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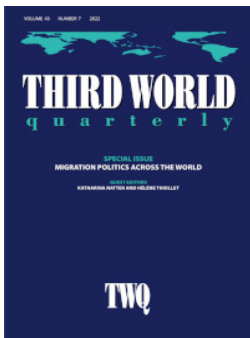
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INTRODUCTION



Theorising migration politics: do political regimes matter?

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ABSTRACT

Research on the politics of migration has so far largely produced context-bound analyses that tie specific migration policies to specific political regimes. This introduction charts existing migration research, including its gaps and biases, and introduces new avenues for empirically grounded theory-building. We draw upon the rich collection of empirical cases assembled in this volume to demonstrate that political regimes – be they liberal or illiberal, democratic or authoritarian – do not strictly and mechanically determine migration politics. Instead, we argue that migration politics and political regimes co-produce each other. Studies of migration politics in Argentina, Tunisia, Japan and South Korea, the United States and Australia, the Philippines, China, and Saudi Arabia showcase the imbrication of migration politics with broader dynamics of regime change, state formation and nation-state ideology, and dissect the role of civil society, legal actors, employers, and international norms across democratic and un-democratic contexts. They reveal unexpected similarities in migration policies in different political regimes at a time when states across the globe are increasingly adopting illiberal practices and policies. Ultimately, we suggest that, beyond contextual variations, migration politics offers an ideal vantage point for understanding state transformations and political changes around the world.

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How do states control, facilitate, or deter migration? Why do they choose to do so? And what is the role of political regimes in immigration and emigration policies?

Classical questions on the politics of migration have so far produced context-bound analyses that tie specific migration policy processes and outputs to specific types of political regimes. While political science research on migration politics has flourished over the past few decades (Hollifield and Wong 2013), studies have tended to privilege sites of investigation and questions pertaining to democratic contexts. In so doing, scholars have either implicitly or explicitly suggested a ‘regime effect’. For instance, immigration policymaking in liberal-democratic states is often portrayed as a trade-off between the interests of markets, elected political leaders, civil society actors and courts at national and international levels (Castles 2004; Freeman 1995).

While migration policies in authoritarian settings or ‘illiberal democracies’ have recently started to receive more academic attention (Adamson and Tsourapas 2020; Chung 1994; El Qadim 2015; Garc es-Masare nas 2012; Klotz 2013; Landau and Amit 2014; Milner 2009; Natter

2021a; Streiff-Fenart and Kabwe-Segatti 2012; Thiollet 2022; Tsourapas 2018, 2019; Vigneswaran 2012), thereby reducing empirical gaps, theories of migration politics remain largely Western-centric (Garcés-Mascreñas 2019) and 'regime-specific' (Natter 2018). Consequently, theoretical hypotheses or assumptions about migration politics that are globally relevant are hard to find, even in landmark works that refer to cases from various corners of the world (Castles 2010; Castles, De Haas, and Miller 2013; Hollifield and Foley 2022; Massey et al. 1993).

In fact, in studies focussed on these 'other' contexts, researchers often emphasise the role of economic and social determinants of migration (Cummings et al. 2015), while disregarding the role of state policies. 'Southern states' are often assumed to be either powerless, or, less frequently, all powerful. Public policies in non-Western states are considered largely irrelevant, either because their implementation is considered as limited by widespread corruption and a lack of administrative capacity, or because migration is seen as being driven by economic factors and individual or household strategies. This leads to a portrayal of migration politics as being dominated and structured by family dynamics, kinship and ethnic groups or networks, as well as the private sector and informal institutions.

Most scholars therefore continue to attribute little power to migration or asylum policies in non-Western contexts, a fact that was denounced several decades ago by Weiner (1985, 450). Some even deny the very existence of such policies, which in turn legitimises Western-centric approaches (Brochmann and Hammar 1999, 12). This line of reasoning is misleading, since states in the Global South, be they autocratic or democratic, have shown themselves to be effective in attracting or expelling immigrants (for instance, Saudi Arabia and, historically, Latin American countries), as well as in limiting and controlling their emigrants and citizens abroad (for instance, the former Soviet Union, Eritrea, Turkey and Morocco). Overall, from policies of 'no policy' (Mufti 2014) to total control, a whole spectrum of politics and policymaking has received insufficient attention.

