Emigration and political development: exploring the national and international nexus

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Most contemporary work on migration and development focuses on economic development. Whether it is work on how internal migration affects a country’s modernization or the sundry studies that have examined how remittances from international migration contribute to economic development in the sending countries, scholars are increasingly aware of the important role that migration can play, and has played, in economic development. The effects of emigration or out-migration on political development are less well understood. This article introduces an argument for why we should expect significant emigration and/or out-migration to influence political development in a sending country or region. This argument is then explored in three different contexts: by examining the effects of international migration over time; by looking at the experiences of a handful of contemporary states; and by considering the political effects of internal (inter-province) migration in today’s China. These studies suggest that if a significantly large proportion of an area’s population leaves, it forces political authorities to adjust in ways that facilitate political development.

Keywords: democracy; emigration; exit; out-migration; political development

The links between migration and economic development are fairly well established, if not always recognized. The launch of this journal bears evidence to that effect. Migrant workers, within nation states, play an important economic role in at least two important regards: (1) they help to produce economic wealth by becoming part of an urban proletariat that fuels industrial development and (2) they help to spread the wealth that is generated by economic development, when they remit to families that remain at home in the outlying areas or return home with new skills and/or experiences.1 The same sort of role is played by international emigrants, whose experiences abroad generate skills and remittances that are pumped into the home economy, fuelling local economic development.2 In both cases the relationships are complex, and not always benign (viz. brain drain), but there is a growing body of empirical work that recognizes the relationship between emigration and development, and our need to understand it better.

The same cannot be said for migration and political development: this relationship remains understudied. While some attention has been paid to the political influence of emigrant or diaspora communities,3 there have been few systematic attempts to see how emigration and/or out-migration4 can affect local political development. This lack of attention is understandable for a number of reasons. First of all, since WWI and until quite recently, inter-

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national migration was seen as something unusual, and the focus of most academics and policymakers was aimed at security-related forms of migration (e.g. refugees, political asylum, etc.). Second, it is remarkably difficult to operationalize political development in a way that allows for fruitful comparisons over diverse political and cultural contexts and over long periods of time. Finally, political development is so manifold and complicated that it is very difficult to parse out any single explanatory factor (such as emigration).

In spite of these caveats, I believe that there is much to be gained by studying the relationship between emigration and political development. This article draws from a number of recent publications, including a book (Moses, 2011), to provide a brief introduction to this new field of work. In the doing, I hope to encourage others to help expand the research frontier by pursuing similar studies.

This article is divided into four sections and a conclusion. The first provides a short theoretical sketch as to why we can expect emigration to affect political development in the sending country or region. The second section looks at the relationship between international emigration levels and global political development over time. In contrast to public perceptions, we find that global international migration levels are actually low, relative to earlier periods of world history. The third section zeros-in on the nature of the contemporary relationship, where global emigration levels are relatively low (from a historical perspective), by looking at those few states which are experiencing high levels of emigration (as a share of their population). Finally, the fourth section looks at similar developments within a given country (contemporary China). While the discussion in each section is necessarily brief, the patterns we find are consistent with the theoretical expectations. These findings should encourage us to uncover more case study and comparative evidence, to better understand the nature of this necessarily complex relationship.

Theoretical linkages
As noted in the introduction, political development is notoriously difficult to operationalize in cross-national comparisons. While most readers are willing to concede that a democratic government is more politically developed than a totalitarian government, it is less clear whether one type of democracy (say a parliamentary system) is more developed than another (e.g. a presidential system). Still, it is possible to conceive of political development in very general terms (e.g. as an extension of individual freedoms and capabilities), and there are several indices available that allow us to measure levels of human development and democracy (for example), in ways that facilitate interstate comparisons. Finally, careful case comparisons can be used to distinguish between political development and decay over time.

