

〈論文〉

Revisiting Spatial Mobility in Asian Migration

HIRAIWA, Eriko*

Abstract:

This study focuses on migration in Asia and suggests a broader context of international movement as an occurrence between bilateral countries and as a spatial phenomenon. Our study makes a significant contribution to the literature because it explores the possibility of incorporating geographical studies by revisiting and exploring migration characteristics in Asia through observation data and literature and calls for a different analytical framework.

Keywords:

International migration Spatial Mobility Asia

1. Introduction

International migration issues have been researched economically, politically, socially, and even geographically. Rapid globalization and the emerging new patterns of international relations, including the movement of commodities, capital, and ideas, always lead to people's movements and vice versa (Haas et al., 2020). The number of international migrants increased by 62% in 2020 compared to the 1990s. It is estimated to be 280 million globally, with nearly two-thirds of them being labor migrants (OECD 2020; IOM 2020). As the movement has received more attention, some international migration patterns have changed in directions and flow corridors. Some of these have been observed in Asia, where south-to-north movement and east-west flows have increased. Nevertheless, traditional receiving countries such as the USA and Canada are still

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huge magnets for international migration. However, Gulf states in West Asia are receiving more unskilled workers from distant regions of Southern Asia, and Japan is becoming a new destination for foreign laborers from Southeast Asia. According to Gorter et al. (1998), migration is inherently spatial. They define international migration as the movement of people across communities, countries, and regions (both urban and rural) of origin and destination, sometimes even within these spaces.

This study focuses on international migration in the Asian region (Western Asia, Southern Asia, South-Eastern Asia, Eastern Asia, and Central Asia) to better understand it from the spatial phenomena context. Asia is a region where population and economic development have grown rapidly. Despite the region's large income disparities, South and South-East Asia have been rapidly integrated into global migration systems, with lower-skilled citizens increasingly migrating to the Gulf region and skilled citizens to Asia (Haas et al. 2020). This study explores the current characteristics of internal migration in Asia and the features that distinguish them from other regions. This study also focuses on intraregional migration in Asia. It suggests a broader context of international movement as between bilateral countries. In addition, it utilizes spatial phenomena to call for further analytical frameworks to explore the possibility of incorporating geographical studies by revisiting and exploring these questions through observation data and literature. The observations discussed here can contribute to a policy-making process of governance or regional strategies in Asia. International migration can be effective in economic development regarding the geographical allocation of human resources.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 proposes the theoretical literature review. Section 3 describes the importance of international migration in Asia, while Section 4 focuses on intraregional migration in West Asia and Southern Asia based on UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) data. Section 5 presents the concluding remarks.

2. Literature review

People's movements reflect global economic development and shed light on both people's movement and trade and investment. International trade theory is used to analyze the economic impact of international migration on the welfare of sending and receiving countries because it considers labor and capital as the primary production factors. However, since the late 1950s, many studies assumed that capital is a production factor with free mobility among countries, while labor mobility is limited only by domestic industries. Therefore, there was no consideration of international movement (Kondoh 2017). According to Kondoh (2017), in the 1950s and 1960s, international capital movement such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was a major topic. Thus,

labor movements were misunderstood as resembling those of the international capital movement. After the 1970s, international migration was recognized as differing from capital movement. As a series of studies conducted by Rivera-Batiz (1982, 1983, 1984, 1989) shows, the effects of international migration on factor prices and country welfare of receiving countries were the main concerns and were analyzed using the analytical framework of international trade theory. Subsequent extensions were made by Lundahl (1985), Djajic (1986), Quibria (1988), Tawada and Kondoh (1991), and Kondoh (1993) on how international migration affects the welfare of receiving and sending countries. Among further extensions which focus skills of immigrants and labor markets in receiving countries, Hiraiwa and Tawada (2002) introduced a specific factor model to show effects on outputs and goods prices in receiving countries.

As the number of international migrants increased in tandem with a decrease in the cost of transportation and in obtaining information or networks of receiving countries, migratory frictions arose. Theoretical analysis has developed the importance of illegal migration (Ethier 1986, Hiraiwa and Tawada 2003, Sun and Tawada 2007), brain drain¹⁾ (Bhagwati and Hamada 1974) or smuggling (Bhagwati and Hansen 1973, Kemp 1976). From the political economy literature, Sassen (1988) argued that information from outside countries through trade and FDI is deeply embedded in the process of producing emigrants in the sending countries.