The geographical limitations and regime biases that we observe in the study of migration politics are not specific to migration research: comparative politics has generally sidelined non-Western contexts, confining the Global South to the domain of development studies, while political theory remains largely Western-centric despite valuable attempts to decolonise it (see Shilliam 2021). States and public actions in the Global South are rarely investigated through public policy analysis or classical theories of the state, but rather within alternative frames borrowing from anthropology, development or area studies, which focus on cultural determinants of public governance (Triandafyllidou 2017) or on local peculiarities, such as patrimonialism (Ayubi 1996; SaadEddin 1982) and *rentierism* (Shin 2017) in the Arab world, or presidentialism and corporatism in Latin America (Diamond 1999).

This volume stems from the idea that our understanding of migration politics is hampered by a tendency to focus on immigration in certain geographical and political contexts (notably the Global North, advanced economies and democratic polities), leaving dynamics in non-Western or 'Southern' contexts under-theorised. We consider geographically limited and regime-bound approaches to migration politics to be problematic for both empirical and analytical reasons. Not only do they obscure the variations and similarities that characterise migration politics in different countries, but they also prevent researchers from capturing changes across time in each political context. We therefore aim to look beyond the dichotomous understandings of political regimes (democracy/autocracy), levels of economic development and political geographies (the so-called Global North/Global South,¹ or the West and the rest) that currently shape migration policy analysis. With this broader

perspective, we have set out to investigate the relationship between migration policies and political regimes, and to examine the factors and actors that make and unmake the politics of migration across contexts and time.

Building upon the rich collection of empirical cases analysed in this volume, we argue that – rather than being ‘regime sensitive’ per se – migration politics and political regimes co-produce each other. Such an approach ceases to consider political regimes as fixed independent variables that turn countries into silos, and instead considers political regimes as dynamic and co-constitutive of migration policies. Indeed, as migration has become more vocally politicised, in both Western and non-Western contexts, political regimes and political elites increasingly rely upon the formulation and implementation of migration policies to establish and maintain their legitimacy and authority. Considering migration politics and political regimes as co-constitutive sheds new light on the politics of migration policies across a variety of contexts – for both exclusionary and rights-enhancing policies on emigration and immigration, internal and international displacement, as well as citizenship and diaspora relations.

By studying the co-production of political regimes and migration politics through an innovative set of case studies, this volume reveals new trends and unexpected similarities in migration politics across the world. The contributions by Melde and Freier (2022), Natter (2021b) and Chung (2021) unpack migration policy in a variety of liberalising contexts – across Argentina, Tunisia, and Japan and South Korea, respectively. In contrast, the contributions by FitzGerald and Hirsch (2021), Rother (2022), van Dongen (2022) and Thiollet (2021) look at migration politics in a variety of contexts tending towards illiberalisation, particularly the United States and Australia, the Philippines, China and Saudi Arabia. Together, they offer nuanced insights on policy dynamics across the democracy–autocracy spectrum. These contributions advance knowledge on the role of civil society in times of political regime transformations – democratisation in Tunisia and South Korea, and democratic decline in the Philippines and the United States – as well as on the role of economic actors and the migration industry across a range of political economy contexts – such as China’s state capitalism and Saudi Arabia’s rentier economy, but also more mixed economies in Japan and the Philippines.

The collection thus brings together theories on migration politics in democracies and autocracies, as well as conversations on immigration and emigration politics that have so far been artificially kept apart. Together, they showcase how migration politics and political regimes are co-produced. They also demonstrate the usefulness of migration policy research more broadly for scholarship on modern statehood and its transformations.

In this introduction we outline our understanding of migration politics and political regimes, which have emerged inductively from the empirical cases studied in this volume. We then discuss the dominant assumptions currently prevailing in migration research and the scholarly debates that the authors engage in. Finally, we present the conceptual power of our innovative case selection and put the seven contributions into dialogue with each other.