With this first hurdle cleared, we move onto the next: we need an explanation for why political development might be influenced by emigration. I suggest that there are basically four ways in which we can expect emigration to affect political development. The first route is indirect as it flows via economic development and builds on two already-established relationships. In particular, there is already a strong tradition which links economic to political development and a growing tradition which links emigration to economic development (as noted in the introduction). When we meld these two relationships together we can expect that: (1) if emigration generates economic development in the sending region; and (2) economic development facilitates political development; then (3) emigration will affect political development with an unspecified lag.

The remaining three channels of influence are more direct, and concern the effects of the emigrant him/herself; the effect of emigration on the relative balance of class power in the sending state; and the effect on a state’s perceptions on the need to respond to large emigra-
tion outflows. In short, we can expect emigrants to affect political development when the size of the emigrant stream reaches a certain threshold – when there are enough fleeing residents that the home political authorities are forced to stand up and take notice (or end up ruling over empty states). My own work suggests that the threshold value for such influence is above 10 emigrants per 1000 residents (or 10 per mil).

This argument may appear as strange, even counterintuitive, so it is useful to dwell on it for a moment longer. After all, we do not usually expect the power of a group or class to grow as its numbers decline (here by way of emigration). But if we think like economists, we know that the supply of a good determines its price (and hence its demand) in the market: as the quantity of a good falls, its price necessarily rises. In the labour market, a decrease in the number of workers translates into an increase in the workers’ wage (and, I would add, their bargaining power). As the relatively weak position of labour in the developing world is mostly a function of a local surplus of labour, emigration helps to drain that surplus. By draining the labour surplus, emigration makes the remaining labour force smaller, easier to organize, and in a better position to demand improved working conditions, wages and associated political demands. In effect, emigration facilitates a change in the balance of class power, to the benefit of the labour that remains.

At the same time, emigration functions as a very useful signalling device and instrument of leverage for dissatisfied citizens. ‘ Exiting’ provides the political authorities with useful information about how to improve deteriorating local conditions in a way that can facilitate political development (Hirschman, 1970; Moses, 2005). Even when authorities are dug in, as we saw in the collapse of East Germany, public protests (voice) combined with a real threat of exit can generate significant political reforms (Hirschman, 1993).

I hasten to remind the reader that there are many factors that lead to political development and that emigration on its own should not be understood as either a necessary or a sufficient factor. After all, there are polities and states that have developed without experiencing significant emigration. Instead, our objective should remain modest; our focus should be on how emigration contributes to other factors in explaining political and social development in various contexts.

This sort of argument is a general one: it applies to any level of political aggregation (be it nation states, provinces, even municipalities) and any form of government (democratic, totalitarian and anything in between). While this level of generality makes it difficult to operationalize political development, it is possible to find social (e.g. Human development index (HDI), government expenditures on social welfare, etc.) as well as political indicators (extension of suffrage, polity indicators and democracy indicators) to map changes in political development over time. More importantly, this approach makes us measure and think about emigration in relative terms. Rather than focusing on the absolute numbers of migrants (as is most common in migration studies), we need to measure migrants as a percentage of the relevant population.

To illustrate the promise of this approach, the remainder of this paper will look at the relationship between emigration (as a share of population) and political development in three very different venues: (1) globally, over time; (2) in a handful of contemporary states; and (3) within contemporary China.

Global emigration flows

Popular opinion holds that the world is burdened by record-high levels of international migration. As is often the case, however, popular opinion is misinformed. While the absolute number of global emigrants may be of record size, the relative emigrant stream (as a percent-
The age of the global population) is much lower than it was before WWI. Indeed, in both absolute and relative terms, global emigration figures – as measured by my own emigration (EMIG) database – have been falling since 1994, as shown in Figure 1.

When seen in per capita terms, the contemporary level of international emigration is intriguing on at least two levels. First, the overall level is significantly below what we saw during a prior period of globalization (pre-First World War). At its most recent apex, in 1994, the level of international migration was only about half as large as the global peak before WWI. Second, it is curious to find the global emigrant share has been falling since 1994 – i.e. before the recent global financial crisis set in.

