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SEEING BEYOND THE STATE: THE POPULATION CONTROL MOVEMENT AND THE PROBLEM OF SOVEREIGNTY*

In December 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower called a meeting of his National Security Council (NSC) to discuss foreign aid. He said that they had neglected what he viewed as the looming threat of the future:

In all our discussions of the problem of underdeveloped countries and the kind of assistance which we could effectively provide them, we had not faced up to what was really the most serious problem, namely, that of exploding population growths. As far as he could see, continued the President, the only solution to this problem throughout the world was finding an effective two cent contraceptive.

Eisenhower thought that ‘something drastic had to be done to solve this problem’, though ‘he certainly did not know how to get started on this solution and he furthermore could not himself get it started’.¹

Eisenhower called for new ideas. He had already asked one of the men present, General William Draper, to lead a presidential commission on US foreign aid. Draper eventually managed to persuade the other members, including influential figures such as Joseph M. Dodge, General Al Gruenther and John J. McCloy, that the United States should help poor countries reduce fertility rates.² The problem continued to pre-occupy the President. In another NSC meeting, he confided that it was ‘a constant worry to him and from time to time reduced him to despair’.³ But when a reporter asked him if he agreed

*This article has had a long gestation, and the author has incurred debts too numerous to mention (or even remember). But he particularly wishes to acknowledge advice and encouragement from Adam McKeown and Jonathan Steinberg, along with audiences at Ohio State University, Harvard University, Fordham University and the University of Pennsylvania.

¹NSC meeting, 3 Dec. 1958: Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series.

²‘Composite Report of the President’s Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program’, 17 Aug. 1959: United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter USNA), RG59, Central Files, 1967–9, Soc 13-3, box 3124.

³NSC Meeting, 28 May 1959: Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series.

that the United States should supply contraceptives, Eisenhower rejected the very idea: 'I cannot imagine anything more emphatically a subject that is not a proper political or governmental activity or function or responsibility'.⁴ It was only after leaving office that he backed population control, agreeing to serve as honorary co-chairman, with Harry Truman, of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. He complained that, with the proliferating array of welfare programmes, including the beginning of federally funded birth control, the United States was 'spending money with one hand to slow up population growth among responsible families and with the other providing financial incentives for increasing production by the ignorant, feeble-minded or lazy'.⁵

For many scholars Eisenhower's position would appear anomalous, and not just because of his seemingly anachronistic support for eugenics. To them, 'biopolitics' was not just a proper activity of nineteenth- and twentieth-century governments. Efforts to shape the quantity, 'quality' and mobility of populations constitute the quintessential state-building project. These scholars have offered so many reasons for the coming of population control that it has begun to appear overdetermined. With the proliferation of mass conscription systems, comparing national birth rates offered a means to predict the future correlation of forces.⁶ The increasing responsibilities of states in social welfare — taking on and further expanding functions once fulfilled by municipalities and charities — created incentives to institutionalize citizenship, register aliens and expel those considered a public charge or public danger. This process accelerated up to the close of the nineteenth century, as the number of poor migrants increased, together with concerns about crime

⁴ State Department circular, 2 Dec. 1959: USNA, RG59, Central Files, 1967-9, Soc 13-3, box 3124.

⁵ Phyllis Tilton Piotrow, *World Population Crisis: The United States Response* (New York, 1973), 36-40, 88; Peter J. Donaldson, *Nature Against Us: The United States and the World Population Crisis, 1965-1980* (Chapel Hill, 1990), 23; Donald T. Critchlow, *Intended Consequences: Birth Control, Abortion, and the Federal Government in Modern America* (New York, 1999), 42-3, 245.

⁶ Deborah Dwork, *War Is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: A History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898-1918* (London, 1987), 9; Michael S. Teitelbaum and Jay M. Winter, *The Fear of Population Decline* (Orlando, 1985), 18-23.

and contagion.⁷ The collection of population statistics is said to have become so obsessive as to constitute a ‘totalitarian menace’, especially with the growing influence of eugenics in the early twentieth century.⁸ This trend is thought to have encompassed the imperial possessions of European powers, as censuses and other statistical projects loomed large in ‘the colonial imagination’.⁹ Much of this work has been inspired by Michel Foucault’s insight that the concept of population, with measurable properties amenable to intervention, created a field of contention, though one in which states gradually assumed responsibility for governing both the social body and the individual bodies of subjects.¹⁰

Yet if scholars have shown that states had compelling reasons to control populations, they have not explained why state officials were so slow to recognize and act on them. Prosecutors and judges in the United States and Europe were generally reluctant to enforce laws against birth control and abortion.¹¹ Population control measures were typically urged on states from the outside, at least initially. In the United States, Australia, Canada and Germany labour groups — not state officials — were the driving force in demanding stricter regulation of

⁷ Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 63–70; Leo Lucassen, ‘Eternal Vagrants? State Formation, Migration, and Travelling Groups in Western-Europe, 1350–1914’, in Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen (eds.), *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, 2nd edn (Berne, 1999), 243–50; Frank Caestecker, ‘The Changing Modalities of Regulation in International Migration within Continental Europe, 1870–1940’, in Anita Böcker *et al.* (eds.), *Regulation of Migration: International Experiences* (Amsterdam, 1998), 74–6, 80–1.

⁸ Yankel Fijalkow, ‘Hygiene, Population Sciences and Population Policy: A Totalitarian Menace?’, *Contemporary European Hist.*, xiii (1999); Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge, 1990). The literature on eugenics is particularly voluminous. For a good introduction, see Frank Dikötter, ‘Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics’, *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, ciii (1998).

⁹ Arjun Appadurai, ‘Number in the Colonial Imagination’, in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia, 1993).

