

THE EFFECT OF GLOBALISATION ON POPULATION MOVEMENTS

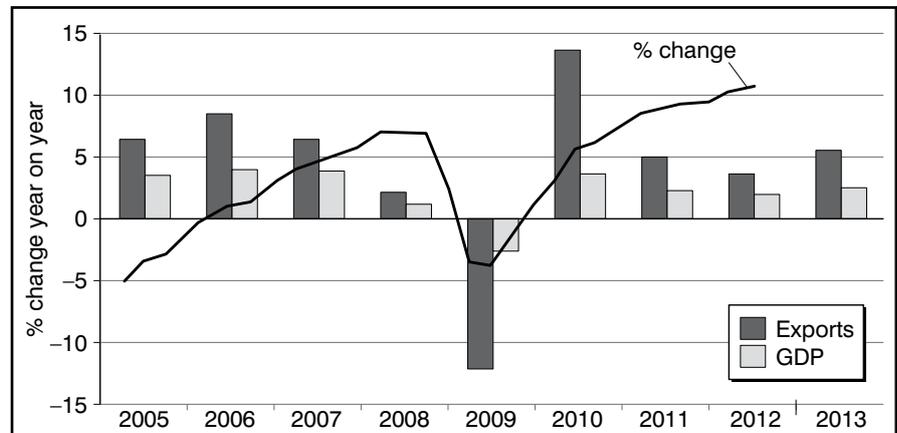
We live in a world that is more closely connected than ever before, with unprecedented volumes of trade and exchanges of finance creating an integrated global economy. Rapidly advancing transport and communications technologies have shrunk the world in terms of distance and time. It is hardly surprising that easily accessible information about foreign countries and cultures has prompted many people to migrate in search of a better life. The United Nations estimated in 2010 that there were 214 million migrants worldwide, an increase of 37% in 20 years. Their ranks grew by 40% in Europe and 80% in North America. Immigration is now one of the most contentious political issues in developed countries and their governments are increasingly drawn into measures to limit or strictly select incomers.

At the same time waves of illegal migrants and refugees from zones of conflict are prepared to risk their lives in attempts to reach the perceived safety and opportunities of the developed world.

What is globalisation?

There is no single generally accepted definition of globalisation and academics continue to debate its nature and progress, suggesting that the concept is constantly changing. Some theorists distinguish between the 'process' of globalisation, which leads to the 'condition' of globalisation, while others question whether the world is fully globalised even today. Yet it is undeniable that people and processes in one part of the world can have almost instant impacts on localities far removed from them spatially. This is sometimes referred to as 'glocalisation' and the opposite, where the local can affect the distant, is evidently also true. The transmission of Western culture from the centre to the periphery has led to a hybridisation of traditional societies and a reverse flow of economic migrants has brought socio-cultural characteristics of the periphery to the centre.

Figure 1: World trade volume, 2005-2012 (seasonally adjusted, 2005 first quarter = 100)



Data: WTO

The origins of globalisation

Historically, there is evidence that globalisation and migration have been linked since the development of the earliest human civilisations. The original migration of the first humans from Africa into the rest of the world is thought to have begun 100,000 years ago. However, the first settled societies had to await the development of sedentary agriculture within the past 10,000 years. Agricultural surpluses allowed specialisation in the first cities and the invention of writing and the wheel in Asia between 3500 and 2000 BC encouraged the growth of communication and trade. A prime example of this was the establishment of the 'Silk Road' through central Asia, which linked the Chinese and Roman empires. This ancient route enabled large quantities of commodities like cloth and rice to be transported over long distances.

Mass migrations took place during the early Christian era, such as the spread of Germanic people into Western Europe in the 5th century leading to the fall of the Roman Empire. The transmission of the bubonic plague in the mid-14th century demonstrated the concept of 'glocality', as up to a third of the populations of China, the Middle East and Europe succumbed to the epidemic. However, prior to 1500 the vast majority of the global population remained isolated from any form of economic, political or cultural interdependence. Although trade

was expanding across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean, the Americas and Oceania remained quite separate from these burgeoning networks.

