

Access*: Interdisciplinary Journal of Student Research and Scholarship

Volume 9 | Issue 1

Article 2

2025

Migrant Workers in the Neoliberal Age

Michael D. Reid

University of Washington Tacoma, mreid5@uw.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/access>



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Economic Theory Commons](#), [International Economics Commons](#), [Labor Economics Commons](#), [Migration Studies Commons](#), [Public Affairs Commons](#), [Public Policy Commons](#), [Social Policy Commons](#), and the [Social Welfare Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Reid, Michael D. (2025) "Migrant Workers in the Neoliberal Age," *Access*: Interdisciplinary Journal of Student Research and Scholarship*: Vol. 9: Iss. 1, Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/access/vol9/iss1/2>

This Undergraduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Teaching and Learning Center at UW Tacoma Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Access*: Interdisciplinary Journal of Student Research and Scholarship by an authorized editor of UW Tacoma Digital Commons. For more information, please contact taclibdc@uw.edu.

Migrant Workers in the Neoliberal Age

Cover Page Footnote

Arendt, Hannah, et al. "We Refugees ." *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, New York, 2007, pp. 264–274. Forman, Michael. "Human rights." *The Oxford Handbook of Global Studies*, 11 Dec. 2018, pp. 414–430, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190630577.013.38>. Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. Harvard University Press, 2004. Habermas, Jürgen. "Remarks on Legitimation Through Human Rights." Edited by William Rehg. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 24, no. 2–3, Apr. 1998, pp. 157–171, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019145379802400211>. Kant, Immanuel. "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch." Oxford University Press, 2005. Kreide, Regina. "The Silence of Political Liberalism." *Eurozine*, 2016. Neocleous, Mark. "'A Brighter and Nicer New Life': Security as Pacification." *Social & Legal Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 6 June 2011, pp. 191–208, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663910395816>. Rodriguez, Robyn Magalit. *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011. Sen, Basav. "Legalizing Human Trafficking." *Dollars & Sense*, 2006. Staff, Bangko Sentral. "Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas Media and Research." Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas, 15 Feb. 2023, www.bsp.gov.ph/SitePages/MediaAndResearch/MediaDisp.aspx?ItemId=6617&fbclid=IwAR00APGgILCyd98_TpPbr3vvJzdR4GdApaqBRd3oQ_vh_x9Zpz-6TacJDXU.

Abstract

This article aims to apply critical thought and analysis to the topic of migrant workers in the broader discussion of human rights. Although migrant workers are ubiquitous around the globe, this article focuses on Philippine workers and their relationship to their government, the United States, and the demands of capitalism. After introducing the subject matter, a discussion of the colonial history that the U.S. has with the Philippines aims to help the audience understand the present intercontinental relationship, and is used as the basis for further arguments, including an assertion of the neocolonial state of the Philippines today. The discussion then moves into the suppression of democracy and the impacts that this repression has on human rights. Moving on from the direct example of the Philippines, this essay discusses the more abstract questions behind human rights, including their origins and the implications that come with their adoption, as well as whether or not they are in fact liberating or rather a guise by which neoliberalism can more effectively extract resources from vulnerable people. The writings of Habermas, a contemporary philosopher and social theorist, Kreide, a professor of political theory, and Rodriguez, professor, author, and activist, are central to this article in its attempt to illuminate the implications of neocolonialism, neoliberalism, and capitalism and the dangers that these pose to human rights.

Keywords: human rights, neocolonialism, neoliberalism, modernity, security, migrant worker, capitalism

Migrant Workers in the Neoliberal Age

The history and relationship that the Philippines has with the United States and colonialism is a complex story, one which we can see the aftermath of in the modern-day Philippine labor brokerage system. Robyn Rodriguez, a political thought author and professor at UC Davis, states, “It is undeniably the world’s premier ‘global enterprise’ of labor as the Philippine migrant worker has become practically ubiquitous around the globe.”¹ After the Spanish-American war when the Philippines were ceded to the US in 1898 with the passing of the Treaty of Paris, and the archipelago’s subsequent independence in 1946, the state has struggled to adapt to a globalizing neoliberal world. By being granted a path to independence through the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, Filipinos became “aliens,” losing their status as non-citizen US nationals, and thus, their freedom of movement between the US and the Philippines. The act also imposed economic dependence, continued US military influence and presence, trade limitations, and an immigration quota.

