Cross-Border Migration, Peace and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia

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The Cold War, by building political barriers between the people of Northeast Asia, also created "divided memories"—divergent understandings of history that continue to hinder regional cooperation. As borders become more porous and cross-border mobility increases, new possibilities are created for interaction, dialogue, and shared understanding. Active strategies are needed, however, to turn this potential into reality. This article considers some ways in which renewed flows of migration in Northeast Asia might provide the basis for fresh approaches to regional reconciliation and cooperation.

Keywords: Migration, diaspora, memory, reconciliation, regionalism

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I. Redrawing the Map of Northeast Asia

Every now and again in life, we experience very ordinary and mundane moments, which, nevertheless, create a little tectonic shift in the way we see the world. I experienced one of those moments on my last trip to Korea in June 2007 as I stood in the departure hall of Incheon Airport, surveying the notice board to check the boarding time for my flight to Tokyo. There on the board, I suddenly realized, was a list of destinations—Shenyang, Urumqi, Ulaanbaatar—that would have been unthinkable when I first visited Incheon in 1974 (long before it had an airport) and unthinkable even fifteen years ago.

The slow thawing of the Cold War in Northeast Asia has produced a radical reshaping of our social experience of space. Places that, though close together on the map, had been separated by impassable political barriers for decades, are now being reconnected. As this happens, new avenues for human mobility are being opened up. The signs are apparent

everywhere: in Japan, the old Chinatowns of Yokohama and Kobe now coexist with new Chinatowns that have been created with the expansion of the number of registered Chinese residents in Japan—from 84,397 in 1986 to 606,889 in 2007 (Homusho Nyukoku Kanrikyoku, 2008, p.19). Around Seoul's Dongdaemun Stadium, shops display advertisements in Mongolian, while in the apartment blocks of suburban Ansan, Korean returnees from Sakhalin play chess and hold conversations in Korean and Russian, switching seamlessly back and forth between the two languages.

When historians of the next generation look back at the late 20th and early 21st centuries, however, the current reshaping of Northeast Asia will perhaps seem less surprising than the fact that the region remained so deeply fractured for so long. For almost fifty years, Northeast Asia was divided, not simply by a single Cold War barrier, but by a multitude of political fissures that had a determining effect on almost every area of the region's cultures and societies. In this sense, the Northeast Asian experience of the Cold War was very different from that of Europe. Europe, in effect, was divided by a single "Iron Curtain" separating the West from the East. Moreover, on the western side of the Curtain, cross-border movement was relatively easy and cultural communication flourished.

In Asia, the fissures were much more complex. The 38th parallel splitting the Korean Peninsula was just one of many Cold War dividing lines, although it has proven the most enduring. There was also, for example, the line dividing Japan from its neighbor Russia (then, the Soviet Union). Then there was the Sino-Soviet split of 1960, which created a divide right across the middle of the Northeast Asian region. Meanwhile, even in the non-communist parts of the region, the Cold War order created borders that isolated national societies and divided families. Less than a year after the end of the Asia-Pacific War, the victorious Allied Powers, which occupied Japan and the southern part of Korea, closed the border between the two countries, preventing movement in either direction. The initial trigger for this action was an outbreak of

cholera in Korea, but the restrictions of movement between the two countries lasted long after the epidemic was over, and it soon became clear that the underlying motive for maintaining closed borders was the fear that border-crossers would carry with them an even more feared infection—the virus of communism. Similar fears led both the Japanese and South Korean governments to maintain these tight restrictions on the cross-border movement of people until after the normalization of relations in 1965.

In other words, the intensity of Cold War tension in Northeast Asia resulted in tight state controls on cross-border movement even within the region's U.S.-dominated sector. This paper begins by examining the way in which the Cold War fracturing of Northeast Asia affected communities and divided families along national borders. Many examples of such division could certainly be discussed: the fate of Korean migrants to eastern Siberia who had been deported by Stalin to Central Asia in the 1930s; the problems faced by colonial-era Korean migrants to China; the case of Japanese settlers "left behind" at the end of the war in China, North Korea, and elsewhere; and, of course, the fate of the Korean families divided by the 38th parallel and the Korean War. Here, however, I focus on just three case studies that highlight some lesser-known features of this history of division. I then go on to consider how the social and political dividing lines created by the Cold War helped to create "divided memories"—radically divergent understandings of recent history that continue to hinder regional cooperation to the present day.

