Classical Demographic Transition

Stage 1

For most of history, human population grew very little because there were nearly as many deaths as births each year. High birth rates were often offset by frightful mortality from wars, famines, and epidemics. The bubonic plague, for example, reduced the populations of China and Europe by one-third in the 14th century. Chronic infections and malnourishment also kept mortality high.

Stage 2

Health and living conditions improved in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, the number of births exceeded the number of deaths, and populations began to grow. Better hygiene and public sanitation reduced the incidence of disease. Expanded commerce made food supplies more widely available and improved nutrition. The wild fluctuations in mortality of previous centuries began to recede and life expectancy began a slow rise. Birth rates also declined as a result of later ages at marriage, urbanization, industrialization, rising aspirations, and other factors.

Stages 3 and 4

The shift from high to low mortality and fertility is known as the "demographic transition." This shift occurred throughout Europe, North America, and a number of other areas in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and started in many developing countries in the middle of the 20th century. Although the pace and paths of decline varied tremendously among countries, the demographic transition emerged as the dominant model of demographic change. In the classic demographic transition, the trend of high birth and death rates (and minimal population growth) is disrupted by a long-term decline in mortality. Mortality rates eventually stabilize at low levels. Then birth rates fall to about the same level as mortality rates. With birth and death rates at similar low levels, the equilibrium of slow population growth is regained.

Demographic Change Today

The pace of change in a country varies depending on its culture, level of economic development and other factors. As countries pass through the various stages of the transition, population growth from natural increase (birth rate minus death rate) accelerates or decelerates depending on the gap between birth rates and death rates. More developed countries such as the United States have "completed" the demographic transition: Fertility and mortality are at low levels, and natural increase adds little, if any, population growth. Many developing countries are in an intermediate stage in which mortality and fertility are falling at various rates but are still relative to the levels of Europe and other more developed areas.

Many low-fertility countries have entered what some describe as a "second demographic transition" in which fertility falls below the two-child replacement level as the forces of contemporary life interfere with childbearing. This transition has been linked with greater education and job opportunities for women, the availability of effective contraception, a shift away from formal marriage, the acceptance of childbearing outside marriage, and the rise of individualism and materialism.

Demographers disagree about whether all countries will follow the transition experienced in Europe and about whether there are additional stages of transition that we have not identified – long-term population decline, for example. But the demographic transition theory provides a useful framework for assessing demographic trends and projecting future population size.

Transitions in World Population, p. 6 (PDF: 320KB) https://assets.prb.org/pdf04/59.1TransitionsinWorldPop.pdf

World Systems Theory – Immanuel Wallerstein

Key Terms

- **peripheral**: Peripheral countries are dependent on core countries for capital and have underdeveloped industry.
- **core**: Describes dominant capitalist countries which exploit the peripheral countries for labor and raw materials.
- **semi-peripheral**: Countries that share characteristics of both core and periphery countries.

According to Wallerstein, the world economic system is divided into a hierarchy of three types of countries: core, semiperipheral, and peripheral. Core countries (e.g., U.S., Japan, Germany) are dominant, capitalist countries characterized by high levels of industrialization and urbanization. Core countries are capital intensive, have high wages and high technology production patterns and lower amounts of labor exploitation and coercion.

Peripheral countries (e.g., most African countries and low income countries in South America) are dependent on core countries for capital and are less industrialized and urbanized. Peripheral countries are usually agrarian, have low literacy rates and lack consistent Internet access.

Semi-peripheral countries (e.g., South Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, Brazil, India, Nigeria, South Africa) are less developed than core nations but more developed than peripheral nations. They are the buffer between core and peripheral countries.

Core countries own most of the world's capital and technology and have great control over world trade and economic agreements. They are also the cultural centers which attract artists and intellectuals. Peripheral countries generally provide labor and materials to core countries. Semiperipheral countries exploit peripheral countries, just as core countries exploit both semiperipheral and peripheral countries. Core countries extract raw materials with little cost. They can also set the prices for the agricultural products that peripheral countries export regardless of market prices, forcing small farmers to abandon their fields because they can't afford to pay for labor and fertilizer. The wealthy in peripheral countries benefit from the labor of poor workers and from their own economic relations with core country capitalists.

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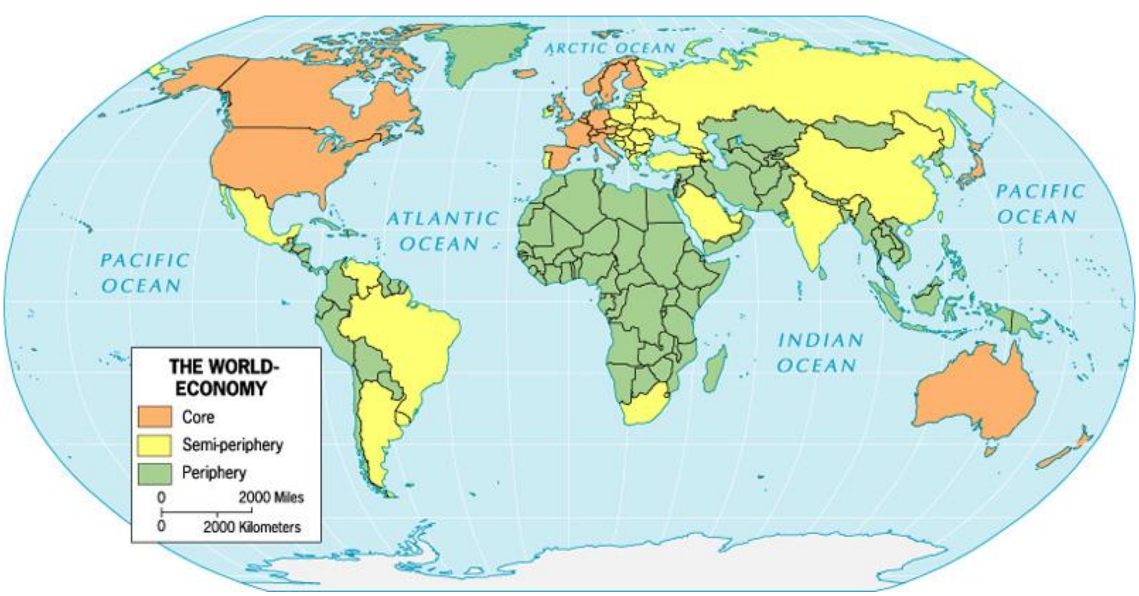