Linking migration politics and political regimes

Our understanding of migration politics and political regimes is part of a broader constructivist research agenda on states and migration. *Migration politics* does not refer solely to

policies of entry, exit, citizenship and diaspora. It also encompasses power relations between non-state and state actors in the shaping of migration outcomes, thus extending beyond the immediate scope of state policies. As such, it comes close to the concept of a 'migration regime' as it also refers to the principles, norms and practices that create 'a regulative order, or a structure of governance involving a plurality of inter-connected actors' (Cvajner, Echeverría, and Sciortino 2018, 69) both within and between countries. As Sciortino (2004, 32–33) highlights, migration regimes emerge from 'a mix of implicit conceptual frames, generations of turf wars among bureaucracies and waves after waves of "quick fix" to emergencies, triggered by changing political constellations of actors'. We thus seek to highlight the historically contingent, constantly dynamic and inherently contradictory nature of migration politics across the globe.

The dynamics characterising migration politics are connected with historical (and often colonial) processes of state formation (Buettner 2016; FitzGerald and Cook-Martín 2014; Madokoro 2019; Mamdani 2020; Mongia 2018; Zolberg 2008). Migration politics thus encompasses both *structural political factors*, which may be inherited from historical dynamics of state formation, institutional path dependency or narratives of national identity, and *contingent political factors*, such as shifts in inter-institutional dynamics, partisan politics, and foreign policy interests and interventions. Ultimately, this leads us to define migration politics as the complex of power relations between state and non-state institutions, official policies and non-policies, as well as informal practices of migration control operating at various geographical scales and political levels.

Consistent with this understanding of migration politics, we approach *political regimes* as specific configurations of power in state–society relations. Regime-specific power configurations are both fixed and dynamic, and thus – to borrow a metaphor from Norbert Elias (Elias and Dunning 1986) – resemble a football game, which features both rules and serendipity. This relational definition not only captures potential regime changes – from democracy towards authoritarianism and vice versa – but also allows us to dive deeper in our understanding of states and their inner workings.

Just like regimes, states, whether weak or strong, are also shaped by power configurations that define their capacity to steer state–society relations, achieve social control and maintain their authority (Migdal 1988). By moving away from a static definition of the state towards a processual one, our approach to political regimes is sensitive to both continuities and changes. This allows us to uncover both the resilience of institutions and practices and their volatility, depending on personalities, places and circumstances. In this sense, migration politics offers a fruitful vantage point for better understanding state transformations (Thiollet 2019).

Ultimately, by focussing on political processes rather than regime categories, we seek to open a discussion on how political regimes both produce and are produced by migration politics, and in so doing, to start to overcome conceptual divides in the study of migration politics.

Conceptual divides and future research agendas

Migration studies and comparative politics, like any other field of social science, are biased by empirical and methodological Western centrism. For instance, hypotheses about why states 'lose control' (Sassen 2015), accept 'unwanted immigration' (Ellermann 2013; Joppke

1998) or suffer from a ‘control gap’ (Bonjour 2011) or a ‘liberal paradox’ (Hollifield, Tichenor, and Hunt 2008) have been developed and tested almost exclusively within liberal-democratic contexts of the Global North (Garcés-Mascreñas 2019). We know now that this asymmetry of research does not reflect immigration numbers, since South–South migration is on a par with other flows and 86% of refugees reside in developing countries.² It reflects the geography of scientific employment and institutions, the economics of research funding and the politics of academic publications, all of which favour advanced democracies as an object of scientific interest for migration policymaking. Apart from raising ethical issues, these limitations constrain our understanding of processes and dynamics of international migration politics, firstly by neglecting empirical realities that are statistically relevant – notably, migration politics in the Global South – and secondly by creating methodological and epistemological biases.

