Asian Intranational and Transnational Migration Flows and Their Regional Implications for Asian Security into the 21st Century

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Introduction

As we approach the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, numerically and proportionally there are more people migrating than at any other time in modern history. In mid-2009, as the world experiences the aftershocks brought about by the Wall Street-precipitated global financial crisis, globally nation-states are again compelled to deal with one of the human dimensions of fast capitalism (Agger 2004), the forced migration of peoples. Concurrently, the growing movement of people is no longer dominated by intranational movements based on desires for personal betterment. Nevertheless, many of the estimated 50 million people expected to lose their jobs during 2009 will be forced to move back to their home villages and towns, or back to their birth families, where at least the basic needs of food and shelter may be met. For too many people across the globe, such return migrations will not be available, and for a myriad of such individuals, destitution and homelessness may be the immediate outcome of the present global crises. Thus, many of the population movements into the second decade of the 21st Century will be made in an attempt to maintain at least basic human security.

During the first part of the 21st Century, prior to the 2008-2009 economic and financial crises, annually, most migrations were global and regional international movements, and although personal betterment was a primary factor driving these moves, it would be more accurate to consider human security issues as the dominant factor influencing individual decision-making considerations with respect to migration. In addition, with the increased globalisation of commodity markets, encompassing the flow of capital, communications, goods and services, and the specific human capital demands of production, much of the migration during the last decades of the 20th Century and into the 21st Century have been temporary rather than permanent migrations (Adamson 2006; Ball 1997; Lloyd 1998; Stalker 2000). As Entzinger et al. (2004: xxv-xxvi) note:

"the impact of globalization on migration seems to be stronger than ever before, and is likely to become even stronger. Migrants not only migrate over much longer distances than in the past, but migration patterns are also much more dispersed than they used to be... transnational networks and transnational labour markets increasingly drive flows. Migration is often generated by earlier migration and by transnational contact that have resulted from it... much of today’s migration is no longer settler migration. Though the classical image of a migrant is that of a settler, most contemporary migrants do not intend to settle somewhere else, but rather to work to make money..."

In the 19th and early 20th Centuries, international Asian migration flows were primarily semi-permanent male-dominated movements involving unskilled workers. In the 21st Century, Asian migration flows are becoming increasingly heterogeneous, comprising short-term to permanent voluntary or forced movements of individuals, who range from unskilled child labourers to highly skilled professional executives, from women and children traded into slavery to families fleeing environmental diasters, from individuals fleeing political or religious persecution to families seeking greater human security due to increased acts of violent terrorism. In addition, unlike in earlier centuries, since the late 20th Century there has been a clear feminisation of migration flows, as the number of female migrants frequently exceeds the number of male migrants. Thus, the nature and
composition of contemporary Asian migration flows are more complex than at any other time in recorded history, and as the diversity and magnitude of these contemporary Asian migration movements intensifies, there is little doubt that irrespective of whether these movements are financially beneficial or detrimental to the nation-states in the Asian-Western Pacific region, these movements have security implications (Akaha & Vassilieva 2005b); human security implications for the individuals involved, and national security significance to the nation-states of the region.

The principal objective of this essay is to examine some of the security implications of population movements within, and emanating from, the Asian region over the past few decades. Considering the diversity of security concerns within the Asian region, and the dissimilarity and complexity of Asian population movements, only a general overview of the most salient issues can be achieved in the limited space available. Population movements impact on not only the security of nation-states, for example, through large-scale internal population movements and the immigration of foreign nationals, but also on a nation-state’s bilateral and multilateral relations, both within the Asia-Pacific region and internationally (Rudolph 2003).

This essay is structured as follows: from the migration literature two elementary typologies of population movements are proposed. After explaining the characteristics and nature of each movement within these typologies, it provides a few contemporary examples of each type of movement within the Asian region, while discussing the security implications of these movements. Here the primary focus is on nation-state security issues, rather than the human security concerns of the individuals involved, but as the issues of the 2008-2009 global economic and financial crises, crime, environmental change and terrorism are addressed in other essays emanating from the 1st Dialogue Forum this work makes only passing reference to the migration and security implications of these four critical issues. The final part of the essay introduces a Habermasian critical theory approach to human communications, which could, if engaged, reduce security conflicts associated with human population movements in the Asian-Western Pacific region. Before commencing a discussion of the security implications of Asian population movements, the issue of security must be briefly addressed.

What is Security?

Other essays presented at the Dialogue Forum have provided a more than adequate discussion of security and regional security in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalised world. Although national security is generally defined as the maintenance of the physical integrity of the nation-state, encompassing notions of military, national and political security (Poku & Graham 1998), with the formation of multilateral regional entities encompassing Asian nation-states in contemporary times (such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), and the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)), there has been a heightened concern with regional economic and geo-political interests. In an era which is witnessing the expansive globalisation of cultures and economies, as well as a heightening of fast capitalism, and the concurrent formation of organisations regionally
and globally, it is becoming increasingly difficult, and some may argue inappropriate, to concentrate solely on the notion of nation-state security, at the expense of regional or international security.

Following Burke (2007: 146, 150), de Lint and Virta (2007: 272), Puckett (1990: 510) and Zedner (2007: 272-273), it is essential to acknowledge that any discussion of security should be based on the notion of comprehensive security, which gives weight to the ecological, economic, political, psychological and social aspects of security; Dupont (2001: 7-11) and Paris (2001: 97) also include an environmental dimension within their notion of extended security. In other words, security should be perceived as a ‘multi-dimensional concept’ (Chan 1992: 13), and not necessarily solely focused on nation-state military and political security. Therefore, as de Lint and Virta (2004: 467) observe:

A variety of critical theorists ... have expanded the security continuum to play up the inter-linkages between varieties of actors. It is argued that the emergent realities of material interdependence and patterns of interactions among people is no longer reconcilable with ‘the inherited legal/political structure of the nation-state system’ (Brown, 1998: 3). The exclusive focus on national laws and institutions (nation states and national governments) does not accommodate subnational, transnational and subpolitical developments in the international system.

In this regard, the security literature, and regional discourses, must devote greater attention to the psychological and social aspects of security, through an enhanced awareness of the contemporary non-military threats to security—such as environmental degradation and global warming, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (Thompson 2004) and similar pathogens such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), human and narcotics trafficking (Emmers et al. 2006; Nadig 2002), and unregulated population flows, e.g. refugees (Evans 1991: 202-204). In essence, the notion of security has evolved over the last century from a primary concern with economic safety and nation-state durability, to a more inclusive regional/global focus on realising symmetry between economics, populations and resources.

Acknowledging the notion of comprehensive security, as well as the diversity of modern Asian nation-states, Tow and Gray (1995: 440) and Viviani (1991: 30) observe that Asian countries have dissimilar security perceptions, originating from not only their diverse internal political situations, but also from their varying perceptions of external threat—perceptions which are generally rooted in history. Concurrently, it is also critical to acknowledge at this point that the nature of bilateral and multilateral relations between Asian nation-states influences security perceptions of international migration flows between Asian nation-states and within the region. In addition, the presence of illegal immigrants or foreign asylum seekers and refugees within a nation-state tend to complicate that nation-state’s relations with the country of origin of these (unwanted) immigrants, even in situations where the illegal immigrants are ‘welcomed’ as a cheap source of labour. Thus, due to the differences between and within nation-states, regional security is more complex and conceptually demanding than nation-state security, and will be only briefly addressed in the
following pages. As noted above, the central focus of this essay is one feature common to bothegional security and the globalisation of economies—namely, population movement (Adamson
2006; Bach 2003; Castles 1998; Curley & Wong 2008: Faist 2004; Lloyd 1998; Stalker 2000;
Wickramasekera 2002).

