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Migrants: Victims, Villains or Heroes?

Migrants make up a large share of the world's precariat. They are a cause of its growth and in danger of becoming its primary victims, demonised and made the scapegoat of problems not of their making. Yet, with few exceptions, all they are doing is trying to improve their lives.

The term 'migrant' comes with historical baggage and covers a multitude of types of experience and behaviour. Some resemble nomads, moving around with no fixed home, driven or acclimatised to roam, always expecting to settle 'one day'. The authentic nomad did know where he or she was going and why. The modern nomad is more opportunistic. Then there are 'circulants', leaving their home in search of earnings or experience but planning to return sooner rather than later. And there are settler migrants, those who move with the intention of remaining if they can, as well as refugees and asylum seekers.

Having dipped in the mid-twentieth century, when economies were more closed, the mobility of people around the world has soared with globalisation. One billion people cross national borders every year, and the number is rising. According to the International Organisation for Migration, there were 214 million international migrants in the world in 2010, three per cent of the global population. That is probably an underestimate, as undocumented migrants are obviously hard to count. In addition, perhaps 740 million are 'internal' migrants, including the 200 million rural migrants to China's industrial cities who share many of the characteristics of international migrants (House, 2009).

Although documented migration into industrialised countries slowed down after the 2008 financial crisis, until then it had been growing by 11 per cent a year (OECD, 2010a). One in four Australian workers is a migrant, as is one in five Irish workers. In Europe, 12 million European citizens live in an EU country other than their own.

The United States remains the major recipient of migrants. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, over a million 'legal' migrants and perhaps a further half a million 'illegal' migrants entered each year. Today, one in eight people is a migrant, and nearly one in six workers is foreign born, the highest proportion since the 1920s. Carefully erected barriers saw the migrant share of the US workforce dip from a high of 21 per cent in 1910 to 5 per cent in 1970. But, by 2010, it was back to 16 per cent. In California, immigrants account for over one in three workers, and in New York, New Jersey and Nevada, over one in four. Although migrants are mainly in agriculture, construction,

catering, transport and health care, a quarter of highly educated workers with doctorates are foreign born.

Other countries have also become big recipients. By 2000, migrants accounted for over 10 per cent of the population in 70 countries, compared with only 48 countries in 1970. In Germany, 16 million of the country's population of 82 million are of migrant origin. In some cities, more than a third of the residents are immigrants and more than half of them are children. In other European countries too, migrants make up a rising share of the population, partly because of the low fertility rates of nationals. In the United Kingdom, one in every ten people is a migrant and the first decade of the twenty-first century saw the largest in-migration ever experienced. On current trends, the 'white' British could be in a minority in the second half of this century (Coleman, 2010).

Modern migration is not just about moving from poor to rich countries. Roughly a third of the world's migrants have moved from a poor to a rich country, a third have moved from one rich country to another and a third have moved from one poor country to another. Many countries, such as South Africa, experience large flows of out-migration and in-migration simultaneously. Moreover, while the image of migration is still one of settlement, today's migration has seven features that mark out the Global Transformation and fuel the growth of the precariat.

First, a historically high share is undocumented. Many governments have connived in this, claiming they are limiting migration while facilitating the growth of a low-wage disposable labour supply. The United States has the most undocumented migrants, with an estimated 12 million in 2008, up 42 per cent since 2000; over half come from Mexico. The political response has been incoherent. In 2006, the House of Representatives passed a bill making 'illegal migration' a felony, but it failed to pass in the Senate, which tried unsuccessfully to pass a similar bill in 2007. In 2009, two trade unions produced a plan to regularise the situation and launched a campaign for legalisation. This too has run into the ground. Advocates of reform argue that bringing immigrants' shadow economy into the open would raise tax revenue, end abuse of illegal migrants, raise wages all around and boost growth. But the political will to legalise has remained feeble. Too many interests benefit from an army of illegal migrants, and too many populists depict attempts at legalisation as eroding the security of the citizenry.

Undocumented migration has been growing elsewhere as well, with similar posturing and conflicts of interest. Undocumented workers provide cheap labour and can be fired and deported if necessary or if they prove recalcitrant. They do not appear on the payrolls of firms and households, and fade into the nooks and crannies of society when recession hits. Productivity appears to rise wonderfully in a boom, as more are recruited without appearing in the statistics, and employment mysteriously drops less than the drop in output and demand in recessions. They are truly a shadow reserve army.

Second, a rising share of migration consists of ‘circulation’, in contrast to the last peak in migration early in the twentieth century when most migrants were settlers. The modern circulants see themselves as itinerants, moving to take temporary jobs, often with the hope of remitting money to relatives.

A *third* distinctive feature is the feminisation of migration (OECD, 2010b). Women, often moving on their own, make up a greater share of international migrants than at any time in history. They have long comprised a high share of internal migrants, in some countries a majority. There are well-documented sinister trends, with trafficking and prostitution the most conspicuous, and there is the sadness of ‘household care chains’, where women go from villages to towns to abroad, leaving children to be cared for by others. Often in bonded contracts, in debt, they are vulnerable, abused, given no protection and often live a shadowy existence. There has also been an unedifying flow of dubious marriage transfers, with young women given no choice by their families or cultures. However, much of the migration has been like that of men, undertaken in the search for a better life.

A *fourth* feature of the migration induced by globalisation is student mobility. While not new, the mobile student population has grown dramatically and, partly due to counter-terrorism measures, a larger proportion are now going to countries other than the United States. Between 2001 and 2008, the US share of foreign students fell from 28 to 21 per cent, while the number of globally mobile students rose by 50 per cent.

A *fifth* feature is movement within multinational corporations. This too has been practised throughout the ages; it was a feature of the great merchant banks of the Middle Ages, for example. But today it is systemic. It involves most levels, from executives to junior staff. It creates fragmented careers and a heady mix of experience.

A *sixth* feature is more ominous. There have never been anything like as many refugees and asylum seekers as there are today. The modern legal treatment stems from the response to the mass displacement before and during the Second World War, which led to the 1951 UN *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. The problem was regarded as one of short-run adjustment as people were helped back to their countries or enabled to resettle elsewhere. Now, increasing numbers seeking to escape from degradation, oppression and conflict are running up against rising barriers to entry. Many fall into chronic social and economic insecurity.

According to the UN refugee agency, in 2009 there were over 15 million refugees, a majority in Asia and Africa, with another million asylum seekers awaiting decision. And some 27 million people were displaced within their countries as a result of conflict (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2010). Globally, a tragedy has been unfolding. Millions of people are spending years in squalid hostels, detention centres, camps or pieces of wasteland losing their dignity, skills and humanity.

The lofty principle of *non-refoulement* – that no country may send a person back to their homeland if they would face danger – is increasingly abused. In some countries, the average time for processing applications has risen to over 15 years. The plight of those trapped in transit countries, hoping to reach somewhere else where the doors are closed, has worsened. In many countries, where a majority of citizens favour more stringent restrictions on immigration, hostility to refugees and asylum seekers is greater than to more favourably placed economic migrants.