Migration, however, is not always a process across borders between countries. This bilateral view has been attributed to rural-urban migration in developing countries as represented by Lewis (1954) in terms of dual economy or Harris and Todaro (1970) in terms of rural-urban migration. Studies of people's movements have employed two-country or two-region models partly due to utilizing a framework of international trade. However, recent studies have provided an alternative theoretical view. Batabyal et al.'s (2021) study sheds light on rural-urban dichotomies and spatial development with the opinion that the more traditional ways of conceptualizing rural-urban dichotomies in Asia should be revised. Their skepticism of the dichotomies is based on the observation that rural and urban regions' economic and social structures have become more similar.

3. Why is international migration important in Asia?

Asia was the origin of over 40% of the world's international migrants in 2015. Over half of them

1) Brain drain refers to the emigration of highly skilled, professionals or highly educated people from developing countries to developed countries for higher wages and better job opportunities. The problem of brain drain is its detrimental effect on economic development for developing countries in terms of human resources or knowledge.

Table 1 Stock of International Migrants by Region in 2020

Region of Origin Region of Destination	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America and The Caribbean	Northern America	Oceania
Africa	20,917,565	1,207,631	648,455	32,524	53,563	14,483
Asia	4,720,103	68,497,762	7,169,630	414,658	538,199	101,725
Europe	4,736,532	23,203,976	44,246,425	5,395,924	1,100,304	397,036
Latin America and The Caribbean	905,926	402,369	1,355,886	11,297,173	1,293,053	5,630
Northern America	2,186,124	17,549,235	6,869,872	25,535,633	1,088,520	343,625
Oceania	185,156	4,050,511	2,983,395	214,569	254,319	1,107,706

Source: UNDESA 2020

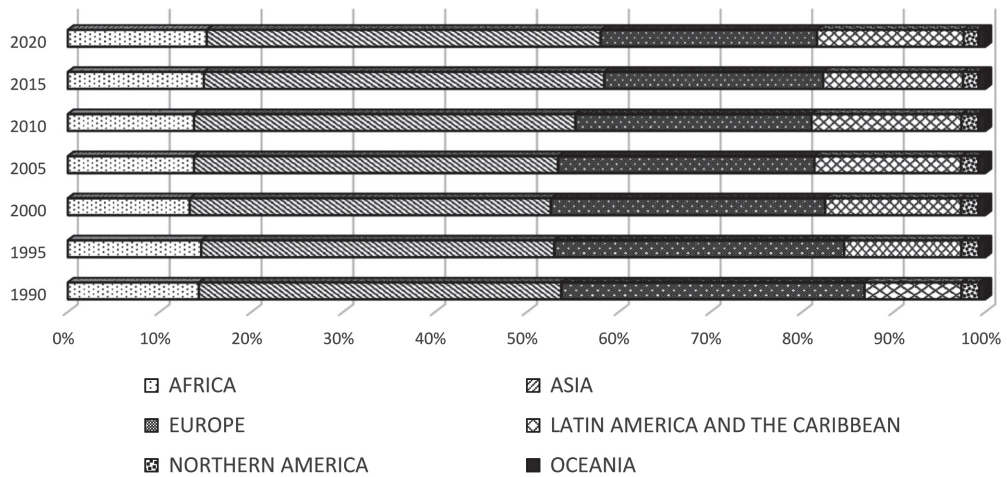
resided in various Asian countries, reflecting intraregional migration as a characteristic of UN (2018). Therefore, when we focus on Asia, intraregional migration within Asia is a key feature; it increased significantly from 30 million in 2010 to 59 million in 2015. These figures surpassed the number of immigrants residing outside Asia. As a result, Asia is the most populous region in immigrant stock among Africa, Europe, Central and South America, North America, and Oceania (Table 1).