II. Divided Families 1 – The Sakhalin Koreans

For hundreds of thousands (even millions, perhaps) of people, the multiple borders of Northeast Asia had a direct and often devastating personal impact. The best known example of this is the effect of national division on Korean families. However, this is far from being the only example. Let me briefly sketch some of the many other ways in which

the Cold War divisions of Northeast Asia created "divided families," with consequences still being felt today.

One group left stranded by the new borders of the Cold War world comprised around 43,000 Koreans, most of whom were brought from colonial Korea to Sakhalin (Karafuto in Japanese) to work in coal mines. Although the 300,000 or more Japanese settlers on the island of Sakhalin were almost all repatriated after the war, the task of repatriating the Koreans was comprehensively neglected both by the Japanese government and Allied occupation forces. In the meantime, the Soviet Union, which had taken control of the island in September 1945, was only too happy to retain the labor of the forced workers bequeathed to it by the Japanese empire (Ito, 1991; Kil & Katayama, 2000).

In 1957, when relations between the Soviet Union and Japan were normalized, those Korean laborers married to Japanese women (together with their children) were allowed to move from Sakhalin to Japan. Four shiploads—about 1,000 people in all—left Sakhalin for Hokkaido, carrying with them a desperate appeal from their remaining compatriots for help in returning home (Alliance of Korean Repatriates from Saghalien, 1958). Before they left, the departing Sakhalin Koreans had secretly managed to compile a meticulous list, detailing the names, addresses, and places of origin of 686 people (together with 1,398 dependents) who were appealing to be repatriated to South Korea (though it was also clear that the total number actually wishing to return to Korea was much larger). The list was sent to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, which forwarded it to the Japanese and South Korean Red Cross societies asking them to take action. The Japanese government refused to assist, and the South Korean Red Cross appears to have done nothing to resolve the problem, so the list sat unread in the archives until 2004, when it was finally opened to public scrutiny.

Meanwhile, the families of those named in the list remained divided, with many in South Korea not knowing the whereabouts of their relatives in Sakhalin nor whether they were even dead or alive. It was

only in 1994 that the Japanese and South Korean governments finally agreed to contribute to a scheme under which some of the first-generation Sakhalin Koreans were able to return home.

III. Divided Families 2 – Koreans in Japan

The closing of borders during the Cold War did not always bring cross-border movement to a complete halt. In some cases, migrations continued but were rendered "illegal," furtive, and dangerous. Despite the closure of the border between Japan and South Korea, for example, between 1946 and the 1960s, tens of thousands of people in fact illegally crossed the line. Between 1946 and 1951 alone, a total of 48,076 illegal entrants to Japan, 45,960 of them from Korea, were arrested (Homusho Nyukoku Kanrikyoku, 1964, p. 16). The number of people that escaped detection is unknown, but it is thought to have been at least as great if not greater. The movement was mainly eastward—from Korea to Japan—though some people travelled secretly in the opposite direction or repeatedly went back and forth across the line.

The risks were considerable. The journeys generally took place in small, overcrowded fishing boats, where people were crammed in the hold with little food and water for journeys that could take a week or more. No one knows how many boats sank en route, but surely, some did. Those boat people who made it ashore in Japan were in constant risk of arrest, incarceration in Omura detention camp (near Nagasaki), and deportation to the Republic of Korea, where under Syngman Rhee or Park Chung-hee regimes, they were liable to be treated (at best) with hostility under the suspicion that they were unpatriotic and potentially subversive.

Who were the people that made these dangerous journeys? Many were Koreans who had lived in Japan before and during the Asia-Pacific War. The official repatriation program, which was established to assist with their return to Korea after liberation, placed very severe restrictions on their right to bring money and goods with them: many people were

forced to leave most of their assets and hard-won savings in Japan, and found it impossible to survive in the harsh circumstances of late-1940s Korea. Then in 1948, there was the Jeju Uprising (otherwise known as the "April 3rd Incident") followed by the Korean War. Tens of thousands fled back across the sea to Japan as refugees, though they were not recognized as such by neither the Japanese government nor by the Allied occupation authorities in Japan nor under the terms of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees.

Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in the Far East, was aware of the refugee problem but refused to give Korean War refugees asylum in Japan. He was concerned that their presence "might well enrage the Japanese people because of past relationship between them and Korean race" and might aggravate "Japan's own pressing problems with Korean minority already in Japan" (Sebald, 1951). Not even those who had spouses or other close relatives living in Japan were allowed entry.

