

HISAR SCHOOL

JUNIOR MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2021

“Combating Polarization in Times of Global Crisis”

Urbanization Committee (SA5)

*Readdressing the Potential of
Population Control Policies for
Overpopulation*

BARTU KÖKSAL



RESEARCH
REPORT



Forum: Urbanization Committee (SA5)

Issue: Addressing the potential of population control policies for overpopulation

Student Officer: Bartu Köksal - President Chair

Introduction

From the onset of the 19th century, concerns over the growth rate of the world population have been raised by some scholars as the world population has hit the 1 billion mark. For the last two centuries, world population has increased in an unseen pattern, with the breakthroughs made in medicine, agriculture, biotechnology, education, and with the contribution of socio-political events. Before the developments made in medicine, the infant mortality rate was very high, and access to healthcare services was limited. Due to these problems, the children per woman rate was very high, and these conditions have gradually started to accelerate the growth of the human population. During this period, a prominent British economist called Thomas Malthus predicted that while food growth and processing is, statistically speaking, arithmetic process, the human population growth is a geometric process; therefore, in a near future, he hypothesized that humankind would outrun the available food stock it has on earth. Such a case could be prevented by the betterment of humankind which was “impossible without stern limits on reproduction”(Britannica). Although Malthus’s ideas became very popular, he did not account for the coming British agricultural and industrial revolution, which skyrocketed the production of edible goods; therefore, experimentally proving Malthus wrong for that time period. However, Malthus’s ideas would later continue to sustain their vogue, as it is called in the modern era as “Neo-Malthusianism”, which is practiced by some countries.

As of 1950, World War-II had just ended, and the returning soldiers caused a great surge in population, giving birth to a generation also known as the baby boomers. With this generation, the population has reached 5.7 billion as of 1987, which was 2.6 billion in 1950 (). Furthermore, due to the need for workforce, and cultural reasons, in the West, people were encouraged to have more babies, and combined with the medical advancements of the 20th century, world population has continued its geometric increase to such an extent that it reached 6 billion people by 1990(). However, next generations that have come after that were far more educated, especially women were and are far more educated, and further introduction of contraceptives, and abortion started to decrease the rate of the rate of growth of population, but saying this directly would be a wrong approach, and would undermine the process of understanding the overpopulation problem. With economic, social and political developments, many countries experience different stages of development in their demographics, and decrease in growth is evident in developed countries, but when analyzing developing countries and, especially, low-income countries, the same cannot be stated. Although the global community is optimistic about the population growth, and claims that the human population will not exceed 11 billion, humans cause destruction and depletion of nature and its resources by further colonising the earth through massive expansions through new settlements to fit its enlarging population.

Fluctuations in population in various parts of the world were not just caused by advancements in medical technology, and education. Some countries enacted neo-Malthusian policies that coerced people

into abortions and pay fines in accordance with the limits that are set on the number of children they can have. China and India are prominent examples of these policies. China, from 1979 to 2015, enacted an one-child policy to counter its oversized population. According to some resources, by doing so, China prevented the birth of 400 million people; therefore, potentially eliminating an overpopulation situation. However, these policies also came with their downsides. As a consequence of this policy, the female and male population in China are highly unbalanced, and one-child policy has also damaged traditional Chinese community sense among families. Furthermore, China's birth rate has fallen more than it should have been, which will overall shrink China's population. Besides, China's human resource is essential to its economic growth; however, with the disastrous effects of one-child policy, it seems China won't be able to continue their successful financial record. Considering these, China has abolished these policies, but some experts say it's too late; furthermore, many people adopted the one-child family structure, so it seems that it's unlikely that China would be able reimburse the population gap they'll have in near future, when other developments such as Fourth Industrial revolution and increase in economic productivity with nominal human input are not considered. Post-industrial countries, such as Japan, also suffer from their shrinking population, and try to find solutions to increase their population. This report would try to analyze and bring forth the pros and cons of various policies, and enlighten the delegates on constructing optimal strategies for keeping the balance and maintaining a healthy population growth.