Figure 1 shows the change in the proportion of migrants in the six regions over three decades from 1990 to 2020. Europe and Asia are the preferred continents for international migration, and they comprise more than 60% of the total migrant stock. However, the change shows Asia's proportion of the migrant stock increasing while that of Europe gradually decreases.

The scale and pace of international migration are notoriously difficult to precisely predict because they are linked to acute events. These include events such as severe instability and political crises. In addition, long-term trends such as demographic change, economic development, communication technology advances, and transportation access affect the scale and pace of international migration (IOM 2020). These events²⁾ have distinguished Asia from other regions such as the European Union (EU) and North America, where colonial ties explain migration issues and political and economic backgrounds. Xiang and Lindquist (2014) argued that Europe is not passively receiving a supposedly unstoppable human tide but is actively reconfiguring regional relations through migration infrastructure. Kneebone (2010) pointed out that intraregional labor migration is one of the most remarkable dimensions of the transformation of East Asia and Southeast Asia. Figure 2 supports this observation; Europe holds 30% of the world's immigrants while holding 10% of the world's population (UNDESA 2020). Meanwhile, Asia holds the same volume of immigrants as Europe, while it holds 60% of the world's population

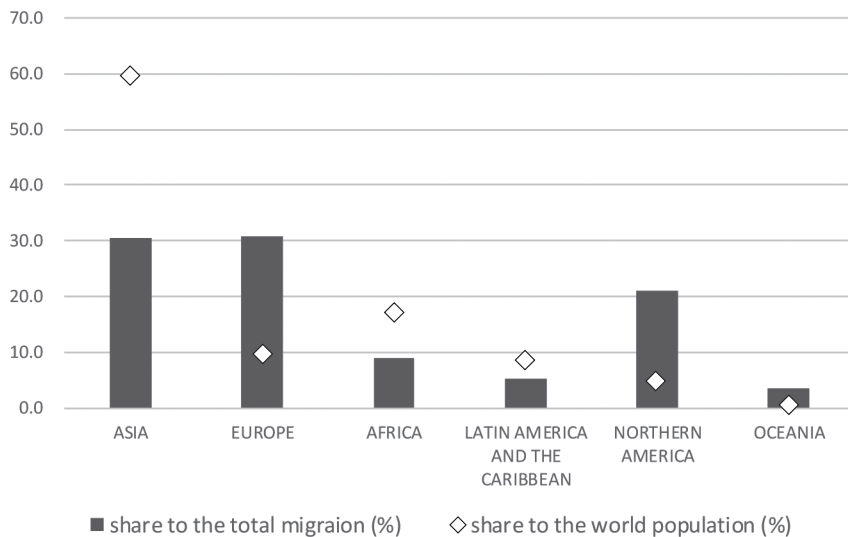
2) For example, the political conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1990s drastically changed the flow of emigrants from Pakistan. The receiving area which absorbed those emigrants from Pakistan is West Asia. Details are explained in Chapter 4.

Figure 1 Change in share of international migrant stock from 1990 to 2020



Source: UNDESA 2020

Figure 2 Share of population to the world population and share of migration to the total international migration by region in 2020

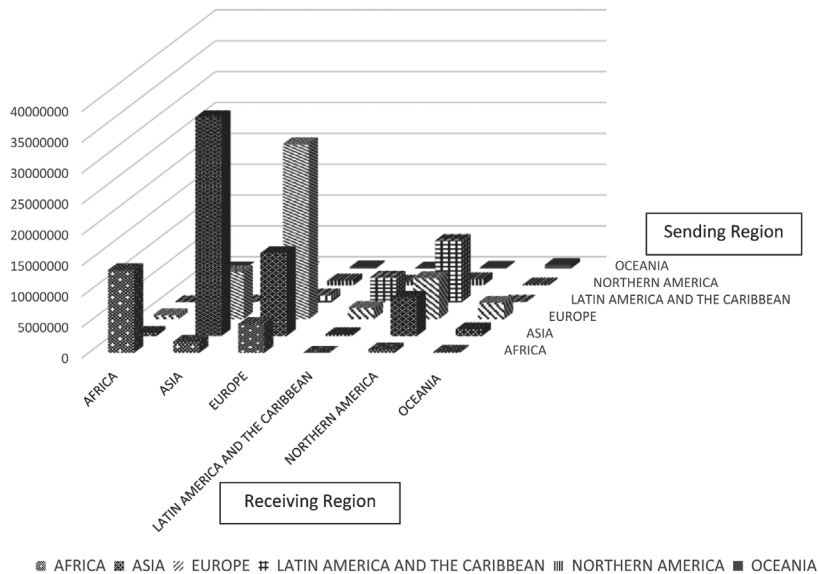


Source: UNDESA 2020

(UNDESA 2020). Looking at this perspective in labor supply, Asia shows a further possibility to change the demographic structure and agglomeration of immigrants in West Asia.

