

An Argument for Guest Worker Programs

Javier S. Hidalgo

1. Introduction

Several noted economists and prominent international organizations have recently advocated for the implementation of guest worker programs in developed states.¹ Their primary argument is that guest worker programs would serve as a powerful mechanism for reducing global poverty and inequality. For example, economist Dani Rodrik estimates that guest worker programs in wealthy states would generate \$200 billion or more annually for poor countries. According to Rodrik, liberalizing the temporary movement of workers would “produce the largest possible gains for the world economy, and for poor countries in particular” in comparison with other policies, such as trade liberalization.²

While guest worker programs have received favorable treatment from economists, political philosophers have typically condemned guest worker programs. Michael Walzer famously argues that guest worker programs are “tyrannies” that create dominating conditions for immigrants.³ David Miller comments that guest worker programs “seem socially unjust” and that the “shortcomings of such [guest worker schemes] are easy to detect.”⁴ Joseph Carens contends that guest worker programs are typically impermissible departures from a democratic norm of equal treatment.⁵ Other authors have broadly echoed these conclusions.⁶

I will sketch an argument *for* guest worker programs. By “guest workers,” I mean temporary immigrants who are admitted with the following bundle of rights and access to goods:

- (i) Civil Liberties: due process, trial by jury, freedom of speech, etc.
- (ii) Basic public entitlements, such as emergency healthcare.
- (iii) Basic public goods: national defense, law and order, transportation infrastructure, etc.

In contrast, full citizens in liberal democratic states have access to (iv-viii) as well as (i-iii):

- (iv) Public pension programs.
- (v) Social welfare programs.
- (vi) Access to the full labor market.
- (vii) Right to vote.
- (viii) Right to indefinitely remain in residence.⁷

My argument for guest worker programs is this. Compatriots have special obligations to one another and obligations of assistance to the global poor. While states can in principle permissibly deny entry to potential immigrants if all relevant obligations of assistance are satisfied, states must in practice discharge some obligations of assistance by admitting immigrants. Yet the special obligations that compatriots have to one another can justify placing restrictions on immigrants. In particular, these special obligations justify admitting immigrants through temporary guest worker programs under some empirically plausible circumstances.

Here is a schematic overview of my argument:

- (P1) Wealthy states are morally required to admit a large number of low-skilled immigrants in order to satisfy global duties of assistance.
- (P2) If (P1) is true, wealthy states are morally required to admit these immigrants as guest workers or as eventual full citizens.
- (P3) The citizens of wealthy states incur a smaller risk of violating special obligations to one another if they admit some of these immigrants as guest workers than as eventual full citizens.
- (P4) There are strong *pro tanto* moral reasons⁸ for the citizens of wealthy states to incur less rather than more risk of violating special obligations to one another in satisfying global duties of assistance.
- (C) Therefore, wealthy states are morally required to admit a large number of low-skilled immigrants as guest workers or as eventual full citizens and there are strong *pro tanto* moral reasons for the citizens of wealthy states to admit some of these immigrants as guest workers rather than as citizens.

Call this: *The Central Argument*.

In sections 2-4, I will argue for the main premises of the Central Argument. In sections 5-7, I will defend the Central Argument against objections. I will ultimately claim that my defense

of the Central Argument is inconclusive in certain respects, but also that the Central Argument is more plausible than many philosophical critics of guest worker programs have suggested.

2. Compatriot Partiality

In this section, I will argue for two positions:

Special Obligations. Compatriots have special obligations of distributive justice to one another.

and

Stronger Obligations. Obligations of distributive justice between compatriots are more demanding than obligations of distributive justice to foreigners.

Call the conjunction of Special Obligations and Stronger Obligations: *Compatriot Partiality*. In arguing for Compatriot Partiality, my goal is this. I will later claim that mass immigration might compromise the ability of compatriots to discharge their obligations to one another. If so, then temporary guest worker programs appear comparatively more attractive, insofar as Compatriot Partiality is true.

Compatriot Partiality is a view about the moral status of the special relationships between individuals who stand in a position of common membership in a political community. The special relationship between compatriots activates obligations of distributive justice and these obligations have greater weight than comparable obligations to outsiders. Citizens have stringent special obligations to secure just distributive shares for their compatriots and prevent a certain degree of inequality from obtaining between them. Members of a political community lack an equivalently weighty obligation to secure an equal opportunity to the citizens of other countries. For my purposes, the crucial claims of Compatriot Partiality are: citizens have a special duty to

minimize inequalities in opportunities or resources between them and this duty has greater stringency than obligations to assist foreigners.