Definition of Key Terms

Dependency Ratio: The dependency ratio is a measure of the number of dependents aged zero to 14 and over the age of 65, compared with the total population aged 15 to 64 (Investopedia)

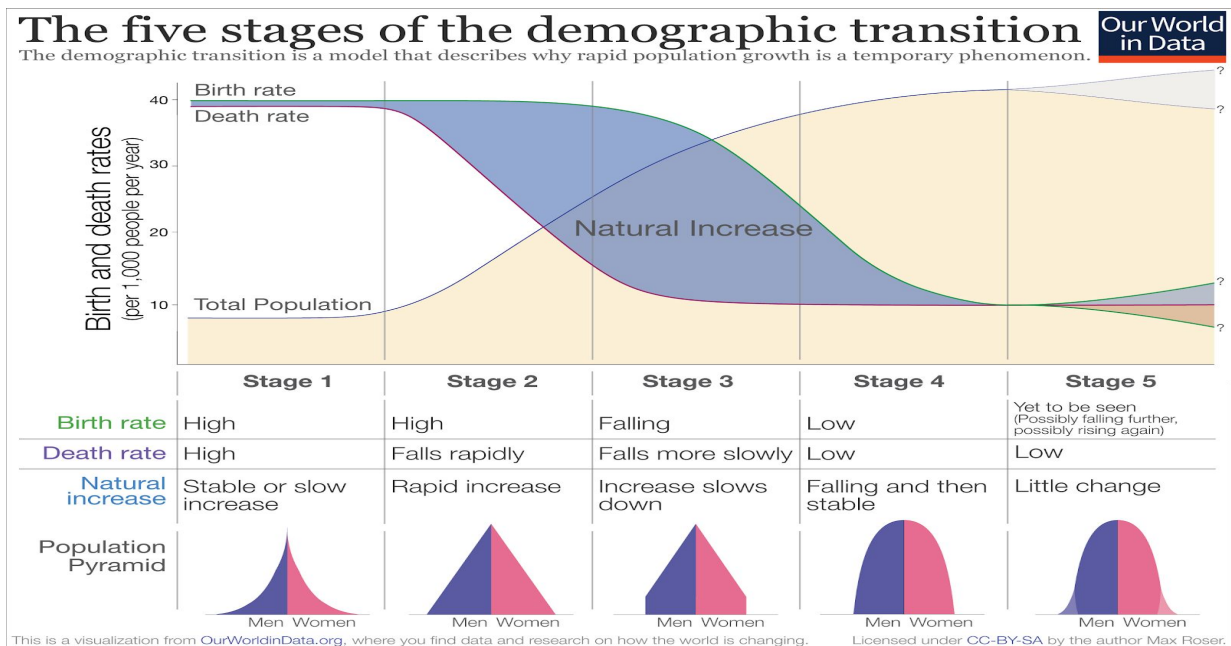
Population Pyramid: A Population Pyramid is a pair of back-to-back Histograms (for each sex) that displays the distribution of a population in all age groups and in both sexes. The X-axis is used to plot population numbers and the Y-axis lists all age groups (datavizcatalogue). Population pyramids are used for determining the demographic transitions in population in various parts of the world. They're usually analyzed in four or five- changeable depending on the source- stages.

Stages of Demographic Transition:

- **Stage-1:** At this stage, population is relatively low, and the population is balanced by high death rates and high birth rates.
- **Stage-2:** At this stage, population starts to grow as birth rates would continue their upward trend and death rates fall. Transition from stage-1 to stage-2 is usually observed in countries that move from a pre-industrial society to an industrialized one. This usually occurs because everyone starts to have more access to healthcare services and medicines that keep death rates low, and increase life expectancy.
- **Stage-3:** At this stage, birth rate also starts to fall, while the overall population is rising and growing. This stage usually occurs in countries that have completed its industrialization; therefore, causing immigration to urban areas from land. In urban areas, it's preferable to have less children compared to rural areas. Also maintaining gender equality enables transitions in

Stage-3 as women start to contribute to the workforce more, rather than bearing children and looking after them.

