

***Balikbayan*: A Filipino Extension of the National Imaginary and of State Boundaries**

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B*alikbayans* are "returnees," "people coming back home to the Philippines." "*Bayang Magiltw....*," the Philippine National Anthem sang by Filipino children during national holidays talks about the Philippine nation, or "*bayan*" in Tagalog, a word that originally meant town and was later extended to nation. "*Balik*" means to return in Tagalog.

A skillful invention by a master politician and manipulator of symbolic meanings, the *balikbayan* program was started by then President Ferdinand Marcos to attract Filipino-American tourists back to the Philippines. It has since become the most important source of foreign exchange, skills and income for the Philippines. The program, supported by subsequent presidents, has progressively united under similar regulations overseas contract workers (OCWs) such as nurses and technicians going to the United States, construction

and service workers going to the Middle East, etc., and long-term migrants of Philippine background who have settled or were born in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and other foreign countries and have by now often become foreign nationals.

Especially since the 1990s, but also earlier, upon arrival at Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport, one cannot help but notice, on the luggage conveyors, large cartons with the word "*Balikbayan*" marked all over, next to a Filipino name and address. One can see young girls, older women, and middle-aged men lugging the boxes on carts and slowly pushing them through the customs lines, where custom inspectors waive them through after briefly interacting with them.

In Manila newspapers as well as in Philippine newspapers abroad, advertisements for "*balikbayan* box" shipments

and for remittance transfers are everywhere. In a single September 1996 issue of *Philippine News*, a nationally-distributed, U.S.-based newspaper, one finds, among others, the following:

TRAVELFAST - CHEAPEST FARES TO MANILA

SEND MONEY TO CEBU - Same day door-to-door money remittance to Metro Cebu; 2-4 days to other places - **BALIKBAYAN BOXES SHIPPED TO THE VISAYAS FROM ANYWHERE IN THE USA**

LUCKY MONEY - 24 hour Money Remittance. *Para sa Aming Mga Kababayan!* Express Money Transfer to your Loved Ones in the Philippines by AMPARO'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE Licensed since 1971 by the Government of Guam and since 1979 by the State Banking Department of California

Courier Flights R/T to Manila, Bangkok, Hongkong, Singapore, Seoul, Tokyo

SPEEDY AND SECURE Cash Delivery in 24 hours to the Philippines: Sending Money Home? Westmont Bank's WorldWide Remittance offers you quick access to worldwide banking, wherever you are in the world. **FASTER, SAFER AND LESS EXPENSIVE THAN THE "DOOR-TO-DOOR" REMITTANCE**

Philippines Now at Wholesale Prices. Tickets to and from Manila at Lowest Price Available... 20 Years in Business.

Manila on Sale. Asia Tours.

Grace Foreign Exchange. With Over a Decade of Experience in Transmitting and Delivering Money to Individuals in the Philippines.

RAPID REMIT. *Perang Padala sa Isang Kisap-Mata.* The next business day remittance to 1,600 ATMs and on-line Philippine National Bank branches.

The business addresses on these ads may be in the U.S. or the Philippines or occasionally elsewhere in the world, but the services they offer are now sometimes world-wide. In the same issue, one also finds:

"How to get a Green Card" Revised edition for \$25.95.

VIDEOS FOR HOMESICK FILIPINOS - Best Tourist Destinations, Folk-dances, Ternos, Jewelry, Fighting Cocks, Churches, Holy Week Celebrations, Regional Heritages.

Hitch your advertising to *Philippine News*. Your strongest link to the \$52 Billion Filipino Market

AT&T and Western Union Transfer advertisements in Tagalog. *Pamasko mo sa kanila. Pamasko namn sa tyo.*

Prepaid International Connection Phone-Card to the Philippines at Discount Prices

Employment Services Inc. Licensed and Bonded. We provide quality.

Nanny/Babysitters @ Housekeepers/
Cook @ Companion for the Elderly
@ Couple for Estate Housekeeping @
"Tunay na Pinoy" We Cater to all @
Everywhere in the U.S.

NURSES WANTED. IMMEDIATE OPENING IN TEXAS AND ILLINOIS. Petitioner will process Permanent Visa.