Finally, there is a new migrant group – ‘environmental refugees’. Environmental degradation, including rising sea levels and other manifestations of climate change, could drive 200 million people from their homes by 2050 (Environmental Justice Foundation, 2009). Hurricane Katrina in 2005 induced the largest movement of people in the history of the United States. In two weeks, 1.5 million fled the Gulf coast, three times as many as moved in the Dust Bowl migration of the 1930s. Half the population of New Orleans had not returned five years later. It may be a harbinger of many such events.

In sum, migration is growing and changing character in ways that are intensifying insecurities and putting many more into precarious circumstances. As if that were not enough, there is also a ‘de-territorialisation’ of migration. This is an ungainly term for an ungainly trend. More and more people who ‘look like migrants’ are subject to intrusive scrutiny within national borders, stopped by police and vigilante groups demanding they prove their identity and legality.

The US state of Arizona’s law SB1070 of 2010 has mandated ‘de-territorialisation’; people stopped on suspicion of doing something illegal are required to prove the legality of their migrant status. Defenders of SB1070 claim this is not ‘racial profiling’, but it certainly gives police licence to target people who look like migrants. What is happening in Arizona is happening in much of the world.

The new denizens

Considering the varieties of migrant – nomadic, circulatory, illegal, refugee, settler and so on – leads to a neglected concept with deep historical roots. This is the *denizen*, as distinct from the *citizen*. In the Middle Ages, in England and other European countries, a denizen was an alien who was discretionarily granted by the monarch or ruler some – but not all – rights that were automatically bestowed on natives or citizens. Thus, in return for payment, an alien would be granted ‘letters patent’, enabling him to buy land or practise a trade.

In common law, a denizen was not a full citizen but had a status similar to that of a ‘resident alien’ today; the law followed the ancient Roman idea of granting someone a right to live in a place but not to participate in its political life. Later, the word was to take another connotation, as indicating someone

who frequented a type of place, as with 'nightclub denizens'; it was also used to refer to non-slave blacks in the United States before the abolition of slavery.

All international migrants are denizens, with different groups having some rights – civil, social, political, economic and cultural – but not others. The ongoing construction of an international rights structure means there are varieties of denizen. Beginning with the least secure, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants have civil rights (such as protection against assault) – usually based on the territoriality principle, covering everybody when they are in the country's territory – but no economic or political rights. Slightly more secure are legalised temporary residents, but they too do not have full economic or political rights. Most secure are those who have acquired full citizenship rights by due process. This layered system has emerged in an *ad hoc* way and varies even within a regional bloc such as the European Union.

Denizenship is complicated by dual citizenship and multiple statuses. Migrants may be reluctant to opt for citizenship of the country where they reside or work for fear of losing citizenship of their country of origin. A person may have the right to live in one country but not to take a job there, while having a right to work for wages in another country without a right to take up residence there if not employed. Some jurists refer to this as 'cosmopolitan denizenship' (Zolberg, 1995).

However, the denizen concept is useful in delineating what people can and cannot do in society. The spectrum begins with asylum seekers, who have practically no rights at all. As their numbers rise, governments are making their lives harder. Often, they are humiliated and treated as if they were criminals. Those who can may try to survive by living a precariat existence. Many simply languish, seeing their lives wasting away.

Next are the undocumented migrants, who have civil rights as human beings but lack economic, social or political rights. They usually have no alternative to eking out an existence in the precariat, with many in the shadow economy. In the United States, the millions of undocumented migrants have no right to work for pay but are hired anyway. They live with the threat of deportation and without rights to social protection, such as unemployment benefits. In Spain, millions of undocumented migrants are thought to account for the country's huge shadow economy. The story is probably similar in most countries.

Then there are those granted temporary residence but restricted by their visa status in what they can do legally. They may have some social rights, such as entitlement to enterprise and state benefits, and perhaps entitlement to belong to economic organisations such as trade unions or business associations. But they have limited or no rights to socio-economic mobility and no political rights, giving them little opportunity to integrate into local society. They are classic denizens.

Further along the spectrum are denizens who are granted long-term residence and formally allowed to pursue jobs of their choice. They may be

relatively secure but face structural limitations on economic and social rights, for example, if they possess qualifications that are not recognised in the country. Thus an engineer, an architect or a dentist who qualifies in one country may not be allowed to practise in another, simply because there is no mutual recognition of standards. By such means, millions of qualified migrants are blocked from their occupation and obliged to scramble for lower level 'brain-wasting' jobs in the precariat.

This is due mainly to the way occupational licensing has developed (Standing, 2009). In Germany alone more than half a million immigrants are unable to do jobs for which they are qualified because the state does not recognise their qualifications. But the phenomenon is global. Occupational licensing has been a way of limiting and shaping migration. Anybody going to New York will find migrant lawyers and PhDs driving taxis. In federal countries, such as the United States, Australia and Canada, even people who move from one state or province to another can find themselves as denizens, denied the right to practise their profession or trade. But the denial across national borders is much more systematic. Licensing has been a part of the global labour process, and so far it has been a powerful way of denying economic rights to a growing number of people around the world.

Usually, these same denizens are also statutorily excluded from the civil service and political office, and are more likely to have legal access to self-employment than to jobs. They are susceptible to expulsion for public security reasons, if they do not behave as 'good citizens'. This limits integration, reinforcing their position as 'outsider-inhabitants'. In France and Germany, there is a three-layer system, with full political rights for citizens, partial political rights for citizens of other EU countries and no political rights for third-country (non-EU) nationals. In the United Kingdom, some third-country nationals – from the Commonwealth and Ireland – are included in the first or second groups.

Governments have been increasing the number of conditions necessary to be a legal migrant, in the process putting more people in more precarious denizen statuses. And denizens may have *de jure* rights but be excluded from them *de facto*. Some of the most egregious instances arise in developing countries.

In India, although every Indian is supposed to have equal rights, this is not true in law, policy or practice. For example, urban slum dwellers may after many years obtain a voter's identity and a ration card but may not obtain a right to be linked to the city's water and sewerage system. There are also no rules about how long it will take someone to obtain rights connected to local residency. Migrants within the country do have a right to labour and live elsewhere in India but may be unable to send their children to school or obtain ration cards, since states have different rules on eligibility. Denizenship also maps with informal workers. For example, a home-based worker in an urban slum will not have a right to electricity. A street vendor is treated as a criminal. And 'non-citizens', such as Bangladeshi or Nepali domestic workers, have no rights at all.

Denizenship has grown most in China, where 200 million rural migrants have lost rights in moving to the cities and industrial workshops that serve the world. They are denied the *hukou*, the residence passbook that would give them residence rights and the right to receive benefits and be employed legally in their own country.

