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Leveraging Return Migration for Development: The Role of Countries of Origin

A Literature Review

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Leveraging Return Migration for Development: The Role of Countries of Origin

A Literature Review^{*}

Priyanka Debnath[†]

Abstract

Return migration is an integral and significant element in the cycle of international migration. In recent years, it has received increased focus from host and origin countries because both groups are interested in leveraging return migration to their economic advantage. Despite this growing attention, limited research has been conducted to understand the decision-making dynamics behind migrants' returning to their home countries and the effectiveness of policies and programs in their reintegration process. The objective of this paper is to provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the contribution of the returnees to their origin countries and the roles that countries of origin can play in facilitating return migration for their economic development.

The review reveals that returnees contribute to their countries of origin in a number of ways including bringing their human capital and skillset acquired in host countries, investing in local economies with their remittances and wealth accumulated while abroad, utilizing their transnational linkages to facilitate innovative business partnerships and ventures between the host and origin countries and acting as social change makers in their home countries. The policies in the countries of origin play a crucial role in providing enabling factors that could better leverage and amplify these contributions by diasporas and returnee migrants. This paper showcases some of those origin country policies including establishing dedicated agencies to help returnees reintegrate into the home societies, amending national laws to allow for dual citizenships and/or relaxing restrictions on investment by diaspora communities, giving incentives for returnee entrepreneurs, establishing dedicated programs geared towards attracting high-skilled returnees, establishing forums aimed at promoting ties between origin and migrants abroad.

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1. Introduction

Return migration is an integral and significant element in the cycle of international migration. In recent years, it has received increased focus from host and origin countries because both groups are interested in leveraging return migration to their economic advantage. Despite this growing attention, there are severe gaps in the return migration literature, including limited research conducted to understand the decision-making dynamics behind migrants' returning to their home countries and the effectiveness of the policies and programs for their reintegration. This discussion is further complicated by the absence of consistent, universally accepted definitions of the terms *return migration* and *returnees*. This definition confusion occurs partly because of the presence of differing types of scholarly perspectives (schools of thought), coupled with politicization of international migratory movements, that have defined the lenses through which return migration and returnees are viewed. Furthermore, ease of communication and reduced travel times have transformed human mobility into a complex, multidirectional phenomenon, thus making return not necessarily the final stage in the migration process.

The objective of this paper is to provide a literature review on the theme of return migration and development. The review is intended to enhance the understanding of the impacts of return migration and reintegration into countries of origin, and the roles that these countries can play in leveraging this return to strengthen their economic development.

The review is structured into five main parts. First, it begins by discussing the conceptual approaches to return migration—how does the literature define and analyze the concept of return migration? Second, it examines the determinants of return migration. Third, the paper discusses the various ways in which returnees and diaspora communities contribute to the development of their home countries. Fourth, it provides an account of the various policies that countries of origin implement to foster return migration and better leverage the contributions made by returnees. Finally, the paper concludes with a critical discussion of the gaps in the existing literature along with identification of areas for future research.

It is important to note that this review is based on the literature related to return migration of skilled migrants into their countries of origin.

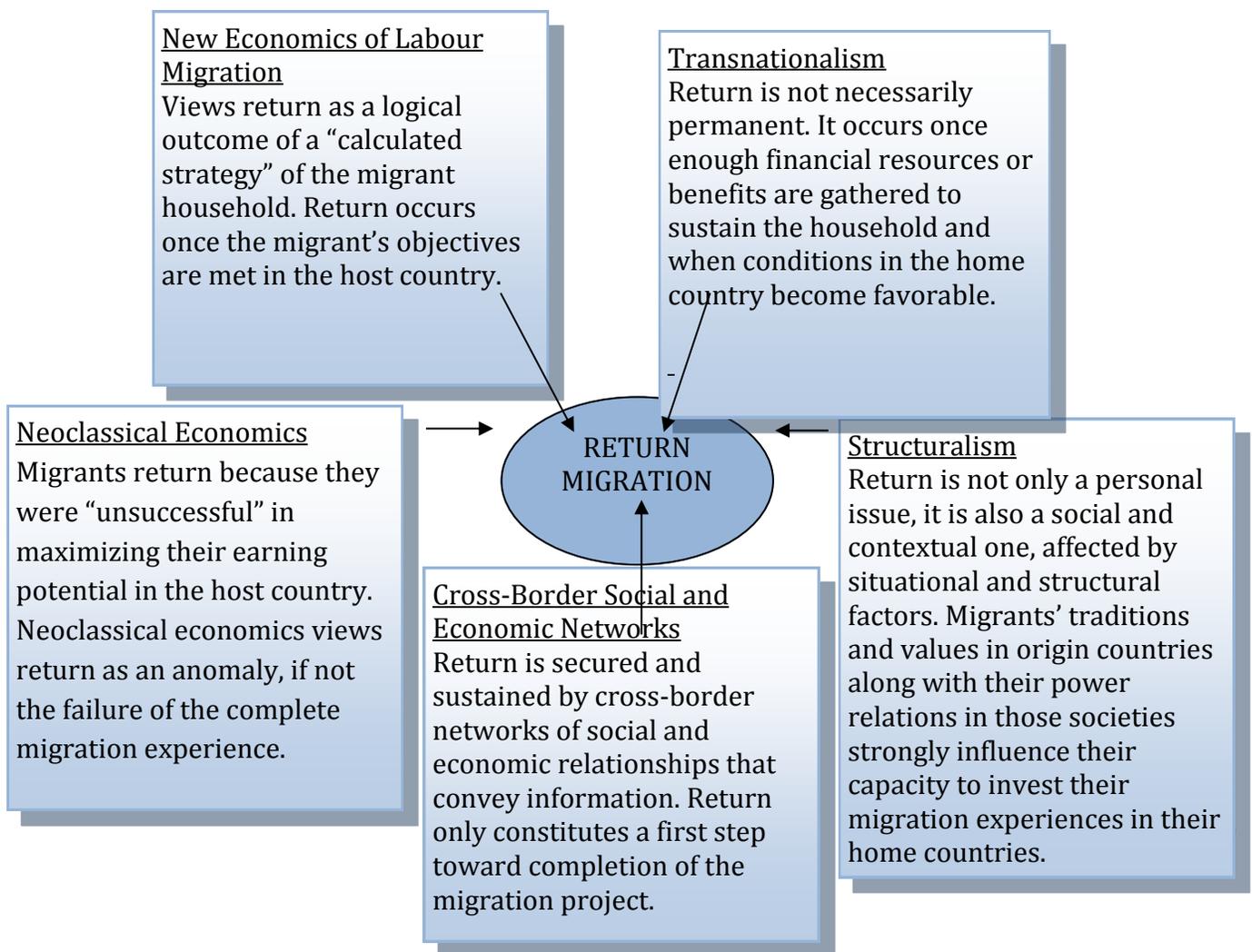
2. Theoretical Evolution of the Concept of Return Migration

