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INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS OF POPULATION POLICIES

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Abstract

Population problems have an international dimension, as externalities generated by demographic behavior are not fully contained within national boundaries. Growing appreciation of international aspects of problems and consequent policy action since World War II, traceable mainly to the effects of rapid population growth have to do with concerns about shifts in relative demographic size within the family of nations; international political and economic stability; humanitarian and welfare considerations; and narrowing options with respect to long-term social development. The main policy approaches responding to these concerns seek to control international migration and provide international assistance to national family planning programs.

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The assigned task of the present paper is a future-oriented examination of the international dimensions of population policies. Clearly the topic addressed here represents a relatively small subset of the issues that would be involved in a comprehensive discussion of population policies in the contemporary world. The overwhelming proportion of what might be construed as "population problems" is located—and dealt with in one fashion or another—within the geographic boundaries of sovereign states. Much of what is often discussed under the loose label "world population problems" upon closer examination reveals itself to be a collection of a multitude of national problems.

Despite their surface diversity, the underlying structure of such national population problems is identical. The myriads of discrete actions that determine demographic processes are governed by a calculus of advantage and disadvantage as perceived by individuals. However, under the existing arrangements regulating social interaction, some of the consequences of individual demographic acts are borne by persons who have had no influence on the process of deliberation that led to a particular demographic decision in the first place. Such "demographic externalities" that emanate from individual actors are likely to be minute in size in any particular case, but they may be of great significance in the aggregate. Welfare transfers, whether negative or positive, may flow predominantly from individuals of



certain demographic or socioeconomic characteristics to others, thus leaving some groups relatively worse off while others experience net gains. Or, the effects may be mutual and symmetrical, each individual or group of individuals both transferring costs to others and bearing costs transferred to them. This may leave relative welfare positions largely unaffected, yet make everybody less well off than they might have been if the costs generated by individual demographic acts were fully borne by the relevant decision makers. In such situations, there is a potential for mutually agreed-upon social interventions aimed at influencing the outcome of individual-level decision making in demographic matters—interventions that would enhance the welfare of at least some in the society without diminishing the welfare of others. The intervention may consist of legally binding rules concerning demographic behavior; education and other forms of normative persuasion; or, most plausibly, changes in the institutional environment that modify the cost calculus individuals make in demographic matters.

Since nations do not live in hermetic isolation, *prime facie* demographic externalities are not fully contained within national boundaries. Indeed, in principle, international population problems possessing the same underlying structure as national problems can be readily identified. Naturally, the significance of international spillover effects attached to demographic behavior is not to be taken for granted *a priori*. For instance, it would be reasonable to expect that in many cases sheer geographic distance might be enough to weaken such effects sufficiently to make it doubtful that there is scope for a social welfare improvement on the international level through population policy measures. But whether countries are adjacent or distant, it is the very existence of international boundaries that tends to constitute

the most important barrier to the transmittal of significant demographic spillovers. Such boundaries demarcate the main units within which population externalities can be not only identified but also acted upon. National entities possess the ready machinery of the state for political bargaining and decision making and for enforcing rules and executing policies once they are adopted. In contrast, supranational organizations endowed with analogous attributes exist today only in rudimentary form, and what powers they do possess are ill-suited for formulating and enforcing population policies on a global or even a regional scale.

Yet, in addressing our assigned topic, we are not searching for content in an empty box. Population issues are not fully confined within national boundaries. On the most obvious level, policies controlling the settlement of foreigners in a national territory have an impact outside the country that exercises the control, even though international law recognizes the right of sovereign states to set such policies at their discretion. The history of international migration policies is, of course, as old as the nation-state itself. As long as the nation-state remains the basic building block of the world system, the existence of such policies will be a permanent fixture of the regulatory mechanisms that shape global demographic trends.

Since the end of World War II, national interests in population matters have also become interlinked in a more explicit fashion. A number of governments, concerned with economic and social ills that appeared to be aggravated by an unprecedented surge of population growth in the less developed countries, have taken an open interest in overall demographic trends outside their own borders. A less than disinterested governmental role in international fact-finding and analytic work concerning population

change has, of course, numerous historical antecedents. But the direct involvement of national governments in population policy formulation and execution in other countries that has characterized the postwar period can be regarded as wholly novel. This new-found interest has manifested itself in two main forms.

First, bilateral contacts between governments came to involve population policy matters. Increasingly, in intergovernmental discussions of economic and social issues, concerns about the interrelationships between population dynamics and development trends were explicitly raised and, as part of development aid (itself, of course, a new facet of international economic relations), financial assistance and sometimes operational partnership was sought or offered for the establishment and support of "population programs." Second, the issue of world population trends was put on the agenda of international organizations, most notably in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The initial focus was on promotion of data gathering and scientific work, but increasingly program assistance was also made available to states requesting it. In 1969, a special United Nations Fund for Population Activities was established to serve as the main agency for coordinating UN activities in the population field and for channeling multilateral assistance to national programs. More recently, World Bank lending became available to help the financing of national population programs. Activities under each of these rubrics have grown rapidly in volume and visibility, especially during the last ten years.