One final introductory issue of concern is that most of the modern security literature is premised on
notions of either nation-state, or regional, security, with an occasional brief mention of global
security or human security (see the essays by McMillen). However, with the acknowledged
expansion of globalisation, as well as the (almost) global recognition of adverse climate change
and global warming, there has been an increased consideration of global security in recent years
(Cha 2000; Kay 2004). Nevertheless, most of the contemporary security literature fails to consider
that associated with the globalisation of economies, markets, media, etc., there is another
stakeholder in security relations—the multinational corporation (MNC), or transnational corporation
(TNC). For example, Hawthorne (2002: 376-378) notes that of the 100 largest global economic
entities in 2001, 71 were MNCs/TNCs. These corporations oversee not only the international
movement of financial and physical capital, but also, increasingly, human capital and military
supplies. A number of large MNCs/TNCs are more powerful than small nation-states, and that
power is not necessarily limited to solely economic or financial power, as this exertion of power can
extend as far as influencing the security concerns of nation-states. It is therefore desirable that
security discourse and theory take into account the growing role of MNCs/TNCs in the
fundamental activities of nation-states, and their role in influencing the national and international
movement of people.

In sum, with respect to the focus of this essay, any discussion of security issues needs to take into
account the complex interrelationship between nation-state and human security, encompassing
notions of economic survival and migration. In this regard, security policies are directly related to
economic and migration policies, and specifically nation-state policies concerning the movement of
people across nation-state borders, as well as policies directed towards migrants within the nation-
state. In some regions, the late 20th and early 21st Centuries have born witness to nation-states
attempting to achieve greater control of their borders, through restricting human immigration, while
at the same time, global capitalism is demanding a greater movement of human capital.

People on the Move and Their Security Implications

For several millennia, migration has been a global phenomenon, which in recent centuries has
been increasingly interlinked with the globalisation of cultures and economies, as well as the
expanding influence of MNCS/TNCs. Within this context it may be argued that such corporations
have an expanding determination of, and nation-states a substantially reduced the role in,
influencing and determining the movement of people across nation-state borders. In other words,
in a growing number of situations nation-states are increasingly deferring to MNCS/TNCs in the de
facto control and movement of international human capital transactions. Unfortunately, a close
examination of the institutional ‘casualties’ of the 2008-2009 global financial crisis and economic
meltdown is an excellent example of this influence. Thus, the framework for developing
immigration and emigration policies within nation-states remains centred on the increasingly ineffective conceptualisation of the nation-state and of national borders (Bach 2003).

It is critical to acknowledge that migration is not merely a movement of people, but rather migration is a process, a dynamic socio-cultural and eco-political process, which impacts not only the migrant, but also the sending and receiving spatial locations. It involves not only the physical movement of people from one spatial location to another, but also the movement of economic resources, cultural practices, political ideologies and social values. In contemporary times, the act of migration is not simply from one geographic location to another over a short period of time, but often a series of movements over an extended period of time. Thus migration may be perceived as movement, or ‘flow’, along a complex matrix of paths that represent the inter-spatial movement of people over time.

Economic and political transformations in the Asian region in recent centuries, due to conquest and/or colonial rule, and their associated population movements, have resulted in a situation where many contemporary Asian nation-state boundaries do not coincide with traditional/historical ethnic and cultural boundaries of earlier nation-states. The increasing diversity in the nature and composition of contemporary Asian migration flows has increased economic and political security implications in the post-Cold War, post-11 September 2001 period, especially in the wake of an expanding external and internal economic and cultural imperialism within the Asian region. While in the 1990s, in the wake of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, national economies became increasingly integrated into regional and global economic structures, concurrently, politically many democratic nation-states moved to the ‘right’ and elected conservative governments, while fundamentalist religious-political groups increasingly resorted to violence in an attempt to achieve their goals. In part, these events caused numerous nation-states to reassert their nationalist ideologies, rather than embrace global political ideologies. These, and the above noted emerging issues, are key factors in present day regional security considerations.

The remainder of this essay seeks to provide a brief general overview of how migration has influenced economic and regional security within the Asian region at the end of the 20th Century and into the 21st Century, and how recent global events will have substantial influence over the migration-security nexus in Asia in coming years. In order to proceed, the initial task is to define what is meant by the term migration, a notion which encompasses not only international movements, but also intranational (or domestic/internal) movements; movements which may be forced or voluntary. This sets the stage for the central objective of the essay: to discuss and assess how migration has impacted, both directly and indirectly, upon the economic and political security of Asia in recent times, and which security issues may be of concern as Asian nation-states progress further into the 21st Century.

A final note on the quality of migration data is warranted here. Not only are there problems in the collection and analysis of migration data, but one must appreciate that all statistical data are ‘political’, and thus prone to ‘political manipulation’, and are therefore potentially unreliable.
Types of Migration Movements in Asia

The main objective of this section of the essay is to define and describe the various types of population movement, and to briefly consider the factors that presently influence, and in recent times have influenced, these different types of migration movements within the Asian region. As with the issue of security, whether personal, national or regional/global, that is 'glocal', there is an acknowledgment that population movements may be a result of an amalgam of economic, environmental, political, psychological or social factors, and thus migration impacts upon the economic, environmental, political, psychological and social fabric of both the sending/source location and the receiving/host location.

Due to the contested complexity of migration, social scientists have yet to develop a broadly acceptable theory or typology of migration, although demographers, economists, human geographers, political scientists and sociologists have attempted to do so. However, on one issue most social scientists of migration are generally in agreement—[given the opportunity and means to do so???] individuals move their place of residence to improve their quality of life. This improvement in quality of life is premised on personal preferences and may be underpinned by economic, environmental, political and/or social factors, or purely aesthetic in nature, and may be based on individual, family, household, clan or tribal considerations.

From the diverse, and often contradictory, migration literature, it is possible to consider migration as being classified by a number of factors, but the three main ones are:

(1) the component of space—the geographic nature of the movement, of which there are two types: *intranational* (domestic) or *international*, each of which has four sub-types, as follows:

   (a) rural to rural,
   (b) rural to urban—also called centripetal migration, as people move towards population centres,
   (c) urban to rural—also termed centrifugal migration, as people disperse from urban areas into surrounding towns and villages, and
   (d) urban to urban.

(2) the notion of time—the permanency of the movement, of which there are three types: *permanent, semi-permanent, or temporary*, with the latter two having three sub-types, as follows:

   (a) periodic migration - usually of workers away from their permanent homes for several years during which time they send home remittances,
   (b) seasonal migration - usually of agricultural workers and/or
farmers’ dependants, to meet changing demands for labour during labour-intensive seasons, and
(c) tourists and (overseas) students.

(3) the element of motivation—the reasons for the movement, which may be complex and diffuse, and fall into a variety of categories, which may or may not be applicable to each case, as follows:

(a) forced (for conquest or colonisation, or impelled by idealistic or economic factors
(b) voluntary (free —in the sense of unfettered or unbonded), sponsored, or just for aesthetic, discovery or merriment value.

A reconfiguration of the above factors can lead to another typology of migration:

(1) innovative migration—people migrate as a means of achieving something new, as they are primarily attracted (pulled) to a new location [such as, from Ha Noi to Sai Gon to study tropical biology];

(2) conservative migration—movement in response to a change in (economic, environmental, political, social, and other) conditions at their residential location in order to retain what they have (or regain what they have lost) [for example, from Bangkok to Chiang Mai to regain cultural enrichment]; or

(3) betterment migration—similar to innovative migration, in that a person moves to improve their position, but suggests that push factors at the place of origin are more important than the pull of the destination [such as, from Mersing to Kuala Lumpur because of the closure of banks and government offices];

(4) subsistence migration—movement away from a poor economic condition, i.e. (economic) push factors are more important than pull factors [for example, from Vientiane to Luang Prabang to regain employment]; and

(5) retirement migration—such as, from Jakarta to Bali to retire and enjoy life in peace with young interesting people.

