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Immigration Trends and Policy Changes in Taiwan*

Hong-zen Wang

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This paper discusses the historical development of Taiwan's immigration policy since 1949, the demographic changes in the past two decades that shaped it, and its impact on female marriage migrants and migrant workers. Taiwan's current immigration policy is based on three ideologies: the patriarchal *jus sanguinis* principle, population quality, and national security. The result is a contradictory policy for marriage and labor migration. As regards the former, many Taiwanese men try to find wives from overseas, on the one hand, while the government strictly controls the entry of 'low quality' women from China and Southeast Asia, on the other. In the same manner, the policy allows high-skilled labor to move freely in and out of Taiwan, while it restricts the stay of blue-collar migrant workers and excludes Chinese nationals from working in Taiwan due to national security reasons. The paper also explores the possible impact of China's rising political economy on Taiwan's future policies, particularly on Taiwan's *jus sanguinis* immigration ideology.

Historically, Taiwan has been a migrant-receiving society since the Dutch occupation in the sixteenth century to the Japanese colonization in the first half of the twentieth century. More than two million Chinese refugees and soldiers moved to Taiwan after the civil war between 1949 and the early 1950s

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(Wang, 2002). At the end of World War II and the ensuing Cold War era, the Taiwanese government strictly controlled population movements in and out of Taiwan to prevent communist infiltration. The legacy of colonial population control systems, including the household registration system, an ID system and the *Pao-Chia* system (community-based crime prevention system), has remained to facilitate the Kuomintang's (KMT) control when the Japanese colonial government handed Taiwan over to the Chinese KMT government in 1945 (Yao, 2008). Taiwanese were not allowed to travel overseas freely until the late 1970s, and, at that time, one needed not only a passport, but also permission for overseas travel from the government.

Globalization trends since the 1980s, especially the free flow of capital, persons and ideas in the East Asian region, contributed greatly to the relaxation of travel restrictions. This was followed by the increasing mobility of the Taiwanese population – many migrated permanently to North America and large numbers traveled to China and Southeast Asia for business and work. At the same time, international migration to Taiwan, mainly labor migration and marriage migration, increased significantly in the past two decades.¹

The paper starts with a discussion of the historical development of Taiwan's immigration policy since 1949. It then moves to an examination of the demographic changes in Taiwan over the past two decades that have had a deep impact on the social structures and the policy decision to admit immigrants. In the third part, the focus of discussion is on two groups of new immigrants, i.e., female migrant spouses and migrant workers, in an attempt to better understand their life in Taiwan.

Historical Development of Immigration Control

Currently, there is a very complicated immigration system in Taiwan due to its unique political history with China. Residents living outside Taiwan are categorized into six groups: (1) Chinese from the People's Republic of China (PRC), including people from Hong Kong and Macao after 1997; (2) Overseas Chinese, including Hong Kong people before 1997, Macao people before 1998, who left China before 1949, and holders of the Republic of China (ROC) passports and their children; (3) Overseas Chinese without PRC, ROC or Taiwan passport but marked by the local government as ethnic Chinese; (4)

¹ For clarity, I use 'Republic of China' (ROC), Taiwan's official nation name, to denote the Nationalist government that controlled China before 1949, and 'Taiwan' to mean the Taiwanese government after 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan to fight against the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Taiwanese who have been naturalized in other countries; (5) PRC Chinese who have been naturalized in other countries; and (6) Foreigners. Basically, the six categories can be collapsed into two groups: foreigners and ethnic Chinese.

Such a complex immigration system has developed over different periods in the past 60 years because of changes in the political milieu and social change faced by the Taiwanese government. The Chinese government since the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) regards ethnic Chinese, no matter how long they have left China and lived permanently overseas, as its nationals. Whoever went to the Chinese embassy could claim a Chinese passport before 1949 (Lee, 1994). However, after the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists in the late 1940s, the ROC government resettled in Taiwan, but it still claims that mainland China is part of its territory, and the mainland Chinese under PRC control are its nationals. Taiwan's government used the 'ROC' title to sit in the United Nations before 1971, claiming to be the sole representative of the Chinese government. Since it was a *de facto* separation of mainland China and Taiwan China, the government of Taiwan did not allow any PRC Chinese to enter Taiwan, but allowed overseas ROC passport holders to return to their homeland, Taiwan. In the early 1960s, when there was a large-scale ethnic tension between Indonesian Chinese and indigenous people in Indonesia, the government of Taiwan sent two warships to receive those ethnic Chinese who wanted to leave (Liu, 2004). It also established many Chinese schools in different countries and recognized the credentials attained from these schools so that overseas Chinese could receive the most classical and orthodox Chinese education. These students could come to Taiwan to continue their tertiary education under the Taiwanese government's sponsorship.

To attract overseas Chinese with ROC passports to come to Taiwan to invest, to study or to visit relatives, these Chinese are granted a special certificate, *Huaqiao shenfen zhengmingshu* (Overseas Chinese Certificate), which is only issued to overseas Chinese who can prove that they or their parents had ever held ROC passports. Overseas Chinese can use this certificate to apply for settlement in Taiwan (Ministry of Justice, 2009). Table 1 shows the number of overseas Chinese granted permit to settle in Taiwan from 1982 to 2007. About three-quarters of these overseas Chinese immigrants came from within Asia.

But since the 'ROC' was expelled from the United Nations in 1971, and after the US recognized PRC China in 1979, Taiwan became a political pariah in the international community. Many Taiwanese left the country in the 1970s and 1980s to seek political security elsewhere. There is no data available for emigration at that time, but Figure 1 below demonstrates that whenever there was a blow to Taiwan's political stability, the number of emigrants increased.