- **Stage-4:** At this stage, population is growing but its rate of growth has significantly dropped. As with the availability of contraception methods and equality in education, low birth rates occur, and with the sake of medical developments low death rates occur. In this stage, people usually prefer to form smaller families. This stage is dominant in developed countries.
- **Stage-5:** At this stage, population starts to shrink as birth rates significantly decline to the point where they are below death rates, so it cannot replace the ageing population by the same volume. Furthermore, this puts post-industrial governments under pressure as the older population triumphs over the younger population so that governments have more people to look after than to get benefitted from. This is seen in advanced post-industrial countries. Japan is a perfect example of Stage-5 demographic transition.



Five Stages of the Demographic Transition

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs): The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

Contraception: Contraception tries to avoid women getting pregnant by blocking factors that cause pregnancy, i.e condoms. (NHS).

Eugenics: Eugenics is the practice or advocacy of improving the human species by selectively mating people with specific desirable hereditary traits. It has been used as a basis for racism and xenophobia many times.

General Overview

Malthusian Understanding and Today's Neo-Malthusian Policies

As introduced in the introduction section, malthusianism is the ideology that follows the ideas set forth by the British economist, Thomas Malthus. Malthus formulated that the population grows by geometric progression while food grows by arithmetic progression (Malthusianism of 21st Century). Malthus defines two types of notions for population growth: obstacles and checks. Malthus defines checks as privative checks, which are voluntary such as not marrying with anyone. There are also obstacles, to which we can also say destructive obstacles, such as natural disasters, wars and hunger. Overall, Malthus stated that “only “vice” (including “the commission of war”), “misery” (including famine or want of food and ill health), and “moral restraint” (i.e., abstinence) could check this excessive growth” (Britannica). Malthus’s ideas lost their validity as the industrial revolution and British agricultural revolution proved contrary. Yet, Malthusian theory was able to survive until now. However, application of Malthusian ideas caused abuses in several locations. “Through 60s and 70s, Neo-Malthusian ideas spread among senior technocrats and government leaders in some developing countries, resulting in human rights abuses that Western development professionals encouraged and that Western aid often funded. Those abuses peaked in the form of China’s one-child policy (1979–2015) and India’s forced sterilizations during its “Emergency” (1975–77), a period in India when civil liberties were suspended and the prime minister ruled by decree” (Cato Institute). Countries like China and India responded to the booming population problem by - as of today, one calls them as- radical solutions. However, also be reminded that Malthusian perspective does not really consider human rights, but it rather prevents any future catastrophic consequences by averting overpopulation. This idea was acknowledged by many to the extent that United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) awarded Indira Gandhi, prime minister of India during “Emergency” period, and Qian Xinzong, one-child policy’s architect with Population Award prize, which is to be awarded to “an individual, to individuals, or to an institution for the most outstanding contribution to the awareness of population questions or to their solutions”, despite protests made by some scholars (Cato Institute). Malthusian ideas are widespread among government officials, scientists and other prominent figures. However, it should be noted that according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 16 and United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), these actions can be stated as abusive of human rights.

Eugenics and Effects of Population Control on Minorities and Underrepresented Groups

Family planning and several population policies targeted minorities. Using eugenics as premise, many governments abused and violated the rights of minorities and underrepresented groups, such as indigenous people. For instance, In the 1960s and 1970s, one out of four U.S. Native American women