Most population movements, especially long-term ones, are primarily made for the benefit of the clan, family or tribe, rather than individual per se, a benefit which is assessed according to a complex amalgam of cultural, economic, environmental, political and social factors, as well as possibly aesthetic and psychological considerations. The migration literature has generally grouped these factors into two main categories: pull factors which act as an attraction to alternative locations, and push factors which compel individuals to leave their current abode.
Although there are schools of thought, and associated literatures, which dismiss the push-pull model as being outdated and lacking in explanatory power, from a behavioural perspective it may be argued that most individuals seek to maximise their individual, family or clan utility, and thus engage in some form of cost-benefit considerations when making the decision to remain in their present location or move to an alternative, more beneficial, location. Thus, when engaging in the decision-making process, both pull and push factors, advantages and disadvantages, are assessed from the individual, family or clan perspective, based on an assessment of a heterogeneous array of perceived, or real, beliefs that the overall standard of their cultural (restrictions on cultural practices such as having large families, religious preferences, and the cultivation of certain crops), economic (cost of living, and employment opportunities), political (the presence of civil unrest, corruption, repressive government at local, regional, province/state and/or national levels, and ideologies or practices), physical (the presence or threat of deforestation, desertification, drought, famine, fires, flood, industrial pollution, rising sea levels, and soil erosion) and social (abuses of human rights or the presence of violence or lack of basic social services, such as educational and health care facilities) environments will be greater in another location. Therefore, when individuals and groups consider the possibility of migration, and when they go through the process of deciding whether and where to migrate, there is a certain complex matrix of factors which act to propel people away from their current abode, and a different set of factors may be attracting them to another location.

As noted in the first typology of migration types above, there are two categories of motivational factors that influence people’s decision to move—forced and voluntary. The difficulty with discussing these two categories of population movement is that although these two terms are readily definable, the actual process of classifying a specific act of migration into one of these two categories is becoming increasingly complex. This complexity arises as the differences between perception and reality may be nebulous, especially when the factors influencing the migration decision-making process become multifarious. Indeed, one may argue that in the latter part of the 20th and in the early years of the 21st Centuries, the categorisation of population movements into either the forced or voluntary category has often been based more on subjective political considerations, rather than on objective empirical criteria. For example, a government may publicly state that it is asking for ‘volunteers’ to move to a new economic zone (as in Indonesia’s *transmigrasi* policies), while those ‘selected’ for migration may deem that they are being forced, against their will, to move; or, refugees fleeing religious persecution under a military dictatorship may say that they have been forced to seek asylum in another country due to government-sponsored persecution of the religious denomination to which they belong; while the government may publicly state that such individuals are voluntarily choosing to leave the country. This is an example of the old adage that one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter.

In recent times, the terms *economic refugee* and *environmental refugee* have been coined and used with increasing frequency. The term ‘economic refugee’ has described individuals who flee poverty or economic disadvantage, rather than fleeing their country or location due to a well-founded fear, or experience, of political persecution. For example, many individuals who clandestinely left Viet Nam in the late 1970s and the 1980s were termed political refugees, while
most those who clandestinely left Viet Nam during the 1990s have been termed economic refugees as they have been deemed by the international community to be primarily fleeing poverty and, secondly, communism/socialism, rather than fleeing due to experiencing or fearing persecution. A more recent example may be drawn from Australia and the United States of America (USA): in the mid-1990s a number of citizens of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) sought refugee status in Australia and the USA on the basis of the PRC’s ‘one-child policy’. These Chinese nationals claimed that the PRC’s one-child policy contravened their human rights, and thus they should be termed political refugees.

On the other hand, the term environmental refugee has been used to describe individuals who have been forced to flee their usual abodes due to natural or human-made disasters. The term is generally not used with respect to individuals who may have been temporarily displaced due to natural disasters, such as the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which destroyed hundreds of villages and took thousands of lives, or the 17 January 1995, Kobe earthquake; but rather to those people who have been permanently displaced from their homes and neighbourhoods, and/or their land eroded away or destroyed due to natural environmental events. In many informed circles, the current projections of climate change and global warming will mean that by the end of the 21st Century, rising sea levels and more extreme weather patterns will destroy many global coastal communities.

In the post-Cold War period, the definition and interpretation of the terms voluntary, forced and refugee have become increasingly ambiguous. Clearly this growing vagueness, as well as the restructuring of global economic and political relations, demand a new paradigm for examining population movements, something that is beyond the remit of this essay.

Despite the above-noted conceptual ambiguities, this essay proceeds to briefly consider examples of some types of the population movements noted above. However, as a caution, it must be appreciated that the labels attached to describe specific types of population movements are somewhat subjective, being influenced by both the ideological and moral concerns of the author [NAMELY??].

**Forced Migration.** The term ‘forced migration’ generally ignites thoughts of refugee movements; of people being forced to leave their abodes due to civil unrest or personal persecution (political refugees), or an environmental disaster (environmental refugees), and, more recently, economic disadvantage or poverty (economic refugees). The complexity and cultural diversity of humankind proclaim that it is with respect to forced migration that we encounter the definitional problems alluded to above—problems such as defining what constitutes political persecution, and moral problems, such as determining whether the rights of the individual are subordinate or superordinate to the rights of the nation-state. For example, factors that constitute human rights abuses in one culture, or nation-state, may be acceptable cultural and political practice in another. With respect to government-initiated forced migration, or the more politically acceptable term ‘population relocation’, similar difficulties are encountered. While many people consider individuals who have been forced to flee their abodes due to an environmental disaster, civil unrest or
persecution, as being refugees, the question is often asked whether people who have been compelled by government authorities to move their abodes are forced migrants. It is therefore important to briefly discuss both government-initiated and non-government initiated forced migrations.

**Government-Initiated Internal Migration**

Throughout the Asian region several countries have either covertly or overtly implemented policies aimed at achieving a more ‘beneficial’ and ‘equitable’ redistribution of their populations. These programs have been initiated for a number of reasons, with the four main reasons being cited as (a) achieving a more equitable population distribution, (b) enhancing national economic development, (c) enhancing population control through eliminating existing political and socio-economic structures, and (d) strengthening national security through relocating populations to border regions. Any particular forced relocation strategy may have one or many of these strategies as its underlying philosophy, as may be illustrated with the following examples:

1. to achieve a more equitable national distribution of the population, as in the case of Indonesia’s transmigration program;

2. to enhance national economic development and to reduce the burden on existing infrastructure by moving people away from densely populated areas into underdeveloped areas, as in the case of Indonesia, Malaysia, the PRC and Viet Nam, for example;

3. to achieve effective control over the population through destroying existing economic, political and social networks, as in the case of Democratic Kampuchea under the Pol Pot Regime (Kiernan 1996), and, to some degree, the forced movement of Han Chinese into Tibet/Xinjiang in recent decades in order to facilitate the cultural, economic and political subjugation of those regions to Beijing (Dillon 2009: 168-175); or

4. to strengthen national security by moving people into sparsely populated border/frontier areas, as in the case of Indonesia’s annexation of East Timor (now Timor-Leste) and Irian Jaya, the land borders of Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and in Viet Nam’s transmigration program.

These four types of government-initiated forced internal migration, have had domestic, regional and international/global security implications. The forced population movements in Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Myanmar, the PRC (Tibet and Xinjiang) and Viet Nam have resulted in domestic and external refugee movements, which have acted to destabilise the nation-states concerned (as with Indonesia and Viet Nam), as well as the nation-states where these refugees have sought initial asylum (Loescher and Milner 2004). Thus, these movements have had adverse impacts upon regional and international/global relations (especially in the case of the
Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese refugee movements in South-East and East Asia in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the on-going impact of the PRC’s involvement in Tibet and Xinjiang). Therefore, while some of the above government-initiated forced population movements sought to enhance national (internal) security, and may have partially achieved their goal, some have also created further (national and regional) security problems, many of which are unlikely to disappear over the medium term unless there are policy reversals by the nation-states which initiated these forced migration programs.

