Ethicization of Migration Policies in ESEA

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A non-economic assessment of modern migration policies in East and Southeast Asia (ESEA) reveals that migrant workers are often considered as mere “service-providers”, where the interest is put only on migrants as workers. International migrants frequently become one of the “goods” that a country can sell or buy, according to national needs and interests. And this unscrupulous market can rely on a well-articulated legal framework, which legitimates all transactions both at the national and international levels. In the third millennium, the picture is getting worse, as supply outstrips demand and, following the basic rules of the market, the “good” turns cheaper. These considerations are based on data and scientific studies on migration trends and policies in ESEA. As a methodological choice, my analysis will focus on international labor migration in ESEA during the last five years (2000-2004).

1. Migration Policies in ESEA

Although there are also migration flows of professionals and settlers, the migration regime in ESEA is essentially dominated by temporary labor migration. Unskilled migrant workers (including so-called “trainees”) or guest workers constitute the great bulk of both regular and irregular flows. For those who are under the contract worker system (i.e., legal labor migration), limited contract, no settlement and no accompanying dependents are the keywords for a modern trade that involve millions of migrant workers in the region. Such a regime is the result of well-elaborated migration policies, which seem to fit the expectations of the sending countries and the receiving countries as well. The countries of origin - particularly Indonesia and the Philippines – consider contract worker migration as an effective development strategy. On the one hand, the job opportunities offered abroad help in balancing chronic national unemployment and, therefore, contribute to reduce internal social pressures. On the other hand, families left behind are guaranteed a substantial inflow of remittances in foreign currencies, which represent a lifeline for the weak national economy. Also the countries of destination find the contract worker system quite convenient. Firstly, short-term visas seem to assure a better management of migration flows, in line with national needs. Secondly, the impossibility to settle permanently prevents the formation of organized immigrant communities, which are often perceived as a possible ethnic threat. Thirdly, temporary migrant workers without family dependents means savings for receiving countries since they do not have to provide social services. For the same reason, costly “integration” programs are seldom part of the host countries’ political agenda. As a consequence, the concept of integration is often reduced to tolerance of the conditional presence of foreign workers. In recent years, there has been a trend to shorter length of employment, which implies lesser possibility to participate in the local trade unions and access to social security benefits. The contract workers system does not allow permanent residence in the receiving country. Consequently, migrant workers are to remain ‘guest workers’ for ever. Naturalization - or acquisition of citizenship - is generally very complicated and reserved to very special categories of migrants.

ESEA governments are involved in labor migration as far as sending and receiving workers is concerned. Sending countries seem ready – and quite generous – in supplying workers at a low cost. Receiving countries, on the other hand, have policies and measures in place to ensure that the number of workers, their sectoral distribution and condition of stay are regulated. In ESEA a legislative framework to defend the rights of migrants does not exist, either at a national or a regional level. In this sense, the laws formulated by the

2 Cf. CASTLES, Stephen, *New Migrations, Ethnicity and Nationalism in Southeast and East Asia*, p. 10.
Philippines (Republic Act 8042) and Indonesia (Law 39/2004), represent a concrete step forward. Nevertheless, both countries are experiencing serious problems regarding their enforcement and implementation. In many host countries, national legislations concerning migrants are often inadequate and they generally tend to protect national workers to the detriment of foreign workers. As for international legislation, in ESEA only the Philippines and East Timor have signed and ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All the Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Despite repeated efforts by the International Labour Organization, no country in ESEA has yet ratified any ILO convention concerning migrant workers. A real cooperation between sending and receiving countries is quite rare. The former seem to be deeply affected by an assumed position of weakness, imposed by the need to sending workers overseas. The latter appear not to worry much about international standards and humanitarian directives, claiming that they are, in fact, contributing to the development of the whole region. Nevertheless, certain signs of solidarity between countries of origin have been given in recent years. Between 2002 and 2003 two ministerial conferences were held under the auspices of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). These meetings enhanced a serious consideration of relevant migration-related issues and envisioned the development of new regional synergies. As for the host countries in ESEA, international discussions have exclusively focused on national security and border control.