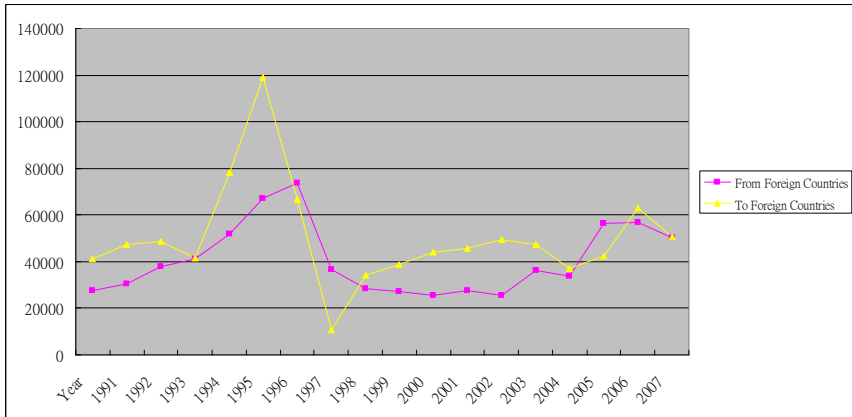
TABLE 1
NUMBER OF OVERSEAS CHINESE SETTLED IN TAIWAN, 1982-2007

Region/Country of Origin	Male	Female	Total
Asia	55,582	114,143	169,725
Vietnam	2,442	31,401	33,843
Indonesia	3,388	25,673	29,061
Hong Kong	15,453	11,982	27,435
Burma	8,975	11,127	20,102
Macao	6,516	6,248	12,764
Philippines	4,920	7,006	11,926
Thailand	3,643	7,672	11,315
Malaysia	3,125	2,900	6,025
Korea	2,541	3,056	5,597
Japan	2,287	2,950	5,237
Cambodia	83	2,178	2,261
Other	2,209	1,950	4,159
America	24,590	26,388	50,978
USA	19,948	21,633	41,581
Canada	2,700	2,791	5,491
Brazil	652	647	1,299
Other	1,290	1,317	2,607
Europe	1,534	1,731	3,265
Oceania	1,887	1,969	3,856
Africa	735	740	1,475
Unknown	921	779	1,700
Total	85,249	145,750	230,999

SOURCE: Overseas Chinese Affairs Council, available at <http://www.ocac.gov.tw/download.asp?tag=P&file=DownFile/File_977.xls&no=977>, accessed on 7 July 2009

This was the case during the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996 when China launched long-range missiles to intimidate former President Lee Teng-hui. In addition, since the mid-1980s, Taiwanese investments in Southeast Asia and China have increased enormously resulting in higher opportunities for many Taiwanese nationals to be posted overseas (Wang, 2008b). It is even claimed that there are more than half a million Taiwanese living in Shanghai. This situation created a new category for immigration control. If those who left Taiwan have applied for naturalization in other countries, they can now be regarded also as 'overseas Chinese,' thus expanding the traditional meaning of 'overseas Chinese,' i.e., those who mostly come from Mainland China.

FIGURE 1
MIGRATION REGISTRATION OF RESIDENT POPULATION IN TAIWAN, 1991-2007



SOURCE: Dept. of Household Registration Affairs, MOI (2009), available at <http://www.ris.gov.tw/ch4/static/st20-12.xls>, accessed on 8 July 2009

Basically, these overseas Taiwanese would have no problem applying for new passports to return to Taiwan provided they can present their old Taiwan ID cards, passports or household registration.

Regarding the category of the PRC Chinese, the mutual exchanges between Taiwan and the PRC were banned before 1985, and there were no mutual visits between the people from both sides. After 1986, the Taiwan government relaxed its control of hometown visits (to Mainland China) by the veterans who fled to Taiwan with the Chiang Kai-shek army. This led to a significant increase in exchanges between the two sides, whether for economic investments or personal visits. Since then, intermarriages between mainlanders and Taiwanese have taken place, creating a new problem for the Taiwan government, which had to reluctantly accept so-called ‘enemy people’ to come to Taiwan for family reunion. The government was then forced to abolish its archaic regulations, and in 1997, a law, ‘The Act Governing Relations between Peoples of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area’ (*Liangnan renmin guanxi tiaoli*), was passed to accommodate the new migration situation. This law also applied to people in Hong Kong and Macao (Mainland Affairs Council, 2009). However, the control over PRC Chinese is stricter than for other foreigners for reasons of national security. Hence, there are currently two laws to regulate marriage immigrants, one is a law specifically for PRC Chinese, while the other is a law applicable to all other foreigners.

The non-Chinese or foreigners form the second major immigration category in Taiwan. This category subsumes three types of immigrants: migrant workers, marriage immigrants and skilled workers, each of whom are further defined, with each group being treated differently. The migrant worker category, which was officially introduced in 1991, refers to less-skilled foreign nationals who are on 'short-term, non-settlement' immigration; people in this category have to leave Taiwan after their job contract expires. Skilled workers from all over the world are welcomed by the government, and they are entitled to apply for permanent resident status after living in Taiwan for six years. They can stay in Taiwan for as long as they like. Both types of migrant workers (i.e., less-skilled and skilled) are regulated by the Employment Law (*Jiuye Fuwufa*). Meanwhile, marriage immigrants are generally treated as nationals, although Southeast Asian immigrants are commonly regarded as being of 'poor population quality,' so they and their children should be carefully monitored (Wang and Belanger, 2008).

The historical development of immigration control frames Taiwan's current immigration policy, which will be discussed in detail in the latter part of this paper. Meanwhile, the next section will discuss the demographic changes experienced by Taiwan and explain its impact on the demand for immigrants.

Demographic Changes in the Past Two Decades (1985-2008)

Like other Asian countries, an important demographic trend in Taiwan is the delay of marriage and the increasing proportion of women who remain single (Jones and Shen, 2008). Since the end of the 1980s international marriage has become a common strategy for single men who are in a disadvantaged position to find brides in the local marriage market. In 2007, some 771,992 men aged between 30 and 44 or 27.5 percent of this age group remained unmarried while only 543,169 women in the same age group stayed single (see Table 2 below). In other words, there is a bride deficit in Taiwan's marriage market.