Does this increase mark the beginning of a secular trend? Will the success or failure of national attempts to regulate population processes be increasingly subject to international scrutiny? Have national population

programs acquired a long-term claim for financial and technical assistance from abroad? To discern, at least in qualitative terms, the rationale, direction, and content of future developments in the international population policy arena is the objective of this paper. The discussion follows a plan that is both simple and conventional. First, the main international population issues are identified. In the second section of the paper, policies that have been adopted in response to these problems are briefly discussed, followed by an assessment of options and likely policy choices during the coming decades. The concluding section considers the main sources of uncertainty that render prognostication on future international population policy matters highly uncertain.

International Population Issues

What are the main factors underlying the increasing attention given to population policies on the international scene? The answer may be approximated by noting four overlapping and interrelated concerns that appear to influence, if unevenly and in varying combinations, the approaches toward international population phenomena embodied in national policies. The concerns have to do with (1) shifts in relative demographic size within the family of nations; (2) international economic and political stability; (3) humanitarian and welfare considerations; and (4) narrowing options with respect to long-term social development. Each of these concerns is a reflection of measurable or perceived consequences of the extraordinarily rapid growth of the world population during the present century and in

particular of the marked acceleration of that growth since the end of World War II. None of these concerns has been adequately articulated either in the academic literature or in international and national forums in which population policies are considered. The general tone of the ongoing policy discussions has been, and remains, intensely pragmatic: discussion is focused on what appears to be feasible at the moment and aims at patient widening of the existing scope of cooperation between national governments.

Given this orientation, the inclination to be perfunctory concerning the rationale for any particular action or even for a general policy line is not unexpected. It reflects the political sensitivity of the issues involved and the fragility of the value consensus, whether between nations or in the domestic arena, on which policies are based. It also reflects what Tinbergen characterized as a "pre-scientific stage of understanding the problem and its solution."¹ Even when demographic patterns and magnitudes can be ascertained with accuracy (a condition often far from being satisfied), there remains wide disagreement concerning the influence of these patterns on human welfare and the nature of their interaction with other social phenomena. Resolution of such disagreements has thus far proven elusive. International cooperation in the meantime has proceeded along the line of least resistance. For better or worse, this has entailed a degree of obfuscation concerning policy rationales and goals. Instead of examination of principles and foundations, there has been concentration on what was politically attainable: ad hoc international cooperation aimed at moderating population growth. The bargains struck typically involve tangible, if thus far decidedly small-scale, transfers between nations--transfers earmarked for encouraging the establishment, and assisting in the execution, of national population

whose ends and means meet outside sympathy and concurrence. The goal of a constitutional-level international contract spelling out a code of demographic behavior applicable to the members of the family of nations has been seen, probably correctly, as out of reach.²

Thus, international action in the population field has become a subset of international development assistance. Among the motivating concerns listed above, item (3), humanitarian and welfare considerations, has received the most attention both in marshalling domestic concerns for supporting international assistance in population matters and in underpinning the willingness of recipient nations to cooperate. Considerations of economic and political stability, item (2), also have been often invoked, at least in justifying donor interest. Items (1) and (4), in contrast, have been seldom discussed, owing, no doubt, to the feeling that they touch on sensitive nerves and to the fact that they focus on consequences of population growth that are long run as well as poorly quantifiable. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the record of the policy discussions of the last few decades leaves little doubt that the influence of these factors has been potent.

Shifts in relative population size

The explosive increase of the world population is perhaps the single most spectacular event of modern history. Global numbers during the last hundred years have tripled. Net population growth between 1900 and 2000 will, in all probability, be of the order of 4.5 billion. During the first quarter of the 21st century an additional net increase of 2 billion is

anticipated by the United Nations. Underlying this expansion are sharp differences in observed and anticipated national and regional growth rates. From the point of view of the slower growing nations, this feature of global demographic growth is a source of obvious if ill-articulated long-term concern. In the domain of evolutionary theory, the consequence of any sustained difference between the rates of growth of two populations occupying the same ecological niche is straightforward: the eventual complete displacement of the slower growing population by the faster growing one.³ Since among human populations rates of growth are subject to social adjustment and relative magnitudes may be reversed by conscious action, the biological principle is not directly applicable. Nevertheless, the shifts in relative demographic weights can be remarkably rapid and, barring catastrophic developments (which, of course, may also reinforce the existing trend), nonreversible.

A few examples illustrating the shifts in relative population sizes should suffice. Europe's population was 17 percent of the world total in 1900 and 15.6 percent in 1950. It is 10.9 percent today, and this share is virtually certain to fall to 8 percent or less by 2000. Expected trends in the 21st century are elaborated in a number of recent long-term population projections.⁴ Europe's population in 2025 is forecast by the UN at 6.4 percent of the world total; Frejka anticipates eventual stabilization at about 4.4 percent. The relative ranking of individual countries exhibits similar pronounced shifts. Thus France, the world's fifth largest independent country in 1900, ranked tenth in 1960, fifteenth in 1980, and will rank twentieth in 2000. France's stabilized rank in the 21st century is forecast as thirty-second by the World Bank.