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols. (New York, 1978), i, 24–6; Michel Foucault, ‘Governmentality’, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago, 1991), 98–103.

¹¹ Andrea Tone, *Devices and Desires: A History of Contraceptives in America* (New York, 2001), 35–40, 44–5; Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York, 2000), 84–5.

immigration.¹² Concerns about the quantity and quality of population did influence state efforts to improve the conditions for bearing and raising children, but they often came at the initiative of women activists, who continued to take the lead in the United States and the United Kingdom.¹³ Eugenics societies sprang up in all these countries, as well as in Latin America and Asia, because governments were thought to be acting with scant regard for how social welfare and public health measures might affect the ‘quality’ of populations — a concern that persisted through the 1960s, as Eisenhower made clear. And far from having an obsession with counting, categorizing and ranking subject populations, colonial administrations often lacked statisticians, many never bothered to hold a census, and informal headcounts were given little credence even by the officials who produced them.¹⁴ When they discovered rapid population growth, colonial authorities grew alarmed but still ruled out official birth control programmes for fear of provoking a backlash.¹⁵

If the ‘ambition of engineering whole societies was almost exclusively a project of the nation-state’, as James Scott argues — indeed, required ‘a weakened or prostrate civil society that lacks the capacity to resist these plans’ — one must ask why it is

¹² Keith Fitzgerald, *The Face of the Nation: Immigration, the State, and the National Identity* (Stanford, 1996), 117–19; Donna Gabaccia, ‘The “Yellow Peril” and the “Chinese of Europe”’: Global Perspectives on Race and Labor, 1815–1930’, in Lucassen and Lucassen (eds.), *Migration, Migration History, History*, 191–2; Leo Lucassen, ‘The Great War and the Origins of Migration Control in Western Europe and the United States (1880–1920)’, in Böcker *et al.* (eds.), *Regulation of Migration*, 47–52.

¹³ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, ‘Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880–1920’, *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, xcvi (1990), 1079–80; Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914–1945* (New York, 1993); Alisa Klaus, *Every Child a Lion: The Origins of Maternal and Infant Health Policy in the United States and France, 1890–1920* (Ithaca, 1993).

¹⁴ Robert Kuczynski, ‘Memorandum on Colonial Population and Vital Statistics’, c.24 Sept. 1943, and record of first meeting of Colonial Demography Research Group, 24 Sept. 1943: National Archives, London, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), CO 927/10; T. Smolski, ‘L’État de la Population’, c. Mar. 1937: Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, Fonds Ministériels, Affaires Économiques (FM77), box 49.

¹⁵ Puerto Rico and Jamaica are the only exceptions: ‘West India Royal Commission, 1938–39’: PRO, CO 318/445/5; Annette B. Ramirez de Arellano and Conrad Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception: A History of Birth Control in Puerto Rico* (Chapel Hill, 1983), 57–60.

that activists and scientists outside government were typically the first and most persistent advocates of selective immigration restrictions, eugenics and birth control. Even when coercive population control became a priority for the state, with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany providing the most extreme examples, professional groups gave advice and support.¹⁶ Population control projects, including eugenics programmes — which Scott considers the most infamous example of social engineering — have typically required the active participation if not leadership of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹⁷

The debate over the merits of state- versus society-centred approaches to explaining social change is now quite familiar. But what is often overlooked is how this debate privileges comparative analyses of different countries, presupposing that countries are the relevant units of analysis. When states are not the primary proponents of social change, this may be the wrong approach. This article instead aims to contribute to the emerging fields of international and global history, which offer alternative frames to analyse transnational phenomena such as migration, social movements and new forms of governance, and which allow us to give more recognition to the role of NGOs. The need for such approaches has long been apparent, but it has proved difficult to devise viable research projects.¹⁸ Narrating the political history of transnational networks poses particular challenges, since these narratives cannot pivot around a few protagonists to advance all the action, or a centre from which it emanates, or even a fixed target that attracted such dispersed efforts. But the narrative technique is all the more necessary to establish individual agency and explain causation in cases, such as this one, where subjects decentralized authority and promoted informal co-ordination as a deliberate strategy. Heretofore neglected archives of international and non-governmental

¹⁶ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, 1998), 89, 91; Fijalkow, 'Hygiene, Population Sciences and Population Policy', 465.

¹⁷ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 92.

¹⁸ Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, 'World History in a Global Age', *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, c (1995); Akira Iriye, 'Internationalizing International History', in Thomas Bender (ed.), *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley, 2002); Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York, 2003).

organizations can reveal how people organized across borders to advance agendas that would not work or even fit within exclusively national frameworks.

This subject has particular significance for international and global history, because it illustrates some of the reasons why people felt compelled to reconsider state sovereignty and start 'thinking globally'.¹⁹ Population trends encouraged activists and scientists to look, and act, beyond states and the borders by which they are defined. Movements to regulate migration and promote eugenics displayed a marked ambivalence towards state power from the very beginning. But this article will focus on the population control project that has garnered the least attention from historians, though it was the most ambitious of all: the worldwide campaign to persuade people to have smaller families. Paradoxically, international and non-governmental organizations provided states that were willing to participate with unprecedented powers to subject their citizenry to surveillance and control. But many in this movement were prepared to act without the knowledge or consent of governments. Working in concert, and in ways meant to insulate such projects from normal political processes, a constellation of public and private agencies sought to control the population of the world without having to answer to anyone in particular.

The phrase 'population control' still evokes this discredited effort to persuade or coerce people to plan smaller families, which culminated in a worldwide campaign conducted under UN auspices in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet it had much in common with earlier efforts to control the mobility and 'quality' of populations, suggesting the need for a broad definition. All population control movements tended to diagnose social and political problems as pathologies with a biological basis. All shared the idea that societies should reproduce themselves by design, even if that meant controlling how people disposed of their own bodies. And all looked at human beings not as individuals but as populations which could be shaped through the combined force of politics and science.

