REGIMES OF REMITTANCE DEPENDENCY: GLOBAL STRUCTURES AND TRAJECTORIES OF THE FORMER SOVIET "BLOC"[1]

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ABSTRACT: *The integration of the countries of eastern and south-eastern Europe into global flows of migration has become a major issue not only in migration policy debates, but also in analysing longer term social change in the region. Changes in the magnitudes of migrant remittances can be of crucial social and political importance. In this study, I link a conceptual contribution with a three-step empirical inquiry. First, I conceptualize migrant remittances as a form of external economic dependency. Next, I describe recent changes in the strength of the empirical relationship between migrant remittances as percentages of the GDP and per capita GDP for all societies of the world utilizing data from two online data sets. Employing what Charles Tilly (1984) called "variation-finding comparison," I examine, next, the – as it turns out, quite sizeable – residual variation in the relative magnitude of remittances that remains after controlling for per capita GDP, and interpret it as a marker for patterns of remittance dependency. Finally, I trace the recent trajectories of the societies that had, until one generation ago, constituted the Soviet "bloc" against the backdrop of the global distribution in remittance dependency.*

The data have been adopted from two sources: Estimates for migrant remittances as percentages of the GDP of their home country come from the online World Develop-

ment Indicators dataset of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development,[3] while per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP/cap)[4] figures have been borrowed from economic historian Angus Maddison's widely used population, GDP and GDP/cap dataset.[5]

1   MIGRANT REMITTANCES, "DEVELOPMENT" AND DEPENDENCY

All forms of commerce involve importation and exportation of labour. In terms of social conditions and consequences, however, there is a considerable difference between those forms of trade where the labour that is exported / imported is embodied "only" in the product, and those that involve human beings crossing state borders to exert their labour power as non-citizens. My interest lies in deciphering the economic significance of the latter[6] for migrant-emitting societies – an issue that is emerging, in the context of an ever more closely integrated world-economy, as an increasingly serious social, economic and political problem.

Of particular conceptual interest are the experiences of the societies of the erstwhile Soviet „bloc" that have experienced the reinstatement of (semi-) peripheral capitalism in the years following 1989–1991. They merit special attention with respect to migrant remittance dependency (MRD) for three main reasons.

First, because most state socialist states had operated some forms of restrictions on the foreign travel of their own citizens, one of the relevant social changes the collapse of states socialism brought in was the removal of such domestic constraints on flows of all kinds, including labour exports. Of course,

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[3] Variable code "BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS," "Workers' remittances and compensation of employees, received (% of GDP), IBRD".

[4] Maddison estimates historical GDP/cap figures with the Geary-Khamis method – a version of the purchasing power parity (PPP) technique – at current USD. For the analysis, they have been translated into annual percentages of the world mean GDP/cap. PPP measures are known to have a close covariance with exchange rate (XE)-based measures, and have one clear advantage, namely, that they control for differences in real cost-of-living differences along the distribution. As a result, the overall variance in the PPP estimates tends to be more "conservative" than that of XE-measures; in other words, the rich appear somewhat less rich, and the poor somewhat less poor.

[5] Maddison, 2012. Maddison's figures are Geary-Khamis PPP estimates, offered in fixed 1980 USD. For better over-time comparability and easier interpretability as "relative position in the global system of economic inequality," I have converted Maddison's USD figures to percentages of the world mean GDP/cap for the given year.

[6] Obviously, economic effects constitute only a subset of the many, far-reaching consequences of labour exports.

the end of the socialist state's administrative restrictions on cross-border popu-
lation movements was paralleled by the creation of new barriers, this time by
the two largest economic entities in the world, the European Union (through the
seven-year delay in implementing the free movement of labour with respect to
citizens of the newly admitted member states) and the United States (which
introduced a similar delay in the implementation of the visa-free travel ar-
rangement to citizens of the recent EU-member states, explicitly expecting that
the latter would be more likely to overstay the 3-month period of stay than
others). Those obstacles have since been removed in a subset of those states,
and only with considerable hesitation, foot-dragging, and delays (Böröcz,
2014). Even today, i.e., more than ten years after formal accession of the first
batch of erstwhile-state-socialist states in the European Union – the presence of
the East European EU-member states' citizens in the labour markets, and, more
broadly, in the formal and informal social spaces, of at least some other EU-
member states is subject to considerable political resistance and consternation.

Second, all post-state-socialist economies sustained deep losses in economic
output (Böröcz, 2012) over the first two decades after the transformation. Pre-
cipitating severe drops in incomes and a massive reduction of the labour force,
the downward slide of post-state-socialist societies produced powerful incen-
tives for labour to seek employment abroad, and for post-state-socialist econo-
mies to export labour power.

Third, the post-state-socialist transformation in the erstwhile Soviet-bloc re-
sulted in the multiplication of three formerly federal states: Czechoslovakia
broke up into two, the end of Yugoslavia created seven successor states, and the
breakdown of the USSR produced no fewer than fifteen, at least nominally
independent, post-Soviet polities. The state-socialist era administrative category
of residency registration thus came to be re-inscribed as citizenship. One con-
clusion was the sudden creation of a sizeable cohort of "foreign" workers
(Böröcz, 2014). The forced population displacements that resulted from the
four post-Yugoslav wars and the various civil and international wars in Central
Asia and around the Caucasus region further swelled the ranks of erstwhile-
socialist labour abroad. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect that the rela-
tionship between labour exports and the economic performance of the migrant-
emitting societies would show some particularly strong patterns in the post-
state-socialist context.

Source: Ratha and Silwal (2012).

Figure 1
Remittances and other resource flows to developing countries, 1990–2010

The idiomatic expression referring to the focal variable of my analysis, 're-mittance dependency' is widely used[7] in the literature on transnational / interna-tional migration. To be noted, however, is that the term often appears without a definition, making the idea suggestive but also rendering it inaccessible to em-pirical examination.

Another feature of the literature is that the use of the expression "remittance dependency" is somewhat undifferentiated in terms of scales: In some instances it refers, clearly, to the micro- and/or meso-scale, denoting families of migrants that experience dependence on remittances; at other places, it designates a mac-ro-level phenomenon, referring to entire societies / states / economies as subject to such dependency. Dependency due to transnational integration involving smaller scales (e.g., households, other formal or informal institutions or indi-viduals) might be of great conceptual interest, but we lack reliable global com-parative data on those scales. Here, my conceptual interest and data refer to the macroscopic scale.

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[7] See, e.g., Keely and Tran (1989), Guarnizo (2003), Hujo and Piper (2007), Koppenberg (2012) or Thieme (2012).

The "migration-development nexus" is a ubiquitous concern for studies in international migration. To be sure, global structures of capital-labour relations ensure that the remuneration of foreign labour – likely the least protected, most precarious, often systematically discriminated-against and overall most exploited segment of the working classes of the world – remains very low. Hence, the remittance flows generated by non-citizen labour are relatively insignificant when compared to the total volume of the world economy, or even if measured against the economic output of the migrant-receiving, often high-income, societies. But that does not mean that those sums are equally insignificant for the migrants' home societies.

The last decade has seen considerable growth in remittances: After two decades of near-stagnation around the 0.4% level, the sum total of migrant savings sent home by the approximately 3% of the world's population that is foreign-born[8] increased from 0.44% to 0.75% of the Gross World Product during the first eleven years of the 21st century.[9]

As data presented in a recent *Migration and Development Brief*, published by the World Bank (Ratha and Silwal, 2012; reproduced here as *Figure 1* above), suggest, the estimated total volume of migrant remittances surpassed the magnitude of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in 1996 and remained higher ever since. Worldwide remittances overtook private debt and portfolio equity in 2008 and the steepness of the curve indicating growth in migrant remittances since the mid-nineties is comparable to the rate of increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) during the same period. World Bank experts Dilip Ratha and Ani Silwal forecast that by 2014 the sum of worldwide migrant remittances will reach the levels that FDI had in 2006 and 2010. To the extent that it is necessary to understand aid dependency and foreign direct investment dependency a major structural problems for some of the poorest and least powerful societies of the world, the sheer magnitudes of, and the increasing trends in, migrant remittances – which show amounts comparable to OAD and FDI – suggest that dependence on transfers resulting from labour exports deserves scholarly attention as well.

Over the most recent years, global remittances have shown considerable fluctuation – likely a short-term effect of the global crisis of 2008. However, even if we take this volatility into account, the overall growth in remittances has been remarkably strong. As *Table 1* suggests, the upswing in remittances to the states that the World Bank categorizes as the "Third World" has been con-

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[8] According to the World Development Indicators dataset, the total foreign-born population (SM.POP.TOTL) of the world increased from 178.1 to 213.3 million people. The World Bank estimates that that comprises 2.92% to 3.11% of the total world population (SM.POP.TOTL.ZS) between 2000 and 2010 (IBRD, 2012).

[9] The exact meaning of 'remittances' and a number of methodological remarks on the remittance data are presented below in the section of "Data Caveats."

siderably more robust than the overall rate of growth in the world economy, irrespective of whether the latter was estimated via Gross National Income (GNI) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is particularly striking, given the likelihood that the data on which these computations are based likely underestimate the magnitude of the remittance flows (for more on that issue, see below).