CANADA WANTS YOU!!! Skilled Immigrants and Students from Around the World!!! **CALL NOW! Speed Up**

Your Applications If You Have Relatives in Canada! Sponsor/ Guarantee your brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, other relatives and friends especially from the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Hongkong, Taiwan, Singapore, France, Germany, Italy, Australia and the U.S.A....CWSS also offers the following services/ assistance: @ Fiance/fiancee sponsorship @ Prospective entrepreneurs @ Overseas Adoption

DO YOU NEED LEGAL HELP ON IMMIGRATION? And numerous other Filipino and American lawyers advertising their services

ATTENTION: MGA KABABAYAN!!! Do you plan to buy or sell: Commercials @ Residentials @ Vacant Lots @ Condominiums @ Golf Shares @ Rentals Around Metro Manila and other Provinces?

The Balikbayan: Definitions and redefinitions

Balikbayan (Operation Homecoming), a presidential "program to invite as many overseas Filipinos as possible to come home for the holidays, from September 1, 1973 to February 28, 1974," was initiated by President Marcos very soon after declaring Martial Law. Filipino emigration was then mostly directed to North America.

On 17 August 1973 thirty-three journalists and travel agents from the United States and Canada, who had been invited by the Philippine government to be briefed on this new program, received a glorious welcome in Manila by the Department of Tourism, complete with beauty queens and sampaguita leis. They were then taken to a VIP tour of

tourist spots and beautiful beaches to impress on them the advantages of the "New Society." They talked about future trips and viable investments, and left with new and more positive perspectives about conditions in their home country (*Filipino Reporter [FR]* 1973b). With the reduced airfares promised by Marcos and the elimination of red tape for obtaining visas for, and departure clearances from, the Philippines, some 24 chartered flights by a number of different airlines, carrying about 4,000 tourists, arrived between November and Christmas 1973 (*FR* 1973a). It was a big success that helped, as hoped by President Marcos, to improve public opinion in the United States about the loss of democracy and the beginnings of Martial Law in the Philippines. The flow continued and the program was extended by the President year after year.

The definition of who was a *balikbayan*, the regulations that accompanied the concept and the reasons why the Philippine government was sponsoring *balikbayans* changed, however, progressively over time. Effective 1 March 1980, for example, only citizens or permanent residents of other lands and their families and descendants will be classified as *balikbayans*. Filipinos who worked for international organizations such as the World Bank or the United Nations could no longer enjoy that status (*FR* 1980b). Special packages were created to attract *balikbayans* to resort places like Baguio (*FR* 1980a). A *Balik-Scientist* program was also created to attract "foreign-based scientists, professionals, technicians of Filipino descent whose special skills can be utilized in priority projects of scientific research and development," to job placements in the Philippines (*FR* 1981).

The initial program, based on a budget of US\$300,000 from President Marcos, aimed "to clear the image of Martial Law and show that the country was not in disarray,...[It] provided the original *balikbayans* with ID cards that allowed easy processing through customs, discount rates in stores, convenient privileges in facilitating inter-island reservations and safe traveling permit during curfew hours," reminisces one of the participants in the original 1973 trip by promoters (*Philippine News [PN]* 1989).

Under Presidents Marcos, Aquino and most recently Ramos, many of these rulings were confirmed or further expanded. In fact, the concept of *balikbayan* has often been stretched well beyond the initial Marcos guidelines, both in law and in practice. A 1986 Executive Order allowed *balikbayans* to make up to US\$1,000 worth of duty-free purchases in foreign currency upon arrival. Memorandum Order No. 230 signed by President Aquino on 10 April 1989 declared that returnees (*balikbayans*) who had lived abroad for at least one year regardless of citizenship could, during the year following the signing of the memorandum, bring into the Philippines one used car or other types of motor vehicle per family for personal use. The used motor vehicle could be donated to a close blood relative and did not have to be paid in dollars. Full taxes and duties, however, had to be paid according to this program jointly sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industries and the House of Representatives' Committee on Trade and Industries (*FR* 1989b).

The 59-day stay of a *balikbayan* was extended to four months, with possible

further extensions up to a maximum of one year and 59 days. Fifty percent of the allowed US\$1,000 purchases in the duty-free shops upon arrival would now go directly to the national treasury in order to increase the country's balance of payments (*FR* 1989a). Many of the rules and regulations, however, were often broken in practice.