The 600,000 or so Koreans who remained in Japan after 1945, even though they were legally registered as foreign residents in Japan, had no legal right to visit their relatives in South Korea until 1965. Those who took the risk of making secret journeys to Korea—e.g., to attend family funerals or visit sick or elderly parents—became "illegal immigrants" on their return to Japan. As a result, by the late 1950s, Japanese officials estimated that in addition to almost 600,000 Koreans who were registered as foreign residents in Japan, there were anywhere between 50,000 and 200,000 others who were unregistered "illegal entrants," living in constant fear of arrest and deportation (Asahi Shinbun, 16 June 1959) .

IV. Divided Families 3 – "Repatriation" to from Japan to North Korea and from South Korea to China

Even for those Koreans in Japan who were not labeled "illegal entrants,"

life was very hard. The Syngman Rhee regime refused to help them return to Korea unless Japan paid compensation for its colonial rule. The Japanese government adamantly refused to pay compensation, but it also failed to provide stable residence rights for Koreans in Japan, who faced widespread social and structural discrimination.

It was against this background that, in 1958, a mass movement for the "repatriation" of Koreans from Japan to North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) erupted, with vocal backing from both the North Korean government and Chongryun (The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan), a community group affiliated with North Korea.

Between December 1959 (when the first ship sailed from Niigata to the North Korean port of Cheongjin) and the end of 1961, some 70,000 people migrated from Japan (which was then just entering the era of its postwar "economic miracle") to North Korea in search of a better life. The vast majority were Koreans who originated in the southern half of Korea and had lived in Japan for decades. Many had been born in Japan. The migrants to North Korea also included some 6,000 Japanese women married to Korean men. By the time this mass migration ceased in 1984, there were 93,340 people from Japan that had resettled in North Korea. It is also worth noting that around the same time, a rather large number of ethnic Koreans from the Yanbian area of Northeastern China also migrated to North Korea, some through the official repatriation scheme, and some simply fleeing the chaos following Mao Zedong's the Great Leap Forward.

Recently declassified documents cast a new and very disturbing light on the background of the mass migration to North Korea from Japan. It is now clear that behind the scenes, certain conservative Japanese politicians and bureaucrats, working with the Japanese Red Cross society, had been lobbying both the international Red Cross and the North Korean government since 1955 to bring about such a large-scale exodus of Koreans from Japan. This was because the Japanese

authorities regarded Korean minorities as subversive and a burden on the welfare budget (Morris-Suzuki, 2007).

The North Korean government, which was initially reluctant to accept a large inflow of Koreans from Japan, eventually decided to promote the "repatriation" scheme for its own strategic interests. North Korea needed labor and technological know-how. It also wanted to disrupt moves toward the normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea. Meanwhile, the United States, although concerned about this mass migration from the "free world" to a Communist nation at the height of the Cold War, did nothing to prevent it. The reason being that the Eisenhower administration was more concerned about maintaining good relations with the Japanese government; the two countries were negotiating the revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty at the point in time.

Although the North Korean government did indeed provide the migrants homes and jobs, conditions were stark, and migrants from Japan had great difficulty adjusting to their new life circumstances. From the time of the normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea in 1965, the "returned compatriots" from Japan came to be regarded with growing suspicion by the North Korean authorities, and large though uncertain numbers were sent to labor camps.

Thus, over 90,000 people found themselves divided from their families by yet another Cold War border. Even today, many tens of thousands of Koreans in Japan live in constant anxiety about the fate of their relatives who migrated to North Korea in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, for a considerable number of families, the division is tripartite. For example, there are families in Jeju today that have some relatives living in Japan and some (participants in the 1960s-1970s "repatriation") living in North Korea—a fact that remains a dark secret for some who fear to share it with others.

The mass migration from Japan to North Korea was not the only disturbing and largely forgotten migration of the 1960s and 1970s. In

Cold-War-era South Korea, tens of thousands of ethnic Chinese faced severe discrimination under the Park Chung-hee regime. Restrictions on the right to own land and run certain types of businesses led to a mass exodus of ethnic Chinese to the People's Republic of China (PRC) or Taiwan. The number of Chinese people living in the area traditionally regarded as Seoul's Chinatown fell from around 60,000 in the 1950s to around 15,000 (do Rosario, 2000). Among those who "returned home" were third and fourth-generation Chinese, descendents of people who had migrated to Korea as early as the 1880s.