Table 1

Rates of growth in total remittances to the Third World and global economic growth (%)

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Growth in remittances to Third World	16.10	-6.30	5.70	10.5[10]
Total GNI growth (annual %)[11]	1.20	-2.57	4.47	..
Total GDP growth (annual %)[12]	1.33	-2.25	4.34	2.73

Source: For remittances: Ratha and Silwal (2012); for GNI and GDP: IBRD 2012.
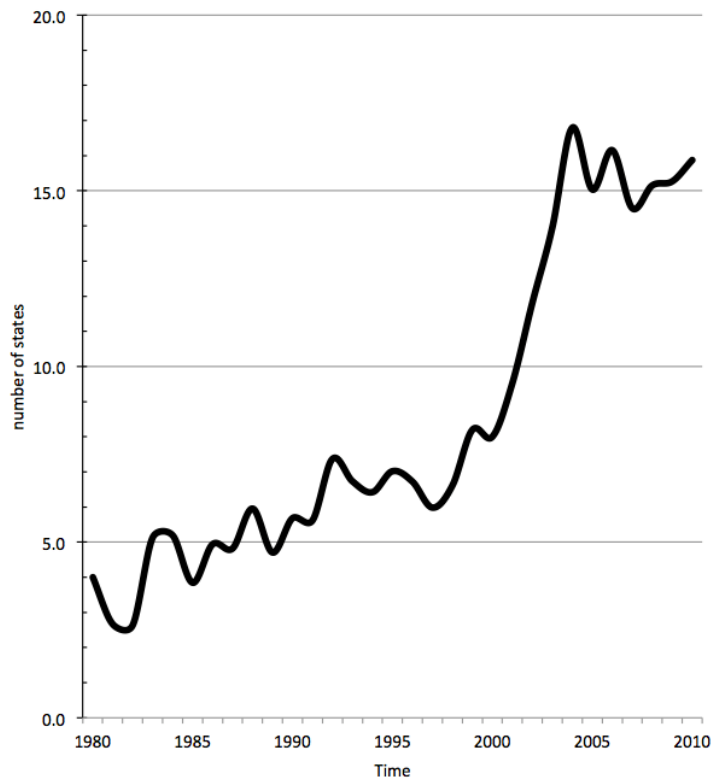
The number of states receiving relatively high levels of migrant remittances also shows a dramatic increase. While the number of the world's societies where migrant remittances exceeded 10% of the GDP of the migrant emitting

[10] Estimate for the first half of 2011.

[11] Variable code: NY.GNP.PCAP.CD . "GNI per capita (formerly GNP per capita) is the gross national income, converted to U.S. dollars using the World Bank Atlas method, divided by the midyear population. GNI is the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad. GNI, calculated in national currency, is usually converted to U.S. dollars at official exchange rates for comparisons across economies, although an alternative rate is used when the official exchange rate is judged to diverge by an exceptionally large margin from the rate actually applied in international transactions. To smooth fluctuations in prices and exchange rates, a special Atlas method of conversion is used by the World Bank. This applies a conversion factor that averages the exchange rate for a given year and the two preceding years, adjusted for differences in rates of inflation between the country, and through 2000, the G-5 countries (France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States). From 2001, these countries include the Euro area, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States."

[12] Variable code: NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG. "Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2000 U.S. dollars. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources."

state[13] had remained at or below five until 1990,[14] that number doubled by 1999,[15] only to double again by 2004. It has hovered above twenty ever since.[16] As a result, the percentage of the world's states with high levels of MRD exceeded 15% by 2004, and has remained on that level ever since.

Source: Computed from IBRD.

Figure 2
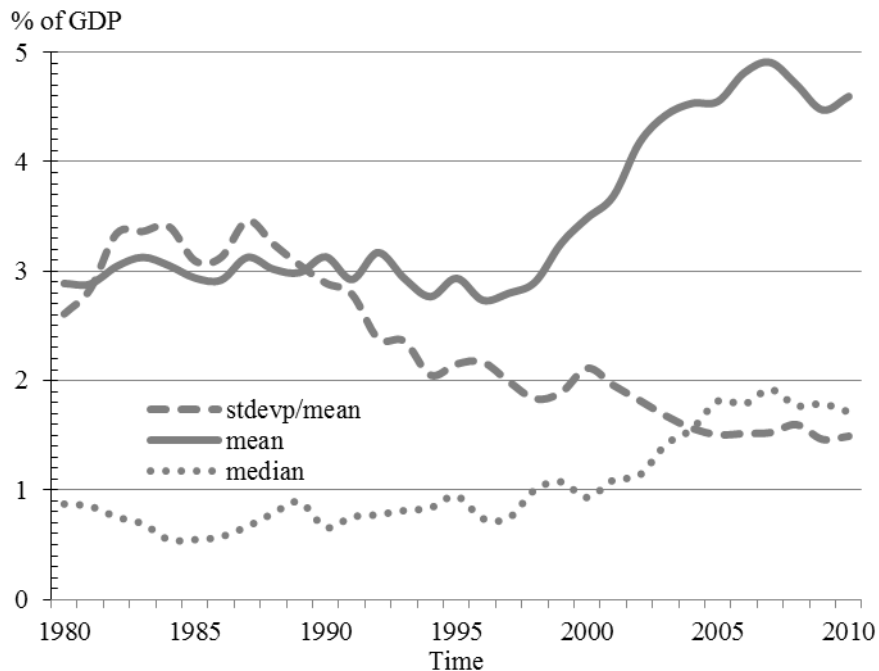*Percent of the world's states with MRD above 10% of GDP, 1980–2010*

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[13] 10% is of course an arbitrary threshold. I use it here to illustrate the changes in the magnitude of the situation. See also Helmke (2010).
[14] Computed from IBRD 2012.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

Figure 2 depicts the dynamics of this transformation in percentage terms. Starting from around 5% of the world's societies in the 1980s, the share of states with high levels of MRD has increased to 16.8% by 2004, and has remained 15% since then. With rates of increase that have surpassed the growth rates of the world economy as a whole, it is undeniable that migrant remittances constitute an increasingly significant form of cross-border value transfers. In migrant remittances, we are looking at a key component of global economic integration.

Source: Computed from IBRD.

Figure 3

Remittances: medians, unweighted means and coefficients of variation (standard deviation / mean), 1980–2010

As the continuous blue line – representing the unweighted world mean remittance/GDP figures – in *Figure 3* indicates, the world mean in remittances as percentages of the GDP remained more or less constant around 3% until the second half of the nineteen nineties. Thereafter, it shows quite a sudden, dynamic upswing: It reached 4.5% in 2004, stayed above 4% ever since. The

median in worldwide remittances per GDP also shows a proportionate increase so that, at its peak in 2007, half of the world's states show a remittance dependence greater than 1.9% – a figure almost three and a half times greater than this period's minimum in 1986. Meanwhile, the distribution of the world's societies in terms of remittance levels became considerably tighter over the same period: The coefficient of variation (standard deviation/mean) among the world's societies in terms of the relative importance of migrant remittances has less than halved (dropping from above 3 to around 1.5) since the early eighties. As the share of migrant remittances in GDP grew and variation among the world's societies sharply decreased, some observers – mainly neoliberal economists – came to expect that increased remittances would by necessity lead to a perceptible surge in "economic development" in the migrant-emitting societies.

And yet – in spite of the indications of growth and the expectations based upon them – as Alejandro Portes has pointed it out, "[t]here is no known instance of remittances economically "developing" by themselves a labour-exporting country" (2007, p.20). In fact, remittance dependency is widely reported to entail a number of consequences that can only be described as conceptual opposites to what reasonable observers would define as "development": Repatriated migrant savings are reported to have contributed to lowering political participation (Krilova, 2008); they seem to have increased only immediate consumption and inflation (Guarnizo, 2003), forcing "land use changes from agricultural production to cattle ranching" (ibid.), and, at least under some conditions, to "serious[ly] distort[ing] the local labour market,"[17] "displac[ing] local jobs and incomes, inducing [. . .] foreign imports [. . .] creat[ing] disparity and envy between recipients and nonrecipients, and creat[ing] a culture of economic dependency" (Vertovec, 2004, p.985).

Facing such adverse effects, as Douglas S. Massey and his collaborators (1998) report, "nobody [among officials of inter-governmental organizations] believes [...] any more" in the possibility of an unambiguous causal connection leading from remittances to development. The "rapid growth in remittances to less-developed countries"[18] ought to be seen, then, in another, more complex, conceptual framework.

To solve the impasse regarding the developmental effects of remittances, Castles and Delgado-Wise propose the idea of "the migration-development nexus" (2007, p.7), devised to transcend the traps of the "nonsensical [discussion about] what comes first" (Castles, 2009) in the relationship between cross-

[17] Guarnizo (2003), summarizing findings, for the Dominican Republic, by Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) and, for El Salvador, by Lungo and Kandel (1999) and Zilberg and Lungo (1999).
[18] Ghosh (2006) and World Bank 2006, quoted non-verbatim by Castles and Delgado-Wise (2007, p.7).

border flows of labour and economic development.[19] Migrant remittances offer an excellent empirical focus for such an inquiry, as they constitute an institutionalized instance of the "migration-development nexus". By focusing on the relative magnitudes of remittances at various levels of economic performance, we have empirical observations concerning patterns of migration and patterns of economic integration jointly, as elements of a single social fact.