Important challenges are associated with both defining and measuring the term *return migration* as well as those who are classified as *returnees*. Definitions of these terms by various international organizations are relatively broad and often fall short in addressing the more complex, yet increasingly prevalent situations such as secondary or repeat migration, temporary or definitive return, and so on. For instance, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM's) definition of return migration refers to "the movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country. This return may or may not be voluntary. Return migration includes voluntary repatriation" (IOM 2004, 56). Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines returning migrants "as persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another

country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year” (OECD 1998, page unspecified).

The use of the term *return migration* has evolved over the years and has been shaped both by scholarly perspectives and by the politics behind the emigration and immigration policies of the countries of origin and destination, respectively. Cassarino (2004) highlights the five key theories that have influenced the theoretical understanding of return migration over time. Figure 1 describes how these dominant theories—neoclassical economics, the new economics of labour migration, structuralism, transnationalism, and cross-border social and economic networks—drive return migration.

Figure 1: Conceptual Approaches to Return Migration



Source: Cassarino 2004.

Given the lack of universally adopted definitions of return migration and returnees, coupled with an absence of reliable data collection mechanisms, it is not surprising that no accurate global estimate of return rates is available. However, a 2008 study based on data from several OECD countries indicates that roughly two migrants in five will leave the host OECD country within five years of arrival (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). However, this estimate varies substantially by host country, origin country and the category of migrants. According to Dumont and Spielvogel (2008), migrant return rates to OECD countries are overall twice as much as those observed toward developing countries.

3. Determinants of Return Migration

While there is well-established research on migration decision-making, far less research has attempted to unravel the decision-making process behind migrants' return (Koser 2013). It is reasonable to assume that to a certain extent, some of the factors motivating migrants to leave their countries of origin will also play a role in determining their propensity to return. For instance, if the initial decision to migrate was motivated by the socio-political situation at home, the future decision to return will most likely take those same factors into account (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). A proper understanding of the factors influencing the return decision-making process is crucial to the design of policies that will encourage migrants to return and that will promote their reintegration into their countries of origin.

In his paper on Italian returnees from the United States, Francesco Cerase (1974) identifies four different factors affecting return that are based on the goals, expectations, and wants and needs of the migrant. He classifies the determinants of return as follows:

- **Failure:** Migrants who returned because after failing to integrate into the host societies because of various stereotypes and biases that they encountered.
- **Conservatism:** Migrants who always had a plan to return to their home countries after they had accumulated enough savings or successfully achieved their goals. These returnees are only concerned about improving their lifestyles in their countries of origin. They do not invest in changing the societal context in their countries of origin that might have initially encouraged them to emigrate.
- **Retirement:** Migrants who are motivated to return to their countries of origin to spend their old age once they have retired in the host country.
- **Innovation:** This category of returnees is classified as entrepreneurs and innovators in contemporary studies. Cerase refers to these returnees as actors who are "prepared to make use of all the means and new skills they have acquired during their migratory experiences" (Cerase 1974, 251). These migrants return because they believe that the skills they acquired abroad in conjunction with their accumulated savings will allow them to act as change makers and innovators in their home societies. However, Cerase cautions that prevalent and strong structural forces at home, such as established power structures and vested interests, might impede these returnees from realizing their full potential as innovators.

Cerase's analysis was among some of the first research to attempt to understand the determinants of return migration. It also identified the significance of situational and contextual factors in the migrants'

home countries in determining whether reintegration would be a success or a failure. Migrants' intentions to return are strongly influenced by their expectations of the origin countries (Cassarino 2004). Gmelch (1980, 143) states that if potential returnees are not aware of the full range of socio-political and other situational factors that predominate in the origin countries, then they will be "ill prepared for their return." Furthermore, if these factors are strong enough, returnees will contemplate re-emigration.

Recent research on the determinants of migration builds on the typologies developed by Cerase. For instance, Dumont and Spielvogel (2008) categorize the determinants of return migration as (1) failure to integrate into the host country, (2) migrant's preference for home country, (3) achievement of a savings objective, and (4) opening of employment opportunities in the home country as a result of having acquired new human capital in the host country.

Another important factor that affects the return decision-making paradigm is the residency status of migrants in the host countries. Klinthäll (2006) classifies migrants into four categories according to the level and nature of the constraints imposed by their migratory status: (1) economic migrants with permanent residence rights, (2) economic migrants with temporary residence rights, (3) refugees with unlimited residence rights, and (4) migrants under temporary protection for humanitarian reasons. Research on return rates by migrant category shows that conditions of entry and legal status are important factors affecting the return decision-making process (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). For instance, Shortland (2006) finds that in New Zealand, 16 percent of immigrants with permanent residence status arriving in 1998 had permanently left the country after five years. Similarly, Aydemir and Robinson (2006) find that in Canada, 30–35 percent of migrants entering under the "business" or "skilled" immigrant category between 1980 and 1996 had left Canada after five years. For those entering under the "family reunification" category, the rate was 25 percent.

