

# International Migration as a Tool in Development Policy: A Passing Phase?

RONALD SKELDON

IT MIGHT SEEM curious to raise the possibility of an “international migration phase” in development since it can be argued that migration has always been, and will always be, an integral part of development. Ravenstein, the father of modern migration studies, in his famous “laws of migration” (1885, 1889) observed that “migration increases as industries and commerce develop and transport improves” (see Grigg 1977: 43). In other words, migration is positively related to development. Ravenstein further asserted that the major direction of migration was from “agricultural areas to the centres of industry and commerce” and that “the major causes of migration were economic.” Hence, right from the emergence of migration as a systematic area of study, development was seen to be an integral part of the process. Development, in effect, creates and intensifies the spatial inequalities that generate migration. Development as a fundamental driving force for migration persists in current interpretations that see national outmigration rates initially rising with the onset of modern economic growth and then declining (Chiswick and Hatton 2003: 82).

Another early but different interpretation of the role of migration in national development is Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 essay on the significance of the frontier in American history. The core of this interpretation is that “the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development” (Turner 1961: 37). The movement of peoples across a new environment essentially brought about the development of the United States. This interpretation was a product of its time and a reaction against the view that American history was simply a continuation of European institutions overseas. Although its sweeping conclusions often resemble geographical determinism, they provide a forceful interpretation of how migration can shape a nation. Hence, in the early works of Ravenstein and Turner we have clear examples of migration as, respectively, a consequence and a cause of development.

Despite this early work, key modern references on migration such as the comprehensive *Handbook of International Migration* (Hirschman, Kasinitz, and DeWind 1999) and its successor (Portes and DeWind 2004), or *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (Cohen 1995) make no specific reference to migration and development. Of course, many of the issues covered in these volumes, such as labor markets, business cycles, entrepreneurship, and assimilation, could be seen as integral parts of any process that would be termed “development.” Similarly, Hoerder’s (2004) magisterial study of migration over the last one thousand years does not explicitly deal with development, even if his “cultures in contact” bring about what could be considered development in its broadest sense. However, “development,” in terms of an improvement in the conditions in areas of origin that is, or can be, brought about by managing migration was not a consideration. Nevertheless, over the last decade at most, this particular sense of migration and development—namely, that migration from the developing to the developed world can play an important role in the development of the poorer countries of origin—has emerged as a major area of academic and policy concern.

This essay examines the current emphasis given to migration and development in this sense and questions how well-founded it is and whether it is likely to be more than a passing phase in development thinking. Governments and international agencies are attracted to the idea of managing international migration—and its accompaniments, such as remittances and transnational ties—as a means of promoting development. But that tends to elevate the comparatively small number of international migrants into an unwarranted instrumental role in development and diverts attention from the much more important obstacles to development located in home-country populations and institutions. Clearly, if we apply a broader approach to development, all countries are developing and migration shapes the more developed parts of the world, too. The literature on this latter aspect of the migration–development nexus is extensive and vigorously contested. It ranges from seeing the arrival of migrants as likely to erode the identity of the nation in, for example, Huntington (2004) and Brimelow (1995), to writers who see immigration as an essential component of the continued economic dynamism of the more developed countries themselves, for example, Legrain (2006) and Pritchett (2006). Coleman (2006) outlines the demographic foundations of the new migration to developed economies, suggesting the emergence of a “third demographic transition” in which low-fertility societies are maintained by migration from distant areas and different cultures. Perhaps the most complete assessment that links origins and destinations over the long term is that by Hatton and Williamson (2005) in which significantly the word “development” does not appear in the index, even though the whole book is about development in its broadest sense. The present essay, however, will concentrate on the current policy concern with migration and development. The focus in the

developed world and in international organizations on migration's contributions to development is recent and, I argue here, is unlikely to be sustained at its present level in the policy debate on development. This certainly does not mean that migration itself is a passing phase in development, but merely that the preoccupation with migration as a policy tool that can be used to foster development is likely to abate. Examples include implementing a policy of ethical recruitment to restrict the contracting of personnel seen as vital to the development of poor countries of origin or, conversely, a policy to promote certain types of migration that will increase the flow of remittances back to countries of origin to support development. These types of policy are negotiated bilaterally between origins and destinations, even if the initiative can come from the one or the other.