For the purposes of the argument at hand, it is perhaps most interesting to note how the per capita emigration data reveal a long-term, wave-like, trend, with four component parts: (1) global emigration levels increased up until WWI; (2) these trends then fell starkly until after the Second World War; (3) in the period between 1950 and 1994, global emigration levels rose moderately (with some flattening); and (4) these levels fell again, after 1994.

As it turns out, this pattern corresponds to the dominant interpretation of global democracy trends. In particular, Samuel Huntington (1991) has noted the tendency for democracy to spread across the globe in a wave-like pattern in which surges of democratization are followed by a democratic backwash (when some of the newer democracies revert to non-democratic rule). When we superimpose Huntington’s ‘three waves of democracy’ onto the per capita emigration data, as is done in Figure 2, we see that global emigration peaks and troughs tend to correspond with the flows and ebbs of Huntington’s three democratic waves.8

From this very simple comparison of emigration and political trends over the long arc of history, it would seem that global emigration levels are somehow related to a rise and fall in the number of democratic states in the world. Of course, there could be many explanations for this correspondence, and it may be that the correlation is best explained with reference to some common, underlying (endogenous) relationship. My own modest attempts to try and test the relationship, while hampered by the limited nature of the data for relevant explanatory variables over such a long period of time, confirm the existence of a relationship.9 In this light, we should think carefully about role that migration (or exit) might have played in encouraging the expansion of democratic rights during the first big democratic wave. In fact, my own study of Norwegian political development during this time reveals a strong connection (Moses, 2011, chap. 5). In this light, globalization (of labour, at least) is not antithetical

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Figure 1. Global emigration trend, per capita, 1850–2005.
Note: Global emigration divided by the global population, times 1000.
to democratic expansion (as is so often argued) – it might even have been instrumental in bringing it about.

**Emigrant states today**

In light of the previous section, we might see the challenge of contemporary political development in terms of the lack of a real exit option (Moses, 2005). While democratic movements in Europe before WWI were able to wield the threat of exit as a lever for securing greater democratic rights (Moses, 2009b), similar movements in today’s developing states are left to fend for their own. Global passport and visa regimes limit the number of options available to denizens of the developing world relative to what Europe’s population enjoyed during the first wave of democratization. If there is a relationship between emigration and political development, then today’s level of global emigration is frighteningly low.

Still, despite low aggregate levels of global emigration, individual states may be experiencing sufficiently high levels of emigration, affecting their political development. In order to find these cases we need to redirect our focus away from those states that are experiencing the highest absolute levels of emigration (e.g. Mexico, China and Pakistan)\(^{10}\), and look at those states with high emigration/capita levels. As it turns out, these states are remarkably few in number, and somewhat off the beaten path of development studies. In fact, these states tend to be very small (and hence are not included in many of the larger statistical databases, including my own EMIG database).

To access emigration data for these states, we need to use the UNDP’s (2009) migration indicator, which employs a measure of a country’s emigration stock (as a percentage of the population). Here we find the most emigrant-prone states to be very small (in terms of both population and land mass) island states with colonialist pasts. In particular, the 10 countries with the highest emigration stock in 2002, as a percentage of the population, were (in declining order): Antigua and Barbuda (45.3%); Saint Kitts and Nevis (44.3%); Grenada (40.3%); Dominica (38.3%); Samoa (37.2%); Suriname (36%) Saint Vincent and Grenadines (34.4%); Tonga (33.7%); Guyana (33.5%) and Cape Verde (30.5%) (Moses, 2011, Table 7.2, pp. 154–155).

These countries are all relatively poor, and do not strike the casual observer as being particularly developed (politically or otherwise). But when we try to control for their level of economic development, we find them to be more politically developed (as measured by their score on the HDI)\(^{11}\) than other states, on average. By mapping the relationship between
Source: See Moses (2011: Table 7.2 and Appendix V).