A revised set of rules and regulations in implementing the *balikbayan* program was again issued in December 1989. They defined the term *balikbayan* to mean: 1) a Filipino citizen who has been continuously out of the Philippines for a period of at least one year from date of last departure; 2) a Filipino overseas worker; or 3) a former Filipino citizen and his family (spouse and children), who had been naturalized in a foreign country and who visit or return to the Philippines.

In order to be entitled to privileges and travel tax exemption, the *balikbayans* need to show documents as proof of their status. They are entitled to purchase up to US\$1,000 of duty-free goods within 48 hours upon arrival, to be paid in US dollars. They are also entitled to air ticket promotions, visa-free entry into the country for one year, travel tax exemptions, and especially designated reception areas. Special passport stamps and separate IDs are again supposed to help enforce some of these rulings, but the program has overextended and illegal practices are rampant.

It is, however, very difficult for the government to control the issuing of ID cards, the number of trips done yearly, the precise immigrant status of the users

of the *balikbayan* program, etc. It is also cumbersome and expensive to control the use of *balikbayan* boxes which were meant to transport the personal effects of returning residents who had lived, studied and/or worked overseas but could not bring all their personal effects back with them on the plane, forcing them to put their effects in a crate which is then sent through surface transportation. Two *balikbayan* boxes can be taken along as personal belongings and *pasahubong* when a *balikbayan* comes home for a visit and are fully duty- and tax-free, whatever their content (clothing, canned goods, electronic equipment) as long as those are used items.

"Enterprising Filipinos' have taken advantage of this privilege given to repatriates," says the Customs Commissioner. "The sending of *pasahubong* (gifts) per se has no legal basis" (PN 1990). The practice—and business—of sending or bringing *balikbayan* boxes has thus gotten out of hand. Aside from accompanied plane luggage, special companies have set up businesses in the United States and in Europe, to facilitate regular unaccompanied shipments to relatives in the Philippines. The shipments which have become progressively door-to-door arrangements are paid by the sender with a fixed sum per pound (US\$3.99 per pound for canned goods, chocolate or clothes in boxes of up to 70 pounds, from New York City in 1989 for example, as opposed to US\$6.50 per pound in the case of electronic items, be they VCRs, microwave ovens and the like). These amounts include an estimated tax cost.

These boxes become the basis for many business transactions in the

Philippines. They are also the basis for dangerous encounters by a *balikbayan* upon his/her arrival in Manila. Consequently, Filipinos in the U.S. have been cautioned: "In Manila, minimize advertising yourself as *balikbayan*. Those boxes with the *BALIKBAYAN* letters emblazoned on them can be your discomfort or death" (PN 1989).

The volume of door-to-door deliveries has also increased tremendously, but has led to many shady transactions. The boxes have to clear, according to James Montenegro, Head of the World Association of Philippine Door-to-Door Carriers, 112 desks at Manila's Customs Department. Because the *balikbayan* box business contributes P4.2 billion (or US\$190 million) annually to the country's economy and, of that figure, P3.3 billion go directly to Filipino families in the form of basic commodities, P155 million to custom duties and taxes, and the remainder to the business entities involved in the shipments, Mr. Montenegro was pressuring Philippine authorities (in his meeting with the Deputy Customs Commissioner and the Finance Undersecretary in Manila) to facilitate the passage of those boxes. Indeed, there has been much recent discussion in the Philippines on how to improve and properly enforce the existing regulations (PN 1990).

By 1996, the sending or carrying of *balikbayan* boxes remains an extensive practice. They may cost as little as US\$158 for two *balikbayan* boxes and one "econo-box," reaching their destination by boat from California in 21 days, including customs clearance. But at the Manila airport the boxes one sees

arriving by air, whether accompanied or unaccompanied by a returning passenger, no longer carry the word "*balikbayan*" marked all over. People are now more cautious.

Extending state boundaries and control

Being a *balikbayan* carries a special nostalgia for the home country, a sense of belonging, of being still acknowledged by the Philippine nation-state. It expands the concept of nation well beyond its territorial boundaries to reach overseas and bind Filipinos and Filipinas to their original home.

