labor shortages next door to labor surpluses, labor smuggling, and stop-go policies that first tolerate and then crack down on illegal workers.

- South Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand have increasingly become labor-receiving countries in the course of rapid economic development. In South Korea and to some extent even in Thailand declining fertility rates also play a role.

Recent estimates of the number of documented migrant workers in the various receiving countries include over 300,000 in South Korea, 1.14 million in Malaysia, and 316,000 in Thailand. In some countries the number of undocumented workers may be larger than the documented population: Malaysia 560,000, Thailand 943,000, and South Korea 123,299 (overstayers).

Some two million South Korean nationals have worked overseas since the early 1960s, mainly on construction projects in the Middle East. South Korea still is a major labor exporter to Japan, where many of its emigrants working illegally. Demographic change and government policies aimed at rapid industrialization gradually turned South Korea into an immigration country by the late 1980s. The official government position is that South Korea does not need unskilled foreign workers. Despite this, irregular immigration developed quickly. Two-thirds of all foreign workers are still undocumented. The South Korean government could not stop migration flows because its so-called trainee system underestimated the strength of demand for labor in a growing economy. The trainee system, set up to train foreign nationals in South Korean companies, was transformed into a source of urgently needed cheap foreign labor. Foreign labor is vital to the survival of South Korea’s small and medium-sized enterprises. The largest group of immigrants are Chinese (mostly Chinese Koreans), followed by migrants from Thailand and the Philippines.

Malaysia is the major receiving country in the region, hosting one of Asia’s largest foreign labor pools of over two million migrant workers. This large inflow reflects demand for low-cost labor from plantations and the construction, manufacturing, and service sectors. Lesser-skilled workers came from rural Indonesia. Indonesia is the source of Malaysia’s immigrant labor for geographic, historical, and cultural reasons. Most of this labor is illegal. Despite the large number of immigrants, the governments and the media ignored the issue initially. In the boom years of the early 1990s
economic needs predominated. By 1995, when foreign workers began to make their presence felt in ever larger numbers, the real and perceived social costs became a major public issue. At the same time, there has been an exodus of well-trained skilled Malaysians, mainly of Chinese descent, seeking semi-white collar jobs in Singapore, Taiwan, and Japan.

Initially, Thailand’s labor exports focused to the Middle East. Following a diplomatic incident with Saudi Arabia in the late 1980s, Thai labor shifted increasingly to Asia. The largest numbers work close to home, i.e. in Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, and Taiwan, where Thai workers form the largest major group. The work pattern of Thai workers is similar to that of other foreign labor in other Southeast Asian countries. Thailand became a country of immigration in the 1990s. Owing to labor shortages and changing attitudes toward menial and low-paid work among Thais, the authorities started accepting low-skilled labor from neighboring countries, particularly Myanmar and the southern provinces of China. In 1997 there were more than one million migrants in Thailand, over 85 percent of them from Myanmar and most with an irregular status.

– Indonesia and the Philippines have remained labor-exporting countries. Given its large surplus of unskilled workers, Indonesia seems to have a greater potential for labor exports than other Asian countries. Political uncertainties and their impact on the economy have strengthened emigration pressures. Increasingly, the preferred destinations are other Asian countries. Labor migration from Indonesia to East and Southeast Asian countries will be one of the critical issues of Indonesian economic development in the 21st century. The vast majority of Indonesian migrants are unskilled. Female migration from Indonesia is also growing. Most migration to Malaysia is illegal. Huge, ongoing migration within Indonesia itself has increased the mobility potential of Indonesians in search of economic advancement, and in many cases internal migration is the first step to going abroad.

Demand for temporary migrant workers in Arab states led to the Philippines becoming the world’s leading source of migrants. In the 1980s, the Philippine government began marketing Filipino labor aggressively. Migration gained further momentum in the 1990s, when President Ramos praised Filipino migrant workers as the country’s “new heroes”. In 1997, Filipino employment in Asia exceeded Filipino employment in the Middle East for the first time. Filipino migration, including seamen,
exceeds 700,000 p.a. Female migration accounts for 60 percent of the annual flow, most of them employed in domestic work or the entertainment industry.