Although the countries of Europe represent the most direct instances of declining relative demographic weight, similar shifts are observable elsewhere. For example, the population of Northern America (essentially, the US and Canada) in 1950 still exceeded that of Latin America and the Caribbean. Today, the latter region has a larger population by some 120 million; in 2000 the gap will be, according to the UN, 267 million. In 2025 it will exceed 520 million.

It is well known that analogous shifts within countries that comprise distinct subpopulations (distinguished by, e.g., ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences) tend to generate great anxiety among the members of the groups suffering relative decline and are a source of social tension or, at least, of perceived potential internal power conflicts. Among the many contemporary examples, reference to the Soviet Union (where between 1970 and 1979 the population of the Slavic Republics grew by 7 percent and that of the Central Asian Republics by 28 to 31 percent) and to such small countries as Lebanon, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia should suffice.

Transposing such anxieties to the international scene is not straightforward, but the general disinclination to discuss the issue is probably deceptive. Historical experience certainly suggests that in the long run relative demographic weights tend to translate into relative political and economic power. The contrasting fates of the European colonization in the Americas and Australia, on the one hand, and in Asia and Africa, on the other, are instructive. Of the two great European wars in the 20th century, the first ended with an extensive redrawing of the political map to better approximate demographic boundaries. More ominously, the second established a historical precedent for redrawing the political map to reflect

massive demographic shifts imposed through force.

Clearly, the stability of the existing division of the world among nation-states ultimately rests on relative military power. It is equally evident that such power in the contemporary world is poorly correlated with demographic growth rates or even with absolute demographic size. But in a long-term perspective, the eventual emergence of a strong, positive correlation is an entirely plausible expectation. Sharp differences, especially between adjacent countries, with respect to population size, density, and population/natural resource ratios are a potential source of instability as they create the temptation to achieve equalization of differences through force.

Thus, the present pattern of demographic growth differentials in the world represents a serious long-term problem from the point of view of the slower growing nations. Sustaining these differentials for a long period would tend to lead to increasing international tensions and perhaps even to the eventual imposition of adjustments of national boundaries. The elimination of such demographic growth differentials, through a reduction in the rate of increase of the rapidly growing nations, may therefore appear as a condition of long-term peace and overall stability within the international system.

There is strong reticence on the part of slow-growing nations to stake out such a claim. However, in a muted way, the objective of equalizing rates of demographic increase internationally is implicit in the population projections cited above. Ostensibly, these projections are artifacts of demographic analysis, reflecting the best guesses on the future evolution of demographic behavior. Yet the grounding of the governing assumption of the

projections--that replacement-level fertility will be attained in all countries within a relatively short span of time and from then on will be sustained indefinitely--is plainly tenuous. The projections of demographic developments in the 21st century are best described as normative: they express a hope and spell out a suggested timetable against which the actual time path of demographic variables can henceforth be measured.

International economic and political stability

Concern with the deleterious consequences of rapid population growth on domestic economic development and, by extension, on the health of the world economy is a major factor in explaining international interest in population matters. Reduced to the most basic terms, economic improvements in the less-developed world require rapid accumulation and effective application of human and physical capital. Human capital growth assumes achievement of adequate standards of health and nutrition, the elimination of illiteracy, and the acquisition of technical and entrepreneurial skills through formal education and through work experience in productive activities. Capital accumulation calls for postponement of current consumption. Each of these requirements is rendered more stringent and more difficult of achievement under conditions of rapid population growth. Societies experiencing such growth have an age structure heavily biased in favor of youth, with proportions under age 15 around 40 percent and often higher. The high youth dependency burden tends to dilute both parental and collective provision of health care, nutrition, and education for children, with harmful eventual

consequences for their productivity as adults. The rapid growth of the population of labor force age depresses capital/labor ratios, interferes with the adoption of modern technologies, and aggravates unemployment, while making capital accumulation more difficult. Elimination of the structural imbalance characterizing underdevelopment in the contemporary world—the coexistence of a technologically advanced subsector with a traditional low-productivity economy—is retarded by rapid demographic growth, which both causes the rate of growth of the modern component to be lower than would otherwise be possible and expands the size of the traditional economy.

The considerations just noted have to do with rates of change and structural characteristics. In a number of developing countries these problems are also aggravated by the excessive size of the existing population relative to resources and the available technology. When such circumstances prevail, even in the absence of demographic growth, development is hindered by the need to exploit resources that require the application of large amounts of capital per unit of output (e.g., in making marginal lands suitable for agricultural production, in conducting off-shore mineral exploration, or in maintaining or achieving a given standard of environmental sanitation). The spatial redistribution of population necessitated by development also entails various diseconomies, such as those associated with urban concentrations beyond a certain scale. Population growth amplifies such problems greatly.