From 1500 onwards the Western world began to extend its power across the globe through colonisation and the diffusion of early capitalism. Spain and Portugal founded empires in the 'New World' of Latin America, while England and France vied for control of the Atlantic and Caribbean seaboard of North America. The emergence of the Dutch and English East India trading companies exemplified the mercantilist phase of colonialism. Indeed, they could reasonably be regarded as the forerunners of modern transnational corporations. As well as the migration of European colonists, the movement of African slaves or, later, indentured labourers from Asia, provided the workforce for Europe's overseas empires. The slave trade between West Africa and the Americas reached its peak between 1700 and 1810 before its eventual abolition in the mid-19th century. Some 10 million Africans are believed to have been transported across the Atlantic, though countless more died during the voyage or on the walk to the slave ports.

Between 1750 and 1850, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, India and West Africa became incorporated into the world economy as the export of bulk commodities replaced trade in luxury goods. During the 19th century, ongoing technological

Figure 2: Migrant labourers from Sichuan seek work on a Chinese city street



Source: Mike Morrish

developments in roads, railways and shipping dramatically improved the connectivity and efficiency of transport systems. Over the entire colonial period average real freight rates fell by 1.6% per annum, meaning that separate economies and means of production became more closely linked as costs diminished. Since these networks were largely confined to the Western empire territories, the newly incorporated Asian economies were held back by their dependence on simplistic and little-changed forms of infrastructure.

In the latter half of the 19th century the volume of world trade increased dramatically, guided by multinational banks and global pricing systems. The invention of the telegraph in 1866 allowed almost instant communication across the Atlantic and, in the twenty years that followed, the telephone, the electric railway and the petrol powered car were all introduced. These groundbreaking innovations greatly accelerated the speed of global networks and led to economic globalization at unprecedented levels. Between 1870 and 1913, international trade tripled. Over this period the movement of Asian indentured labour into previously unproductive regions of the world fuelled the growth of the world economy.

Globalisation and migration in the past 100 years

The 20th century saw unparalleled changes in global economic, social and political interaction. Transport innovations made the movement of goods and people faster, cheaper and

more efficient than was previously imaginable. The dominance of road systems for freight and private travel eclipsed rail travel over short and medium distances, particularly with the rise of 'juggernaut' lorries and mass car ownership in the second half of the century. In the same period larger aircraft like 'jumbo jets' meant that air travel became feasible for millions of ordinary passengers rather than just the privileged few. Ocean-going liners lost their market for long distance international journeys, but the increasing size of cargo ships and 'containerisation' dramatically reduced freight costs for bulk goods and general cargoes respectively. The net result was a massive stimulus to the scope and volume of international trade, interrupted only by cyclical recessions, most recently since 2008 (Figure 1).

The second wave of intensified globalisation in the 20th century was the movement of money through international finance. The development of computerised systems and satellite communications revolutionised banking, investment and currency dealings, a process that was accelerated by the introduction of the internet during the past thirty years. Since the 1960s there has also been a 'global shift' in manufacturing as the developed economies of the West have become more dependent on tertiary and quaternary activities while the emerging nations of the Far East and South Asia have taken on the role of 'workshop of the world'.

Migration is regarded as the third wave of globalisation and, as the world population has trebled to 7 billion since the early 20th century, so

population movements have become more frequent, longer, larger and faster than ever before. The four main differences of contemporary migration are:

- **Global reach:** migration can now span the whole world thanks to modern transport networks, especially international air travel.
- **Feminisation:** nearly half the world's migrants are women and their emergence as breadwinners has had profound economic and social consequences.
- **Technology:** the widespread use of mobile phones and internet communications has led to 'transnationalism' which can impede the integration of migrants into their host societies and can also facilitate terrorism.
- **Government controls:** high levels of immigration can cause resentment and anger among indigenous populations, leading to policy-making that restricts entry for foreign nationals according to quotas or strict qualifying conditions.