The scholarly literature on global structures and inequalities conceived, on the most generic level, the idea of 'dependency' to grasp "an unequal relationship between societies" (Foran, 2012, p.383) that "shapes the nature of development" (ibid.). A classic definition of economic dependency, proposed most elegantly by Theotonio dos Santos in 1968, apprehends "dependence [as] a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected" (dos Santos 1970, 231; dos Santos 1968, 6). In more formal terms, dependency obtains in situations where entire societies are tied to other societies in such ways that the linkages between them are considerably more important to some than to others.

Dependency is, thus, an unequal network relationship depicted from the standpoint of the society that experiences significantly less network power. Viewed through a network 'lens,' the world economy is but a set of asymmetrical network ties, and the significance of those linkages is exceedingly rarely, if ever, balanced, or equal, for all societies involved.[20] Simply, experience suggests that, in the capitalist world economy, various dimensions of dependency tend to be clustered.[21]

From this perspective, I define migrant remittance dependency (MRD) as that aspect of the dependence of a society on the economic, political, and social conditions prevalent in a set of other societies which results from value trans-

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[19] Castles and Delgado-Wise (2009) find this discussion "nonsensical" because "socio-economic change and human mobility are constantly interactive processes" (p.1), making it impossible to separate the mutual effects of the two empirically.

[20] This is not necessarily and always a devastating socio-economic and -political problem: Small discrepancies in network power can be, and are, routinely absorbed, especially given the historic expectations that such external networks will, eventually, over time, provide possible avenues for a more equal relationship. However, magnitudes do matter, and it is also the case that true reciprocity in dependency – where society A and society B are by and large to the same extent, symmetrically dependent on each other in multiple dimensions – is almost un-heard-of.

[21] Because of the tendency of asymmetrical ties to cluster, it is possible to regard the external dependency of society A as a structural condition, even without necessarily specifying which alters (societies B, C, D, etc.) A is dependent on. It is this insight that led, among other developments, to recognition of the importance of the existence and character of external linkages in explaining chronic problems of economic growth, industrialisation, and (internal as well as external) inequalities.

fers by its own citizens who sell their labour power abroad.[22] Just like dependency on aid or on foreign direct investment, remittance dependency is a process whereby external structural conditions are internalized so that the migrant emitting society loses much of its control over its domestic economic, political, social, etc., processes.

Remittance dependency can be thought of as a ratio-scale variable: It is that percentage of the GDP of the migrant-emitting economy which is accounted for by migrant remittances. "High-MRD" obtains when the economic importance of remittances into a society by people from that state who work abroad is high. As with most empirical measures, of course there is no *a priori* way to determine what constitutes a "high" level but, given sharp differences in magnitudes, finding a society consistently in the top segments of distributions signals the likely presence of MRD.

2 DATA CAVEATS

While migrant remittances are, clearly, network phenomena, network data are not available anywhere in an even remotely comprehensive fashion.[23] All the World Bank World Development Indicators dataset – to my knowledge, the best globally comprehensive source of information on remittances available to scholars – allows us to do is model some consequences of network linkages without network data.[24] The analysis I am presenting below focuses essentially

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[22] There appears to be such a degree of agreement about the existence, and significance, of remittance dependency that, while a large number of studies – e.g., Keely and Tran, 1989; Guarnizo, 2003; Hujo and Piper, 2007; Koppenberg, 2012; Thieme 2012 – use a notion of remittance dependency, they do not offer a formal definition for it, nor do they specify its origins.

[23] The only example of a study that uses network data I have found, Lueth and Ruiz-Arranz (2006), works with data for 11 remittance destination states, linked to 3 to 31 alters. This creates a small and very uneven sub-matrix of the 200 by 200 state-to-state matrix that is the world economy.

[24] The description of the relevant variable – "Workers' remittances and compensation of employees, received (% of GDP)", variable code: BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS . – reads as follows: Workers' remittances and compensation of employees comprise current transfers by migrant workers and wages and salaries earned by nonresident workers. Data are the sum of three items defined in the fifth edition of the IMF's Balance of Payments Manual: workers' remittances, compensation of employees, and migrants' transfers. Remittances are classified as current private transfers from migrant workers resident in the host country for more than a year, irrespective of their immigration status, to recipients in their country of origin. Migrants' transfers are defined as the net worth of migrants who are expected to remain in the host country for more than one year that is transferred from one country to another at the time of migration. Compensation of employees is the income of migrants who have lived in the host country for less than a year (IBRD, 2012).

on that endpoint of a network process where the savings of non-citizen workers abroad enter the migrant emitting society. This allows, clearly, only a first step toward an analysis of migrant dependency because, given the absence of information on specific remittances by source state, it is impossible to calculate pairwise, state-to-state rates of dependency on remittances. However, the data do allow calculating the degree of the dependency of a specific economy on the external linkages that emerge as a result of the exportation of its citizens' labour power.

More problematic, the World Bank data set includes only formal-sector transfers, i.e., it provides no information on remittances transferred through informal channels. This is quite a serious problem because – as the literature on international migration and migrant transnationalism[25] has insisted for quite some time – a considerable part[26] of migrant remittances never enter formal financial institutions. We ought to expect this to be the case with most migrants that find employment in the informal sector, and at least some of even those who are engaged in the formal sector. The powerful involvement of "labour supply companies," recruiting agents and touts – i.e., almost always informal components of the value chains in the labour export industry that have every reason to conceal their activities (Sarkar, 2012) – is likely further to decrease the visibility of at least some of the related monetary flows into the migrant-emitting economies. As a result, the World Bank data definitely undercount the phenomenon they purport to represent.

Worse yet, there is reason to expect that the magnitude of the undercount is systematically related to the level of *per capita* income: Because of a host of social, political and cultural reasons, not to mention the widely noted[27] lower transaction costs of informal-sector banking services, the undercount is likely to become more pronounced as we proceed from the richer to the poorer receiving societies. This also raises the possibility that at least some of the recorded changes in reported levels of remittances may be the result of migrants switching between institutional arrangements, some of which might involve shifts

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[25] See, e.g., Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt (1999); Landolt, Autler and Baires (1999); Puri and Ritzema (1999); de Haas (2007); Zelizer (2007).

[26] According to one World Bank estimate, reported by Ratha and Shaw (2007), "the true size of these flows, taking into account unrecorded flows through formal and informal channels, is believed to be at least 50 percent larger" than estimates based only on formal sector transfers. (See also Awal, 2011.)

[27] Freund and Spatafora (2005, p.5), considers information concerning the lower transaction costs in the informal sector "anecdotal"; meanwhile, in the next paragraph, they assert without any qualification that "[f]ormal remittance channels are typically more expensive" (Freund and Spatafora 2005, p.5).

between the formal and informal sectors.[28] Some of the state-by-state differences may also stem from institutional variation in the transmission of funds along the formality-informality distinction, and there is no way to account for these effects empirically.

Finally, yet another caveat is at order: The World Bank has presented its remittances data without disclosing its sources or the specific techniques used in obtaining / estimating them. That is a serious cause for concern, given the great worldwide variation in the ways in which national banks and other central financial authorities are able, and willing, to monitor banking activity. This is especially so in the case of financial transfers – such as migrant remittances – that dwarf, for the most part, in comparison to other cross-border financial transactions.

We should keep all these caveats in mind. The validity of the analysis below rests on the assumption that the data we do have are robust enough to withstand the damage caused by the obvious imperfections at the source in order to yield meaningful results.

3 EMPIRICAL EXPECTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The dependent variable is a single ratio-scale distribution of the world's societies in terms of percentages of their GDP that is accounted for by officially recorded migrant remittances. According to the precepts of a neoclassical-inspired "push-pull" model of migration (e.g., Adams, 2008; Glytsos, 1997), we should expect, *ceteris paribus*, strong negative covariance between migrant remittances and levels of income at the migrant-emitting societies.[29] That is a reasonable expectation because, first, as "push-pull" theories would argue, individuals in poor societies have greater incentives to go abroad to search for work than their colleagues in richer societies. In addition, the lower the position of the migrant emitting economy on the global income scale, the more opportunities there are for labour to find more highly remunerated positions. Amplifying this effect is the likelihood that, once incomes are earned, migrants' savings

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[28] Freund and Spatafora (2005) raises the possibility that recorded higher levels may be artifacts of a movement toward the formal sector – but, from a sociological point of view, there is no *a priori* reason to exclude the obverse, i.e., that recorded drops may be results of a movement toward the informal sector.

