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Return Migration and Crises in Non-Western Countries

Edited by
Jungwon Yeo

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Human mobility, whatever its scale, is often controversial. Hence it carries with it the potential for politics. A core feature of mobility politics is the tension between the desire to maximise the social and economic benefits of migration and pressures to restrict movement. Transnational communities, global instability, advances in transportation and communication, and concepts of 'smart borders' and 'migration management' are just a few of the phenomena transforming the landscape of migration today. The tension between openness and restriction raises important questions about how different types of policy and politics come to life and influence mobility.

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PART I

Introduction

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CHAPTER 1

Return Migration and Crises in Non-Western Countries: Introduction

Jungwon Yeo

Introduction

Crises have become prominent factors in global migration. The increasing frequencies and scales of both expected and unprecedented crises shed light on diverse issues related to human displacement (Kahanec et al., 2016; Yeo, 2020; Comfort, 2023). Crises can shape multifaceted conditions for the departure or return of people and bring about cascading changes or challenges in the societies involved, all without necessarily suggesting foreseeable outcomes or resolutions (Hall & Massey, 2010; Barrett et al., 2016; Mencutek, 2022). For instance, the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022 led to the displacement of over eight million Ukrainians, resulting in new economic, cultural, political, and societal challenges and opportunities for many European countries (see Yeo & Pysmenna, 2024, Chap. 6, in this volume). Similarly, the world's common responses to combat the initial spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as border

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closures and lockdowns, gave rise to unusual migration flows between countries, resulting in unprecedented socio-economic issues and challenges worldwide (see Loustau-Williams & Zouggaghi, 2024, Chap. 8 in this volume).

It requires a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between various types and scales of crises and the diverse backgrounds of migrants, encompassing their social, political, economic, cultural, and psychological status to address and resolve emerging issues at the intersection of migration and crises (Hall & Massey, 2010; Hazans, 2016). Despite the significance, the intersection of crises and migration remains relatively underexplored and poorly understood within migration and crisis research (Bastia, 2011; Mencutek, 2022). This limited research knowledge has hindered its potential to offer meaningful insights to policymakers and practitioners in these fields.

Additionally, there has been a growing demand for information and knowledge concerning return migration and crisis in non-Western countries. A major portion of migration studies focuses predominantly on the dichotomy between immigration—the influx of foreigners—into Western countries, and emigration—outflows of citizens—from non-Western countries (Olivier-Mensah & Scholl-Schneider, 2016; Yeo & Huang, 2020). Return migration is often viewed as the final stage of this dichotomy and is not explored extensively as an independent subject within migration studies (Olivier-Mensah & Scholl-Schneider, 2016). Moreover, significant volume of migration studies was conducted in the context of Western countries, as migrants' destinations (Yeo & Huang, 2020). When non-Western countries become the locus of migration research, it tends to revolve around the emigration of their citizens. This emphasis on emigration stems from economic factors as non-Western countries are rarely highlighted as departures for migrants seeking for new opportunities. Consequently, migration studies have rarely centered on non-Western countries as destination for migrants.

Return migration in non-Western countries has been an evolving phenomenon, particularly amid crises (Bastia, 2011; Zaiceva & Zimmermann, 2016). Moreover, the contextual conditions in non-Western countries differ significantly from those in developed Western countries. Many returnees may find that their formal status aligns with their countries of origin. When they return to their home countries, they may no longer face the same set of challenges they encountered in their host countries, especially those related to maintaining their formal status (as Jacobo-Suárez, 2024

discussed in Chap. 9 in this volume). However, returnees' experiences in other countries, primarily affluent Western ones, and their encounters with crises could introduce unique contexts that either facilitate or hinder the processes and outcomes of their return to their home countries (Comfort, 2023). Furthermore, the impacts, challenges, and issues associated with return migration are more prominent in non-Western countries (Zaiceva & Zimmermann, 2016), many of which may lack sufficient awareness and mitigation measures to address the emerging needs and demands of returnees (as discussed in Chaps. 2 and 9 in this volume).

Therefore, I have proposed this edited volume to explore diverse issues related to return migration amid various types of crises facing non-Western countries. Through a rich collection of cases and theoretical discussions featured in chapters, this book aims to expand significantly current knowledge of crisis migration and discuss the implications for a wide range of practices and policies in migration and crisis management.

Foci, Loci, and Conceptualization

As the title of this edited volume indicates explicitly, 'crisis,' 'return migration,' and 'non-Western countries' are the key terms that define the focus and locus of this book. In this section, I will briefly discuss how these terms are defined and used throughout the chapters of this book.

