



How can Political-economic Theories address global Migration? — Marxian Economics reconsidered⁽¹⁾

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Abstract Some of the most important problems of this age concern the ever-increasing global migration flows. How should these flows be treated in the analysis of the modern world economy? In the history of political economics, Marxian economic theories have been regarded among the most radical. Theories of this school, however, have not contributed significantly in addressing the issue of migration. Why is this? What “blind spots” do these theories have? This paper explores this theme in terms of Marx’s original work as well as his followers’ interpretation, and contends that political-economic analysis of global migration is vital to a basic understanding of the current global market economy.

Key words International Migration, Marx, Modern Capitalism

September 30, 2003 accepted

邦題：経済学はいかに人の移動を無視してきたか

——マルクス経済学の場合 大西威人

要旨 グローバルな規模で絶えず増大する人の移動は現代の最重要問題の一つである。この問題の経済分析が軽視されてきたのはなぜか。経済学説史の上ではマルクス経済学が最も政治経済学的な伝統を持っているが、この問題を扱うには役に立たない。問題がどこにあるのが本論文の主題である。次の諸点が論じられる。理論の一部の論点のみで資本主義の歴史が示そうとされ、それに対応して理論は抑圧体制を支え、国際的な人の移動を無視する役目を担った。同時にこれに際しては欧州中心主義の偏りもあった。このため従来からグローバルに存在した人の流れを分析できなかった。人の移動の経済分析がこれらの反省の上に進められねば現代のグローバル経済の帰趨を判断できない。

キーワード 国際移動, マルクス経済学, 現代資本主義

原稿受理日 2003年9月30日

(1) This paper is the revised version of the original paper presented in the 6th conference of ESHET (European Society for the History of Economic Thought), Crete, 16 March 2002.

1. Questionnaire

There is no lack of misery in the modern world. In the realm of economics, these topics might properly be addressed using the Marxian theory of political economics. Marxian economics has been traditionally regarded as the most radical political economic theory after Adam Smith. Around one hundred years ago, there appeared politically influential theorists in Europe who insisted that the contemporary social problems should be regarded as a revelation of basic faults inherent in capitalistic market economies. They referred to this idea as 'imperialism theory' and created several theories to explain it. They claimed that these ideas were legitimate successors of Marx's theory.

When we view the present economic situation of the world, however, it seems rather strange that the persistently expanding migration flows in the world economy have thoroughly exceeded the scope of these tracts. As the migration flows have involved national and/or international oppositions as well as conflicts everywhere in the world, political economists are the ones who should be engaged in the study of their causes and effects. What is particularly remarkable is that the direction of these migration flows is, in large part, from the former socialistic economies to the central spheres of the capitalist market economy. One of these flows has had so strong a pressure that it forced down the Berlin Wall. What are we to make of this situation? Have Marxian economics been evil doctrines, or at best, are they no longer critical theories? What lessons can be gained from the history of this vein of economic thought? I pursue these questions in a three step process. First, I reconsider Marx's logic in contrast with the main streams of his followers, sorting out two different sets of logic to the theory. Second, I examine a main fault of Marxian speculation, including that of Marx himself. Finally, I show the necessity of examining and evaluating the trends of global

migration. A retrospective view of the history of Marxian economic theories, the so called imperialism theories, is pursued first.

2. Marx : Two logics

The most emphatic point of Marx's main work in *Das Kapital* was to create an economic theory of capitalism. For him the essence of capitalism was the very fact that human beings are transformed into an aggregate of labour force. (Uno, 1962) The labour force is for him the most important component of a market economy, which alone could assure the fundamental regularity of a capitalistic market economy, although he also described systematic interrelation within economic factors in a pure capitalistic society. He wanted his analysis of the movement of capitalistic economy to be comparable to Newton mechanics in physics. This inclination is most conspicuously exposed when he dealt with the cyclical economic crises.⁽²⁾ However, when we reconsider this part of Marx's description as his main thought, since the part occupying by far a larger volume in this book than historical analysis, we cannot help but ask why there is not more analysis of the historical situations that have made human beings income-pursuers. He may have thought that the detailed situations making labour power a kind of commodity could be ignored when pursuing "scientific" analysis. Be that as it may, before advancing our reconsideration further, we must deal with his other, more important thought.