From a socio-economic perspective, Lian et al. (2016) examined the characteristics of international migration in Asia in contrast to Europe and North America. They suggested that the most remarkable characteristic is that although immigrants work on a contract basis, the

Figure 3 International migration by corridors of region in 1990

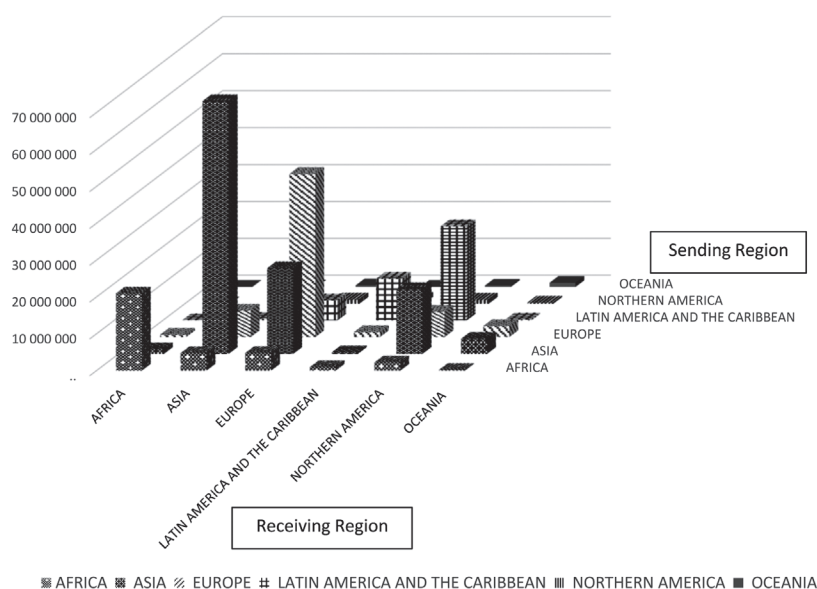


Source: UNDESA 2020

receiving countries are permanently dependent on migrant workers. They attributed this to the non-existence of a democratic regime in the political arena to protect the rights of individuals. Furthermore, the intraregional migration of women in East and Southeast Asia is another characteristic of international migration. Oishi (1996, 2002, 2005) is one of the scholars who focused on cross-national patterns and mechanisms of international female migration. She discusses export-oriented industrialization, which enables countries in East and Southeast Asia to develop and economically help create a social environment and legitimacy conducive to international female migration by focusing on the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Asia is a sending region with the largest number of emigrants. Approximately 60% or one-third of all global immigrants come from Asia (UNDESA 2020). Asia also receives the most immigrants as a region, while the United States is the leading destination as a country. The majority of the world's regions participate in international migration, ensuring that people's movements are not limited to sending and receiving countries; people move within a region. Over 90% of migrants move within the region in Africa. Approximately 84% of migrants move to Asia, 74% to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 56% to Europe. Figures 3 and 4 provide an intuitive view of such movement within a region. The vertical line shows the sending regions and the horizontal line indicates the receiving regions. Migrants in Asia have been moving within the region at a higher rate, as shown by the increase in migrant stock compared to intraregional movement in 1990 (Figure 3). Migrants increased by 101% in Asia, 180% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 104% in

Figure 4 International migration by corridors of region in 2020



Source: UNDESA 2020

Oceania, 96% in Africa, 54% in Northern America, and 32% in Europe between 1990 and 2020 (UNDESA). Martin (2020) suggests that the major migration challenges of the twenty-first century will be south-south migration or movements between developing countries. One such example is the migration from Bangladesh to India.