Firstly, this book explores various causes, types, scales, and roles of crises in the realm of human migration research and practice. In this book, 'crisis' refers to 'a difficult or a dangerous situation requiring serious policy attention.' The contributing authors investigate different forms of crises including war (see Chap. 6), public health crises (see Chaps. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 11), and institutional, economic, or policy failures (see Chaps. 7, 8, 9, and 10). Some chapters focus on specific crisis as a standalone event, such as the COVID-19 pandemic in Chaps. 2 and 3, and the war in Chap. 5. Other chapters examine cascading crises that involve a series of interconnected events (see Chaps. 9, 10, and 11). Additionally, certain chapters explore how a crisis or cascading crises can create new contexts influencing various aspects of human migratory processes (see Chaps. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10), and relevant policies (see Chap. 2). Some chapters address crises as both causes and consequences of human movement across borders (Chaps. 3 and 9).

Secondly, while many studies on migration amid crises exist, this edited volume places a particular emphasis on 'return migration.' Return

migration refers to 'the movement of a person going from a host country back to a country of origin, country of nationality, or habitual residence' (International Organization of Migration [IOM], 2011). Traditionally, in migration studies, return migration was often seen as the final stage of the migratory process, primarily discussed in relation to the extended period of residence in foreign countries (Pérez-López, 2001; IOM, 2011; Stark, 2019). However, both chapter authors and I acknowledge that there has not been a universally concrete definition or understanding of return migration within the field, given the varied causes, processes, and outcomes associated with return migration. In addition, existing studies on return migration tend to highlight the experiences of low-skilled international male labor migrants. Other types of returnees, such as refugees, asylum seekers, families, high-skilled migrants, female domestic workers, and 1.5 generations, received relatively less scholarly attention (Mencutek, 2022).

Therefore, this book presents a wide array of definitions of return migration, returnees, or return migrants that consider factors such as the duration of migration, types of return (permanent, medium, and temporary), causes, and locations. Several chapters delve into the issues of return migration's volatility or circularity of return migration. In examining the forces and factors driving return (or return intention), the chapter authors are allowed to adopt and explain diverse terms, including push and pull factors, as well as individual, structural, and institutional factors. The book addresses divergent types of return, distinguishing between forced returns due to external circumstances or forces and voluntary returns driven by individual choices within different contexts.

Moreover, recognizing the volatility and circulatory nature of return migration, this book broadens the concept by including 'remigration' which refers to the act or process of migrants moving from their initial location to another that may not necessarily be their home (see Zheng & Zhang, 2024, Chap. 3 in this volume). This expansion is especially pertinent for short-term or seasonal migrant laborers, for whom remigration to other cities or locations could be an integral part of the return process. As such, we anticipate that research findings on remigration will offer valuable insight into our understanding of return migration.

Finally, this book delves into the intersection of return migration and crises within 'non-Western countries.' The term 'non-Western countries' refers to nations in the Eastern part of the world, encompassing Asian, Middle Eastern, and African countries. Western countries typically denote

economically developed nations primarily located in North America and Western Europe.

However, it is worth noting that the distinction between Western and non-Western countries extends beyond geography; it often signifies the level of economic development. For instance, countries in Central or South America as well as Eastern Europe are not typically considered Western despite their geographical locations. Conversely, Australia and New Zealand are regarded as Western countries due to their historical and cultural ties to North America and Western Europe, even though they are situated in the Oceania region. As a result, the term 'non-Western countries' encompasses a broad range of regions, including Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean, based on the aforementioned criteria. This distinction forms the framework for selecting chapter authors in this edited volume.

Book Organization and Chapter Introduction

This book is divided into three sections. **Section I**, which includes this introductory chapter (Chap. 1), serves as a foundational component of the edited volume. It introduces the volume's overarching goals and contributions by emphasizing the significance of understanding return migration and crises in contemporary society. This chapter also provides clear definitions of the main concepts—return migration, crisis, and non-Western countries. Additionally, it offers an overview of the edited volume and briefly introduces the chapters that are included in Section II.