Philosophers have advanced a variety of justifications for Compatriot Partiality. The most common and, in my mind, promising strategy for justifying Compatriot Partiality is to identify some morally relevant features of the relationships that compatriots have to one another that they lack with respect to outsiders. Two plausible (non-exclusive) candidates include:

Mutual Coercion. Compatriots coerce each other by imposing a system of laws and political and economic institutions on one another. As the imposition of these institutions and laws *prima facie* infringes on people's autonomy and pervasively impacts their lives, this system of mutual coercion activates special obligations to ensure that the system of laws and institutions is fair to those who are coerced.⁹

Reciprocity. Compatriots jointly contribute to the provision of essential public goods and stand in other cooperative relationships with one another that trigger obligations of reciprocity. These obligations of reciprocity require citizens to ensure that the jointly-created benefits and burdens of social cooperation are fairly distributed.¹⁰

I will argue that Mutual Coercion and Reciprocity support both Special Obligations and Stronger Obligations.

Mutual Coercion and Reciprocity entail special obligations of distributive justice if the following is true:

- (1) For either (a) the coercive imposition of institutions and laws to be fair, or (b) the benefits and burdens of social cooperation to be fair, they need to be structured in a manner that is consistent with egalitarian principles of justice.

These egalitarian principles may include fair equality of opportunity or some other distributive egalitarian principles. I do not need to specify the precise principles at stake here. The important point is that the path from Mutual Coercion or Reciprocity to Special Obligations is this: certain features of social relationships activate obligations of fairness to compatriots and these obligations of fairness require some presumptively egalitarian distribution of opportunities or resources. As these relationships are especially salient among compatriots, they also support

Stronger Obligations. Thus, if either Mutual Coercion or Reciprocity is true, and some additional empirical assumptions hold, then they entail Compatriot Partiality.

Notice that the above justification for Compatriot Partiality also supports:

Global Scope. There are global special obligations of distributive justice.

if the following is true:

- (2) Coercive and cooperative relationships of the right kind now extend around the world.

(2) appears to be true. There are international institutions that are, at least arguably, coercive and that provide global public goods. Other important cooperative relationships span the globe as well. These facts, together with either Mutual Coercion or Reciprocity, suggest Global Scope. However, Global Scope is potentially compatible with Compatriot Partiality if some ancillary assumptions are in place. Suppose first that:

- (3) The strength of the special obligations that are generated by Mutual Coercion or Reciprocity is at least partly proportionate to the degree to which coercive or cooperative social relationships obtain between individuals.

This assumption is plausible enough; the stringency or weight of special obligations must somehow be sensitive to the intensity of the relationships that activate them. Next:

- (4) The extent of coercion and the intensity of cooperative ties exist to a greater degree within most political communities—that is, between compatriots—than they do globally.

If (4) is correct—and it does seem very plausible indeed—Mutual Coercion and Reciprocity justify the thesis that compatriots owe each other stronger obligations of distributive justice than they owe to foreigners, even if these obligations obtain globally as well. Global Scope and Compatriot Partiality are in this sense entirely consistent with one another.

Of course, I have said nothing to directly justify Mutual Coercion and Reciprocity here. Others have done so at length and I have little to add to their arguments. Mutual Coercion and

Reciprocity will simply be premises of my argument for guest worker programs. Yet Mutual Coercion and Reciprocity are plausible and support the common belief that compatriots owe each other some special regard and concern. Furthermore, Mutual Coercion and Reciprocity also provides support for the widely accepted contention that the demands of global distributive justice are increasing in tandem with the growth of international cooperation and institutions.

3. The Ethics of Low-Skilled Immigration

This section will argue for two conclusions:

- (5) Low-skilled immigration to developed states may compromise the ability of the citizens of those states to satisfy their special obligations to one another.

and

- (6) It is necessary for the members of developed states to admit a large number of low-skilled immigrants in order to satisfy their global obligations of assistance.

A. Empirical Background

Some empirical evidence suggests that low-skilled immigration can have adverse effects on the receiving societies. George Borjas's research finds that immigration to the United States has lowered the average wage of American citizens by 3 percent. Immigration has caused a nearly 9 percent loss in wages for some low-skilled American citizens, such as high school dropouts.¹¹ Although these losses diminish over time, they remain significant. Another study by Borjas et al. concludes that immigration has a negative impact on the employment opportunities and wages of African American men. Immigration explains as much as 40 percent of the decline in employment among this group during the past several decades.¹² Other research indicates that immigration contributes to income inequality because immigrants drive down wages among low-skilled workers.¹³ Each of these studies is subject to dispute, but they together support the

conclusion that immigration can stand in tension with the promotion of an egalitarian distribution of income and wealth in the receiving society.