As Sassen (1988) noted, earlier in the 1980s, international emigration did not necessarily occur in the poorest countries. There is a large and growing body of literature on the relationship between home country earnings and the decision to migrate. In their theoretical and empirical analysis, Djajic et al. (2016) examined how the income level of a sending country affects motivation to decide to emigrate in the context of a model in which individuals make optimal savings and emigration decisions under liquidity constraints. They found that the relationship between the welfare gain from emigration and the home-country wage is hump-shaped for low-skilled individuals. The peak of the hump was estimated to be at an average income level of US\$4,000 (at 2000 PPP-adjusted prices) in the home country. Djajic (2016) argues that a per-capita income level rise from US\$231 per year in the poorest country to US\$4,000 2000 PPP-adjusted prices increased the emigration rate from about 2.7% to 5.0% of its low-skilled workers. Another interesting finding is that emigration rates of medium-skilled and high-skilled emigrants monotonically decrease in income at the origin. Table 2 shows this analysis; middle-income

Table 2 International migrants by group of income level

Region, development group of destination	High-income countries	Middle-income countries	Upper-middle-income countries	Lower-middle-income countries	Low-income countries
High-income countries	45,839,206	117,946,103	59,946,932	57,999,171	10,493,994
Middle-income countries	6,616,973	55,810,379	27,051,049	28,759,330	18,737,963
Upper-middle-income countries	5,656,006	38,866,884	20,596,985	18,269,899	10,811,121
Upper-middle-income countries	960,967	16,943,495	6,454,064	10,489,431	7,926,842
Low-income countries	102,128	3,474,543	579,030	2,895,513	8,121,431

Source: UNDESA 2020

Note: Countries with less than US\$1,035 GNI per capita are classified as low-income countries, those with between US\$1,035 and US\$4,045 as lower-middle income countries, and those with between US\$4,046 and US\$12,535 as upper-middle income countries, and those with incomes of more than \$12,535 as high-income countries by World Bank as of July 1, 2020.

countries are the biggest source of emigration³⁾, and the widest corridor is from middle-income countries to high-income countries.

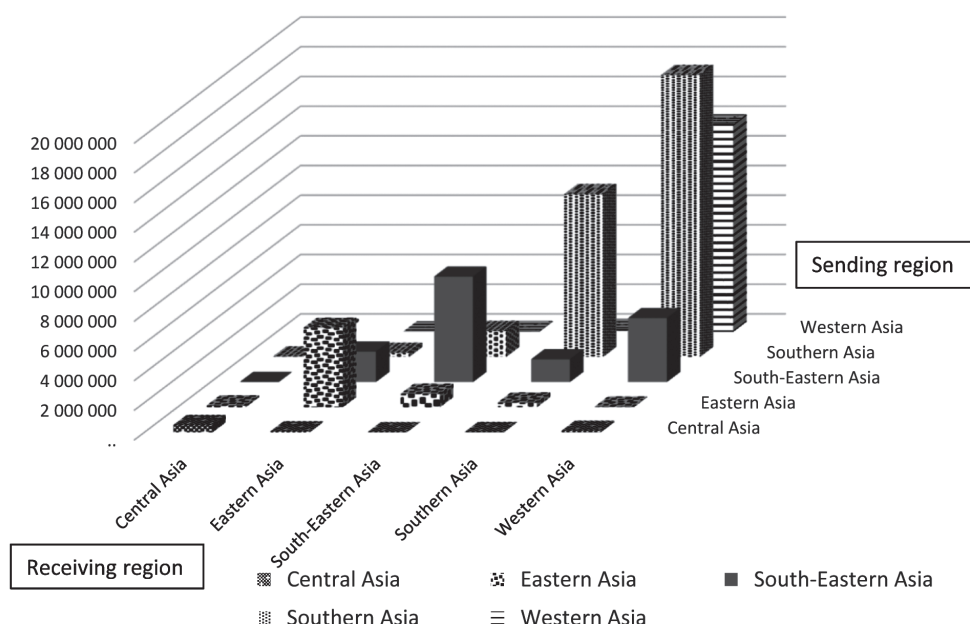
4. Patterns of international migration in Asia