In **Section II**, which encompasses Chaps. 2–11, the book delves into specific case studies of non-Western countries. These chapters explore a wide range of theoretical and methodological perspectives while offering practical insights to address the intricate issues surrounding return migration and crises. The topics covered within this chapters include return migration trends, the pivotal roles, and contributions of return migrants, the social, psychological, and policy challenges faced by returnees, emerging issues stemming from return migration in their home countries, and the public and formal responses to return migration and the reintegration of returned citizens. Section II is further divided into four parts, each focusing on a distinct geographical region: Asia (Chaps. 2–4), Europe (Chaps. 5–7), North Africa (Chap. 8), and Latin America and the Caribbean (Chaps. 9–11).

The Asian chapter by Yap and Opiniano (2024) (Chap. 2). In the chapter, Yap and Opiniano delve into the systematic policy efforts of Philippine government to reintegrate overseas returnees, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. They provide a comprehensive review of the 40-year history of migrant management policies, with a special focus on reintegration policies developed in response to various crises. The chapter analyzes how the substantial return migration resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has led to innovative approaches to migration reintegration in the Philippines. The authors underscore the significance of return migration for the nation's development and emphasize the need for more comprehensive and inclusive reintegration policies. They advocate for a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach to support systemically the return of oversees migrants in the post pandemic era.

In Chap. 3, Zheng and Zhang (2024) explain empirically how environmental uncertainty, particularly uncertainty related to the global pandemic, influences the remigration intentions of Chinese migrant workers within different regions and cities of China. Through statistical analysis of survey data from 317 migrant workers, Zheng and Zhang explore the intricate relationships among environmental uncertainty, pandemic-related uncertainty, migrant workers' perception of unemployment risk, and their intentions to remigrate. While the authors did not find a significant direct association between environmental uncertainties and remigration intentions, their findings highlight the exacerbating impact of pandemic-related uncertainty on overall environmental uncertainty. Furthermore, they demonstrate that heightened perceptions regarding unemployment significantly influence migrant workers' intention to emigrate from their current locations.

In Chap. 4, Khan (2024) delves into the profound effects of return migration on the diplomatic ties between nation-states. Emphasizing the pivotal role of remittances in cementing the connection between countries of origin and destination, the author contends that the mass return of Indian expatriates from the Persian Gulf amid the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting labor market dynamics in the region have resulted in a substantial reduction in remittances. Consequently, this reduction has led to fractures in the bilateral relationship between the nations.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 explore return migration and crises within the context of non-Western Europe. In Chap. 5, Vaidelytė et al. (2024) investigate whether various crises have reshaped migration patterns, specifically the movement between emigration and return, among high-skilled

professionals in Lithuania. The authors explained that while the pandemic itself may not have significantly influenced the decisions of high-skilled labor migrants to return, the conditions in both the origin and host countries since the pandemic—such as socio-economic cultural conditions, as well as individual's perceptions of the life—may serve as push or pull factors in the return and remigration decision of high-skilled migrants in Lithuania.

Chapter 6, by Yeo and Pysmenna (2024), examines the migratory processes of Ukrainians before and after the war resulting from the Russian invasion in February 2022. The authors explore whether the factors and antecedents driving Ukrainians' emigration, return, remigration, or resettlement differ before and after the war. Findings indicate that in the prewar period, structural factors, especially economic and institutional disparities between Ukraine and the destination countries, were the primary drivers of Ukrainians' migratory process. However, after the war, individual factors, such as family connections and patriotism, became the major forces influencing the return intentions and decisions of Ukrainian refugees.

In Chap. 7, Künüroğlu and Yüzbaşı (2024) focus on the return migration of Turkish families from Western European countries and the impact of cascading crises on their returns and reintegration in Turkey. The authors investigate the push and pull factors affecting Turkish migrant families' decisions to return, their reintegration and readaptation processes amid public health and economic crises, and the role of family dynamics in the returnees' reintegration and re-acculturation processes. Through qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews, authors find that emotional reasons, such as preserving ethnic ties, feeling at home, and avoiding discrimination in Europe, played a significant role in convincing returnees to stay in Turkey, despite the challenges of hyperinflation and unemployment challenge they faced in Turkey.

In Chap. 8 Loustau-Williams and Zouggaghi (2024) contend that the pandemic-induced border closures caused an immobility crisis in Morocco, **North Africa**. They, then, delve into how the immobility crisis reshaped the circulatory movement of migrants within Morocco. Throughout the chapter, the authors explore three forms of circulatory return migration: longer term return, seasonal return, and daily border-crossing. By analyzing government reports, statistics, and in-depth interviews, the authors discover that the mobility restrictions disrupted the migration circularity system. In particular, immobility had a significant impact on seasonal or