The reason for the rise of migration and development in the policy arena is not hard to fathom. First, migration from poorer developing countries to more developed countries increased beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s in step with the modification of immigration policies in the main settler countries in North America and Australasia. Europe also emerged as a major destination for migrants from former colonies and beyond. Second, studies of migration showed that migrants maintain social, political, and, most importantly, economic linkages with their countries of origin, in the process forming transnational communities. This phenomenon may not have been a unique feature of international migration in the last quarter of the twentieth century, but transnationalism became a new way of conceptualizing the migration of the time (Glick Schiller 1999). Technological developments in transportation and telecommunication allowed migrants to maintain ties between origins and destinations more intensively than ever before. Third, and perhaps most critically, is the way that development itself came to be framed and how that framework excluded migration, paradoxical though this might appear. Fourth, as will become clear below, political considerations also loomed large in this trend.

Development is notoriously difficult to define. The concept is filled with inherent tensions and contradictions. Improvement in the conditions of some members of society creates inequalities that may result in destructive social movements or the marginalization of other members. Short-term improvements may lead to long-term problems, hence the issue of sustainability looms large in development thinking. At the turn of the millennium, the international community identified several key areas for intervention that came to be known as the "millennium development goals" (see, for example, UNDP 2003). Eight general goals ranging from poverty eradication to education, health, gender equity, and environment and governance form the basis for the MDGs. Eighteen specific targets were identified that could be measured and monitored in order to gauge the progress made toward the achievement of the MDGs.

Although virtually all the goals could be related in some way or other to migration, international migration itself was not seen as a key goal, or as a development issue that should be subject to policy intervention. Whether international migration should have been a specific MDG seems beside the point (UNFPA 2005). In political terms, it is highly unlikely that 189 countries could have agreed upon any development framework that incorporated such a sensitive and contentious issue as international migration. It is virtually impossible to envisage international agreement on specific targets for migration in the same way that targets for a decline in poverty or in child and maternal mortality could be so agreed. Because migration involves countries of both immigration and emigration, statements to the effect that the number of migrants should be increased by X or decreased by Y by 2015 in line with other targets to achieve the MDGs would have been impossible as universal recommendations. Nevertheless, perhaps some more general goal to the effect that countries should seek to better manage their flows of migration might have achieved agreement: for example, a goal with similarly difficult-to-quantify targets such as those that characterize goal number eight on creating a global partnership for development.

In 2003, in the absence of any clear international guidelines for migration but recognizing that it was a major issue, the Secretary-General of the United Nations commissioned a special report. The mandate of the Global Commission on International Migration was to provide a framework for formulating a coherent, comprehensive, and global response to international migration (GCIM 2005). If migration was to be considered at the multilateral level, however, it had to be linked with development. Developed countries saw immigration—whom and how many to admit within their borders—as a matter for state policy alone, with no interference from any outside power. Nevertheless, if the management of migration could be shown to promote development in some way, then a role for multilateral involvement could be justified. Migration itself was off the agenda, but migration linked to development was the backdoor way of discussing the issue of migration in the international arena. It is in this more limited and essentially policy-related sense rather than in the broad Ravenstein or Turner approaches that “migration and development” can be seen as a new phase in the debates on migration. Thus were set in motion specific directions and discourses in migration and development.

The report from the Global Commission on International Migration was followed by a major document on international migration and development from the General Assembly of the United Nations. This document served as background for the High-level Dialogue of senior government officials at the United Nations in September 2006 (United Nations 2006a). International activity has been maintained through the state-led Global Forum on Migration and Development, the first meeting of which was held in Brussels in June