Table 1 offers a simplified representation of the research assumptions and divides that still dominate the study of migration politics. Firstly, scholarship continues to associate countries in the Global North with advanced economies and liberal democracies, in opposition to countries in the Global South, which are largely assumed to be economically developing and politically illiberal. Secondly, such ‘Northern states’ are often assumed to be strong, even in the context of globalisation. They are thus often seen as being constrained only by individual and collective rights, and largely autonomous of markets and societal actors to which they may delegate migration control (Guiraudon and Lahav 2000). In contrast, scholarship highlights that so-called ‘Southern states’ are embedded in market and social forces, which has led to a debate on the relative strength or weakness of such states. Thirdly, migration research on the Global North tends to emphasise immigration and its policies, with the main debate centred on questions of policy effectiveness, while research on the Global South focusses largely on emigration and asylum and its policies, with debates centred on issues of state capacity, informality and arbitrariness (Gamlen 2008; de Haas and Vezzoli 2011). Such divides are also reflected in the type of policy drivers highlighted in the literature, with

Table 1. Dominant research assumptions about migration politics.

Political geography	Global North/developed	Global South/developing
Political regime	Democracies/liberal	Autocracies/illiberal
Political economy	Advanced economies.	Developing or emerging economies.
State–society relations	Autonomy of states, markets and societal actors.	Embeddedness of states, markets, societal actors (developmental states, patrimonial states etc.) .
State capacity	Strong states but constrained by individual and collective rights.	Weak states/strong states debate. Weak individual and collective rights.
Type of flow	Mostly immigration.	Mostly emigration (and asylum).
Migration policies considered	Mostly immigration policies. Debate on their effectiveness.	Mostly emigration policies – or non-policies. Debate on whether policies are ineffective or all-powerful.
Main policy drivers considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics: deliberative and interest based (civil society, lobbies, partisan politics, public opinion), the rule of law (labour law, citizenship rights, asylum law, domestic courts and international organisations), bureaucratic politics dynamics. • Economics: labour market demand and supply, firms, migration industry, trade relations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics: international organisations, diplomatic relations and pressures, colonial histories. • Economics: economic development, unemployment, firms, patronage systems, recruiters, smugglers, migration industry. • Formal and informal social institutions: family, kinship, brokers, migrants’ and refugees’ networks, diasporas and transnational social groups.

domestic politics, bureaucratic politics and legal constraints dominating in research on the Global North, and international dynamics, economic development imperatives and informal social institutions dominating in research on the Global South.

Such assumptions and biases generate a series of research gaps, but they also delineate six privileged zones of investigation with the potential for advancing migration scholarship:

1. *Migration policymaking* remains scarcely studied in poor, non-democratic, postcolonial states, where either socio-economic drivers or international interventions are assumed to determine policymaking. Yet, even where such states are studied empirically, theoretical inputs remain largely determined by Western-centric premises – with some notable exceptions, which we shall discuss at the end of this section.
2. The more specific influence of *civil society and courts* on migration policy is generally disregarded as an irrelevant object of study in the context of illiberal or authoritarian contexts (Chung 2020).
3. Studies on *migration industries* often focus on illegal or informal institutions in the Global South (Surak 2018). Conversely, states' relationships with migration industries is under-researched in contemporary Northern contexts, although they were considered central in earlier phases of migration research (Bosma, van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Sarkar 2013).
4. *Immigrants' political and social incorporation* in developing countries is hardly ever studied in depth (for some notable exceptions, see the work of Ilgit and Klotz 2014; Kibreab 2003; Thioulet and Assaf 2021; Yelfaanibe and Zetter 2018).
5. Studies on *immigration and emigration policies*, respectively, belong to separate empirical and theoretical discussions, disregarding the fact that they shape the same migration patterns, only from different vantage points (see Naujoks 2010). Overcoming this divide would also serve to connect discussions on low-skilled emigration from the Global South with discussions on highly skilled expatriates from the Global North.
6. Last but not least, with the exception of critical research on transit migration, refugee studies or migration crises (Andrijasevic and Anderson 2009; Chimni 2008; Collyer, Düvell, and de Haas 2012; Lindley 2014), migrants and refugees themselves are often understudied as political agents and subjects – notably in authoritarian contexts.