V. Divided Memories

The disruption to individual lives and the division of families, though, were not the only consequences of Northeast Asia's multiple and tightly-guarded borders. These borders (I would argue) also helped to create divided memories and divergent understandings of history in the various nations of the region. The Japanese government is often (and rightly) criticized for its failure to come to terms with Japan's imperial past. However, a careful examination of Japan's postwar intellectual discourse and popular culture (films, novels, etc.) shows a rather widespread recognition on the part of many Japanese scholars, writers, and others of a need to address the wrongs of the past. Novels like Gomikawa Junpei's *Ningen no Joken (The Human Condition,* 1958—also later made into a movie and manga) and non-fiction works like *Kike Wadatsumi no Koe (Listen to the Voice of the Sea*—a collection of letters written by young recruits to the Japanese military, first published in 1949) or Kobayashi Tomi's autobiographical *Kaigara no Machi: Koe naki Hitobito to no Deai* (*The Town of Shells: Encounters with Voiceless People,* 1980) repeatedly reminded Japanese people of the evils of military expansionism and the futility of war.

These sentiments, unfortunately, failed to be reflected in the policies of the Japanese government. Equally unfortunately, the multiple

dividing lines of the region's Cold War borders also greatly hindered face-to-face encounters between ordinary Japanese, Korean, and Chinese people. It was impossible for most ordinary people to travel across the region's national boundaries. Therefore, no space existed in which Japanese, Korean, and Chinese memories of the recent past could be shared. For four decades following the end of the Asia-Pacific War, there was, in effect, no scope for that agonizing but also ultimately healing process we have witnessed, for example, in South Africa. During South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, aggressors were confronted with personal accounts of the suffering of their victims while also being given the opportunity to explain the forces that caused them to become aggressors (Krog, 1999).

Instead, in a U.S.-dominated postwar world order, Northeast Asia experienced what has been termed "thin reconciliation" (Shin, Park, & Yang, 2007, pp. 2-3). The normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea in 1965 and that between Japan and the PRC in 1972 were processes through which redress for the victims of violence was bargained away in return for economic aid. Formal political relationships were restored, but underlying historical issues of truth and justice remained unresolved. As a result, when the region's borders finally began to become more porous from the end of the 1980s onward, a mass of conflicting memories surged to the surface, fuelling regional "history wars" that are still being waged today.

As this upsurge of "history wars" indicates, mere spatial proximity and person-to-person contact do not necessarily create mutual understanding. On the contrary, when people with different educational and social backgrounds, experiences, and memories encounter one another, the initial result may be conflict. Face-to-face encounter creates the possibility for dialogue but do not ensure that this will occur. What is needed, then, is for social movements to take advantage of new forms of spatial mobility to create forums for interaction and mutual learning—a process which may be difficult and challenging.

VI. Old Paths: New Paths

The area of Australia where I live is just recovering from a severe and prolonged drought. For five years, we barely got any rain. Streams and even lakes dried up. But then in July of this year, the rains finally returned and continued day after day. Suddenly, little streams and watercourses whose existence we had forgotten reappeared, running along more or less the same courses as before, weaving their way through contours worn by the forgotten streams and floods of earlier years.

Watching this, I found myself thinking of the movement of people across borders. Of course, migration is a much more complex process than the flow of water. It is propelled by many intersecting forces: above all, income and wealth gaps between various countries. But migration too tends to follow paths carved out by earlier, sometimes long-forgotten movements of people. So, as borders open up, movement across them will be determined not just by economic forces but also by the historical connections that have linked points within the region in the past and that, although temporarily severed, are now being reconnected.

There have been many examples of this process in recent trends in migration within the region. For example in South Korea, a substantial proportion of migrant workers are descendents of Korean émigrés who left for China between the late 19thcentury and the end of the colonial period in 1945. According to government figures, about 70,000 out of the estimated 190,000 undocumented foreign residents in South Korea in 2005 were ethnic Koreans from China (*Joseonjok*). Since then, new (and somewhat controversial) programs have been put in place to encourage and persuade undocumented migrants to regularize their residence status, and plans have been drawn up to smooth the path for ethnic Koreans from China and Russia who wish to migrate to South Korea (Yeh, 2006, p. 262). Human mobility is also slowly re-linking the two halves of the

divided peninsula. Although there is (of course) still no legal path for southward migration across the 38th parallel, South Korea is now home to thousands of refugees from the North, 6,596 of whom arrived between 2000 and 2005 alone, mostly via China and Mongolia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and other third countries (Ministry of Unification, 2006).