Struggling to recover from a less than ideal Tydings-McDuffie Act, which greatly hampered the ability of the economy to develop, and attempting to respond to the overwhelming levels of unemployment, the newly independent Philippine state looked for answers outside of its borders. With an abundant supply of available cheap laborers looking for employment, a labor brokerage state emerged with vast amounts of resources being funneled into the brokerage apparatus. Today, the state studies market trends and targets “[c]ountries with prospective employment visa availability [for]

¹ Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xii.

informal and formal 'labor diplomacy.'"² The neoliberal orthodox pillars of free trade and export-oriented development underpin the Philippine economy so much so that today, overseas employment is a vital mechanism for many Filipinos' survival, and makes up just under 10% of the Philippines GDP, or \$36.14 billion.³ Being subject to foreign labor laws makes Filipino migrant workers inherently vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, a consequence of colonialism and present day neoliberalism.

Hannah Arendt, an author who experienced stateless status as a refugee during World War II and later published an essay on statelessness, eloquently articulates the issue in saying, "I can hardly imagine an attitude more dangerous, since we actually live in a world in which human beings as such have ceased to exist for quite a while; since society has discovered discrimination as the great social weapon by which one may kill men without any bloodshed; since passports or birth certificates, and sometimes even income tax receipts, are no longer formal papers but matters of social distinction."⁴ Put less eloquently on the topic of the Filipinos' situation, "the Philippine state engages in nothing more than 'legal human trafficking.'"⁵ While the subject of these two statements is different, their reflexive meaning underscores the importance of social distinction and identity, as well as the stateless nature of a transitory migrant labor population.

In this article, I intend to show that liberal conceptions of human rights are blind to the implications of the encroachment and retrenchment of democracy, which manifest from power and capitalism, by looking at the Philippine labor brokerage system and its coercive nature. Global neoliberalism presents the people of the Philippines with few

² Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, 23.

³ Bangko Sentral Staff, "Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas Media and Research," *Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas*, 15 Feb. 2023.

⁴ Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," *The Jewish Writings* (Schocken Books, New York, New York, 2007), 273.

⁵ Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, x.

options other than to capitulate to the demands of capitalism and the brokerage system, subjecting them to alienation and abuse, and as such, they are rendered invisible to the purview of human rights. This article is divided up into four sections: Colonialism, Exploitation and Democracy, Modernity, and finally, Security and The Neoliberal Order. In this discussion of human rights, I will attempt, in the words of philosopher and social theorist Regina Kreide, to “outline ‘systemic’ encroachments that arise as a result of neoliberal globalization and that can be exposed by a combination of critical social analysis and reflective practice.”⁶ Globalism is the idea that the actions and events of one country cannot be studied in an isolated sense, but rather must be analyzed in their interconnectedness to the rest of the world. This is largely what Kreide focuses on, as well as the nationalistic fears that globalization engenders, which can be felt in the undertone of her authorship. In this next section, we will trace the relationship that classic colonialism has with its contemporary iteration, neocolonialism.

Colonialism

The terms of independence for the Philippines stifled the ability of the country to develop, as “U.S. firms were able to maintain their economic dominance through key provisions in the Philippine constitution...the newly ‘independent’ Philippine state was, in fact, a neocolonial one.”⁷ This forced the Philippines to adapt to capitalistic policies in line with American economic interests. Several decades later, as Kreide observes, we see the Philippines begin to struggle to keep up with neoliberal globalization. The subject (the Philippines in this case) finds itself “trapped in the constraints of systematically organized labour, exposed to the demands of a highly technologized,

⁶ Regina Kreide, “The Silence of Political Liberalism” (Eurozine, 2016), 9.

⁷ Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, 10.

hypermobile world, and abandoned to political powerlessness—and recognizes [its] disastrous predicament.”⁸ The status of being caught between the demands of global capitalism and the obligation to protect its citizens left the Philippines in a dangerous position.

For Kreide, “This leads us to a...blind spot of liberalism: it is largely indifferent to the fact that a large portion of humanity is confronted with the grave consequences of capitalist conditions, including not only poverty and growing inequality, but also the feeling of being left behind despite one’s efforts.”⁹ Kreide goes on to explain that this neoliberal restructuring of living conditions, social life and value exposes the social and political shortcomings of past decades. What originated under the guise of a benevolent assimilation of the Philippines as an “unincorporated territory,” later developed into the generosity of independence. In reality these actions stemmed from the conflict between capital, state, and labor. The United States, initially struggling to meet the demands of capital and labor, found its solution in neocolonialism. Capital wanted the foreign nationals for cheap labor, particularly in the industrial and agricultural sector. The voice of American labor on the other hand was expressing ever growing sentiments of nationalism, largely due to the overwhelming feeling by many laborers that they were being replaced with what was being referred to as an Asiatic invasion. Thus, labor called for the expulsion of all Filipinos. It’s worth noting here that these themes are no less relevant today than they were in the 1930s and 1940s. Understanding the events of the past can help frame and clarify contemporary iterations of the same story being told.