For the last years, in ESEA, a rampant “migration industry” has speculated on the migration “dreams” of millions of people. Governments of both sending and receiving countries have made several concessions to recruitment agents, compromising sometimes the protection of human rights. Thousands of agencies operate freely, disregarding national and international labor standards. Reported abuses and exploitation have been generally tolerated by the authorities, given their essential role in the “generation” of migration. The private recruitment sector usually exercises a strong influence on the definition of migration policies and related legislation in the countries of origin. Moreover, fake and illegal agencies prey on thousands of victims every year. In several cases, the deception and exploitation would continue in the country of destination. There, the employer would worsen the conditions of employment and reduce the wages; or the broker would compel the migrant worker to accept his/her exorbitant service fees. In case of public controversies, the stronger lobbying power of brokers and employers normally prevails and migration policies and legislation are amended in their favor.

Refuting a general assumption, in ESEA the enormous income generated by remittances does not seem to contribute substantially to the national development of the countries of origin. In the Filipino case, only 5% of the total of remittances is actually invested in productive activities whereas almost 70% is allocated to paying debts and covering ordinary domestic expenditure. Moreover, the strong dependency on money earned abroad affects not only migrants’ nuclear family, but also their extended family, whose members had economically contributed to their deployment. There are concerns that left-behind families are becoming dependent on remittances. As for now, migration policies have not succeeded in addressing this specific issue. The possibility of productive reintegration of migrants upon return, taking advantage of their upgraded skilled and entrepreneurship, is very scarce or null.

Generally speaking, sending countries’ migration policies are not sufficiently concerned about the social costs of migration. The contract workers system in ESEA, with its impossibility of family reunification, has unveiled the vulnerability of ‘transnational’ families. In this line, the migration of mothers and the exchange

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3 Cf. ASIS, Maruja M. B., Preparing to Work Abroad. Filipino Migrants' Experiences Prior to Deployment, Scalabrini Migration Center, Quezon City, 2004.
of parental roles have been found particularly problematic\(^5\). The most defenseless victims are children, the sons and daughters of emigrants. Moreover, in the countries of origin a worrisome increase of what can be defined as “migration mentality” has been observed. New generations are growing up with the conviction that emigration is the only way to achieve professional and personal fulfillment. As an example, a study carried out by SMC in 2003-2004 revealed that almost half of Filipino children, aged ten to twelve, are already entertaining thoughts of working abroad.\(^6\) The vocational orientations of youth appear to be influenced by the prospect of migration; their decisions about professional training are more and more conditioned by the opportunities offered by overseas labor markets. Such migration mentality is undermining the very foundations of sound nationalism. While governments in both sending and receiving countries insist on paying special recognition to migrants’ contributions, the latter seem to experience an erosion of responsibility in nation building. Not enough attention is given to the worrisome exodus of professionals, which is especially affecting the health-care sector. It represents a real impoverishment of the sending countries and a serious threat to feeble attempts towards a sustainable development. Modern migrations in ESEA are increasingly showing a female face. The feminization of migration in ESEA is inexorably unveiling the lack of basic legal frameworks for migrants’ rights protection. Reported cases of verbal and physical abuse, exploitation and sexual harassment, whose victims are migrant women, are dramatically increasing. Given the special job conditions and the activities involved, the entertainment and household sectors have been identified as high risk\(^7\). Yet recognizing some isolated interventions, migration policies have not dealt directly with this important issue.

The phenomenon of unauthorized migration affects most of major receiving countries in ESEA. In the last decade, more restrictive immigration policies have been implemented, aiming to curb any irregular foreign presence. Massive crackdowns and stricter border controls have been enacted. Nevertheless, the results do not seem to match the efforts. The reasons for such failure can be identified as follows. Firstly, irregular migration is often a necessity in the ESEA economy, whether governments recognize it or not. In fact, the contribution of unauthorized migrants is critical to fuel the informal labor market, the secret of some ESEA countries’ rapid economic growth. Secondly, unilateral restrictive measures do not take into consideration that the irregular migration is deeply rooted in the governance constraints of the countries of origin. In this line, the lack of bilateral or regional coordination of efforts would inevitably mark the failure of any curbing initiative. Thirdly, the geographical configurations of the countries in ESEA, their historical development and people’s vague sense of national borders do not help to raise migrants’ consciousness of their unlawful status\(^8\). A related phenomenon is human trafficking, the scale (or perceived scale) of which in ESEA has already provoked the concern of the international community. Children and women are the most vulnerable victims of this lucrative but inhumane trade that smartly uses the channels of unauthorized outflows and inflows. Some good initiatives and legislations on anti-trafficking have been implemented, but more needs to be done to effectively combat this trade in human beings.