2007, with the second scheduled for the Philippines in 2008. That the center of the debate has moved from the multilateral forums of the United Nations to a state-led format is perhaps indicative of a significant shift in the level of policy concern. Nevertheless, all this activity has been matched by a series of studies produced by international organizations, governments, and other organizations examining the potential impact of migration on the development of poorer countries. The literature has become extensive, with perhaps the most comprehensive and recent review on the economic dimension being that of Lucas (2005), updating earlier assessments in Skeldon (1997), Appleyard (1999), and Nyberg-Sørensen, Van Hear, and Engberg-Pedersen (2002). One of the most important contributions of these efforts has been to correct the oft-held impression at the policy level that migration is necessarily negative for development and is an exceptional type of human behavior that needs to be curtailed. Nevertheless, although the fact that international migration is being brought to a high profile can only be welcomed, an uneasy feeling is emerging that a sense of perspective is being lost and that the migration tail is beginning to wag the development dog. Migration, if not quite being seen as a panacea, is being reified as a tool that can be used to bring about development itself. Some cautionary words are therefore appropriate as we look again at the major areas of concern.

### **A minority of migrants**

In 2005, the United Nations estimated that the number of international migrants worldwide had reached 191 million, up from 158 million in 1990 (United Nations 2006b). The 2005 figure represented about 3 percent of the world's population, and while one could cavil at the means of calculating the number of international migrants, the UN estimates provide the best data to date at the global level. A comparison with United Nations data in 1975 suggests that the growth rate in the number of international migrants actually slowed between 1990 and 2005 compared with the period between 1975 and 1990, although the overall figure is somewhat deceptive. Whereas the number of international migrants in the developing world declined, the number going to the developed world remained robust, and the proportion of migrants going to the developed world from developing countries was increasing. Nevertheless, the definition of "developing" includes a broad range of levels of development, and data for specific developed countries show that the majority of migrants from the non-developed world came from middle-income developing countries such as China, India, Mexico, and the Philippines. An examination of the country of origin of migrants to OECD countries showed that only 15 percent originated in low-income economies. These economies had by far the lowest rate of outmigration: 0.5 percent compared with 3.3 percent for lower-middle income, 4.2 percent for upper-middle income, and

2.8 percent for high-income countries (Docquier and Marfouk 2006: 170). Hence, the numbers of international migrants from countries most in need of “development” are a small proportion of the total.

Information on specific place of origin within the country of origin is generally lacking: whether international migrants from developing countries originate in the urban or rural sector or even in the national capital is generally not known. A historical analysis of migration from nineteenth-century Europe indicated that rural populations were generally less mobile internationally than urban populations (Chiswick and Hatton 2003: 82). Whether present populations in the developing world react in a similar way is not known and the data are fragmentary, but logic suggests that they might, as it is in the urban areas that the resources necessary to migrate internationally can be accumulated. Over 80 percent of migrants from the Philippines to Hong Kong came from metropolitan Manila or the immediate surrounding area, for instance (cited in Skeldon 1997: 108). Nevertheless, the evidence is conflicting. Migration from rural parts of developing countries to overseas destinations also occurs, with Sylhet in Bangladesh being a notable example of a primarily rural district with a long-established tradition of migration to the United Kingdom (Gardner 1995). Some 95 percent of migrants from Bangladesh to the United Kingdom up to the late 1980s came from Sylhet. Similarly, the majority of the migrants from Pakistan to the United Kingdom came from the mainly rural district of Mirpur in the north of that country (Ballard 1987: 24). Furthermore, the origins of international migration are highly concentrated, with large parts of most countries of origin not participating in international movements. Much of the migration from India to the Middle East has been from the southern state of Kerala (Zachariah, Mathew, and Rajan 2003), and migration from China has been dominated by three southern coastal provinces, Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang, and from specific parts of those provinces.

The available data appear to support Ravenstein’s contention that migration is positively related to development. The data also suggest, however, that focusing on international migration as a means to bring about development may not be the most effective approach, simply because most people in poor countries are not linked to international networks. This does not mean that migration is unrelated to development. However, and again following Ravenstein’s law that most people move over short distances, current discussions exclude most people who move. The majority of those who move do so within their own countries, and the incorporation of internal migration into any framework that seeks to understand both the theoretical dimensions and the policy implications of migration and development is urgently required. For example, in China alone, estimates place the number of internal migrants at well over 100 million (Murphy 2002), well over half the global number of international migrants. The conclusion seems inescapable: the current focus

on international migrants is on a tiny proportion of the world's population and on a minority of all migrants. Internal and international migrations are not the same thing: the movements of people within the boundaries of sovereign states have different implications from the movements of those who enter sovereign states from outside. Nevertheless, linkages between the two do exist, and it seems unwise to exclude the majority of those who move from any framework that seeks to understand the relationships between migration and development.

