

Date: 18 October 2007

Subject: H2 Geography (Human)

Topic: Population

Question Source: Post Prelims Revision Lectures

*Describe & account for the changes in the demographic composition of a country as it goes through the stages of the Demographic Transition Model.*

The Demographic Transition Model (DTM) is a model describing the development of the population dynamics of a country over time, showing the birth rate, death rate as well as the natural increase experienced at different times. The model divides the trends displayed by the populations into 4 stages where marked changes occur in fertility and mortality trends. The demographic structure of the country changes throughout the different stages as the population dynamics are altered.

The demographic transition model begins with high fluctuating fertility and mortality rates in the first stage, producing a youthful population that is plagued with high rates of Infant and Child Mortality; life expectancy is extremely low and because of the combined high mortality and fertility, the natural increase experienced is extremely low and fluctuating. The high mortality is a result of the inadequacies in medical technology and such circumstances has helped shaped the social mindset that keeps fertility rates high in order to maintain the size of the population. High fertility rates are also sustained by need for labour in the traditional agrarian societies.

Stage two of the DTM introduces the trend of falling mortality, largely a result of improvements in medical technology and access to healthcare services. Life expectancy begins to rise and natural increase also begins rising. Fertility rates stay high the need for labour in families remains and the traditional mindsets that encourages big families linger. Economic growth also brings about better living conditions that helps reduce mortality. Population starts growing rapidly due to a combination of high fertility and rapidly declining mortality and the average age of the population falls rapidly.

Stage three of DTM is when the decline in fertility sets in while mortality continues to fall. Increasing affluence remains an important reason for falling mortality as people become hygiene-conscious. Fertility starts declining mainly due to the changes in social structure and for Britain's case, the emancipation of women after the war. Big families stop being a virtue as cost of living rise with industrialization and focus on material welfare of individuals. Natural increase continues to rise but no longer as rapid. There are signs of ageing in the population

Finally, stage four of the DTM presents an idealistic scenario of low, stable mortality and fertility, resulting in stabilizing natural increase. Population is evenly distributed across different ages and life expectancy is very high. In reality however, most countries exceed this stage and experience extreme low fertility that dips below that of mortality, resulting in a population decline instead of 'zero-growth'.

*To what extent is transnational migration solely driven by political forces?*

Transnational migration, the international movement of individuals is driven by different forces and usually a combination of them. The needs and circumstance of individuals motivates the flows of these people across the globe and it would be foolish to attribute them solely to political forces.

In the past, transnational migration may have been shaped mainly by political forces due to the difficulty with traveling long distances without the aid of modern technology. Migration of Europeans to Africa, different parts of Asia and the Americas is largely a result of colonialization and the territorial ambitions of the Europeans. War have also helped drive migration as refugees escape countries plagued by armed conflict like the movement of Jews out of Europe, to America during the World War II as well as the Vietnamese moving to United States and Australia during the Vietnam War. Differences in political ideologies have also forced people to move out of their countries as exemplified by the East Germans attempting to escape from the communist regime by moving across to the West German Republic (it was considered transnational at that time).

Beyond that, transnational migration is largely driven by socio-economic forces. During the colonial era, large groups of Chinese labourers migrated to the European colonies in search of better life and attracted by job opportunities. The trend parallels the migration flows that are common in our globalized world today. Global talents and labourers, skill or unskilled is driven to different locations all around the world by the localized demands for their labour or talents.

The positioning of United States as a high-tech industrial state has helped encourage the movement of researchers and scientists to set up businesses or institutions in the country. The different movements by Transnational Corporations also bring with them their employees and help attract people to the metropolitan poles around the world. Tourism has also emerged as one of the important forces driving transnational migration; the interest in foreign cultures and desire to consume outside one's own economy has driven many across borders. These movements around the world are all shaped by economic forces and not political ones.

Social forces also plays a part in driving transnational migration as more and more people begin to leave their native countries for higher education. There's flow of Asians to the Western countries like United Kingdom and United States for tertiary education in a bid to differentiate themselves from their peers back at home. There's also increasing evidence of retirees migrating to more lay back countries or developing countries which offers lower costs of living as a place to live the rest of their lives. Rising Humanitarian Aid provision by international organizations has also produced a flow of aid-workers into the developing economies both to help with programmes that are aimed at eradicating poverty, and also with building of infrastructures.

It is apparent that political forces only drives part of all transnational migration and these international movements cannot be solely attributed to political forces. In today's globalized world, the dominant force shaping flows of people around the world is economic in nature. Moreover, social forces have become increasingly important in bringing about movements across international borders.