Whether a given population size or a given growth rate is deemed excessive, the problem generally perceived is not that these demographic factors will lead to catastrophic events within a historically short span of time, nor even that such growth precludes material improvement.⁵ Although

the possibility of demographic growth-induced localized breakdowns cannot be ruled out, the effects of rapid population growth, according to most analyses, are relative: a slower rate of improvement than would otherwise be feasible. There is a broad consensus among economists that, save for special circumstances seldom found in the economies of the contemporary world, very rapid population growth—on the order of 2 percent per year or more—is likely to exert a major hindrance on development.⁶

At the level of the international economy, differential demographic growth contributes significantly to maintaining and even widening the prevailing large income differentials between rich and poor countries. It is virtually certain that such income differentials will persist during the coming fifty years, in no small measure due to demographic growth patterns.⁷ In view of the initial disparities in income per capita, as long as there is substantial positive growth in the high-income countries, a widening of the gap between rich and poor countries is, of course, an arithmetic necessity as far as absolute differences are concerned. To narrow income differentials reflected in the more relevant measure—the relative size of per capita incomes—requires a faster rate of improvement among the less well-off countries. In the last twenty years, high rates of population growth greatly narrowed and in many instances more than wiped out the relative gains developing countries could otherwise have realized from their generally high rates of growth in terms of aggregate income.

The disparities in demographic patterns between the broad categories of developed and developing countries manifest themselves in many important facets of economic performance. Thus, for example, differential demographic growth tends to shift the terms of trade against many primary products

exported by developing countries. Similarly, contrasting growth trends in the population of labor force age accentuate the differences in employment opportunities and in relative factor prices between developing and developed countries. At present, as a result of past demographic trends, this effect is particularly strong with respect to the prospects faced by persons in the young labor force ages. For example, between 1980 and 2000, the age group 20 to 39 will be increasing at the annual rate of 2.45 percent in the developing countries, in contrast to a rate of 0.24 percent in the developed world. (Excluding China, the rate ranges between 2.8 and 3.2 percent in the major developing regions). In absolute terms, the net increase during this period will be 17 million in the developed countries as a whole and 600 million in the developing world.⁸

Although the great diversity of development performance within the so-called Third World makes generalization difficult, it is clear that the ongoing process of rapid demographic growth puts heavy added pressure on the changing social and economic fabric of most developing countries. Amplified by rising expectations that result from increased exposure to the outside world, dissatisfaction of significant segments of the population with their status is likely to grow. Almost by definition, development implies differential improvement in material conditions, leading to sharpened class conflicts and regional antagonisms. The weakening and eventual breakdown of social institutions that have accommodated poverty and mediated between conflicting interests in the traditional society expose some groups to particularly harsh conditions. The loss of political cohesion that results tends, in turn, to worsen economic performance. Great Power rivalries feed on the general conditions of economic and political weakness of Third World

countries, and this interferes with the development of stable trade relations and the international flow of capital, further hindering material progress.

It follows from the foregoing that policies that would reduce population growth could have highly beneficial economic and political returns. On this issue--unlike that discussed in the preceding section--the perspectives of developing and developed countries are likely to overlap. Thus, scope for cooperation between nations can be found aimed at promoting policies that promise to reduce undesirably rapid population growth. From the point of view of individual countries the perceived payoffs are primarily domestic economic and social gains. In contrast, the perspective of the developed countries on the matter is international. For them, the appeal of such policies lies in the hoped-for result of greater political tranquility in friendly countries, greater stability of international relations, security of export markets and sources of needed imports, and reduced pressures for unilateral international wealth transfers from developed to developing countries. International organizations that seek to reduce income differentials between member countries also have strong reasons to support such policies.

The macro-level benefits discussed in this section do not of course follow immediately upon such policies. For instance, significant alleviation of employment problems would follow a reduction of fertility only with a time lag of some fifteen to twenty years. Even so, economic and political returns to investments in supporting population programs, if such programs are effective in moderating demographic growth, compare favorably to the returns expected from investments in many fields of conventional economic assistance.

Humanitarian and welfare considerations

Concern with poverty has always been an important motor force for international action involving unilateral resource transfers between nations. The earliest beginnings of foreign aid were ad hoc expressions of human solidarity toward victims of disasters, natural or manmade. Following World War II, in an increasing number of countries, some of the arguments of distributive justice that made the nation-state an engine of domestic income redistribution were extended to support systematic assistance to economically less-developed countries. In enlisting domestic support for foreign assistance, humanitarian considerations for the welfare of the poor living outside the national boundaries continue to be stressed and have proven effective to a degree.

There are, however, crucial differences between domestic redistribution and international income transfers. Within states, modifications of the patterns of primary income distribution through compulsory levies are the outcome of a participatory political process that creates individual entitlements and rights backed up by corresponding obligations that are enforced through appropriate institutions. Internationally, the corresponding element of participation is missing: decisions are made unilaterally by the donor state and reflect donor values and political judgments. In a further difference, domestic income transfers, although mediated by the state, are from individual to individual, assuring a pattern of benefits and sacrifices that are unambiguously linked to individual characteristics. International transfers are largely between sovereign

states, with the donor exercising only limited control over ultimate use. This creates the virtual certainty that some of the individuals supporting the transfers as taxpayers are less well off than some of the recipients.

These characteristics have tended, first, to set fairly narrow limits to international assistance without a tangible quid pro quo. Transfers between states based on humanitarian concerns are a small fraction of the size of income flows generated by internal redistribution schemes. Indeed, much of the domestic debate concerning the socially desirable patterns of income distribution makes no reference to international differences between incomes even though these differences are often far wider than differences within countries.