This conclusion does not imply that small numbers of international migrants cannot make a significant impact on their countries of origin. They can, and the remainder of this essay focuses only on this minority of migrants and their implications for development. The work on international migration and development has tended to revolve around three major interconnected themes: remittances; skilled migration and brain drain; and diaspora. Here, too, implicit assumptions often characterize much of the work on migration and development.

### **Migrant remittances**

Virtually all published work on migration and development has touched upon remittances, and several major recent assessments are available (OECD 2005; World Bank 2006; Maimbo and Ratha 2005; Özden and Schiff 2006). Such has been the dominance that attention had to be drawn to the fact that research on migration and development needed to move "beyond remittances" (Newland and Patrick 2004; also Skeldon 2004). The obvious reason for this preoccupation with financial flows from migrants back to their homelands is their sheer magnitude. Estimates placed the volume of remittances flowing only to developing countries in 2005 at US\$167 billion, an amount that has doubled since 2000; remittances are now much larger than the total volume of official aid flows (World Bank 2006). Certainly, part of the increase can be accounted for by improved reporting and statistical systems, but the total amount reported referred only to remittances flowing through formal banking channels. The World Bank has estimated that an equal amount may flow through informal channels. Studies in Bangladesh, for example, suggested that only about 46 percent of international remittances sent back to villages flowed through formal channels (Siddiqui 2005: 84–85), and data from the Philippines indicate a similar situation (Dimzon 2005).

The annual value of global remittances is second only to foreign direct investment as a source of external funding (Ratha 2005: 20). To assess the full impact of international migrants on their home economies, one must ask where the dividing line is drawn between remittances and foreign direct investment. For example, remittances sent to China, valued at some US\$8 billion between 1991 and 1998, are considered small compared with the figure

seven times higher sent to India from a smaller overseas Indian population. Foreign direct investment in China in 2002 was estimated at US\$48 billion, of which half came from the overseas Chinese (data cited in Newland and Patrick 2004: 4–5). Hence, looking at remittances alone does not give a full impression of the contribution that migrants make to financial flows home.

While doubts exist about the precise amounts of money migrants send as remittances, there is no question about their importance for countries of origin. Nevertheless, debate on remittances tends to ignore certain aspects of the process. The discussion in the previous section about the origins of migrants clearly has implications for remittances. The assumption is that remittances flow back to the country of origin as a whole. However, the large preponderance of remittances flows back to a small number of towns and villages. The immediate effect is to reinforce or increase inequalities between rural and urban areas and between rural areas. Thus, unlike aid or official development assistance, which can be targeted at particular groups and specifically toward the eradication of poverty, remittances are flows to the specific areas of origin of migration that might involve neither the poorest areas nor the poorest people within those areas. Nevertheless, remittances do improve social and economic conditions within certain home areas. The massive labor migration from the Indian state of Kerala to the countries of the Persian Gulf generated about US\$3 billion in remittances in 2000 and contributed to a 12 percent reduction in poverty across the state (Zachariah, Mathew, and Rajan 2003). Convincing evidence of the impact of remittances on poverty alleviation is also available from Latin America (Acosta, Fajnzylber, and Lopez 2007).

Unlike official development assistance, remittances constitute a flow in cash and kind directly to the migrant's family. Attempts to interfere with this flow or to recommend that remittances be employed more for investment than consumption ignore the fact that distinctions between uses for investment and consumption are largely deceptive. Expenditure on consumption for housing construction, for example, has important multiplier effects through the creation of local employment and a stimulus in demand for local products. Where expenditure is mainly for imported goods, such stimulus is diminished, but even expenditure that appears to be directed primarily at consumption can have positive implications for local development. Any attempt by governments to influence the use of remittances for "investment" is likely to prove counterproductive, and migrants are likely either to resort to informal channels or to cease to remit altogether if they see that their monies are going to government-sponsored development objectives. Thus, attempts to regulate or otherwise manage monetary flows along more development-oriented paths may fail to achieve the intended result.