Contemporary international migration

Our 21st century globalised world has given rise to many different forms of migration. Some major examples are outlined below:

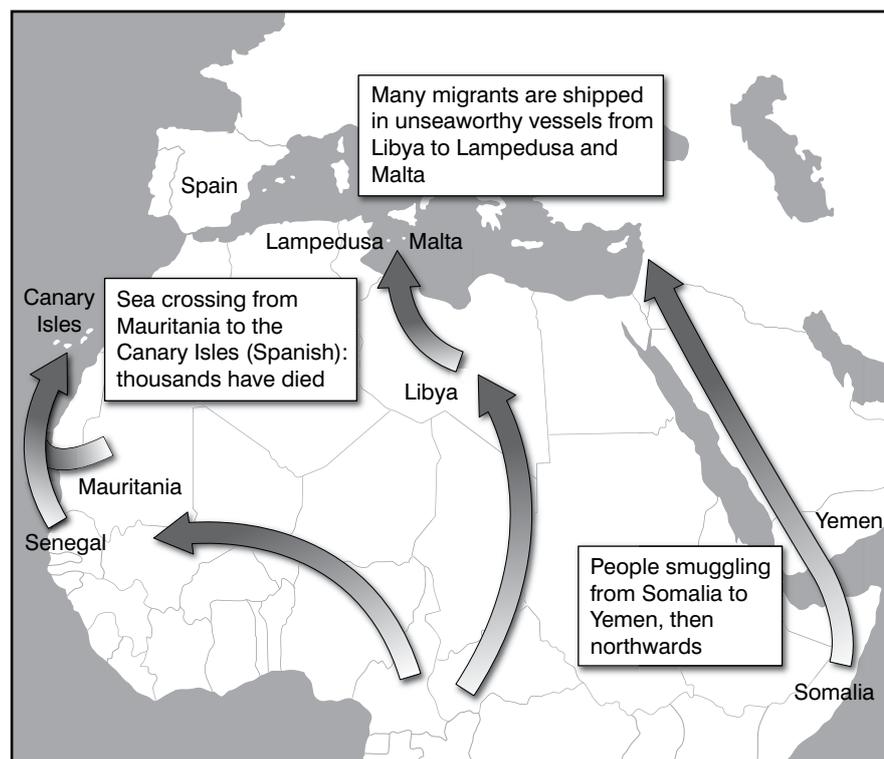
International migration within the EU

In 2004 the EU admitted another ten member states, predominantly from the former Soviet bloc countries of Eastern Europe. Given the free movement of labour inside the EU, millions of East Europeans took jobs in the more prosperous economies of Western Europe. By 2009 nearly half a million were resident in the UK, making up 1.6% of the workforce. Following the financial crisis of 2008, there was also significant migration northwards from Mediterranean countries like Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece which had been most badly affected by debts and unemployment.

Internal migration in China

Since China opened itself to international trade and commerce in the late 1970s, its manufacturing sector has expanded enormously in its coastal provinces such as Guangdong on the Pearl River delta. Most factory employees are migrants from China's rural interior, as are the bulk of the

Figure 3: Migration routes from Africa into Europe



construction workforce and people in low-grade service jobs. There are between 150 and 200 million rural migrants in the country's major cities, the world's largest peacetime migration, and they form an underclass denied the full rights to housing, education and medical care because they can register only as temporary residents (Figure 2).

Economic migrants and refugees from Africa to Southern Europe

In autumn 2013 a succession of news stories highlighted the plight of desperate migrants travelling by sea in overcrowded boats from the North African coast, usually Libya, to Italy. One tragic incident in October, when a small ship capsized and sank off the island of Lampedusa, led to the deaths of some 300 refugees. There were numerous other cases of migrants being rescued from unseaworthy vessels by the Italian maritime authorities. Many of these passengers were genuine refugees from warzones such as Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia but their numbers also included economic migrants from North and West Africa (Figure 3).