Another interesting lens on return migration is that of Cassarino (2004, 2014), who claims that migrants' decisions to return also depend on their "return preparedness." Migrants' willingness and readiness to return are two core elements affecting their return preparedness. "Return preparedness is not only about preparing for return. It is about having the ability, though not always the opportunity, to gather the tangible and intangible resources needed to secure one's return home" (Cassarino 2014, 3).

A study by Koser and Kuschminder (2015) classifies the factors determining return migration into three broad categories: (1) structural factors (for example, conditions in the origin country), (2) individual factors (for example, age, gender, and social relations), and (3) policy interventions by destination and origin countries that serve as incentives or disincentives in the context of reintegration.

4. Return Migration and its Impact on Development in the Country of Origin

A sizable volume of research suggests that migration generates benefits for migrants, countries of origin, and host countries (Mohapatra and Ratha 2011). The economic benefits for the countries of origin are recognized mainly through the inflow of remittances, the support given by the diaspora communities to their hometowns, and the physical return of the migrants. Nevertheless, there is "no macroeconomic assessment on the impact of return migration, in part because the required data are missing, and in part because the expected effect is probably weak, given the low volume of flows" (Dumont and Spielvogel

2008, 197). Literature on the benefits of return migration is still fragmentary and is composed mostly of country and regional case studies.

The existing literature analyzes the development impacts of return migration and classifies the contribution of returnees to their countries of origin into four broad categories or channels. First, they bring with them new skills (human capital) acquired through experience, training, or education in host countries. Second, they may come back with financial capital in the form of savings from abroad. This acquired capital allows returnees to participate as entrepreneurs or investors in their home countries. Third, they contribute through their social capital (networks) that they acquired as a result of their migration experience. Finally, returnees can act as social change makers. For instance, they can exert a positive impact by challenging and changing existing relations within the origin societies. The remainder of this section elaborates on these four categories.

4.1. Human Capital Mobility and its Contribution

Returnees' human capital contribution, also known as *brain gain* or *skills circulation*, refers to migrants' returning with new and enhanced skills, technology, or norms acquired through the migration experience and training or education abroad. Unlike brain drain³, brain gain has a positive connotation in the migration literature because of its beneficial impact on home countries (Stark, Helmenstein, and Prskawetz 1997).

Return from abroad often allows returnees to capitalize on their acquired skills to secure a more highly skilled job (with a better salary) than they would have if they had not migrated. Research on return migration to Brazil, Chile, and Costa Rica indicates that returnees are overrepresented in highly skilled occupations and underrepresented in least-skilled trades (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). Similarly, Gubert, De Vreyer, and Robilliard (2007) note that returnees to West Africa also performed well in domestic labour markets compared with the nonmigrant population. Another study on return migrants to Uruguay finds that 64 percent of the returnees were employed, while this was true for only 43 percent of the nonmigrant population (Meyer et al. 2007).

As a result of the U.S. dotcom bubble, large numbers of Indian- and Chinese-born software engineers returned to their respective countries, partly because they were unable to extend their work visas and partly because they perceived better opportunities in their home countries (Giordano and Terranova 2012; Jonkers 2008; Saxenian 2005). These foreign-educated engineers made use of the low transaction costs associated with digitization, consequently transferring institutional and technical knowledge and techniques to their home countries.

A 2005 study on China notes that since 1995, the number of return migrants has increased at a rate of 13 percent per year (Vanhonacker et al. 2005) Furthermore, most of these returnees have been highly

³ Since this paper is a literature review, it cites existing sources that use the term "brain drain". However, a growing number of scholars are expressing their reservation associated with this term. Development economists, such as Michael Clemens (2014) view "brain drain" as a pejorative term used in describing skilled migration. Use of this term inherently suggests that emigration of highly skilled workers is detrimental for countries of origin.

educated individuals holding PhDs and MBAs from the host countries (Vanhonacker et al. 2005). A 2002 survey of Chinese returnees in high-tech industries in six cities confirms this trend and reveals that 48 percent of returnees brought with them new technology as well as enhanced skill sets (Zweig et al. 2004).

Several other countries have also benefited from the return of their migrants, including Argentina, Ghana, Ireland, and Mexico. Between 1993 and 2001, Ireland witnessed a staggering GDP growth rate of 8.4 percent (average for the period). Around the same period, Ireland experienced an inflow of a quarter of a million people, half of whom were Irish migrants returning home (Wells 2005). Labour force survey data revealed that those who returned were relatively high skilled, well-educated individuals (Barrett and O'Connell 2000). A 2005 research paper by Kapur and McHale reaches similar conclusions. These authors claim that the Irish case is an example of how the return of skilled workers who left during the previous decade turned into brain gain for the present and the future.

Similar trends were also observed in Argentina and Ghana. Jonkers (2008) finds that between 2003 and 2005, more than 300 Argentinian scientists returned home and started working for the government research institutes, thus helping the country regain its research base. In the same vein, a Ghanaian study of 302 "elite" returnees—highly educated professionals from relatively privileged segments of Ghanaian society—and a further 302 "less skilled" returnees reveals that the majority of the returnees, especially in the elite category, had sought to introduce changes in their workplaces, building on their innovative experiences acquired abroad (Ammassari 2004). In a background paper on Ghanaian migration experiences, Anarfi and Kwanfe (2003) observe similar results.

4.2 Financial Contribution through Innovation and Investment

Several studies on developing countries have indicated that a significant portion of returnees will opt to start businesses or arrange for independent work after they return (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). This is particularly true for those migrants who went abroad in hopes of accumulating capital and for those who see the option of creating their own businesses as the best way to overcome labour market (re)entry problems in their countries of origin. Research indicates that entrepreneurial efforts by returnee migrants played a significant role in the economies of China, the Arab Republic of Egypt, India, Morocco, Turkey, and Tunisia (Wahba 2007; Dustmann and Kirchkamp 2002; Hamdouch and Ould-Aoudia 2007; Mesnard 2004; Jonkers 2008).