While there is little question that remittances can help to alleviate poverty and improve human well-being in origin areas, evidence that remittances promote sustainable economic growth is more elusive. Labor force partici-

pation rates may fall in remittance-receiving households even though the incidence of entrepreneurial activities may increase (see the essays in Özden and Schiff 2007). Despite the volume of remittances received by Kerala and the state's excellent and improved health and education indicators, Kerala has not experienced a parallel increase in economic growth, actually declining in national rank by gross state domestic product between 1980 and 1998 within India (Sachs, Bajpai, and Ramiah 2001). Remittances may improve human capital but, in doing so, may lock certain populations into dependence upon further outmigration. Although little work has been carried out on reverse remittances, which are usually deemed small compared with the main flows back to origins, the amounts spent on education may essentially be intended to train the next generation for employment in towns or overseas. Other amounts may be used to facilitate regular or irregular travel of people in origin areas to overseas destinations. Mobrand (2007), in a perhaps counterintuitive finding, has shown that rural-to-urban remittances by internal migrants exceeded urban-to-rural cash flows in Korea between 1960 and 1990. Other early work reviewed in Connell et al. (1976: 101–102) suggests similar patterns among internal migrants in villages in Nigeria, southern India, and Papua New Guinea. Remittances, although improving human well-being, may, in certain areas at least, simply maintain a status quo that leads to further migration and population redistribution, rather than sustaining economic development in areas of origin.

Finally, donor countries might be tempted to reallocate their official development assistance on the basis of the observed flows of remittances to certain countries. If a particular country is receiving substantial yearly remittances, why should aid not be channeled to another country that is not in receipt of such flows? As stated above, however, remittances make up a very different type of financial flow compared with aid, and the attempt to influence the allocation of aid on the basis of remittance flows would be a potentially harmful move. If official flows of aid were to be diminished, some areas and some particularly vulnerable groups that did not participate in migration might be deprived of assistance in countries that received substantial remittances. Also, any such approach would mean placing the responsibility for development firmly on the migrants themselves. That the agency of the migrants takes primacy in the development of home areas seems to divert attention from the importance of structural aspects of development policy. The value of remittances to Kerala was highlighted above but, equally clearly, it was the economic liberalization from 1991, and particularly the move from a fixed to a managed exchange rate, that facilitated the return of remittances (Kannan and Hari 2002). Once migrants can see the benefits of sending monies home, remittances will increase. The tension between migrant agency and structure will be found in the other themes in the migration and development debate.

## Skilled migration and brain drain

The migration of skilled persons can perhaps be seen as the other side of the coin from remittances. Whereas developing countries gain from the remittances sent by their migrants in destination countries, such countries lose through the outmigration of their skilled personnel. The outmigration of the highly skilled was, and, despite a literature to the contrary (Stark 2004; Clemens 2007), to a large extent still is seen as negative for the countries of origin as they lose the people most likely to generate development. Yet the tendency to blame a lack of development on the loss of migrants is again an example of according primacy to agency rather than to structure: blaming the migrants themselves rather than the economic structures and policies that are the critical factors in development.

The economies of East Asia from the late 1950s sent large numbers of students to the developed world, mainly the United States. Relatively few returned, initially at least. Yet these economies have seen one of the most rapid and sustained rates of economic growth in history. It seems futile to ask whether these economies would have grown any faster had the skilled migrants stayed home. Again, following Ravenstein, the increasing migration of the highly skilled is an integral part of economic development, at least in the East Asian case. Today, available data suggest that, in absolute numbers, the sources of skilled migrants lie primarily in the developed world itself and in a relatively small number of middle-income developing countries in East and South Asia (Docquier and Marfouk 2006). However, assessing the loss of skilled workers as a proportion of the total skilled workforce of any country does show that small countries such as Guyana, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and even Jamaica are highly affected, as are Cape Verde and the Gambia, and it is in these countries that a brain drain may be found.