[29] To be noted is that "most – but not all of the results" presented by Adams (2008, p.17) suggest an "inverted U-shape" relationship between remittances and *per capita* GDP – however, this is not directly relevant because Adams' dependent variable is remittances *per capita* (not remittances as % of the GDP).

go farther in terms of purchasing power in the poorer "home" economies than in their less poor counterparts.[30]

Summarizing the tradition of sociological critiques in 1989, Alejandro Portes and József Böröcz (1989) offered a critique of the conceptual weaknesses of the "push-pull" paradigm by suggesting that it incorporated a selection bias fallacy: "The tendency of the push-pull model to be applied to those flows which are already taking place conceals its inability to explain why similar movements do not arise out of the other equally 'poor' nations or why sources of outmigration tend to concentrate in certain regions and not in others [. . .]" (Portes and Böröcz 1989, p.607). The present study allows an explicit empirical examination, not only of the explanatory power of this empirical expectation but, more important, also of the empirical dispersion of the world's societies in terms of the degree of their dependence on migrant remittances, at similar levels of *per capita* GDP.
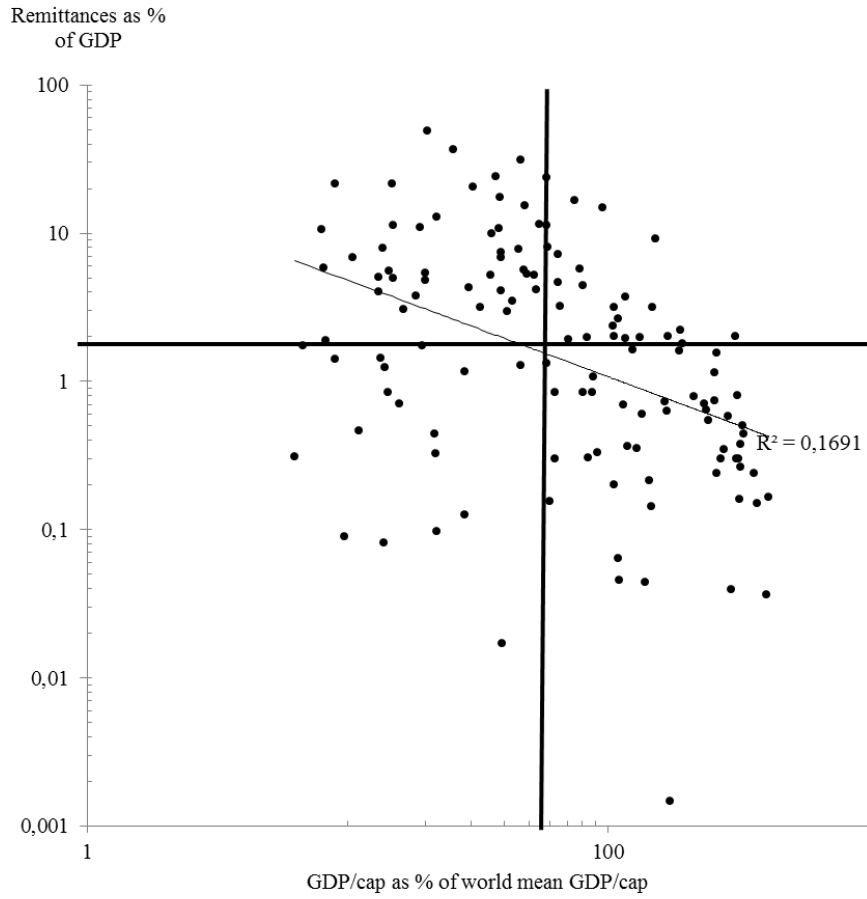
As a first step, let us examine the shape of the distribution of the magnitude of migrant remittances according to *per capita* GDP for 2008.[31]

Quantifying the economic impact of non-citizen labour on labour exporting states for 2008, *Figure 4* strongly confirms the critique of the "push-pull" paradigm put forth by Portes and Böröcz (1989). As the vertical spread of the dots representing the world's societies indicates, the relative importance of migrant remittances covers a wide range, even after controlling for overall level of income (measured as *per capita* GDP along the horizontal axis). For instance, around the median *per capita* GDP (at 58.3% of the world mean *per capita* GDP in 2008),[32] we find (see *Figure 4*) that societies dispersed on a range between 0.155% and 23.8%, i.e., the distribution shows a width of over 150 times. At other levels of *per capita* GDP, *Figure 2* shows even broader dispersion in remittances.

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[30] E.g,. Poonam Gupta spells out the precepts of a neoclassical perspective on migration, savings and remittances as follows: "*one can think of an optimising framework whereby a migrant maximizes his utility by choosing the optimal level of his own consumption, remittances to family in his native country for their consumption needs, and investment in various available instruments in the native country as well as in the host country.*" (2006, p.2772).

[31] 2008 is the most recent data year for which both remittance and GDP estimates are available at the time of the writing of this study.

[32] Medians in both dimensions are marked by straight black lines in this and all subsequent graphs.

Source: Computed from Maddison and IBRD.

Figure 4
Relative wealth and MRD, states of the world, 2008
(% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)

Table 2
Percent of variance in remittance dependence explained by GDP/cap
(R^2 yielded by univariate regression, select years)

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008
GDP/cap as % of world mean	0.009[33]	0.011[34]	0.008	0.009	0.021	0.135	0.169

Source: IBRD, World Development Indicators and Maddison.

Table 2 reports the strength of the relationship between per capita GDP and MRD between 1980 and 2008 – the entire period for which relevant data are available. Throughout the period, R^2-levels are remarkably low. There appears to be a certain tendency of over-time increase as we approach the more recent time points. I do not have a specific explanation for this apparent empirical regularity, but it is amply evident that even the highest R^2-s leave more than four-fifths of the variation in the level of migrant remittances un-explained. In other words, clearly, the most exciting aspect of the relationship between migrant remittances on the one hand and levels of economic performance on the other is not their weak, negative covariance – the only regularity expected on the basis of the central insight of the "push-pull" paradigms – but the wide dispersion in migrant remittance levels after controlling for relative wealth. Of great conceptual importance is the empirical regularity that even relatively rich countries can also be dependent on remittances. This wide dispersion might actually mean that various social groups of rich countries also manoeuvre in the global economy and thus development migration nexus is to be rethought.

Table 3
Regimes of remittance dependency (MRD)

	Low *per capita* GDP	High *per capita* GDP
High remittance dependency	*Poor – high* MRD	*Rich – high* MRD
Low remittance dependency	*Poor – low* MRD	*Rich-low* MRD

Conceptually, the wide dispersion of remittance levels and their low sensitivity to control for *per capita* GDP allows consideration of various regions of this plot as distinct types of insertion in the global system of economic integration. In the rest of this study, I shall interpret these distinct locations as distinct regimes of remittance dependency. At the simplest, we can distinguish, as does *Table 3*, between high and low levels of dependency along poor and rich mi-

[33] The effect points in the direction opposite the expectation.
[34] The effect points in the direction opposite the expectation.

grant emitting states. In terms of this typology, the "push-pull" expectation would be that most cases fall in the top-left and bottom-right cells of this table.[35] Our alternative perspective opens up the question of where in this typology given societies fall – and examines the question empirically. Intuitively, it is reasonable to expect sharp contrasts in the available economic policy, geopolitical strategy, as well as labour, educational, pension and other social policy, etc. options for two states with approximately identical levels of *per capita* GDP where migrant remittances constitute, say, 12% of the GDP of one and 0.12% of another. As *Figure 2* and *Table 2*, above, suggest such contrasts do, clearly, exist at virtually all levels of national income.

4 TRAJECTORIES IN POST-STATE-SOCIALIST REMITTANCE DEPENDENCY

The post-state-socialist transformation of the erstwhile Soviet "bloc" produced 27 states. The erstwhile-state-socialist countries cover the world map in a fully contiguous manner from the former East German-West-German border and the eastern borders of Finland, Austria and Italy through the Pacific Ocean.[36] This political transformation made available approximately 8.14% of the world's population,[37] and added altogether circa 10.4% of the gross world product[38] at the time, to that part of the global productive assets of humankind that is valorised by global capital without interference by a socialist state.

In the remainder of this study, I examine the trajectories of these 27 post-state-socialist societies in two batches: the states of (South-) Eastern Europe (referred to in the graphs as (S)EE) and the successor states of the USSR.[39] I examine the trajectories of these two groups of states at four time points: 1996,[40] 2000, 2005 and 2008.[41] I keep the distributions for the rest of the world, marked by small black dots, in the background of the graphs.

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[35] Further to aid orientation in this map of global positions, I also include a univariate power regression line in each graph – a visual aid that can be interpreted as the set of expected values under the "push-pull" perspective.