(2) Characteristics of Structural Profile: Asianization, feminization, undocumented migration:

- **Asianization**: Until the early 1990s, East Asia was a source of labor mainly for industrialized countries. Remarkable economic growth in the Asian NICs then triggered a dramatic increase in intra-regional Asian migration. The desire to sustain economic growth transformed South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand into labor-importing countries as they approached full employment and their own population moved into better-paying jobs, creating a shortage of local labor for the so-called 3D jobs (dirty, dangerous, difficult). The receiving countries turned to foreign workers – some reluctantly, some more openly – to fill demand for unskilled jobs in manufacturing, plantation work, agriculture and fisheries, and domestic service. The volume and complexity of migration flows within the region has grown enormously, and migrants range from professionals to unskilled workers, filling positions from manager to maid. However, migration within Asia is still characterized mainly by the flows of unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Migration from Asia to the post-industrial countries on the Pacific rim (primarily Australia, Canada, and the United States), on the other hand, favors highly educated Asians trained in technical fields and professions in engineering, the sciences, information technology and healthcare.

- **Feminization**: An increasingly large proportion of Asian migrants are women, employed in manufacturing, agriculture, entertainment, and domestic work. Issues resulting from the increasing feminization of labor migration, such as physical abuse and labor offences, are probably the most apparent and appalling societal costs. Female migration from the Philippines counts for 60 percent of the annual flow of Filipinos abroad, most of them to work in households or in entertainment. More and more Filipinas move as autonomous economic migrants rather than as dependents of male migrants. Their movement is often a family survival strategy.

- **Undocumented Migration**: Over half of the three million migrants in East Asia work abroad illegally. The prevalence of clandestine international labor migration is often overlooked in East Asia. But illegal migrants may even outnumber legal ones. With many Asian nations refusing or restricting the number of unskilled foreign workers,
many migrants rely on an often shadowy network of labor brokers, contractors, and transporters to help them enter and work in higher wage countries. Recruiters range from one-person operations to organized crime syndicates. Private recruitment agencies are responsible for nine out of ten placements in Asia. The increase in the number of illegal migrants has been facilitated by the expanded activities of such intermediaries. Labor smuggling is a lucrative business. The proliferation of illegal channels can be attributed partly to the high costs and bureaucratic procedures of legal migration.

2.2. Impact of the 1997–99 Crisis on Government Policies

(1) Change of Context: Intra-Asian labor migration played a vital role in the economic development of the region. Migrant workers annually sent home millions of dollars – remittances in much needed foreign exchange. During the East Asian “miracle”, however, some of the social and political aspects of migrant labor were neglected.

The regional financial and economic crisis has changed the context of migration. Migrant workers have become a “burden” and a “problem” for the governments concerned and form a particularly vulnerable group of workers and unemployed. Although no massive repatriation has taken place, this does not mean that migrant workers were always treated well in their host countries. Some of the impacts of the crisis were hidden (e.g. pay cuts, longer working hours, deterioration in working conditions, etc.). In many instances migrant workers face the hostility of a local population that perceives them as taking away their jobs. These sentiments are not quite consistent with reality. Migrant labor in Asia has been mainly “niched” in unskilled, low paying jobs shunned by nationals except the very poor. This is evidenced by the persistence of shortages of low-skilled workers even in the midst of the crisis. Still, the popular media and vote-seeking politicians could easily make migrants the scapegoat for the economic downturn and the ills of the host society. As a result, the link between migration and security is particularly relevant. Because of cutbacks in development and social welfare programs the governments of the migrants’ home countries are unable to support displaced returnees. Nor do they want to antagonize the governments of destination countries by pressing for better treatment of their own nationals and by claiming benefits for them, for out-migration eases pressure on domestic employment. Overall, the rights and interests of migrant
workers in East Asia are often subordinated to the interests of both labor-sending and labor-receiving states.

(2) **South Korea:** Government measures to protect the human rights of immigrants are strongest in South Korea. In response to protests by undocumented workers and support from Korean civil organizations, the South Korean government announced in 1994 that it would uphold fundamental human rights, including cases of industrial accidents, overdue wages, labor abuses and foreign labor. Illegal foreign workers were given equal protection under the country’s Labor Standards Act. After the crisis, perhaps one third of irregular migrants were repatriated under an amnesty program. However, irregular migration is again on the rise as the economy recovers.