Here again, migrants' specific place of origin looms large. If the skilled are concentrated in the largest urban areas, then their emigration will not have much effect on the poor rural areas where the need for their talent may be greatest. Some 90 percent of physicians in Haiti are supposedly concentrated in the capital, Port-au-Prince. In Ghana, 46 percent of both private and public sector physicians are found in Greater Accra, a figure that rises to 69 percent when a second city, Kumasi, is included (Nyonator and Dovlo 2005: 229). Several aspects of the brain drain debate remain poorly explored. First, are highly skilled professionals the most appropriate personnel for the conditions where the development needs are greatest? For example, the need for health workers with basic skills may be greater than the need for those trained to international standards for modern hospitals. Second, pay and conditions in developing countries may lead to a migration from the health sector but not from the country itself. Although some 32,000 vacancies for nurses existed in South Africa around the beginning of the twenty-first century, some 35,000

registered nurses in the country were found to be inactive or unemployed (OECD 2004). Skill loss is not solely a result of outmigration. Third, the place of training of the skilled is rarely considered, mainly because of lack of data. While many skilled workers from a middle-income country such as India or the Philippines with long traditions of education are likely to be trained in the country of origin, the same is not the case for poorer countries where institutions for advanced training do not exist. It has been estimated that some 55 percent of skilled professionals from Latin America and the Caribbean who are living in the United States were trained in the United States; and more than 40 percent of those from China and India living in the United States are American-trained (United Nations 2006a). Over two-thirds of foreign scientists conducting research in the United States in 1999 had been trained there (Johnson 2003: 6). Hence, many of the brains are refined, if not created, in countries of destination. Finally, the loss of the more educated from rural communities to cities—that is, the internal brain drain—is seldom considered. While the loss of skills from a village may be relative and include only those with a few years of education from a population that is largely illiterate, their migration to a town or city may undermine the social, economic, and ultimately demographic viability of the community.

Hence, in discussions of skilled migration and development, the preoccupation with international migration has diverted attention from significant developmental issues such as domestic policies toward education and the educated and toward urban and rural growth. We have already seen that only a minority of most populations moves internationally. Of that minority, only a small proportion is made up of highly skilled migrants. In discussions of the brain drain, a danger exists that primacy is accorded to this minority as a cause of a lack of development rather than to economic, social, and, most critically, political structures back home. One might add that any attempt to restrict the migration of the highly skilled in the hope of spurring development will almost certainly force these innovative people to seek alternative channels through which to migrate. These channels may be irregular, which may mean that the migrants enter illegally into the labor markets of destination economies and cannot use the skills that they have, thus leading to brain waste.

## The migrant diaspora

Another major theme in the current migration and development debate is the importance of migrant communities overseas in home-country development. This theme, centred around the concept of “diaspora,” essentially brings remittances and the skilled migrants together. The physical and human capital of international migrants can be “leveraged” for the development of the country of origin (Kuznetsov 2006).

The word migration gives the impression of a definitive move: to a destination where the migrant will stay and eventually become a citizen of another country. Diaspora, on the other hand, draws attention to looking back, to the importance of linkages between origins and destinations and to the fact that migrants may return or at least continue their involvement with their countries of origin. Diaspora becomes closely associated with another term that has come to prominence in the migration literature, the “transnational community”: migrants maintain close links with their origins and may even operate or live and work in two or more states. In fact, the United Nations uses the term transnational community as a substitute for diaspora. Diaspora also brings together, under a single rubric, migrants and co-ethnics who may have been born in the destination society. It is a small jump from the focus on linkages between origins and destinations to the idea that development can be associated with the diaspora. As seen above, in the migrant diaspora are to be found many of the best and brightest workers that a country of origin has to offer. If a country can take advantage of its population living outside its borders, then these expatriates should be able to contribute to development.