There are other ways by which the Philippine state, in extending its presence in foreign lands, has followed its emigres and contract workers. Filipino citizens contracted to work abroad, for example, must pay an income tax to the Philippines on their foreign-earned income. This is true of nurses contracted to work in the United States as well as of construction workers, domestic workers, and other service workers in many different countries including the Middle East. Any Filipino citizen resident abroad or working there on a special overseas visa must file a tax return form when he/she requests a passport from the Philippine consulate. The income declaration should be in US dollars. While it is common practice for citizens residing overseas to pay taxes on their property and business profits in the country of origin, to owe taxes on current employment income not only in the country of current residence but also in the Philippines seems preposterous. Furthermore, nurses and

other contract workers must declare their contractual income on their initial papers, thus there is no escape. Executive Order 857 imposed forced remittances through numerous punitive clauses. An expensive renewal of the passport was required from contract workers after two years, in order to fulfill their five-year contract. And higher customs duties/taxes were for a time levied when the worker returned home for good.

If anything, this regulation encourages the adoption of local citizenship if such is possible. Many contract workers, such as nurses, doctors, teachers, have remained in the U.S. working, at times illegally, after the termination of their timed contracts. Many aspire for U.S. citizenship. Indeed, Filipinos have the highest rate of naturalization among all U.S. immigrant groups. By so doing, they enter the category of immigrant *balikbayan*, living in many ways across two countries.

It should be noted that the timed international emigration of Filipinos started on a large scale in 1965 before President Marcos coined the term *balikbayan*. The migrants' term of reference to their country of origin was progressively transformed into state policy. The relationship between the terms *balikbayan* and overseas contract workers (OCWs), however, is more complicated. President Marcos and subsequent Philippine Presidents have intervened very directly to define all migrant returnees as legally and ideologically an important part of the Philippine nation and state. They are in fact listed jointly in the 1989 laws mentioned earlier, even though their

legal relationships to both the Philippine and foreign states are quite different. And the public perception of them may also be changing.

The first Philippine overseas contract workers went in fact to the U.S.A. as nurses starting in the 1960s. Now there are overseas contract workers (in domestic work, construction, services, entertainment) not only in the Middle East, but also in many other countries in the West, Japan, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. However, recent NGO and media denunciations of the problems faced by OCWs in the Middle East and the shocking reports of dramatic events in Kuwait and now Singapore (beating, flogging, death penalty) have created new awareness of the difficulties they face and increased public sympathy, still mixed with some envy for the fact that they were able to leave the Philippines to work and earn abroad. In other words, *balikbayan* and OCWs are terms that will continue to be reinterpreted by the public imaginary as conditions change both in the Philippines and abroad where they reside. But for the moment they are both still firmly inscribed in Philippine laws and regulations.

By 1996, "OCWs/*Balikbayans*" (as they are now listed) are carefully counted upon entry to the country. There used to be a special desk close to the Immigration section at the Manila airport. Now they must fill a special portion of the Philippine entry form for foreigners and provide their ID numbers as well as their passport number and nationality. They still flock to buy large amounts of duty-free goods in dollars before passing through immigration.

The 1974 Labor Code is still valid but there have been some adjustments. Filipino non-government organizations, now transnational, have taken the causes of specific migrants to heart, especially women, and have succeeded in getting the Philippine government to repeal some of the more oppressive existing laws.

The boundary between being truly a Philippine citizen or a Philippine returnee has at times become somewhat blurred. There was, for example, a hot debate and some indignation when it was discovered, after the 1986 election of President Aquino, at a time when many U.S. residents came home as *balikbayan* to help rebuild the country, that some proportion of candidates who had won in the countryside as well as a good number of members of the current government—former immigrant residents in the U.S.—were still U.S. citizens or green-card holders. The issue caused intensive debates. Should they or should they not be allowed to exercise their state responsibilities? Should they be asked to step down?

Another important limitation to this extension of citizenship rights is the vote, again an issue of intense debate in both U.S. and Manila-based newspapers. Should all immigrants be allowed to vote in Philippine elections? Which restrictions should still hold?

Filipinos living abroad have thus been incorporated to many possible effects as citizens, with status and responsibilities, by the Philippine state even when they are no longer Filipino citizens. They continue to be considered fully contributing members of the

Philippine nation, in different ways according to their actual citizenship status, and receive special privileges in exchange. They are forcibly incorporated into a new symbolic national space (Anderson 1983), with national responsibilities, despite their effective geographical/physical and often legal distance (see Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1992 for non-Asian examples of comparable state policies). The precise dimensions of that reincorporation are still being debated and reassessed day by day.