⁸ Kreide, “The Silence of Political Liberalism.” 6.

⁹ Kreide, “The Silence of Political Liberalism.” 6.

In maintaining cheap labor for capital, and ensuring such labor was temporary through circular migration to appease the growing tide of nationalism, the Tydings-McDuffie Act clearly demarcated Filipinos as non-citizens, outside of the purview of American rights and protection. In this way, Philippine independence benefited the US more than it did the Philippines. Jürgen Habermas aims to parse out the abstract and obfuscated realities from the professed and publicized intentions of those in power in saying, “the egalitarian claim to universal validity and inclusion had also always served to mask the de facto unequal treatment of those who were silently excluded...Have they not always served to shield a false universality—an imaginary humanity, behind which an imperialistic West could conceal its own ways and interests?”¹⁰ Habermas answers this question with a critique of reason, arguing that human rights norms function as exclusionary practices in the name of human rights; and a critique of power, stating that universal legal claims always conceal the will of those trying to get their way.

The Philippines’ relationship to the US is not one of tutelage but of coercive exploitation, as evidenced by the involvement in the Middle East. A high-ranking Filipino migration official recounted the Philippines’ participation in a 1970s labor marketing campaign where they spoke of going directly to the United States rather than dealing with “Middle Eastern middlemen” because it was US companies that had operations in the Middle East. It is the region with the highest numbers of Filipino migrant workers, which Rodriguez posits, is linked to the US construction industry’s global expansion.¹¹ While the Philippine state is responsible for the protection of the rights of its overseas

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, “Remarks on Legitimation Through Human Rights,” Edited by William Rehg (Philosophy & Social Criticism, 1998), 162.

¹¹ Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, 59.

workers, it is constrained in its ability to do so not only by the sovereignty of host states, but by its desire to maintain positive relations for future labor brokerage diplomacy in the region. Numerous examples of unsuccessful grievance claims filed by various groups of Filipino workers, including but not limited to, unsafe working conditions, inadequate pay, and physical misconduct, eventually revealed that “the bureaucratic processing the Philippine state institutes to ensure that Philippine migrants’ contracts conform to national wage and employment standards is ultimately invalid outside the Philippines.”¹² This is clearly problematic as these contracts all exist outside of the Philippines, rendering these assurances irrelevant. This, paired with the desire of the Philippine state to capitulate to foreign capital and state demands to maintain relations, demonstrates that “In effect, the Philippine state participated in negotiating away the rights of Filipino workers.”¹³ Rodriguez’s articulation of the problem exemplifies Kreide’s broader critique, which is that “In addition to grievances, injustices and exclusions, the focus on neoliberal restructuring and its impact on the conditions of social life brings ...[to] light the political failings of the past decades.”¹⁴

Exploitation and Democracy

Kreide summarizes the testimony of one migrant worker, who described that the only security they have as workers is their bodies: “Migrant workers are only valuable (and therefore employable) inasmuch as they are useful and productive laboring bodies. Otherwise, they become mere waste that employers and states (both receiving and sending) can easily discard and replace.”¹⁵ The ramifications of being reduced to a

¹² Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, 119.

¹³ Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, 130.

¹⁴ Kreide, “The Silence of Political Liberalism,” 9.

¹⁵ Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, 48.

globally traded commodity do not paint the entire picture though. The emotional resources of women in particular are capitalized on as well, as they perform duties in line with a heteronormative structure, relegating the Filipina workforce to a particularly vulnerable set of employment prospects. Furthermore, Filipinos' ability on the whole to participate in the process of democracy is heavily impeded, which not only helps to reproduce the neoliberal structure of the Philippine state, as we shall see shortly, but also undermines the migrant workers' ability to preserve their own integrity as individuals, once reduced to a physical unit of labor. Considering such dehumanization, Arendt warns us that "Man is a social animal and life is not easy for him when social ties are cut off. Moral standards are much easier kept in the texture of society. Very few individuals have the strength to conserve their own integrity if their social, political, and legal status is completely confused."¹⁶ Yet the contemporary neoliberal structure fosters exactly this complete confusion.