The role of the diaspora has been significant in development in East Asia. The overseas Chinese have for decades supported the construction of infrastructure in southern China; and in Vietnam today, expatriate Vietnamese, the Viet Kieu, are playing a critical role in the country’s development. Their investment is much more than remittances, it is foreign direct investment, although, again, a clear distinction between the two is elusive. Moreover, the diaspora plays a much greater role than just financial investment. In the economies of East Asia, many migrants have returned home. As mentioned above, thousands of students from East Asia left in the 1960s, with very few returning initially. The proportion returning has increased markedly from the 1970s on (Tsai 1988). Today in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and other economies in the region, including China, centers of academic excellence are emerging for the regional and global training of the highly skilled. The role that returned students have played in Asian economies is remarkable. The parliaments of the Asian Tiger economies, and the administrations of those economies, include many senior members who have been trained or have gained experience overseas. For example, of the 45 members of the cabinet of Taiwan in 2006, 25 had completed advanced degrees outside Taiwan, mainly in the United States but also in Japan, France, and the United Kingdom. The father of modern Singapore, Lee Kwan Yew, wrote an article in the late 1940s on the role of the returned student. Return migration and the trend toward a democratization of political systems in East Asia are surely more than coincidental.

Revolutionaries of other persuasions, too, refined their ideologies in Paris in the early 1920s and returned to play key a role in the transformations of China and Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai were

among the most prominent leaders who returned to their homeland, but more than one thousand young Chinese students traveled to Paris in 1919 and 1920, including some of Mao Zedong's closest associates (Spence 1990: 321). In the words of one Vietnamese revolutionary, "Oppression comes to us from France, but so does the spirit of freedom" (Ta Thu Thau in Van 1995: 123). "Students" who learned their skills in Afghanistan fighting the then Soviet Union moved on to ply their craft in many of today's trouble spots.

Returning to the capitalist development in East Asia, two critical points need to be borne in mind when we assess the role of the diaspora in development. First, there was something for the migrants to return to. It would be simplistic, if not just wrong, to attribute the development of East Asia to the return migration or to the role of the diaspora. Return migrants certainly contributed to that development but they did not cause it. The assumption that the return of some of the highly skilled to Ghana, Chad, or Burkina Faso will automatically bring development is again assigning a primacy to migrant agency that seems totally misplaced. The underlying structures need first to be in place in order for the agency of migrants to function. Where the structures are nonexistent or weakly developed, the return of the highly skilled is likely to be ineffective. Development drives migration, not the other way round, although, clearly, migration can support development.

Second, the diaspora migration back to East Asia was part of a wider migration of the highly skilled from the developed world. The diaspora was not occurring in isolation from other migratory currents. Skilled persons from North America, Australasia, and Europe were also involved. Some of this migration was of nationals from the majority populations of these areas. Another part of this migration was the product of previous moves to these destination societies. Diaspora, as was noted above, deals not just with migrants but with ethnic groups including descendants—first, second, or later generations of children of migrants who may see their migration as a return, short- or long-term, to their ancestral home. Ethnic Koreans are moving from the United States and from China (the *chosungjok*) to Korea; ethnic Japanese (the *nikkeijin*) are moving to Japan from South America. Some may have been born in Korea or Japan but they are the minority, with the vast majority born in the United States, China, Brazil, or Peru, who have returned to the land of their parents or grandparents to participate in the economic dynamism of these economies. In Hong Kong, Singapore, and China we find BBCs (British-born Chinese), ABCs (American-born Chinese), CBCs (Canadian-born Chinese), and, in Vietnam, American-born Vietnamese, who are returning to live and work in their ancestral lands.

Finally, the diaspora is highly heterogeneous in terms of skill and education as well as origins and political persuasion. The diaspora cannot be thought of simply in terms of a resource to be easily mined. Many in the migrant diaspora may not have the interests of current rulers in areas of origin in mind; in

fact, they may work to depose them overtly or covertly. Secession movements in the homeland have been supported by diaspora migrants in countries such as India, Ireland, and Sri Lanka. Hence, diaspora becomes associated with security and geopolitical issues, and the concept raises difficult questions of identity and loyalty. Transnationalism is much more than just linkages among co-ethnics or between migrants and communities back home.