Although most of these blind spots concern the Global South and thus call for more empirically grounded and theoretically orientated research 'there', we argue that the currently existing research gaps are not only geographical in nature. They also concern issues, institutions, processes, interactions and power relations that are not bound by geographical contexts. Thus, the solution to addressing these oversights in research on migration politics does not consist only in conducting research on 'non-Western others', confined to sub-fields in area studies or comparative studies. Truly global research in migration politics uses either single-case studies or comparative research across types of states and political regimes to weed out some of the mistaken assumptions of migration theories and to open new avenues for theory-building.

This innovative line of enquiry could be pursued in several different ways. Scholars might consider the seemingly 'most different' political contexts and compare, for instance, democratic apples and authoritarian pears (see the work of Garcés-Mascreñas

2012). They could trace political processes and institutions across time and contexts in greater depth than before, highlighting, for instance, the authoritarian not-so-distant past of Spain, Greece and Portugal, while acknowledging the democratic history of India and Brazil, in order to draw general conclusions on democracy and migration policymaking. They could also pay closer attention to evolutions of practices and policies that contradict current assumptions regarding political regimes: recent trends in the United States, Hungary and Poland offer striking examples of illiberal policies towards immigrants and refugees in Western democracies (De Genova and Peutz 2010; Robinson 2022). Conversely, open-door policies for asylum seekers are combined with varying levels of socio-economic rights for refugees in the Middle East (Chatty 2013; Thiollet 2011) and Africa (Milner 2009). Turning the regime-based approach on its head, it therefore seems that a focus on migration policies can reveal the shifting boundaries between democratic and un-democratic practices across contexts, and offer innovative insights on democratising authoritarianism, illiberal democracies and populist turns in contemporary politics (Schain 2018).

We pursue such promising avenues in the present volume, with a particular focus on the first two blind spots outlined above: migration policymaking and the role of non-state actors across political regimes. In doing so, we build on the still rare work of scholars who have tried to translate empirical insights from non-Western contexts into contributions to theories of migration and socio-political changes. For instance, FitzGerald and Cook-Martín (2014), in their work on ethnic and racial selection in immigration policies across the Americas, questioned Western-centric preconceptions about the link between liberal immigration policy and democracy. Audie Klotz (2013) has contributed to international relations theories of norm diffusion by looking at migration politics in South Africa, and Fiona Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas (2019) have offered new typologies of states built from examples from the Global South. Natter (2018) has explored the role of political regimes on migration policymaking in Morocco and Tunisia, and Garcés-Mascreñas (2012) has compared how markets and states interact in the governance of (irregular) labour immigration in autocratic Malaysia and democratic Spain. More generally, Liu-Farrer and Yeoh (2018) have retheorised 'international migration from [a] non-Western experience' by grounding their insights in Singapore and other Asian cases. It allowed them to propose new theories on the politics of space, and on mobility and immobility in relation to gender, ethnicity and class identities. Bakewell and Jónsson (2013) have transformed the African continent from a consumer of Western-produced theories to a reservoir of fresh theoretical insights that can unsettle, challenge and refine existing theories. Biao Xiang (2014) has demonstrated how Asia 'typifies some aspects of the relation between return migration and social transformations that are potentially global'. And the volume *Mobility Makes States*, edited by Vigneswaran and Quirk (2015), demonstrates the variety of ways in which African states have shaped – both promoted and obstructed – the multiple forms of human movement, and how these policy strategies reflect broader state survival aims such as control over territory, population and resources. Such endeavours not only have built upon well-known postcolonial critiques of refugee and migration studies (Castles and Delgado Wise 2008; Chimni 2008) but also have offered new frameworks and theories of social and political change, to which we seek to contribute.