¹⁹For more on the intellectual history of population control, see Matthew Connelly, 'To Inherit the Earth: Imagining World Population, from the Yellow Peril to the Population Bomb', *Jl Global Hist.*, i (2006).

Cultural beliefs and practices that have the effect of controlling population may be common to all societies.²⁰ But the ambition to control the population of the world is a modern phenomenon. Before the development of cheap, reliable and easily administered contraception, it focused on manipulating migration, based on the idea that this would influence the fertility and mortality of different populations, and thus shape the composition of world population. It also depended on representing certain people as *requiring* control.

The first project to control world population had its origins in late nineteenth-century struggles over migration in California, Australia, Canada and South Africa. It was ironic but perhaps inevitable that these settlement colonies, built on the graveyards of their original inhabitants, were home to the most strident opponents of wholly unrestricted movement. When Asians and Europeans found themselves competing for the same land and the same work, it created a sense of scarcity that gave global population growth political salience. In the 1860s Washington had put pressure on China's imperial government to drop exit barriers, arguing from the 'inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance'.²¹ But disgruntled workers in California attacked Asian immigrants and, in 1877, began political mobilization, much to the alarm of East Coast elites.

Writing for the *North American Review* the following year, M. J. Dee sought to justify anti-Chinese attacks. Immigration was not just another form of international trade, he insisted, and the frugal Chinese worker was not just 'another labor-saving machine'. Migration was a biological process. Centuries of overpopulation in places like India and China had produced people able to subsist on wages that would starve Europeans. Facing such competition, whites would fail to reproduce. Dire consequences would therefore ensue should they 'withdraw the intelligence of artificial selection

²⁰ George Murdock considered 'population policy' to be a universal human behaviour on the basis of the ethnographic research catalogued in the Human Relations Area Files: George Murdock, 'The Common Denominator of Cultures', in Ralph Linton (ed.), *The Science of Man in the World Crisis* (New York, 1945), 124.

²¹ Quoted in Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill, 1995), 7.

from the environment, and leave the battle to the chances of natural selection alone'.²²

These arguments would later issue from the tribunes of the most eminent scientific authorities. But that same year they began to be echoed in a series of novels and short stories proclaiming an imminent 'invasion' of Europe and the United States. Chinese were depicted not as nationals of a particular country, but as a 'horde' or 'flood' — a force of nature. This image also featured in European journalistic and fictional accounts of migration.²³ The German geographer Friedrich Ratzel, perhaps the first European to draw attention to 'the Chinese question' in California, would go on to popularize the notion of *Lebensraum*. The term was exceedingly vague, and purposely so, since it suggested that biological processes of growth and movement underlay politics, and were more fundamental than mere political borders.²⁴

In 1885 anti-Chinese violence culminated in a series of mass expulsions up and down the West Coast with massacres even further afield. Apologists described this violence as a means by which workers everywhere expressed their citizenship, comparing attacks on the Chinese to anti-Jewish pogroms.²⁵ Both the Chinese and the Jews were depicted as disease-carrying cosmopolitans who excelled in economic competition and conspired to rule the world. And both figured in political projects intended to define nationalism and delimit citizenship through popular violence, and not just through state policies.²⁶ When

²² M. J. Dee, 'Chinese Immigration', *North Amer. Rev.*, cxxvi (1878), 510, 513–14, 520–1, 523–6, and see also *Report of the Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration* (Washington DC, 1877), p. v.

²³ William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction, 1850–1940* (Hamden, Conn., 1982), 30–46; Heinz Gollwitzer, *Die gelbe Gefahr: Geschichte eines Schlagworts. Studien zum imperialistischen Denken* (Göttingen, 1962), 29–30, 50 ff., 87–91, 131 ff., 175–83; and see also Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (New York, 1997), 173–4.

²⁴ Gollwitzer, *Die gelbe Gefahr*, 13–14; Friedrich Ratzel, *Die chinesische Auswanderung: ein Beitrag zur Cultur- und Handelsgeographie* (Breslau, 1876); Friedrich Ratzel, *Der Lebensraum: eine biogeographische Studie* (Tübingen, 1901). My thanks to Cyrus Schayegh for pointing out this connection.

²⁵ Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, 1971), 201–13, 268.

²⁶ Aristide R. Zolberg, 'The Great Wall against China: Responses to the First Immigration Crisis, 1885–1925', in Lucassen and Lucassen (eds.), *Migration, Migration History, History*, 311–12; Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1987), 43–9.

Chinese migrants succeeded in entering the United States under assumed identities, they compelled immigration officials to develop increasingly sophisticated means of identifying and keeping watch on particular individuals, a prerequisite for modern systems of population control. The development of the first migration policies expected to control both the quantity and the 'quality' of world population was not, therefore, a top-down process. Instead, it was driven by both the initiative of individual migrants and the grass-roots agitation it inspired.²⁷ But once it started, it often led to increasing centralization and standardization of regulatory power.

Most Chinese migrants tended to follow regular itineraries, relying on pre-established networks, and did not typically come from the poorest provinces.²⁸ But the perception that they constituted an undifferentiated mass driven by desperation to seek any outlet shaped the response. It militated against piecemeal reactions by individual provinces or states, like those adopted in the 1850s–1870s in British Columbia, California, Queensland and South Australia. Stopping Chinese migration in one place raised the prospect that it would increase pressure elsewhere.²⁹ National or even international policies seemed imperative, especially when Japanese, Indians and others were deemed equally threatening. One after another, the United States, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand moved to stop immigration from Asia.