Since 2000, about one out of ten newlywed couples in Taiwan is in an international or cross-border marriage (Table 3). The data exclude PRC Chinese spouses who are not officially considered as foreigners. If PRC Chinese were included, the proportion of registered cross-border marriages would be higher, at one in five. The sudden drop in Taiwanese-Chinese cross-border marriages in 2004 was the outcome of a stricter interview policy for newly-arrived Chinese immigrant spouses at the airport. Table 4 below shows that the failure rate for the interview went as high as one-third of all interviews. According to news reports, the failure rate was as high as 35 percent for interviewees with Vietnamese spouses (*China Times Daily*, 22 July 2009). The drop in the number of foreign immigrant spouses in 2005 was also the result

TABLE 2
SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC DATA IN TAIWAN, 1975-2007

Year	Population	Number of women aged 15-49	Total fertility rate	Newly-born Babies	Unmarried aged 30-44		% 65 years and over	International Migration	
					Males	Females		Inbound	Outbound
1975	16,223,089	3,919,805	2.84	369,349	131,754	44,081	3.5	17,639	16,426
1976	16,579,737	4,047,219	3.08	425,125	121,715	45,205	3.6	15,466	15,426
1977	16,882,053	4,172,297	2.70	397,373	119,123	47,450	3.8	14,272	21,875
1978	17,202,491	4,294,491	2.72	410,783	119,797	56,250	4.0	15,818	22,371
1979	17,543,067	4,415,681	2.67	424,034	126,937	61,473	4.1	14,281	18,166
1980	17,866,008	4,533,257	2.52	413,881	140,171	73,834	4.3	13,847	15,988
1981	18,193,955	4,648,047	2.45	414,069	151,692	82,529	4.4	14,377	11,142
1982	18,515,754	4,757,502	2.32	405,263	162,154	90,267	4.5	14,007	13,370
1983	18,790,538	4,857,683	2.17	383,439	175,961	102,260	4.7	14,011	17,295
1984	19,069,194	4,959,369	2.05	371,008	191,871	111,850	4.9	14,765	22,513
1985	19,313,825	5,058,530	1.88	346,208	214,080	124,954	5.1	16,902	32,878
1986	19,509,082	5,146,231	1.68	309,230	234,795	137,471	5.3	19,228	30,733
1987	19,725,010	5,230,176	1.70	314,024	257,521	149,927	5.5	26,993	40,745
1988	19,954,397	5,313,456	1.85	342,031	286,339	163,304	5.7	30,778	38,840
1989	20,156,587	5,390,622	1.68	315,299	313,169	183,199	6.0	33,492	33,167
1990	20,401,305	5,464,196	1.81	335,618	347,406	204,604	6.2	31,391	25,518
1991	20,605,831	5,551,085	1.72	321,932	381,882	220,025	6.5	27,723	41,062
1992	20,802,622	5,643,283	1.73	321,632	417,086	238,576	6.8	30,553	47,151
1993	20,995,416	5,732,819	1.76	325,613	448,956	257,277	7.1	38,059	48,495
1994	21,177,874	5,838,714	1.75	322,938	491,954	279,187	7.4	41,113	41,743

TABLE 2 (continued)
SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC DATA IN TAIWAN, 1975-2007

Year	Population	Number of women aged 15-49	Total fertility rate	Newly-born Babies	Unmarried aged 30-44		% 65 years and over	International Migration	
					Males	Females		Inbound	Outbound
1995	21,357,431	5,953,671	1.77	329,581	521,722	290,663	7.6	51,855	78,420
1996	21,525,433	6,061,425	1.76	325,545	543,280	296,164	7.9	67,089	119,144
1997	21,742,815	6,160,153	1.77	326,002	560,547	307,252	8.1	77,720	66,644
1998	21,928,591	6,247,214	1.46	271,450	588,284	324,971	8.3	47,754	10,776
1999	22,092,387	6,313,071	1.55	283,661	606,860	346,062	8.4	40,833	34,258
2000	22,276,672	6,352,815	1.68	305,312	620,066	367,632	8.6	44,302	38,674
2001	22,405,568	6,359,382	1.40	260,354	635,570	390,665	8.8	40,479	44,086
2002	22,520,776	6,346,621	1.34	247,530	650,001	413,461	9.0	42,311	45,846
2003	22,604,550	6,341,051	1.23	227,070	668,308	437,631	9.2	37,305	49,560
2004	22,689,122	6,332,149	1.18	216,419	698,770	467,129	9.5	50,776	47,185
2005	22,770,383	6,320,814	1.11	205,854	730,054	498,121	9.7	52,520	37,140
2006	22,876,527	6,313,944	1.11	204,459	781,010	543,172	10.0	80,239	42,247
2007	22,958,360	6,307,957	1.10	204,414	821,419	579,659	10.2	82,428	63,150

SOURCE: MOI (2009), available at <<http://www.ris.gov.tw/ch4/static/st20-12.xls>>, accessed on 7 July 2009

TABLE 3
NUMBER OF MARRIAGES IN TAIWAN, 2000-2008

Year	Marriages between Taiwanese nationals	Marriages between Taiwanese nationals and foreigners			Total number of marriages
		China	Other foreigners	Total foreigners	
2000	13,6676	23,628	21,338	44,966	181,642
2001	12,4313	26,797	19,405	46,202	170,515
2002	12,3642	28,906	20,107	49,013	172,655
2003	11,6849	34,991	19,643	54,634	171,483
2004	10,0143	10,972	20,338	31,310	131,453
2005	11,2713	14,619	13,808	28,427	141,140
2006	11,8739	14,406	9,524	23,930	142,669
2007	11,0341	15,146	9,554	24,700	135,041
2008	13,3137	12,772	8,957	21,729	154,866

SOURCE: Immigration Bureau, MOI (2009), available at <http://www.immigration.gov.tw>, accessed on 7 July 2009

of a strict policy requiring would-be spouses to undergo individual face-to-face interviews in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This requirement resulted in a 50 percent decrease in the number of Vietnamese spouses that year.