As clearly stated above, modern migration policies and legislations in ESEA are posing some emerging challenges that, with no claim of geographical exclusivity, deserve special consideration and a call for urgent solutions. The first challenge is represented by the serious inconsistency of migration policies and legislation at different levels. In several cases, national laws concerning emigration and those regulating immigration do not refer to the same principles: what is claimed as a right for citizens overseas is not recognized as such for foreign workers residing in the national territory. Moreover, the enforcement of migration policies is

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\(^6\) Cf. Scalabrini Migration Center, Hearts Apart, Quezon City, 2004.


\(^8\) Cf. Battistella, Graziano – Asis, Maruja M.B. Unauthorized Migration in Southeast Asia, Quezon City, Scalabrini Migration Center, 2002.
frequently not consistent with the correspondent national legislation. When such discrepancy is brought to public attention, governments move for amendments on the basis of different political praxis. Inconsistency also characterizes what is reported as official migration policy on the one side, and the actions effectively undertaken by migration authorities on the other side. As far as migration is concerned, it seems that declared visions and programs are not really binding to government authorities, resulting in frequent shifts and resort to exceptions.

The second challenge is posed by the undeniable conflict between migration policies and governments’ commitment toward the promotion of human rights and dignity. Immigration legislation and policies are often considered as “special” because they address “non-citizens”, whose rights are not clearly defined in national constitutions. Therefore, while noting the encouraging show of official concern on human rights’ defense and promotion, one observes that foreign workers are often not included in the process. The need for an urgent reconciliation between human rights and migrants’ rights is evident. In the last years, the global fear generated by terrorist attacks and the overly zealous concerns on national security and border protection seem to have overcome any human rights-related consideration; such collective paranoia is actually misleading many to regard migrants as a permanent potential threat. Moreover, in ESEA, politics in general, and migration policies in particular, unveil the risks of the modern antagonism between the economistic approach and the humanistic approach. The latter reveals that “services”, which the World Trade Organization (WTO) usually associated with “trades”, hide millions of people, who are to be regarded not as “means”, but as “ends” of the economy.

The third challenge is offered by the lack of regulation of the huge migration industry, which has been able to consolidate the private and public sectors for what can be considered as a real “big deal”. The contract workers system, fuelled by both recruitment agencies and direct hiring initiatives, is seen as the most profitable, and this is why it is politically supported in spite of rampant violations of national labor codes and abuses of every kind. Governments can get a significant share of the overall profit through the collection of taxes, fees and payment for necessary documentation (e.g., passports). For the countries of origin, the real gain is constituted by remittances, which have become vital for their national economy. Moreover, the migration industry has already engaged in a lucrative partnership with state and private educational institutions, which are tasked to provide trained candidates for the overseas labor markets, disregarding any consideration for vocational orientation and national needs. The mass media are also involved in the trade, raking in revenues for advertising job opportunities abroad. With the consent of official authorities, they are extremely instrumental to the creation of a general migration mentality, to the detriment of personal commitment in nation building.

The fourth challenge is represented by the manifest failure of ESEA migration policies in curbing irregular migration and human trafficking in the region. More restrictive legislations and crackdowns have generally failed to address the real issue, i.e., the instrumentality of unauthorized migrants in sustaining national economies. The development of irregular inflows mostly depends on the demands of local labor markets, and they will persist until such demands will be regulated. Moreover, the unjustified increase of financial requirements and bureaucratic hurdles ends by playing into the hands of illegal recruiters and other unauthorized migration channels’ providers. The Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo, 2000) has elucidated that a very thin line divides irregular migration from human trafficking. Setting aside this assumption in shaping migration and anti-trafficking policies would constitute a major mistake. Praiseworthy attempts to properly address the problem have been often weakened by corruption in official circles and the participation of transnational criminal groups.

The fifth challenge is posed by the obstinacy to treat migration policies as a national affair in a political scenario deeply informed by globalization and regionalization processes. In the last years, interministerial hearings and meetings on migration have repeatedly failed to promote regional visions and actions. Sending and receiving countries seem to be stuck on national economic interests, which inevitably differ. There is
general difficulty in assuming responsibilities for migrant workers and their families. While sending countries find it difficult to elaborate policies for citizens who are overseas, countries of destination do not regard it as priority to uphold the rights of non-citizens residing in their national territory. In spite of declared good intentions and optimistic projections, migration has not been that instrumental to the economic and social growth of the less developed countries in ESEA. Moreover, not enough attention is given to the social costs of migration, whose prices must be paid regionally.