This entrepreneurial trend is particularly evident in Egypt. Using a 2003 survey, Wahba (2004) finds that the longer Egyptian migrants stayed abroad, the higher the probability that upon return they will start their own businesses. However, other studies contend that even short spells of migration play an important role in boosting the spirit of entrepreneurship among returnee Egyptians (McCormick and Wahba 2004). A 2007 study by Wahba on Egyptian returnees reveals that the returnee population contributed significantly by establishing small businesses and was responsible for 15 percent of job creation and investment in the local economy.

Returnees' financial capital accumulated abroad is pivotal in serving as seed capital for these initiatives. The level of their savings is positively correlated with their choice of self-employment upon returning home (Ilahi 1999). These observations are not unique to Egypt. Studies show that approximately 26

percent of Tunisian returnees start their own businesses, and the majority of their initiatives are financed solely by their financial capital (savings brought from abroad) (Mesnard 2004). Gouldborne (1999), studying the case of Caribbean returnees from the United Kingdom, reaches similar conclusions. He notes that returnees, particularly to Jamaica and Barbados, made significant contributions to their local economies through investments.

In West Africa, Gubert, De Vreyer, and Robilliard (2007) find that returnees from OECD countries were more inclined to start their own enterprises compared with those who never emigrated. Similarly, more than half of Turkish returnees also participate as entrepreneurs in their home economies upon their return (Dustmann and Kirchkamp 2002). Using cross-sectional data from Pakistan, Ilahi (1999) notes that upon return, overseas savings become a critical determinant of occupational choice because returnees with high savings chose self-employment (establishing their own businesses) while others opted for wage employment. Similar findings were observed by Murillo Castaño (1988) for Colombian returnees. Murillo Castaño (1988) finds that returnees used savings from abroad to establish self-employment activities once they took care of their basic needs.

The other two large nations that have benefited strongly from returnee entrepreneurs are China and India. The growth of China's "research system in the first half of the 20th century has been strongly influenced (made possible) by scientists who had received training abroad" (Jonkers 2008, 8). According to the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology, returnees started most Internet-based ventures in China. This trend was confirmed by a 2001 survey that revealed that approximately two-thirds of returnees working in development zones ran their own companies (Vanhonacker et al. 2005). Data obtained from the Shanghai Personnel Bureau show that in 2002, more than 2,000 foreign-trained entrepreneurs were running their own businesses in Shanghai (Vanhonacker et al. 2005). A paper by Yasheng (2011) argues that given the political climate in China, without capital from Chinese migrants, it would have been challenging for the Chinese economy to grow. According to Yasheng (2001), the Chinese sociopolitical climate would have acted as an impediment for foreign (non-Chinese origin) investors interested in investing in China. However, Chinese migrants and returnees are aware of the local knowledge and have the expertise to navigate the local economy and government processes. Indeed, in situations of uncertainty and risk, returnees and members of the diaspora act as saviors by providing much-needed capital in a relatively volatile sociopolitical climate (Freinkman 2000).

In India, the largest share of Indian skilled migrants went to North America, followed by Western Europe (Jonkers 2008). India's human capital abroad is diverse but dominated by the information technology (IT) and biomedical sectors. The rise of India's IT industry has been attributed to the return of highly skilled IT professionals and entrepreneurs who used their skill sets, coupled with financial capital, to establish businesses in India (Jonkers 2008; Giordano and Terranova 2012).

4.3 Social Capital Contribution: Role of Returnees' Transnational Networks

Transnational networks refer to the socioeconomic linkages and relationships that migrants develop and maintain with both their origin and destination countries (Cassarino 2004). During the migratory experience, migrants have the opportunity to build their social capital in the host countries along with maintaining that in their countries of origin. Robust social capital is particularly important for reintegrating into the country of origin (Jonkers 2008). Furthermore, migrants' personal and

professional networks are influential in the pursuit of specific activities after return, including participating in international trade, transferring technology and innovation, and seizing opportunities related to foreign investment (Rauch and Trindade 2002; Dumont and Spielvogel 2008).

The successful growth of India's software and IT industry is said to be owed to a combination of the human and financial capital brought back by returnees along with their strong ties with overseas Indian IT diaspora communities. Transnational linkages established by returnees in both their host and home countries enabled the returnees to mobilize the necessary resources, including access to foreign investors, transfer and use of foreign technology, access to international markets, and access to local human resource pools (Jonkers 2008; Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). China has a similar storyline in relation to its returnees and their use of social networks both at home and abroad.

In a study of Polish returnees, Klagge, Klein-Hitbass, and Fihel (2007) find that the brain gain in Poland is in large part driven by knowledge networks. Polish returnees provide "pipelines" to firms, institutions, and key players abroad, expanding the scope for beneficial external relationships in the receiving regions. Similarly, in a research paper on Salvadoran and Guatemalan migrants in southern California, Chinchilla and Hamilton (1999) conclude that the transnational linkages of Salvadoran and Guatemalan migrants have led to strengthened networks within their origin communities that have, in turn, transformed these communities. For instance, Salvadoran and Guatemalan hometown associations in southern California have strong networks that have allowed them to successfully raise funds for development projects in their respective home countries.

In a research study of members of the Egyptian diaspora living abroad, Zohry and Debnath (2010) find that Egyptians who are interested in returning home highlighted the need and importance of maintaining strong links (virtual and physical) between the origin and destination countries. Existing literature (Lowell and Gerova 2004; Meyer and Brown 1999) indicates that more than 60 electronic networks are "linking diasporas throughout the world, for the purpose of maintaining links within what is often a scattered community and for sharing information on employment opportunities in the home country" (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008, 201).

