

government aid. Nevertheless, an attempt by business interests, private foundations, and federal foreign assistance to integrate their approaches and build technical capacity could only be a positive step.

The authors of *Security By Other Means* successfully parse the many challenges and opportunities posed by U.S. foreign assistance reform. Along with a growing number of critical voices, this book provides a basis for further discussion and action on a number of fronts, including integrating diverse donor funds, seriously deliberating the comparative advantages of various organizations, and streamlining competing foreign assistance mandates.

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The Shape of Things To Come: Why Age Structure Matters to a Safer, More Equitable World

By Elizabeth Leahy, with Robert Engelman, Carolyn Gibb Vogel, Sarah Haddock, and Tod Preston
Washington, DC: Population Action International, 2007. 96 pages.

Available online from <http://www.populationaction.org>

Reviewed by JOHN F. MAY

In the past two decades, the study of the world's evolving demographic trends has led population scholars to reassess two classic paradigms. The first paradigm held that the theory of demographic transition—a country's transition from high mortality and fertility to low mortality and fertility—was a set of hypotheses regarding fertility with limited predictive value, and far from a universal model encompassing mortality, fertility, and migration. The second paradigm—held by many economists until quite recently—

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was that population growth and demographic trends have no impact on (or, at least, are "neutral" to) economic development.

Recent demographic trends appear to have ended the period of intellectual doubt first



opened by the Princeton Project's work on fertility decline in Europe (Coale & Watkins, 1986). Mortality and fertility levels have declined rapidly everywhere except sub-Saharan Africa. These declines have often been followed by transitional migratory movements. The initial intuition that the demographic transition (also known as the demographic "revolution") would reach virtually all the corners of the world has been proven correct (Chesnais, 1992). Moreover, the rapid demographic transition has brought about unexpected results, such as extremely low levels of fertility—far below what is needed to replace the current population—in some countries, as well as the phenomenon of rapid aging, both of which have had far-reaching consequences for the economy.

New research, focused on East Asia, has also challenged the conventional wisdom regarding the independence of demographic trends and economic development. This work has demonstrated that changes in age structure, dependency ratios, and labor force size have contributed to at least one-third of the region's rapid economic growth, dubbed the "Asian miracle" (Birs dall et al., 2001). A country's age structure, population pyramids, and changes in rates of population growth are now being recognized as more important determinants of economic development and poverty reduction than population size itself (and, to some extent, population density). This evidence is encapsulated in a new theory, the "demographic dividend," which emphasizes the gains brought by growing numbers of workers with fewer dependents to support (Lee & Mason, 2006). Indeed, as neatly stated by Nancy Birs dall et al. (2001), researchers have once again returned to the idea that "population matters."

A recent study by Population Action International (PAI), *The Shape of Things To Come: Why Age Structure Matters to a Safer, More Equitable World*, provides a timely illustration of these trends and their current interpretations. The report seeks to demonstrate that in today's changing world, investment in well-designed population and reproductive health policies can play an important role in advancing national and global development. Through their analysis

of age structures and population pyramids across the world, Elizabeth Leahy and her co-authors guide the reader through the consequences of the demographic transition and changes in age structures, as well as their implications for economic growth. They also explore the impacts of changing age structures on security, democratic development, governance, vulnerability to civil conflict, and social well-being. These dimensions—examined earlier by PAI in *The Security Demographic* (Cincotta et al., 2003)—are arguably more difficult to analyze.

The first of the report's seven short chapters explains the meaning of population structures. The next four chapters focus on four types of age structures and introduce a new classification system: very young, youthful, transitional, and mature. Seven countries—namely, Germany, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Korea, and Tunisia—provide case studies. *The Shape of Things To Come* also addresses two atypical age structures, caused either by large migratory movements or the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as well as a speculative age structure illustrating a country that moves beyond the demographic transition in approximately 2025. Finally, the last chapter wraps up the authors' findings and considers future demographic possibilities.

The layout is truly stunning: The colors of the graphs and population pyramids skillfully highlight major changes; key messages are prominently displayed; and a very simple but quite powerful graph plots the percentage of the population aged 0-29 (vertical Y-axis) against the percentage of the population aged 60+ (horizontal X-axis). This graph, which recurs throughout the study, enables the reader to immediately position a country on the demographic transition "scale."

The Shape of Things To Come offers a few key findings:

- Very young and youthful age structures are most likely to undermine countries' development and security;
- Countries with a transitional age structure (i.e., in the middle of the demographic tran-

sition) stand to benefit significantly from demographic change;

- Countries with a mature age structure (i.e., 55 percent of the population is above age 30) have generally been more stable, democratic, and highly developed; and
- Societies and governments can influence age structures by enacting policies that support access to family planning and reproductive health services, girls' education, and economic opportunities for women.

The crucial role of policies has been too often overlooked in recent demographic studies; PAI deserves credit for addressing it in a straightforward manner.

The report's original analysis and the wealth of information accompanying it could have been enhanced in a number of ways. First, the authors could have further analyzed the effects of the demographic transition on age structure by using, for example, the concept of the transitional multiplier to compare different transitions. The transitional multiplier is obtained by dividing the total population at the end of the transition by the total population at the beginning of the transition; the same concept can be extended to specific age groups (e.g., Chesnais, 1990; 1992). They could also have further explored top-heavy population pyramids with older age structures. Moreover, they could have highlighted the importance of the time factor, since a country's pace through the demographic transition varies, which can lead to different age structure outcomes (e.g., a stalled fertility decline can have dramatic effects). Addressing these points would have helped *The Shape of Things To Come* to more completely chart demographic changes.

In addition, it is not easy to sort countries into only four age structure categories; allusions to a fifth category, a post-mature age structure, could have been explored further. The issue of *negative* population momentum (as in the case of Russia) also merits more consideration. Finally, the succinct discussion of migratory movements could have been expanded to include the possibility that such movements might cause countries to regress across some age structure categories.

Furthermore, some of the report's bolder claims—namely, the link between population trends and political stability—rest on rather shaky grounds. Although the authors offer the necessary caveats, some of the analytical conclusions presented in the book appear to result from connecting facts that may or may not be causally related. For example, while it is one thing to say that 80 percent of civil conflicts (defined as causing at least 25 deaths) occurred in countries in which 60 percent or more of the population is under age 30, it is another thing altogether to prove statistically that the youthfulness of the population is a cause of civil conflict. Such conclusions depend on the size of the sample, which should be discussed in greater detail. The previous PAI report on the security demographic, to which this report refers, faced similar difficulties.

In conclusion, *The Shape of Things To Come* could have examined several issues in more detail. Despite these omissions, Leahy and her co-authors offer a timely and useful tool to chart the changes in age structures that are brought about by the demographic transition that continues to spread around the world.

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