Meanwhile (as mentioned earlier), after prolonged pressure from groups within Japan and abroad, the Japanese and Korean governments in 1994 agreed to contribute to a scheme whereby the first generation of Sakhalin Koreans, almost all of whom come from South Korea, would be able to return home. Apartments have been built for them in Ansan and spaces have also been made available to them at a nursing home in Incheon. But spaces are limited, and the scheme is hedged around with restrictions (*Korea Times*, 18 February 2005). Above all, it is available only to the first generation—to those actually brought to Sakhalin before or during the war—and not to their children or grandchildren. So they can return "home" only at the cost of having to leave their families behind, yet again.

In Japan, too, the changing order in Northeast Asia is bringing to the surface memories of the largely forgotten Cold War migration from Japan to North Korea. The ongoing crisis in Japan-DPRK relations has been accompanied by a growing debate about the possibility of a large-scale flow of North Korean refugees to Japan. This debate was reignited on 2 June 2007, when a tiny boat carrying four refugees from North Korea arrived on the Japanese shoreline near the port of Fukuura in Aomori Prefecture. The boat's arrival attracted widespread media attention in Japan, reviving the debate about a possible, impending tidal wave of displaced people from the Korean Peninsula. A government security think tank recently predicted that a crisis in North Korea could result in the arrival of 100,000 to 150,000 refugees on Japan's shores (*Asahi Shinbun*, 5 January 2007). Though these figures are far-fetched, it is true that there are many survivors of the mass migration from Japan to North Korea during the Cold War who would now like to reverse the

journey and rejoin their families in Japan. Since the late 1990s, around 180 of these survivors and their dependents, having managed to make the dangerous crossing out of North Korea to China, have been quietly allowed to resettle in Japan (*Hokkaido Shinbun*, 11 March 2009). Given the Japanese government's involvement in the mass migration plan of 1959, it would be both just and realistic for Japan to prepare to accept several thousand more in the coming years.

VII. Migration, Peace and Reconciliation

The reintegration of Northeast Asia, then, is creating a new space for human mobility. In the future, we can expect this space to become the site for increasingly complex and large-scale flows of people across national borders. These movements will almost certainly include increased flows of people both into and out of China, as well as new flows of people from North Korea southward (into South Korea), northward (into China), and eastward (into Japan). All this, of course, is likely to be accompanied by ongoing and expanding flows of migration into Northeast Asia from other parts of the world, such as South and Southeast Asia.

This process is both reinforced and complicated by the wider forces of globalization. Revived intra-regional flows intersect with new flows that spill over regional boundaries. China today, for example, is one of the largest "exporters" of migrants worldwide. Chinese emigrants head to Korea and Japan as well as to North America, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere. Migrants from South and Southeast Asia often move between the countries of Northeast Asia, taking up work in South Korea, for example, before moving on to Japan or vice versa. These new currents of migration create communities that overlap with those of earlier waves of migration but also have their own cultural dynamics. These dynamics are vividly illustrated, for example, by the contrast between the older-established ethnic Korean community of Tsuruhashi in the Japanese city of Osaka and the newer Korean and multicultural community of Shin

Okubo in Tokyo (Rands, 2007).

In a region where national borders have for decades been relatively tightly closed, this freer flow of people across frontiers creates many new challenges. Active steps by national and local governments and non-governmental groups are essential to ensure that national societies adapt to greater mobility and diversity. Without such steps, there is always a danger that migration will be accompanied by growing nationalism, ethnocentrism, and xenophobia.

But the new spaces of migration in Northeast Asia also create a wealth of opportunities for cultural interaction and regional integration. Here, I should like to outline just three major ways in which cross-border mobility can help to promote regional peace and reconciliation.

1. Reuniting Memories

If (as suggested earlier) the Cold War divisions of the region laid the foundations for conflicts over history and memory by hindering person-to-person dialogue across national boundaries, then it is also true that the opening of borders is creating new spaces for dialogue. As an academic who works mainly on Japan, I have been fascinated by the transformation that has taken place in the past fifteen years in the relationship between my Japanese friends and colleagues and their counterparts in South Korea and China. Until the early 1990s, almost no-one I knew in Japan was engaged in collaborative research with scholars in Korea or China, though many had close links to scholars in the United States or Europe. Today, collaborative projects, conferences, and exchange programs linking universities in the various parts of Northeast Asia abound.

