

มนุษยวิทยา

EDITORIAL

Recently, the subject of the relationship between population and social development has challenged the demographers of many developing countries, including Thailand, for the simple reason that, by the nature of the subject matter, it is germane to the future of their own countries. In the case of Thailand, it is encouraging to hear that the idea of population as a focal point of social development has been widely accepted not only by Thai scholars of different disciplines but the National Economic and Social Development Board, an organization which once thought economic development was social development, and population problems were primarily related to economic development.

While it is relishing, for the demographers as a group, to gain recognition for their contributions to society, it also puts them into an uncomfortable position, having been unable to provide any viable set of strategies for social development and planning. Considering that the concept of population as a focal point of social development has had a long history, this is rather unusual. Scholars and philosophers since ancient time have systematically contemplated the ways in which population changes may influence social institution and welfare. Interestingly enough, however, it was the publication of Malthus' Essay at the end of Eighteenth Century that brought about the question of population and its relation to human welfare into a prominent position in the literature for the first time. Since Malthusian time, the works on demographic thought are not only far more numerous than the earlier writings but also more relevant to the actual living conditions of the total populace of the present day.

Unfortunately, the demographic work on social development has not gone far beyond the theoretical deduction of Malthus' theory. The majority of students of population have made the proposition that population growth, if unchecked, has an adverse effect on economic development. This proposition, though sound in logic, has not explicitly dealt with the topic of social development in particular. This makes it very difficult for one to visualize the interrelationship of economic development, social development, and population growth. The interrelationship between the three variables is of particular importance here, and needs to be more systematically contemplated so that we can achieve not only more meaningful but more fruitful strategies for social development.

The hypothetical interrelationship of the three variables can be dealt with in a mathematical way to be more formalized. However, in this paper it will only be treated and discussed in a non-mathematical format. An elaboration can be made here by operationalizing the extent of economic development. The most common uses are GNP and per capita income. What really happens, after the process of economic development is in full swing, is that there is a positive effect of rising income on the level of consumption, on the one hand, and depletion of natural resources, on the other. And if one defines social development as a planned process moving toward a high quality of life, one can hypothesize that there is an unequal effect of rising income under the capitalistic model. That is, in general, the already rich (by pre-development standards) become much more affluent because of the broadening of investment opportunities, under the situation of high consumption, which in turn yields a greater scale of profits. Thus the rich can improve their quality of life almost entirely from their high purchasing power; whereas

the poor, while increasing their level of consumption on a smaller magnitude, have a constant or deteriorating quality of life. This is a new phenomenon which may be explained chiefly by the now a renowned concept of "the tragedy of the commons", i. e., in our situation, the higher rates of consumption play a major role in both depleting our precious natural resources and generating more consumption wastes such as polluted air, polluted water, radiated heat from the air conditioners, etc..... Thus there is an interaction effect between economic development and social development.

Interestingly, it should be noted here that an inevitable depletion of natural resources-- a point which has been formalized by the "limits to growth" view--- is built into this model. Thus, it should be noted also that the positive relationship between economic development and the level of consumption, in the short run, assumes a linear model. In the long run, however, it will fit a curvilinear curve. Unfortunately, the time span cannot be more precisely stated simply because we, at present, have not been able to get the accurate data on the existing world natural resources. Hence, for most purposes a linear relationship is assumed.

The discussion so far has assumed a constant zero population growth. Actually in case of developing countries of the world today, none of them has reached this stage yet. On the average, their rates of growth are well above this level. Consequently, a negative relationship between population growth and economic development persists. Thus, so far we have no actual data to fully test the theory advanced here. Nevertheless, the trend is there, as for example, in case of Thailand, the

recent decline in the fertility makes economic development goal become more realistic. Henceforth, Thailand is on her way to show an interaction between economic development and social development.

This attempt to seek out a path to social development in this paper is based on a capitalistic model. For an alternative model of Marxian view, it is left to the readers to use their own demographic imagination. Keeping in mind the assumption of low variances in the socio-economic variables within a given society, the latter model is less complicated, thus making it easier to see any relationship between economic development and social development, on the one hand, and population growth and social development, on the other. However, we will not touch the question of which models we should follow. The answer involves ideological considerations and cannot be fully accepted by all of us.

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