Figure 3. GDP/capita on HDI, scatter plots with high emigration states.
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)/capita (in 2000) and HDI (in 2007) across all countries on the globe, as is done in Figure 3, we find a hyperbolic relationship: as the level of GDP/capita grows, so too does the level of political development (i.e. score on the HDI) seven years later. When we then locate the 10 most emigrant-prone states in the scatter plot, we find each of them above the regression line. This suggests that those states with very high levels of emigration are more likely (than the average state) to enjoy higher levels of human development, given their level of economic development.

As with the previous historical example, the nature of this relationship needs to be fleshed out with more detailed case studies. My hope is to encourage more interest in the subject, so that others can help to map out these relationships over a broader range of cases.

**Chinese out-migration**

In most countries, citizens are free to move within national borders. This freedom is noticeably absent in the international system, and this lack of freedom may have important consequences for political development, as illustrated by the examples above. This section considers whether it is possible to find similar effects from migration within a given country – where the cultural and legal barriers to migration tend to be smaller. This last example looks at one aspect of the largest migration flow in human history: inter-province migration in contemporary China.

The Chinese case was chosen because of its massive internal migration flows. As in the previous examples, we might expect that sufficiently large out-migration flows will generate pressure on local authorities to improve social and political conditions at home (in order to stave off future out-migration). Indeed, in a non-democratic context, such as in China, migration may function as a means of ‘voting with one’s feet’.

While the Chinese case is interesting and attractive for these reasons, it is also problematic in at least three respects. First, the relative size of China’s internal out-migrant flows is actually smaller than what we saw in several sending states before WWI. While the absolute number of Chinese internal migrants is mind-numbing, the per capita rates of out-migration, in the most exposed provinces, tend to be under 10 per mil. Second, and relatedly, Chinese internal migration is hamstrung by a regulatory system, the *hukou* system, which functions as a de facto internal passport system – and limits free migration in significant ways. Consequently, this sort of regulation makes the internal Chinese flows similar to international migration flows (compared to say, internal flows in India, or international flows prior to WWI). Finally, it is not entirely clear whether the province level is the appropriate level of study in China – as lower levels of political authority may have better policy instruments for affecting out-migration.

In an attempt to measure whether local authorities are responding to out-migration pressure in China’s sending provinces, the first four columns in Table 1 rank Chinese provinces by their average level of out-migration between 1995 and 2005. On the basis of these data, the provinces have been divided into three groups: high out-migration, medium out-migration and low out-migration. High out-migration provinces experienced more than 10 out-migrants per thousand residents in any given year (on average); medium out-migration provinces experienced between 5 and 10 per mil and low out-migration provinces had less than 5 out-migrants per mil. These data are based on five-year census data, as described in the notes accompanying the table.

In Table 1, we see that Jiangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Anhui and Hunan were those provinces that experienced the highest level of per capita out-migration between 1995 and 2005. In the right hand columns of the table, I have collected evidence of the sort of province-level
Table 1. Chinese out-migration and development indicators (province level).

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Sources: Moses and Chan (2012); Chan (2012, p. 14); Chan and Wang (2008, p. 30); HDR China (2007, p. 139); UNDP (1997), and various issues of the China Statistical Yearbook.