Many of these collaborative projects are specifically concerned with the task of promoting reconciliation within the region. Cross-border groups have been set up by both governments and informal groups of scholars and intellectuals to exchange ideas and promote mutual understanding. At a grassroots level, travel and cultural interaction has

made people, particularly young people, within the region far more aware of the opinions of the people in neighboring countries than they would have been two decades ago. As mentioned earlier, this awareness does not always produce understanding or harmony. However, a growing range of social movements have been working to create spaces of dialogue where people from around the region can meet to exchange ideas and work toward the mutual understanding of regional issues. These movements often draw on the expanding worldwide pool of expertise in the creation of dialogue and reconciliation. Good examples include the Grassroots House Peace Museum in Kochi, Japan, and the Collaborative East Asian Workshop, which has brought young people from Japan, Korea, and elsewhere together to address the legacies of Japan's mobilization of forced labor during the Asia-Pacific War (Kim, 2007).

2. The Diaspora as a Bridge

While the closing of national border during the Cold War intensified suspicion of and discrimination toward foreign minorities and tore many families apart, the reintegration of Northeast Asia creates new possibilities for members of the diaspora to act as links between their ancestral countries and current homes. In this sense, the diasporic communities of Northeast Asia are not simply victims of colonialism and Cold War power politics but also important and active participants in the current process of dialogue and reconciliation.

There are already many examples of overseas Chinese, Koreans, and others playing this role. For example, prominent *Zainichi* Koreans (Koreans in Japan) have been key actors in promoting cultural dialogue between Japan and Korea. Sakhalin Koreans play a central role in the burgeoning economic relationship between South Korea and the Russian Far East, while ethnic Koreans in the Yanbian region are crucial intermediaries in trade and cultural contact between Korea and Northeastern China. In the future, it seems reasonable to hope that ethnic

Koreans who took part in the Cold-War-era migration from Japan to North Korea may be able to play a similarly important role in reconnecting cultural and economic ties between their South Korean ancestral homes, Japan (where most have close relatives still living), and North Korea.

A focus on the diaspora can also serve as a force for reconciliation in another way. The histories of diasporic and migrant communities are stories that have generally been neglected or marginalized in the national historical narratives of all the countries of the region. The experiences outlined in this paper—of Koreans in Sakhalin and Japan, ethnic Korean "repatriation" from Japan to North Korea, and Chinese "repatriation" from Korea—are areas of history that do not figure prominently in any country's textbooks. They are, however, inescapably histories that link the region's nations. Exploring these neglected stories from multiple national perspectives could become a collaborative project, linking researchers from around the region in the rediscovery of shared memories and the conquest of shared amnesia.

3. Regional Collaboration on Migration

It would, of course, be naïve to paint a uniformly rosy picture of cross-border movement in Northeast Asia. The refusal of China to grant refugee status to any border-crossers from North Korea, the difficult conditions faced by many North Korean refugees in South Korea, and the upsurges of media hysteria in Japan over the allegedly high crime rate of Chinese migrants are reminders of the complex processes of adjustment that accompany the growing cross-border migrations of people. The creation of a new space for movement in Northeast Asia will create enormous future challenges. It is impossible to predict the course of events in North Korea or to say how the gradual journey toward Korean reunification will unfold. Nevertheless, no matter how these processes occur, I think it is inevitable that they will be accompanied by new

outflows of people from North Korea. The region's governments and NGOs will need skill and sensitivity to find a response to these flows that is both practical and genuinely humanitarian. Too much of the discourse on the human rights of North Korean refugees to date has been colored by questionable political motives. A fresh, long-term approach to the future of this issue is urgently needed.

Other large-scale migrations in the region, including the out-migration of ethnic Koreans from China and wider waves of internal and overseas migration by Chinese citizens, will also challenge the capacity of governments to respond imaginatively to the changed human geography of the region. It is in this context that I have argued the need for new forms of regional collaboration to address present and future migration issues (Morris-Suzuki, 2006). One approach to such collaboration might be the creation of a forum on migration issues linking Northeast Asian nations. The object of such a forum would be to engage representatives from migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries of the region in constructive dialogue and the production of creative ideas to address the problems of migration and migrants' rights. It is particularly important that such collaboration should be multilayered, involving representatives both of government and non-government organizations, drawing on the expertise of people from many walks of life. The forum should provide an opportunity for representatives of migrant communities themselves to contribute to the debate on the future of regional migration policies.

Migration is both one of the greatest challenges and one of the greatest integrating forces for a new Northeast Asia. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, Cold War borders ensured that the paths of migration within the region were paths of pain strewn with obstacles and ambushes. In the 21st century, there is an opportunity for a new approach to borders and migrations: a collaborative approach that could be one of the starting points for a wider process of regional cooperation.

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