[36] The German Democratic Republic has been incorporated into the Federal Republic of Germany and neither the IBRD (2012) nor the Maddison (2008) datasets provide estimates for it.
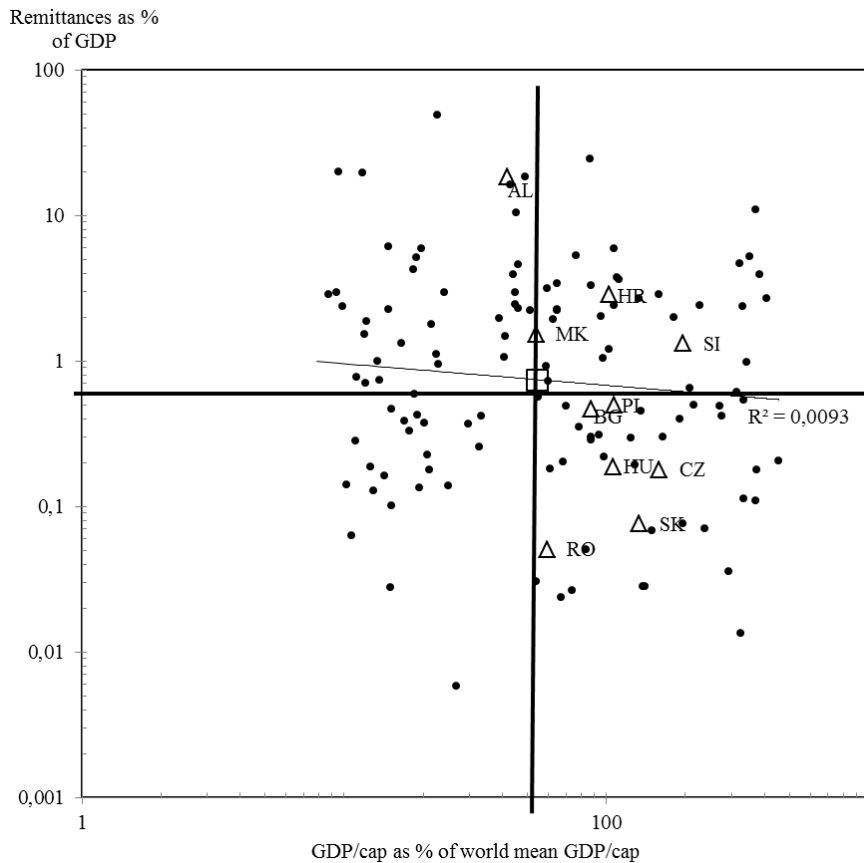
[37] Computed from Maddison, 2012.

[38] Computed from Maddison, 2012.

[39] Of the post-Soviet states, remittance data are missing for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, reducing the number of the post-Soviet data points to 13.

[40] This is the earliest year for which a reasonable number of data for the post-state-socialist states is available in the IBRD data set.

[41] This is the most recent year for which the Maddison data set offers estimates of *per capita* GDP.
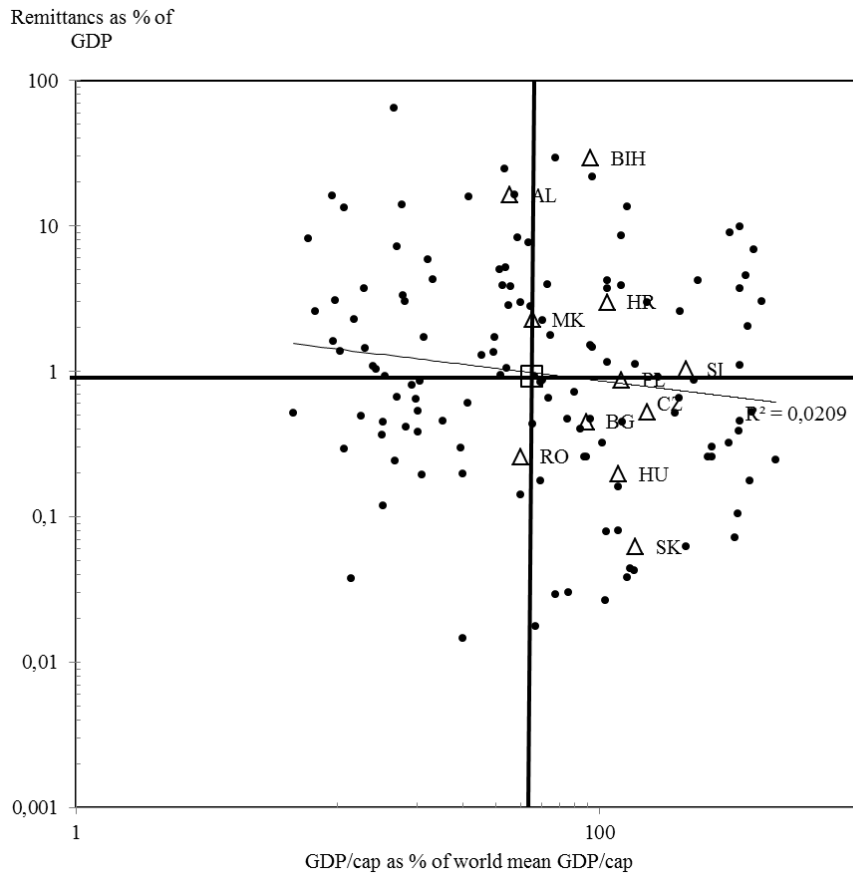
Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 5
MRD by relative wealth, Eastern Europe and states of the world, 1996,
(% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)

As *Figure 5* indicates, Albania (AL) – the poorest of this lot of post-state-socialist states – was already among the world's most highly remittance-dependent societies by the time it began reporting remittance information to the World Bank in 1996. We find the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (MK), as well as Croatia (HR), and Slovenia (SI) also in the top half (i.e., above the horizontal straight line representing the global median for the given year) of

the global distribution.[42] Closest to the median are Poland (PL) and Bulgaria (BG), followed, from some distance, by Hungary (HU). Meanwhile, Slovakia (SK) and Romania (RO) are definitely in the low-RMD segment of the distribution. The regression line illustrating the strength of per capita GDP in predicting world-wide variance in MRD is almost entirely flat, with a negligible R^2.
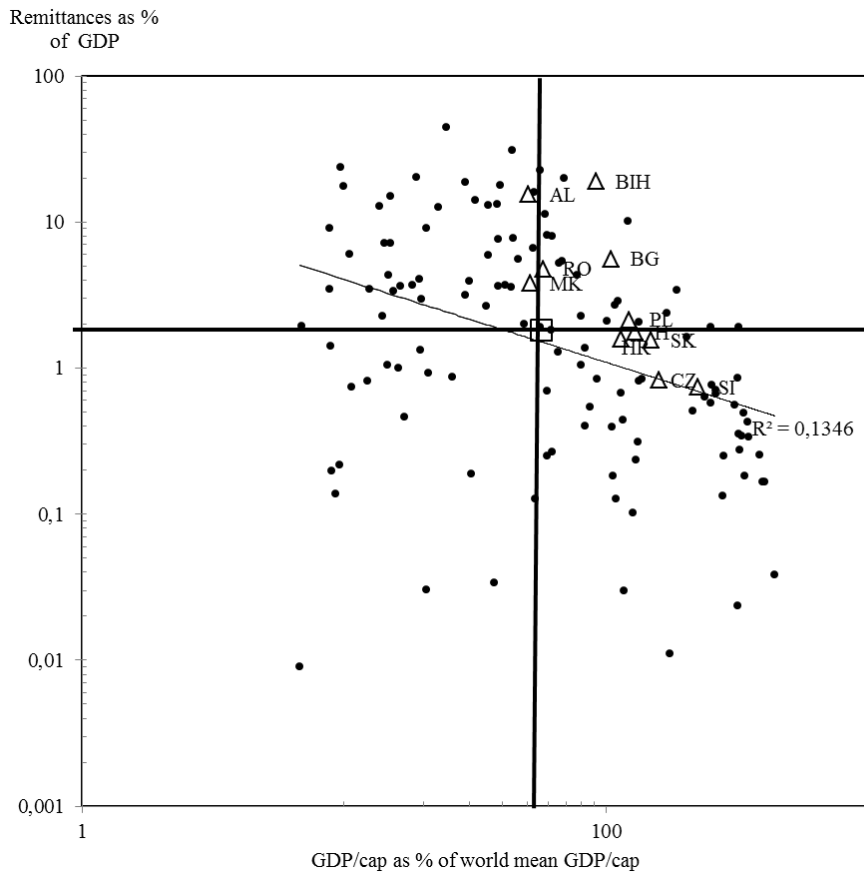

Remittancs as % of GDP

GDP/cap as % of world mean GDP/cap

$R^2 = 0,0209$

Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 6
*MRD by relative wealth, Eastern Europe and states of the world, 2000
(% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)*

[42] This could well be, to some extent, the effect of the dissolution of the federal state of Yugoslavia. (For more on the impact of the collapse of the erstwhile-state-socialist states on the global system of labour migration, see Böröcz, 2014).

By 2000, we see (in *Figure 6*) the definite signs of a rearrangement. For the first time, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BIH) reported data for this year and, with its remittances accounting for just a notch below 30% of its GDP, it is instantly one of the world's most migrant remittance dependent societies. Romania's MRD increased more than ten-fold, from 0.025% to 0.26% of its GDP, during the four years elapsed – but, even with this increase, Romania was still among the less remittance-dependent societies of the world in 2000. Poland has moved up to the median of the global distribution of MRD, somewhere halfway between the Czech Republic (CZ) and Slovenia. The remaining societies of the region registered no perceptible movement.

Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 7
*MRD by relative wealth, Eastern Europe and states of the world, 2005
(% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)*

In 2004, the European Union underwent what is referred to as the "Big Bang" enlargements. As part of this expansion, five states of (South-) Eastern Europe – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) were formally admitted[43] in the EU. It is quite a surprising insight about the dynamics of remittance dependency that – contrary to some alarmist and xenophobic rhetoric warning that the EU would be "flooded" by "Polish plumbers"[44] and other temporary labour migrants from the newly acceded lands – only one state in the region, Slovakia experienced a noteworthy increase in RMD up till 2005 by going from well below to considerably above the global median (its remittances increased from 0.06% to 1.54% of the GDP), showing a more than twenty-five-fold jump. Although the other states in this region show only moderate increases, all states of Southern and Eastern Europe have moved to or above the regression line by 2005. To be noted also is that it is at this point – i.e., at the point where the former-state-socialist societies of eastern Europe joined the EU – that the R^2 estimating the significance of per capita GDP for migrant remittance dependency jumps to a non-trivial 13.5%, possibly signalling the importance of eastern Europe's EU-membership for increasing the total amount of global inequality and, more specifically, dependency.