Notes: The out-migration data are based on five-year census data; see Chan (2012) for details. The demographic data are Chan and Wang’s (2008) ‘de facto’ population estimates, per province, in the closing year of each period (i.e. 1995, 2000 and 2005). The resulting out-migration figures in the table are generated using province-level data in the simple formula: (Out-migration/Population)\(^{\times}1000\). I then divided the five-year period averages by the number of years (five) to get an estimate of annual average out-migration, per mil (per thousand of population). The figures in italics represent five-year average highs that qualify the province for its ranking in a given category (high, medium and low). High out-migration provinces have more than 10/1000 annual out-migrants in any given five-year period; medium out-migration provinces have between 5–10/1000 and low out-migration provinces are those that did not experience more than 5/1000 out-migrants a year in any given five-year period. The figures in bold represent group averages. Before 1996, Chongqing was included in the Sichuan province figures. In the ‘Government Expenditures’ columns, the Chongqing and Sichuan scores are for 1997; in the ‘Δ Welfare’ column, these province scores are not comparable. The Inner Mongolia ‘% Δ GDP/capita’ score is extraordinarily large, but jettisoning this score does not change the fact that the low out-migration provinces still enjoy the highest average economic growth rates (the average drops from 485.1 to 459.2). The change in minimum wage data is from the provincial capitals and represents urban monthly wages. A thorough description of that data is found in Moses and Chan (2012).
policy outputs that we might expect authorities to use in response to massive out-migration. The middle column presents the most recent HDI score, in 2008. This column provides a glimpse of the variance in opportunity that still exists across Chinese provinces today, even after a decade of substantial inter-province migration. From this column we see that the high out-migration provinces, on average, still tend to suffer from a lower (0.767) HDI score than the medium (0.769) and low (0.798) out-migration provinces. In short, even after a decade of out-migration, the sending provinces are still relatively under developed, on average.¹⁶

When we look at the change in a province’s HDI score over time, however, the picture changes rather remarkably. Here we see that high out-migration provinces have, on average, enjoyed larger HDI gains (20.1%), and that these gains tend to decrease along with the level of out-migration. Thus, medium out-migration provinces enjoyed a smaller (17.7%) increase, while the low out-migration provinces enjoyed the smallest (13.7%) gains. It is important to point out that these (low out-migration) provinces are the wealthiest in China: they include the magnet provinces to which many migrants are attracted. Consequently, we might expect their rate of growth to be smaller than those provinces which begin at lower HDI levels. What is odd, however, is that the economy in these provinces is still out-performing the higher out-migration provinces, and this economic growth should generate more HDI, ceteris paribus (see the discussion below, with respect to change in GDP/capita).

In short, it would seem that provinces which have experienced the largest outflow of migrants (as a share of their population) are those that are also experiencing the largest increase in human development (on average). This finding seems to suggest that provinces are indeed employing policy measures in response to high levels of out-migration.

The three columns that report the share of (province) government expenditures aim to capture this policy effect more directly. Here we see that the share of a province’s budget that goes to welfare and health expenditures increased the most (on average) in the high out-migration provinces, relative to the middle and low out-migration provinces (while the pattern evident in education budgets is counter to our expectations). This may be the best evidence that local governments are responding to the outflow of migrants by redirecting their budget expenditures in a way that improves the local provision of public (health and welfare) goods.

The next-to-the-last column on the right considers annual changes in province-level (monthly) minimum wage rates between 2005 and 2011.¹⁷ This indicator provides evidence of a direct policy tool, as the provincial authorities are given some discretion in setting the local minimum wage rate. In this column we see that, on average, the largest wage gains were actually seen in the medium out-migration states. In particular, their minimum wage growth rate for the 2005–2011 period was 29.90%, while it was just 28.53% for the high out-migration provinces, and only 27.25% among the low out-migration provinces. This evidence is weak, as my argument would expect us to see the largest wage increases in those provinces with the highest level of per capita out-migration; but the findings are not inconsistent with my expectations. Clearly, more work needs to be done in this area.

The final column provides a summary of the per capita growth rate of province economies over roughly the same stretch of time.¹⁸ This column can be used as a sort of control, as it shows that the observed increases in the HDI, welfare and health indicators are not just the result of a growing economic pie. After all, we might expect broad-based human development to occur in the wake of economic development, irrespective of the level of government actions. But when we see the rate of human development moving contrary to the rate of economic growth, when comparing across different out-migration levels, then we know that something interesting is going on here.