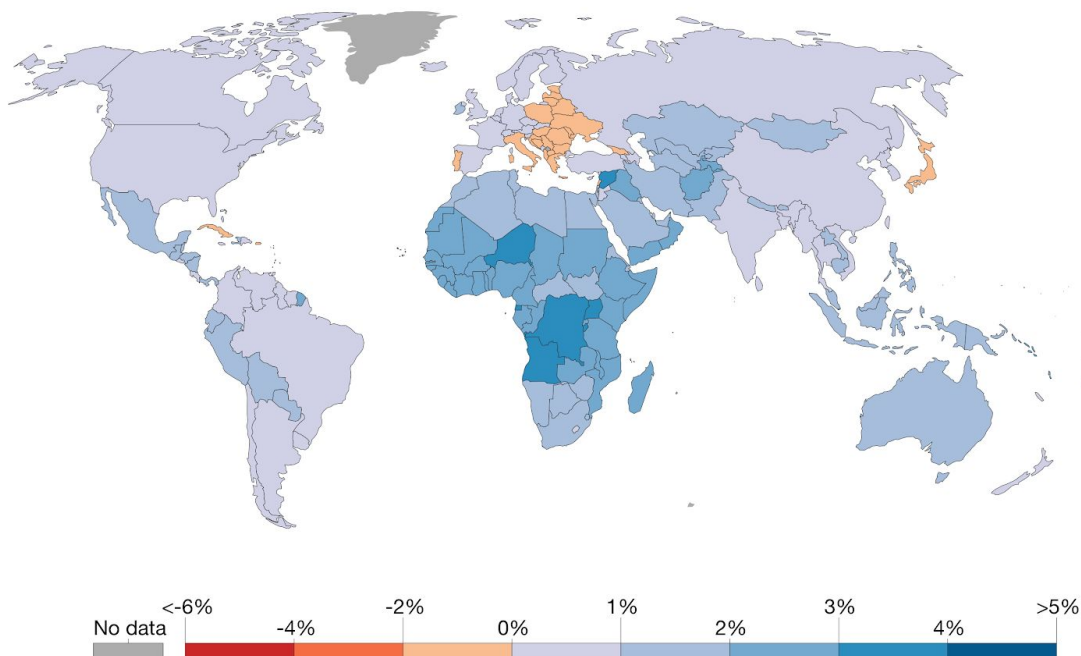
underwent sterilization, with that figure rising as high as 50 percent between 1970 and 1976” (Cato Institute, The Cruel Truth). Furthermore, these are not past occurrences; governments of China and India still forcefully sterilize and coerce Uyghurs, Kazakhs and non-Hindus into having a definite number of children.

Developing Countries and Low-Income Countries

Developing and Low-Income countries linger between Stage-1 and Stage-2, and Stage-2 and Stage-3 demographic transition stages, as some of them are still in pre-industrial era, and try to introduce industry-this is especially the case for low income countries; whereas, developing countries diversify their economy, and rapidly industrialize with the wave of immigration from rural areas to urban areas, which cause initiation of slowing down in birth rate. The data below is an accurate visualization of this.

Population growth rate, 2020

Annual rate of population change from 1950, including UN projections to 2099 based on its median scenario. This takes births, deaths and migration into account.



Source: United Nations – Population Division (2019 Revision)

OurWorldInData.org/world-population-growth/ • CC BY

Population growth rate in 2020

Post-Industrial Countries and Developed Countries

Post-Industrial Countries and Developed Countries are countries in stages 4 and 5 of demographic transition. The population growth in these countries is slow. There is also a problem of shrinking population in Stage-5 countries such as Japan. Japan’s population has decreased by 1 million people.

Biotechnology and Medicine

Just as the industrial revolution and British agricultural revolution proved Malthus wrong, advances made in biotechnology could affect agriculture, and provide a sustainable food ecosystem for increasing population; while protecting the environment and nature. The Green Revolution in agriculture can be given as an example, although some critics suggest that the green revolution does not prepare for an overpopulation scenario, but rather stimulates it (ThoughtCo). Furthermore, keeping infant mortality as low as possible by more access to healthcare and regular medical assistance could lower the population growth as statistics suggest.

Education of Women and Availability of Contraception

As more women get educated, the birth rate decreases. This is also self-evident from the fact that Stage-3 and Stage-4 demographic transitions require equity among genders; thus, enabling entrance of more women into the workforce. Usually in the past as women were not be able to work outside of their homes they were tasked with raising their children, and also this is a culture inherited from the rural life, but as more women get into the workforce, and urban areas rule over agricultural areas, women were not be able to raise too many children both due to the time management and disadvantages of urban areas. Contraception is vital as many women get pregnant accidentally due to the lack of modern efficient contraception methods. A good example of this is Bangladesh, who were able to decrease their children per woman rate significantly, where they provided logistics for distribution of contraceptives over the entire population, including rural areas. However not every culture can see this as acceptable and plausible; therefore, it is important to educate people regardless of their religion, and get help of religious authorities in doing so.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