2. Towards an Ethical Paradigm for Migration Policies

The challenges identified above must be urgently addressed by policymakers in ESEA, both at the national and regional levels. Responses and solutions must constitute “good migration policies”, aiming to uphold the wellbeing of all the actors involved in the phenomenon. Nevertheless, with no concession to functionalistic approaches, it has to be recognized that it is indeed difficult to assess their soundness a priori, mostly because of the problematic diversity of modern migration, where time and space do play a key role. Best practices may not necessarily work today; locally successful initiatives may be failures elsewhere. If it is not possible to define universally applicable models, it is indeed feasible to identify some universal principles that would inform migration policies and serve as bases for their assessment. Such principles would constitute an ethical paradigm, which was defined after much reflection on ethics and politics.

2.1 Ethics and Politics

In his work titled, Politics⁹, the Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that politics was essentially intended as an instrument for the achievement of a virtuous life (ethics) in the citizenry. Such teleological consideration motivated the epistemological dependence of politics on ethics. The historical development of the reflection, which passed though the questioning of Aristotle’s syllogism by Nominalism (William of Ockam), led to the separation of politics from ethics. The Italian political theorist, Niccolò Machiavelli, in his book, The Prince¹⁰, stressed the total autonomy of politics from any moral consideration. According to Machiavelli, actions are politically correct if they succeed in seizing and maintaining power. Thus, their ethical component is just irrelevant. The philosophical revolution brought by the European Illuminism led to the modern utilitarian approach to politics. The new perspective recovered the union between politics and ethics, but claims and asserts that the latter is determined by a pragmatic assessment of consequences. Political decisions are morally correct to the extent that they produce the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals¹¹. Post-modern and neo-liberal theories assert the relativism of every human knowledge and praxis, whose development is always determined by circumstances. Decisions can be ethically assessed only on their functional component in the context of reference¹². According to this philosophical pattern, politics is relegated again to an ancillary status; it now depends on the economy.

Post-modern moral reflections, with all their different articulations, have already revealed their “hazardous” consequences. On the one side, the proposed “metaethical moral relativism”¹³ refutes the existence of a “universal conscience”, whose relevance in the development of human history is undeniable. On the other

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¹³ Metaethical moral relativism claims that « … the truth or falsity of moral judgments, or their justification, is not absolute or universal, but is relative to the traditions, convictions, or practices of a group of persons. »; cf. GOWANS, Chris, « Moral Relativism », in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism, accessed on 5 October 2005.
side, the unavoidable conflicts between conventional relativism (the moral good is determined by a group) and subjective relativism (the moral good is determined by the individual) seem to sow confusion and eventually the dissolution of personal and group identities. Yet with different ideological approaches, in recent years, several moral theorists have underlined the need of returning to ethics its attributes of certainty and universality. The phenomenon of globalization has intensely contributed to the comprehension of the oneness of the world and humankind; the feasibility of cross-cultural and cross-national dynamics and processes relies on the existence of common platforms. In this sense, the recovery of universal and normative values of ethics is seen as critical. The definition of an agreeable “global good” is what makes the development of international politics possible.

Universal and normative ethics is the only one able to provide politics with clear and sound principles, which cannot depend on contingent and subjective consideration. Such ethics would constantly remind politics about the need for laws and praxis to be consistent with their declared goal, i.e. the wellbeing of the members of the community. Modern reflections have led to “free” politics from normative ethics, in favor of a relativistic approach, which, paradoxically, claims to be the “norm”. In order to avert the dangerous process of the “absolutization of contingencies”, where consistency and accountability are not included, politics needs to be reconciled with the ethics of principles. Such reconciliation is what this paper defines as the “ethicization of politics”.

The ethicization of politics presumes the existence of a universally accepted ethical platform, which would serve to shape and, eventually, assess politics. Actually, the definition of such universal set of principles is what constitutes the real problem. Assuming that the welfare of human beings is the main objective of every political exercise, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948, can be fairly considered as a first relevant step towards a universal ethical paradigm. Full respect of every single right listed in the Declaration would make up as a first basic criterion for the ethical assessment of legislations and practices. Nevertheless, a rights’ non-violation approach would be quite restrictive, since it does not do justice to politics’ commitment of promoting human development and dignified existence for everyone.