Modernity

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is an aspirational document that attempts to lay the groundwork for what a good society should be and the way that its citizens should be treated. Ever since the Enlightenment that ignited European modernity, people have struggled with the concept of rights, and what can be appropriately applied to this essentially contested concept, which is especially the case when looking at the juxtaposition of Eastern to Western formations of society. Modernity, in short, refers to the shift in the sociopolitical framework that happened near the end of the fifteenth century, introducing new socioeconomic structures, shifts in

¹⁶ Arendt, *We Refugees*, 271.

political organization, and the cultural normative transitions that fed and followed these shifts. This social revolution can, on the whole, be described as the emergence of capitalism, particularly the commodification of land, labor and capital.¹⁷

Among the Enlightenment thinkers, John Locke was potentially the most influential to Anglo-American political and sociological thought, building heavily on the ideas presented by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other Reformation thinkers who laid the groundwork for modern conceptions of individuality. Being the father of liberalism, Locke described the individual as necessarily coming before society, and that the state's main interest was in protecting the rights of the individual who was modeled after the sovereign. This individual is subject to no laws other than those of nature and those he makes for himself, formally and substantively. This is a concept that is still very significant in today's conception of politics, as evidenced by the United States' emphasis on individualism and natural liberty. This is in contrast to the conceptions of the relationship between society and the individual in many Eastern conceptions of politics, as referenced above, which necessarily sees the individual and their interest lying in the collective whole rather than in the individual self.

As Habermas notes, for Eastern cultures, there is not a distinct divide between laws and ethics, and that political community is integrated more by duties than rights.¹⁸ Habermas observes that "From the principled point of view, the reservations about the individualistic style of European human rights are backed by the justified critique of an understanding of rights that stems from the Lockean tradition and that has been revived

¹⁷ Michael Forman, *Human Rights (The Oxford Handbook of Global Studies 2018)*, 2-3.

¹⁸ Habermas, "Remarks on Legitimation Through Human Rights," 165.

today by neoliberalism.”¹⁹ Understandably, these concerns with modern day conceptions of human rights stem from the core understanding of where one finds themselves situated in the polity. This has been one of the main critiques of the UDHR, that it advocates for the universal adoption of a conception of rights conceived of by Western thinkers.

Although there is some credence to this critique, it is also the case, as previously stated, that capitalism is a defining characteristic of modernity which follows a liberal economic progression. Habermas further notes that “other cultures and world religions are now also exposed to the challenges of social modernity...My working hypothesis is that those standards stem less from the particular cultural background of western civilization than from the attempt to answer specific challenges posed by a social modernity that has in the meantime covered the globe.”²⁰ It is therefore modernity’s introduction of a normative plurality, the shifting of political organization, the transformation of the purpose of the state, the building of new financial institutions and systems, and the emergence of a wholly novel debate as to what a good life is that created a new set of issues for the infancy of modern society. These issues gave rise to extraordinary violence, social dislocation, and genocide, which liberalism, and in turn, human rights, aims to address in understanding, containing, and managing.²¹ These are the challenges that Habermas refers to, and they are due to the fact that modernity is inseparable from capitalism, capitalism inseparable from liberalism, and liberalism inseparable from human rights. We see, through this transitive property, an inevitability

¹⁹ Habermas, “Remarks on Legitimation Through Human Rights,” 167.

²⁰ Habermas, “Remarks on Legitimation Through Human Rights,” 163.

²¹ Forman, *Human Rights*, 3-4.

to the conversation of human rights and the questions that arise, regardless of the fact that these conceptions originated in the Western culture. These questions are observable in the Philippines, for instance, which is undergoing modernity later than the core countries of prior centuries. Assuredly, the Philippines, just as all other countries, was going to be presented with questions of human rights, as the demands of capitalism and neoliberalism expanded outward to engulf the globe.

Security and the Neoliberal Order

Neoliberalism favors capital at the expense of the state and labor, or the people, which summarizes much of what has already been spoken about here. In the Philippines, labor is subordinate to the state, which is in turn subordinate to capital. The desire to maintain the labor brokerage state for the remittances that it recovers from its overseas workers drives the state to engage in practices that will pacify the Filipino people into a state of obedience. Between 2001 and 2010, during Gloria Arroyo's presidency, military engagements with her own people weren't uncommon, as she attempted to suppress another social revolution. But as Rodriguez puts it, "if militarization cannot sufficiently quell the communist movement, migration can."²² Labor brokerage served two functions in this capacity. Firstly, it removed many of the citizens who may have otherwise involved themselves in the revolution, and placed them in overseas employment, thus easing the threat to order that unemployment posed to the state. Secondly, the system provided income for the state through remittances which allowed the state to gesture to the growing economy as evidence of its success.

²² Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, 16.

Mark Neocleous, professor of politics and philosophy at the University of Brunel, London, and has written extensively on security, pacification, and police power. Neocleous describes this coercive migration as a direct means of pacification, observing that when a state seeks to “create a socio-political environment in which future insurgency would not flourish again,” it pursues “police-type action and constructive politico-economic programs as security is restored.”²³ Neocleous describes this imperative as securing the insecurity of the capitalist system, arguing that the accumulation that capital demands is never satisfied, thus security is never considered restored, forever justifying a police state of pacification.

When the migrant workers return home, they are met with great fanfare, consisting of parades, music, and typically an appearance of the president as the country celebrates the effort and sacrifice of the migrant workforce dubbed national heroes. The public celebration of the “heroes” that make up the overseas migrant workforce is meant to reproduce themes of nationalistic pride. Their sacrifice is depicted as being for their family, and for the wellbeing of the nation for generations to come. It is propaganda employed to not only pacify the suffering, abused, and exploited workforce, but to ensure that remittances are sent home as the state carefully uses themes of family and nation to encourage the continued “voluntary” exploitation of its people. It is of course not entirely voluntary, as the fact that the Philippine economy is growing does not mean that significantly more jobs are being invested in and created at home. This means also that, as previously stated, working abroad is one of the only methods by which many Filipinos can survive. This is a self-perpetuating narrative, as

²³ Mark Neocleous, “‘A Brighter and Nicer New Life’: Security as Pacification” (*Social & Legal Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 6 June 2011), 194.

Habermas describes, “The dictatorships consider themselves authorized by the right to social development—apparently understood as a collective right—to postpone the realization of liberal rights and rights of political participation until their countries have attained a level of economic development that allows them to satisfy the basic material needs of the population equally. For a population in misery, they claim, legal equality and freedom of opinion are not so relevant as the prospect of better living conditions.”²⁴ Although the Philippines is not a dictatorship, it is also not a robust democracy either, scoring a 6.63 in 2023 as a “flawed democracy.”²⁵

Normative plurality, as previously mentioned, is the coexistence of many different types of people within a society, and is an element of modernity that comes with its own set of issues. The state employs tactics that exacerbate these issues to split up the labor force, so as to fragment its voice. According to Evelyn Glenn, scholar of race and gender studies, “The labor system has been organized in ways that create and re-create race-gender categories and relationships...segregation can be seen as an unstable compromise that ultimately benefited capital by fragmenting workers into smaller interest groups and hampered coalitions across race, gender, skill, nativity, and other lines. Capitalist industrialization both incorporated existing race/gender hierarchies and reformulated and rearticulated race/gender relationships.”²⁶ This is crucial to the reproduction of the capitalist state, as when grievances arise, workers are separated based on skill, gender, race, etc. and all handled separately, leading many to turn on each other despite having undergone a similar experience of mistreatment and

²⁴ Habermas, “Remarks on Legitimation Through Human Rights,” 56.

²⁵ “Democracy Index,” *Our World in Data, Economist Intelligence Unit*, 2024.

²⁶ Evelyn Nakano Glenn. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. (Harvard University Press, 2004). 58

exploitation. In one incident for example, the Filipinos hired by a Brunei factory had filed a mass grievance claim against their employers for unsafe working conditions and unfair pay. After failing to fight for their migrant workforce, the Philippine government conducted “batch” settlements in which they grouped up workers and arbitrated their grievance claims in somewhat random clusters of workers, and seemingly without specific pattern, awarded them varying dollar amounts of reparations. For instance, some who had only recently been deployed to Brunei were awarded more than others who had been stationed there for significantly longer. “This settlement process served to weaken workers' unity and caused tensions among them.”²⁷

Conclusion

The neocolonial history and relationship that the Philippines and the United States share are evidenced by the modern-day political and economic structure of the state. This type of relationship is being reproduced in other international relationships between the core and semi-periphery as well. GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) is a modern-day iteration of legalized human trafficking that continues the practice of stripping rights away from migrant workers. Basav Sen, of the Institute of Policy Studies, argues in his article “Legalizing Human Trafficking,” a title that echoes the perspective of Rodriguez, that “Under GATS... employers will be able to bring the sweatshop home legally, threatening service-sector workers with the same mass layoffs that manufacturing workers have had to deal with.”²⁸ The current global neoliberal current pushes further and further into the lives of not only migrant workers, but also those whose jobs will be impacted at home with the introduction of exploited cheap

²⁷ Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, 132.