To be noted, however, is that, other than Slovakia, Eastern Europe's highest increases in MRD were registered in Romania (jumping from 0.26% to 4.78% of the GDP, an uptake of more than 18 times) and Bulgaria (which shot from 0.45% to 5.58%, an over 12-fold increase) – i.e., states that were not among those admitted to the European Union' in 2004 yet.[45] Viewed in the context of the world, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia and Poland occupied a position almost exactly on or, as with the Czech Republic, somewhat below, the global median of RMD, while not-yet-EU-member Romania and Bulgarian already joined Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BIH) and Macedonia – i.e., states of the region that had already been in the high-MRD category.
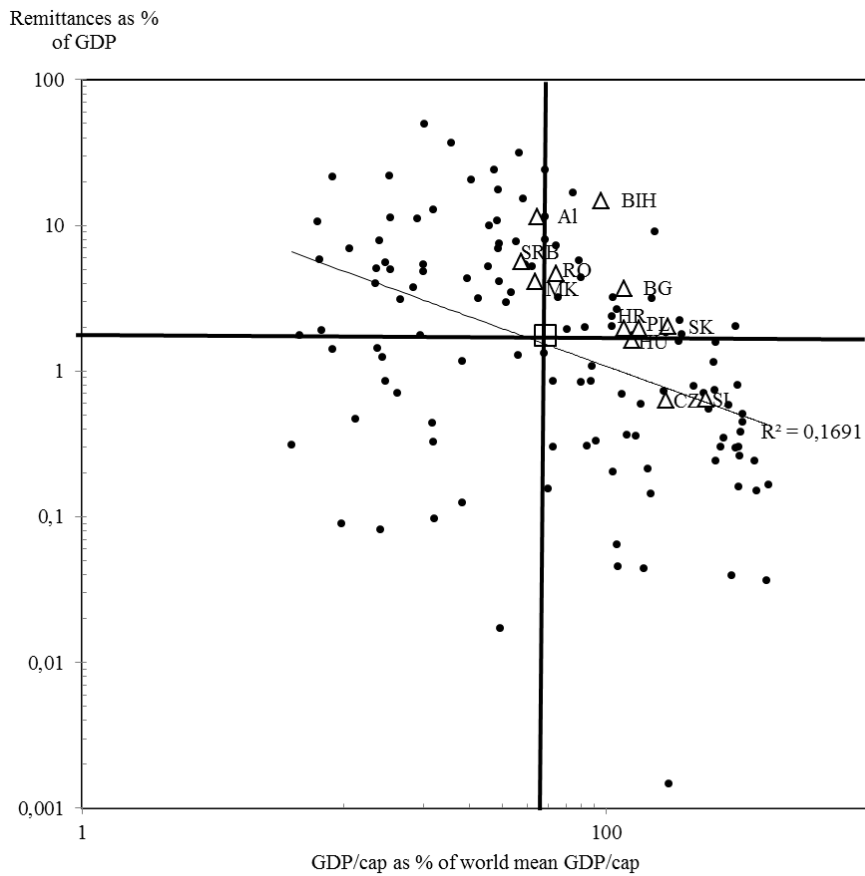
Meanwhile, by 2005, it became clear that Slovenia had a trajectory that was the exact opposite of the rest of Eastern Europe. The region's wealthiest and smallest state began its migrant remittance experience at relatively high levels, registering an RMD of 1.03% in 1996. However, while most other societies of

[43] To be noted is that, with respect to labour migration, most already-EU-member states imposed a seven-year ban on the new entrants so, at least in theory, one ought to have expected a relatively minor effect on remittances until 2011, when the bans expired.

[44] The xenophobic public debates about east European migrants supposedly "inundating" western Europe unfolded with a particular viciousness in France, in the context of the debate on the European Constitutional Treaty (Favell, 2008) and in Britain over the latter government's decision not to restrict labour migration to citizens of the newly-admitted EU-member states (Martyniak, 2006). About the emerging, *longue-durée* moral-geopolitical patterns of 'European difference', see Böröcz (2006) and Melegh (2006).

[45] Bulgaria's and Romania's accession to the EU took place on January 1, 2007, and involved seven-year bans on the movement of labour, similar to all other "eastern" entrants.

the region experienced an upward-pointing trajectory or began high and stayed high (as most other successor states of the former Yugoslavia), Slovenia started moving down such that, by 2005, its MRD was 0.74%, a figure that put it well below the global median and almost exactly on the global regression line.
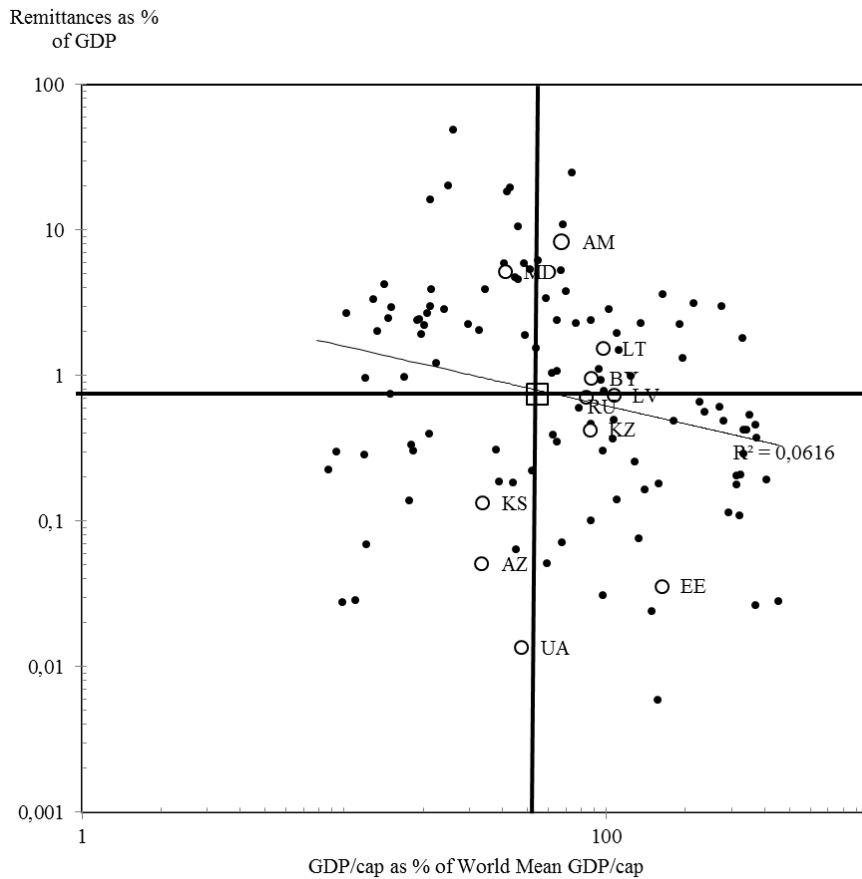

Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 8
MRD by relative wealth, Eastern Europe and states of the world, 2008
(% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)

By 2008, we see (as in *Figure 8*) the culmination of the trends that began during the previous period. Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Romania, Macedonia and Bulgaria each show high MRD levels, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland hover around the median, and the Czech Republic has joined

Slovenia as the other exception in Eastern Europe, of states with low MRD. With their figures at 0.63% and 0.64%, respectively, they show almost exactly the value expected on the basis of the "push-pull" perspective.
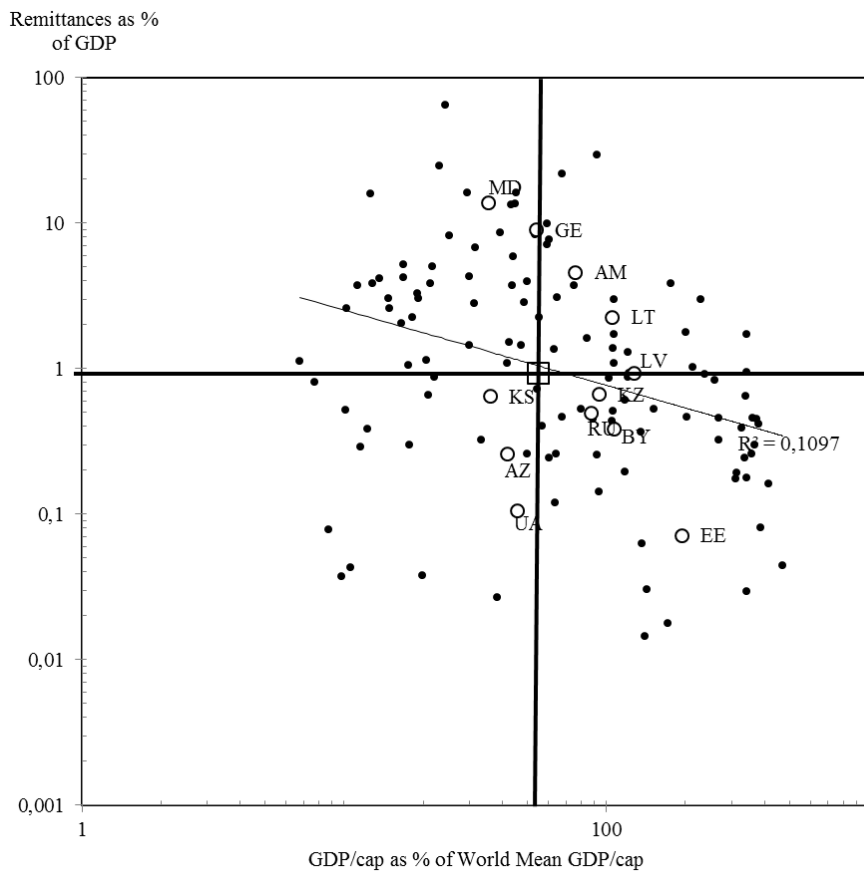
Remittances as %
of GDP

Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 9

MRD by relative wealth, successor states of the USSR and states of the world, 1996 (% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)

It is a testimony to the complexities of the post-Soviet landscape that the data representing the MRD of the successor states of the former USSR[46] (presented in *Figure 9*) start with a remarkably wide dispersion. In 1996, Armenia's

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[46] The post-Soviet states are marked by circles in the graphs.