There is also evidence that immigration can lower social solidarity and put pressure on the welfare state. High rates of immigration may be correlated with a slower growth of welfare spending. According to one study, “the typical industrial society might spend 16 or 17 percent more than it now does on social services had it kept its foreign-born percentage where it was in 1970.”¹⁴ An explanation for this regularity is that immigration brings about more diversity and citizens resist the transfer of resources to culturally and ethnically distinct groups.¹⁵ Several authors view the differences in welfare spending between the United States and Western European countries as a result of greater ethnic diversity in the United States, which reduced support for a sizable welfare state.¹⁶ Robert Putnam argues that the “inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life” and “to distrust their neighbours, regardless of the colour of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends...to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often.”¹⁷ Immigration and the resulting cultural pluralism can lead to a loss of civic engagement, trust, and lower support for public social spending.¹⁸

Of course, these empirical findings do not constitute all of the morally relevant facts. We must also ask: how much have the immigrants benefited from migrating? Estimates indicate that low-skilled immigrants from Mexico raise their wages by over 400 percent after they migrate to the United States.¹⁹ Unskilled Salvadorians increase their annual incomes from about \$1,200 to \$18,000.²⁰ Immigration has positive spillover effects, particularly low-skilled immigration. When immigrants leave, they can tighten the labor markets of their home countries and cause wages to rise. Mexican immigration to the United States seems to have increased wages in

several Mexican states by 6 to 9 percent.²¹ Migrants from developing countries send home about \$300 billion annually in remittances, which is approximately three times the size of all official development assistance.²² An influential World Bank study finds that, if high-income countries admitted 14.2 million new immigrants, the developing world would receive \$305 billion in net income.²³ Several comparative analyses of the benefits of trade liberalization, migration, and foreign aid conclude that the liberalization of immigration restrictions would benefit people in the developing world more than other anti-poverty policies.²⁴

Historical evidence supports the view that immigration can be a potent force for reducing poverty and inequality. Immigration is currently the most restrictive element of international exchange. A large number of states have liberalized trade and finance, but they oppose opening up of their labor markets to immigrants. In contrast, few barriers to immigration existed in the Western hemisphere in the late nineteenth century. Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson have analyzed the effects of immigration during this period and argue that migration accounts for the entirety of economic convergence between rich and poor countries: "all...of the [global] real wage convergence between 1870 and 1910 was attributable to migration."²⁵ The potential of migration to curtail global inequality is substantial in light of the evidence from the late nineteenth century.

B. Immigration Restrictions and Foreign Aid

Mass low-skilled immigration to developed countries may compromise the ability of compatriots to satisfy special obligations to each other. If the above empirical research on the impact of low-skilled immigration is accurate, low-skilled immigration can harm vulnerable citizens, increase material inequality, and erode the social solidarity that underpins the welfare

state. These are serious concerns. If the only obligations at stake were special obligations of distributive justice between compatriots, they might justify denying entry to many low-skilled immigrants.

However, I have also argued that there are global obligations of distributive justice. This is given by the fact that relationships of cooperation and coercion span the globe. These obligations must be satisfied as well, despite their possible weakness relative to obligations between compatriots. Even if Global Scope is false, there are certainly humanitarian obligations to the global poor that recommend a policy of open borders on the part of developed countries, especially in light of the evidence of the beneficial effects of immigration on global poverty.

These reflections support:

Conflicting Obligations. If the citizens of wealthy states satisfy global obligations by admitting large numbers of low-skilled immigrants, they risk violating special obligations to one another.

Wealthy states might avoid Conflicting Obligations if the following argument is sound:

- (P1) A state can permissibly deny entry to foreigners if this state can feasibly satisfy all relevant duties of assistance through other means besides permitting immigration.
- (P2) A state can feasibly satisfy all relevant duties of assistance through other means besides permitting immigration (through, for example, foreign aid).
- (C) Therefore, a state can permissibly deny entry to foreigners.

Call this: *The Other Means Argument*. Christopher Wellman articulates this argument in a question: “why cannot wealthy countries fully discharge their global distributive duties without including the recipients in their political union, simply by transferring the required level of funds abroad?”²⁶ Wellman later adds: “global poverty requires wealthy states to either export aid or import unfortunate people” and he evidently assumes that it is feasible for wealthy states to

satisfy their obligations via foreign aid, thus rendering it permissible for states to close their borders.