By 1908 Theodore Roosevelt was calling for the exclusion of Asian immigrants from all English-speaking countries, an idea with high-level support in Canada and Australia. Roosevelt said that he had dispatched the White Fleet to the Pacific, ready to go to war with Japan, in defence of 'white civilization'.³⁰ As population control percolated up from local to national jurisdiction, finally to become a subject of international diplomacy, racial or ethnic categories were still considered the relevant units for analysis, even if effective action required working through states.

²⁷ Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers*; Adam McKeown, *Asian Migration and the Invention of Border Control, 1834–1929*, forthcoming.

²⁸ Adam McKeown, 'Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842 to 1949', *Jl Asian Studies*, lviii (1999), 9–10.

²⁹ Zolberg, 'Great Wall against China', 292.

³⁰ Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford, 1989), 185–94; Robert A. Huttenback, *Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830–1910* (Ithaca, 1976), 188–9.

By this point, more and better-connected commentators — especially the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former census superintendent Francis Walker — had taken up M. J. Dee's argument that regulating the rate and composition of immigration was necessary to safeguard the fertility and thus the supremacy of 'native stocks'. The Chinese precedent provided a rationale for discriminating against other groups.³¹ In the United States the Immigration Bureau won congressional approval for collecting statistics according to a list of 'races and peoples', rather than country of origin. This became a tool to prove the inferiority of racial groups, and a model for like-minded French officials.³² In Canada, Australia and several European states as well, Italians came to be known as 'the Chinese of Europe'.³³ The category of peoples requiring containment thus grew far beyond Asians, defined not by nationality so much as by biology, that is, their supposed capacity to propagate on wages that would lower other people's living standards and fertility.

Though Roosevelt failed to co-ordinate exclusionary measures, researchers and activists saw them as the beginning of a de facto policy of global population control. In 1912 the sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross, from whom Roosevelt had borrowed the idea of 'race suicide', argued that Northern European nations had to hold fast to every settlement colony and fill them with their offspring, or else see them 'filled with the children of the brown and the yellow races'. He predicted that 'the world will be cut up with immigration barriers which will never be leveled until the intelligent accommodation of numbers to resources has greatly equalized population pressure all over the globe'.³⁴ Linking migration and fertility provided the basis for common action with eugenicists. In 1919 the leader

³¹ Francis Walker, *Discussions in Economics and Statistics* (New York, 1899), 420–2, 424–5, 438–9, 447.

³² Patrick Weil, 'Races at the Gate: Racial Distinctions in Immigration Policy. A Comparison between France and the United States', in Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil (eds.), *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War Period* (New York, 2003), 273–5, 283–4.

³³ Gabaccia, "'Yellow Peril' and the 'Chinese of Europe'", 178.

³⁴ Edward Alsworth Ross, *Changing America: Studies in Contemporary Society* (New York, 1912), 46–8; and see also his *The Old World in the New: The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York, 1914), preface.

of the Immigration Restriction League, Prescott F. Hall, hit upon the idea that a system that contained Asians like ‘bacterial invasions’ while preserving settlement colonies for ‘superior races’ contributed to what he called ‘World-eugenics’.³⁵

In this way, the ‘fit’ and the ‘unfit’ — in terms of both individuals and races — became the relevant categories of analysis, and the national identity of any particular person was important only to the extent that it determined the appropriate social policy. The state was merely a mechanism for controlling biological processes, whether through promoting the propagation of the fit or excluding and sterilizing the unfit. Under the guidance of eugenists, the chairman of the House Immigration Committee, Albert Johnson, would come to view its work setting quotas favouring Northern Europeans as ‘more and more like a biological problem’.³⁶

There is now a vast literature on eugenics demonstrating its diversity and broad appeal.³⁷ But works comparing and contrasting its development in different countries can obscure the degree to which leaders in Europe and North America believed themselves to be part of the same movement, with the first international congress taking place in London in 1912.³⁸ Some considered it to be a new religion, and created a catechism as well as prizes for ministers who wrote the best sermons.³⁹ Similar to other internationalists of the era, eugenists emphasized a shared interest in preserving peace — at least among European peoples — especially after the First World War sent so many of the ‘fittest’ to early deaths. And as with other fledgling fields of research, they organized conferences that could showcase eugenics as a

³⁵ Prescott Hall, ‘Immigration Restriction and World Eugenics’, *Jl Heredity*, x (1919), 126.

³⁶ Testimony of 28 Apr. 1926 in Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *The Eugenic Aspects of Deportation* (Washington DC, 1928), 46.

³⁷ See, especially, recent comparative work stressing its international character: Mark B. Adams (ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York, 1990); Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen (eds.), *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Sterilization Policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland* (East Lansing, 1996); Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, 1991).

³⁸ *Problems in Eugenics: Papers Communicated to the First International Eugenics Congress*, 2 vols. (London, 1912).

³⁹ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 60–1.

discipline that followed the scientific method wherever it led, regardless of national differences.⁴⁰

Eugenists were most successful when they backed measures that had popular appeal, such as further restrictions on immigration to both North and South America as well as improved maternal and child health. While eugenics was not typically a grass-roots movement, the fact that tens of thousands of Americans mailed family pedigrees to the Eugenics Record Office and enrolled in 'Fitter Families' contests remains remarkable.⁴¹ What Ian Hacking has called the process of 'making up people' — that is, creating classifications of normalcy and deviance through which individuals would recognize themselves — depended in part on their willingness to participate.⁴² Targeting the unfit in order to promote an elite was not an effective means of eliciting such engagement. When, for instance, people ignored requirements for a eugenic certificate prior to marriage, such as in Peru, state officials had little recourse.⁴³ And in most countries it proved impossible to discourage increasing use of contraception among middle- and upper-class couples.