China

From 1979 to 2015, China enacted a policy called one-child policy. This policy required couples to have only one child, but this particularly caused a shrinking in China's population. By 2050, it is expected that China's population would shrink, and would be dominated by older generations, which increases the dependency ratio, and this could cause lots of problems for China ("Can China recover from its disastrous one-child policy?"). As these problems are observed, China gradually relieved the harsh sterns, and allowed for different conditions, such as if a family is living in rural areas that family could have more than one child. Furthermore, this also destabilized the gender ratio in the same generation, as Chinese people- heeding to their cultural values- favored male children over females. This system is also known as "4-2-1" among people. As four people represent the maternal and paternal grandparents, and two represent the parents, and finally one is the result of one child policy. Besides, Chinese people are bound by a sense of community among their families; therefore, they don't really separate among themselves, and look out for each other as a generation gets old. However, in this case one person would have to take care of 4 maybe 6 people, as death rates fall as well. Considering all these problems, China has abolished one-child policy, and now tries to get people into making more than one child, but that does

not really work, as this policy-considering the time period and generations it has encapsulated- became a norm among Chinese people.

India

India has started a forced sterilization as a population programme, as it is “encouraged by loans amounting to tens of millions of dollars from the World Bank, the Swedish International Development Authority and the UN Population Fund” (Biswas). Sterilizations were undertaken as part of The Emergency period (1975-1977). During that period, even though as outlined previously UN awarded India, state-sponsored population control caused many abusements and atrocities against civil liberties and human rights, such as the sterilization of 6.2 million Indian men, “which was 15 times the number of people sterilized by Nazis” (Biswas). Furthermore, allegedly these sterilizations were particularly focused on “the poor and underprivileged” with “eugenic aims” (Biswas). Furthermore, as some of these operations are botched, some people who had these operations died. India has continued to practice family planning policies and with the developments made in women’s education and alleviation of poverty fertility rates declined; however, still some atrocities by local authorities, such as targeting underprivileged groups, botched operations, continue in India.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the most successful countries in reducing the population growth and reducing the fertility rate. Through increment in literacy and women’s empowerment, Bangladesh employed a successful family planning policy, and with the improving economic standards, education standards were elevated; thereby, more women and children were educated. Furthermore, distribution of free contraceptives throughout the country evaded unwanted pregnancies; therefore, fertility rate has dropped. Also, educating couples about family planning, and other methods of family building, Bangladesh has set an example for healthy population policy planning.

Sub-Saharan African Countries

Being one of the most diverse and poor regions around the world, Sub-Saharan African Countries are experiencing huge amounts of population growth, even though, recently, countries made commendable progress in reducing child mortality and so forth. Sub-Saharan countries are different from each other, and the heterogeneity that they possess within the cultures, customs and political structures makes it hard for establishing a common feasible family planning framework. Furthermore, these countries were not off to a good start since their independence. Many countries are deprived due to the post-colonial traumas, civil wars and effects of the Cold War, and the types of assistance they received instead of more sustainable ones. All these result in economic deprivation and extreme poverty with the increasing population, which further makes it sustainable for countries to keep up with the increasing population, thereby the demands. Illiteracy rates are also relatively high, which indicates the lack of education and necessary infrastructure that should be immediately remedied in order to stimulate

Population growth rate, 2020

Annual rate of population change from 1950, including UN projections to 2099 based on its median scenario. This takes births, deaths and migration into account.

