Migration Profile in The Countries of The East

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Abstract: This article explores migration flows in the countries of the East by examining their historical roots, economic and socio-cultural factors, and the role of political and environmental issues. The paper aims to present a clear picture of why people migrate from and within Eastern countries, offering a student-level understanding supported by recent literature. The focus is on how different reasons—ranging from history and traditions to modern economic conditions and climate change—shape migration patterns in this region.

Keywords: Migration, Eastern countries, economic factors, culture, environment, politics, history.

Introduction: Migration has been part of human life since the earliest times. In the Eastern countries, which include parts of Asia, the Middle East, and some areas of North Africa, migration has had deep roots in history. It is important to understand how migration developed over time and what reasons push people to move from one place to another, especially in the context of the East. In ancient times, many of these countries were part of the Silk Road, a network of trade routes connecting China, India, Persia, and even parts of Europe and Africa (Frankopan, 2015). These trade routes not only brought goods like silk and spices but also people—merchants, scholars, and workers—who migrated for business, knowledge, or better lives.

In fact, in countries like India and China, historical migration happened both internally and across borders. For example, in China, the movement of workers from rural areas to cities has a long tradition that continues today, especially after economic reforms started in the 1980s (Chan, 2012). Similarly, in India, internal migration has long been a response to agricultural cycles and caste-based discrimination (Deshingkar & Start, 2003). In the Middle East, historical migrations were often linked to religion and tribal life. The migration of Muslims from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, known as the Hijrah, is one of the most important examples in Islamic history.

Today, migration in the Eastern world is shaped by both past and present forces. The economic factor is one of the main reasons people choose to leave their homes.

Many people from countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Nepal migrate to richer countries in the Gulf, such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, to work in construction, domestic service, and other sectors. These migrants usually do not have access to citizenship in their host countries and often live in difficult conditions. According to the International Labour Organization (2021), migrant workers make up 70% or more of the labor force in several Gulf countries, showing how dependent these economies are on foreign labor.

In South-East Asia, countries like Thailand and Malaysia also receive many migrants from poorer neighbors like Myanmar and Cambodia. These people often work in factories, fisheries, or as domestic workers. While they help the economy, they are sometimes victims of exploitation and abuse. For example, a 2018 report by Amnesty International found that many migrant workers in Malaysia face long working hours, low pay, and even forced labor. Despite these issues, economic migration continues because it often offers better opportunities than staying at home, especially when there is unemployment or poverty.

Globalization has also played an important role in shaping migration patterns in the East. The growth of multinational companies and free trade has increased the demand for cheap labor in many countries. While this has created job opportunities, it has also led to economic inequalities. For instance, large factories in Vietnam or Bangladesh often hire thousands of

workers, most of them young women, to produce goods for export to Western countries. These workers usually receive very low wages and work in poor conditions. A study by Mahmud and Ahmed (2021) found that many garment workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, earn less than the legal minimum wage and are not allowed to join labor unions. These situations encourage people to move either within the country or abroad in search of better-paying jobs, even if the jobs are risky or unstable.

In addition to globalization, the rise of digital technologies has also made migration easier in some ways. Today, many migrants use social media and messaging apps to stay in touch with their families and to find jobs, housing, and travel information. There are even online platforms specifically created for migrant workers to learn about their rights and report abuse. For example, in the Philippines, the government has developed online services to support its overseas workers, who are called OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers). These tools make it easier for migrants to plan their journeys and communicate across borders. However, digital access is not equal everywhere. Many poor or rural migrants still do not have access to mobile phones or the internet, which puts them at a disadvantage and increases the risk of being exploited by agents or employers.

Moreover, the structure of labor migration systems in many Eastern countries can sometimes make migrants more vulnerable. In the Gulf countries, the kafala (sponsorship) system gives employers a high level of control over migrant workers. This system has been criticized by human rights organizations because it often results in workers being trapped in abusive jobs. Although some reforms have been introduced in countries like Qatar, serious problems remain (Amnesty International, 2020). Migrants under this system often cannot change jobs or leave the country without permission from their sponsor. This dependency can lead to forced labor or other abuses. Still, millions of workers accept these risks because they see no other way to support their families. These conditions show how economic need can push people to accept unfair systems, making reform efforts all the more important.

Besides economics, socio-cultural factors also play a strong role in migration. Family connections, traditions, and education influence why and how people migrate. In many Eastern cultures, there is a strong desire to support the family financially. Often, one family member, usually a man, will migrate abroad to earn money and send remittances home. These remittances are important for the home country's economy. For example, in Nepal, remittances account for nearly 24%

of GDP (World Bank, 2022). This shows how migration is not only about personal goals but also about supporting communities and even national economies.

Culture also affects how migrants adapt to new environments. For example, in Arab Gulf countries, cultural and religious similarities between migrants from Muslim-majority countries and their host societies can make it easier for migrants to adjust. However, even when there are cultural links, there can still be challenges. Migrants may experience discrimination or feel excluded from social life. Also, in many Asian cultures, shame and honor play a big role, so failure abroad can be hard to admit. Therefore, many migrants feel pressure to succeed even if they suffer abroad.