Our contribution

The present volume offers a valuable contribution on migration politics and political regimes from a comparative perspective, building upon case studies from across the world. It brings together contributions from authors across various disciplines – political science, sociology, history and geography – whose in-depth empirical expertise sheds light on the dynamics that structure the co-production of migration politics and political regimes. The seven contributions include both single case studies and comparisons of multiple cases of immigration and emigration from across world regions: China since the 1949 revolution, Argentina since its democratisation in the 1980s, Australia and the US since the election of Donald Trump as president, the Philippines in the past two decades of political illiberalisation, Tunisia in the decade before and after the 2011 revolution, Japan and South Korea since the 1950s, and Saudi Arabia since the 1991 Gulf War.

The diversity of cases covered stands out in the field of migration and public policy studies, which continues to be strongly segmented by regions, development levels and political regime typologies, and where the research on immigration policies in Western liberal democracies or advanced economies (making up most publications in this field) rarely speaks to studies on emigration and immigration policies in the Global South or autocracies. However, there is much to gain from cross-categorical comparisons. This volume explicitly and purposefully brings together countries around the world with a variety of migration histories, economic development levels and political structures (see Table 2). We argue that comparing migration politics in immigration countries such as the United States and Australia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Japan shatters our assumptions about migration policies, with their

Table 2. Main economic, political and migratory features of the cases covered.

Countries covered (author)	Type of migration	Political regime characteristics	Geographic region	Economic development characteristics*
Argentina (Melde and Freier)	Immigration and emigration	Liberal democracy, democratic transition in the 1980s	Americas	Upper middle-income economy
Tunisia (Natter)	Immigration and emigration	Democratic transition since 2011	Middle East, North Africa	Lower middle-income economy
Japan, South Korea (Chung)	Immigration, in South Korea also emigration	Liberal democracies, democratic transition in South Korea in the 1980s	Asia	High-income economies
United States, Australia (FitzGerald and Hirsh)	Immigration	Liberal democracies, but the US was downgraded to defective democracy under Trump	Americas and Australia	High-income economies
Philippines (Rother)	Emigration	Illiberal democracy, democratic transition in the 1990s	Asia	Lower middle-income economy
China (van Dongen)	Immigration, emigration and internal migration	Autocracy	Asia	Upper middle-income economy, state capitalism
Saudi Arabia (Thiollet)	Immigration	Autocracy	Middle East, North Africa	High-income economy, rentier state economy

*https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519#High_income

various *drivers* and degrees of effectiveness, as well as the *strength* or *weakness* of states across regimes and times. Indeed, the ambition of such a diverse selection of cases (Gerring and Cojocaru 2016; Seawright and Gerring 2008) is to explore the commonalities in migration policy dynamics across pre-determined categories and to develop innovative conclusions on the co-production of migration politics and political regimes from an empirically grounded perspective.

All of the contributions are based on original empirical research and adopt a historical perspective to incorporate an analysis of the roots and origins of current developments. However, they mobilise different theoretical frameworks and methods to do so, ranging from public policy analysis and international relations to the sociology of institutions and political ethnography. Drawing on combinations of in-depth interviewing, archival research and analysis of policy, parliamentary and legal documents, the authors break open conceptual monoliths such as the 'state', the 'economy' or 'civil society', and explore the diverse and sometimes conflicting interests connected to migration within and across each of them.

Using different entry points and levels of analysis, the contributions examine:

1. the imbrication of migration politics with broader dynamics of regime change, state formation and nation-state ideology;
2. the role of civil society, legal actors, employers, inter-institutional dynamics or international norms dynamics across democratic vs un-democratic contexts;
3. the linkages between immigration and emigration politics; and
4. the broader trend towards an illiberalisation of migration policies across the globe.

Taken together, the collection showcases how migration politics and political regimes are co-produced. In fact, migration politics is not just an outcome of political change processes, but rather offers an entry point for exploring modern statehood and its transformations. The first set of contributions, devoted to Argentina, Tunisia, and South Korea and Japan, focusses on *liberalising* contexts, while the second set of contributions, on the US and Australia, the Philippines, China, and Saudi Arabia, focusses on *illiberalising* contexts. Together, they shed light on the connections between, on the one hand, internal regime dynamics in democracies and autocracies, and, on the other hand, policymaking processes related to migration (including immigration and emigration, but also return and internal migration).