Secondly, foreign transfers predicated on humanitarian considerations, as distinct from development aid in general, tend to emphasize particular end uses so as to secure greater assurance that aid does benefit the poorest segments of the recipient population. Among the types of aid seen as most effective in this respect, population assistance has ranked high: on a par with, or just below, health assistance or food distribution schemes. The concern with aiding the poor through population programs to some extent springs from the notion of macroeconomic gains expected from successful programs: slowing down population growth should accelerate overall development, and this should benefit the poorest segments of the population. But the main focus of the humanitarian argument is on direct welfare assistance, especially the provision of goods and services to poor people who otherwise would not have access to such services; and on the attendant benefits accruing to particular groups, such as women and young children, in terms of more freedom, better health, or greater emotional and personal well

being.

The attitude of recipient governments toward foreign assistance motivated by humanitarian consideration tends to be ambivalent. Such grants are seen as justified by existing international income differentials, and this interpretation accords well with the influential view that such differentials in and of themselves establish a mutual claim for international transfers. On the other hand, in practice such aid necessarily carries strong paternalistic overtones and tends to create relationships of dependency rather than a partnership of equals based on the expectation of mutual gains from exchange.

To some extent, international institutions resolve the dilemma posed by these conflicting perspectives. They reallocate funds contributed by national governments through grants that favor poor countries and that are more akin to entitlements than to international charity. It is sometimes suggested that further development of such institutions should lead to a supranational authority with powers of taxation and endowed with redistributive functions analogous to those of nation states.⁹ There is little evidence, however, that the international system is moving toward the degree of integration and solidarity that would be a necessary condition for the emergence of such an authority.

Options for development

Discussions of the welfare implications of rapid population growth tend

to be dominated by narrow economic considerations. In evaluating future economic gains, the usual reference point for comparisons is the current level of consumption, with tastes implicitly assumed constant. But development not only brings higher levels of income; it also changes preferences. Although it should be possible in every country to satisfy the basic needs of a much larger population, satisfaction of higher level needs is likely to prove more difficult. As population increases, the range of developmental options available becomes narrower. One broad class of options concerns preservation of desirable characteristics of the natural environment. The accommodation of large populations at high income levels entails a steady accumulation of manmade artifacts, leading to the disappearance of certain environmental amenities. *Ceteris paribus*, increased population size in a given territory means reduced per capita availability of natural assets that are in fixed supply. The effect is amplified by economic growth that tends to reduce the land area not claimed by human habitation or by industry.

The consequences of such changes affect primarily the inhabitants of the country in which the changes take place; but there is also an international dimension to the problem. Even if the rate of use--current or prospective--of natural amenities by non-nationals is low, the increasing scarcity or outright destruction of such amenities does represent a loss to them. Most inhabitants of London or Cairo may never plan to visit unspoiled nature in the American West, or the foothills of the Himalayas, or the Amazon Basin. Significant psychic benefits are derived, however, from the simple awareness that such places exist and are potentially accessible. The narrowing of such options diminishes welfare.

Another class of relevant options concerns the conditions of contact with people living in countries other than one's own. One of the likely domestic implications of rapid population growth in any given country is greater governmental regulation of people's lives. Combined with the differences in national economic and social development, in turn partly caused by differential demographic growth, such a trend tends to reduce interaction with citizens of other countries. It is certain to contribute, for example, to the perpetuation of the system of nation-states. Despite the expected further advances in the ease of transportation and communication that in effect diminish the size of the planet, "spaceship earth" is likely to remain partitioned into many cubicles. Within the foreseeable future, the option for convergence into an integrated human society is likely to remain effectively out of reach. It is not suggested, of course, that demographic factors necessarily have a dominant influence on the prevailing forms of domestic political organization and on the patterns of international intercourse. But it would be clearly implausible to assume that development paths that would have been open to a world numbering, say, three billion persons--the world total in 1960--will also be open to a population of three or four times that size.

One option that is likely to be lost as a result of population growth is population growth itself. As noted above, the standard assumption concerning long-term demographic prospects posits the universal achievement of replacement-level fertility by 2000 or within a few decades thereafter. Thus the feast of very rapid population growth in the second part of the 20th century is to be replaced by the fast of no growth at all later. Although such a cessation of population growth is likely to be on balance highly

desirable, the necessity of maintaining a stationary population (presumably permitting only minor fluctuations around the zero-growth fertility level) will mean foregoing the obvious social amenities provided by a relatively young age distribution. The even greater amenity of parental freedom of choice concerning the number of children may also become a casualty of rapid demographic growth. It should be noted in this context that the nature of the social mechanisms that will be necessary to achieve and thereafter maintain replacement-level fertility is not at all clear. Indeed, the issue is not addressed in the literature presenting the projections. It is highly unlikely that the stipulated aggregate behavior will be the fortuitous outcome of voluntary individual choices. Often, to make the projections at all plausible, an intrusive governmental role in shaping fertility decisions will have to be assumed. If so, this further illustrates the validity of the point made in the preceding paragraph.