The migration of Filipinos to the U.S. in a broader perspective

From the earliest years of Spanish colonial rule in the late sixteenth century until the early 1900s, there was practically no economic emigration of Philippine inhabitants. Only a few children of the rising wealthy 19th-century Filipino and Chinese-Mestizo colonial class went to Spain for their education, learned how to best undermine the Spanish colonial hegemonic control, and ultimately contributed to terminate Spain's rule.

There was surprisingly limited emigration towards the United States after the Philippines formally became an American colonial territory (1902-1934), even though Philippine citizens, as members of the colony, obtained American passports when leaving their country, roamed freely across the U.S., and were not submitted to quotas. They were, however, granted American citizenship. Starting with the first 160 Filipino male workers recruited as

agricultural laborers for Hawaii in 1906, some 80,000 Filipinos, mostly single working males, but also some students and merchant marine crewmen, were residing in the United States by 1929. This first wave was composed of predominantly unschooled, unskilled male immigrants of low socioeconomic status, hired by Filipino contractors in rural areas, to offset agricultural labor shortages in Hawaii, California and the fish canneries of Alaska, which other Asian immigrants, less favorably treated by immigration laws at the time, could not fill. These Philippine immigrants, however, were very poorly rewarded for their hard work, racially discriminated against, and led difficult and lonely lives. Nevertheless, most remained in the United States (San Buenaventura 1990; 1996).

Slowed down by the Depression, their immigration further decreased with the passage of the Philippine Independence Act in 1934, which made the Philippines a country under U.S. Commonwealth protection and which defined Filipinos as aliens. From 1935 to 1946, Filipinos had an immigration quota of 50 persons per year. During the Second World War, immigration was formally stopped, but many Filipinos in the U.S. military as well as Filipina wives of U.S. servicemen were later granted immigrant status. From 1946 to 1964, after the Philippines had become an independent nation-state, the annual quota rose to 100 persons, and immigrants were granted naturalization rights. But the number of overall Philippine immigrants to the United States had risen only from 125,000 by 1940 to 176,000 by 1960.

The sudden influx of Filipinos to the United States after 1965 is thus particularly striking. It is tied to the 1965 U.S. immigration policy which facilitated an in-coming wave of well-educated professionals and technical workers from Third World countries, who could then bring their families, thanks to family reunification regulations. By 1969, in four years' time, India and the Philippines had replaced all European countries as the leading sources of scientists, engineers and physicians in the U.S., with the Philippines as the major source of physicians. Since the greatest demand was for medical and other health-related professionals (physicians, nurses, medical technicians, food professionals), women (especially nurses) also steadily outnumbered men. This was still true in 1990 when, according to the 1990 U.S. Census, there were only 86 men for every 100 women among the population of Philippine background.

Filipinos in the U.S., as much as most Asian-Americans, have continued to increase since 1965. In only five years, between 1 April 1980 and 30 September 30 1985, the proportion of Asian-Americans in the total U.S. population increased from a little over 1.5 percent to 2.1 percent. It had reached 2.9 percent by 1990. While no Asian group in the U.S. numbered more than a million in 1980, by September 1985 the Filipinos, with an estimated 1,051,000, had almost overcome the Chinese, estimated at 1,079,000. By 1990, Filipinos continued to form the second largest Asian-American population in the United States, with an estimated 1,409,362 as compared to 1,644,255 Chinese. They represent 20.4 percent of all Asian-

Americans, who numbered 6,908,638 in 1990, a 99 percent increase since 1980 (Gardner, Robey and Smith 1985, Hing 1993, US Bureau of the Census 1993).

In the U.S.A., the median family income of Filipino-Americans is higher than that of the general U.S. population, particularly among foreign-born, but there are also more workers per family, particularly women. Furthermore, their individual median income in 1990 remained 14 percent lower than that of an individual white American worker, and even lower in the case of recent immigrants.