Unlike in the early twentieth century, much of today's migration is not assimilation to new citizenship but is more of a *de-citizenship* process. Instead of being settlers, many migrants are denied several forms of citizenship – rights held by local nationals, rights of citizenship from where they come and rights that come with legal status. Many also lack occupational citizenship, with the right to practise their occupation denied. They are also not on a trajectory to gain the rights initially denied to them, making them super-exploitable. And they are not becoming part of a proletariat, a working class of stabilised labourers. They are disposable, with no access to state or enterprise benefits, and can be discarded with impunity, for if they protest the police will be mobilised to penalise, criminalise and deport them.

This highlights the fragmented labour process in which varieties of the precariat have different entitlements and a different structure of social income. It feeds through into the issue of identity. Natives can display multiple identities, legal migrants can focus on the identity that gives them most security and illegals must not display any identity, for fear of being exposed.

Bearing in mind the idea of denizens, we consider how distinctive groups of migrants are being treated and how they figure in the growth of the global precariat.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Let us start with refugees and asylum seekers. An example may bring home their misery. According to a report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (2010), the UK Border Agency (UKBA), in charge of refugees, had a backlog of a quarter of a million asylum cases. Cases remained unresolved for years on end; a Somali granted indefinite leave to remain in 2000 did not receive his documents until 2008. Such people live in the economic shadows, their lives on hold. While languishing in this denizen status, they are granted a miserly £42 a week and not allowed to take jobs, following moves by the Labour government to restrict help for asylum seekers. It is a recipe for a shadow-economy precariat.

Undocumented and illegal migrants

Demonising 'illegal migrants' has become part of the populist reaction to the insecurities visited on the precariat in general. They, rather than labour flexibility policies and shrinking social assistance, are blamed for the tribulations of local

workers. On re-election as Italy's prime minister in 2008, Silvio Berlusconi's first statement was a pledge to defeat 'the army of evil', his term for undocumented migrants. He promptly issued a decree authorising private vigilante groups, which made no pretence about their intended targets. And he expelled Roma from their camps across Italy.

After African migrants in Calabria, in the toe of Italy, went on the rampage in January 2010 in protest at unpaid wages, their makeshift encampments were bulldozed and many were summarily deported. They had been recruited as cheap labour on agricultural estates, controlled by the local mafia, which had simply stopped paying wages after the financial crisis hit. When the Africans protested, possibly instigated by the mafia itself in the expectation of what would follow, they were shot at and beaten by vigilantes, applauded by local residents. The riots followed years of harassment and attacks by local youth. Yet Roberto Maroni, Italy's interior minister, said in an interview that they were the fruit of 'too much tolerance'. Similar attacks on immigrants have been happening all over Italy.

In France, President Nicolas Sarkozy, ironically himself of migrant origin, took up the populist mantra, issuing orders to destroy 'illegal' Roma camps and expel their residents. They were duly sent to Bulgaria and Romania, many swearing to return since they had a legal right to move around the European Union. A leaked memorandum from the interior minister made it clear that Roma were a priority target, in likely violation of the French constitution (Willsher, 2010). The immigration minister, Eric Bosson, told a press conference, 'Free movement in the European area doesn't mean free settlement'. Apparently, migrants were to be kept on the move. What sort of society is this?

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, zealous groups with religious tattoos and T-shirts were arming themselves and manning the Arizona-Mexico border, peering through binoculars to identify scurrying ill-clad desperados, most merely seeking a better life. Some migrants do carry drugs, often forced to do so by people traffickers. Some are 'criminals'; every population group has its share. But demonisation is pervasive. The growth of the migrant precariat in the United States was matched by official commando-style raids on factories suspected of employing 'illegals'. Although President Obama ordered an end to such raids, they could easily return.

The Arizona law of 2010, which made illegal immigration a state misdemeanour as well as a federal civil violation, intensified the tension between migrants and 'native citizens' fearful of joining the precariat. It requires local police, after making 'lawful contact', to check the immigration status of those who cause 'reasonable suspicion' and to arrest them if they lack documents, opening the door to random stopping of Hispanic-looking drivers on minor pretexts. The law led to national protests by Hispanics and sympathisers. But it tapped into a populist nerve, linked to what some have called a 'cultural generation gap', which is thinly veiled racism. In Arizona, 83 per cent of older people are white, but only 43 per cent of children are. Older whites believe they

are paying taxes for children whom they do not recognise as their own. This is fuelling the anti-tax populism of the Tea Party, in which male baby boomers figure prominently. Something similar is happening in Germany, where in many cities migrants already account for a majority of children.

Most Americans appear to support the Arizona law. One national poll produced the following results, showing the percentages in favour of each proposition:

• increasing fines for employers of illegal immigrants	80%
• criminalising employment of illegal immigrants	75%
• requiring police to report illegals to federal government	70%
• National Guard patrols of the Mexican border	68%
• building more border fences	60%
• allowing police to demand proof of migrant status	50%
• excluding illegal immigrant children from school	42%
• requiring churches to report illegal immigrants	37%

In South Africa, an even more ugly development typifies what is happening in many parts of the world. Millions of migrants slip across the borders and make their way to the townships, particularly around Johannesburg. They come from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and elsewhere on the African continent, as well as from Pakistan and other parts of Asia. There may be over 4 million of them. Most have no work visas but have to work. The government makes it hard for them to obtain visas, and thousands travel long distances every day to queue in the hope of acquiring one.

Many young South Africans cannot obtain legal jobs paying legal wages because desperate migrants are obliged to take illegal jobs paying illegal wages without benefits. Their presence lowers the bargaining position of workers in general, swells the precariat, and allows politicians and economists to claim there is massive unemployment and that real wages and labour protections must be lowered. In reality, much of the employment is simply not being measured. Claims that the unemployment rate in South Africa ranges up to 40 per cent are nonsense. However, in May 2008, tensions became explosive and migrants in the townships were savagely attacked. Scores were killed and thousands fled. They were victims in a society that has grown even more unequal since the end of apartheid.

Temporary and seasonal migrants

Many other migrants, despite being legal, are left vulnerable to such an extent that any dispassionate observer would be led to wonder whether it is not

deliberate, to please some local interests, to placate local workers or because they have no political rights and cannot vote. Some recent examples are indicative.

After a number of incidents, notably the deaths of 23 Chinese cockle pickers caught by the tide at Morecambe Bay in February 2004, the UK government set up a Gangmasters Licensing Authority to regulate agency labour. But an enquiry by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, 2010) on meat and poultry processing factories, which employ 90,000 people, showed that the authority was too under-funded to do its job.

In what is by some measures the largest manufacturing sector left in the United Kingdom, the enquiry found appalling working conditions, with workers forced to stand for hours on fast-operating production lines, unable to go for toilet breaks and subject to abuse. Pregnant women were shockingly affected; some had miscarriages and many faced open discrimination. Workers had to put in 16- to 17-hour shifts, with only a few hours sleep in between. In some cases, the agencies entered their homes to wake them early in the morning because supermarkets operating just-in-time ordering practices were leaving orders to the last minute, putting pressure on the factories to have staff on standby.

A third of the labour force comprised agency employees; 70 per cent were migrants from Eastern Europe, with a few from Portugal. Most said employers treated agency workers worse, while British workers were reluctant to work in the sector, deterred by the low wages and poor working conditions. Some British workers told the EHRC that agencies only hired migrants, a practice unlawful under the Race Relations Act. Abuse of agency workers was associated with deliberately lax inspection.

