

Haiti is another example. A multitude of factors have contributed to social tension and violent conflict, including environmental stress which appears to have played some causal role. Nonetheless, hard empirical evidence is lacking on the relative importance of the variables. Over recent decades, Haiti has experienced substantive deforestation and soil erosion. One author has concluded that "while many of the boat people who fled to the United States left because of the brutality of the Duvalier regimes, there is no question that -and this is not widely recognized- many Haitians were forced into boats by the impossible task of farming bare rock. Until Haiti is reforested, it will never be politically stable."³⁰ Unfortunately, there are no data to give any indication of what precisely motivated Haitians to emigrate, or to the extent environmental stress contributed to a rise in domestic violence directed toward political regimes.

5. The Demographic Time Bomb

Population levels, distribution and growth have a fundamental role in the analysis of environmental stress and national security issues. Unfortunately, a high degree of uncertainty surrounds the translation of demographic factors, particularly population growth, into some understanding of the environmental, let alone social, impact of the factors. Malthusian and counter Malthusian reasoning on the effects of demographic change are not on solid ground; there are many unknowns. Malthusian thinking argues that population growth will outstrip human sustenance. Counter Malthusian thinking points to the fact that, for the past two hundred years, technical change and other factors, such as new agricultural lands and the functioning of markets, has allowed humankind to provide for itself. The past, however, cannot be simply extrapolated into the future. For example, the "green revolution", which lasted from the 1960s to the 1980s and brought about increased agricultural yields, is largely over. Toss in some unknown global climate change in part contributed to by global warming and, while the Malthusian prediction does not become inevitable, there is cause for serious reflection on the significant size of potential desirable levels of future production to sustain mankind at a "comfortable" standard of living and the limitations on reaching such levels of production.³¹

With a reduction in external military threats, resources deployed to the military might more wisely be deployed elsewhere.

³⁰Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Redefining Security", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 68, No.2, 1989, p.168.

³¹Indeed, with current technology it may well be that the world does not have enough resources to provide the current global population with a 1995 middle class OECD country-type lifestyle.