(3) **Malaysia:** Alarmed by the prospect of a wave of Indonesian migrants, Malaysia stepped up measures to curb illegal migration. When the economic crisis struck in 1997–98, the dramatic increase in the numbers of undocumented Indonesian migrants was widely perceived as a threat to Malaysia’s security. A government plan was drawn up to send home foreign workers who had been retrenched or whose work permits had expired in batches over the next five years. Following this change of policy, a nation-wide crackdown on undocumented migrants began in 1998, which heightened tensions, culminating in resistance to deportation and widely publicized clashes. In the following months, to address labor shortages in the plantation and manufacturing sectors – both hit less severely by the crisis than the construction sector –, the government changed its stance, allowing new migrant recruitment, or redeployment, in spite of fears of rising unemployment. This seemingly contradictory stop-go approach illustrates the persistence of migration flows and the fact that today in many societies the state may not be the sole or dominant force controlling migration.

(4) **Thailand:** Three hundred thousand migrants were repatriated in response to the 1998 crisis. 200,000 of them were sent to Myanmar. In spite Thai workers returning to rural areas from the cities, it soon became apparent that there was still a severe shortage of labor shortage in the agricultural sector. Two factors militated against the repatriation policy. On the one hand, employers had vested interests in irregular migration; on the other, the political and economic conditions in Myanmar were push factors that sustained the flow of illegal migrants. In 1997, the government announced that Thailand would enter into labor agreements with neighboring
countries in order to stop the flow of migrant workers and to protect their rights. The crisis also prompted Thais to consider working overseas in countries such as Israel, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore.

(5) Indonesia: Due to enormous emigration pressures and in the interests of good relations with its neighbors, Indonesia has adopted a passive approach to the strong deterrent policies of its neighbors. The Indonesian government has no reintegration program for returning workers. Generating domestic employment has top priority.

(6) The Philippines: Migration has become a major industry involving the state – through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) – and hundreds of private recruitment and placement agencies. The Philippines was not hit as severely as other countries – e.g. Indonesia – by the economic crisis. Mass repatriation of workers did not occur because Filipino workers are dispersed in various regions of the world. A minority of Filipino migrants worked in countries severely hit by the economic crisis. In addition, relatively few Filipinos were employed in critical sectors such as construction. The actual scale of repatriation therefore was not as large as initially feared. During the crisis, the Philippine government planned additional emigration by exploring new markets previously avoided as potentially dangerous, such as Algeria. To save their jobs it encouraged migrants to scale back their demands. This could mean lowering the protection for workers abroad, despite the fact that the Philippines – with two to four million nationals working abroad – has taken the lead in international forums in pushing for migrants rights.

2.3. Challenges for Future Policies

(1) Regional coordination: Regional cooperation appears necessary to stem trafficking in migrants. The issue of illegal migration may be addressed by easing labor restrictions to make clandestine channels less attractive. But this issue can be resolved only through regional coordination and bilateral agreements (e.g. between the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia). In Europe the influx of asylum seekers and the fear of a huge wave of migrants from the former Warsaw Bloc countries gave new urgency to cooperative prevention of unwanted immigration. Many illegal migrants, both in Europe and Asia, have effectively settled in the receiving countries. Regularizing their stay seems to be more humane and possibly more effective solution than deportation.
(2) **Attention to labor market demands**: Most indicators point toward more rather than fewer migrants in the 21st century. An appropriate policy regime in East Asia would ease rather than simply block migration by careful responding to demands. Government policies of sending and host countries that ignore market forces are only likely to encourage illegal migration; short-term policy interventions in defiance of the labor situation in sending and host countries will be effective only in the short run at most. The object of a sensible policy should be to minimize the social costs and maximize the social benefits of international migration while promoting development.

(3) **Assessment**: Analysis and empirical assessment of migration policies must improve. This requires adequate information for monitoring the dimensions and the composition of labor inflows and outflows (skill classification, employment status, and gender). In addition, in order to anticipate newly emerging patterns of demand for migrant workers there is an urgent need to monitor economic and structural changes, including the aging of the population. Similar to the declining and aging population of Europe, Southeast Asian countries are also experiencing falling population growth rates (e.g. Thailand, where birth rates have declined most sharply). It is in the common interest of demographers and policymakers in Europe and East Asia to link immigration to future manpower requirements.

(4) **Protecting female migrants**: The predicament of migrant women should be a major issue. Adequate legal protection of migrant women is already of growing concern to many individuals and groups in this region, both governmental and non-governmental. Increasingly, international and regional forums are adopting a gender-sensitive approach to migration issues.