Disappointingly, the EHRC recommended that the industry should improve its practices voluntarily, a bit of wishful thinking; it did not intend to litigate. In other words, the precariat was to be left exposed to abuse. And the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004 does not cover the care and hospitality sectors, where migrants are concentrated in the greatest numbers.

Also in the United Kingdom, in the harsh winter of 2009–10, when many East European migrants were jobless and made homeless by debt, local authorities started to send them home. In Boston in Lincolnshire, migrant agricultural labourers made up a quarter of the population in 2008. When the farm jobs dried up, many returned to their countries but others remained, hoping to find new jobs. They did not qualify for state benefits, notably Jobseeker's Allowance (unemployment benefit), which requires a person to have been employed continuously for at least a year. In the mid-winter, some, homeless and moneyless, resorted to living in makeshift tents. Seeing them as a social sore, with rising morbidity and petty criminality, the government opted to rid the local community of the nomadic labour force. The Boston authorities hired a Pied Piper, in the form of Crime Reduction Initiatives (CRI), an organisation

funded by government and local councils to address the causes of disorder in communities.

The job description for CRI's contract was benign enough – to ascertain if the homeless were eligible for benefits and, if not, to offer them a one-way ticket home. One might ask why the government would use a firm with a crime-fighting title to do such a job. It looked like a step towards privatised policing. The CRI's John Rossington told the press, 'Boston has a problem with rough sleepers, most of whom are from eastern Europe. Almost all these people are unable to receive benefits either because they are not entitled to them or they have lost their papers and cannot verify this. We are encouraging them to come forward so we can establish their situation' (Barber, 2010). CRI made the commercial objective clear, saying repatriation would save money. 'These are people who have no money and are extremely vulnerable, especially if they are living outside in the cold weather. If they end up offending or become ill, they are likely to cost the taxpayer more than a cheap one-way flight to eastern Europe'.

Long-term migrants

In many countries, legally settled migrants have been demonised for cultural reasons. This can easily lead to discriminatory policy and xenophobic violence. We will content ourselves with two poignant examples, albeit indicating wider trends.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Germany welcomed hundreds of thousands of guest workers from Turkey and other parts of southern Europe, needed to provide cheap labour in building the German miracle, as the country's regeneration was dubbed. It was assumed they would go home when their contracts expired. So the state ensured that they did not integrate socially, politically or economically. They were given a special status outside society. But they stayed. This created a basis for animosity; as the German population started to shrink due to its low fertility, populists were able to depict a future of alien population dominance, with images of an Islamic underclass refusing to integrate in German society. First, the state prevented the migrants from integrating; then it blamed them for not being integrated.

In 2000, their children were given the option of taking German citizenship, as long as they did so before they reached the age of 23. This reflected the denizen-citizenship situation, since German nationality law was traditionally based on a person's blood, not place of birth. But the guest-worker system had laid the seeds for tension.

The predicament will be one faced by other European nations. The native German population is shrinking, the total is shrinking, a labour shortage is feared. But only a minority of German voters wish to see 'managed immigration' as a partial solution to the problem (Peel, 2010). An attempt by the pro-business Free Democrats to introduce a points system for bringing in skilled migrants

was blocked by the Christian Democrats, who claimed it was an attempt to bring in cheap labour rather than train local workers. Nevertheless, in 2011, the German borders will be opened freely to workers from Eastern Europe for the first time. Germany already has 2.5 million EU migrants, more than any other EU country.

A 'national integration plan' has expanded language training and teaching Islam is now possible in state schools. But racism is rampant. In 2010, Thilo Sarrazin, a prominent Social Democrat politician, said that Berlin's Turks and Arabs were 'neither willing to integrate nor capable of it'. Opinion polls found that a majority of Germans agreed. Sacked as a member of the Bundesbank board, Sarrazin published an instant bestseller claiming he did not wish his grandchildren to live in a society overrun by an alien culture. To talk of shadows of the past is scarcely an exaggeration.

Now consider what has happened in France. For decades after the Second World War, labour migration was left to private firms, which recruited workers from abroad to plug shortages at home. The period coincided with decolonisation of France's North African possessions, and Maghrebians from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria accounted for a rising share of migrants, reaching 30 per cent by 2005 (Tavan, 2005). For decades, tensions between French citizens and North African migrants were muted. As most of the migrants were young and employed, they were net contributors to the social security system, while French citizens were net beneficiaries. But the state was building a precariat. Migrants' wages are lower than those of French workers and they are more vulnerable to unemployment, partly because they are in low-skilled jobs, such as construction, and more affected by economic fluctuations, partly because of discrimination. Unemployed Maghrebians often do not have the contribution record needed to claim unemployment benefit and are obliged to rely on the means-tested RMI (*Revenu minimum d'insertion*). However, to be eligible for the RMI, housing benefit and health protection, non-French nationals must possess a residence permit and must have lived in France for five years. Many Maghrebians have simply been locked out.

The state had allowed undocumented migration to build up but after 1996 put many immigrants from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa in the awkward status of what they came to call themselves, *sans-papiers* (without papers). Even though they had worked for years in France, suddenly their status was made uncertain if not illegal. The *sans-papiers* organised to contest their outsider status, demanding to have their temporary labour contracts converted into regular contracts. But by this time the state was hostile. While some had their situations 'regularised', thousands were sent back – 29,000 in 2009. In April 2010, the immigration minister announced that *sans-papiers* who asked for regularisation would still be expelled.

Even when they are French citizens, Maghrebians are denizens, having equal rights in law but not in practice. For example, the Labour Code asserts

the principle of equal treatment during employment but does not cover discrimination in recruitment. A study for the Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Commission reported that in Paris people with Maghrebian names were five times less likely to be called for a job interview, and Maghrebian university graduates were three times less likely to be interviewed than their French counterparts (Fauroux, 2005). It was no surprise that the riots in the *banlieues* (high-rise housing estates in the suburbs) in late 2005 were led by second-generation Maghrebians let down by a system that proclaimed their equality but engendered their precarity.

These examples – both involving Muslims, in the heart of Europe – show how once-welcomed migrants can become demonised outsiders even after they have put down deep roots. They are being re-marginalised.

The precariat as a floating reserve

The Great Recession following the shock of 2008 could have been expected to alter migrant flows, but in a global economy what happens is not easy to predict. For instance, return migration from the United Kingdom was considerable in 2009; the number of registered workers from the new EU member nations in Eastern Europe dropped by over 50 per cent. It was forecast that 200,000 skilled workers would return from industrialised countries to India and China over the next five years. But at the same time a remarkable shift was taking place.