Yet there is good reason to believe that P2 of the Other Means Argument is false. Although wealthy states can no doubt satisfy *some* of their global obligations via international redistribution, it is exceedingly unlikely that they can satisfy *all* of them in this fashion. There is now an enormous empirical literature on the effectiveness of foreign aid and much of it is skeptical. In general, empirical studies have been unable to consistently find a large positive causal relationship between foreign aid and economic growth.²⁷ Why? Several problems beset foreign aid to developing countries:

- (7) *Loss of Accountability.* Foreign aid inflows cause an erosion of governmental accountability in developing countries because political elites no longer need to extract revenue from the local population, as they can depend on external support. This undermines the responsiveness of governments and damages the quality of institutions. In this respect, foreign aid has effects that are similar to the “resource curse.”²⁸
- (8) *Diversion.* Foreign aid can be often diverted away from its original purpose in poverty alleviation and development and into the hands of a corrupt bureaucracy and patronage system. Sometimes foreign aid may even be diverted into financing wars and regional arms races, with evident detrimental effects on the global poor.²⁹
- (9) *Macroeconomic Effects.* Foreign aid inflows cause real exchange overvaluation in developing countries, which damages the capacity of these countries to develop a manufacturing base and promote exporting industries.³⁰

It seems that (7-9) explain in large part why development assistance has been only intermittently effective. While (7-9) certainly fall far short of showing that aid is never effective, they do indicate that P2 is in all likelihood false. In the actual world, the citizens of developed countries cannot satisfy their obligations at a distance purely via international transfers. Foreign aid alone is probably inadequate. Therefore, at least one version of the Other Means Argument fails.³¹

However, some authors also doubt whether developed states can satisfy their global obligations by allowing immigration. David Miller writes:

A policy of open migration may make [the global poor] worse off still, if it allows doctors, engineers, and other professionals to move from economically undeveloped to economically developed societies in search of higher incomes, thereby depriving their countries of origin of vital skills.³²

Miller is making a “brain drain” argument against a policy of open immigration. The thought is that permitting open immigration would deprive poor societies of important human capital and thus reinforce global poverty. One problem with this argument is that it is challenged by recent empirical studies on the effects of skilled immigration. If the highly skilled emigrate, this may raise the returns to education in the home country and provide incentives for more natives to educate themselves, thereby compensating for the losses in human capital.³³ Moreover, even if the brain drain argument is correct, Miller ignores an obviously solution: developed countries could admit a proportionately higher number of low-skilled workers. This solution would avoid the problem with a brain drain altogether, although it would exacerbate the potentially negative effects of low-skilled immigration highlighted above. I will return to this issue in section 4.

There might be other more viable interpretations of Other Means Argument available. Instead of investing in foreign aid, developed countries can perhaps satisfy their obligations by investing in technology or, more radically, by forcibly erecting more just institutions in some developing countries. I am unable to rule these alternatives out in principle, but I believe that they too are extremely unlikely to render P2 of the Other Means Argument true in practice. To reiterate, I am not arguing against using variety of mechanisms through which wealthy societies might satisfy obligations to the developing world. Foreign aid, investments in technology, and perhaps humanitarian intervention are all arguably part of a package of policies that may successfully discharge global obligations of assistance. My claim is merely that a policy of

admitting some large number of low-skilled immigrants is likely a necessary component of that package of policies. If so, the Other Means Argument is unsuccessful and the tension between obligations between compatriots and global obligations of assistance remains.

4. The Case for Guest Worker Programs

In this section, I will propose another (at least partial) solution to Conflicting Obligations.

My claim is:

- (10) If wealthy states implemented guest worker programs, this could lower the risk that citizens would violate special obligations to one another in discharging global obligations of assistance, compared to a policy of purely admitting low-skilled immigrants as eventual full citizens.

Here are some of the potential advantages of guest worker programs. Guest programs can reduce the cultural and social impact of immigration by ensuring that immigration is temporary and can restrict immigrants to working in specific sectors of the economy where they avoid competing with citizens. Guest programs prohibit guest workers from receiving many public welfare benefits and this would potentially lower the pressure that immigration can have on the welfare state. Furthermore, the experience of some guest worker programs suggests that guest programs can facilitate a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and opportunities in the host society. I will now elaborate on these features of guest worker programs.

The Welfare State. As I noted in section 3, some empirical studies argue that immigration causally leads to a reduction in support for the welfare state and social spending because citizens resist redistribution to cultural and ethnic minorities. Guest workers lack access to most social welfare programs. Thus, immigration through guest worker programs would not reduce support for social spending, provided that natives recognize that guest workers will not receive benefits from social welfare programs.