Even in the United States, eugenists grew dissatisfied with measures that merely targeted the most and least fit, especially if they did not reach beyond national borders. As the Harvard geneticist Edward M. East complained in one of the first academic studies of global population growth, one that had considerable influence on Margaret Sanger, 'the eugenists have seldom gone farther than to make the pathetic suggestion that the whole current of society can be changed by interfering with the two little rills which flow from either side'.⁴⁴ Moreover, all the Anglo-Saxons, Teutons, Slavs and Latins put together could be seen as just 'little rills' flowing into a world population swelling with Asians, Africans and Amerindians. That was the view of Lothrop Stoddard, whose book *The Rising Tide of Color* (1920) popularized the arguments for 'World-eugenics' first

⁴⁰ Stefan Kühl, *Die Internationale der Rassisten: Aufstieg und Niedergang der internationalen Bewegung für Eugenik und Rassenhygiene im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), 13–15, 41, 73–4.

⁴¹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 58–63.

⁴² Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge, 1990), 3–6.

⁴³ Stepan, 'Hour of Eugenics', 186–7.

⁴⁴ Edward M. East, *Mankind at the Crossroads* (New York, 1923), 299; David M. Kennedy, *Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger* (New Haven, 1970), 198.

put forth by Prescott Hall and E. A. Ross during the preceding decade. It was reissued in British and Australian editions and translated into German, French, Japanese and Hindi.⁴⁵ These ideas would continually recur in what was becoming an international debate about population trends, especially as it became apparent that fertility rates were declining among nearly all the European peoples.

The earliest exchanges occurred in Britain and the United States, the two countries that provided most of the leadership of international population movements for decades to come. Though he did not indulge in lurid race-war imagery, the Cambridge economist Harold Wright called for 'a world policy in regard to population problems', but worried that national rivalries were leading in precisely the opposite direction.⁴⁶ The influential demographer A. M. Carr-Saunders thought that war would inevitably result from differential growth rates among nations and races unless declining populations were provided with 'some form of international guarantee'.⁴⁷ Similarly, the former MP and editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Harold Cox, thought that low-fertility nations needed to band together to defend themselves 'against any race that by its too great fecundity is threatening the peace of the world'.⁴⁸ The psychologist and future leader of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, C. P. Blacker, worried that Asia and Russia might become a 'solid block, determined to shake off the yoke of the Western Powers and of America'. Birth control offered the only way to avoid a second world war, this time between East and West, but this required that every culture accept it.⁴⁹ Thus, there was growing concern that population trends were exacerbating the national rivalries that already made any concerted international response implausible. This was especially true if it required not simply raising a 'Great Barrier of the peoples of Europe, the Americas, and Australasia against those of Africa

⁴⁵ Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (New York, 1920).

⁴⁶ Harold Wright, *Population* (Cambridge, 1923), 123, 142, 176.

⁴⁷ A. M. Carr-Saunders, *Population* (London, 1925), 82–3.

⁴⁸ Harold Cox, *The Problem of Population* (New York, 1923), 85.

⁴⁹ C. P. Blacker, *Birth Control and the State: A Plea and a Forecast* (London, 1926), 77–82.

and Asia', as E. A. Ross put it, but actually reducing growth among non-European populations.⁵⁰

Even in France, where persistent low fertility engendered hostility to Malthusianism, the Nobel laureate Charles Richet conceded that 'There will always be enough human beings on the face of the earth. In the near future, it is a plethora, and not a scarcity, of men that is to be feared'. Reacting to an influx of immigrants, in 1926 high officials in the Interior Ministry warned that 'the first waves of Orientals and Slavs that are breaking on France presage the invading flood which threatens to submerge what remains of our civilization'.⁵¹ Indians and Japanese, on the other hand, argued that it was the 'white peril' that was most worrisome, considering the greater population density and territorial acquisitiveness typical of European peoples.⁵²

The question, as East put it, was nothing less than 'Who shall inherit the earth?'⁵³ His friend the prominent biologist Raymond Pearl, who had developed a theory of how populations stopped growing at the point of 'saturation', presented it this way to the 1921 International Eugenics Congress:

Projecting our thought ahead for a moment to that time, *at most a few centuries ahead*, we perceive that the important question will then be: what kind of people are they to be who will then inherit the earth? Here enters the eugenic phase of the problem. Man, in theory at least, has it now completely in his power to determine what kind of people will make up the earth's population of saturation.⁵⁴

It was pointless, he said, for eugenists to go on urging the fitter classes to become more fertile as a 'transcendental social duty', or pretend that it was enough merely to target the obviously

⁵⁰ E. A. Ross, *Standing Room Only?* (New York, 1927), 93–8, 341.

⁵¹ Charles Richet, *La Sélection humaine* (Paris, 1919), 166; Georges Dequidt and Georges Forestier, 'Les Aspects sanitaires du problème de l'immigration en France', *Revue d'hygiène*, xlviii (1926), 1022; and see also William H. Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth-Century France* (New York, 1990), 236–7.

⁵² Taraknath Das, 'The Population Problem in India', in Margaret Sanger (ed.), *The Sixth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference*, 4 vols. (New York, 1926), iv, 195–8; Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought (1882–1945)*, Columbia Univ. Press, forthcoming.

⁵³ East, *Mankind at the Crossroads*, 111–12.