4.4 Returnees as Social Change Makers

The literature on exploring the role of returnees as social change makers is sparse; however, it has started to receive attention from scholars in recent times. A 2014 empirical study on Indian skilled diasporas and returnees examined the impact of skilled return migration on development in India (Siddiqui and Tejada, 2014). The ability of returnees to foster positive social change is linked to their own social acceptability upon return. The study found that a crucial factor that positively influences the interest of returnees in development issues is their affiliation to a *disadvantaged identity* in the home country (India). The study classified *disadvantaged identity* in terms of a participant being a woman, member of a religious minority group, belonging to a rural background, etc. Returnees with these disadvantaged identities were more interested in working towards home country development changes. Siddiqui and Tejada (2014) attributed this pattern to the huge gap between the rights and facilities that these groups accessed in their host countries (Europe) and the lack of such rights and facilities that they experienced in India at an early stage of their lives (Siddiqui and Tejada, 2014).

Another study by Ellis, Conway, and Bailey (1996) note that migration experiences expose women and men to socioeconomic and cultural norms and practices in the host countries' that might in turn restructure or moderate the origin countries' patriarchal systems and traditions once these migrants return. In a study of Greek returnees from Germany, Sakka, Dikaiou, and Kiosseoglou (1999) compare returnee households and nonmigrant households and find that the household roles taken up by men and women differed between migrant and nonmigrant households. Among returnee households, husbands and wives were able to move away from their traditionally defined roles and adopt new roles that they were exposed to while abroad.

5. Home Country Policies that Foster Return

Policies fostering and promoting return have been a subject of unprecedented interest in recent decades. Despite a variety of host country initiatives, including assisted voluntary return programs, the literature generally agrees that voluntary return, particularly of skilled migrants, is dependent on the stability and attractiveness of the political, economic, and social conditions in the home country (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008; El-Khawas 2004; Kapur 2001).

Nonetheless, several countries of origin have made significant efforts to encourage their highly skilled migrants to return. These efforts include offering a range of financial and social incentives to help with the overall reintegration process. Some of these governments have also established dedicated agencies or ministries, research hubs and centers, and virtual databases and networks to connect potential returnees with opportunities in the countries of origin. This section provides an overview of some of the existing practices, roles, and initiatives that home country institutions have undertaken to foster return.

5.1 Policies Encouraging Brain Gain and Knowledge Transfer

One country that has been actively implementing strategies to attract its nationals to return is China. In 1989, China set up a new service center for its returnees aimed at providing them with housing allocations and assisting them with purchasing duty-free computers and vehicles. The center also helped certain student groups with airfare assistance (Keren, Guo, and Ping 2003). Beginning in 2002, China instituted targeted policies to encourage the return of young graduates by offering them preferential treatment in job placement, salary and benefits packages, taxation schemes, and other incentives (Zweig 2006). In 2012 alone, China saw the return of 272,900 students, an increase of almost 50 percent from 2011 (UN Chronicle 2013). China also invested in providing social integration support to returnees and their dependents, including setting up international schools and waiving potential fines for couples violating the one child policy (Jonkers 2008). In 2010, China launched its National Talent Development Plan, aimed at recruiting highly skilled Chinese migrants abroad to contribute in the fields of education, science, culture, and health (UN Chronicle 2013). By 2012, a total of 35 industries and 31 Chinese provinces had initiated talent programs, attracting more than 20,000 high-skilled migrants (UN Chronicle 2013). Statistics indicate that almost 80 percent of academics in China have a foreign education, with two-thirds of university and research leaders also having foreign work experience (Jonkers 2008; UN Chronicle 2013). The impact of these policies has been significant, not only because they contributed to the economic growth of the country, but they have also served as a force toward educational, scientific, and political reform (Jonkers 2008; Sun 2013).

Along with promoting permanent return, China has implemented policies to support temporary return of its highly skilled nationals living abroad. Programs such as Two Bases and Spring-Bud encourage the temporary return of scientists by providing them with teaching and research opportunities in addition to access to research labs in China (Jonkers 2008; UN Chronicle 2013). Some of these programs allow scientists to enjoy these facilities while residing in the host countries. However, these programs have attracted criticism because anecdotal evidence suggests that they have been exploited by some who are contributing little to the Chinese research landscape (Jonkers 2008). In an effort to curb abuse, more stringent rules have been implemented, at times geared toward those holding foreign citizenship. Others have raised concerns that the benefits provided to the “sea turtles” (academics living abroad) are not commensurate with their contributions to their homeland (Sun 2013).

The governments of the Republic of Korea and Taiwan, China, also have sophisticated return migration strategies. Korea and Taiwan, China, carefully identify their high-skilled scientists living abroad by examining their credentials, for instance, number of years since attaining a PhD degree, number of publications, and whether their research is relevant to national priorities. These targeted individuals are then offered lucrative financial packages and reintegration assistance (for example, subsidized mortgages). Korea and Taiwan, China, have also implemented programs that are aimed at attracting temporary return of high-skilled nationals (Wade 2001).

Latin American countries, including Argentina, Colombia, and Uruguay, have also undertaken initiatives to attract their expatriate scientist communities. In Colombia, returning doctoral candidates are enlisted to participate in ongoing research projects, and the government provides loans to returnees for setting up innovative projects (Meyer et al. 2007). Steps have also been taken to duly recognize degrees earned abroad, which is especially important for attracting young Colombians studying abroad (Meyer et al. 2007). In Argentina, similar programs were introduced in the 2001 postcrisis economic recovery phase. The government increased its science and technology budget and invested in infrastructure to make the country an attractive destination for returnees (Jonkers 2008). The government also increased the number of job opportunities for scientists and improved employment conditions in its research facilities in an effort to retain and attract its human capital and re-establish its research base (Jonkers 2008). Uruguay established its Sectoral Commission for Scientific Research (CSIC) at the University of the Republic in 1990. The commission gives preferential treatment to returnees when hiring scientists and also provides financial packages to assist with their reintegration (Pellegrino 2001).