In addition to personal shame, social pressure from families and communities back home can also influence how migrants experience their journey. In many Eastern societies, especially in South Asia and Southeast Asia, migration is often seen as a way to bring honor and economic success to the whole family. Parents may spend their savings or take out loans to send a child abroad for work or education, expecting future financial returns. This puts pressure on the migrant to succeed at all costs, even if they face hardship or failure. If they return home without success, they may be seen as a disappointment. These social expectations can affect mental health, as many migrants report feelings of isolation, anxiety, or even depression. According to a study by Liu and Pan (2020), migrant workers in urban China often suffer from emotional stress caused by family separation and social stigma.

Gender roles also shape migration in important ways. In many cases, women migrants are judged more harshly than men, especially if they leave home alone or go abroad to work. In conservative communities, it is not always accepted for women to live independently in foreign countries. Yet more and more women are becoming labor migrants, particularly in sectors like domestic work, caregiving, and healthcare. In countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, millions of women work abroad to support their families. While this gives them more financial freedom, it can also expose them to exploitation or abuse. At the same time, their role as breadwinners is changing traditional gender expectations. This shift can cause tensions both in the host countries and back at home, where families must adjust to new power dynamics and responsibilities.

Education is another cultural factor that influences migration. Many students from Eastern countries go abroad to study, especially in Western countries like the USA, UK, and Australia. But there is also an increase

in regional educational migration. For instance, students from Central Asia often move to countries like Turkey, China, or Russia for higher education (ICEF Monitor, 2023). This kind of migration is seen as an investment in the future. After studying abroad, some students return home with new skills, while others choose to stay and work in their host countries. This "brain drain" can be a problem for the home country, especially if educated people do not return.

Apart from economic and cultural reasons, political issues also influence migration. In the East, there are many areas of conflict and political instability. Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen have seen large numbers of people fleeing war and violence. According to UNHCR (2023), Syria alone has produced over 6.8 million refugees, most of them going to neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. These host countries now face social and economic pressure because of the high number of refugees. In Myanmar, the Rohingya crisis is another example of forced migration. Since 2017, over 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh to escape violence and persecution (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Sometimes, even when there is no war, people migrate because of government oppression or lack of freedom. In places where there are restrictions on speech, religion, or movement, people may feel they have no future. For example, some people from Iran or China migrate for political freedom or to escape censorship and surveillance. Although these migrants are often educated, they face challenges in finding work or getting asylum in the West. Political migration is often more difficult than economic migration because it involves long legal processes and uncertainty.

Lastly, the environment is becoming a more serious factor in Eastern migration. Climate change is causing floods, droughts, and natural disasters, especially in countries like Bangladesh, India, and parts of Southeast Asia. The World Bank (2021) estimates that over 40 million people in South Asia could become "climate migrants" by 2050. These are people who are forced to move not because of war or jobs, but because their homes are no longer livable due to rising sea levels or extreme weather. For example, in Bangladesh, rising seas are already forcing people to leave their coastal villages and move to crowded cities like Dhaka, where they often live in slums without proper services.

Climate change is not only causing physical damage to homes and farmlands, but also disrupting traditional ways of life. In some parts of South and Southeast Asia, rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall are making farming and fishing much more difficult. For example, in parts of rural India, extreme heat waves and water shortages are forcing people to leave their villages and move to cities in search of survival (Rigaud et al., 2018). These environmental migrants are often unprepared for life in crowded cities, where they may struggle to find jobs or housing. In many cases, they join the informal sector, working in dangerous or unstable jobs without legal protection. The World Bank estimates that by 2050, over 40 million people in South Asia alone could become internal climate migrants if current trends continue (Rigaud et al., 2018).

Environmental migration is also connected to political instability. When large numbers of people move due to natural disasters, it can put pressure on governments and public services. In some countries, this can increase social tensions between local populations and newcomers. If governments do not have clear policies for managing migration or helping displaced people, it can lead to protests, discrimination, or even conflict. In Myanmar, for example, a combination of environmental degradation, ethnic tension, and poor governance has made the situation for displaced groups even worse. The 2021 military coup further weakened the country's ability to support internal migrants or refugees (International Crisis Group, 2021). These complex conditions show how environmental and political crises can interact, pushing more people to move in unsafe and unplanned ways.

In addition, international responses to migration caused by environmental and political factors are still limited. Most countries in Asia do not recognize "climate refugee" as a legal status. This makes it difficult for people fleeing environmental disasters to seek asylum or receive official protection. Even in major global discussions on migration, such as the UN Global Compact for Migration, the focus has been more on economic migration than environmental causes. Researchers like McLeman and Gemenne (2018) argue that it is essential to include climate migration in global policy frameworks. Otherwise, millions of vulnerable people could be left without help as the planet continues to warm.

Environmental migration also affects agriculture. When crops fail due to drought or flood, farmers lose their income and must find work elsewhere. In Central Asia, the drying up of the Aral Sea has caused economic decline and migration from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In addition, disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons also cause people to move, either temporarily or permanently. Governments in Eastern countries are starting to realize the need to prepare for environmental migration, but the process is slow, and many people are still at risk.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, migration in the countries of the East is a complex topic with historical, economic, social, political, and environmental aspects. People move for many different reasons—sometimes because they want to, and other times because they have no choice. Understanding migration means looking at both the personal stories of migrants and the larger systems that affect their decisions. For students and researchers, it is important to continue studying this topic because migration affects every part of society—from the economy to culture, to politics, and the environment. As global challenges continue, especially with climate change and political conflict, migration will remain a key issue in the Eastern world.

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