There are also considerable differences in income and conditions among Filipino-Americans. This has been particularly true in the case of overseas contract workers such as nurses who were placed, since early on, on a special H-1 visa and on a five-year contract with very stringent regulations. These regulations were made more lenient in 1990 and the H-1 visas have been progressively phased out for the 10,000 nurses still under those provisions in 1996. These nurses can now automatically get green cards and then naturalize, in contrast to what they had to do before 1990, which entailed that they spend much money working out loopholes in U.S. laws as they were threatened with immediate deportation (Szanton Blanc 1996b). This latter alternative is certainly true for the service workers, especially domestic workers, entertainers and mail order brides, who have come in larger numbers more recently (*Ibid*).

Finally, Filipinos have become the more frequently apprehended and

deported Asian-Americans from the United States, a shift which occurred through the 1980s. Before 1965, the undocumented in the U.S. were predominantly Chinese, a pattern altered by Filipinos.

A transnational existence

Filipino immigrants to the U.S., despite rapid naturalization rates, are preserving strong transnational ties with their country of origin. They are taking full advantage of the increased availability of rapid communications and transportation technologies and of the multiple transnational processes that are taking place around them. Extended families are often stretched over very long distances with close family members located both in the U.S.A. and abroad. Further encouraged by their government, Filipinos make frequent trips home, reinvest in houses, land, businesses and send remittances, willingly or under contract obligation (in the case of contract workers). The special category of *baltkbayan* facilitates this process, as we have seen, while earning foreign exchange for the Philippine government. Filipino businesses with branches in both countries have been created to facilitate these exchanges.

Filipinos and Filipino-Americans have also formed myriads of organizations in the United States, from hometown associations to social clubs, cultural clubs, religious groups (charismatics), professional and vocational Filipino-American organizations, civic organizations (Lions, Rotary, Jaycees), advocacy groups, alumni networks, and philan-

thropic groups. These organizations have their own meetings and activities, while lobbying for specific legislation in the United States or planning events and donations back home. They have often become increasingly transnational, with branches in both the United States and the Philippines.

Since the Filipino-Americans have become an important voting bloc in the United States, they are now courted by both American politicians as well as by Philippine political candidates. It is not uncommon for candidates to the Philippine Senate or House of Representatives to come electioneering in New York or on the West coast (for more detailed discussion of their transnational existences, see Basch, Glick-Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994).

State appropriation of spontaneous emigration

The increased deterioration of the Philippine economy by the late 1970s and during the 1980s, leading to a negative gross national product (GNP) in the middle 1980s, made the new overseas opportunities particularly attractive. Filipino emigration sharply increased during that period and expanded beyond the United States, while assuming a somewhat different character. While continuing to send professionals and technically trained people to the U.S.A., these people also started responding to opportunities in other countries such as Canada, Europe, and Australia. At the same time, Filipinos quickly responded to the industrial boom of the Middle East (requiring construction, manufacturing, and

industrial workers) that followed the 1973 oil crisis and, subsequently, to the need in that region for educated service workers as office support staff, nurses, pharmacists, and domestic helpers. Educated Filipinos and Filipinas also started to leave for the U.S., Western Europe, Japan, and increasingly for the expanding Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore economies to become domestic helpers, construction workers, seamen, night club "entertainers," prostitutes, and mail-order brides.

The emigration flows which started through the entrepreneurship and networks of individual Filipinos were officially recognized and increasingly sponsored by the Philippine government early on. Note that the Philippines led the way in this process. Asian governments, with the exception of Korea, did not engage in comparable regulations until the middle 1980s. By 1974, a new Philippine Labor Code was established by President Marcos through presidential decree, and the Martial Law government established a Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and a License and Regulation Office, and started to issue licenses to state-recognized labor recruiting agencies. It also established a Workers' Assistance and Adjudication Office to "look after the welfare" of all overseas workers and their families, and facilitate procedures for remittances.

At the same time, the government also set up two market development and placement offices to conduct systematic manpower marketing programs: the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB), a state-run recruitment agency for land-based workers, and the National Seamen's Board (NSB), the government-run

placement agency for seafarers. The Philippine Labor Code of 1974 banned the direct hiring of workers for overseas employment and made mandatory the remittance of foreign exchange earnings (80 percent of their total earnings and 50 to 70 percent of their monthly salary, respectively, as Korea did in the early 1980s). It prohibited travel agencies from engaging in the recruitment business, allowed the charging of placement fees for overseas employment applicants, and prohibited certain unscrupulous recruitment practices (Institute of Labor and Manpower Studies 1984). In other words, the government started actively to sponsor overseas migration, while regulating and supposedly facilitating the life of overseas workers.