Jamaica has also successfully implemented a return-talent management program that encourages Jamaicans to return. The government provides a multitude of services, including paying for airfare, facilitating and subsidizing moving costs, providing financial subsidies, and helping returnees with (re)entering the labour market (Thomas-Hope 1999).

Some countries have benefited from the return of their migrants despite lagging in the development of policies such as those described above. Return in those cases happened because of a combination of factors, including changes in host country employment conditions. India is a case in point. The dotcom crisis in North America left many highly skilled IT professionals jobless, which encouraged them to return to their countries of origin. These returnees used their human and financial capital coupled with links to the diaspora to set up innovative enterprises. Unlike China, one of India’s closest competitors, India was

not as successful in attracting returnees to join its public sector. This result is partly due to lack of funding in universities and research facilities for incentive programs geared toward scholars and scientists. Consequently, the return of this group of migrants has been considerably smaller (Jonkers 2008; Singla 2012). In 2004, the Indian government instituted several fellowship programs aimed at Indian scientists and engineers abroad, but the programs have been limited in number and have demonstrated only modest positive effects (Jonkers 2008; Singla 2012).

5.2 Policies Facilitating Returnee Entrepreneurship

Along with attracting human capital, several home countries have been pursuing policies to attract financial capital by encouraging their returnees to invest in local economies.

China serves as a prime example since it has been quite successful in implementing several policies that facilitate returnee entrepreneurship. It has piloted a number of high-tech zones throughout different provinces. These zones have provided entrepreneurs with extensive freedom to form and run private companies and have provided support through cheap office facilities, tax exemptions, and interest-free loans (Cao 2004; Wang 2005). Other enabling policies, including laws to protect intellectual property, have also been put in place to support these high-tech start-ups (Jonkers 2008). Since the 1980s, 260 high-tech zones have been established for and by returnees, with the number constantly increasing (Jonkers 2008; UN Chronicle 2013). The success associated with the returnees has led to a number of Chinese regions competing with one another for returnee entrepreneurs, the most popular locations being Shanghai and Beijing (Jonkers 2008; Wang 2005). According to UN Chronicle (2013), “Chinese returnee venture capitalists are active in fostering the growth of small and medium enterprises, and then listing them overseas, especially in the United States” (page unspecified).

Although Chinese return migration policies have been successful, various concerns still remain. The existing political structure and bureaucracy in China limits effective coordination among different governmental bodies and agencies, as well as between different regions (Jonkers 2008; Murphy 2000). The positive effect of returnees—their skills and investment—has been noticeable in urban areas; however, the benefits have not trickled down to the many rural regions of China (Murphy 2000; Wang 2005). Through acquired knowledge, experience, and capital, returnees to rural areas have the potential to affect development, yet institutional barriers such as policies that limit certain jobs to local residents, and government policies that deter movement between rural and urban areas, greatly inhibit their efforts (Murphy 2000; Wang 2005). Proposed policies to remedy this situation have included the establishment of rural enterprises and sponsorship programs to assist returnees in these regions. Cooperation between the different levels of state authorities, along with infrastructure and accessibility, is critical in addressing the social inequities in rural regions (Wang 2005).

India has followed China’s lead and instituted similar policies to enhance entrepreneurship among its returnees. In 2000, India replicated the Chinese model of Special Economic Zones (SEZ). The goal was to provide a competitive infrastructure for export companies (Jonkers 2008). Even though SEZs do not target returnees exclusively and are also meant to attract foreign investment in general, they were set up in part to offer favorable investment opportunities to Indian migrants wishing to start businesses in India (Jonkers 2008). Related SEZ policies include subsidies, foreign investment provisions, and exemptions from tax regimes and licensing (Jonkers 2008). Similar to the high-tech zones in China, these

zones in India have proven to be quite successful. By 2005, India had implemented SEZs in eight regions; those SEZs were home to 800 organizations (Jonkers 2008). India's attempt at becoming a prime outsourcing location for high-end services and attracting high-tech entrepreneurs and highly skilled professionals, especially in the software industry, has been effective (Jonkers 2008).

Several other countries have been undertaking somewhat similar policies and programs, including Albania, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Tunisia's return migration policies focus on encouraging Tunisians living abroad to invest in their country of origin. Government policies allow these entrepreneurs to enjoy tax holidays and preferential treatment of imports of capital goods for their businesses. Additionally, they can open tax-free accounts while abroad and can freely transfer their assets. Most important, these facilities can be accessed by Tunisians with no preconditions for definitive return to their homeland (Bel Haj Zekri 2007). Algeria has also implemented similar policies to encourage returnee entrepreneurship. Returnee entrepreneurs are exempted from taxes on imports of capital equipment for their business initiatives and can repatriate all of their belongings duty free (Saib Musette 2007).

Analyzing data from the 2005 Albanian national household survey, Kilic et al. (2007) find a strong positive relationship between returnees and business ownership in the country. The study highlights that in Albania, where the absence of start-up capital and a lack of technical skills act as obstacles to the development of small businesses, returnees are favorably placed to overcome both of these hurdles through their acquired financial and human capital. A study exploring the link between return migration and development of small enterprises in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia (the Maghreb Region) finds that one-third of returnees in the sample invested in projects and businesses after their return (Gubert and Nordman 2011).

5.3 Establishing Dedicated Agencies to Facilitate Return Initiatives

To reaffirm their commitment to attracting their nationals back home, several home countries have established government agencies, and in many cases a separate ministry, to coordinate various migration and return migration policies and programs.

In 2014, the Irish government appointed its first Minister of State for Diaspora Affairs and released its first diaspora policy in March 2015 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2015). The focus of this policy reflects the government's commitment to being more involved with its diaspora community. Some of the government's initiatives include establishing a Global Irish Civic Forum to discuss challenges facing diaspora community, the Alumni Challenge Fund to fund Irish institutions' outreach to Irish and non-Irish graduates working overseas, etc. (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2015).