The influence of economic growth on a province’s broader development can also be controlled for in a more visual fashion, by regressing the per cent change in a province’s
HDI score onto the per cent change in its per capita GDP. This is done in Figure 4. The regression line provides us with a rough estimate of the general relationship between economic growth and human development across provinces in China, for the period under consideration. When we then locate the provinces with the highest level of out-migration, we find that they have enjoyed a stronger growth in human development than we might otherwise expect, given their rate of economic growth (i.e. each of them is located above the regression line).

In summary, we can conclude this section by noting the existence of a pattern in the Chinese province-level data: those provinces that have experienced the highest rates of out-migration (as a share of their population) enjoy larger improvements in human development and they also prioritize a larger growth in the share of their province expenditures delegated to public goods provision (such as health and welfare, although not education). While the minimum wage trends are less convincing, the differences across provinces were small enough that we need not be too discouraged by these. What is perhaps most interesting is that these political and social gains are evident even after we control for economic gains over the same period of time.

Thus, the situation in China seems to be similar to what we have found in other contexts characterized by relatively high levels of out-migration and emigration. This suggests that the relationship between emigration and political development is not confined to international migration, particular periods in time, or regime types.
Conclusions

With this short piece, I wanted to outline the potential for future studies aimed at linking emigration to political development. This new field of research is fresh, fertile and—for the most part—lying dormant. To illustrate the promise of this sort of work, I have sketched the existence of a relationship between emigration and political development in three different contexts: globally, over time; among a handful of contemporary states; and across provinces within China.

These diverse studies suggest that there is a political effect being generated by emigration, but that it is not always easy to find. This should not surprise us, as political development is itself a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon. But by looking at specific cases in greater detail, we can begin to understand how a sufficiently large number of emigrants can change the political balance of power in such a way that can facilitate political development for those that remain at home.

These examples were also chosen to illustrate the very general nature of the relationship. If sufficiently large (as a share of the population), migration can affect political development in a very wide variety of contexts: both within countries and internationally; under international regimes that encourage international migration and those that do not; and in democratic as well as non-democratic regimes.

Given this level of generalizability, we should find evidence of the political effects of migration in a large number of international and national contexts. The international emigration data is remarkably spotty, especially if we want to conduct historical studies. This is the reason I constructed the EMIG database—in an attempt to provide better comparative (and historical) data. Still, even if the historical data remains patchy, it is possible to test this relationship in a number of contemporary areas, such as the effect of emigrant labour on states in the Far East, South Asia and across Africa. Better yet, because of data availability (and ease of mobility), it should be easy to test the political effects of emigration from European Union (EU) member states (consider Poland).

Given the difficulty of securing good international data, it may be easier to conduct studies of the political effects of out-migration within some of the larger federal states (e.g. India, Brazil, Russia and the USA). As the data improves, so too can the sophistication of the analyses. To examine this relationship, however, scholars need to direct their attention away from the absolute size of migrant flows, and begin to study the relative share of migrant flows.

In both international and national cases, there is much work that can and should be done. With this short piece, I hope to entice others to help build out this research frontier so that we can better understand when emigration facilitates political development, and when it does not.

Notes

1. This story is usually told with reference to a country’s access to workers in the traditional sector, i.e. migrating from the rural to the urban areas (e.g. Lewis, 1954). While most commonly applied to developing countries (e.g. Fei & Ranis 1964; Nurske, 1953; Ranis & Fei, 1961; Skarstein 1997), Kindleberger (1967) used this sort of approach to explain Europe’s post-war growth.

2. For an accessible overview of the general relationship between migration and economic development, see UNDP (2009). For studies of the expected economic gains from free international migration, see Moses and Letnes (2004, 2005), and a recent review by Clemens (2011). For a policy study of the expected economic gains for a single country, see Moses (2009a).

3. See, for example, the intriguing work done by Córdova and Hiskey (2009) which finds that individuals who were in contact with international migrant networks tended to participate more in local community affairs, were more supportive of democratic principles, and even were more critical of their own country’s democratic performance. See also Smith and Bakker (2008).
4. Formally, emigration refers to migration out of a country and out-migration refers to migration from one area to another within a country. As my argument assumes that the effects of migration are the same, whether they occur within a country, or across countries, I find this vocabulary to be somewhat cumbersome. In an effort at simplifying, I use emigration to refer to both interstate and intra-state (out-migration) migration in the theoretical discussion that follows.