This supervision continued and, if anything, increased over time. By 1977, the then Ministry of Labor and Employment became directly responsible for negotiating overseas contracts for Filipino construction workers in what it called "corporate export" of Filipino manpower in the construction industry. And the Overseas Construction Industry Authority, a government entity under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, was created to coordinate with the Labor Ministry the recruitment and hiring of Filipino construction workers for overseas employment. Two subsequent presidential decrees in 1980 and 1982 further consolidated these different government agencies and, in particular, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) as the main body for the coordination of overseas migration. The POEA functioned in ways quite similar to the other state monopoly corporations or agencies created by Marcos, such as the national airline, and the state monopoly on the

sugar and coconut industries, among others.

By 1983 there were 1,023 recruiting agencies in the international labor export business paying the government an annual license fee. By 1988, branches of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in provincial cities and in Manila advertised on their bulletin boards lists of potential jobs overseas which they administered directly. This was the practice for contract jobs to the Middle East but also to the United States (nurses, medical technicians, teachers), Canada, Australia, Europe or the rest of Southeast Asia. Combined with the U.S. individual and family reunification policies discussed earlier, this state-sponsored migration helps account for the soaring numbers of Philippine emigrants.

Between 1974 and 1985, about two million Filipinos left for the United States or the Middle East as temporary or permanent workers. Another 500,000 or so were in Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, Canada and Australia, and almost 500,000 contract workers were currently employed in some 130 countries around the world. The Philippines had become a leader in the international export of manpower (cf. Ramirez 1987, Roberto 1987). By 1995, from a population of nearly 70 million Filipinos, some 3.5 million worked overseas, still mostly in the United States and Saudi Arabia, according to conservative government figures. This labor trade proved to be quite helpful to the overpopulated, underemployed Philippines. Overseas Filipinos became an unexpected source of valuable foreign exchange as dollar

remittances reached the billion dollar level for the first time in 1983 (remittances amounted to US\$291 million in 1978 and US\$798 million in 1981), and had tripled according to official banking figures, if not sextupled (if one includes money flows through private finance companies and other channels), by the end of 1994.

The key dates and processes in this brief history of Filipino emigration are (1) the opening of the U.S. immigrant flood gates in 1965 and progressively in many other countries (though there are now attempts to close those gates again); (2) the declaration of Martial Law in the Philippines in 1972 which coincided with the oil crisis, a shift in policies from import substitution to export production through IMF encouragements, and changes in labor policies with the new 1974 Philippine Labor Code; and (3) the combined need of Filipinos and Filipinas to support their deteriorating family incomes with incomes generated abroad.

**The practice of *balikbayan*
as a double-edged sword—
The redefinition of citizenship**

Filipinos, and increasingly Filipinas started migrating because their conditions of existence had deteriorated at home and new opportunities were suddenly offered to them in the United States, in other industrialized countries, and in the Middle East. They, individually and through personal networks, put to use these new opportunities. But, only a few years later, the Philippine state was already placing their individually-led migration

to its own use. The state started taxing its emigrating populations, be they OCWs (to the U.S.A. or elsewhere) or well-to-do Philippine nationals, in whatever way it could.

Transmigrants responded by trying to use newly created state policies to their advantage, subverting regulations, such as those governing *balikbayan* and overseas contract workers, and making new claims on their home governments. Filipino transmigrants, for example, are now requesting specific rights from the Philippine government, such as the right to vote, to own land on a foreign passport without being submitted to special regulations, to dual citizenship, and to run for elective office in the Philippines. If you want us as quasi-citizens, they say, then give us some of the related entitlements. Since some of their U.S. entitlements as residents or nationals, much as those in other industrialized countries, may be slipping away—such as ensured health coverage, welfare, education, affirmative action quotas in college education for their children, etc. (PN 1996)—entitlements from the Philippines become ever more pressing.