TABLE 4
OUTCOME OF INTERVIEWS WITH THE PRC SPOUSES ENTERING TAIWAN, 2003-2008

Year	Passed	Deported	Not Passed	Need second round of interview	Total number interviewed
2003	6,338	891	939	1,132	9,300
2004	43,571	1,445	3,334	3,985	52,335
2005	31,619	1,369	5,076	4,119	42,183
2006	26,654	1,001	3,541	4,662	35,858
2007	27,469	477	5,267	6,936	40,149
2008	20,902	216	3,510	5,870	30,498

SOURCE: National Immigration Bureau, available at <http://www.immigration.gov.tw>, accessed on 2 July 2009

TABLE 5
NUMBER OF NEWLY-BORN BABIES BY MOTHER'S NATIONALITY, 2000-2007

Year	Native	Mother's nationality		Total
		Foreign		
2000	28,2073	23,239		305,312
2001	23,2608	27,746		260,354
2002	21,6697	30,833		247,530
2003	19,6722	30,348		227,070
2004	18,7753	28,666		216,419
2005	17,9345	26,509		205,854
2006	18,0556	23,903		204,459
2007	18,3509	20,905		204,414

SOURCE: MOI (2009), available at <http://www.edu.tw/files/site-content/B0013overview77.xls>, accessed on 6 June 2009

NOTE: Chinese and foreign female spouses are counted as natives if they have been naturalized.

In the past decade, about one in eight or nine newly-born babies is born to couples in international or cross-border marriages (see Table 5); many of those children are now in primary and secondary school. As Table 6 shows, the number of students with an immigrant parent increased more than three-fold, from 30,040 students in 2003 to 103,600 in 2007. This means that without the immigrants, the number of newly-born babies in Taiwan will be about 10 percent less than the current level.

TABLE 6
DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS IN PRIMARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
BY PARENT'S COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, 2003-2007

Parent's country of origin	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
China	10,087	15,764	21,181	28,776	37,552
Indonesia	7,839	11,525	14,143	18,107	21,825
Vietnam	3,567	7,141	10,940	16,584	25,299
Philippines	2,143	3,185	3,801	4,500	5,084
Thailand	1,859	2,447	2,858	3,257	3,590
Other	4,545	6,349	7,278	1,477	10,250
TOTAL	30,040	46,411	60,201	72,701	103,600

SOURCE: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, available at http://www.cher.ntnu.edu.tw/sindex/upload/taiwan/basic_edu/input/com_kidparents_nationa.xls, accessed on 6 June 2009

TABLE 7
TYPE OF HOUSEHOLDS, 1992 AND 2002

Type of Household	Total number of households		Percent of households with persons aged over 65	
	1992	2002	1992	2002
Single	6.6	8.5	9.6	8.7
Only wife & husband	8.5	12.9	19.6	29.2
Single parent	6.4	8.1	3.9	4.6
Nuclear	56.6	47.7	14.3	12.9
Three-generation	17.0	16.3	43.1	33.5
Other	5.0	6.5	9.6	11.2

SOURCE: Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS), available at <http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/public/Attachment/412218164171.doc>, accessed on 9 July 2009

Another major demographic change in Taiwan is the onset of an aging society. In 1988, the population aged over 65 was only 5.7 per cent, but in 2007, it increased to 10.2 per cent (see Table 2). Industrialization brings urbanization, and most families are nuclear families living in cities. Many elderly continue to live with their children, especially with their sons, a set-up which frees the government from the responsibility to provide a general care system for its elderly members. However, when a one-income family is no longer sustainable, the care of the elderly becomes a problem when both the wife and husband have to work outside the home. Although majority of the elderly co-reside with their children, Table 7 shows that the proportion living independently from their children increased from 19.6 per cent in 1992 to 29.2 per cent in 2002, a big increase of 10 per cent in ten years. Three-generation family types with persons aged over 65 declined from 43 per cent to 33 per cent in the same period. In other words, the traditional family care system no longer seems sustainable. To deal with this care crisis, the government has allowed families to hire migrant workers to take care of their elderly since 1992.

In addition to the care crisis, Taiwan has been experiencing a labor shortage since the late 1980s. Taiwan officially started importing foreign labor in 1991, with the manufacturing and social service industries employing most of the migrant workers. After 1986, Taiwan experienced a shortage of cheap labor and, therefore, quickly moved its production lines to its neighboring countries: to Southeast Asia initially, to China in the early 1990s, then to Vietnam and Cambodia in the late 1990s. Meanwhile, the Taiwan government started importing labor to cope with the demand from the industrial sector.

TABLE 8
NUMBER OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN TAIWAN, 1991-2008

Year	Total	Industry			Welfare-Related Service	
		Agriculture	Manu- facturing	Construction	Elderly	Domestic
1991	2,999			2,999		
1992	15,924	70	8,722	6,463	306	363
1993	97,565	426	72,327	17,287	1,320	6,205
1994	151,989	1,044	109,170	28,317	4,257	9,201
1995	189,051	1,454	132,636	37,554	8,902	8,505
1996	236,555	1,384	162,482	42,434	16,308	13,947
1997	248,396	1,144	165,534	42,606	26,233	12,879
1998	270,620	1,109	168,197	47,946	41,844	11,524
1999	294,967	993	173,735	45,446	67,063	7,730
2000	326,515	1,185	181,998	37,001	98,508	7,823
2001	304,605	1,249	157,055	33,367	103,780	9,154
2002	303,684	2,935	156,697	23,341	113,755	6,956
2003	300,150	3,396	162,039	14,117	115,724	4,874
2004	314,034	3,089	167,694	12,184	128,223	2,844
2005	327,396	3,147	166,928	13,306	141,752	2,263
2006	338,755	3,322	169,903	11,745	151,391	2,394
2007	357,937	3,786	183,329	8,594	159,702	2,526
2008	365,060	4,865	185,624	6,144	165,898	2,529

SOURCE: Derived from the Council of Labor Affairs database, available at <http://stat.db.cla.gov.tw/statis/webproxy.aspx?sys=210&kind=21&type=1&funid=q13016&rdm=63Yd65lb>, accessed on 7 July 2009

Tables 8 and 9 show the number of migrant workers from different Southeast Asian countries employed in various industries. The importation of migrant workers was the policy adopted by the government to deal with the care crisis and cope with labor shortages in various industries.