In the first contribution, Susanne Melde and Feline Freier engage with the debate on the democratisation–migration policy nexus through the textbook case of Argentina. They explore the policy process that led to Argentina's revolutionary migration law in 2004, which remains the world's most far-reaching legislation in terms of migrant rights. They argue that both structural and contingent regime dynamics contributed to producing a unique window of opportunity that allowed the reform to take place, namely democratisation, the construction of national identity as a 'nation of immigrants', and the salience of human rights issues on the political agenda, as well as the 2001 economic crisis and increasing emigration rates. This context engendered multi-sectoral coalitions and strategic alliances between civil society organisations, the executive and the legislature that facilitated the passing of progressive immigration reform. The Argentinian case thus confirms the main theoretical expectation present in much of the migration studies literature that immigration liberalisation can be a spillover effect of broader human rights movements in recently consolidated democracies.

However, it is important to note that, for such progressive reform to succeed in Argentina, it had to be framed as a human rights issue, and not as an immigration issue.

In contrast to Argentina, in Tunisia, democratisation and the expansion of citizens' political freedoms did not result in pro-migrant rights reforms. As Katharina Natter shows in her analysis of Tunisian migration politics before and after the 2011 revolution, restrictive migration policies inherited from Tunisia's authoritarian past remained in place. To explain the stickiness of securitised approaches, Natter dissects how democratisation affected political legitimisation and inter-institutional and transnational dynamics of migration policymaking. The analysis highlights that, despite the unprecedented dynamism of Tunisian civil society and the efforts of various institutional actors to reform Tunisia's security-driven migration policy, there were both domestic and international forces that put the brakes on migration reform. In particular, political legitimisation in this young democracy required policymakers to accommodate divergent popular views on immigration and emigration, rather than adhere to principles of equality and freedom; inter-institutional dynamics resulted in policy stalemate rather than progressive reforms by activist courts or bureaucrats; and democratisation led to unexpected coalitions between state, civil society and international actors on migration as well as equivocal dynamics of international norm adherence. The analysis thus nuances the idea of a 'regime effect', in the sense of a link between democratisation and migrant rights.

Like Melde and Freier, as well as Natter, Erin Chung engages with the question of whether democracy prevents imposing restrictions on migration. Focussing on South Korea and Japan, she critically evaluates the claim that democracies are converging towards relatively open immigration policies and institutionalised rights for immigrants based on democratic principles or universal human rights. In fact, although both Japan and South Korea have enacted far-reaching democratic reforms in their recent histories, their immigration policies have remained relatively stagnant, more closely resembling those of autocratic than democratic regimes. Moving beyond the cultural explanations that dominate the study of East Asian immigration policy, Chung examines how *de jure* and *de facto* migration policies have enabled both states to maintain low levels of immigration while meeting labour demands through the proliferation of visa categories. In each country, these multi-tier migration policies have institutionalised specific migrant hierarchies, with some categories benefitting from broad rights and others remaining excluded from permanent residency. Chung's analysis shows that the relationship between political regime type and migration policies is indeterminate: at most, liberal democracy is a necessary but insufficient condition for the formation of liberal migration policies. Rather than assuming that immigration liberalisation is an inevitable outcome of political liberalisation, the South Korean and Japanese cases suggest that liberal migration policies are far from becoming the universal model among democratic countries and that, instead, multi-tier migration policies that combine 'liberal' and 'illiberal' logics of migration governance may become the norm.

Moving from liberalising to illiberalising contexts, the contribution by David FitzGerald and Asher Hirsh focusses close attention on the role of norms in US and Australian immigration and refugee policies. While a publication on the US and Australia might be surprising to some readers of *Third World Quarterly*, it was precisely our ambition to initiate a conversation across geographical and analytical boundaries. So far, scholarship has focussed on the constraints imposed by international rights norms and judicial autonomy

for immigration policy in liberal democracies. Less attention has been given to dynamics of deinstitutionalisation and challenges to normative constraints. In both the US and Australia, however, such dynamics were clearly at play under the Trump presidency and under the Liberal-National Coalition government in the late 2010s, respectively, when governments attempted to challenge the illegitimacy of ethnic selection of immigrants, the rights of detained children and the principle of non-refoulement. By analysing push-back from legal advocacy, public protest, and international legal and political sources, FitzGerald and Hirsh systematically identify whether the established norms managed to hold back restrictive reforms or were breached. They uncover not only the resilience of institutions and practices, but also their volatility according to the personalities and circumstances in place, thus concluding that norms are tenacious, but never immutable. They also demonstrate how the US and Australian cases can advance insights into illiberal policies across political regimes.