Economic development in Asia has been one of the reasons why studies on international migration in Asia have gained the attention of researchers. Asian dragon economies (Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan) demonstrated a distinguishing feature in the 1980s and 1990s by producing a shift from net emigration to net immigration (Findlay et al. 1998). This can be observed in a time series space because international migrants are transient. Migrants move back and forth from a host country, region, or community to another destination. Migration is viewed solely from a host country or a sending country perspective, and the socioeconomic causes and consequences of spatial patterns have received little systematic attention (Findlay et al., 1998). Circular migration is an example of a non-permanent spatial pattern in this context. There is no standard definition of circular migration. It is defined as temporary movements of a repetitive character, either formally or informally, across borders, usually for work, involving the same migrants (Wickramasekara 2011). Gulf countries and Asia have demonstrated spatial phenomena. Gulf countries have drawn migrant workers from Southeast and South Asia, a classic temporary labor migration system based on fixed-term contracts ranging from one to three years.

As mentioned earlier, Asia is a continent of intraregional migration, with 84% of immigrants moving within the region. The trend of the corridor is that people move within each region; for example, emigrants from Western Asia move within Western Asia, and emigrants from Eastern

3) The number of countries classified as middle-income economies (lower-middle income economies and upper-middle income economies) in Asia is 27, including China and India, out of 110 countries in the world.

Figure 5 International migration in Asia by corridors of region in 2020

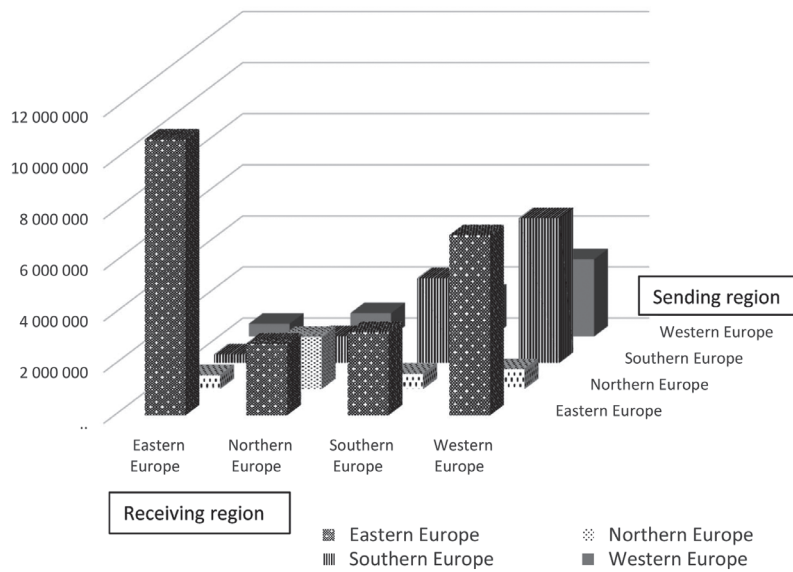


Source: UNDESA 2020

Asia move to neighboring countries in Eastern Asia. However, the only exception in its direction and volume is a movement from Southern Asia to Western Asia, with 19 million emigrants moving to Western Asia (UNDESA 2000, Figure 5). The growing interconnection between distant regions is promoted by technological revolutions that have reduced communication and travel costs over long distances. This might explain the emigration from Southern Asia to Western Asia. Czaika and Haas (2014) illustrate in their identification of globalization that the concept of globalization has facilitated migration in ever greater numbers between an increasingly diverse and geographically distant array of destination and origin countries. However, explaining the increasingly international and domestic inequalities has promoted persistent demand for low-skilled migrant labor in the segmented labor markets of wealthy societies (Czaika and Haas 2014).

Here, it is noteworthy to consider a comparison between Asia and Europe. In contrast to the Asian region, intraregional migration in Europe has distinctive features (Figure 6). One of the characteristics which differentiates Europe from Asia (other than the volume of migration) is that freedom of people movement is realized across borders under EU integration. With the latest expansion of the EU to Eastern Europe, it is interesting to note that intraregional movement within regions of Eastern Europe has become active. Furthermore, unlike the Asian region, cross-border laborers in the EU tend to move to neighboring countries.