The government claimed from the beginning that the recruitment of migrant workers was a 'supplementary' measure and that all migrant workers had to leave after their contract expires. In the first few years, the policy allowed unskilled migrant workers to stay for only three years, but this was relaxed to six years in 2000, and then to nine years in 2007. This shows that the so-called 'short-term, temporary' migration of foreign labor initially envisioned by the government has, in fact, evolved into 'long-term' migration. In addition, the situation also exposed the structural dependence of the country on migrant workers in coping with the care crisis and the blue-collar

TABLE 9
MIGRANT WORKERS BY GENDER AND NATIONALITY, 1998-2008

Year	Indonesia		Philippines		Thailand		Vietnam	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1998	17,800	4,258	60,197	54,058	120,230	13,137	-	-
1999	11,712	29,512	37,855	76,073	118,188	21,338	12	119
2000	12,126	65,704	30,100	68,061	118,563	24,102	2,556	5,190
2001	10,336	80,796	23,284	49,495	107,635	20,097	3,977	8,939
2002	9,622	83,590	22,212	47,214	93,904	17,634	8,400	21,073
2003	6,971	49,466	23,685	57,670	86,914	17,814	10,831	46,772
2004	4,831	22,450	25,504	65,646	86,477	18,804	11,610	78,631
2005	6,350	42,744	28,311	67,392	81,215	17,107	12,497	71,688
2006	8,861	76,362	28,429	61,625	77,696	15,198	15,065	55,471
2007	12,845	102,645	29,079	57,344	73,057	13,891	24,031	45,012
2008	15,373	112,391	28,035	52,601	64,015	11,569	34,568	46,492

SOURCE: Derived from the Council of Labor Affairs database, available at <<http://statdb.cla.gov.tw/statis/webproxy.aspx?sys=210&kind=21&type=1&funid=q13016&rdm=63Yd65lb>>, accessed on 7 July 2009

labor shortage. However, due to the long-held ideology² that Taiwan is a zero-migration country, it is not easy for the government to change its rhetoric. In the following section, I briefly discuss the characteristics of Taiwan's migration policy, which has been shaped by various historical and political developments.

Characteristics of Taiwan's Immigration Policy

As explained earlier, the government had authorized the importation of migrant workers and cross-border marriages as major strategies to tackle the labor shortage (including the care crisis) and the bride deficit. The arrival of workers and marriage immigrants into Taiwan in such a short period called for changes in the government's migration policies. However, the main principles underlying Taiwan's migration policies have not truly changed to the extent that they should.

² A similar ideology is found in different Asian countries. For a detailed comparison, see Belanger, Lee and Wang (2010).

The most important ideology that sustains immigration policy in Taiwan is the patriarchal *jus sanguinis* principle. As discussed previously, the political rivalry between the PRC and ROC led to the creation of a specific immigrant category for overseas Chinese, based on the *jus sanguinis* principle which has remained until now. It was considered patriarchal because before the revision of the Nationality Law in 1999, only descendants of male ROC/Taiwan passport holders could apply for naturalization. It prohibited foreign men who married Taiwanese women from acquiring Taiwanese citizenship, while foreign women who married Taiwanese men were automatically granted naturalization rights. Following protests by feminist advocates and foreign male spouses, the nationality law was revised in 1999 to allow the children of all ROC/Taiwanese citizens to apply for naturalization (Article 2). To remain in Taiwan before naturalization, a marriage immigrant must have an attachment to a Taiwanese national, either a spouse or child. Otherwise, the marriage immigrant has to leave when the temporary residency permit expires. This practice reflects the patriarchal family ideology in Taiwan, since most permanent settlers are women from China and Southeast Asia.

Another key concept of Taiwan's migration and citizenship policy is 'population quality' (*renkou suzhi*) and the categorization of individuals and migrants as being of lower or higher quality. The mission of the Taiwanese government is to ensure the reproduction of a good quality population, while preventing any 'contamination' from low quality populations coming into the society. A 'Population Policy Committee' was set up in the 1960s, which still remains an important body in the Ministry of Interior, to oversee the implementation of the policy on the reproduction of a 'good quality' population. The committee views a lesser-educated population as 'low quality' and should be strictly monitored. Therefore, it is not surprising that Taiwan's migration policy reflects a class-based ideology. Taiwan's government explicitly states that it will attract 'high quality population' to work and to settle in the country. As indicated in the Guidelines for 2009 Policy Implementation, 'the government will improve the effectiveness of border control, prevent human trafficking, formulate a consistent policy to prosecute, protect and prevent human trafficking, and actively attract overseas *high quality persons*' (italics by author) (Executive Yuan, 2009: 4). Blue-collar foreign workers are regarded as 'not qualified;' the government has openly excluded 'foreign workers,' which in Taiwan's social context means unskilled migrant workers from Southeast Asia, from applying for permanent residence status or naturalization, no matter how long they have stayed in Taiwan. The offspring of marriage migrant women are also regarded as 'poor quality population,' which is why the government worries about the children of female immigrants. In a survey

done in 2003 (Ministry of Interior, 2004), information on immigrant children classifies their health situation into four categories: 'good,' 'retarded development,' 'physically and mentally disabled,' and 'serious illness.' In the questionnaire, a red-inked mark is used to identify 'developmentally retarded children' as 'children under the age of six who suffer from deviant development and need early treatment.' Children of foreign mothers are flagged as potentially problematic and of 'low quality' and should therefore be strictly monitored. Despite the absence of strong evidence, the official report of the Survey on the Living Conditions of Foreign and Mainland Chinese Spouses, 2003, stated that "Many problems arise when nationals marry foreigners or Mainlanders. For instance, problems could potentially arise because of fragile love marriage [sic], disadvantaged economic situation, weak social support networks and low social status, leading to poor adaptation and strains in family relationships. Fertility and health problems may affect population quality, while low education problems makes it hard to raise children properly. When there is domestic violence, the foreign spouse becomes more vulnerable due to the absence of social support networks. Other problems that may worsen the situation include falsified marriages and illegal migration. Among the important objectives of the current migration policy are to develop supportive measures to meet the immigrant spouses' personal and family needs and protect their rights; to help these immigrants to be assimilated into Taiwan's society, and to create a multicultural society" (MOI, 2004).