Asian workers in the Middle East

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are well established as destinations for migrant workers from the Indian sub-continent and South East Asia, especially the Philippines. Women will typically take jobs as domestic

servants while men are predominantly employed in the construction industry. The work is long and hard, while living conditions are often poor: in some cases people are treated as virtual slaves. When the economy crashed in Dubai after 2008 the cancellation of building projects forced tens of thousands of Indian labourers to return home without compensation. In 2013, Qatar, where 1.2 million migrants are employed, was accused of brutal exploitation of its foreign workforce.

Case study: Mexico and the United States

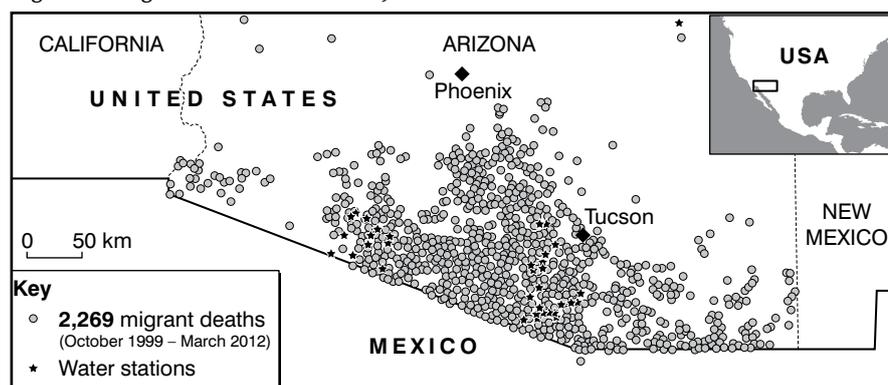
Mexico, past and present, epitomises the influence of globalisation on population movements. The 3,140 km border between the United States and Mexico, much of which follows the Rio Grande river, has long been one of the most 'porous' in the world. Disputed during the 19th century, the border saw persistent illegal migration from Latin America, predominantly Mexico, throughout the 20th century. The first border patrol, along the western half of the frontier between El Paso and California, was set up in 1904. Six years later the Mexican revolution led to an influx into the south western United States, as migrants sought work in manufacturing industry and services.

The US Immigration Act of 1921 set a quota for European immigrants, but the powerful American farming lobby blocked a quota for Mexicans, to protect its source of cheap labour. As commercial agriculture boomed in California during the inter-war years, Mexicans became a major part of the labour force. Illegal migrants, who swam across the Rio Grande, were known as 'wetbacks', and in 1954 'Operation Wetback' deported many Hispanic nationals, both legal and illegal. Yet well into the 1970s, Mexicans were allowed to move freely back-and-forth in response to seasonal work opportunities in the US, and until 1976 the US placed no limits on the number of Mexicans who could apply for permanent residence. By the end of the 20th century Hispanic people were the largest minority group in America, making up 12.5% of the total population.

During the past 25 years the US government has taken increasingly stringent measures in attempts to tighten its border controls. In 2000 the number of detentions along the US-Mexico border peaked at 1.53 million, with the vast majority of migrants being immediately returned to Mexico. Even so, in the twenty years to 2006 the number of illegal migrants in the US rose from 4 million to 12 million, of whom more than half were Mexican and a further quarter from the rest of Latin America. 2006 saw another raft of federal legislation that increased the size of the US Border Patrol by 50% and planned high security fencing along one third of the frontier's length. At the same time, some southern US states introduced draconian laws that allowed police to demand immigration papers from anyone suspected of being an illegal migrant.