As the recession deepened, the share of total employment taken by migrants *rose* sharply. Businesses continued to hire foreigners even as unemployment rose. The number of people in employment born in the United Kingdom fell by 654,000 between late 2008 and late 2010 while the number of migrants in employment rose by 139,000. This may have partly reflected the sectoral nature of job cuts, since old industries where the local working class and lower level salariat were concentrated were badly hit. It also reflected a tendency for firms to use recessions to rid themselves of older and more costly long-term employees. And it reflected a rise in labour churning and the greater ease in shifting to lower cost temporaries and those paid ‘off the books’. With a global flexible labour process, old queuing mechanisms and the LIFO (‘last-in, first-out’) system have broken down. Recessions now accelerate the trend towards precariat labour, favouring employment of those most resigned to accept lower wages and fewer benefits.

The substitution of migrants has happened even though many have been sent or transported home, often at a cost borne by governments. Spain and Japan have offered cash incentives for immigrants to leave. The United Kingdom has paid for one-way tickets home. But governments trying to curb migration have run up against resistance from business interests.

While politicians may posture as favouring limits on migration and sending migrants 'back', business wants them for their cheap labour. In Australia, a survey found that companies were refusing to retrench visa-holding skilled migrants rather than local workers. They were paying migrants less than half what they were paying, or would have had to pay, local workers. In the end, the Labour government sided with business in accepting that firms no longer had to give preference to Australian workers (Knox, 2010).

In European countries such as France and Italy, with their low fertility rates and ageing populations, business organisations have been equally opposed to migration curbs, especially on skilled labour. In the United Kingdom, multinational companies have lobbied the Coalition government to retract its plans to cap the numbers of skilled migrants from outside the European Union coming into the country. Unedifying ideas of auctioning limited work permits were mooted.

In Japan, while some politicians have become more stridently anti-migrant and nationalistic, businesses have welcomed South Koreans, Brazilians of Japanese stock and Chinese bonded labourers. In the United States, where, in 2005, undocumented migrants were estimated to comprise half of all farm labourers, a quarter of workers in the meat and poultry industry and a quarter of dishwashers, business has favoured legalisation and opposed expulsions (Bloomberg Businessweek, 2005).

Capital welcomes migration because it brings low-cost malleable labour. The groups most vehemently opposed to migration are the old (white) working class and lower middle class, squeezed by globalisation and falling into the precariat.

From queuing to hurdles?

Traditionally, migrants were seen as entering a queue for vacant jobs. That was a reasonably accurate image in the pre-globalisation era. But queuing no longer operates, mainly due to labour market and social protection reforms.

In flexible labour markets with porous borders, wages are driven down to levels only migrants will willingly accept, below what residents habituated to a higher standard of living could tolerate. In the United Kingdom, falling wages and worsening conditions in the care, hospitality and agricultural sectors where migrants are concentrated have intensified downward pressure in other sectors. Prime Minister Gordon Brown's jingoistic rhetoric in 2007 – 'British jobs for British workers' – changed nothing; indeed, in-migration increased. A more inequalitarian society, combined with a cheap migrant labour regime, enabled the affluent to benefit from low-cost nannies, cleaners and plumbers. And access to skilled migrants lessened pressure on firms to train the unemployed in manual skills, leaving locals at a further disadvantage.

Another reason for the breakdown of queuing was the dismantling of the labourist social security system. As governments rushed to replace social insurance by social assistance, long-term citizens found themselves disadvantaged in accessing benefits and social services. This has probably done more than anything to fan resentment of migrants and ethnic minorities, particularly in decaying urban areas that had been strongholds of the working class. While some of its own members blamed the Labour Party's loss in the United Kingdom's 2010 General Election to its failure to reach out to the white working class over immigration, they failed to see, or did not wish to acknowledge, that the means-testing system they themselves had built was the main problem.

Means testing destroyed a pillar of the welfare state. A social insurance-type system based on entitlements gained through labour-based contributions rewards those who have been in the system for a long time. If benefits and access to social services are determined by proof of financial need, then those who have contributed will lose out to those, such as migrants, who are demonstrably worse off. For the withering 'working class', this is perceived as unfair. So it is ironic that in the United Kingdom and elsewhere social democratic governments were the ones moving policy in that direction.

In the United Kingdom, the shift to means testing helped accelerate the break-up of working-class extended families, as the pioneering study of the East End of London by Dench, Gavron and Young (2006) demonstrated. Incoming Bangladeshi migrants, being the poorest, went to the front of the queue for council housing, while old working-class families were bumped down the list and were obliged to move away to find cheaper housing.

Migrants also inadvertently contribute to other social problems. They are under-recorded in censuses, which leads to a significant population under-count in areas where they are concentrated, resulting in under-funding from central government for schools, housing and so on. In 2010, on some estimates, there may have been over 1 million people living in the United Kingdom 'illegally'.

As queuing mechanisms have ceased to function, countries are seeking other ways to manage migration. Some operate complex schemes to select occupations deemed to have shortages. Until 2010, Australia had 106 'occupations in demand'. This was changed to a 'more targeted' list, designed to focus on health care, engineering and mining. Such measures do not work well. In the United Kingdom, Tier 1 visas are granted to migrants deemed to possess 'high skills' in short supply. Yet, in 2010, at least 29 per cent of Tier 1 visa holders were identified as doing unskilled jobs (UKBA, 2010), part of a 'brain-wasting' process.

It has also become harder to gain UK citizenship. In 2009, modelled on an Australian scheme, the United Kingdom outlined plans to make immigrants 'earn' a passport by accumulating points, through voluntary work, speaking English, paying taxes, having useful skills and being prepared to live in parts of

the country where there is a perceived shortage of skills. Moving to a points-based system, rather than giving an automatic right to citizenship for anyone who had lived in the country for five years without a criminal record, meant the government could alter the hurdles as it chose. A Home Office source said, 'We are going to be tougher about people becoming citizens. There won't be an automatic right any longer, and the link between work and citizenship is effectively broken' (Hinsliff, 2009).

This is converting migrants into permanent denizens, more primed for the precariat. The UK Labour government was also planning a points-based system for temporary migrants, restricting work permits for those from outside the European Union and taking some occupations off the list of those deemed to have shortages. In 2010, the new Coalition government tightened the process even further.

In sum, because the old queuing system has dissolved, and because governments cannot or do not wish to reverse the labour market reforms they have instituted, they have increasingly sought to raise barriers to entry, make the denizen status of migrants more precarious and encourage or oblige them to leave when no longer needed. This opens up some ugly possibilities.

Migrants as cheap labour in developing countries

Your labour is glorious and deserves respect from all society.

Wen Jiabao, Chinese Prime Minister, June 2010

To die is the only way to testify that we ever lived. Perhaps for the Foxconn employees and employees like us – we who are called *nongmingong*, rural migrant workers, in China – the use of death is simply to testify that we were ever alive at all, and that while we lived, we had only despair.

Chinese worker blog, after the twelfth suicide leap at Foxconn

National capitalism was built on rural-urban migration, led by the exodus from the English countryside into the mills and factories but repeated across the world in slightly different forms. In today's industrialising economies, governments have facilitated the movement by setting up export processing zones in which labour regulations are loosened, union bargaining restricted, temporary contracts are the norm and subsidies are thrown at firms. That story is well known. What is less appreciated is how the greatest migration in history is being organised to accelerate and restructure *global* capitalism.