A deeper reflection on the Declaration would open to further considerations. Firstly, the Illuminist roots of such “universal” understanding of human rights cannot be denied, as well as its “westernized” development. These spatial and temporal determinants call for the constant assessment and redefinition of human rights in dialogue with different cultural and historical traditions. Secondly, the human rights listed in the Declaration seem to be inspired only by the Illuminist principles of “freedom” and “equality”, while the equally important Illuminist principle of “fraternity” appears to play a secondary role. Interestingly, it is worth noting that the third principle seems to have more global resonance than the first two principles. Along this line, fraternity provides the basis for the elaboration of a complementary set of ethical values namely, brotherly and sisterly empathy, global stewardship and responsibility, universal solidarity and global citizenship.

Advocates of secularism argue that the definition of a universally accepted ethical platform should lie outside any religious consideration. Only a neutral (i.e., “merely philosophical”) set of principles would supposedly overcome the divide of creeds and beliefs. The different paths of development of such secular reflection would lead either to modern iusnaturalism, normative hedonism or moral contractarianism. The French

philosopher, Jacques Maritain has strongly opposed the total secularization of ethics, on the basis of the “integral humanism”\(^{20}\). The conviction that the human person is both material and spiritual does not allow the exclusion \textit{a priori} of religion from the ethical debate. With no confessional claim, a holistically oriented reflection on morality would never leave aside the religious dimension of human existence. In the contemporary scenario, characterized by multifaceted truths and many-sided comprehensions, an “inclusive approach” seems to respond better to the ethical challenges. In this line, the pursuit of universality would require a moral reflection not “beyond”, but “together with” religions, aiming the definition of a “universal wisdom” that would integrate the common moral paradigms offered by the different philosophies and beliefs. In his book, \textit{The Culture of Disbelief}, the American scholar Stephen Carter underlines the valuable contribution of religious approaches to a universally acceptable ethics, inviting religious people not to give up their religiousness in public conversation\(^{21}\). Some interesting attempts have been already initiated. A concerned interfaith dialogue, in the 1990s, led to the drafting of the \textit{Declaration of a Global Ethic} and \textit{The Principles of a Global Ethic}. Both documents, authored by the Swiss theologian, Hans Küng, were scrutinized and eventually adopted by the Parliament of the World’s Religions (Chicago) in September 1993. Kung defines Global Ethic as the “... minimal consensus concerning binding values, irrevocable standards and fundamental moral attitudes.”\(^{22}\). Notwithstanding the sound philosophical foundation of Global Ethic’s arguments, its limitation is represented by the fact that the “minimal consensus” is not inclusive of non-religious sectors. With less “global” pretensions, American writers, Darrel Fasching and Dell deChant, propose a narrative approach to comparative religious ethics. The paradigm emerging from their reflection is a normative ethics of human dignity and human liberation, in concurrence with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights\(^{23}\). Another interesting attempt is called, “ethics across cultures”, and it claims a mere descriptive approach to morality, with a deferential consideration of the cultural and religious divide. This is the recent interpretation proposed by the American scholar Michael Brannigan\(^{24}\) and Swiss professor Prabhu Gupta\(^{25}\). All these interreligious and cross-cultural initiatives offer two valuable contributions: (1) they are important steps towards the long search to reconcile “reason” and “faith” in moral debate, and (2) they advance the reflection towards timely and opportune “dewesternization” of ethics.

Beyond the different “ideological” approaches, it seems that there is a general consensus on the urgent need for an interfaith and cross-cultural ethical paradigm, which is assumed to inform human praxis, including politics. The need for a universally-agreed on normative ethics is particularly compelling in the face of the failure of much-admired globally synergies and the spread of self-serving politics.

\subsection*{2.2 Ethicization of Migration Policies}

The following considerations are intended as the author’s attempt to contribute to the definition of a

\begin{footnotes}
\item 18 \textit{Normative hedonism is the claim that only pleasure has value and only pain has disvalue non-instrumentally, that is, independently of the value of anything they might cause or prevent.}; cf. \textit{Hedonism}, in \textit{Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy}, at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hedonism/, accessed on 6 October 2005.
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universally-agreed on normative ethics, particularly in relation to the politics of migration. Some work has already been done along this line. In September 1995, the Center for Migration Studies (CMS), based in New York, organized a conference titled, *Ethics, Migration and Global Stewardship: Towards International Consensus?* at Georgetown University. The symposium succeeded in involving several scholars from different scientific and religious sectors in an interesting debate, whose valuable conclusions were published in the *International Migration Review* (Vol. 30, No. 113). A few central elements, which are relevant to the aim of this article, were identified. It seems worthy, after 10 years, to revisit them, with the aid of some recently developed reflections. In light of the geographic coverage of this study, the reflection would essentially deal with the main religions and philosophies in ESEA.