Population Policy Responses

To what extent can population policies mitigate the problem of rapid demographic growth and, in particular, what is the likely scope of international action in population policy matters during the coming decades? The potential role of two types of policies--those relating to international migration and to mortality--would seem to be narrowly circumscribed. The prospects for useful action in the matter of fertility are more promising.

Policies concerning international migration

International migration changes the distribution of the population between states. It can have an important effect on national growth rates but can affect aggregate growth on the world level only indirectly--through mortality and fertility. Quite likely, in the sending countries the indirect demographic effects generated by large-scale migration could be quite significant. In the short run, international migration tends to reduce mortality and increase fertility, thus increasing the rate of natural population growth. Still, the growth-reducing effect of outmigration is likely to be dominant: international migration can be an important safety valve relieving population pressures. In the receiving countries the main demographic effect of migration is, of course, to increase population growth.

The aggregate economic effect is also fairly straightforward. International migration, by bringing about a better adjustment of the world's population to world economic resources, should result in a higher total world product. This potential economic effect is quite large. The existing distribution of the world population between countries is poorly related to relative resource endowments. For example, the current population of Southern and Eastern Asia represents 50 percent of the estimated total world population. Yet the area occupied by this population possesses only 16.5 percent of the world's total energy resources.¹⁰ If China is excluded, the contrast is even more pronounced: 30 percent of the world population possesses 3.2 percent of estimated total energy resources. Prospective demographic trends are likely to further increase such inequalities with respect to the natural resource base. The distribution of manmade physical

productive assets and of human capital shows equally sharp inequalities.

If there were no barriers to the international movement of people, it is virtually certain that the existing great differences in factor endowments would generate massive migration flows, significantly affecting relative demographic and economic characteristics of many nations. Disregarding the complicated issue of the brain drain (which, in any event, is not usefully discussed as a population policy matter), the economic effects, in terms of changes in income per head, would be generally beneficial both for the sending and the receiving countries. However, in the receiving countries the competition created by migrants would tend to reduce the relative income shares accruing to labor and, quite possibly, absolute wage levels in less-skilled occupations as well. There are, of course, heroic simplifications lurking behind these bland propositions, rendering them largely meaningless. Thus, for example, large-scale immigration might generate cultural and political tensions that would drastically reduce the real and perceived economic advantages both for immigrants and for the receiving country. But the point is academic. International migration is not free; hence its current volume, while large by most historical standards, is insignificant by comparison with the net annual increase of the world population. National policies in most countries that would be potentially attractive destination points for international migrants either completely bar entry to foreigners for permanent settlement or keep such movements within narrow limits.

Policies of Communist states, of course, are uniformly in the first category. The logic of comprehensive state planning is clearly hostile to movements of labor across frontiers, even to and from states with similar

economic and political arrangements. The Chinese-Soviet border, for example, marks one of the sharpest gradients between neighboring states with respect to population/resource ratios. There is, of course, no significant migration across that frontier now; but even at the time of Chinese-Soviet amity, there was no expectation that such movements would materialize in the future.

A strictly enforced stance against permanent labor migration is not the exclusive property of Communist states. Japan is an outstanding example of a market economy that follows such a policy. Judging from the tone of recent policy discussions concerning migration, the majority of Western European states are also moving in that direction as far as migration from outside the European Economic Community is concerned. Any return to the more liberal attitudes that characterized European migration policies during the early postwar decades is expected to be partial: limited to labor movements under term contracts. Owing to low fertility in the past, a return to economic buoyancy may of course recreate a situation of acute labor shortages in Western Europe. (For example, between 1990 and 2000 the size of the population between 20 and 40 will decrease by more than 4 million). But emerging technological trends suggest that through automation the demand for labor could be significantly reduced. More importantly, in future decisions concerning immigration policy, social rather than economic considerations are likely to be increasingly influential. This will tend to favor restrictive policies.

As to the United States, which remains the most important country of immigration, the direction and the outcome of the current debate on immigration policy is less easily predictable. The seeming confusion of that debate reflects not only the conflicting economic interests involved, but

also the fact that the size of what is probably the largest component of US immigration, illegal migration, can be estimated only within very broad limits. It is reasonable to assume, however, that as in Europe, noneconomic considerations will be given increasing weight in determining policy. Since concern about the social impact of immigration tends to increase disproportionately beyond some threshold level of the number of recent migrants, public resistance to the costly and onerous measures that would be required to enforce the existing immigration laws is likely to weaken in the future. Since those laws--now easily flouted--are fairly restrictive and are likely to remain so, such a development would tend to reduce immigration to the US substantially.¹¹

It seems safe to conclude that in the coming decades international migration policies are not likely to make a significant contribution to the solution of problems caused by rapid population growth. Proposals for radical new initiatives toward population redistribution across international frontiers--e.g., through transfer of administrative control (but not sovereignty) over designated territories from one state to another for purposes of colonization--seem to lack realism.¹²

Policies affecting mortality

Levels of mortality are a major factor in influencing rates of population growth. The rapid reduction of death rates in the developing world since World War II (to a significant degree achieved through health policies supported by foreign assistance), was the primary cause of the

"population explosion." Since Third World mortality levels are still significantly below those achieved in the economically advanced countries, much further improvement is still possible. To the extent that such improvements are realized, population growth rates will increase. It has been often suggested that lowering infant and childhood mortality will contribute to reduced fertility, compensating for the initial growth-promoting effect. The scientific debate on this issue is not fully resolved; but on balance, the evidence does not confirm that such compensation in fact takes place.¹³ However, past decisions concerning health policies were not influenced by the expected impact of mortality reduction on population growth. In view of the overriding value of health in its own right, it is unlikely that policymakers will take a different stance in the future. Insofar as rapid population growth is deemed socially undesirable, there is a sound consensus that the full burden of adjustment ought to be placed on fertility.