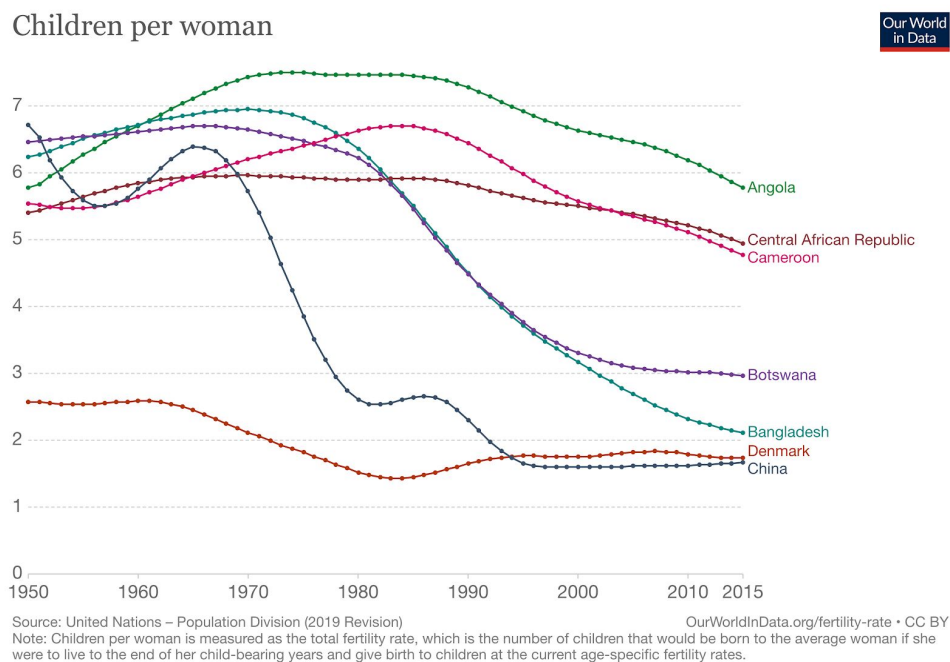


intellectual and socio-economic development throughout the region, which will act as a stimulus to decrease the rates of fertility and children per woman.

Population Growth Rates vary from 3% to >5% in Sub-Saharan African countries

UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency with the mission to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled (Unfpa.org). It works actively in matters of sexual&reproductive health, gender equality, human rights and population control. Proactive involvement of UNFPA is critical in maintaining the balance between a healthy family planning and protection of sexual and reproductive rights.

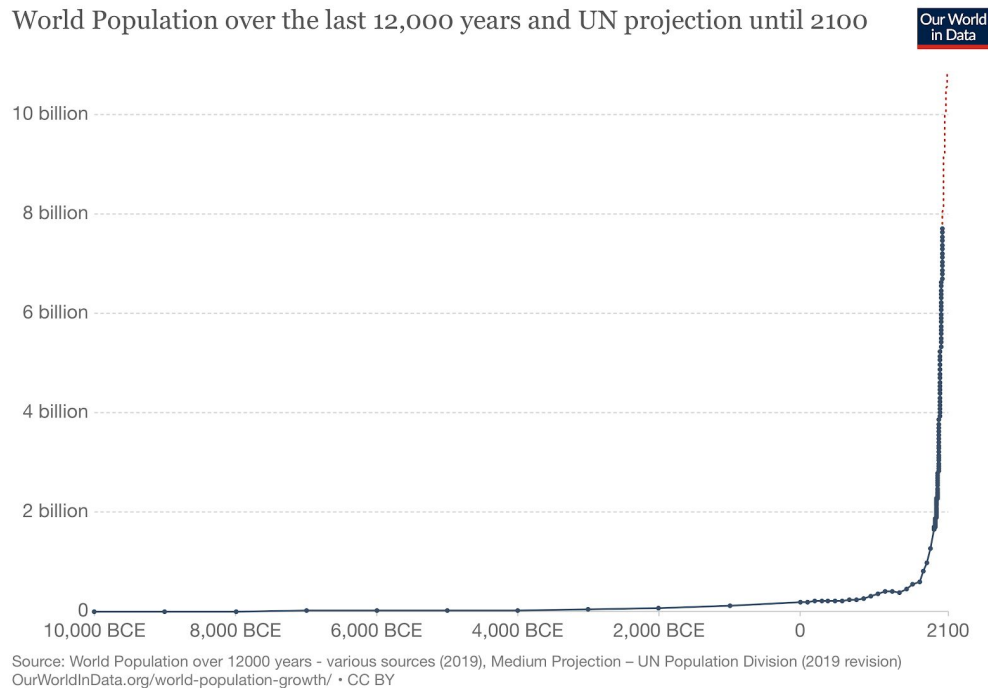


Comparison of some Sub-Saharan Africa countries (Botswana, Cameroon etc.) with the developing and developed countries in terms of Children per Woman.