As has already been suggested, Marx had, in fact, no special theory of 'imperialism'.⁽³⁾ He sometimes regarded capitalism as a kind of a self-destructive economic system, an idea which his descendants made use of.⁽⁴⁾

(2) Sugihara (1974) connected this fact with Marx's theory of revolution.

(3) Uno (1962), Onishi (1997).

(4) In Japan there were a lot of contributions on this theme. I also once worked with this theme, which I show again here in an abridged way. *Das Kapital* includes a lot of theoretical materials, among which almost exclusively Bd.1 Abs.7 'Der Akkumulation' ↗

(We can name this logic Marx-A.) According to the followers, this kind of instability is revealed not through their predecessor's principle of a Newtonian mechanics but through economic policies adopted by nation states, i.e., protectionism or capital export involving colonialism, which 'caused' irreconcilable opposition in the real world of global politics. This combination of economic theory and political analysis supplied the practical toolkit of the parties his followers espoused. They could dispute each capitalistic national policy and refer to 'socialism' at once as if they were dealing with the same economic analysis with the same degree of relevancy. Important economic policies by leading countries could be conveniently described in order to win political support (votes) from the masses. However, analysis and scrutiny of policies on a theme, i.e. trans-border migration policies, were practically ignored. Thus, it was difficult for their imperialism theories to address migration problems. The transition process from capitalism to socialism in these stories was, as it were, expressed and measured by the grades of socialization in capitalistic organizations through the systems of market economy, for instance 'monopoly capitalism' or 'financial capitalism'. In this sense, the logic Marx-A

prozess des Kapitals', especially Kap.24-7 'Geschichtlich Tendenz der Kapitalistischen Akkumulation' is referred to by main classical theorists in German SPD. From this part of Marx emerged such imperialism theories as viewed modern capitalism as the latest or final stage of it (Stage theories). In that part of *Das Kapital*, Marx had described the history of capitalism as the process of transition in ownership developing from proprietary based upon labour to its rejection (which should be followed by socialism as re-denial of this rejection). There capitalism was regarded as an unstable economic system, which his descendants made use of. (The logic Marx-A.) In truth, this perspective remained only in a pure basic theoretical level for Marx. His view of capitalistic development could be seen comparatively clearer in *Grundrisse*, which described three stages of the development as: 1. primitive accumulation, 2. normal accumulation, and 3. concentration process. The main stream of Marxian economists after Marx, the origin of which was F. Engels, has striven to describe modern capitalism as this concentration process (these theories can be named 'the socialising theories', which is the corollaries of Marx-A). Among the most famous result of these theories is R. Hilferding's *Das Finanzkapital*. The basic framework of this volume is, maybe overestimating for him, that monopoly-capitalism has been formed by means of joint-stock capital (the financial capital), which caused the functional changes of protectionism. Lenin added an issuing point concerning British capital export. But both had the same political intention to make clear objective landmarks for showing the advent of socialism by the terms of *Das Kapital* (especially Bd.1 Abs.7). See, for example, Uno (1962), Sato (1980), and Hoshino (1977).

has been a mainstream in the history of Marxian economics (So-called 'socialization aspect').

As for *Das Kapital*, the main logic was, however, to elucidate the law of capitalism as an independent and autonomous economic system. (We can name this logic Marx-B)⁽⁵⁾ Evaluation of economic policies for each nation-state was not the primary theme. Marx in this sense cannot contain the logic of the demise or ruin of capitalism. If it could contribute anything toward this end, however, it would concern exclusively a labour power. In this perspective, the truly important problem for the world capitalism is the labour problem on the global basis. The key stone of establishing capitalism in a society is the commodification of labour, sending various human behaviours into the same orbit of earning a regular income, as the market economy orders.

3. Beyond Marx

Regardless of its original aim of making an economic analysis toward capitalistic market economy, Marx-B was still static and ahistorical and thus could not address human or labour migrations. In the real world, however, human communities have various kinds of flows of people causing various types of integration. It can not be said that economic analysis should be always pursued only for societies where people stay and act within the border of their society. Like capital movements and commodity transactions, labour powers can be thought to move globally as a

(5) An influential interpretation for this Marx in Japan could be summarised as follows. Capitalism is a system in which every entity takes a form of commodity. A commercial form of material circulation cannot be seen natural but has been established through historical processes. Commercialisation itself originated and developed from the interrelation between communities (or outsides of communities), which made other systems of material circulation within communities dissolved and unified them into a totally commercialised society. The establishment of this process relies solely upon a commercialisation of labour power, which can make traditionally organised society into a capitalistic society by itself. See also writings cited in the footnote 4 of this paper.