The case of the Philippines, which serves as an example of processes of political illiberalisation found across the world, offers valuable insights into the crucial role of non-state actors in migration politics across political regimes. In his contribution, Stefan Rother discusses the strategies and forms of leverage used by pro-migrant civil society in the Philippines, a major emigration country and an increasingly illiberal democracy. He demonstrates that, throughout Philippine history and regardless of the political regime in place (dictatorship, democratisation, democratic decline), migrant civil society has been a constant and major contributing factor to emigration and diaspora policies and the high levels of formal protection of labour emigrants. Broadening the perspective beyond the nation state, Rother shows the importance of multi-level advocacy strategies, whereby commitments made by the government at a global level are mobilised by civil society to advance rights at a national level. He argues that the high level of emigrant protection in the Philippines is the result of the mix between, on the one hand, political systems providing at least some room for manoeuvre for societal stakeholders, and, on the other hand, the strategic positioning of the country at various levels of migration governance. The paper thereby contributes to a more fine-grained understanding of the role played by civil society and the migration industry in illiberal contexts.

Consistent with the idea of the co-production of migration politics and political regimes advanced in this volume, Els van Dongen looks at China's multi-faceted migration policy in the context of historical regime transformations. What is unique about her approach is that she mobilises not only an analysis of immigration and emigration policy, but also an analysis of internal migration, to investigate the transformations of the Chinese state at two crucial historical moments: the 1949 creation of the People's Republic of China and the reform era starting in 1978. She explores both changes and continuities in migration policies through these two historical junctures, highlighting the diversity of restrictions and opportunities for internal migrants, including both emigrants and immigrants. Like Chung in the case of Japan and South Korea, van Dongen engages with the burgeoning conceptual debate around the 'migration state' to explain these multi-tiered migration policies and demonstrates that, alongside the economic and developmental drivers that are often highlighted in contexts in the Global South, national identity and state-building motives also play a major role and are therefore not limited to Western liberal democracies.

The last contribution, by H el ene Thiollet, investigates Saudi Arabia, a country with one of the highest total rates of immigration in the world, but also one of the world's most consolidated authoritarian regimes. She explores the instrumentalisation and institutionalisation of migration control from the 1991 Gulf Crisis to the 2011 uprisings, showing that migration politics has shifted from immigration denial and partly informal migration policies based on private intermediaries towards politicised, state-centred and discursively neoliberal migration policies. In this process, and with a view to consolidating the state's hold on migration policy, ruling elites imposed greater state control over market and societal institutions that were involved in immigration control, such as the Chambers of Commerce, employers, brokers and migrants' sponsors. In this sense, immigration reforms were designed not only as ad hoc counter-revolutionary measures against a potential Arab Spring in Saudi Arabia, but also as part of authoritarian modernisation. Such analysis demonstrates that migration politics – and the changing social and power relations between migrants, citizens and the state that underpin it – is key to understanding both short- and long-term political change. As Thiollet argues, such processes are not regime-specific, but can be observed across a variety of political regimes in both the Global South and the Global North.

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Notes

1. For further discussion on the use of these ready-made categories, which require contextualisation, see the special issue of *Third World Quarterly* titled 'The "Global South" in the Study of World Politics' (Haug et al. 2021).
2. South–South migration now equals South–North migration (UNDESA 2015) and 'Southern' countries host some of the largest stocks of immigrants, such as the Gulf States and Singapore, as well as the largest stocks of refugees, such as Pakistan, Uganda and Turkey (UNHCR 2018).

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