From the analysis of different religious and secular approaches, it seems possible to identify five main “universal” principles, which would serve as bases for a new ethical paradigm to be applied to migration policies.

*a) The existence of a set of values/virtues beyond human contingency*

Though admitting the huge influence of space and time determinants in the elaboration of different worldviews, all religious and philosophical reflections converge in assuming the existence of a set of values/virtues, which lie beyond human contingency. For Christian-inspired moralities, such a set correspond to a natural/divine law, established by God at the beginning of creation and binding every human being26. In the case of Islam, the *Koran* (Recitations) is the divine law of God as uttered by Allah himself in revelations to the prophet Muhammad. It contains all the principles to be followed for a moral life. « *It is a guide for the righteous ... who trust what has been revealed to you and to others before you and firmly believe in the life to come* »27. Hinduism states the existence of different ethical paradigms depending on castes and roles in society. Nevertheless, strict moral rules are understood as duty (*dharma*), related to one’s position in society and his/her stage in life. The main ethical virtues are austerity, self-control, renunciation, non-attachment, and concentration28. Moral conduct for Buddhists is based on two different sets of principles, one applying to common people and the other to the clergy (*sangha*). A lay Buddhist should follow only five precepts, while a *sangha*’s behavior is governed by 227 to 253 rules in the case of males, and between 290 and 354 rules in the case of females. The variation of numbers depends on the school tradition29. More than a religion, Confucianism should be considered an ethical system, to which rituality has been added. It primarily deals with the principles of good conduct, practical wisdom, and proper social relationships, which are contained in nine books written by Confucius and his followers. The supreme virtue is the positive fulfillment of all human qualities (*jen*)30. There has been a notable decline in religious practices in some countries of ESEA; conversely, the appeal of secular ethics is becoming more and more attractive. Such ethics source either from the richness of the Eastern philosophical tradition or from other speculative frameworks derived from the West. Majority of them refer to universal sets of values, which match the principles of the Illuminist humanism (freedom, equality and fraternity) and the common platform of human rights.

*b) Sense of transnational belonging*

The formation of the modern European nation states, which formalized the distinction between citizen and foreigner, is intrinsically bound to the history of Christianity. Interestingly, the same Christian faith upholds a sense of belonging, which transcends geographical boundaries. Inclusiveness in the Christian faith is cast in two main ideas: (1) the real “homeland” for Christians does not belong to the present world (Heaven); and

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(2) everybody is entitled of universal citizenship in the “Kingdom of God” inaugurated by Jesus Christ. The original Muslim tradition envisions an Islamic nation (Ummah), which lies beyond the historical boundaries of the nation-states. Inside the Ummah, a basic freedom of movement is granted to all believers. Such free movement has been codified in article 23 of the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights. The geographical expansion of the Ummah would result in the enlargement of the reach of such global citizenship. Moreover, according to the Koran, at the end of times, in his final judgment Allah would reward the righteous with entry to a heavenly garden/paradise, which will be their homeland for ever. According to the Hindu evolution/involution scheme (samsara) and the correlated theory of the transmigration of souls (reincarnation), the whole cosmos is the natural theatre of human existence. Nation states are just historical and contingent determinants of one of the many possible lives, while the soul belongs to the universe. In the inclusive spirit of Hinduism, the concept of nation itself seems to be alien to the Hindu worldview. Based on the absolute equality and the sanctity of all human beings, Buddhist ethics allows no discrimination by nation or race. The real temporal and spatial dimensions of human life are the "great cosmos", meaning the inner universe where past, present and future, and any geographical determination are contingent elements of the total oneness. Moreover, inviting all human being to see their own humanity in and through the eyes of others, Buddhism proposes a cosmopolitan worldview. Confucian ethics advances a holistic and ever-changing cosmology, according to which everything in the universe moves constantly through 64 states of being and, thus, is intrinsically connected with all the rest. Individual happiness, which is the ultimate goal of human beings' praxis, is not achievable without universal peace. Therefore, wars and rivalries should be abolished, in order to create the “Great Unity” of the world. Most secular ethics insists on the concept of global fraternity, claiming that nationality is not a true source of identity. In particular, the socialist tradition sees national belonging as the denial of the universal brotherhood of human beings. The asymmetric interpretation of the basic freedom to migrate in the nation-states set-up (i.e., one is free to leave one’s country, but not equally free to enter another country) reveals the limited "universality" of human rights. Ethical consistency with universally accepted principles would lead to free movement and migration without borders scenario.