Labor Market Restrictions. If low-skilled immigrants would harm some significant number of disadvantaged citizens by competing with them for employment, then guest worker programs might reduce this harm this by preventing immigrants from accessing the entire labor market. Guest worker programs could restrict immigrants to certain sectors of the labor market where few citizens seek employment.

Egalitarian Redistribution. Some guest worker programs may promote an egalitarian distribution of income and wealth in host societies. Here is an example: guest programs for immigrants who help care for dependents and assist in household maintenance. Michael Kremer and Stanley Watt argue that large-scale guest worker programs for domestic workers have an egalitarian effect on the income distribution of the host country.³⁴ If guest workers perform more domestic labor, more citizens can work in market production. Consequently, a guest worker program for domestic laborers could increase total economic output because more women would participate in the official labor market. Educated women who enter the labor market compete with other educated workers. Competition among skilled workers causes wages to decline. This process would have the effect of compressing wage disparities. The result is a more egalitarian distribution of income in the host country. If Kremer and Watt's analysis is correct, then certain guest worker programs can actually help satisfy the special obligations of distributive justice that obtain between compatriots.

Benefits to Global Poor. In section 3, I reviewed empirical evidence that indicates that low-skilled immigration has impressive benefits for the global poor. Furthermore, a guest worker program would avoid the problems with brain drains highlighted above, supposing that these problems are in fact empirically supported. Immigrants would be temporary residents—they would acquire work experience and then return to their countries of origin.

To avoid confusion, my precise claim is:

(11) Guest worker programs could help avoid Conflicting Obligations.

rather than

(12) Some actual guest worker programs avoid or have avoided Conflicting Obligations.

My arguments here are mainly intended to support (11). The practical force of my argument, however, will depend on judgments of feasibility and the truth or falsity of (12) bears on this question. It may turn out that most guest worker programs that have the benefits that I have sketched are unfeasible. I will be unable to argue conclusively against this possibility. I will, nonetheless, provide some support for (11) and suggest that guest worker programs do deserve more consideration from political philosophers than they have received.

I now discuss objections to guest worker programs. These objections are that guest worker programs harm or wrong immigrants and have negative side effects on the host society. If these objections are sound, we have reason to conclude that the disadvantages of guest worker programs easily outweigh their benefits. I will defend guest worker programs against these objections, but I concede that these objections have a point and that the argument for guest worker programs might be inconclusive in practice. Note, however, that the arguments in this section provide support for the view that the conflict between low-skilled immigration and Compatriot Partiality is to some extent illusory. If suitably designed, a guest worker program can minimize this conflict.

5. The Domination Objection

In his influential discussion of guest worker programs, Michael Walzer's advances:

The Domination Objection.

(a) Dominating institutions are impermissible.

(b) Guest worker programs are dominating.

Walzer observes that guest workers “experience the state as a pervasive and frightening power that shapes their lives and regulates their every move—and never asks for their opinion.

Departure is only a formal option; deportation, a continuous practical threat.” The host state and private employers can arbitrarily interfere with the choices and rights of guest workers. Under guest worker programs, the host state might revoke the rights of guest workers and deport them without warning. Private employers can exercise substantial control over the lives of some guest workers, particularly domestic workers who live in the homes of their employers. Walzer’s claims suggest that guest worker programs are impermissible regardless of whether immigrants consent to the terms of their contracts—the consent of guest workers “given at a single moment in time, while it is sufficient to legitimize market transactions, is not sufficient for democratic politics.”³⁵

Are guest worker programs in fact dominating? Here is a reason to think that the answer to this question is sometimes yes. According to one influential analysis of domination, A dominates B if A has the capacity to interfere with the choices of B in a manner that ignores B’s interests or judgment.³⁶ A host state might dominate guest workers in this sense, as the host state has the capacity to interfere with the choices of guest workers without giving them a formal opportunity to influence policy or sufficient legal protection from employers and other parties.

Yet the Domination Objection is not a general objection to guest worker programs. As I will also discuss in section 6, guest worker programs can have clear guidelines about the duration of the contract and permit immigrants to plan to earn a relatively high wage and then return home. All liberal democratic states admit temporary residents, such as foreign students and tourists, and restrict their access to public entitlements, social welfare programs, and the labor

market. If this practice is not objectionably dominating, then some guest worker programs can have the same status, as the admission of temporary residents and guest worker programs share many of the same salient characteristics.

Walzer in fact acknowledges that guest workers need not always be dominating. Walzer proposes a reform that would minimize the domination of guest workers: “the host countries might undertake to negotiate formal treaties with the home countries, setting out in authoritative form a list of guest rights.”³⁷ Under these treaties, guest workers would enjoy many of the legal protections of citizenship and the governments of their home countries would pressure the host countries into enforcing these protections. Setting aside the issue of whether Walzer’s specific proposal is desirable or feasible, we should in general accept the claim that guest worker programs are not in principle impermissibly dominating.