The third characteristic of Taiwan's migration policy is the emphasis on 'national security.' Since the defeat of the KMT in 1949, Taiwan was built as a bastion in the fight against Communist China. Population movements were regarded as threatening to national security, so they needed to be controlled. Though the Cold War has been over for twenty years, Taiwan still enforces the law that requires a person who leaves his or her registered household and stays elsewhere for 15 days, to register with the local police. The principle is especially applied to PRC Chinese immigrants, who could be denied entry at Taiwan's airport if they were considered potential threats to national security. Mainland immigrants are not allowed to work before they get their permanent residency status, which takes about six years to acquire. Even after they have been naturalized, they could still be suspected of being communist Chinese spies, and so they are not allowed to become civil servants within the first ten years of naturalization, as provided by the Act Governing Relations between Peoples of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area.

These three principles framing current population movement control policy are not easy to change, although the tensions in the cross-Taiwan Strait relationship has eased a lot since 2008. Nonetheless, such ideologies will still dominate Taiwan's immigration policies in the coming decade.

Immigrants and Their Relationship with Taiwanese Society

In this section, I will focus on two major immigrant groups who have deeply changed Taiwan's ethnoscapes and socioscape in the past two decades. The first is female immigrant spouses and the second is the blue-collar migrant workers from Southeast Asia.

The Taiwanese Husband's Family and the Foreign Wife

Data here were mainly from the general survey on immigrants conducted by the Taiwanese Ministry of Interior in 2003. Tables 10, 11, and 12 show the average education of these immigrants. Some 95 percent of foreign spouses were females, and 85 percent of them were under the age of 35. Chinese immigrant spouses were generally older, with 77 percent of them between the ages of 25 and 44. About 35 percent of foreign immigrant spouses were

TABLE 10
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEYED IMMIGRANT SPOUSES, BY GENDER AND AGE

	Chinese			Other Foreigners		
	Mainland China	Hong Kong and Macau	Total Chinese	SE Asia	Elsewhere	Total Other Foreigners
Gender						
Male	3.4	46.7	4.4	2.9	56.1	5.2
Female	96.6	53.3	95.6	97.1	43.9	94.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Number)			(93,551)			(82,358)
Age Group						
15-24	11.6	1.5	11.3	46.5	2.0	44.6
25-34	56.5	18.5	55.5	41.3	29.3	40.7
35-44	20.6	35.5	21.0	9.6	36.5	10.8
45-54	8.0	24.6	8.4	2.2	17.3	2.9
55-64	2.3	10.4	2.5	0.4	10.2	0.8
65+	1.1	9.5	1.3	0.1	4.6	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Number)			(93,551)			(82,358)

SOURCE: MOI (2004)

TABLE 11
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF INTERVIEWED IMMIGRANT SPOUSES (IN PERCENT)

Educational Status	Chinese	Other Foreigner			TOTAL
		SE Asia	Elsewhere	Total Other Foreigner	
No formal education	2.3	3.0	0.3	2.9	2.6
Primary	18.8	33.1	5.6	31.9	25.0
Junior high school	40.6	35.7	10.3	34.6	37.8
Senior high school	27.5	21.3	19.0	21.2	24.6
Tertiary	10.8	6.9	64.8	9.4	10.1
Total number of immigrant spouses	93,551	78,824	3,534	82,358	175,909

SOURCE: MOI (2004)

employed compared with 25 percent of Chinese spouses. The difference reflects the government’s policy banning Chinese spouses from working during the first six years of their stay in Taiwan. In general, the labor force participation rates of immigrant spouses were lower than the rates for Taiwanese females at 50 percent. These low rates are attributed to the traditional roles that the immigrant women are expected to perform by the husbands’ families, particularly as the carers of young children.

TABLE 12
EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE INTERVIEWED IMMIGRANTS (IN PERCENT)

Nationality	Total	Employment Status (%)			
		Employed*	Not Employed	Unknown	
Chinese	93,551	100.0	24.9	72.0	3.1
Other foreigner	82,358	100.0	34.6	64.1	1.3
Total	175,909	100.0	29.4	68.3	2.3

SOURCE: MOI (2004)

NOTE: * including casual employment

TABLE 13
AGE OF THE INTERVIEWED TAIWANESE NATIONALS AND
THEIR FOREIGN SPOUSES (IN PERCENT)

Age Group	Taiwanese Nationals		Foreign Spouses	
	Male	Female	Chinese	Other foreigner
15-24	0.7	4.7	0.7	1.2
25-34	24.4	32.4	22.2	27.7
35-44	46.9	37.3	41.1	52.5
45-54	15.4	20.1	16.4	14.8
55-64	3.2	4.0	3.9	2.4
65+	9.4	1.5	15.7	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Number)	(167,505)	(8404)	(93,551)	(82,358)

SOURCE: MOI (2004)

Tables 13 and 14 show the age and education of Taiwanese spouses. Their ages range from 25 to 44, which is much younger compared to those marrying Chinese spouses, 16 per cent of whom are aged over 65. The latter group includes political refugees who left Mainland China after 1949 and who, prior to 1969, were prevented by the law from marrying. By the 1970s, they had already missed the marriageable age and stayed single until the early 1990s when they were allowed to go home to China to see their relatives (Chao, 2004). The educational level of Taiwanese spouses marrying foreign or Chinese

TABLE 14
EDUCATIONAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION OF THE INTERVIEWED TAIWANESE NATIONALS
AND THEIR FOREIGN SPOUSES (IN PERCENT)