theoretical prerequisite.⁽⁶⁾ As a matter of fact, global capitalism has always been searching for its desired workers internationally, even in a temporary base, a fact which most classical imperialism theorists would not take into their logic. In effect, after the so-called 'geographical discoveries', modern world history was coloured by European emigration to different regions and their production for the world market using natives or people taken by force or otherwise from other regions. Against this background there emerged powerful centre countries in Europe and around them a modern world system of capitalism. The initiative for these processes should not be considered in terms of trade relations exclusively. For each individual company or enterprise, the trade affairs compose an important part of their interests. Nevertheless, their interests consist of other important factors, among which changes in the distribution of labour powers should be taken as most. Thus, we agree with Marx that capitalism is an external system for a community, but disagree in that the community per se was seen stable. A community can be dissolved, separated and integrated by factors other than circulation of material commodities. Once migration is brought about, it has no less effect in the dissolution and reconstitution of human societies than commodity trade. In this case, wages can be lower than or extremely short of that required for life-reproduction. Nevertheless, commercialised labour power can initiate the social transformation to a market economy.⁽⁷⁾

For Marx, skilled and semi-skilled labour were automatically (by means of machinery and modern industry) dissolved into simple (unskilled) labour so that problems of different skill-level strata concerning international labour allocation played no proper role in constituting a global capitalism. His emphasis was on the active and dismantling side

(6) It is plausible that these flows would occur just following the circulation of commercialised materials, i.e., penetration of market economy. Sure it might be, but the reverse could also be true; migration could promote a market economy through various routes. 'We may say even as truly as Marx that migration caused dissolution of communities and made them commercialised to establish a world capitalist system.' Onishi (1997), p. 108.

(7) A very interesting example for this process is illustrated in Beinart (1982).

of commercialisation in contrast to the passive roles of communities. In reality, however, community bonds have changed their role according to the market economy and have sometimes sustained the capitalistic development of the centre-region by the fact that communities have supplied unskilled labours as if they were unlimited sources. Ironically at the moment, the so-called "brain drain" from developing countries is sometimes criticised as an obstacle to their economic development. Of course, this criticism does not arise from global capitalism itself.

To add to this situation, judging from the current contributions of studies on economic history, it is important that the basic historical tendency of labour migration is different from that of economic policies and trade-custom policies in their global aspect. When the world economy is seen exclusively from the perspective of trade policy, the era of classic imperialism may be characterised as that of economic protectionism. However, as is well known, it cannot be said that the 20th century was typically an age of economic protectionism. Free movement of capital, financial transactions and labour became more marked after the Great Depression of the end of the 19th century. Among other things, it should be noteworthy that after the Great Depression there emerged 'the Atlantic Ocean economic zone' including a global 'proletariat's mass migration'. From southern and eastern European countries a large-scale emigration of wandering peasants occurred and supplied this economic zone with industrial labour force. The 'dual labour market' emerged. Labourers in their home countries received comparatively high wages, good labour conditions and skilled jobs, whereas 'new immigrants' from southern and eastern Europe became unskilled, low-class labourers on the whole. This semi-globally unified labour market, formed the basis of modern capitalism as much as the nominal separation of national markets for material goods by protectionism.

In this context, Asiatic migration should be emphasized. Many theo-

ries concerning imperialism direct their attention exclusively to oppositions or conflicts within western European countries including USA, remaining blind to the racially segmented features of the modern world economy beyond the Western perspective. Even I. Wallerstein, for example, says that main players of the World War 2 were USA and Germany, who had been fighting since 1914, and that Japan was a minor player of this global drama; For him, 'Pearl Harbour' was a trifling incident, unlike the current political moves in USA. Although this theoretical bias might be caused by ignorance of the history of Asian migration in the APEC region, it could be wondered whether even within Europe at this time, there might have been important racial conflicts caused by migration problems.