Figure 6 International migration in Europe by corridors of region in 2020



Source: UNDESA 2020

The international migration flow is another intriguing angle to investigate the trend observed in Southern and West Asia. Flow movement would reflect the dynamics of the migration process to understand people's movement better and identify patterns to have a time-series view (Abel 2013). Abel (2013) developed a methodology to derive bilateral migration flows from sequential stock tables. Abel and Sander (2014) presented data on bilateral flows between 196 countries from 1990 to 2010 to provide a comprehensive view of international migration flows, including interpretation of trends and patterns of migration flows to and from individual countries based on their location within a regional or global context. Contextualizing the literature of this paper, if we shift our view of international migration from just country-country dichotomies to spatial movement, we might find it as a more dynamic and complex arena in terms of globalized movement. According to the estimation conducted by Abel and Sanders (2014), the largest movements occurred between South and West Asia, from Latin America to North America, and within Africa. Using their estimation of flow from 1990 to 2000 (Abel and Sanders 2014), Southern Asia and West Asia showed a unique movement in terms of the share of inflow from the same region and a share of outflow to other regions. In Southern Asia, there was a large inflow of 6.5 million migrants and an outflow of 7 million emigrants in the 1990s. More than 80% of the flows had occurred within the region, from Pakistan to Afghanistan. However, due to conflict between the two countries, the intraregional outflow decreased rapidly from 80% in the 1990s to 10% in the 2000s. Instead, West Asia absorbed emigrants from South Asia. As a result, the intraregional

inflow and outflow share in West Asia was around 40% in the 1990s but decreased to 10% in the 2000s. This radical change of movement was considerable in regions other than Europe, Latin America, and even East Asia and Southeast Asia. This can be seen as one of the key dimensions of highly unequal global terms of exchange (Czaika and Haas 2014).

5. Discussion and concluding remarks

Many researchers have discussed the importance of international migration in Asia in recent decades, focusing on economic development, as illustrated in the World Bank report *East Asian Miracle* (1993). Quibria (1997) addressed labor market integration in Asia and stated that the magnitude of international migration to destinations outside exceeded that within Asia in 1997. Historically, as early as the nineteenth century, the labor movement moved from Asia to the United States and in the early 1950s, from South Asia to Europe. However, after roughly a quarter-century, observation conducted by Quibria (1997) still stands out: Asian economies experienced some degree of labor market integration through international migration across countries, and in that process, East and West Asian countries were the net recipients of the migrant workers who moved from the rest of developing Asia as we have seen in the previous chapters.

In the 2000s, other studies and observations on international and intraregional mobility in Asia include Lian et al. (2016) and Battistella (2014). Fielding (2016) used space to demonstrate East Asia due to its unique geographical environment and landscape diversity. Fielding (2016) describes it as a vast area of Asia where several spatial structures are interconnected politically and culturally. Battistella (2014) raised a theoretical question on migration in Asia from an ethics perspective, whether migration observed in Asia might challenge some aspects of the general theoretical formulation. He illustrated international migration in Asia as out-of-the-box patterns, such as migration to the Gulf countries from countries with no previous political or social ties or Japan's controversial policy restricting all migration only to skilled workers.

In a micro-level of economics, an immigrant wants to move to a destination to maximize their utility. The destination could be either an urban area or a wealthier country across borders for socioeconomic factors such as higher wages or a safer society. Therefore, decision-making is motivated and deeply linked to a geographical space. Given this view of geographical space, international migration in Asia cannot be interpreted as an arena of solely bi-lateral relationships between sending and receiving countries or two-sector models of rural-urban movement. Rather, international migration is a more complex and spatial phenomenon in terms of growth and development, which might cause a much larger income gap and uneven distribution. This view

reiterates the need to introduce a different view of analysis in addition to traditional economic theories. One possibility is introducing spatial economic development to extant rural-urban dichotomies to understand the Asian continent of geopolitically and culturally interwoven space, as seen in Batabyal et al. (2021). Another possibility is contributing to a policy-making process of governance or regional strategies in Asia and for international migration to be effective in economic development in terms of geographical allocation of human resources. These remain a task for future research.

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