²⁸ Basav Sen, “Legalizing Human Trafficking” (Dollars & Sense, 2006).

labor, providing capital the cheap labor it demands. Understanding that capitalism does not have a natural end, other than potential global crisis, the need to implement protections not simply nationally but globally becomes glaringly apparent.

Immanuel Kant's "Perpetual Peace" aims to lay the groundwork for the avoidance of military conflict, but it can also help us understand what can create an international community that is committed to the protection of human rights through mutual respect. The history of the neocolonial Philippine state is rooted in economic monopolization, exploitation, and ownership, which stands in contrast to Kant's second preliminary article, stating that "no independently existing state, whether it be large or small, may be acquired by another state by inheritance exchange, purchase or gift."²⁹ This highlights the problematic nature of the term "unincorporated territory" from which the modern Philippine state arose. Secondly, in contrast to the coercive nature and hierarchy that neoliberalism necessitates, Kant explains that "A republican constitution is founded upon three principles: firstly, the principle of freedom for all members of a society, secondly, the principle of dependence of everyone upon a single common legislation, and thirdly, the principle of legal equality for everyone."³⁰ Thirdly, speaking directly to the mistreatment of visitors, the principle of universal hospitality means that no visitor should be treated with hostility—i.e., If you invite them in, acting in any exploitative or hostile manner is a clear violation of the article of cosmopolitanism. Everyone, despite their individual affiliations, belongs to a singular community and should be treated as such. And lastly, and most importantly, a *pacific federation* established to encompass the world in a collective system of federalism aims to maintain a balance of harmony

²⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.

³⁰ Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace*, 5-6.

between states so as to not negatively interfere in the lives of those sharing this planet with us.

Liberal conceptions of human rights present inadequate responses to questions that arise from social analysis that pertain to power and capitalism. The impacts on human rights that the coercive nature of the Philippine neoliberal structure places upon its citizens is completely overlooked by our present political and philosophical framework. In turn, Kreide asserts, "Political theory must become aware that when it looks down into the valley of social reality from an all too lofty a philosophical height, it fails to see many things. And it must reflect on what theory is farsighted enough to comprehend both normative and empirical aspects alike."³¹ Our current conceptions of human rights under the dominant political philosophy of liberalism represent "an obstacle to an appropriate theorization of social conditions."³² To close, a reflection on the words of Arendt can allow us to learn from our past: "The comity of European peoples went to pieces when, and because, it allowed its weakest member to be excluded and persecuted."³³

³¹ Kreide, "The Silence of Political Liberalism," 9.

³² Kreide, "The Silence of Political Liberalism," 9.

³³ Arendt, *We Refugees*, 274

Bibliography

- Arendt, Hannah, et al. "We Refugees." *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, New York, 2007, pp. 264–274.
- "Democracy Index." *Our World in Data*, 2024, ourworldindata.org/grapher/democracy-index-eiu.
- Forman, Michael. "Human rights." *The Oxford Handbook of Global Studies*, 11 Dec. 2018, pp. 414–430, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190630577.013.38>.
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Habermas, Jürgen. "Remarks on Legitimation Through Human Rights." Edited by William Rehg. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 24, no. 2–3, Apr. 1998, pp. 157–171, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019145379802400211>.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Kreide, Regina. "The Silence of Political Liberalism." *Eurozine*, 2016.
- Neocleous, Mark. "'A Brighter and Nicer New Life': Security as Pacification." *Social & Legal Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 6 June 2011, pp. 191–208, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663910395816>.
- Rodriguez, Robyn Magalit. *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Sen, Basav. "Legalizing Human Trafficking." *Dollars & Sense*, 2006.
- Staff, Bangko Sentral. "Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas Media and Research." *Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas*, 15 Feb. 2023, www.bsp.gov.ph/SitePages/MediaAndResearch/MediaDisp.aspx?ItemId=6617&fbclid=IwAR00APGgILCyd98_TpPbr3vvJzdR4GdApaqBRd3oQ_vh_x9Zpz-6TacJDXU.