

Migration

(by Nigel Harris at Institute of Social Studies, the Hague,
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Central theme:

Contradiction between the immobile State and a mobile economy or, between the requirements of political control and economic growth/development, between politics and economics.

Three components:

- the control of internal migration;
- international migration;
- the integration of migrants.

I. Internal migration

- A central preoccupation of the State is with the control of the population, to prevent or regulate mobility; this effort is limited only by the administrative capacity of the State and its other preoccupations.
- Most extreme cases historically – authoritarian regimes, with internal passports (*laissez-passez*) or visas, checkpoints.

Hence:

- Tsarist Russia;
- Frederick's Prussia;
- Tokugawa Japan.
- More generally, European feudalism – serfs tied to the soil (cf. Elizabethan England – ferocious punishments for interparish movement).

Modern authoritarian States:

- former Soviet Russia and “Eastern Bloc” countries – cf. Yeltsin in 1980s grumbling at rural workers brought in to clean city, and escape (“illegal immigrants”)
- remnant – Russian registration system, *propiska* (cf. young lose papers etc)
- (ii) Number of newly independent developing country seek migration control/transfer to reduce urbanization – Indonesia (*transmigrasi*), Malaysia, Philippines, Tanzania (*ujaama*) etc.
- (iii) Others – apartheid South Africa and pass system; Palestinian Occupied Territories (West Bank/Gaza)

In essence, the State sacrifices the formation of a national labour market based on free mobility – and hence accelerated economic growth – to State control of population, “economics” to “politics”.

(iii) Most interesting case – PR China:

- 1945 Mao's On Coalition Government - “hundreds of thousands” of peasants move to the cities;
- 1955/56 panic at pace of urbanization – so controls:
- *Hukou* (pensions, social security, health services, education, housing) - radical differentiation of rural and urban population, with
- Non-transferable ration cards; permit to leave rural commune, to enter urban area; to travel, to work, to reside, police raid railway stations, slum areas and expel “illegals”.
- Not work – hence forced labour transfers, “worker-peasant system (1966 Shanghai General Strike).
- From Deng reforms 1979 and pursuit economic growth, obliged to relax – though formally not end (eg *hukou*).

Yet benefits of migration immense through redistribution of income from rich areas to poor. See 2003 Ministry of Agricultural survey – 192 million outside province of birth (ie underestimate) – 60% of rural household income from remittances. Hence cost of State's migration control born in reduction of welfare of rural population.

In sum, history of government reactions to internal movement provide model when move to international context and emergence of single global economy with immense potential for radical reduction of world poverty. Issue not about social/economic impact of immigration – but political sovereignty, existential crisis of State.

II. International migration.

- Economic globalization – potentially immense increase in mobility of factors of production, capital and labour, and in the redistribution of economic activity
- Historically redistribution of labour forced through slavery, indentured labour.
- First great surge of economic globalization, second half of nineteenth century and unprecedented free economic migration – Europeans to Americas, Africa, Antipodes etc.. 2nd surge, 1970-2000 – 150 million migrate (excluding returnees)
- Process exaggerated by:
 - Demography of developed countries (and China) – decline of active age groups and ageing. **End of national self-sufficiency in labour.**
 - Increase in skill-intensity; domestic supply of skills inadequate, so increasingly dependent on imported skills. So 2,000 US census – 47% of scientists and engineers with Ph.Ds foreign-born (2/3rds of net addition of such workers, 1995-2000) – and growing contribution to high -tech economic growth (foreign born on quarter of US patent applications, 2006 – up from 7.6% 1998)
 - New global specializations – Philippines (nurses, merchant seamen); China/India – doctors, engineers), etc.
 - But note, mobility of activity, “outsourcing” – hospitals, universities etc. Aged retire to labour-intensive locations.
 - Dangers of the present crisis in reversing globalization? Governments reach for nationalism to protect domestic position against destructive effects of world markets – British jobs for British workers (and “Buy American”)

III. Integration

Governments tend to persist in treating all long-term migrants, as settlers, not circulating workers – as people joining the club of the “nation”. Hence,

- a political, rather than an economic question (what workers are required);
- intensity of vetting, growing probation, density of requirements.

Problem – defining the “nation” and the criteria of membership (for most people, no issue – accident of birth).

Two extremes:

- a community of “values” (or common “culture” etc.) that all accept;
- liberal position – all who accept to live under common body of laws, until changed (“rules of the club”).

Problem with the first definition – impossible to state the common values that supposedly the native born share – hence a retreat into prejudice or a covert political agenda - for example, for UK and the Crown (but native born can be republican) or US and Constitution. False trail.

Liberal principles:

1. In general, people should be free to live, work and settle where they choose, and be protected – their rights secured – as they do so;
2. All should enjoy the right of freedom of thought, not being obliged to abandon their beliefs or pretend to adopt other beliefs because they change countries;
3. All should be treated equally – nothing required of the foreign-born that is not required of the native-born.

Key issue in “joining the club” should be, not sharing values with other club members, but accepting the rules of the club, without special discriminatory rules for newcomers.

Current position – rights attached to national status. Without status, insecure/disprivileged (medical/educational status etc). But governments make conditions of acquiring citizenship so onerous/expensive, declining incentive to make the attempt (passport as convenience for travel, not sacred badge of identity).

Hence final political issue – as numbers of circulating workers inevitably grow (necessary if the welfare of the native-born is to be secured), growing numbers come to lack legal status, to slip out of State control.

Implications for popular national sovereignty?

Growing tension between single global economy and nationally fragmented political order.