Global capitalism has been built on migrant labour, first in what used to be called the NICs (newly industrialising countries). In the 1980s, I recall many visits to the export processing zones of Malaysia to factories run by some of the great names of global capital, such as Motorola, Honda and Hewlett

Packard. It was not a proletariat being formed but a temporary precarious labour force. Thousands of young women from the *kampongs* (villages) were housed in shabby hostels, labouring for incredibly long workweeks and then expected to leave after several years, once their health and capacities had deteriorated. Many left with poor eyesight and chronic back problems. Global capitalism was built on their backs.

That system still operates in the latest batch of emerging market economies, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Thailand. It embraces international migrants as well. Thus, in Thailand, in 2010, there were 3 million migrants, mostly undocumented, many from Myanmar (Burma). Following tensions, the government launched a registration scheme, ordering migrants to apply to their country of origin for special passports so that they could labour legally and, in principle, have access to state benefits and services. Those from Myanmar did not wish to return there, fearing they would be unable to leave again. So most who did register were from Laos and Cambodia. Failure to register by the deadline meant arrest and deportation. In practice, this was not systematic since Thai companies depended on migrant labour to do low-paid jobs and did not want millions kicked out. But, according to Human Rights Watch (2010), even legal migrants suffer terrible abuses, being at the mercy of employers, not allowed to form or join unions, not allowed to travel freely, often not paid their wages, subject to summary dismissal and abused by officials supposedly protecting them.

These are labour market realities in emerging market economies. Although campaigns and international agencies could do more to rectify them, they will continue. However, most relevant for understanding the shaping of the global precariat are developments in the economy that is rapidly becoming the world's largest.

The Chinese state has shaped a denizen labour force unlike anything else ever created. It has a working-age population of 977 million, which will rise to 993 million by 2015. Some 200 million are rural migrants lured to the new industrial workshops where Chinese and foreign contractors act as intermediaries of household-name multinational corporations from all over the world. These migrants are the engine of the global precariat, denizens in their own country. Because they are unable to obtain the *hukou* residence permit, they are forced to live and work precariously, denied the rights of urban natives. The state is riding a tiger. For two decades it fashioned this flexible labour force of young migrants, treating them as disposable, subsidised by their rural families and expected to slink back after their most productive years have passed. There have been historical parallels, but they are minor compared with the vastness of what has been done in China.

After the shock of 2008, which hit Chinese exports, 25 million migrants were retrenched, although they did not appear in the unemployment statistics because, being 'illegal' in their own country, they had no access to

unemployment benefits. Many returned to their villages. Others took wage cuts and lost factory benefits. Resentment built up; thousands of local protests and strikes – over 120,000 in one year – were kept out of public knowledge; stress deepened.

As the economy rebounded, the state tried to let out some of the pressure. It stood by while some very public strikes occurred in foreign-owned factories, a change of stance interpreted by many foreign observers as a turning point. This may be wishful thinking. The rural areas still contain 40 per cent of China's labour force – 400 million languishing in dismal conditions, many waiting to be drawn into the precariat. Even if there were no rapid rise in productivity in those industrial workshops, which is most unlikely, a supply of labour will be there for many years. By the time the surplus dries up and wages rise in China and in other emerging market economies in Asia, the downward effects on wages and labour conditions in today's rich tertiary societies, mainly in Europe and North America, will have been completed.

Some commentators believe that what we may call the 'precariat phase' of Chinese development is coming to an end because the number of young workers, the main group of temporary denizens, is declining. To put such claims in perspective, there will still be over 200 million Chinese aged 15 to 29 in 2020, and five out of every six rural workers under the age of 40 still say they would be prepared to migrate for those temporary jobs.

China's migrant labour conditions are not accidental. International brands adopted unethical purchasing practices, resulting in substandard conditions in their supply chains. Walmart, the world's largest retailer, sources US\$30 billion of cheap goods from these supply chains annually, which helped Americans to live beyond their means. Other companies were able to flood the world market with their artificially cheap gadgets. Local contractors have used abusive illegal methods to raise short-term efficiency, generating workplace grievances and resistance. Local Chinese officials, in collusion with enterprise management, have systematically neglected workers' rights, resulting in misery and deeper inequalities.

Despite the growing tensions, the *hukou* registration system has been maintained. Millions of urban residents remain denizens, lacking entitlement to schooling, health care, housing and state benefits. Although the first nine years of schooling are supposed to be free for all, migrants are forced to send their children to private schools or send them home. Because annual school payments can be equivalent to several weeks' wages, millions of children of migrants stay in the countryside, rarely seeing their parents.

Reform of the *hukou* rules is slow in coming. In 2009, the city of Shanghai declared that henceforth seven years of employment in the city would entitle someone to a *hukou*, as long as they had paid tax and social security contributions. However, migrants lacking a *hukou* mostly have inadequate contracts and do not pay tax or contribute to welfare funds. Only 3,000 of

Shanghai's millions of migrants were expected to qualify for a *hukou* under the new rule.

Meanwhile, migrants maintain a link to the countryside because it provides some security, including rights to a homestead and to farm a small plot. This is why millions flock out of cities around Chinese New Year, returning to their villages to be with relatives, to renew connections and to tend land. The tension of being a floating worker was epitomised by a survey by Renmin University in 2009, which showed that a third of young migrants aspired to build a house in their village rather than buy one in a city. Only 7 per cent identified themselves as city people.

The migrants' denizen status is strengthened by the fact that they cannot sell their land or homes. Their rural anchor blocks them from acquiring roots in urban areas and prevents rural productivity and incomes from rising through land consolidation. The rural areas provide a subsidy for industrial labour, making it possible to keep money wages below subsistence level, so making those fancy commodities even cheaper for the world's consumers. Land reform has been under consideration. But the Communist Party has been fearful of the consequences. After all, when the global crisis hit, the rural system acted as a safety valve, with millions returning to the land.

The Chinese precariat is easily the largest such group in the world. Earlier generations of social scientists would have called them semi-proletarian. But there is no reason to think they are becoming proletarians. First, stable jobs would have to come and stay. That is unlikely and surely will not come before social tensions turn ugly.

Already, while the authorities are organising mass migration, the floating labour force has posed a threat to locals, creating ethnic tensions. An example was the government-organised transportation of Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighurs 3,000 miles to labour for the Xuri toy factory in Guangdong. The Uighurs, housed near the Han majority, were paid much less than the Hans they displaced. In June 2009, in riots over the alleged rape of a local woman, a Han mob killed two Uighurs. When news was relayed to the north-western province of Xinjiang, the Uighurs' home, street protests erupted in Urumqi, its capital, resulting in many deaths.