Nonetheless, Walzer’s objection does point to a serious worry about guest worker programs. Although it is possible to imagine guest worker programs that are not objectionably dominating, in practice these programs may be difficult to devise and sustain. I will return to this problem in section 6 and the conclusion.

6. Externalities

One of the most powerful objections to guest worker programs is that they have harmful side effects on the host society. Opponents of guest worker programs argue that guest workers will overstay their contracts and establish roots in the host society. Because they lack an opportunity to become full members of this society, guest workers and their families will form an underclass with an oppositional subculture that resists integration. Among others, William Kymlicka advances this thesis and argues that “the predictable consequence [of a guest worker

program] can involve some mixture of political alienation, criminality, and religious fundamentalism amongst the immigrants, particularly the second generation.”³⁸ The crucial claim here is that guest worker programs will generate negative externalities for the host society in virtue of the fact that guest workers will violate the terms of their contracts.

The claim that guest workers will overstay draws support from the experience of the German program for Turkish guest workers during the 1960s and 70s. Many Turkish guest workers did overstay and formed a disenfranchised and alienated underclass that was resistant to integration. Only comparatively recently have former guest workers in Germany and their children acquired access to full citizenship. The German experience supports the argument that guest worker programs are both unviable and produce unacceptable negative externalities. Invoking the failures of the German program, Kymlicka writes that the “[e]mpirically, it has become clear that [guest workers] who have lived in a country for several years are highly unlikely to go home, even if they have only precarious legal status.”³⁹

There are several responses to the position that guest worker programs are invariably permanent. It is worth pointing out that a large majority of guest workers in Germany did return home.⁴⁰ It is also a mistake to generalize from the German program to all guest worker programs. The German program permitted most guest workers to stay for an indefinite amount of time and bring their families, which predictably encouraged guest workers to settle in Germany. Courts affirmed the rights of guest workers to remain in Germany because the guest program failed to be explicit about the duration of stay and the renewability of temporary contracts.⁴¹ Other guest worker programs have to a greater extent avoided these problems. If the host state explicitly specifies the terms under which guest workers will be required to leave and enforces these terms, then a guest worker program can minimize overstaying. The experience of Singapore, Hong

Kong, and other states shows that it is possible to sustain temporary and large-scale guest worker programs for decades.⁴² The difference is that host states must have the resolve to deport guest workers when they have violated their contracts to ensure that guest workers are genuinely temporary.

However, it is hardly a coincidence that Singapore, Hong Kong, and other states with massive guest worker programs are less than fully democratic. The citizens of liberal democratic states may find a policy of mass deportation to be excessively harsh and this widespread sentiment is partly responsible for the failure of guest worker programs in these states. Yet there are other policy options available to liberal democratic states that can help sustain temporary programs that avoid coercive deportations. One proposal that various authors have suggested is to withhold part of the income of guest workers and reimburse them only when they return home. Another option is to make firms responsible for repatriating guest workers such that they must pay penalties if guest workers overstay their contracts. I will avoid engaging in detailed analysis of these proposals here. My point is merely that it is far from inevitable that a large fraction of guest workers will violate their contracts and continue as permanent residents. Additionally, guest programs can benefit the host society substantially even if some fraction of the workers fails to return home.⁴³

7. Conclusion

This table illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of a well-designed guest worker program in comparison with unrestricted low-skilled immigration:

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Immigration Outside of Guest Programs	-Benefits Global Poor	-Possible Brain Drain -Harms low-skilled citizens -Worsens income distributions of

		host society -May undermine support for welfare state
Well-Designed and Enforced Guest Programs	-Benefits Global Poor -No Brain Drain -May Promote Egalitarian Distribution of Income in Host Society -May protect low-skilled citizens -Avoids undermining support for welfare state	-Danger of domination -Danger of overstaying

Suppose that a feasible guest worker program could in fact have these advantages and disadvantages. A guest worker program would then help resolve Conflicting Obligations, at least relative to low-skilled immigration outside of guest worker programs. This seems to license the third premise of the Central Argument:

The citizens of wealthy states incur a smaller risk of violating special obligations to one another if they admit some of these [low-skilled] immigrants as guest workers than as eventual full citizens.

If the other premises of the Central Argument are true, it follows that:

Wealthy states are morally required to admit a large number of low-skilled immigrants as guest workers or as eventual full citizens and there are strong *pro tanto* moral reasons for the citizens of wealthy states to admit some of these immigrants as guest workers rather than as citizens.