Educational Status	Taiwanese	Foreign Spouse	
	Nationals	Chinese	Other Foreigner
No formal education	1.4	2.1	0.6
Primary	14.8	16.5	12.9
Junior high school	34.6	29.7	40.2
Senior high school	35.9	36.6	35.4
Tertiary	13.2	15.3	10.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Number)	(175,909)	(93,551)	(82,358)

SOURCE: MOI (2004)

spouses is junior or senior high school. According to Wang's survey of Vietnamese wives and Taiwanese husbands, the women are about twelve years younger than their spouses and have had little education beyond six years of elementary school (Wang, 2001). About half the women come from rural areas and a quarter of them are ethnic Chinese. The average age of Taiwanese husbands is 36 years old, and their educational attainment is not high, averaging less than the nine years of compulsory education. The usual occupations among the husbands are manual work, cab driving, self-employment and farming. Further, most of the respondents are from low-income areas. The socio-economic status of these grooms, then, in terms of education, occupational prestige and place of residence is comparatively low. In Taiwan, this disadvantaged social background makes finding domestic partners difficult.

There is no large-scale survey on the structure of immigrant families. According to my small-scale survey of Vietnamese wives and their families done in 2000, the average household size is 4.69, including 0.62 children, while the corresponding household size among their Taiwanese counterparts, who were similarly between 18 and 39 years old, is 5.02, including 2.08 children (Wang, 2001). In other words, besides the nuclear family, there are normally 1.76 other persons living in the immigrant households. These persons are usually the husbands' relatives, mainly his parents, while only 0.94 relatives live with the Taiwanese family. It seems that the importation of domestic workers or caregivers for the elderly is the strategy employed by middle class families, while marrying a foreign woman is the strategy among lower income families to deal with the care crisis.

In Japan, Korea and Taiwan, cross-border marriage migrants are *de facto* economic migrants in the sense that their role is that of unpaid reproductive workers in the families (Kojima, 2001; Suzuki, 2000). But the expectation of the husband's family might not be consistent with the immigrant wife's image of what her life will be in the host country. Often, conflicts arise due to disagreements over whether the wife should seek employment or not. Immigrant women are normally stereotyped and portrayed by the media as materialistic, pursuing easy money through marriage. Another stereotype is that of poor immigrant women who suffer from domestic abuse, despite the lack of evidence showing that domestic violence is more likely to happen in immigrant families than in Taiwanese families, nor is there evidence showing that their divorce rate is higher than that of Taiwanese couples (see Table 15).

In the case of Vietnamese immigrant women, most of them face many kinds of difficulties in the first few years after their arrival, mostly on account of the strong patriarchal family system in Taiwan. Vietnamese women cannot do much to change the gender relations preset by their husband's families. They have no choice but to follow the roles assigned to them: to be a dependent

TABLE 15
DIVORCE RATES IN TAIWAN, 2000-2008

Year	Among Taiwanese		Among Taiwanese Married to a Foreigner					
	Number	Percent	Chinese Spouse		Other Foreign Spouse		All Foreign Spouses	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2000	46,720	88.7	4,350	8.26	1,600	3.04	5,950	11.3
2001	49,330	87.25	4,702	8.32	2,506	4.43	7,208	12.75
2002	53,074	86.7	5,496	8.98	2,643	4.32	8,139	13.3
2003	53,898	83.09	7,943	12.25	3,025	4.66	10,968	16.91
2004	51,406	81.86	7,849	12.5	3,541	5.64	11,390	18.14
2005	51,529	82.35	7,132	11.4	3,910	6.25	11,042	17.65
2006	52,950	82.04	7,165	11.1	4,425	6.86	11,590	17.96
2007	47,428	81.05	6,603	11.28	4,487	7.67	11,090	18.95
2008	44,574	79.6	6,578	11.75	4,843	8.65	11,421	20.4

SOURCE: MOI (2009), available at <<http://www.immigration.gov.tw/aspcode/info9710.asp>>, accessed on 6 June 2009

wife and an obedient daughter-in-law, and to follow the rules imposed on them by Taiwan's patriarchal system. The language barrier, "incomplete" citizenship status, and lack of Vietnamese community support in Taiwan, all contribute to these difficulties (Tang and Wang, 2011). However, if the husbands' families were supportive, the immigrant wives can adapt to Taiwan more easily. The victimized and abused image of these immigrant women is often the product of mass media, which should not be taken for granted. Contrary to popular perceptions, cross-border marriages are not prone to divorce – less than nine percent of such marriages end up in divorce and the figure is even declining in the past decade (see the last column in Table 15).

Some of these cross-border marriages do encounter economic difficulties or domestic discords, which could result in separation, domestic violence, or divorce. Some women in such situations try to find a way out of an unhappy life. After a few years of living in Taiwan, their language ability is improved, and they are able to interact with local society. For Vietnamese wives, their culture which encourages them to be working women and filial daughters, motivates them to find a job so that they can save some money for themselves and their natal families. Having some money empowers them to be independent from their husbands. Going out to work helps them to build social networks with the Taiwanese. They can rely on these networks when they

walk out of their marriage. Moreover, a working knowledge of Taiwan's domestic violence law could come in handy when they find themselves in such situations with their partner. Once empowered, they can rise above being merely obedient daughters-in-law, subservient wives or hardworking domestic workers. They can put more focus on work and on social networking outside the family; in so doing, they find themselves a new role: that of a citizen of Taiwan (Tang and Wang, 2011).