The movement of a nation-state’s nationals into sparsely populated border/frontier areas may be domestically perceived as a strengthening of national security, while their neighbour(s) could interpret such a demographic relocation as a potential threat to their own national security. Amongst others in Asia’s long history, the southern expansion of the Vietnamese people during the past two millennia serves as an historical example of how such movements into sparsely populated border/frontier areas may result in conflict and conquest. Since the early 1990s, similar regional security concerns have being raised about the PRC’s movement of its armed forces into, and the concurrent establishment of military garrison forces in, numerous sites in the South China Sea (Cossa 1998; Hiramatsu 2001; Ji 1998; Odgaard 2003; Tonnesson 2000). Correspondingly, the on-going government-initiated population movements in Indonesia are likely to create additional security problems in this poly-ethnic country, with internal (economic and political) and external (refugee) security problems having already arisen from forced movements in East Timor, Myanmar, Tibet/Xinjiang and West Irian (West Papua). In these latter cases, the internal tensions experienced over the past few decades may be an indication of similar problems arising in coming decades within the region.

**Refugee Movements.** Since the mid-1970s, large refugee movements have become a increasing concern in the Asian region. The perception of refugee movements as a potential security problem is still intense within Asia, as exemplified by the Muslim *Rohingya* fleeing abuse, poverty and repression in Myanmar who arrived in Thailand in 2008 and early 2009, as well as all too numerous other events in recent times (United Nations High Commission for Refugees 2008; United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants 2008). This brief treatment does not wish to duplicate or reproduce the extensive literature on asylum seekers, displaced persons, and refugees within Asia over the past three to four decades, but rather to just register a few salient points.

As we are all too aware, in the 1980s, in the eyes of Western media, the major global refugee problem was that of the Indochinese asylum seekers throughout East and South East Asia. For most of that decade, the Western media and diplomatic efforts focused primarily on Vietnamese, and at a distant second, the Cambodian, asylum seekers throughout the region, with only scant attention being directed towards the plight of the Hmong, Lao, Mian, and other refugees from Laos. Since early 1975, approximately 2.5 million Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese nationals successfully fled their homelands as refugees, with possibly up to another half a million perishing in the process. These asylum seeker/refugee movements have had a significant economic and political impact upon East and South East Asia. Many countries in the region were compelled to
provide temporary sanctuary to these refugees as they awaited a lasting solution. Some countries, such as (pre July 1997) Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, the PRC, and Thailand, have also provided permanent residence to some Indochinese refugees who arrived at their borders.

The Western world presently seems to be relatively uninterested in the contemporary refugee crises in the Asian region, and the current plight of the millions of refugees in Asian refugee camps has rarely registered any attention from the Western media during the 21st Century. Apart from the present (2009) refugee problems in the Asian region, especially the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and numerous ethnic minority groups from Myanmar in Thailand, for some observers the next anticipated refugee movement will be those environmental refugees precipitated by climate change, global warming and associated rising sea levels, as well as ones displaced by the increasing extremes in global weather patterns, which have certainly impacted across the Asian region during the early years of the 21st Century. Considering the frequency and magnitude of recent adverse regional climatic events, it can be expected that there will be a substantial increase in the number and proportion of environmental refugees in the Asian region, especially in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the PRC, Thailand and Viet Nam. Additionally, potential political refugee movements also exist in Indonesia (especially in Aceh and West Papua), in the PRC (which has witnessed an increase in the frequency and size of rural and worker protests since early 2005), and in poly-ethnic multicultural nation-states that do not provide an equality of citizenship rights to all of their nationals.

However, of more immediate concern are the 2008-2009 global economic and financial crises, and the effects on the estimated 50 million people who may lose their jobs globally. These global economic and financial crises could: (1) increase economic hardship; (2) increase the internal migration of unemployed workers seeking employment, and (3) increase personal and family stress, which will in turn; (4) almost certainly increase the level of societal violence and civil unrest in numerous Asian countries, reflecting patterns already evident in Western Europe during late 2008 and early 2009. Thus, potentially, the 2008-2009 global economic and financial crises could be triggers for economic refugee movements in many Asian countries, especially those most severely affected by the 2008-2009 crises.

It is clear from the contemporary Asian history of the latter quarter of the 20th Century, that although most governments are well aware of the various factors which may produce refugee movements, politicians do not always act appropriately to halt such movements before they occur—nor do national, regional or global governments/institutions act in a timely manner to alleviate the suffering of many refugees. This issue will be addressed in more detail later in this essay.

Voluntary Migration. Apart from government-initiated forced migrations, the primary decision-making about migration is made by individuals, families, households, clans or tribes with the objective of improving the quality of life and well-being of those involved. Generally, a significant proportion of voluntary migration takes place within the borders of a nation-state, and in recent decades there has been a marked increase in the number and proportion of Asian nationals
engaged in migration to destinations both within the Asian region and in other parts of the globe.

**Internal Migration**

In recent decades, increasing economic and financial globalisation has contributed to economic advancement in the nation-states of Asia, with an associated expansion in the size and economic diversity of Asian primate cities, thus heralding rapid urbanisation (Ness & Talwar 2005). A large portion of this urbanisation has been due to large-scale rural-to-urban migration (Jones 2002a & 2002b), as rural people seek out the perceived economic benefits, as well as better educational, health and welfare services, located in urban areas. Since the mid-1960s, the most rapid urbanisation in the Asian region has occurred in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Nepal and the Republic of (South) Korea, with the urban populations in these countries increasing by more than three-fold since the mid-1960s. On the other hand, the proportion of national populations in urban locations has increased only slightly, or declined, in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Kyrgyzstan, the Macau Special Administrative Region, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—thus suggesting a limited amount of net rural-urban movement. From the mid-1960s until the mid-2000s, the proportion of Asia’s population living in urban areas has almost doubled, up to about 37 per cent (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2007; United Nations 2005).

Since the last quarter of the 20th Century, there has been a great deal of internal migration in Asia, especially in times of economic growth and industrialisation, which has been enhanced in the wake of contemporary globalisation. Most internal migration is precipitated by economic inequalities and differential opportunities between rural and urban areas (Clausen 2002; Deshingkar 2006; Djamba et al. 1999; Guest 1998; Skeldon 1997). People move to areas of perceived better economic opportunity, which are generally the cities, and especially primate cities. While some of these movements are long-term/permanent, others are either temporary/seasonal, often based on the need to sell the domestic surplus of labour or labour power (Chan & Abdullah 1999). Estimates of the magnitude of permanent and temporary internal migration within Asian countries vary substantially, not only depending on the source of the estimates—academic, government or non-government organisations, but also depending on the time of year. However, there is a reasonable degree of consensus in the Asian region that about half of the urban population growth during the past two decades has been a result of internal migration (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2007; Jones 2002a & 2002b; United Nations 2005).

As noted above, numerous Asian governments are extremely concerned about the potential domestic security implications of large-scale rural-to-urban migration. In addition, in light of the current (2009) global economic and financial crises, and the predicted loss of 50 million jobs worldwide during 2009, concerns are presently being raised about the security implications of forced urban-to-rural return migration, as well as the increased numbers of urban unemployed. Rather than resort solely to policies of forced population relocation to counter this population movement to primate cities, a number of countries—such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the PRC, and Thailand—have implemented policies of regional development and
decentralisation. Although such policies cannot strictly be classified as government-initiated forced migrations, these are government-initiated polices aimed at containing, redirecting, or restricting population movements to urban areas. As part of this decentralisation, employment opportunities are being created in provincial areas, and in a few cases some public administrative functions have been relocated out of the primate cities. Nevertheless, present evidence (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2007; United Nations 2005) would suggest that such programs have had only limited success in restricting, or reducing, urbanisation in recent times.