(5) **Control of the recruitment industry**: It is imperative to better control and regulate the activities of the “immigration industry”. This is a difficult task because private labor brokering is quite efficient in generating demand for labor. Sending states have an interest in not discouraging private recruitment agencies. Government regulations should therefore concentrate on licensing agencies, legislating penal sanctions against unacceptable recruitment practices, and providing tax or other incentives for agencies that meet criteria for good performance. Government services should be considered for the counseling and preparing workers intending to go abroad. The Philippines has some experience in this field, as best practices indicate. A fuller and more effective use of NGOs should be made. The Philippines and Sri Lanka already
entrust NGOs with the responsibility for providing information for potential migrants. Migrant workers themselves should be encouraged to build up their own support structures and networks and to improve relationships with locals in their host country. The governments of the sending countries can make further efforts to develop social centers for their nationals abroad. For example, cultural facilities serve as focal points for the communities of migrant workers in Europe.

(6) Legislative measures: Concerted action is required at both national and international levels to combat the exploitation and physical, sexual, and other abuse of migrant workers, especially the more vulnerable female migrants. Establishing a legal foundation for the protection of nationals overseas is an important measure that migration countries must shoulder. An example is the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act passed by the Philippines in 1995. Adopting and respecting International Labor Standards for protecting the rights of migrant workers could be an important step in this direction. It should be considered by the labor-sending and, particularly, by the labor-receiving countries.

(7) Concern for returnees: Remigration deserves the attention of policy makers. Programs for re-integration are politically difficult to sell to the public because migrants are often perceived as privileged workers. But it must be recognized that the work-experience, acquired skills and investment savings of returning migrants are assets that can be mobilized for economic development. In the Philippines, a welfare fund established with employer and migrant contributions has proved a success. Governments might also provide incentives to redirect a larger portion of remittance inflows from consumption to investment. Alternatively, existing schemes for self-employment or small enterprise creation might be modified to attract investment from migrants. As the experience of Europe has shown, such measures work best at the local level.

3. Lessons from the European and Asian Migration Experiences
East Asia is experiencing the growing importance of intra-regional labor flows. Accelerated economic integration and development in East Asia will result in more than rather less migration. Steps toward regional economic integration will initially generate a wave of labor migration, as occurred in Europe the 1960s when southern Europeans sought jobs in northwestern Europe. A similar “migration bump” is taking
place in East Asia. The regional crisis has widened income disparities within and between countries, thereby further increasing emigration pressures. Migration and settlement will be also encouraged by geographic and cultural proximity. As intra-regional labor migration becomes more institutionalized in East Asia in the coming decades, governments will face major challenges on policies for planning, regulating, and monitoring overseas employment, protecting migrant workers, and strengthening regional cooperation. In the case of Western Europe, the perceived failure of national migration policies has led the governments, especially Germany, to look for a Europe-wide solution that includes cooperation with neighboring central and eastern European states. Likewise the East Asian socioeconomic crisis 1997–99 calls for a regional response to the problem of immigration control.

The crisis has also exposed the shortcomings of a strictly temporary approach to labor migration. In Asian countries foreign workers are – as far as they are legally admitted – strictly limited to a temporary stay with no possibility of long-term integration. Asian governments want to prevent unskilled migrants from settling.

The most important lesson of modern international migration in Europe is that migration acquires its own dynamics, which go beyond the laws of supply and demand. Once networks are established, migration for work tends to be perpetuated. Migrants become less and less flexible buffers in the host country’s labor market. Guest-worker programs are easier to start than to stop. “There is nothing more permanent than temporary workers” (Ph. L. Martin). Asian rotation policies may slow this settlement process, but will not stop it. North American and European observers studying the evolution of labor migration in East Asia are often struck by familiar first signs of workers becoming settlers. Integrating foreigners may yet emerge as a major issue in East Asia.

In the long run, if economic growth in Indonesia and the Philippines offers hope of individual advancement at home to those currently emigrating for lack of opportunity, emigration may subside, as has happened in Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece since the 80s. A growing scarcity of labor in the East Asia may then perhaps create an opening for the vast emigration potential of China, which, owing to a legacy of political and cultural antagonism, has remained largely untapped.
4. Bibliography