4. Theoretical tool for despotism

Next, we should proceed to another important aspect of Marxian economics. Hobsbawm envisaged labour migration of the last century as deriving from the agricultural problems in Europe. (Hobsbawm, 1987) This explanation from the "push" side within the Atlantic economy is a kind of equilibrating interpretation. For, emphasizing point is put on the fact that this move released Europe from demographic pressures, and the USA absorbed workers and made use of them for future development. There can be also a pessimistic view of this history. The focus could be directed to the "pull" factors, or the industrial requirements of the receiving countries. In a theoretical sense, there is no novelty in this view. Political economists have undoubtedly sought important factors for imperialistic action in this "pull" factor. Nevertheless they do not deal with migration within their theoretical constructions. No important suggestion concerning migration has been made by them, even when the most intelligent critics have witnessed the political-economical incidents outside the Atlantic economy.

The most impressive classical example of this work was that of J. A. Hobson on the Boer War. Hobson saw the South African War as induced by greedy English capitalists. This point was also propounded by Rosa Luxemburg. They accurately emphasised imperialistic character of this economy, but they failed to analyse the problems in recruiting native labour for the capitalistic organization in South Africa that came to form the segmented labour system. They saw only the financier-interested character of this organization, not the other aspect of the segmented labour ingredients. As a matter of fact, after a 'labour shortage' campaign, which eventually led to the introduction of Chinese indentured labour into South Africa, the Chamber of Mines formed a monopsonic organization (WNLA) to recruit native labour from a country outside British rule (Mozambique) and distribute it directly to the mines. This organization's strategy far exceed those of the usual manufacturing organizations in the western world.⁽⁸⁾ In fact, these critics never imagined the significance of this monster. This had more commanding force against human beings than the normal monopolistic enterprises of a classical capitalist economy, which so many classical theorists have antagonized. Different from WNLA, forming the German Cartel organization is said to have nothing with wage disputes. (Clapham, 1921) In South Africa, thus, scrambles for labour and the consequent international migration were among the basic economic factors of the imperialistic appetite. Superficially, struggles may have been located within the white elements in Southern parts of Africa, but the effects were certainly not confined to them. At the same time, the processes of labour organization could be important determining factors of unfair political systems of this capitalist nation and its interna-

(8) Chamber of Mines is an organization that mining companies in Johannesburg collected together. It was, as it were, the headquarters of mining capitalists, although there were some disagreements in management policy between them. It made a lot of effort for the mines. Among all, the Group System is well-known, which is a unique financially-tied organization aimed at getting money from European stock markets as well as modern technology from the advanced countries. To a large extent the Group System succeeded in getting these resources, but the most essential resource, cheap labour, was difficult for the System to have.

tional relations.

In this regard, Marxian classical theories have argued international oppositions and conflicts in a modern global economy exclusively by referring to an apparent economic system of manufacturing organizations in leading countries (e.g., monopoly capitalism), which have introduced 'socialization aspects' as already mentioned. In the meantime, however, they have not paid attention to the shape of this organization in the marginal sphere. They could not see the monopsonic system in South Africa. More precisely, they proceeded in the wrong direction, taking a prospect of the command economy of labour distributing organizations for the coming idealised economy, as if it were the basic solution against the systemic defects of the existing market economy. Instead of examining the linkage between labour migration and industrial pull factors, they applied the perspective of Marx-A. Ironically, from a retrospective viewpoint, these socialising theories have offered convenient theories to make developing economies adopt a political organization allowing the direct distribution of labour by force of despotism.

In general, a century ago, command economies were not necessarily regarded as evil. F. Engels, for example, identified a planned economy as socialism. Beyond the intentions of the related policy makers, the first half of the 20th century was an era in which command economies were devised and implemented, whether under the banner of fascism or socialism. These political systems gave birth to nation-state economies that distributed labour by force. However, over the past century these kinds of distributing organizations in themselves have not been able to make a proper global allocation of the various strata of labour. These systems must, nevertheless, control the cross-border human migration by nature, whereas the world market economy has not ceased to need labour migration and to constitute ever-changing labour market strata.

How can Political-economic Theories address global Migration? (Onishi)

This was a classical issue, as the history of WNLA suggests. Still this could be seen one of the most basic situations in the modern world economy. For, the oppositions or interdependence of this age largely depend, economically, upon this migratory situation. In fact, political as well as economic agreements including free trade agreements will arise as often as not around this pivot.