Migrant Workers and Their Life in Taiwan

Although Taiwanese society needs migrant workers, it does not recognize the fact that such demand exists. Instead, Taiwan continues to adhere to the 'guest worker scheme,' which is based on the idea that Taiwan needs some guest workers to fill gaps in its labor force, but it does not want migrants to become members of the society. The scheme was adopted to discourage the settlement of migrant workers and their integration into Taiwanese society. As guest workers, they are treated as temporary sojourners with very limited rights (Tseng, 2004). According to regulations (56th article of the Employment Law), workers who 'run away' from their employers for more than three days are considered 'illegal' migrants. When caught by the police, they are immediately put in detention camps and then repatriated (as provided by the 34th article of the Immigration Law). Unlike Taiwanese citizens, 'run away' workers have no right to appeal their case, even if they left their jobs to escape from abuse or poor working conditions. Inconsistencies in the policies and laws in Taiwan are evident in the treatment of migrant workers, which runs contrary to provisions forbidding the arrest and detention of individuals without any legal procedures or right to appeal (Li, 2003). Foreign guest workers are also deprived of basic labor rights granted to Taiwanese workers: the right to unite, the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike. Even if the law allows mediation when there is a labor dispute, the process is time-consuming and the guest workers involved cannot work for another employer during the process.

In addition to a strict guest-workers scheme, which bonds migrant workers to their employers, coming to Taiwan entails huge costs to migrants. The international labor migration system to Taiwan has the following characteristics. Firstly, it requires the participation of intermediaries as facilitators; these are embedded in complex and transnational negotiations. Secondly, the commodification of the migration process makes migration costly to migrant workers. The profit-oriented migration industry charges steep fees for their services, which often leads to the debt-bondage of workers who are caught in a vicious cycle of having to pay back a large debt. Thirdly, migrant workers are tied to their employer, which prevents the mobility of workers in the

destination country. Compared to marriage immigrants, this condition disempowers workers further and worsens their conditions (Wang and Belanger, 2011).

The debt- and employer-bonded migrant workers have to work hard to repay the recruitment fee that could be as high as one-and-a-half years' salary in Taiwan (about US\$6,300). It means that most migrant workers cannot have any day off during their stay in Taiwan. These conditions were highlighted in a protest action staged by Thai migrant workers. On 21 August 2005, more than a thousand Thai migrant workers who were working on the construction of the Kaohsiung Mass Rapid Transit rioted to protest their poor working conditions and the inhumane treatment by their employer (*United Daily News*, 22 August 2005). The rioters burned down their dormitory, attacked their Taiwanese foremen, and demanded better living conditions. At first glance, the problem could be interpreted as a simple case of mistreatment, but in reality, the problem is rooted in structural factors that maximize profits at the expense of migrant workers' protection and well-being. These migrant workers lived in dormitories with less than 0.33 square meter of personal space per person, had more than one-third of their monthly wage deducted to pay back their placement fee, and were barred from leaving the construction site without permission. Moreover, they were forced to buy their daily needs from the company at prices that were 50 percent higher than in grocery stores outside the dormitory fence. The situation of migrant workers in Taiwan is now regularly reported by human rights advocates, including the US Department of State's, *Trafficking in Persons Report-Taiwan*. The working conditions of foreign domestic workers remain problematic. They live in private households, private spheres that often obscure the capitalist employee-employer relationship. In open interactions, domestic workers have to show submission to their employer's authority. For example, dining time for the boss is normally fixed, while the domestic workers' should always be flexible (Lan, 2006). Despite constraints, domestic workers have some opportunities to build their own social networks. In performing routine tasks, such as escorting children to school, dispensing of garbage or accompanying the elderly to the hospital, they get a respite from their employer's surveillance, providing possibilities to build relations with others.

In contrast to home-based domestic and elderly care workers who have limited interaction with fellow migrants, factory workers work together under one roof. Most of them live in dormitories where they have opportunities to network with co-workers. This also facilitates connections with other persons outside the factory. Factory workers are protected by the Labor Standard Law in Taiwan, so they are entitled to one day off every week. Though Taiwanese employers do not like to give migrant workers much freedom, they have to abide by the law. The places frequented by migrant workers, e.g., ethnic food

restaurants and discotheques, then become popular venues for them to gather. Railway stations in the major cities are the gathering points for migrant workers to meet or to have a break from their routine work. Near the station area, many ethnic restaurants and shops open to attract these customers. For instance, the east block next to the Taipei railway station has become the main meeting point for Indonesian migrant workers and is now known as "little Jakarta."

Conclusions

The principles of Taiwan's immigration policy have not changed very much in the past few decades. Political changes, particularly those related to China, and domestic pressures led to major immigration policy changes in the past. We foresee some policy changes in the near future.

First of all, the China factor will strongly influence Taiwan's immigration policy. Current migration policy toward Chinese spouses and foreign spouses is discriminatory but strong pressure from China and domestic NGOs for the equal treatment of these two groups with their Taiwanese counterparts may bring about policy changes. This is especially likely under the new government led by President Ma Ying-jeou in 2008, which is perceived as heavily leaning toward China. Among the government's moves which are read as China-friendly are the relaxation of policies allowing Chinese students to study in Taiwan after 2012. Many of these students will very likely settle in Taiwan after graduation and become permanent residents. In addition, the short-term de-sinicization process between 2000 and 2008 by former President Chen Shui-bian³ has been reversed by the new government and moves to ease policies on the immigration of overseas Chinese is undergoing. This means that more overseas Chinese would be able to apply for immigration in the coming years. It also means that the 'national security' principle will be downplayed, while the *jus sanguinis* principle, the imagined Chineseness, will again be enforced. Some evidence of this is the increase in the approval rate of applications from overseas Chinese for permanent residence in Taiwan — from 17,000 in 2007 to 31,000 in 2009 (Overseas Chinese Affairs, 2011: 4).

What will likely remain is the ideology of "population quality," which suggests that the government will continue to control marriage immigration and labor migration. The government is now trying to establish a long-term care system to tackle the aging crisis. However, persisting labor shortage will

³ The former government put more emphasis on local Taiwanese history rather than the KMT government's version of Taiwan history, which is nothing more than a part of Chinese frontier development history. Part of this policy entailed keeping a distance from overseas Chinese while maintaining strong ties with overseas Taiwanese.

make it almost impossible to halt the hiring of migrant workers (Zhou et. al., 2006). In other words, the need for migrant workers is built into the economic and social system and the claim of zero migration policy is only rhetoric.

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