Several qualifications to this argument are necessary.

First, there might be other immigration policies besides guest worker programs that I have neglected to discuss that also satisfy the relevant global and domestic obligations. Given that other such arrangements might exist, a wealthy state could permissibly select one of these alternative policies instead (whatever they might be).

Second, I have refrained from commenting on how many immigrants should be admitted as guest workers in order to deliver the benefits described above. This is a difficult empirical

question and I am unable to answer it here with any competence. At any rate, the answer surely depends on the details of particular cases.

Third, if the conclusion of the Central Argument is true, it may have limited practical significance if morally permissible guest worker programs are infeasible. Although I have argued that permissible guest worker programs are feasible, I have also provided some reasons to doubt whether this is so. Perhaps any actual guest worker program would have negative effects that render it less preferable to a policy of admitting low-skilled immigrants with more entitlements than guest workers. I have failed to rule this possibility out. Consequently, the practical significance of the Central Argument remains an open question.⁴⁴

Princeton University

¹ A list of international organizations that support guest worker programs is found in Martin Ruhs and Philip Martin, "Numbers vs Rights: Trade-Offs and Guest Worker Programs," *International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 1 (2008), pp. 249. For a forceful defense of large-scale guest worker programs, see: Lant Pritchett, *Let Their People Come: Breaking the Gridlock on Global Labor Mobility* (Baltimore: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

² Dani Rodrik, "Feasible Globalizations," in *Globalization: What's New?*, ed. Michael Weinstein, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 208.

³ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), pp. 59-60.

⁴ David Miller, "Immigrants, Nations, and Citizenship," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 16, no. 4 (2008), pp. 377.

⁵ Joseph Carens, "Live-in Domestic Workers, Seasonal Workers, and Others Hard to Locate on the Map of Democracy," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 16, no. 4 (2008), pp. 419-445.

⁶ For example: William Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) chap. 8 and Christopher Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," *Ethics* vol. 119 (2007), pp. 109-141. Daniel Bell and Ryan Pevnick are the only political philosophers that I know of who argue for guest worker programs. See: Daniel Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), chap. 11 and Ryan Pevnick, "Social Trust and the Ethics of Immigration Policy," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2009), pp. 146-167.

⁷ This list may be non-exhaustive. For the formulation of this list, I owe in large part to Pevnick, "Social Trust and the Ethics of Immigration Policy", pp. 155.

⁸ *Pro tanto* reasons are reasons that have genuine weight, but may be outweighed by other considerations. *Pro tanto* reasons retain their weight even if they are outweighed.

⁹ Michael Blake, "Distributive Justice, State Coercion, and Autonomy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2001), pp. 257-296

¹⁰ Andrea Sangiovanni "Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2007), pp. 2-39.

¹¹ George Borjas, "The Labor Demand Curve Is Downward Sloping: Reexamining the Impact of Immigration on the Labor Market," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 118, no.4 (2003), pp. 1335-1374.