Through the 20th century, however, the way of probing this issue has been turned upside down. Currently required are methods for developing market economies everywhere. In this case, the world market economy and concurrent responses from developing countries are both sides of the same coin. In the age of global economy, the latter must have had various needs for protecting their social conditions as well as reconciling with their own inherent circumstances including 'safety nets'. Inheritors of Marxian economics should be seen, from current viewpoint, to have made a most brutal resolution of these problems.

5. Migration in the market economy

How will international migration work within a current global market economy? What can we learn from the history of a global migration? To some extent, the present situations of international migration have something in common with the cases of hundreds years ago.

In West Asian (the Middle East) countries, for a few decades, demands for labour in the petroleum industry and other related sectors (including the household sector) have attracted a sizable number of labour migrants from their neighbouring countries as well as the South Asian countries. This industry is still a leading one, and many of the concerned countries are Islamic states. Here, labour contracts have a pre-modern character that resembles the former indenture system through which many Asian

“coolies” were exploited. In most cases, temporary workers are tied to a specific employer through a contract. (Weiner, 1995) In accordance with this fact, political systems of host countries are old-fashioned. They prefer Asian labourers to the local Arab people, because Asians complain less than the locals. Thus, the present petroleum industry is much like the former gold industry in South Africa. When considering the situations of South and Southeast Asian countries, inter-regional migration flows increased steeply after 1990. The largest flow of these has been to the Saudi Arabia, the largest oil production country. And, as of now, a remittance flow from this country is the second largest flow of all the money flows that the developing countries received from the world.

There have also been the large remote migration flows within the Asian region, which might have promoted East Asian economic development. Once P. Krugman characterised this Asian recent economic situation as ‘a development by means of perspiration’ similar to the countries of the past socialism. This statement still seems to remain static or on the level of value theory. His thesis should be examined through large flows of migration in recent Asia. When taking a symbolic example, a great number of girls from the countryside are working long days at extremely cheap wages in Special Economic Zones of this area, as if they were unlimited labour sources. F. Engels would be surprised to see this result of a command economy. Young Chinese women there do not know even what the trade union is. Also, a tremendous number of the Asian domestic maids are found all over the developed and developing world. In this region, protection of women against the world market economy would seem to have reasonable grounds. But this role is now no longer played by the developing nation state, not to mention socialist nations.

As a matter of fact, if there is anything that can be of some help for them, it would only be the religious bond put around within a religious world. When they are religiously pious people, religiously organized redis-

tribution system of goods could play the role of sustaining Asian human lives. For example, Islamic credit systems, from which now even the western banking systems are eager to take profits, impressively show this situation.

Thus, what matters most at the moment is as much how a system of labour distribution could work, as how the economic development could be managed.

Asian flows are concurrent with many conflicts of this age, in spite of an optimistic positive appreciation for the 'Bangalore-Silicon Valley linkage' by UNDP. As a result, especially after the Asian crisis, some significant policy changes appeared in related countries, although these concern only unskilled migration for the time being. On the one hand, in receiving countries of the ESCAP region, varying restrictions on the entry of female migrant workers have been a relatively common policy response. (Skeldon, 1999) On the other hand, after the Asian 'crisis', for example in Bangladesh, the recruitment of domestic workers for foreign countries has been banned or become more strictly controlled by the government. These recent phenomena are judged a movement toward 'nationalization of economies'. (Battistella, 1999) In Asia, in effect, controlling migration has, to the some extent, proceeded in response to the increment of labour migration to the oil countries. Besides Bangladesh, meanwhile, other main labour exporting countries including Pakistan and the Philippines have already established the official organisations promoting and controlling international migration. Even China is very eager to export labourers. Although the control of the officials is imperfect, authorities of Asian countries have some power to regulate their labour outflows now.

Although it is possible to guess that the recent moves will reverse in the near future, that might depend on economic situations. We should not abandon economic analyses by identifying the current large flows only as a movement of people from politically unstable countries to

democracies. At any rate, international migration will last. Agreements between countries cannot but help address these flows as much as they have international trade flows and international capital flows. All that we need is to seize the fundamental problem beneath these moves. In using cheap labour flows, the modern world market economy could create the characteristic social organization. One of the largest subjects of the political economics, then, should be to evaluate migration moves and, if required, manage the modern flows of international migration to prevent the tragedies that can ensue. At the very least, if we ignore migration flows in this age of globalisation, we cannot understand the miseries of the present world. Such would mark the end of the political economics.

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