

III -- International Effects of Rapid Population Growth

World Economy and Environment

With so many countries held back individually, to varying degrees, by population growth among other factors, imbalances in general world economic development are further accentuated, as are related phenomena such as **Third World indebtedness**. Potential ODA impacts are diminished as client populations increase; Third World investments in human capital weaken, as does educational quality; there are poorer markets for international trade; and migratory pressures are increased.¹ The economic downturn of recent years has put the underlying problems into sharper relief.

While much of the environmental damage linked to population growth is concentrated in the immediate country or region concerned, **general world environmental problems** such as climate change and global warming are also intensified. While the contribution of rich countries where population has almost ceased to grow is at least as great, the first sufferers may well be in the **vulnerable countries of high population growth** -- the coastal dwellers of Egypt or Bangladesh, the peasants trying to till the fringes of the encroaching Sahara.

Inter-State Relations

With large-scale shifts in world population ratios bound to continue far into the next century, there will be **fresh strains on the international system of theoretically equal sovereign states**.

The relationship is not a simple one between national power and overall population. Obvious other factors are the strength of a country's economy (to the extent it is not overwhelmed by population growth itself), its technological and educational base, and its degree of national unity and will.² But sheer numbers do count too. We are likely to hear the larger developing countries assert increasingly the need to realign international relations on the basis of population, particularly as they progress technologically and economically, and perhaps militarily.

It follows that there will eventually be **strong pressure for changes in the list of those recognised as major powers**. The Indians, for example, have recently started to talk officially about the need to add India and Brazil to the Security Council on the basis of their geography and population, as well as Japan and Germany on the basis of their economic strength. Others, allegedly even including the new Secretary-General, are making similar suggestions, adding Nigeria to the list as well. For the time being, these ideas will go nowhere, but they are a portent. The world of the early 21st century