An additional policy, which has also be adopted in Indonesia, the PRC, and Viet Nam, has been to attempt to legally restrict the permanent and temporary movement of people from one location to another, especially movement into the cities (Desbarats 1987; Deshingkar 2006; Djamba et al. 1999; Fan 1996, 2005; Guest 1998). In these countries individuals are officially required to obtain government approval before they move their abode, especially if the planned movement is into primate cities. In the PRC and Indonesia, and increasingly in Viet Nam to the early 2000s, these policies have proven to be ineffective in achieving their goal. One of the primary reasons for this policy failure may be attributed to government corruption, but more than often the policies have been ineffective because people ignore their government’s directives and move into the cities.

With increased industrialisation and reduced employment opportunities in rural areas, countries such as the PRC and Viet Nam need to urgently create rural employment opportunities. For example, in the PRC there is an estimated 130 million former rural workers, termed ‘the floating population’, who have migrated to Chinese cities seeking employment (Deshingkar 2006), with about one-fifth of this number unemployed (Chang 2009), as well as an estimated 8.9 million urban unemployed at the end of 2008 (Li 2009). With the PRC needing an annual Gross Domestic Product growth of eight per cent to keep unemployment stable (Bezlova 2009), the magnitude of these ‘floating population’ figures would suggest that even in the PRC, the floating population and the rapidly expanding number of urban unemployed pose a major potential threat to domestic security and stability, and their number is expected to increase if the 2008-2009 global economic and financial crises deepens into 2010, and possibly beyond. As the 1997 Asian financial crisis had a significant impact on the Asian regional economies and security (Dieter 2009; Nishikawa 2009: 217-218), it is probable that the present unemployment situation in the PRC will be repeated in other similar Asian economies, such as Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam which are heavily dependent on MNCs/TNCs for domestic economic and employment growth.

Small-scale gradual internal migrations can be planned for and possibly appropriate physical infrastructure, such as hospitals, housing, roads, schools, constructed to accommodate the new populations. But large-scale relatively rapid internal movements create massive internal problems, such as crime, excessive demand on existing social and transportation infrastructure, homelessness, slums, substance (alcohol and illicit drugs) abuse and violence, which in turn have the potential to result in internal political discontent and economic disruption, which may eventually have regional implications through international (refugee) migration.

International Migration
From even before recorded history, Asian peoples have been traversing the political borders of city-states or nation-states within insular and mainland Asia, and the types and reasons for these migrations fill most of the categories in the two typologies described above. During the past millennia, and up to the present time, most of the permanent migrations engaged in by Asian peoples have been confined to within the Asian region. It has only been within the past two centuries that a sizeable number of Asian nationals have undertaken international, non-regional, movements that briefly have been described by Castles and Miller (2003). Over recent decades, as regional and national security concerns have increased, and globalisation has expanded and deepened, nation-states in the region have directed an increasing amount of resources to controlling population movements across their frontier boundaries. These attempts have often disrupted the ‘traditional’ movement of peoples engaged in commercial activities and resulted in an increase in what has been termed ‘illegal migration’. The first part of this section considers the legal movement of people across national boundaries, and the latter part the growing diversity and magnitude of illegal movements.

Increased globalisation and expanding economic differentials between Asian countries in recent decades have brought in their wake a substantial increase in the magnitude of voluntary temporary international movements within the Asian region. Most of this movement has been driven by economic factors, and is primarily labour-related (Athukorala & Manning 1999; Goss & Lindquist 2000; Kaur & Metcalfe 2006; Lloyd 1998). This movement of labour power comprises workers with a broad spectrum of skills, from unskilled child labourers and commercial sex workers to highly skilled professionals and business-people (Iredale 2000; Lloyd & Williams 1998). The type of employment the university-educated and highly skilled professionals obtain in their country of destination may not necessarily coincide with their levels of expertise and education that they obtained in their homeland or overseas. For example, some of the domestic maids and labourers from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand who work in the more advanced economies of the region—such as the HKSAR, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and, to a lesser degree, Malaysia—have graduated from universities in their homelands. In many cases, unskilled jobs in the developed economies pay better than skilled professional jobs in the developing countries, which in turn leads to a substantial loss of human capital from the developing economies (Hugo 1998; Lucas 2005). At the same time, labour flows are not always from the less advanced economies to the more advanced economies, as may be illustrated by the case of Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese nationals who follow their transnational companies which have established operations in the developing Asian economies. Thus, the unidirectional transnational movement of investment capital results in a multi-directional movement of human capital throughout the Asian region.

The security implications of international regional population movements that result from the transnational movement of investment capital are as diverse as the movements themselves. A mid-1990s much researched international movement was the emigration flow from Hong Kong, where public confidence in the future of the territory after its return to PRC rule on 1 July 1997 was low (Skeldon 1990-91: 500). Some commentators at the time expressed the view that a mass
exodus from Hong Kong prior to July 1997 would lead to the economic collapse and general social and political instability in the post June 1997 HKSAR. Although during 1996 and early 1997 none of these major catastrophes eventuated in Hong Kong, there was a marked increase in the level of domestic crime, which was in part associated with mainland Chinese gangs moving into the HKSAR, as well as the emigration of domestic security personnel.

The international movement of labour within the Asian region, whether legal and illegal or undocumented, has been the focus of much research in recent decades (Goss & Lindquist 2000; Kaur & Metcalfe 2006; Lucas 2005; Mackenzie 2005; Sim & Wee 2009), and thus only a brief consideration of this issue will be provided here. As Prasai (1993: 1055) notes:

> The dynamic growth rates of Japan and other Asian economic "tigers" such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia have led to a two-tiered structure of migration within Asia: the selective recruitment of skilled laborers needed by high-growth industries, and a lesser known illegal migration trend of an estimated three to four million Asian workers . . .

Almost every country in the Asian region is both a sender and receiver of labour power (Chia 2006; Mackenzie 2005), and the workers who are officially working overseas are often termed Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs).

Kaur (2007: 136) provides a brief summary of the number of overseas Asian migrant workers in the early years of this millennium, though readers should be aware that different sources provide a diversity of estimates:

1. there were an estimated 14,197,000 overseas South East Asians working in Asia and the Middle East in the early 2000s, of which the majority were 8,084,000 Filipinos working in the HKSAR, Malaysia, the Middle East, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and Thailand; 3,500,000 Indonesians working in the HKSAR, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan; and 1,100,000 people from Myanmar working in Thailand,

2. there were an estimated 16,681,000 overseas South Asians working in Asia and the Middle East in the early 2000s, of which the majority were 5,000,000 Indians working in the Middle East; 4,000,000 Nepalese working in India, Malaysia and the Middle East; and 3,181,000 Pakistanis working in Malaysia and the Middle East; and

3. there were an estimated 1,723,000 overseas East Asians working in Asia and the Middle East in the early 2000s, of which the majority were 632,000 workers from the Republic of Korea working in Japan; 550,000 workers from the PRC working in various countries; and, 300,000 people from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea working in the PRC.
The above data clearly indicate that in the early years of this century, India, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines were the largest sending countries, which together accounted for about 63.1 per cent of all overseas Asian migrant workers. The remittances sent back home by these workers are not insignificant, as in 2002 they accounted for 9.9% of the Philippines Gross Domestic Product, 8.9% of Pakistan's, 7.9% of Sri Lanka's and 6.6% of Bangladesh's (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2005: 34).

The astute reader will have noted that the figures associated with the preceding paragraph do not always add up. The main problem is that not only do various official government sources frequently release conflicting data, but also that government data/estimates severely understate/underestimate the actual number of OCWs, for reasons addressed in an earlier section. Before considering the security implications of the Asian OCWs, let us briefly glance at the foreign labour situation in a few South East Asian nation-states.