(AM) MRD level already stands at 5.25% of the GDP, while Ukraine (UA) registers 0.013%, showing a difference between two former-Soviet successor states of over 400 times. Next to Armenia, we find Moldova (MD) and Latvia (LT) also considerably above the global median, with Belarus (BY), Lithuania (LV) and Russia (RU) around the intersection of the median and the regression line. Slightly below them, well beneath the global median, we see Kazakhstan (KZ), Kyrgyzstan (KS), Azerbaijan (AZ), Estonia (EE) and Ukraine (UA). Particularly noteworthy are the positions of Ukraine, Estonia and Azerbaijan, because they are particularly far below the regression line, clearly among the world's societies with the lowest levels of migrant remittances.
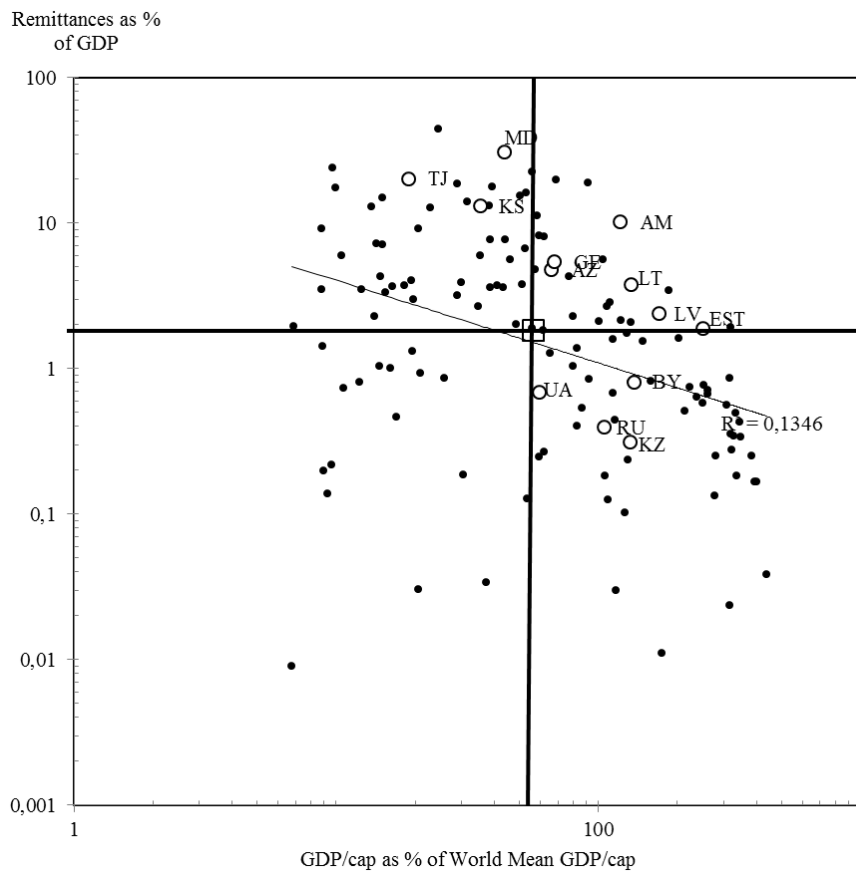

Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 10

MRD by relative wealth, successor states of the USSR and states of the world, 2000 (% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)

By 2000 (in *Figure 10*), we see a truly different map. Ukraine has moved up (going from 0.013% to 0.105%, showing a 7.8-fold jump in four years). Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan both show similar upswings, putting Kyrgyzstan just below the global median, slightly trailing behind Kazakhstan and just above Russia and Belarus. Estonia, the wealthiest state in this group, continues with remarkably low levels of MRD. Among the high-MRD states, Moldova and Georgia (GE) are at the top, followed by Armenia and Latvia.
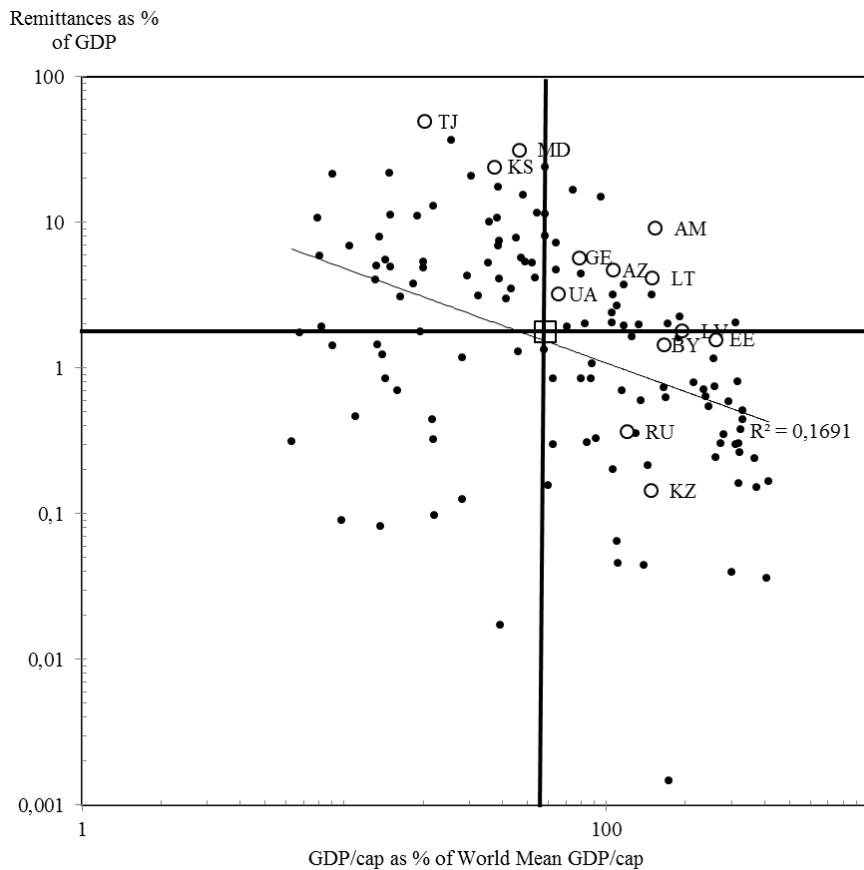

Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 11
MRD by relative wealth, successor states of the USSR and states of the world, 2005 (% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)

The period of 2000 to 2005 (including, again, the momentous enlargement of the European Union, bringing, from this group, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

into the organization) shows a great flux. During this time, as *Figure 11* suggests, Estonia moved from far beneath to almost exactly on the global median (a jump of 26.7 times, from 0.071% to 1.899%), putting it considerably above the regression line as well. By the mid-2000s, Kyrgyzstan had also been catapulted into the high-MRD category, next to Tajikistan (TJ) and Moldova. Azerbaijan also became a high-MRD state during this period. Ukraine has continued its upward trajectory. By way of a movement in the opposite direction, Georgia's (GE) MRD decreased, but it still remained within the high-MRD category, while Russia and Kazakhstan (KZ) experienced a considerable drop in their MRD.

Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 12
MRD by relative wealth, successor states of the USSR and states of the world, 2008 (% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)

By 2008 (see *Figure 12*), the polarization of the successor states of the USSR had become complete. With a full 49.3% of its GDP coming from migrant remittances, Tajikistan held the world record in remittance dependency for 2008. Moldova and Kyrgyzstan follow suit, with 31.3% and 24%, respectively. Ukraine has finally shot into the high-MRD category so that, all other successor states of the former USSR except Russia and Kazakhstan are above the regression line. Of the latter group, Estonia, Lithuania (LV) and Belarus are on the global median, the rest are considerably above it. Russia and Kazakhstan – two heavily energy- and raw-materials-export-dependent economies of the former USSR that saw considerable international revenue increases due to the consistently high energy prices during the last decade and a half – are the only two in the low-MRD category.