## Conclusions and a way forward

This essay has examined how current concerns over migration and development have arisen and particularly how a traditional focus in migration studies on causes and consequences of population movement has shifted to a policy focus on types of migration that will promote or inhibit development. Through an examination of the three main areas of current concern—remittances, skilled migration, and diaspora—I have argued that the responsibility for development is being increasingly placed upon the agency of migrants rather than on institutional structures. While it is clear that international migrants can influence institutional structures, they are minorities in any population. Excluding mass forced movements, those who leave represent a small proportion of the home populations, and those who return are minorities of the minority. More fundamentally, there is a danger in reifying migration as something separate from development, specifying that migration itself is a “thing apart” that can be used to promote development. Migration is essentially the responses of thousands of individuals to changing development conditions. That development promotes increased population mobility has been a central theme since the early pioneering works on international migration.

If the results of the voluminous research and the numerous meetings on international migration and development have shown that migration is not generally a negative factor for development, then a major step forward has been achieved. More concretely, if migration becomes accepted as an integral part of development and if it is acknowledged that development itself cannot be used to stop migration, then indeed progress will have been made (de Haas 2006; Skeldon 1997). Giving migration a higher profile has been a positive achievement, but the limitations of this stance also need to be acknowledged. Care has to be taken not to go to the other extreme and promote the idea that facilitating certain types of population mobility will lead to development. The point is not so much that migration can be used to promote development but that governments need to be prepared for the kinds of population migration that development generates. Development will not stop migration, although it can influence the volume and patterns of population movement. Migration has proven singularly intractable to policy intervention. Nevertheless, this fact should not imply that migration policy is irrelevant in an “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 2003).

The discussion in this essay suggests two shifts in thinking about migration and development. First, a shift in thinking is required toward more reactive rather than proactive policies. Accommodationist policies, or those that seek to respond to and plan for the kinds of migration that are likely to occur in any particular development scenario, are likely to be more appropriate than proactive policies that seek to channel migration in a particular direction to promote development. Thus, the migration and development debate needs to shift somewhat back to its intellectual roots. International migration is not a development index in the same way as the millennium development goals, although these goals themselves, like migration, simply reflect broader, deep-rooted elements of economic and social change. It is right to include migration as an integral part of the development process, but it is deceptive to think that it can be manipulated to bring about development itself. Second, a shift in the approaches to migration is required to reincorporate internal migrants into the migration and development debate, thus bringing the majority of migrants into the equation. For an example using data from Asia, see Skeldon (2006). To consider any linkages between migration and development without taking into consideration the fact that most of those who move do so internally seems misguided.

Hence, research on urbanization, international migration, and development needs to be integrated, and the role of cities and metropolitan governments needs to be given greater prominence in the migration and development debate. Also critical is the creation of new political and economic spaces. The expansion of the European Union eastward incorporated millions of de facto international migrants without their even moving, but they thereby became entitled to move internally within the EU. Some free-trade areas and contiguous states that agree to freedom of movement across their common borders in other parts of the world, too, such as Australia–New Zealand or India–Nepal, achieve similar results. Hence, more important than the relatively small numbers who move internationally are those who are “moved” into new situations because of political and economic agreements. The subject of migration and political development has, perhaps understandably, not been a central part of the recent migration and development debate.

International migration was identified as one of the ten most pressing global challenges facing humankind by an international panel of leading economists (Lomborg 2004), but it was also deemed to be one of the least likely of the ten challenges to respond to cost-effective policy intervention. A sense of skepticism may be setting in about how effective programs of migration management can be in bringing about development. Already a sense exists that the policy debate may be moving on from migration and development to other topics such as migration and climate change. Ultimately, when we are dealing with these global challenges or with the ways in which the millennium development goals are to be achieved, the emphasis must be

placed on structures: on establishing the kinds of institutions that will lead to improvements in human well-being. A focus on phenomena that are consequences rather than causes of the process, such as the diaspora, remittances, or skilled migrants, without addressing the causes of a lack of development in the first place, is unlikely to bring success. Migration can be best addressed, paradoxical though this may at first seem, if the current preoccupation with international migration as a tool to promote development becomes a passing phase in the debate on development. Migration should not be eliminated from the equation, but it should be recognized as an integral part of the development process itself and planned for accordingly.

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## Note

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