In 1986, it was estimated that about 42% of Brunei’s labour force consisted of foreign nationals, and in 1990, about 73% of private sector employees were foreign nationals. In the mid-1990s, about one-fifth of Singapore’s labour force consisted of foreign nationals, which increased to almost one-third (or 620,000 individuals) by 2000 (Kaur 2007: 149). As of 2007, 23% (or 2.8 million workers) of Malaysia’s labour force were migrant workers, with 68.9% of these migrant workers coming from Indonesia, 9.9% from Nepal, 6.9% from India and 4.6% from Myanmar (Kaur 2007: 150, 153). Part of the explanation for the high proportion of expatriate workers in these three countries may be found in the relatively strong growth of wealth in these countries in recent decades, compared to the source countries of the migrant workers, in conjunction with the evolution of more extensive information and communication networks. The strong economic growth, and associated expansion of wealth in some sections of most Asian nation-states, in recent years has led a growing number of Asian nationals to seek not only release from labour-intensive domestic chores, but also an increase in their standard of living and social status, which in turn has resulted in an increased demand for domestic workers (Chang 2000; Huang et al. 2005). From this perspective, part of the explanation for the labour shortages in the more developed countries of the region has been the rising levels of education and wealth in these countries—such as the HKSAR, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and so on—which in turn has lead to a distaste for doing manual labour, and thus creating a demand for the (temporary) immigration of workers to fill unskilled job vacancies (Yamanaka 1993: 72).

Another example, though covering a broader skill spectrum than that just considered, may be found in the HKSAR. In the early to mid-1990s, despite increasing levels of unemployment, especially of the middle aged and the elderly, the then Hong Kong was experiencing a severe labour shortage at all levels of skill, requiring the importation of overseas workers to fill vacancies across the entire skill spectrum. According to the Hong Kong Standard (4 December 1994), in September 1994 there were 382,900 expatriates, or about 6.4% of the total population, officially working in Hong Kong, though the real number was estimated to be as large as three times higher. In the wake of the return of Hong Kong to the control of the PRC, highly skilled professionals from
across the globe still sought out short- and medium-term employment possibilities in the HKSAR.

The preceding examples clearly illustrate that there is a diverse international movement of labour within the Asian region, as well as into and out of the region. Most of the concern with OCWs and illegal or undocumented immigrants is located in the countries in which these migrants are working, and here the security concerns are multifaceted as the overseas workers may not only directly impact upon the internal security of a country, but they may also act as ‘fifth columnists’. In countries where issues of culture, ethnicity, race or religion are sensitive, the presence of foreign workers, legal, illegal or undocumented, is likely to contribute to domestic political insecurity. For example, in Malaysia,

... illegal Indonesian [immigrants] are resented by both Malays and non-Malays in view of the popular perception that they contribute significantly to the rising crime rate and squatter problems. (Prasai 1993: 1057)

In addition, immigrant workers, especially illegal labourers, may also pose health risks to the domestic population through the transmission of readily communicable diseases and viruses, such as cholera, dengue fever, SARS, H1N1, Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections (STD/Is), typhoid, and so on (Soto 2009). Therefore, unless adequate border/frontier controls are implemented, and appropriate health education procedures adopted, including public education programs, overseas workers may not only bring economic advancement for some, but also political and social instability for others.

Until the 1990s, source governments paid little attention to the treatment their OCWs experienced in their places of employment. However, over the past three decades, the abuse that many of these workers have experienced at the hands of their foreign employers has invited the attention of only a few national and regional Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), such as religious groups and women’s groups (Lyons 2009). A few examples that received global attention in the early 1990s illustrate how the ‘hostile’ treatment of OCWs may influence the bilateral relations between the two nation-states which act as the host and source countries of the OCWs. The case of the Filipina domestic workers Flor Contemplacion in Singapore and Sarah Balabagan in the United Arab Emirates, and Thai workers in Singapore, are examples where the abuse of, including physical and sexual violence towards, overseas contract workers have strained diplomatic relations between the countries of destination and origin.

There has been little attention directed towards another aspect of the OCW movement—how the security of the source countries are influenced by this movement. As labour migration is primarily economic-based, and thus generates an international currency flow, we need to ask what are the internal, or national, security implications if this flow of money evaporates, or significantly declines? As the above Gross Domestic Product data would suggest, countries such as the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, amongst others, would face major economic problems, as not only would there be a loss of billions of US dollars per annum flowing into the economy, but there would also be the multiplier effects of this loss throughout the domestic economies of the
sending nation-states. In the case of the Philippines, for example, these multiplier effects would be substantial, and thus domestic economic stability would be threatened. In addition, as countries that have lower labour costs than the Philippines, such as the PRC and Viet Nam, for example, become increasingly active players in the OCW market, there is a real likelihood that the demand for Filipino OCWs will decline in some sectors. The domestic problems that would be experienced in the Philippines by such a scenario could also spread to the other source countries, if the regional demand for semi-skilled and unskilled labour does not continue to expand. Certainly, the 2008-2009 global economic and financial crises will have a significant impact upon the Asian economies, and thus on illegal workers and OCWs, which in turn will have security implications for both the sending and receiving countries.

In sum, the above discussion has noted that in the wake of the expanding globalisation of economies, and associated increasing power of multinationals, there is an affiliated international movement of financial and human capital, as well as cultural capital (Castles 1998). Global cities, such as Bangkok, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Tokyo, have attracted not only highly skilled Western business-people, but also unskilled regional workers, all of whom bring not only their labour power, but also their cultural, health and political capital. Within some Islamic nation-states, this foreign non-Islamic cultural capital may be unwelcome and potentially destabilizing—as in the case of Malaysia.

Another source of domestic instability may be the arrival of international students and overseas workers who bring unwanted political ideologies with their human capital. Not only may these political ideologies be a threat to the host nation, but also the immigrant’s country of origin (Constable 2009: King & Melvin 1999/2000), and Ma (1993). Some have observed that emigrants may engage in political activities aimed at destabilising their country of origin. In some cases, especially in South East Asia, the Chinese diaspora have been long viewed with concern from a national security perspective (Lee 1993: 1097).

The Security Dimension

Thus far this essay has skirted the issue of security with respect to the various migration flows discussed. There is a broad contested literature on the issues of national and regional security, and the author does not have the knowledge or expertise to adequately summarise this literature, nor satisfactorily engage with these debates. However, in this time of global change and enhanced interconnectedness, it is probably time to advance an unconventional vista in considering such issues. The starting points for this vista are two-fold: firstly a pragmatic beginning may be found in the work undertaken by McMillen (1988 & 1989) with respect to the then regional Kampuchea issue of the 1980s and early 1990s; and secondly the theoretical work of the third generation German Critical Theorist, Jürgen Habermas, and more specifically his influential Theory of Communicative Action (1984, 1987), as well as his important Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action (1990) and On the Pragmatics of Communication (1998). One of the core tenets of Critical Theory is a Marxian influenced conceptualisation of
human emancipation (Burke 2007: 147, 152):

Emancipation here is the idea of freeing peoples ‘from those physical and human constraints which stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do ... Security and Emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order produces true security’ (Booth 1991: 319). The idea of emancipation is ... a provocative idea, not least because it invites consideration of the means by which people may seek their own security rather than having order foist upon them ... (Zedner 2007: 272)

The main premise of McMillen’s perspective (1989: 11) is the notion of conflict resolution through confidence building. This process commences with the opening of dialogue, through which mutual confidence and trust are achieved, which in turn opens the possibility for conflict resolution. In essence this is what Habermas is concerned with, but the location of the dialogue shifts from systems of power to the lifeworld. As Rostboll (2008: 716-717) notes:

A core idea in Habermas is that people interpret their needs and form their identities, desires, and opinions in communication, or inter-subjectively. And when this communication is distorted, the processes of identity- and opinion-formation do not take place rationally and autonomously. So the concern for the form of communication is a concern that the formation of identities, need-interpretations, interest-articulation, and opinion- and will-formation all happen rationally and autonomously. ...

... the search for a way to solve the problem of how a plurality of competing interests could converge in a general interest ... has animated Habermas' writings since 1962.