A redefinition of what citizenship means is in a process of reelaboration. This echoes comparable redefinitions in other parts of the world. The Philippine government is expanding the construction of “nation-ness”, of the feeling of belonging, an integral part of the construction of the 19th- and 20th-century nation-state (Anderson 1983), beyond the territorial boundaries of the state and its citizens to incorporate non-Philippine citizens purely on the grounds of descent, of common origins. But it has been much more hesitant to extend

in a similar way all the entitlements and responsibilities that belong to Philippine citizens who hold a Philippine passport. The Philippine government has indeed extended some of them (taxation or exoneration from foreigners' status at entry, special IDs and registered numbers, special recognition by the Philippine President) but has resisted for a long time the pressures to provide full dual citizenship or comparable rights to land, vote, etc. to *balikbayans*. Filipino-Americans, like many other immigrant populations in the U.S.A., have been pushing for the recognition of their full range of rights by their country of origin. If you want us to help you construct a powerful and successful Philippines, if you want our national loyalty, we deserve the other entitlements and responsibilities as well—such is the feeling often expressed. The Philippine state has thus attempted to separate the two closely interconnected facets of citizenship in the nation-state: national belonging and loyalty, and specific state entitlements and responsibilities. It is deterritorializing the nation but not the state quite to the same degree.

In many European countries (France for example), the sense of belonging is, on the other hand, being restricted. While many emigrants have recently become citizens, only the original populations, the autochtones in a way, really belong. Thus young Algerians born in France and considered full French citizens by French law are being deported back to Algeria because they are deemed undesirable members of the French nation. In the U.S.A. belonging is similarly being restricted. The first step has been the placing of limitations on

illegal residents in terms of access to public school education for their children and to health entitlements. Residents who are not yet citizens but who used to enjoy, in the liberal American democratic system, all the privileges of citizenship but for voting, becoming candidates for election or holding a passport, are feeling that they may be next in the process of exclusion. They are now being reexamined and renumbered by the Immigration Department. Many are naturalizing as part of large national campaigns towards naturalization. At the same time, strong feelings of being American, and pressures for exclusive loyalty to their country of citizenship, are being placed on the many hyphenated Americans for whom multiculturalism has opened new avenues of self-expression. Again, the message is one of redrawn boundaries of belonging and of state allotments. Again, citizenship is being redefined.

The significance of *balikbayan*, a Philippine invention, thus goes much further theoretically than just a migration policy. It provides a sharp example of the new strategic responses of the modern state to the tensions generated by the sweeping transnational processes that are accompanying global economic restructuring and the new movements of population. It needs to be understood in a context of economic change that is still based on power differences and inequalities.

Conclusion

Filipino and Filipina emigrants, though usually committed to their new countries of residence, with the

exception of some overseas contract workers, live in worlds that very much include the Philippines both ideologically and literally. This is particularly true even in the case of long-time U.S.-based and often already naturalized or foreign-born transmigrants. The political connections between the U.S.A. and the Philippines make these relationships particularly important, and Filipinos as a pressure group have become critical to Philippine state policy with the United States. Nation-building that includes the migrants remains one way to ensure their support. But ties to the Philippines are important also when the migrants have moved to other industrialized countries. While some forms of overseas contract work to the U.S. are progressively disappearing, other problems are emerging with domestic workers, entertainers, mail order brides there and elsewhere. At the same time, contract work in other countries of Asia is increasing (in Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia), and the often better educated Filipinos and Filipinas are rapidly in danger of becoming, since they have to handle menial jobs well below their educational levels, the work horses of the region, together with Indonesians and a few really poor rural Thais.

While the rest of Southeast Asia is being pulled by its successful resident Chinese-background populations towards East Asia, authoritarian regimes and a Straits-version of economic success, the Philippines is still tied in many ways to the U.S.A., among others through recent extensive migration and the multiple connections of the migrants' transnational existences. The Philippines still stands for its own

brand of democracy and has not yet rhetorically rejected a western-style mode of development. She was, after all, the showcase of democracy and western modernity in Asia in the 1960s! The timing of all this may become a limitation for the Philippines in the current Pacific Rim patterning of the region's future (Szanton Blanc 1996a). Or, if one wishes to be

optimistic, it may lead to an even brighter future!

Balibayan and its implications need to be analyzed in this larger context. But also carefully brought back to the individual lives of everyday Filipinos and Filipinas and their children, which they affect on a daily basis.

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