c) The moral duty of hospitality to foreigners

Christians inherited the duty of welcoming strangers from the Jewish tradition, which regarded the precept as divine commandment. The doctrine reveled by Jesus Christ clarified that the duty of hospitality is motivated by the mysterious presence of God in the foreigner to be welcomed. To Christian communities, hospitality to foreigners is so relevant that its practice is listed among the few criteria which will determine the divine judgment on all human beings at the end of times. According to the Muslim tradition, in the

beginning, the earth was divided into two opposite worlds: the world of Islam (dar-el-Islam), meaning the Muslim territories, and the world of war (dar-el-harb), meaning all the rest. When the idea of a feasible peaceful coexistence with non-Muslim kingdoms arose, a third world namely, the world of treaty (dar-ahd) was introduced to indicate non-hostile foreign countries. Beyond the fraternal welcoming due to fellow-dwellers of dar-el-Islam, Muslims are bound to a duty of protection/hospitality to the inhabitant of dar-el-harb (harbi), who needed sojourn in dar-el-Islam. Under divine protection, the stranger becomes the “secured” (musta’min)\(^43\). Hinduism considers hospitality as a fundamental duty of each householder, who is supposed to provide food and shelter to needy strangers. The unexpected guest (atithi) should be treated as God. Hospitality kindly offered would be highly rewarded, but hospitality neglected would be severely punished. Special welcoming has to be provided to the holy men, but the Hindu scriptures also insist on showing hospitality to visiting enemies, so that they will forget their animosity\(^44\). According to Buddhist morality, one of the four sublime states, which everybody should aspire to, is maitri, i.e. the caring and loving kindness to be displayed to all one meets. A Buddha’s poem recites: « Who is hospitable and friendly can attain honor »\(^45\). In this line, hospitality is not an obligation, but a spiritual practice, which connects us with the deep truth of the universal humankind, in which there is no stranger\(^46\). As already mentioned, the essence of Confucian ethics is the jen. Together with benevolence, charity and loving kindness, hospitality constitutes an essential element of jen\(^47\). Among Confucius’ ethical principles, contained in the Book of Analects (Lun Yu), the following statement introduces hospitality as a constant attitude of those aiming the perfect virtue: « ... when you go abroad, ... behave to every one as if you were receiving a great guest »\(^48\). From a secular ethics’ perspective, hospitality represents a concrete sign of civilization, in line with a true humanistic development. Local traditions in ESEA countries pay great homage to the welcoming of foreigners, which is generally regarded as one of the main elements constituting correctness in social relationships.

\(^d\) Global stewardship and responsibility
The Christian understanding of global stewardship is based on an explicit divine disposition in the beginning of the world. According to the biblical account of the creation of the universe, derived from the Jewish tradition, the Creator (God) chose human beings as stewards of the earth: « So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, blessed them, and said, “have many children, so that your descendant all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.” »\(^49\). In several occasions, the Bible states that God is the true owner of creation, while humankind is only the administrator, responsible and accountable anytime to the owner. Jesus’ revelation further clarified the way such stewardship should be undertaken: the likeness with God indicates the obligation to adopt the same loving care, which the Lord holds towards creation\(^50\). According to the Koran, Allah is clearly the creator and the ultimate owner of the dominium on the Heavens, the Earth and all that lies between them. At a certain moment, God offered the global trusteeship (amana) to the Heavens, the Earth, and the Mountains, but they all declined out of fear. Humankind took the opportunity
and accepted the amana, though “unjust and very ignorant”. A profound responsibility is entailed in this inherited commitment, and all human beings are accountable directly to Allah, who, out of his mercy, would guide and help them in bearing the amana. Hindu cosmology argues that there are forces in the natural world, which interconnect with life itself. The sacredness of some rivers and mountains is determined by their function to give and sustain life. Moreover, all living creatures have souls, which, according to the reincarnation theory, continually transmigrate from one being to another. Not enjoying any privileged position, humankind is fully involved in the samsara; thus, human beings must show great respect for the preservation of every kind of life. Any act destructive of life is to be morally condemned by the principle of the sanctity of life (ahimsa). In the case of Hinduism, the accent is put on global responsibility, more than on stewardship. Buddhism proposes a similar approach, but introducing new elements. In the beginning of the world, all creatures were living in harmony. The appearance of human beings, with their selfishness and greed, spoiled the harmony on earth. The path towards enlightenment (nirvana) includes the reestablishment of the interdependent connection among beings, in the global atmosphere of responsible respect for every living reality. The Confucian worldview is characterized by an “anthropocosmic” perspective, according to which heaven (a guiding force), earth (nature), and humans are intrinsically interacting. The “dynamic vitalism” (ch’i) is the material force of the universe, which unifies the whole cosmos and justifies the profound reciprocity between humans and the natural world. In this global interactivity, the relationships between humans and nature are determined by a strict moral responsibility, whose collective dimension is highly stressed. Globalization has helped secular ethics to consider in their reflection the undeniable reality of the global impact of local decisions and actions. Humanitarian and environmental concerns are seen ever more linked, with a growing emphasis on both the individual and collective responsibility in shaping the future of the world. In ESEA, there is a need to view environmental protection and human development as indivisible, i.e., one cannot be achieved without the other. Due to varying levels of development in the region, regional cooperation is the way forward to address these invisible concerns. This process, however, has yet to begin.