The Philippines is another important example of an origin country where the government has identified the reintegration of its returnees as a priority (Go 2007; Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). In 2007, the government established the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers as a "one-stop center" for helping returnees reintegrate. Initiatives include providing expedited access to credit for creating a business, capacity development training, and family counseling (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008).

In 2004, following a number of recommendations from the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, the Indian government created the Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs (this body was later absorbed into the Ministry of External Affairs) to foster engagement with migrant communities around the globe and to boost remittances and investment (Jonkers 2008). This ministry gathers and circulates information to migrants living abroad who wish to establish businesses in India. The government also amended its tax regulations to provide incentives for and facilitate investment from Indians living abroad.

In 2001, Benin developed a National Policy Plan for Beninese abroad and established a new ministry in charge of relations with Beninese living abroad, as well as a national agency of Beninese abroad (IOM 2005). Similarly, the Ethiopian government established the Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs General Directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ethiopian Expatriate Support and Coordination Office as part of its efforts to manage migration (IOM 2005). Likewise, in 2001 the Bangladesh government established the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment to provide assistance to Bangladeshi migrants living abroad (Government of Bangladesh Website 2015).

Other countries of origin that have established similar dedicated agencies to foster return and to strengthen coordination with their migrants living abroad include El Salvador, Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, China, and Uruguay (IOM 2005; Agunias 2006).

5.4 Networking: Policies Promoting Ties between the Homeland and its Migrants Abroad

Several countries of origin have realized the benefits of maintaining diaspora networks both in encouraging future return migration and in ensuring a relatively secure pool of financial investors often keen on investing in their home countries. For instance, the Chinese government is focused on fostering ties with its migrant networks abroad (Jonkers 2008; Xiang 2003). A number of government bodies and agencies have played an active role in engaging with the Chinese diaspora communities, including students and scientist associations abroad (Cao 2004; Xiang 2003). Compared with other countries, including India and Mexico, China has a greater number of policies geared toward strengthening migrant networks (Cao 2004; Jonkers 2008). These policies are critical because they promote temporary return and serve as a foundation for the eventual permanent return of migrants.

The Argentinian government has also invested in initiatives to promote and maintain ties with its nationals living abroad. For instance, the Argentinian Ministry of Science and Technology established the network Red de Argentinos Investigadores y Cientificos en el Exterior (RAICES), which initiated a database of Argentinian researchers living abroad and is dedicated to providing them with information about domestic market conditions and helping support their reintegration through a repatriation fund. However, in comparison with China, the scope and reach of the RAICES initiative is limited, partly due to lack of funding. The annual budget for the repatriation fund is approximately US\$300,000, which is close to the sum that a single participant in the Chinese talent program receives from the Chinese Academy of Sciences for a period of three years (Jonkers 2008).

In 1990, the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME), aimed at supporting its migrant community living abroad. Since 2006, the IME has also assumed the task

of setting up a network of Mexican scientists living abroad (Jonkers 2008). Korea and Taiwan, China, have established networks and databases to connect their high-skilled migrant workers with job opportunities at home. Other countries that have taken similar steps include Burkina Faso, Colombia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uruguay (Black 2004; Hansen et al. 2002; *Economist* 2002).

5.5 Domestic Policy Reforms and Initiatives

In an attempt to showcase themselves as attractive places to return to, countries of origin have also instituted changes to some of their domestic laws that are perceived as potential barriers by migrant communities. The possibility of maintaining dual citizenship or some form of legal status in the country of origin is an important desire of migrants living abroad (Jonkers 2008). In recent decades, several countries have taken steps to address this need. For instance, India's constitution does not allow dual citizenship. However, following the recommendation of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, the government decided to offer the possibility of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). "Individuals of Indian origin who migrated from India and acquired the nationality of the host country may apply for this OCI" (Jonkers 2008, 13). In 2015, the Indian government made further changes to the program and introduced the concept of Overseas Citizen of India Cardholder (OCC). The government amended the Citizenship Act to also relax some of the physical residency requirements (duration of stay in India) needed from non-resident Indians to apply for Indian citizenship (Government of India, 2015). The government also amended its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy so that investments by OCC are deemed as domestic investments on par with investments made by residents. The cumulative effect of these policy changes has connected the Indian diaspora more closely with India. Indian entrepreneurs continue to return home to establish businesses, including software companies, call centers, research and development outsourcing firms, and others. Most of these businesses are set up in high-tech parks or areas where they receive location-specific benefits from the government (Jonkers 2008).

Similar to India, Chinese law does not formally allow dual citizenship. To somewhat address this issue, the Chinese government established the multi-entry visa scheme. In addition, the Shanghai municipal government has begun a *green card* system that allows foreign passport holders who live and work in Shanghai to enjoy privileges similar to those enjoyed by the locals (Jonkers 2008; Xiang 2003). In Shanghai, about 90 per cent of the *green card* holders are returnee Chinese students, many with United States green cards (Sun 2008). This resident permit system has "marked a breakthrough in Shanghai's bid to attract domestic and overseas talent" (Sun 2008, 52).

Similar to China and India, the Ethiopian government does not grant dual citizenship. However, since 2002 the Ethiopian government has offered Ethiopian Origin Identity cards to Ethiopians who hold foreign citizenship. The cards entitle the holder to all Ethiopian-citizen rights except for the right to vote. The objective of this card is "to create a legal framework whereby persons of Ethiopian Origin fulfil their contribution to the development and prosperity of their country of origin"(Ethiopian Diaspora Portal 2016, page unspecified).

Other developing countries that have been amending their laws or making policy changes to allow for similar provisions include Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay (Jones-Correa 2002).