Timeline of Events

1798	An Essay On the Principle of Population was written by Thomas Robert Malthus. This initiated the spread of Malthusianism.
1804	Human Population Reaches 1 billion people.
1914-1918	World War-I diminishes world population.

1918-1920	Spanish Flu, 50,000,000 people died.
1927	Human Population Reaches 2 billion people.
1939-1945	World War II, approximately 75,000,000 people died.
1945-1960	Baby Boom
1960-1970	Green Revolution in India
1960	Human Population Reaches 3 billion.
1975	Human Population Reaches 4 billion.
1979	China's One-Child Policy
July 11, 1987	Human Population Reaches 5 billion.
October 31, 2011	Human Population Reaches 7 billion.
2015	China abolishes One-Child Policy
2019-Present	COVID-19 Pandemic, 1,975,707 people died.



World Population over the last 12,000 years

Treaties and Events

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Protection of Human Rights is essential when it comes to implementing policies that are affecting human lives. This document clearly accentuates the reproduction rights and right to form a family; therefore, it should be held as a basis for every population control policy.

International Conference on Population and Development: This is a key document that outlines the Program of Action (POA) that paves the UNFPA's path in maintaining certain policies in terms of population and development. This document is one of the most important documents on population, and formulating the principles, basis for actions, and actions while addressing the population problems.

General Assembly 21st Special Session (A/RES/S-21/2): This resolution adopted by the General Assembly aims to address many key issues surrounding population and development in accordance with the *Realpolitik* of the new century, while upholding basic human rights.

The 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): These are 17 goals set by countries, which are to be achieved until 2030. Goals vary from alleviation of poverty to gender equality. There has been some criticism with regards to goals, not including the reduction of population or population growth. However, it should be also noted that the goals outlined here affect the population growth negatively, as it is observed in Stage-4 and Stage-5- even a negative growth in case of Japan- demographic transition countries.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

When one observes the global trends in population growth, many countries successfully reduce the population growth rate, fertility rate and so forth. However, it is unfortunately observed that lack of international cooperation and UN discretion could lead to variety of consequences: inequalities among countries, targeting of specific groups, violation of human rights, and malfunctioning in maintaining a healthy sustainable population policy, which -later on- lead to unwanted consequences in social, economic and political powers of countries.

Furthermore, lack of attention of the United Nations is also observed. The United Nations should treat population problem as an existential and global problem just as it did on climate change, and should form an international standard, an agreement, a framework or a treaty that would be flexible enough to be tailored according to each countries' specific needs while upholding the basic principles and plan of actions. Instead of pacifist and reactionary actions, the UN should be more proactive, while collaborating with NGOs, and institutions that are researching on areas related to population to address the population problem. Current guidelines and agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and SDGs, are also related or stimulated to the question of population control; therefore, this problem should be more publicized and brought to the attention of the international community, rather than just being an agenda of the national policies of countries.

Possible Solutions

Improvement of socio-economic infrastructure would be effective as better transportation, more healthcare services and education would decrease birth rates, and death rates. An important point to heed here is to keep the balance between birth rates and death rates. People can be incentivized to make children in Stage-4 and Stage-5 demographic transitioned nations.

Furthermore, contraceptives must be easily accessible, and children should be educated on sex and gender topics. Family planning policies must also be put in use, while not harming cultural values and not abusing human rights.

Research on agriculture technologies and biotechnology must be funded by the government, and scientific solutions should be followed to address the problem of livestock that Malthus pointed out. Moreover, hygiene and sanitation should be prioritized regardless of the location of settlements to insure dignity of human life and elevate the living standards of people. Lastly, socio-economic gap between classes must be addressed as poverty is one of the precursors of population boom.

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