Finally, the last graph (*Figure 13*) plots all post-state-socialist states against the background of the world distribution for 2008.[47] This presentation allows us to gain a visual sense of the current position of the post-state-socialist former-"bloc" as a whole in the global system of migrant remittances.
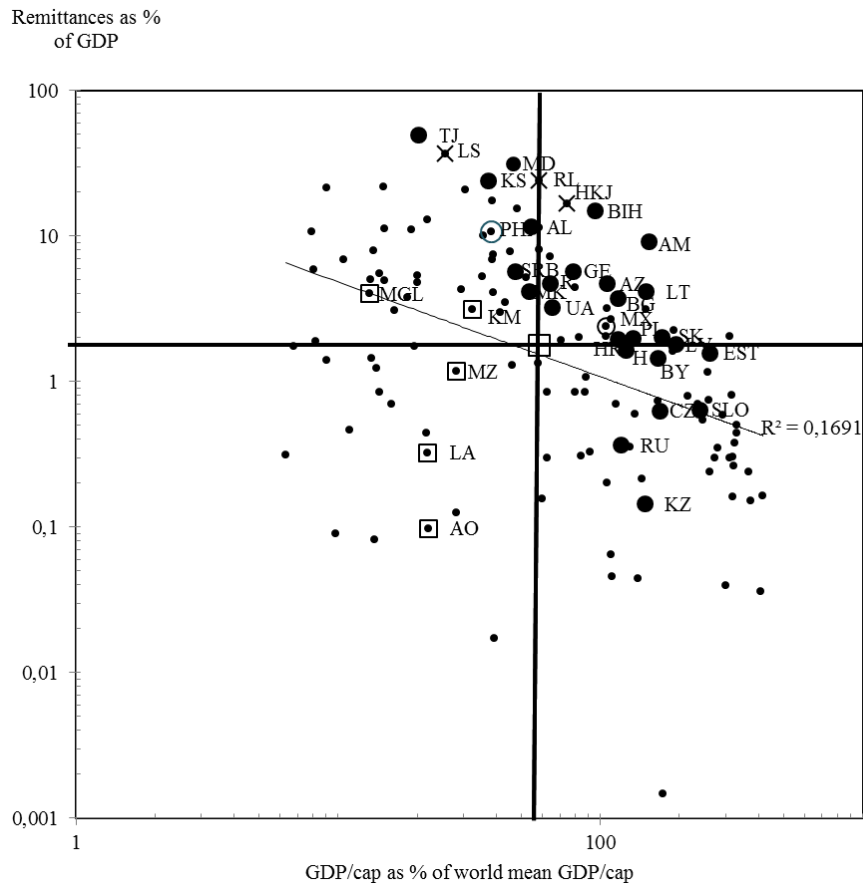
Two things are particularly noteworthy about this image. First, and most suggestive, the larger dark circles representing the post-state-socialist societies of the former Soviet-"bloc" have by and large come to be in the top quintile of the global distribution of MRD, almost completely irrespective of their position in the global distribution of income. Tajikistan, Moldova, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Armenia are in fact exactly on the very top edge of the distribution of the world's states, sharing this area only with only such states as Lesotho (LS), Lebanon (RL) and Jordan (HKJ),[48] known for their extremely high dependence on migrant remittances. Observing the global distribution, even in the second top "layer" we find such post-state-socialist societies as Kyrgyzstan, Albania, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Latvia.

Figure 13 also indicates[49] the positions of those "third-world" states that had undergone a socialist transformation at some point in their histories but – except for Mongolia – protracted anti-colonial liberation struggles and other wars dominated their socialist history. The list includes Angola (AO), Cambodia (KM), Mongolia (MNG), Mozambique (MZ) and Laos (LA). As *Figure* 10 clearly suggests, only Mongolia and Cambodia are above the global median and on or above the regression line; the others are very clearly in the low-MRD category. Overall, none of them show the record-high levels of MRD that eastern Europe and northern Eurasia does.

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[47] The post-state-socialist states are marked by full circles in the graphs.

[48] Lesotho, Lebanon and Jordan are marked by X signs in the graph.

[49] These states are marked by transparent squares.

Source: Computed from Maddison n.d. and IBRD 2012.

Figure 13
MRD by relative wealth, all post-state-socialist states and states of the world, 2008 (% of GDP by % of world mean GDP/cap)

Finally, *Figure 13* also includes a transparent circle marking the Philippines (PHI). The Philippines offers an important point of orientation because its government has maintained, for a generation now, very strong pro-migration- and, more important, pro-migrant-remittance policies. This is so much so that it is accurate to characterize the Philippines, as Robyn Magalit Rodriguez (2010) does, as "a labour-brokering state." The Philippine government trains selected groups of its citizens in specific skill areas, promotes the life strategy of working abroad as a service to the nation, acts as an agent and a representative of

sorts for them *in lieu* of trade unions and, most important, it makes concerted efforts to enable Philippine citizen migrants to return and repatriate their earnings. In other words, the Philippines ought to be seen as a society in the global South whose government is strongly focused on promoting a high level of migrant remittances.

As *Figure 13* reveals, with its concerted efforts, the Philippine government has managed to achieve a 10.7% level in migrant remittances. Of the group of post-state-socialist states, Tajikistan, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania all receive greater proportions of their GDP from remittances, and Armenia is not lagging too far behind. This should help contextualize globally the condition of labour exports in the post-Soviet-"bloc."

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We can isolate three distinct MRD patterns in the post-Soviet context. They are:

− "Global South"-like poor post-state-socialist economies with high MRD throughout the period under study (Tajikistan, Albania, Moldova);

− Medium-to-high MRD early on, followed by precipitous drops (Slovenia, Czech Republic, Russia, Kazakhstan);

− Systematic "march" upward, populating the top quintile in the global plot of remittance dependency (all others, both in Eastern Europe and the former USSR).

The by now quarter-of-a-century-old critique of "push-pull" theories, quoted above, argued that, by themselves, global inequalities in income levels fail to explain the manifold complexities of international migration. The wide dispersion of the world's societies in terms of the share of migrant remittances in GDP, after controlling for *per capita* GDP above, strongly confirmed this critique.

Examination of the recent experiences of the post-Soviet states added another layer to that critique of the "push-pull" model. For, it is not just that relative income levels do not fully explain the variation in remittance levels; the world's societies can, and as the post-state-socialist trajectories indicate, very much do, move in the global system along the dimension of remittance dependency. The empirical task for the researcher is, hence, not simply locating a position but following the trajectories of (groups of) societies.

The experience of post-state-socialist societies suggests, clearly, that there is movement in the system. In some exceptional cases that movement can be quite extreme, involving greater than twenty-fold increases in the percentages of the GDP accounted for by migrant remittances over relatively short periods of three to five years. Only a small subgroup of the world's post-state-socialist societies

(Albania, Moldova and Tajikistan) show evidence of having begun their post-socialist involvement in global labour exports at levels comparable to the most remittance-dependent poor societies of the world. Practically all other erst-while-state-socialist societies examined here travelled quite a distance in the analytical graph. Most of them proceeded upward. This makes the cases of the three or four low-MRD exceptions (each of which began at higher levels and "descended" over time) that much more noteworthy for analytical purposes.

To recap, the post-state-socialist societies of the former-Soviet-"bloc" have recently become highly dependent on migrant remittances, almost completely irrespective of their level of income. There are two sets of exceptions from this regularity. Slovenia and the Czech Republic came down from their initial, mid-to-high-MRD to the regression line during this period, while Russia and Kazakhstan descended from medium-to low to really low levels of MRD (below both the "push-pull" regression line and the global median).

By the end of the period under study, almost all former-state-socialist-"bloc" have shown evidence of specialisation in high dependence on migrant remittances. This is a unique, specific, and, thus far, at least to this author, un-known finding. The implications of the sudden and unique move of the socie-ties of (South-) Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia to this particular kind of specialisation will require much more analytical space than what is available in the framework of this paper.

The inclusion of Mongolia and the non-contiguous, "former-third-world" former-state-socialist states (as it is done in *Figure 13*) offers an additional clue pointing toward a possible explanation for this striking empirical regularity. Because of the absence of high MRD among the latter group, the simple "post-state-socialism" explanation (one that would argue that specialization on high levels of MRD is somehow caused by the post-state-socialist transformation *per se* – i.e., a combination of a transition to a more formal multiparty political system with the constitutional guarantees for private capital ownership – does not hold by itself.

I do not have a firm alternative explanation to offer in this preliminary anal-ysis. However, I will venture to say that this difference may have something to do with combinations of factors such as the historical legacies of Soviet-style state-socialist policies (industrialization, education, urbanization, collective and individual class mobility, including proletarianisation, etc., during the state socialist period) and the geopolitical presence of two large economies – the European Union and Russia – with intense needs, for their own distinct reasons, for industrially socialized, educated, urbanized and proletarianised and ex-tremely inexpensive labour. In other words, my point is that neither the "transi-tion to democracy," nor property change, nor the mere cheapness of labour explain these extremely high levels of MRD by themselves.

We could get closer to an understanding of the full complexity of the story by way of a much more detailed examination of the histories of each of these societies in terms of their participation in the Eurasian labour migration systems. It is also important to note that the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Russia and perhaps even Kazakhstan had emerged, during the post-state-socialist period, as strongly migrant-attracting economies, and it stands to reason that the conditions that attract foreign citizens to work there might work as factors that help persuade their own citizens not to seek employment abroad.

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