More specifically, Macey (2001: 69) notes:

Communicative action takes place in the [lifeworld], as opposed to the systems of power and money where strategic action holds sway, and allows subjects to arrive at a communality of mutual comprehension that facilitates shared action because they recognize the mutual compatibility of the validity claims they are putting forward. Because they are open to public scrutiny and recognized as being both comprehensible and sincere, these claims to be speaking the truth can be modified through argument and consensual persuasion. In theory, it is therefore possible to arrive at a full or ideal consensus. (Emphasis added)

The main attraction of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action is four-fold. Firstly, it shifts the site of the communication away from ‘systems of power and money’ to the lifeworld, and thus the distortions introduced by these systems of power and money can be countered by the reality, or pragmatics, of the lifeworld (Habermas 1998). Secondly, as discourse is based in the lifeworld, and thus encourages reflective thinking and dialogue, it is open to multicultural or cross-cultural communications, in the broadest sense of the word ‘cultural’ (Baumeister 2003; Czobor-Lupp 2008). Thirdly, a ‘successful’ outcome of Communicative Action is not only mutually empowering to the parties involved, but it is also mutually beneficial to the human project, and thus human security. Finally, Habermas' paradigm can be utilised ‘glocally’ at any level of security concern, from the individual, neighbourhood and community micro levels, through the meso level, all the
way up to nation-state, regional and global security concerns at the macro levels. As Lynch (2006: 183-184) explains, Communicative Action occurs when actors set aside their self-interest, their relative power, and even their identities in order to seek truth - or at least consensus about the right course of action. For Habermas, strategic action can produce an agreement, a temporary convergence of interests and power, but this will not command any normative weight. Such normative legitimacy can only be achieved through communicative action, in which all affected actors are able to effectively speak and be heard. By this standard, the unilateral definitions of norms and standards inherently represents an act of power, a monologue to which others might or might not accede but to which they are not invited to contribute. Any unilateral claim to legitimacy - even by "good" actors - therefore must be viewed with great suspicion. Since legitimacy can only be achieved through open dialogue among all affected actors, no single actor alone can define its terms. An actor that arrogates unto itself the power to dictate the terms of morality might convince itself of its own righteousness, or effectively win support among the like-minded or domestic audiences, but will not likely convince others. (Emphasis added)

In essence, Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action is an ideal perspective for domestic and international security considerations, as well as peace-making, as has been demonstrated in the works of Biebricher (2007) with respect to strategic state analysis, Diez and Steans (2005), Haacke (2005), Rengger and Thrirkell-White (2007) and Weber (2005) in consideration of international relations, Nuruzzaman (2006) in regard to human security, and Yordán (2009) with respect to contemporary peace operations. The task at hand, is for Asian nation-states and leaders to develop and implement appropriate mechanisms and structures of Communicative Action, aimed at resolving existing, and minimising potential, human, nation-state and regional security concerns attached to population movements. Even in situations beyond human control, such as natural (environmental) disasters, Communicative Action could not only minimise human suffering and social dislocation, but also alleviate many security concerns emanating from such events.

**Prospects and Policies**

In the last few decades there has been an increase in the magnitude of all forms of migration. As cultural and economic globalisations increase in amplitude and expand their penetrations into remote spatial locations across the globe, bringing in their wake enhanced national and global inequalities, one of the flow-on effects will be an increase in the significance of global migration at both the international and intranational levels. Thus, the future patterns of migration within, and emigration out of, the Asian region are expected to be complex, and very much influenced by economic, environmental and political factors. Therefore, the possible migration scenarios within the region are both complex and contrasting, due to the diversity of economic, environmental and political characteristics of Asian nation-states.
In the wake of the 2008-2009 global economic and financial crises, recent and present day migrants are likely to furnish Asian nation-states with critical internal, and possibly international, security challenges, as domestic unemployment grows and a significant proportion of international and intranational labour migrants are forced to return to their homelands, as well as their home cities, towns and villages, respectively, as noted earlier. Thus, if mid-2009 global economic trends persist, the early years of the second decade of the 21st Century are likely to witness decreases in the level of international and intranational labour migration, and thus remittances, for the large international labour migration countries such as India, Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as similar internal experiences in countries with a high proportion of domestic labour migrants, such as the PRC, Thailand and Viet Nam. In both of these situations, it is probable that domestic poverty will increase, which will in turn generate increased domestic security concerns, as most Asian nation-states have failed to implement appropriate social security/welfare systems to support the social and social welfare needs and rights of their populations in times of severe economic hardship. Unless appropriate policies are quickly introduced to support those affected by the current global economic and financial crises, then it is likely that domestic political unrest will mount in both magnitude and severity, as has already been experienced in some nation-states since early 2009. Although the implementation of such social justice/welfare programs at this time of global economic and financial crises may be perceived as being unrealistic, history informs us that (significant) domestic political and social unrest will increase if the timely implementation of such programs is not realised. Nevertheless, at the more general level, emigration from the region is also likely to continue as well-educated professionals seek higher incomes and greater personal security elsewhere (Asian Development Bank 2008: 77), and Asians currently outside the region attempt to sponsor family members to join them.

Despite the 2008-2009 global economic and financial crises, the Asian region is increasingly becoming the main region of global economic growth, and thus one of the principal ‘engines’ of the global economy, as indeed the PRC was prior to the 18th Century. In addition, there are signs that regional totalitarian [authoritarian??] regimes are becoming more ‘democratic’ and/or ‘emancipated’, and thus a growing number of Asian people who previously emigrated out of the region are beginning to return to their homelands. For example, each year a significant number of former Indochinese refugees return to their homelands for visits or temporary employment, with some deciding to remain as they realise that their life in the West is much more difficult than they originally believed, and conditions have improved in their countries of origin (Coughlan 2008 & 2009).

As the industrialising economies of Asia continue to develop, the magnitude of emigration from these countries is likely to diminish, ceteris paribus. East Asia, with the exception of the PRC, will continue to receive an increasing number of temporary workers, primarily from source countries in South and South East Asia. The relative economic underdevelopment of these source countries will dictate that they will become the main sources of unskilled Asian labour into the second and third decades of 21st Century, once the present global economic and financial crises are resolved. The South Asian nation-states, especially Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, as well as the PRC, are likely to increase their contribution as foreign sources of labour in the region, and elsewhere, such
as the Middle East, as their economies struggle to develop (with the exception of the PRC) and their populations expand at a rate that is far in excess of the domestic demand for labour. In addition, the supply of labour from these countries will also in part be influenced by their own internal security concerns, as well as the productivity of their workers.

However, from an alternative perspective, some types of labour migration to the advanced economies in the region may be expected to decline in the near future, as these high labour cost economies of destination increasingly relocate their labour-intensive manufacturing industries to the developing low labour cost economies. For example, since the latter part of the 20th Century, Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese manufacturers have been increasingly relocating their labour-intensive factories to the PRC, Thailand and Viet Nam. However, although such a movement of physical capital will reduce the movement of human capital, it is likely to have minimal impact upon other labour movements, such as commercial sex workers, non-manufacturing construction workers, domestic workers and entertainers.

In sum, nothing is constant, except change itself, and in this increasingly dynamic global environment, Asian nations ‘will have to adjust their foreign and security policies to the changing times’ (Banerjee 1994: 554). While in Asia, Singapore is one of the few countries which permits both long-term and short-term immigration (Kim 1995: 360; Low 1994: 256-258), a number of other Asian countries which are experiencing labour shortages have developed policies to accept short-term labour immigrants, as has been noted in previous sections, but often these policies have only been implemented in the wake of extensive contested internal debate. The position of Japan is typical of the position of many countries within the region; Yamanaka (1993) notes that most Japanese are against the importation of foreign labour as it weakens the commonly (and incorrectly) perceived ethnic homogeneity of Japanese society, thereby generating potential social and economic costs, including heightened concerns about personal security. At the same time, recent Malaysian governments have preferred to import a significant proportion of its temporary foreign labour primarily from its close cultural neighbour, Indonesia.