Coupled with the economic crisis of 2008 and subsequent recession, there has been a marked change in Mexican migrants' attitudes. Many have left the hard work in the fields for stable, better paid jobs in construction, retail and leisure. A growing number have returned to Mexico or are planning to, representing half of those resident in the US for less than five years. The proportion of Latino migrants sending regular remittances to their home country fell by a third between 2006-2008, reflecting a slump in

Figure 4: Migrant deaths in Arizona, 1999-2012



Data: Humane Borders

the low wage job market leading to less job security and lower incomes. But with US wages for agricultural labour offering twice as much for an hour's work as a Mexican could earn in a day, there are still plenty of potential migrants willing to take their chances crossing the border illegally.

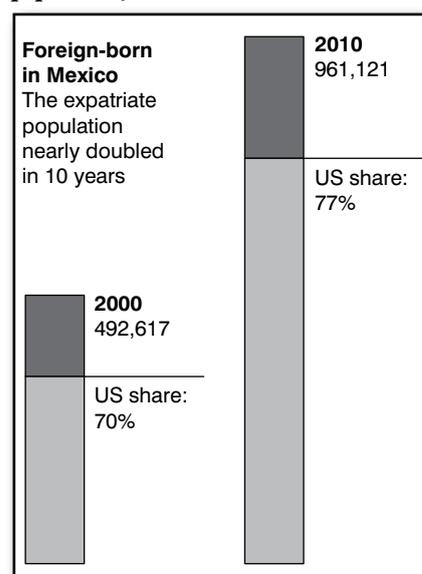
It is a hazardous journey, the more so because the construction of border walls has forced migrants deeper into the hostile thorn scrub desert, away from traditional routes with better water supplies. They are led by fast moving guides, people smugglers known as 'coyotes', who will abandon the weak or injured to their fate. Daytime temperatures in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona can reach 50 degrees C, causing dehydration, and hypothermia is a danger in winter. The vast majority of victims die of exposure. Between 1999 and 2012, 2269 deaths were recorded along the Arizona border, two-thirds of which remained unidentified since migrants rarely carry identification (Figure 4). The true loss of life in the border zone is undoubtedly higher. An American charity called 'Humane Borders' is working to reduce migrant casualties by establishing water stations along the desert pathways.

Recently it has been suggested that illegal migrant numbers into the US have been declining. What is certainly true is that more migrants originate in other Central American countries – mainly Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador – and enter Mexico illegally by road or railway. Push factors for these migrants are factory jobs drying up at home, crime in the big cities and drugs violence. There is concern in Mexico about such migrants staying longer on their way through

to the US and 300 million dollars has been spent in the past few years improving border crossings and checkpoints.

In the 21st century Mexico has itself become a significant destination for immigrants. Although the country's documented foreign population is only one million, less than 1% of Mexico's total of 112 million, their numbers doubled between 2000 and 2010, reflecting changes in the global economy. Rising wage levels in China and increased transport costs across the Pacific have made Mexican manufacturing very competitive. In 2011/12 Mexico's economic growth outpaced the United States, Canada and Brazil. The incomers range from executives to labourers, originating from EU countries, the US, Japan, South Korea and Latin American nations. Three quarters of Mexico's foreigners are American and recently the number of American immigrants has exceeded the total Mexicans moving to the US. The greatest economic change is found in the centre of the country, focused on Mexico City, as with the new VW and Honda factories located in Guanajuato. Also North American retirees have relocated to purpose-built developments around Cancun and Puerto Vallata. Mexico is

Figure 5: Mexico's foreign-born population, 2000 and 2010



currently seen as dynamic, open and creative, a perception that clearly has attractions for foreign migrants (Figure 5).

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Do you think the world is fully globalised now? Identify some places that may still be considered remote from its effects and suggest ways in which they are, and are not, touched by globalisation.
2. Make lists of the push and pull factors that might influence: (a) an East European migrant to move to the UK (b) a Mexican migrant to move to the United States. What additional factors might deter them from moving?
3. What advantages and disadvantages does a high level of net immigration bring to a developed country like the UK?