The toy-factory incident was a spark. For years, the government has moved people from low-income areas to the wealthy eastern provinces buoyed by export-led growth. Over 200,000 from Xinjiang moved in just one year, signing one- to three-year contracts before travelling to live in cramped humid factory dormitories. They were participating in an extraordinarily rapid process. Industrial estates sprouted almost overnight. That toy factory had been an orchard just three years before. The migrants were an instant community. Symbolically, situated at the base of an electricity pylon outside the factory gate was a giant TV screen, sponsored by Pepsi, where hundreds gathered every night to watch *kung fu* films after their shifts.

Placating an itinerant labour force is hard enough. But the scale of the movement was bound to raise tensions. As one Han worker told a journalist, 'The more of them there were, the worse relations became'. In those riots, the Uighurs claimed their death toll was understated and that the police did not protect them. Whatever the truth, the violence was an almost inevitable outcome of mass migration of temporary workers across unfamiliar cultures.

The internal migration in China is the largest migratory process the world has ever known. It is part of the development of a global labour market system. Those migrants are having an effect on how labour is being organised and compensated in every part of the world.

The emerging labour export regimes

An early feature of globalisation was that a few emerging market economies, notably in the Middle East, became magnets for migration from other parts of the world. In 2010, 90 per cent of the labour force of the United Arab Emirates was foreign; in Qatar and Kuwait, over 80 per cent; and in Saudi Arabia, 50 per cent. In downturns, the authorities instruct firms to fire foreigners first. In Bahrain, where foreigners hold 80 per cent of private sector jobs, the government charges 200 Bahraini dinars (US\$530) for a work visa and 10 dinars a month for each foreign employee. Since 2009, it has allowed foreigners to quit their sponsoring employer, giving them four weeks to find a new job before they must leave Bahrain.

This form of migration has spread, so that groups from the poorest countries can be found labouring in discomfort and oppression in countries higher up the income spectrum. In the process, millions of migrants labouring as anything from nannies and dishwashers to plumbers and dockworkers are sending more money to low-income countries than is going in official aid. The World Bank estimated that foreign workers sent US\$328 billion from richer to poorer countries in 2008, three times what all OECD countries sent in aid. India alone received US\$52 billion from its diaspora.

However, a new phenomenon has emerged, in the form of the organised mass transfer of workers from China, India and other Asian market economies. Historically, this sort of practice was a trickle, with governments and companies sending a few people to work abroad for a short time. In the early globalisation era, much was made of the organised export of Filipina maids and related workers, usually with personal bonds to ensure their return. Today, 9 million Filipinos work abroad, about a tenth of the Philippines population; their remittances make up 10 per cent of the country's gross national product (GNP). Other countries took note.

Led by China, governments and their major enterprises are organising the systematic export of temporary workers in their hundreds of thousands. This 'labour export regime' is helping to transform the global labour market. India is doing it in different ways. The result is that armies of labourers are being mobilised and moved around the world.

China has taken advantage of its combination of large state corporations with access to financial capital and a huge supply of workers resigned to labour for a pittance. In Africa, China is operating a variant of the Marshall Plan, adopted by the United States to assist Western Europe recover from the devastation of the Second World War. Beijing provides low-cost loans to African governments to build infrastructure needed for Chinese factories. It then imports Chinese workers to do much of the labour.

China has been winning contracts elsewhere too, using its own workers to do construction jobs building power plants, factories, railroads, roads, subway lines, convention centres and stadia. By the end of 2008, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, 740,000 Chinese were employed abroad officially, in countries as diverse as Angola, Indonesia, Iran and Uzbekistan. The number is growing. Chinese project managers report they prefer Chinese workers because they are easier to manage, according to Diao Chunhe, director of the China International Contractors' Association. Perhaps frighten is a better word than manage.

Chinese labour brokers are also thriving. Following a 2007 deal between the Chinese and Japanese governments, large numbers of young Chinese workers have been induced to pay brokers large fees and, once transported to Japan, are obliged to guarantee further payments when they start earning. Lured by the promise of 'learning' skills on a scheme approved by their government, the bonded migrants are labouring in virtual slavery in the food processing, construction, and garment and electrical manufacturing firms in which they are concentrated (Tabuchi, 2010). They are forced to work long workweeks for sub-minimum wages in a country where their presence is resented and where they can expect no institutional support in the face of a disregard for regulations.

Many are isolated, ending up in distant regions, living in company dormitories, forbidden from going far from their workplaces, unable to speak Japanese. The bonded labour trap means they fear being sent back before they earn enough to pay off their debts to the brokers, equivalent to over a year's salary. Unless they can repay, they risk losing their one possession, their home in China, often advanced as security when they took the bait. Although some may gain skills, most are in the global precariat, a source of insecure labour that acts as a lever to lower standards for others.

Japan is not a solitary case. Of all places, given its iconic status for social democrats, Sweden found itself the centre of critical attention in mid-2010 when it was revealed that thousands of Chinese, Vietnamese and Bangladeshi

migrants had been brought in, many on tourist visas, to labour in the forests of northern Sweden picking wild cloudberries, blueberries and lingonberries for use in cosmetics, pharmaceutical syrups and nutritional supplements. Wages and working conditions for pickers are notoriously bad, and firms were using contractors to bring in Asians *en masse*. It emerged that they were being crowded into squalid dwellings lacking basic sanitation, without warm clothes or blankets for freezing night conditions. When some were not even paid their wages, they resorted to locking up bosses, bringing attention to their plight.

The Swedish Migration Board admitted it had issued work permits to 4,000 Asians but said it could not follow up on abuses because it had no authority to do so. The Municipal Workers' Union, *Kommunal*, won entitlement to organise the pickers but admitted that it could not reach agreement with the companies because the staffing agencies were in Asia. The government took a similar view (Saltmarsh, 2010). A spokesman for the migration ministry claimed, 'It is difficult for the government to act on contracts signed abroad'. Or was it a case of middle-class Swedes wanting their berries?

These are skirmishes in a bigger picture. The labour export regime could be a harbinger of the global labour system to come. It is leading to protests and violence against Chinese workers and efforts by countries such as Vietnam and India to reform labour laws to restrict the number of Chinese workers. And it is hard to deny that the Chinese are taking jobs from locals, staying after their contractual period and sequestering themselves in enclaves, similar to US military communities around the world.

Although Vietnam bans the import of unskilled workers and requires foreign contractors to hire Vietnamese for civil works projects, 35,000 Chinese workers are in the country. Many are cloistered in dingy dormitories where Chinese firms have won government contracts (Wong, 2009), bypassing the regulations by paying bribes. There are entire villages occupied by Chinese migrants. In a construction site at the port of Haiphong, a Chinatown has sprung up, with dormitory compounds, restaurants, massage parlours and so on. One installation manager summed it up, 'I was sent here, and I'm fulfilling my patriotic duty'. Chinese workers are segregated by occupational groups, such as welders, electricians and crane operators. A poem on a door of one of the dormitories reads, 'We are all people floating around in the world. We meet each other, but we never really get to know each other'. One could scarcely imagine a more poignant message from the global precariat.