Thus, in addition to the human capital attributes of temporary foreign labour, at times the cultural attributes of potential workers comes into play when labour power is being recruited. And, we may expect an increased regulation of regional labour migration, as both sending and receiving countries are increasingly entering into bilateral agreements to control the movement of people between countries. However, the agreements which emerge from such negotiations are rarely based on full disclosure as required under Habermas’ *Theory of Communicative Action*, and thus these movements may lead to increased dissatisfaction and conflict (Constable 2009; Lyons 2009; Sim & Wee 2009). And certainly, the individuals involved in these movements have little, if any, say in the conditions of their employment, and, in some cases, as the exploitation of these workers increases, the discontentment of the workers will increase, which then becomes a domestic security issue for the host country, as well as a possible impediment to fruitful bilateral relations, as noted earlier.

Apart from the labour migrations just noted, since the 1970s, intraregional migration flows have
become more regulated, and this regulation may be expected to increase well into the 21st Century, as an increasing number of multilateral migration agreements will be achieved. However, such agreements will not stop clandestine illegal movements while individuals perceive that they are being persecuted by their governments, and individuals and firms seek to minimise labour costs, which may encourage illegal labour and undocumented migrations. This was noted with respect to the Macau Special Administrative Region by Sim and Wee (2009: 165): ‘The Macau government’s laissez-faire tolerance of such workers is grounded in its need for human labor that is abundant, cheap, marginal, and disposable.’

The issues of forced migration and refugees are probably the most difficult to deal with, although appropriate international instruments are in place to deal with asylum seeker and refugee movements. As highlighted earlier, most regional nation-states will be forced to deal with an increasing number of environmental refugees as the 21st Century progresses, if present environmental patterns produced by recent changing climatic conditions are any indication. Certainly this will be a regional concern, as environmental disasters will impact on most nation-states in the region, and nationals from most regional nation-states will be seeking refuge in foreign countries. Comparatively speaking, as recent history illustrates, political asylum seekers and refugees are relatively easier to deal with and resolve at a global level, but regional nation-states generally seem incapable of dealing appropriately with these situations. While there will always be citizens who will disagree with the ideologies and politics of their governments, and this happens in most nation-states, it is when governments enact discriminatory or repressive policies which contravene the human rights of its citizens, that we are most likely to see large-scale refugee movements, as noted above. In such situations, it is surely incumbent upon regional nation-states, either directly or indirectly via appropriate regional fora, or through the United Nations or other appropriate global fora, to persuade the offending nation-state to alter its policies. If the transgressing nation-state is unwilling to engage in Habermasian Communicative Action to enhance the human rights of its nationals, then other alternatives are available through the United Nations Security Council, and such actions should be pursued, if the minimisation of human suffering is to be achieved.

The past few decades have witnessed an increase in economic inter-dependency within the Asian region, as well as an expansion in regional security cooperation, including in the important military areas. Generally, security concerns that arise due to migration are likely to be settled amicably by the parties concerned, though there may be tensions, as long as the parties concerned engage in conflict resolution through confidence building via Habermasian Communicative Action. However, any unilateral military expansionism, such as the Indonesian invasion of East Timor on 7 December 1975, and regional concern of possible PRC expansion into the South China Sea and South East Asia, are types of population movements which may not only destabilise bilateral relations, but also the region as a whole. Therefore, it may be desirable to establish new regional fora and mechanisms to deal with such potential concerns; or, alternatively, readdress the ideologies and philosophies of existing regional organisations to be more focused on engaging in Habermasian Communicative Action, for the mutual benefit of all Asian peoples, rather than acting primarily in the ‘best’ interests of existing nation-state economic, military and political elites, at the
expense of the peace-loving peoples of Asia.

In addition, at the national or domestic level, nation-states need to implement policies to encourage the social and structural integration of permanent and temporary immigrants and migrant workers within the host society, possibly modeled on the Australian and Canadian policies of multiculturalism. Such an integration of permanent immigrants and long-term temporary migrants will act to facilitate the enhancement of these individuals’ human rights, and thereby minimise potential domestic security threats. At the same time, nation-states need to introduce policies and programs which seek to ensure a more equitable distribution of the economic and social benefits of economic growth and prosperity across their populations. Such policies would assist in reducing the magnitude of intranational and international migration, and once again minimise national and regional security threats.

Summary and Conclusions

The effectiveness of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum may prove to be central to how regional population movements are perceived and dealt with within the Asian region in the 21st Century, as it is within the economic framework that most population movements occur, and must be dealt with. The APEC grouping will also assist in reinforcing the actions of other region bodies, which may also deal with regional migration and security issues.

However, from the political perspective, the most important factor influencing how nation-states deal with cross-border population movements will be determined by the nature of their bilateral relations, the multilateral relationships they are engaged in and whether the countries concerned share a common geographical border. As a generalisation, when two nation-states have close economic, political and security relations then migration between them is less of a concern in nation-state security, though this is tempered by the history of the relations between the two countries. For example, recent Thai governments’ treatment of Burmese refugees has changed since the late 1980s as the nature of Burmese-Thai relations has fluctuated.

At the same time, immigrant and overseas worker groups should not be perceived as being politically homogeneous. In the mid-1990s, the Vietnamese government perceived most of the ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia not to be a security threat to Viet Nam, but some overseas Vietnamese who lived in the West have used Cambodia as a staging area to conduct anti-communist activities in Viet Nam into the 21st Century. While the former diaspora group in Cambodia may be perceived as a strategic buffer by the Vietnamese government, the latter anti-communist groups are a potential security threat. Similarly, in the late 20th Century some Hmong refugees used northern Thai refugee camps as a base for their anti-communist activities in Laos. On the other hand, the small, but widely supported amongst the general Australian population, East Timorese and Tibetan communities in Australia have been very vocal about the 1975 Indonesian annexation of East Timor and 1951 Chinese annexation of Tibet, respectively, though these actions by the two diaspora communities and their Australian supporters have not adversely impacted on Australia-Indonesia and Australia-PRC bilateral relations. The geographical reality
that Australia, Indonesia and the PRC do not share a land border, and that in general Australia has a constructive relationship with both countries, has meant that Australia has been able to deal with the East Timor and Tibet issues in a reasonably constructive manner, facilitating the widely acclaimed independence of Timor-Leste in 2002.

From the above discussion it is clear that population movements from, into and within the Asian region will continue well into the 21st Century. It is also apparent that some of these migrations will be of security concern to both receiving and sending countries, as well as the region as a whole. How much importance is to be placed on these security concerns will be in part determined by how the receiving and sending countries regard the citizenship and human rights of the migrants, as well as the status of the bilateral relations between the countries concerned. As history informs us, it is probable that national policies of inclusion and multiculturalism will foster acceptance, while policies of exclusion and separation will foster distrust and tension, and heighten national security concerns, as we have noted above. Therefore, it is essential that the national, bilateral and regional levels, nation-states engage in appropriate Habermasian Communicative Action so as to maximise human rights and minimise security threats.

In conclusion, it is fitting to note the words of Demenchonok and Peterson (2009: 72):

The reliance on force does not solve social and global problems, including those that are the source of violence. Rather, it creates its own problems and is counterproductive, thus perpetuating the spiral of violence. Against the background of the negative consequences of globalization aggravated by "monologic" hegemonic power politics, it is becoming increasingly obvious that there is no reasonable alternative to "dialogue" or "polylogue" in multilateral relations of peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the nations for solving social and global problems. An indispensable condition for this is strengthening the international rule of law and institutions, such as a properly reformed United Nations, developing nongovernmental organizations, and broadening the network of transnational grassroots movements. Furthermore, in the long run, the recent eruption of a new spiral of global violence is a symptom of the urgent necessity to move toward the transition from an international to a cosmopolitan order of law and peace.


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