5. For an elaboration, see Moses (2011, chaps. 2 and 3).

6. The roots to this argument run deep, and the scope of contemporary tests are wide ranging, but the common focal point for most studies is Lipset’s (1959) influential article linking democracy to economic development. While there are significant differences over the particular nature of the relationship, there is a strong empirical link between the level of economic development and the incidence of democratic regimes. For general overviews of the literature, see Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi (2000, 2001); Diamond (1992); and Landman (2003).

7. The EMIG database includes only formally recognized emigration data from state authorities – it does not include asylum, refuges or undocumented migrant flows. See Moses (2012b) and Moses (in press) for introductions to the database.

8. The relationship is not perfect, and a healthy dose of caution is advised. These measures are rough, and the post-Second World War emigration data reveal a long, slowly upward, trend – with little evidence of the second democratic backwash. In other words, the level of global emigration flattens out but does not decline over the length of that period. With that said, the third backwash, in 1994, is clearly more evident.

9. The results from a series of global time series data analyses, as well as nation-state level time-series cross-sectional analyses, suggest that emigration is related to political development as measured both in terms of a governance (polity) and a democracy (Vanhanen) indicator. This effect occurs even after controlling for the effect of economic development and tends to come after a variable lag (suggesting more indirect effects). See Moses (2011, chap. 4) for details.

10. In 2005, Mexico had 400,000, China had 390,000 and Pakistan had 362,000 emigrants – topping the UN’s emigration statistics. As a percentage of their population, however these levels of emigration were remarkably small, just 3.9, 0.3 and 2.4 per mil, respectively.

11. The HDI offers a broad-based measure of human development that is related to economic development (access to goods), but also includes access to health and education. For an elaboration on how HDI is related to international migration, see UNDP (2009).

12. I should mention that there is an established research tradition, associated with the work of Tiebout (1956) which looks for these sorts of effects in conditions where there is significant internal mobility (e.g. in the USA). For introductions to the vast Tiebout-inspired literature, see Zodrow (1983), Dowding, John, and Biggs (1994), Oates (2005), and Fischel (2006). For a critique of Tiebout’s applicability, see Bewley (1981).

13. This is just one aspect of the Chinese migration flows, because it looks only at those migrants which have moved from one province to another. Much Chinese internal migration occurs within the provinces, and these flows are not captured in this analysis.

14. Under this system, each household is granted an occupation category (agricultural or non-agricultural) and a place of residence (hukou). The hukou designates a person as either a peasant or an urban resident, and this designation provides access to locally provided social goods such as housing, education, health care, etc. See Chan and Buckingham (2008) for details.

15. See Moses (2012a) for discussion along these lines, and a test at a lower (village) level of aggregation.

16. But the difference between them is shrinking over time. In 1995, the high out-migration provinces averaged 0.470, while the low out-migration provinces averaged 0.670 (with the medium provinces in the middle at 0.620) – a difference of 0.200 (compared to the difference today of just 0.031).

17. This column is based on a new data-set which is more thoroughly described in Moses and Chan (2012). For now I might note that the data reveal shrinking coefficients of variation between 2005 and 2010. This trend has reversed in the last year (with a rise in 2011) for reasons which are not entirely clear. When we look at the annual changes in the 2008–2011 period, we can see that those provinces with the largest wage gains (Anhui, Henan, Hebei, Ningxia and Qinghai) are all provinces that are sending, rather than receiving migrants. More work needs to be done in this area, and I am currently working with Kam Wing Chan to collect hourly minimum wage data at the province level in China.

18. I am aware of the accounting problems associated with using per capita figures in this table, as they may not include the hukou population. As usual, caution is advised when interpreting results based on Chinese data.
Notes on contributor

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