-
- ¹² George Borjas, Jeffrey Grogger, Gordon Hanson, "Immigration and African American Employment Opportunities," NBER Working Paper no. 12518 (2006)
- ¹³ Hannes Johannsson and Stephen Walker, "Immigration and Wage Inequality in the 1990s," *Social Science Journal*, vol. 42, no.2 (2005), pp. 231-240.
- ¹⁴ Stuart Soroka, Keith Banting, and Richard Johnston, "Immigration and Redistribution in a Global Era" in *Globalization and Egalitarian Redistribution*, eds. Pranab Bardhan, Samuel Bowles, and Michael Wallerstein, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), chap. 10.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 278.
- ¹⁶ Edward Glaeser and Alberto Alesina, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- ¹⁷ Robert Putnam, "Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century," *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2007), pp. 150-151
- ¹⁸ For additional evidence, see: Axel West Pedersen and Ann-Helen Bay, "The Limits of Social Solidarity: Basic Income, Immigration, and the Legitimacy of the Universal Welfare State," *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 49, no.4 (2006), pp. 419-436.
- ¹⁹ Gordon Hanson, "Illegal Immigration from Mexico to the United States," *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 44, no. 4 (2006), pp. 894. These numbers are adjusted for differences in purchasing power.
- ²⁰ This figure is not adjusted for purchasing power. See: Pritchett, *Let Their People Come*, pp. 22.
- ²¹ Gordon Hanson, "Emigration, Labor Supply, and Earnings in Mexico" in *Mexican Immigration*, ed. George Borjas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press and the National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007), pp. 325.
- ²² The International Fund for Agricultural Development, *Sending Money Home: Worldwide Remittance Flows to Developing and Transition Countries* (December 2007). The net official development assistance of OECD countries was \$104 billion in 2007.
- ²³ World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration* (New York: The World Bank, 2006).
- ²⁴ Rodrik, "Feasible Globalizations," Dani Rodrik, Nancy Birdsall, Arvind Subramanian, "How to Help Poor Countries," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 4 (2005), pp. 132-152, Devesh Kapur and John McHale, "What is Wrong with Plan B? Immigration as an Alternative to Development Assistance," in *Brookings Trade Forum 2006: Global Labor Markets*, eds. Susan Collins and Carol Graham, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2006), pp. 137-172, Michael Clemens, Claudio Montenegro, and Lant Pritchett, "The Place Premium: Wage Differences for Identical Workers across the U.S. Border," Center For Global Development, Working Paper No. 148 (2008), especially pp. 51-55.
- ²⁵ Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), pp.163.
- ²⁶ Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," pp. 127.
- ²⁷ Raghuram Rajan and Arvind Subramanian "Aid and Growth: What Does the Evidence Really Show?" *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 90, no.4 (2008), pp. 643-665
- ²⁸ Simeon Djankov, Jose G. Montalvo, and Marta Reynal-Querol, "The Curse of Aid," *Journal of Economic Growth*, vol.13, (2008), pp. 169-194 and Todd Moss, Gunilla Pettersson and Nicolas van de Walle, "An Aid-Institutions Paradox?" in *Reinventing Foreign Aid*, ed. William Easterly, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), chap. 8.
- ²⁹ Paul Collier and Anne Hoeffler, "Unintended Consequences: Does Aid Promote Arms Races?" *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 69, no.1 (2007), pp. 1-27.
- ³⁰ Raghuram Rajan and Arvind Subramanian, "Aid, Dutch Disease, and Manufacturing Growth," working paper, International Monetary Fund (2007). For a review, see: "Christopher Adam, "Exogenous Inflows and Real Exchange Rates: Theoretical Quirk or Empirical Reality?" in *The Macroeconomic Management Of Foreign Aid*, eds. Peter Isard, Leslie Lipschitz, Alexandros Mourmouras, and Borianna Yontcheva (Washington: International Monetary Fund, 2005).
- ³¹ It is worth noting that remittances may avoid some of the problems with official development assistance because they are direct transfers to people in developing countries. This means that remittances are not channeled through governments and so they are less likely to promote corruption. If so, this conclusion strengthens the case for admitting a large number of immigrants as a way of satisfying global distributive obligations. I am grateful to a referee for *PAQ* for suggesting this point.
- ³² David Miller, "Immigration: The Case for Limits," in *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*, ed. Andrew Cohen and Christopher Heath Wellman, (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 198-199.

-
- ³³ Oded Stark, Christian Helmenstein, and Alexia Prskawetz, "A Brain Gain With a Brain Gain," *Economic Letters*, vol. 55 (1997), pp. 227-234.
- ³⁴ Michael Kremer and Stanely Watt, "The Globalization of Household Production," Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Working Paper (2006) and Michael Kremer, "Globalization and Wage Inequality," in *Brookings Trade Forum 2006: Global Labor Markets*, pp. 211-228.
- ³⁵ Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. 58-59.
- ³⁶ Philip Pettit, *Republicanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 55.
- ³⁷ Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. 60.
- ³⁸ Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 359.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 359.
- ⁴⁰ Philip Martin, Manolo Abella, and Christiane Kuptsch, *Managing Labor Migration in Twenty-First Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 86-7.
- ⁴¹ Christain Jopke, "The Evolution of Alien Rights in the United States, Germany, and the European Union," in *Citizenship Today: Global Perspectives and Practices*, eds. Alexander Aleinikoff and Douglas Klusmeyer, (Baltimore: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), pp. 47.
- ⁴² For a description and defense of these programs, see: Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, chap. 11.
- ⁴³ See: Kremer and Watt, "Globalization of Household Production." For an assessment of on new policy instruments for increasing return rates for guest workers, see: Martin Ruhs, "The Potential of Temporary Migration Programmes in Future International Migration Policy," *International Labour Review*, vol. 145, no.1-2 (2006), pp. 7-36.
- ⁴⁴ I am immensely grateful to an anonymous referee for *PAQ*, Jessica Flanigan, Ryan Davis, Stephen Macedo, Alan Patten, and the participants of the Princeton political theory research seminar for their comments and suggestions. This work was supported by a travel grant from the Princeton University Center for Human Values.