Rostow's Stages of Growth Development Model

The economist's 5 stages of economic growth are often criticized

byJuliet Jacobs
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Geographers often seek to categorize places using a scale of development, frequently dividing nations into the "developed" and "developing," "first world" and "third world," or "core" and "periphery." All of these labels are based on judging a country's development, but this raises the question: what exactly does it mean to be "developed," and why have some countries developed while others have not? Since the beginning of the twentieth century, geographers and those involved with the vast field of Development Studies have sought to answer this question, and in the process, have come up with many different models to explain this phenomenon.

W.W. Rostow and the Stages of Economic Growth

One of the key thinkers in twentieth-century Development Studies was W.W. Rostow, an American economist, and government official. Prior to Rostow, approaches to development had been based on the assumption that "modernization" was characterized by the Western world (wealthier, more powerful countries at the time), which were able to advance from the initial stages of underdevelopment. Accordingly, other countries should model themselves after the West, aspiring to a "modern" state of capitalism and liberal democracy. Using these ideas, Rostow penned his classic "Stages of Economic Growth" in 1960, which presented five steps through which all countries must pass to become developed. The model asserted that all countries exist somewhere on this linear spectrum, and climb upward through each stage in the development process:

1. **Traditional Society:** This stage is characterized by a subsistent, agricultural based economy, with intensive labor and low levels of trading, and a population that does not have a scientific perspective on the world and technology.

2. **Preconditions to Take-off:** Here, a society begins to develop manufacturing, and a more national/international, as opposed to regional, outlook.

3. **Take-off:** Rostow describes this stage as a short period of intensive growth, in which industrialization begins to occur, and workers and institutions become concentrated around a new industry.

4. **Drive to Maturity:** This stage takes place over a long period of time, as standards of living rise, the use of technology increases, and the national economy grows and diversifies.

5. **Age of High Mass Consumption:** At the time of writing, Rostow believed that Western countries, most notably the United States, occupied this last "developed" stage. Here, a country's economy flourishes in a capitalist system, characterized by mass production and consumerism.

Rostow's Model in Context

Rostow's Stages of Growth model is one of the most influential development theories of the twentieth century. It was, however, also grounded in the historical and political context in which he wrote. "Stages of Economic Growth" was published in 1960, at the height of the Cold War, and with the subtitle "A Non-Communist Manifesto," it was overtly political. Rostow was fiercely anti-communist and right-wing; he modeled his theory after western capitalist countries, which had industrialized and urbanized. As a staff member in President John F. Kennedy's administration, Rostow promoted his development model as part of U.S. foreign policy. Rostow's model illustrates a desire not only to assist lower-income countries in the development process but also to assert the United States' influence over that of communist Russia.

Criticisms of Rostow's Model

Rostow's model still sheds light on a successful path to economic development for some countries. However, there are many criticisms of his model. While Rostow illustrates faith in a capitalist system, scholars have criticized his bias towards a western model as the only path towards development. Rostow lays out five succinct steps towards development and critics have cited that all countries do not develop in such a linear fashion; some skip steps or take different paths. Rostow's theory can be classified as "top-down," or one that emphasizes a trickle-down modernization effect from urban industry and western influence to develop a country as a whole. Later theorists have challenged this approach, emphasizing a "bottom-up" development paradigm, in which countries become self- sufficient through local efforts, and urban industry is not necessary. Rostow also assumes that all countries have a desire to develop in the same way, with the end goal of high mass consumption, disregarding the diversity of priorities that each society holds and different measures of development.

For example, while Singapore is one of the most economically prosperous countries, it also has one of the highest income disparities in the world. Finally, Rostow disregards one of the most fundamental geographical principals: site and situation. Rostow assumes that all countries have an equal chance to develop, without regard to population size, natural resources, or location. Singapore, for instance, has one of the world's busiest trading ports, but this would not be possible without its advantageous geography as an island nation between Indonesia and Malaysia.

In spite of the many critiques of Rostow's model, it is still one of the most widely cited development theories and is a primary example of the intersection of geography, economics, and politics.

Jacobs, Juliet. "Rostow's Stages of Growth Development Model." ThoughtCo, Jun. 5, 2019, thoughtco.com/rostows-stages-of-growth-development-model-1434564.