Finally, origin country governments have also often joined forces with international organizations to assist with return migration and reintegration of their nationals. The IOM has been implementing programs to facilitate the return of migrants to several regions across the globe. To promote return to Africa, the IOM implemented the program Return of Qualified African Nationals, later followed by another program called Migration for Development in Africa (Wickramasekara 2002). It also undertook similar programs in Latin America (Reintegration of Qualified Latin American Nationals) and Afghanistan (Return of Qualified Afghans). As part of implementing these programs, the IOM works closely with the countries of origin to identify potential returnees and provide them return and reintegration support (for example, assistance with financing return or finding employment) (Wickramasekara 2002).

Apart from these policies, host governments could also implement policies to facilitate return migration including allowing full portability of workers' pension benefits to their countries of origin, allowing the flexibility to multiple re-entries into the host country. A thorough discussion of host country policies is not in the scope of this literature review. Nonetheless, it forms another crucial piece of the overall migration management policy paradigm.

5.6 Policies versus Return Realities: Effectiveness of Return Policies

The preceding section showcases some of the various policy initiatives undertaken by countries of origin to encourage the return of their nationals. However, the effectiveness of return and reintegration policies has been a subject of constant debate for years. Some researchers have expressed concern that while countries like China, Taiwan, India, Korea, have benefited from implementing various return policies, not all developing countries are in a position to implement similar policies (for example, because of lack of funding, imperfect labour market conditions, less accessible credit markets for returnee entrepreneurs). Moreover, the policies that have worked for some developing countries might not work for the entire developing world since each country has its unique set of political and economic factors requiring customized policy solutions (Saxenian 2005). Others argue that successful return occurs when the factors at home as well as in the host country are conducive to return (Wickramasekara 2002).

Several others have identified the significance of sociopolitical and economic conditions in home countries as important determinants in deciding the success of return policies (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). As described in the earlier section on determinants of return migration, policies to encourage return will be ineffective if the conditions and factors that initially "pushed" migrants to emigrate still exist. For instance, if migrants left because of the lack of rule of law, simply providing them with lucrative employment incentive packages might not encourage their return. In analyzing return migration to some African countries, Kapur (2001) notes that as long as political instability remains in the region, those countries will find it hard to attract returnees. Likewise, when examining the cases of Colombia and Uruguay, Pellegrino (2001) highlights that policies engineered to reverse brain drain to brain gain will need to first focus on eliminating the factors that initially pushed their human capital to emigrate. In the same vein, Jonkers (2008, 30) states that "if socio-economic and professional conditions

in the home country would be sufficiently open and attractive relative to expatriates' host countries, there is likely to be little need for measures to promote return: it would happen in and of itself."

Finally, as discussed in an earlier section of this paper, migrants' intentions to return to their countries of origin are strongly influenced by their expectations of the origin countries (Cassarino 2004). If those expectations are not met, there will be a tendency for these returnees to opt for re-emigration. Thus, when designing return policies, it is important that country-specific factors be taken into consideration. A one-size-fits-all approach will most likely not work. It is also important to note that several policies that foster return migration might also contribute in encouraging circular migration. In particular, when countries allow for multiple citizenships or countries of origin issue ID cards to their diaspora communities, it enable migrants to stay/work between several host countries and their countries of origin.

6. Conclusions and Next Steps

The issue of encouraging and managing return migration is at the center of the debate on international migration. While some see benefits to leveraging return migration through policies and initiatives to enhance development impacts, others remain skeptical about the suitability and effectiveness of these policies. This debate is further complicated by the concern that regardless of the incentive package offered to returnees, if the conditions in the home country remain uncertain, the return policies may be rendered ineffective.

Moreover, the effect of providing returnees with incentives, both financial and social, is still somewhat ambiguous (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). While showcasing the benefits of policies fostering return, researchers are also mindful of the adverse unintended consequences that might be triggered by these policies. For instance, having lucrative return incentives in place might encourage individuals to emigrate solely to benefit from the assistance upon their return. These policies could also be a windfall for those migrants who would have returned home anyway. Finally, these policies could create resentment among nonmigrants, which, in turn, would create an unfriendly environment for returnees as they try to reintegrate into their home societies (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008).

Nonetheless, amid this debate, it is important to recognize that country studies on China, India, Korea, do point to the benefits of return migration on these economies. However, whether return migration in these countries is an accelerator of development, a consequence of ongoing domestic growth, or both, is unclear. Future research needs to focus on learning from these countries' experiences, and at the same time, assess whether similar policies would benefit other countries that are in different stages of development than these countries when they started attracting their returnees.

Additionally, for developing countries that are in the nascent stages of economic development or are susceptible to a volatile sociopolitical environment, it would be helpful to know if there are any strategies or initiatives that these countries could undertake to encourage return (Agunias 2006). Indeed, if human and financial capital are needed to jumpstart these economies, it would be worth investigating how these sets of countries could reverse their brain drain to brain gain and attract investment. Furthermore, these studies could then also test to see if the claims put forward by scholars such as Yasheng (2011) and Freinkman (2000) hold true. As discussed earlier in this paper, these

researchers contend that in situations of uncertainty and risk in the countries of origin, returnees and diaspora communities could act as saviors by providing the much-needed human and financial capital for investment and growth.

The current state of literature on the effectiveness of return migration is at best fragmentary and consists mostly of country and regional case studies with limited scope and reach. One of the gap areas in the literature is the absence of macroeconomic assessments of the impact of return migration and the effectiveness of return policies. It would be helpful, from the perspectives of both the origin and destination countries, if future research initiatives were to include such assessments.

Finally, as this paper points out, currently there are no consistent, universally accepted definitions of the terms *return migration* and *returnees*, which poses significant challenges in qualifying and quantifying the return phenomenon. Lack of reliable data has been a chronic problem in the study of return migration. An important next step could be formulating a working definition of these terms, which in turn would facilitate data collection and empirical analysis. Host and origin countries, as well as international and national migration agencies, could work together in developing these definitions. Forums such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development could perhaps play an active role in facilitating this process.

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