Anger erupted in 2009 when the Vietnamese government gave a contract to China's Aluminum Corp to mine bauxite, using Chinese workers. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the 98-year-old icon of the Vietnam War, sent three public letters to party leaders in protest at the growing Chinese presence. In response to unrest, the government detained dissidents, shut down critical blogs and ordered newspapers to stop reporting on the use of Chinese labour. It also made a show of tightening visa and work permit requirements and, in a populist

gesture, deported 182 Chinese workers from a cement plant. However, it could not be too strident, for it too has been building a labour export regime. With 86 million people, its potential to do so is large. Already half a million Vietnamese are working abroad in fourteen countries, according to the Vietnamese General Confederation of Labour.

When Laos won its bid to host the South-East Asian Games, China offered to build a 'natatorium' outside the capital Vientiane in return for a 50-year lease on 1,600 hectares of prime land, where China's Suzhou Industrial Park Overseas Investment Company wished to build factories. Protests erupted when it became known that the company was bringing in 3,000 Chinese labourers to do the building work. The land leased out was subsequently cut to 200 hectares. But the wedge had been inserted.

There is a more sinister element in this labour export regime. China has the world's largest prison population, estimated at around 1.6 million in 2009. The government allows firms to use prisoners as labour on infrastructure projects across Africa and Asia, as exemplified by the use of thousands of convicts in Sri Lanka (Chellaney, 2010). China has established itself as the world's leading dam builder, and its special precariat workforce has been part of that endeavour. Convicts are freed on parole for such projects and used as short-term labourers, without any prospect of 'career'. While they reduce the chances of jobs coming the way of locals, no doubt they are 'easier to manage'.

China is moving its export labour regime into Europe. In the aftermath of the financial crisis, it has taken advantage of its huge foreign exchange reserves to buy up depressed assets on the fringes of Europe, focusing on ports in Greece, Italy and elsewhere, and providing billions of dollars to finance public infrastructure projects using Chinese firms and workers. In 2009, China outbid European firms to build a highway in Poland using Chinese workers and European subsidies.

India is also moving into the pool. More than 5 million Indians are working abroad, 90 per cent of them in the Persian Gulf. In 2010, the Indian government announced plans for a contribution-based 'return and resettlement fund' for overseas workers that would provide benefits on their return. It has also set up an Indian Community Welfare Fund to provide emergency aid to 'distressed' workers in seventeen countries. This is a parallel social protection system, a dangerous precedent. The fund supports welfare measures, including food, shelter, repatriation assistance and relief. These workers are not among India's poorest, even if they are exploited and oppressed. The scheme is a subsidy to risk-taking workers and to countries employing them. It reduces pressure on governments to provide migrants with social protection while making it cheaper for firms to use Indian labour. What would be the consequences if many countries followed the Indian example?

India has negotiated social security agreements with Switzerland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, and is in negotiations with other nations

with a large immigrant Indian workforce. Agreements covering recruitment practices, terms of employment and welfare have been reached with Malaysia, Bahrain and Qatar. This is part of the global labour process. It seems fraught with moral and immoral hazards.

The millions of migrants drawn into labour export regimes are part of foreign and trade policy. They lower costs of production and facilitate a flow of capital into the sending countries in the form of remittances. They are an extraordinarily cheap labour source, which operates like a colossal precariat and drives host-country labour markets in similar directions. If it is found in Vietnam, Uganda, Laos, Sweden and elsewhere, we should recognise we are seeing a global phenomenon that is growing very rapidly indeed. Labour export regimes are leveraging labour conditions in recipient countries. Migrants are being used to accentuate the growth of the global precariat.

Concluding reflections

Migrants are the light infantry of global capitalism. Vast numbers vie with each other for jobs. Most have to put up with short-term contracts, with low wages and few benefits. The process is systemic, not accidental. The world is becoming full of denizens.

The spread of the nation state made 'belonging to the community into which one is born no longer a matter of course and not belonging no longer a matter of choice' (Arendt, [1951] 1986: 286). Today's migrants are rarely stateless in a *de jure* sense; they are not expelled from humanity. But they lack security and opportunity for membership of countries to where they move. More are 'de-citizenised', *de facto* denizens, even in their own country, as in China.

Many migrants are 'barely tolerated guests' (Gibney, 2009: 3). Some observers (such as Soysal, 1994) believe that differences in the rights of citizens and non-citizens have waned, due to post-national human rights norms. But more see a growing gap between formal legal entitlements and societal practices (e.g. Zolberg, 1995). What we can say is that in a flexible open system, two meta-securities are needed for the realisation of rights – basic income security and Voice security. Denizens lack Voice. Except when desperate, they keep their heads down, hoping not to be noticed as they go about their daily business of survival. Citizens have the priceless security of not being subject to deportation or exile, although there have been worrying slips even there. They may enter and leave their country; denizens are never sure.

The combination of a precariat made up of migrants, a tax-based social assistance system and a taxation system that places most emphasis on income tax levied mainly on those around the median income accentuates hostility towards migrants and 'foreigners'. The structure that leaves taxpayers feeling they are paying the bills for poor migrants means tensions cannot be dismissed

as racial prejudice. They reflect abandonment of universalism and social solidarity.

Tensions are growing. According to a 2009 poll in six European countries and the United States, the United Kingdom was most hostile to migrants, with nearly 60 per cent believing they took jobs from natives. This compared with 42 per cent of Americans, 38 per cent of Spaniards, 23 per cent of Italians and 18 per cent of French. In the Netherlands a majority believed migrants increased crime. The United Kingdom had the highest share (44 per cent) of people saying that *legal* immigrants should not have an equal right to benefits, followed by Germany, the United States, Canada, the Netherlands and France. Polls in 2010 showed a worsening set of attitudes everywhere.

In rich OECD countries, migration involves a special precarity trap. Real wages and jobs with career potential are declining, creating a status frustration effect. Those becoming unemployed face the prospect of jobs offering lower wages and less occupational content. It is unfair to criticise them for resenting this or being reluctant to give up on long-acquired skills and expectations. Meanwhile, migrants come in from places where they had lower income and expectations, making them more prepared to accept part-time, short-term and occupationally restrictive jobs. Politicians play the populist card, blaming the outcome on the laziness of locals, thereby justifying both tighter controls on migration and bigger benefit cuts for the unemployed. This demonises two groups that will please the middle class, displaying the modern utilitarians at their most opportunistic. It is not 'laziness' or migration that is at fault; it is the nature of the flexible labour market.

Instead, migrants in public discourse are increasingly displayed as 'dirty, dangerous and damned'. They 'bring in' diseases and alien habits, are a threat to 'our jobs and way of life', are trafficked 'ruined victims', prostitutes or sad spectacles of humanity. The outcome of these crude attitudes is more border guards and harder conditions for entry. We see the latter in points systems and puerile citizenship tests being adopted in some countries. Rogue traits of a few are displayed as normal tendencies against which the state must take the utmost precautions. Increasingly, migrants are guilty until they can prove innocence.

In the background, what has been happening is a sharpening of hostility fanned by populist politicians and fears that the Great Recession is turning into long-term decline. We shall come back to that once we have considered one other aspect of the precariat, its loss of control of time.