⁵⁴ Raymond Pearl, 'Some Eugenic Aspects of the Problem of Population', in Charles B. Davenport et al. (eds.), *Eugenics in Race and State* (Baltimore, 1923), 214 (emphasis original).

unfit. Real eugenics required reducing differential fertility between rich and poor worldwide.⁵⁵

East and Pearl therefore formed an improbable alliance with Margaret Sanger. She was leading a revival of an international movement that had started with the founding of 'neo-Malthusian' leagues in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France and Germany, beginning in 1878, but that had grown moribund for want of a more positive message or actual programmes to provide contraceptives. Rather than lecturing the poor to stop breeding, Sanger, together with her counterparts in Japan, Sweden and the United Kingdom, based her first appeals for legalizing birth control on the individual's right to health and happiness, at the same time organizing services to meet their needs.⁵⁶ Like Marie Stopes, Sanger discovered that prosecution provided excellent publicity.⁵⁷ When she travelled to Japan in 1922, the authorities initially decided to deny her entry as an agitator. Here too she observed that the 'fact that the government was against the idea of birth control threw the sympathy of the people everywhere decidedly for it and for me'.⁵⁸

Almost from the start, some recognized that such a movement was subversive, and not just in terms of sexual mores. 'There is a bigger issue than the immediate preference of an individual', argued Louis Dublin, perhaps the most influential statistician of the day. 'The very life of a state is involved as soon as we begin to tamper with who shall and who shall not be born'.⁵⁹ Sanger herself realized that she would need government support if birth control were ever to become available to rich

⁵⁵ Raymond Pearl, *The Biology of Population Growth* (New York, 1925), 171.

⁵⁶ June Rose, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution* (London, 1992), 111, 144–5; Helen M. Hopper, *A New Woman of Japan: A Political Biography of Katō Shidzue* (Boulder, 1996), 20–2, 56–8; Doris H. Linder, *Crusader for Sex Education: Elise Ottesen-Jensen (1886–1973) in Scandinavia and on the International Scene* (Lanham, 1996), 68–70, 105–11.

⁵⁷ Kennedy, *Birth Control in America*, 84–7; Angus McLaren, *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1990), 216–18.

⁵⁸ Sanger to Juliet Rublee, n.d., in *The Margaret Sanger Papers: Collected Documents Series*, ed. Esther Katz et al., microfilm (Bethesda, 1996), reel 2; 'Brief Impressions of Japan', diary entries c. 10 Apr. 1922, in *The Margaret Sanger Papers: Documents from the Sophia Smith Collection and College Archives, Smith College*, ed. Esther Katz et al., microfilm (Bethesda, 1994), reel 70.

⁵⁹ Louis Dublin, 'The Excesses of Birth Control', in Sanger (ed.), *Sixth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference*, ii, 180–1.

and poor alike, and for that she needed respectable allies like Pearl. She therefore argued that contraception was not merely a personal choice, but a public good — indeed, a panacea for social problems. For the unfit it was a duty, and Sanger became convinced that states had to intervene when necessary to prevent their propagation. Her movement would thus court government repression — to gain visibility and sympathy for the cause of liberating individuals from unwanted births — while striving to win state support for top-down programmes to shape populations. Sanger herself felt that she ‘never had a country’, and instead devoted her life to the movement.⁶⁰ For her, birth control was a secular faith that would advance peace between peoples by reducing Malthusian pressures and depriving militant nationalists of cannon fodder.

Interestingly, even when Sanger faced prosecution by state officials, she did not consider them to be her real enemy. Instead, behind every setback she sensed the heavy hand of the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, the Church did act behind the scenes and through sympathetic state officials to thwart her efforts. Like birth control advocates, Church leaders often identified friends and foes in official circles by first determining their religious affiliation and fervour.⁶¹ As much as they needed states, they too advanced principles that trumped state sovereignty. ‘The family is more sacred than the State’, Pope Pius XI argued in his 1930 encyclical *On Christian Marriage*, which condemned contraception, marriage restrictions and compulsory sterilization. So, like Sanger, Catholics lobbied governments to advance their agenda — such as protecting ‘infants hidden in the mother’s womb’ — while at the same time mobilizing activists across borders.⁶²

⁶⁰ Journal excerpt, 3 Nov. 1914, in *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger*, i, *The Woman Rebel, 1900–1928*, ed. Esther Katz (Urbana, 2003), 98.

⁶¹ For examples, see the correspondence of John Burke of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), who co-ordinated a diplomatic campaign in 1932 to withdraw League of Nations guidelines for maternal health that countenanced contraception: Catholic University of America Archives, Washington DC, NCWC, collection 10, box 172, folder 33. In the 1950s, the Geneva-based Centre d’information des organisations internationales catholiques worked to ensure that observant Catholics were represented in international organizations: Catholic University of America Archives, NCWC, collection 10, box 172, folder 32.

⁶² ‘Casti Connubii: Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Christian Marriage’, 31 Dec. 1930: <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/> (accessed 18 July 2006).

For transnational movements that asserted universal principles, international organizations would inevitably become a key site of contention. They provided both a platform from which to pontificate on behalf of all humanity and a mechanism for either pursuing or thwarting population programmes with global reach. Sanger organized the first World Population Conference in Geneva in 1927 specifically to put birth control on the agenda of the League of Nations.⁶³ She ceded control to Pearl and other population researchers, hoping they would give her movement the stamp of scientific respectability. Instead, Pearl seized the opportunity to create an International Union for the Scientific Investigation of Population Problems (IUSIPP) that would exclude activists like Sanger (without, on the other hand, avoiding bitter divisions over Nazi and Fascist policies that would render it ineffective through the 1930s). Even so, League Secretary-General Sir Eric Drummond, a devout convert to Catholicism, wanted no part of the population conference, and instructed other officials to keep their distance.⁶⁴ Catholics attacked it as a ‘neo-Malthusian conspiracy’, and resolved to form an international committee of organizations favouring large families to defeat the ‘blind, fanatical or criminal proponents of doctrines of death’.⁶⁵

Though hardly a conspiracy, the conference did inspire the first serious proposal for an international agency that would have authority over world population. The director of the International Labour Office (ILO), Albert Thomas, had been looking for just such an opportunity, having grown concerned about increasing tensions over migration restrictions.⁶⁶ ‘Has the moment yet arrived’, he asked, ‘for considering the possibility of establishing some sort of supreme supernational authority which would regulate the distribution of population on rational

⁶³ Sanger to Little, 16 Mar. 1927: Bentley Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, C. C. Little Papers, box 6, folder 26; Tait to the Deputy Director, 5 Sept. 1927, and ‘The World Population Conference: Preliminary Notice’: both in the International Labour Organization archives, Geneva, B, Continuing Series, PO 1000/1/1.