Policies affecting fertility

Government efforts in the developing countries aimed at reducing population growth through reduction of fertility have received much international attention during the past two decades. The policy approaches have been thoroughly debated and widely publicized. Only the briefest reminder of the contending viewpoints need be given here to serve as background to the issue at hand: the expected international dimension of such fertility-reducing policies during the coming decades.

By way of a rather drastic simplification, two main positions concerning fertility policy may be distinguished. The first sees high levels of fertility as an aberration that reflects the inability of potential parents to apply efficient birth-preventing measures, either because of ignorance, or because of the high cost of acquiring the needed services. In this view, a large proportion of parents in high fertility countries desire no more children than they already have; indeed, some of their existing children have resulted from pregnancies that were unwanted. The policy prescription corresponding to this diagnosis is straightforward. Programs are to be organized to inform people about birth control techniques, and subsidized (preferably free) services are to be offered providing access to efficient contraceptive technology.

The other position explains high fertility as a fairly accurate expression of prevailing parental preferences for children. These preferences are seen as deeply rooted in parents' emotional needs and strongly supported by cultural norms. Fertility behavior also reflects, inter alia, children's positive economic contribution to productive activities of the family and their insurance value as old-age support for parents. According to this view, in order to achieve a decline in fertility, policies must change the social and economic arrangements that bear on parental reproductive behavior. Access to improved contraceptive technology is a factor in shaping that behavior; but in and by itself, it is unlikely to be a significant one.

Under conditions of rapid socioeconomic change, the programmatic implications of these two positions need not be contradictory. One result of such a change will be the emergence of increasing demand for birth control.

Family planning programs can cater to that demand by providing access to contraceptive technology and by reducing the costs of its adoption. The question of the relative importance of the causal factors is moot: the aim is to ease the onset of fertility decline and accelerate its pace.

Not surprisingly, strong international support for such programs has been forthcoming. The improved contraceptive methods that became available in the 1960s were a natural candidate for organized technology transfer: they were new, relatively inexpensive, and manufactured only in the developed countries. Voluntary acceptance of birth control services certifies that program clients derive a personal benefit from their participation while at the same time they contribute to the social objective of the programs: reduction of the rate of population growth. Thus, harmony of individual and collective interests tends to make such programs politically noncontroversial, hence a natural choice for favored treatment in foreign assistance programs.

Family planning programs have performed well in the relatively advanced developing countries, but not so in situations of economic backwardness and slow social change. Under such conditions, available remedies for the problem of rapid population growth are more painful and difficult. The policy remedies are of two distinct types, although in practice they tend to be jointly applied. First, governments may seek to overrule individual reproductive motivations and demand conformity to socially determined rules concerning proper fertility behavior. The Chinese objective of eliminating all higher than second-order births--and even pressing for the adoption of the single-child norm--is an extreme example of policies of this type. Second, as part of the overall design of development policy (which, under

conditions of backwardness, may aim at a radical restructuring of social institutions), demographic considerations can be explicitly recognized. Thus, when a reduction of population growth is a social desideratum, development policy may be given a bias that creates micro-level pressures favoring the adoption of low fertility. Once again, the policies pursued by China provide the most apposite reference.

It can be readily appreciated that neither of these lines of attack on socially objectionable patterns of fertility behavior offers a large scope for international assistance, let alone for close foreign involvement in policy execution. To promote such policies, there are no tangible goods that can be helpfully transmitted from donor to recipient: the "technology" of new institutional design is necessarily home-grown. Even when foreign assistance could be helpful, political considerations tend to dictate reticence either in accepting or in offering it. Outsiders' judgments on human rights matters are bound to differ from domestic interpretations.

Significant international involvement in fertility policies is therefore likely to continue to be limited to assistance in the relatively noncontroversial field of family planning programs. Given the large numbers of people who are potential clients of family planning programs, such assistance could grow rapidly as fertility decline spreads to more and more countries. However, once decline has started in any particular country, the case for assistance will tend to become less compelling. Developing countries experiencing fertility decline are likely to be the economically most successful ones. Such countries are likely to be increasingly able and willing to finance domestic service programs whenever such programs are demanded by the population. Domestic willingness to fully underwrite the

costs of family planning programs is likely to be more than matched by donor reluctance to extend assistance indefinitely. In the "difficult" countries, international population assistance will continue to have limited scope, at least until a large-scale demand for family planning services emerges. International attention will have to focus, instead, on creating the economic and social preconditions of fertility decline. In such situations, the issue of population policy merges with the broader issue of development policy. To discuss that vast subject is outside the scope of the present paper.