**e) The comprehension of wealth as a trustee for collective welfare**

While firmly stating the inviolability of private property, Christians understand wealth as a gift of God to be used for the welfare of humankind. Jesus Christ’s revelation underlines the contingency of material goods, together with the obligation to share any personal resource with the needy. The selfish usage of private wealth deserves eternal punishment. The first Christian community in Jerusalem is presented in the New Testament as a clear example of distributive justice: « All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. » . According to Islam, creation is intended to benefit all humankind. Allah wanted natural resources, especially those that are instrumental to survival, to be available to all. Personal wealth is understood as a gift, which indicates a special choice of Allah. Though God owns everything, he distributes wealth and property to human beings for their private enjoyment. Nevertheless, there is a moral duty of solidarity with less fortunate people. Good Muslims should practice charity (Zakat or Zakkah) with the poor, for the sake of sharing and solidarity. Hinduism states that human beings are called to honestly earn material possessions (artha), in order to sustain themselves and their families, and help those who depend upon them. Everything comes from divine generosity, distributed according to the role of each person in society. It follows that each recipient is expected to practice charity

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and solidarity. Due to the cosmic transmigration of souls, wealth and property are contingent and should be used for the welfare of the community and the world\textsuperscript{57}. According to Buddhist morality, private wealth is intended for the welfare of oneself and others. Charity and solidarity are moral virtues applicable according to the financial possibilities: to whom much is given, much is expected. Global interdependence links personal happiness to the happiness of all other beings. According to this dynamic, in human relationships empathy generates compassion, and subsequently compassion generates solidarity\textsuperscript{58}. Cognizant of social divisions, Confucianism considers the difference between the rich and the poor as an opportunity for interpersonal cooperation. Charity and solidarity should naturally flow from the government towards its people, and from one person towards another. Moreover, Confucius identified two major obstacles to social progress: the concentration of wealth and violence among nations. In \textit{The Great Learning} (Tsang), he wrote: «Hence, the accumulation of wealth is the way to scatter the people; and the letting it be scattered among them is the way to collect the people.»\textsuperscript{59}. Secular ethics often refer to philanthropy and solidarity as valuable virtues, but it seems they seldom constitute moral obligation. The divide between socialist and capitalist approaches, both typical of the Western tradition, hinders a common understanding of wealth, property and social justice. Globalization is uncovering the increasing interdependence of local economies, wherein contributions to the development of other countries are now considered in terms of international investment. Modern information technologies have globalized otherwise local concerns, so that displays of global solidarity are not rare.

These five principles compose a tentative ethical paradigm, which the author intends to offer to ESEA policymakers for the assessment of their national migration policies. The suggested ethicization process would assist in forging the necessary tools to promptly respond to the challenges posed by modern migration in the region, envisioning a more consistent and humanized politics. In order to enhance the chances of success, all the stakeholders, i.e. governments, academe, trade unions, NGOs and migrants should be involved in the process.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The focus on migrants being on sale in ESEA does not suppose that the situation is any less urgent in Latin America or other regions. Economistic and pragmatic migration policies in ESEA are perhaps not worse than many European migration policies. The emerging challenges posed by modern migration may be the same all over the world. Such global comparison, instead of weakening the proposed ethical paradigm, would serve to affirm its usefulness across regions and cultures. If this article has provoked or ignited the interest of even just one person to join the reflection towards a more universal and inclusive output, it can be said that this article has achieved its goal.


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