⁶⁴ Richard Symonds and Michael Carder, *The United Nations and the Population Question* (London, 1973), 12–14. On Drummond, see James Barros, *Office without Power: Secretary-General Sir Eric Drummond, 1919–1933* (Oxford, 1979), 25–6.

⁶⁵ Henri Brenier, ‘Le Congrès de la population mondiale à Genève et la conspiration néo-malthusienne’, *Le Correspondant* (Paris), 10 Oct. 1927, 12–13, 16.

⁶⁶ Thomas to Varlez, 1 Aug. 1927, and Thomas to Legouis, 6 Aug. 1927: International Labour Organization archives, B, Continuing Series, PO 1000/1/1.

and impartial lines, by controlling and directing migration movements and deciding on the opening-up or closing of countries to particular streams of immigration?' Thomas advanced a set of principles that would serve as the basis for resolving migration disputes. '*Failing a policy of compulsory birth control*', he thought they might 'form a protection against excessive growth of certain sections of the world population where such growth may represent a danger for neighboring communities'.⁶⁷

Thomas's proposal fell on deaf ears. American eugenicists, in particular, defended national control of migration as a means of regulating population quality, and tried to persuade counterparts abroad to prohibit cross-border movement of the unfit.⁶⁸ But others at the conference were also beginning to reimagine international relations in terms of the relations between different populations and the institutions, actual or prospective, that might regulate them. One of the themes in these discussions was that population growth, along with more rapid transport and communications, had made the world small. According to the University of Michigan mathematician James Glover, any calculus of 'optimum population' had to be based on the capacity of the entire planet. 'This problem of an isolated population does not exist', another participant agreed. 'In reality, the whole area within which migration is possible is a unit'.⁶⁹

There was a growing tendency to treat population trends as a transnational concern and consider the planet as a single analytical unit, whether because the problems were assumed to be essentially biological, affecting the whole species, or because the solutions transcended state boundaries. Moreover, this opened for discussion a whole range of potential responses, and not just organized migration. Julian Huxley, who would become the first director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), observed after Thomas's address that 'all present realized that

⁶⁷ Albert Thomas, 'International Migration and its Control', in Margaret Sanger (ed.), *Proceedings of the World Population Conference* (London, 1927), 262-3 (emphasis added).

⁶⁸ 'Fourth Meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Eugenics Society', 29 Nov. 1927: Bentley Library, C. C. Little Papers, box 7, folder 8; Stepan, '*Hour of Eugenics*', 175-82.

⁶⁹ Sanger (ed.), *Proceedings of the World Population Conference*, 85, 99; see also E. M. East, 'Food and Population', *ibid.*, 102.

the United States or Australia has precisely the same right to demand that the population-exporting countries should take steps to lower their birth rate as each has to demand an open-door from the population-importing nations'.⁷⁰

Even in the absence of institutions that could assert international norms, such ideas would continually recur in discussions about population during the following decade. As Thomas had suggested, a shrinking earth militated in favour of making room for growing populations even at the cost of some measure of state sovereignty. Pointing to what they viewed as the danger of war due to population growth in resource-poor areas, leading demographers suggested that states might have to cede territory, dismantle tariffs or drop immigration restrictions.⁷¹ This internationalist sentiment was not necessarily benign. A Finnish diplomat, soon to become foreign minister, argued at the 1927 conference that 'from a scientific point of view, the worst enemies of the great statesmen are not the nations living on the other side of the political frontiers, but are all the anti- and a-social forces keeping even the highest of nations internally weak and socially sick'.⁷²

Instead of international co-operation, population policies of the 1930s would exemplify the extreme nationalism of the era. Fascist Italy adopted harsh penalties for any practice that interfered with people's social duty to contribute to the national 'stock'.⁷³ Hitler explained the conquest, depopulation and resettlement of Eastern Europe as 'the planned control of population movements' to restore the numbers and quality of the Aryan race.⁷⁴ Japan's imperial government set demographic targets to make a purified 'Yamato race' overlords of Asia,

⁷⁰ Thomas, 'International Migration and its Control', 269; Julian Huxley, 'Too Many People Seen as Real World Danger', *New York Times*, 16 Oct. 1927, 6.

⁷¹ Warren S. Thompson, *Danger Spots in World Population* (New York, 1929), 6 and *passim*; H. L. Wilkinson, *The World's Population Problems and a White Australia* (London, 1930), 316–17; Robert Kuczynski, 'The World's Future Population', in Corrado Gini *et al.*, *Population: Lectures on the Harris Foundation, 1929* (Chicago, 1930), 286–8.

⁷² Sanger (ed.), *Proceedings of the World Population Conference*, 360.

⁷³ Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley, 1992), 53–6; David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton, 1994), 59–60, 79–88.

⁷⁴ Hermann Rauschnig, *The Voice of Destruction* (New York, 1940), 136–8, and see also Hervé Le Bras, *Le Sol et le sang: théories de l'invasion au XX^e siècle* (La Tour d'Aigues, 1993), 52–3.

including the overseas settlement of twelve million people.⁷⁵ Sanger continued her efforts through the London-based Birth Control International Information Centre. But with little money and a tiny staff, it was merely an information clearing house that occasionally dispatched organizers and supplies to clinics abroad. It could do almost nothing for its allies when they faced persecution at the hands of pro-natalist governments.