Prospects for Fertility Decline

The magnitude of the international problem of rapid population growth and its hold on the attention of policymakers in the coming decades depends mainly on future fertility trends. On this score, the message implicit in present global projections is, in part, discouraging. It illustrates the momentum of population growth: in the developing world, further rapid demographic increase in the 1980s and 1990s is a virtual certainty. The confidently expected speedy and universal convergence of the projections to replacement-level fertility anticipated during the coming decades, in contrast, has a soothing effect, since it implies a rapid decline of demographic growth by the early 2000s. In recent years, this prospect of quasi-automatic decline has come to dominate discussions of population issues. But, in fact, no claim can be made that such convergence is assured or even highly probable. Numerous features of the contemporary demographic situation could be cited to demonstrate this point. Sixty years of socialist

rule have left the fertility of the Moslem populations of the Soviet Union virtually unchanged. In 1980, World Bank projections anticipated that Iran's population would stabilize at 102 million. In 1981 the figure was changed to 140 million, presumably to reflect the hostility of the new regime toward family planning. In Sub-Saharan Africa and in much of South Asia, fertility decline has not yet begun, and no solid theory explains why it should start tomorrow. If the past is a guide to the future, significant reversal of recent Chinese fertility trends is by no means impossible. There is, of course, a broad negative correlation between levels of "development" and levels of fertility, and this does suggest that successful development eventually will reduce population growth. But such correlations do not rule out the possibility that in many developing countries future increase in income and in food production will be used, partly or entirely, simply to sustain further rapid demographic expansion. Policymakers' ability to influence fertility trends remains tenuous within countries; the proposition applies with double force to the global scene. The prevailing mood of optimism about long-term world demographic prospects notwithstanding, the "solution" of the international problem created by rapid growth is not yet at hand.

Notes

1. Jan Tinbergen, "Demographic development and the exhaustion of natural resources," Population and Development Review, 1, no. 3 (September 1975):24.
2. A somewhat ill-conceived attempt to introduce elements of such a contract into the World Population Plan of Action that was a focal point of the deliberations of the 1974 United Nations World Population Conference in Bucharest was decisively rebutted by the Conference.
3. Garrett Hardin, "The competitive exclusion principle," Science 131 (29 April 1960):1292-1297.
4. World Development Report 1981. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1981; Tomas Frejka, "World population growth prospects," Center for Policy Studies Working Paper No. 72 (June 1981), The Population Council, New York; and World Population Prospects as Assessed in 1980 (New York: United Nations, 1981).
5. When such forecasts are made, disagreement is apt to be vocal. The dominant negative reaction of economists to The Limits of Growth Report is epitomized in Carl Kaysen, "The computer that printed "W*O*L*F*," Foreign Affairs 50 (1972):660-668. More recently, the massive US Government study The Global 2000 Report to the President elicited equally harsh dissent despite its more guarded formulations. The titles of two reviews are indicative: Julian Simon characterized the Report as "Global Confusion, 1980" (in The Public Interest, Winter 1981); more succinctly, Herman Kahn termed it "Globaloney" (in Policy Review, Spring 1981).
6. For a review of the relevant literature, see Robert H. Cassen, "Population and development: A survey." World Development 4, nos. 10/11 (1976):785-830.
7. Analyses that reach such a conclusion in examining expected development patterns during the next 20 years include Wassily Leontief, et al., The Future of the World Economy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), and Interfutures, Facing the Future (Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1979). See also Nathan Keyfitz, "World resources and the world middle class." Scientific American 235 July 1976):28-35.
8. For a more extended discussion, see Paul Demeny, "Patterns of population growth and structural change in the world economy," Conference on Economic and Demographic Change: Issues for the 1980s, Helsinki, Finland (IUSSP 1979, Liege, Belgium).
9. The most recent proposal for such a plan is put forward in the Brandt Commission Report, North-South: A Program for Survival. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1980).

10. Roger Reville, "Economic dilemmas in Asia: The needs for research and development." Science 209 (4 July 1980):164-174.
11. Occasionally, a return to the pre-World War I open door US immigration policy is advocated. For an uncompromising statement of this position, see Chapter 14 in David Friedman, The Machinery of Freedom (New York, Harper and Row, 1973).
12. See, for example, Alfred Sauvy, La question de l'espace et la population sous l'angle de la solidarite, Institut international d'etudes sociales. Serie de recherche N. 36, Geneve 1978. Sauvy's examples for ceding administrative control through "treaties of solidarity" include the United States, France and Australia, on the one hand, and Mexico, the Maghreb and South East Asia, on the other hand.
13. Samuel H. Preston, ed., The Effects of Infant and Child Mortality on Fertility. (New York: Academic Press, 1978).

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| 41 | Samuel S. Lieberman, "Prospects for Development and Population Growth in Iran," May. | 61 | Paula E. Hollerbach, "Recent Trends in Fertility, Abortion, and Contraception in Cuba," September. |
| 42 | John Bongaarts, "The Fertility Impact of Traditional and Changing Childspacing Practices in Tropical Africa," May. | 62 | Veen N. Thadani, "Property and Progeny: An Exploration of Intergenerational Relations," November. |
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