Yet while imperialist and nationalist population policies made international co-operation seem implausible, it also made it seem all the more imperative. Italy's efforts to organize expatriates subverted the sovereignty of other nations, and Germany's persecution of Jews created an international refugee crisis. Some of the most urgent calls for co-operation came from citizens of pro-natalist states. 'Suppose only some countries restrict their population and leave the rest as it is', a Japanese delegate to the 1933 Birth Control in Asia conference speculated. 'The result will be only too clear. The final aim will never be realized. This campaign must be international'.⁷⁶ Writing just before the outbreak of fighting in Europe, the German émigré and sociologist Hans Staudinger offered this conclusion:

A study of the world-wide implications of population trends gives us only further proof that it is necessary to build up an international system of social and economic cooperation if we are to prevent the starvation of millions of human beings, quiet political unrest in the dark spots of the world and stop for once the sad sequence: population pressure and war — population pressure and war.⁷⁷

After the war ended, the idea that population pressure contributed to international conflict could be discussed without appearing to give credit to Axis propaganda about the need for *Lebensraum*. At the same time, accumulating evidence of rapid growth in the West Indies, North Africa, India and Indo-China made population a concern for colonial officials all over the world, even if few were prepared to do anything about it. Like

⁷⁵ Yuehtsen Juliette Chung, *Struggle for National Survival: Eugenics in Sino-Japanese Contexts, 1896–1945* (New York, 2002), 141–3; John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986), 271–8.

⁷⁶ 'International Conference on Birth Control in Asia: Paper Read by Dr. Kato', 25 Nov. 1933: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, Contemporary Medical Archives Centre, London, Eugenics Society Papers, D.14, box 26.

⁷⁷ Hans Staudinger, 'Problems of Population', in Hans Speier and Alfred Kähler (eds.), *War in Our Time* (New York, 1939), 98.

ILO director Albert Thomas a generation earlier, leaders of new UN agencies began to see the sheer scale, complexity and controversy of population problems as an opportunity to co-ordinate efforts of individual states — even to go where governments still feared to tread. The first director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization, John Boyd Orr, argued that politicians were hung up on adjusting international boundaries, even though advances in communications and technology made absolute sovereignty impossible. But UN agencies, by focusing on improving the lot of ‘borderline’ populations, especially the health and nutrition of poor people everywhere, could make a much greater contribution to reducing international tensions. At the same time, concrete action in areas of common interest would create momentum towards world government.⁷⁸

While Orr was primarily concerned with boosting food production as a way to alleviate malnutrition, Huxley wanted UNESCO to focus on the demand side of the population problem: not only uncontrolled growth, but also qualitative decline. Nazi abuses had discredited racism, but they did not silence eugenists. In fact, Sanger pointed to the death camps as proof of the ‘widespread devaluation of human lives’ and the urgent need for policies to improve them, beginning with the sterilization of those with ‘dysgenic qualities of body and mind’.⁷⁹ In 1948 Huxley cited research suggesting an inverse correlation between intelligence and fertility and called for ‘a world population policy’. It could be implemented by ‘incentives and penalties, by persuasion or by compulsion’. Population problems affect ‘the future of the human species as a whole’, Huxley insisted, ‘and not merely the separate nations into which the human species now happens to be divided’.⁸⁰ If the ‘population explosion’ posed a threat akin to nuclear war, as some observers

⁷⁸ John Boyd Orr, ‘The Choice Ahead: One World or None’, 14 Dec. 1946: FAO archives, Rome, RG 1.1, Series D1, Notes and Comments by John Boyd Orr; Orr to Scrutton, 2 Sept. 1947: FAO archives, RG 1.1, Series A2, Lord John Orr Outgoing Letters.

⁷⁹ ‘Address by Margaret Sanger’ to the thirtieth annual meeting of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 25 Oct. 1950: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, Contemporary Medical Archives Centre, Eugenics Society Papers, C.304, box 22.

⁸⁰ Huxley memo to Trygve Lie, 30 Mar. 1948: UNESCO archives, Paris, inactive correspondence files, 312 A 06 (45) ‘54’.

began to argue, then population control was no less urgent than arms control. In both cases the United Nations seemed to provide the appropriate forum and agency. Here too the choice was 'one world or none'.

Yet neither initiative succeeded. The United States and the United Kingdom thwarted Orr's proposal for a 'World Food Board', while Huxley's idea for a population conference to advance a world policy was transformed into an anodyne meeting of experts.⁸¹ The consequences of pressing too openly for a UN role in reducing fertility became apparent in 1952, after the first director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Canadian Brock Chisholm, suggested it might begin to support family planning programmes. Representatives of Ireland, Italy and other Catholic countries hinted that they would withdraw. Chisholm was forced to acknowledge that 'the job of the Secretariat is clearly to carry out the wishes of the national delegations'. Subsequently, governments seeking assistance from the WHO in birth control were told that it was not within its mandate, and the debacle had a similarly chilling effect on other UN agencies.⁸²

Most UN officials believed it was both safer and more efficacious simply to ascertain demographic facts and let these facts speak for themselves. Much of the world's population had never been enumerated with any accuracy, and new states would need help in holding censuses. This approach found an institutional home in the annual meetings of the UN Population Commission together with its permanent staff in the Department of Social Affairs.⁸³

The first director of the UN Population Division, Frank Notestein, understood the 'importance of the unimportant', as he later put it. An international organization could lay the groundwork for a far-reaching and comprehensive policy response merely by reporting on official data and publishing

⁸¹ Amy Staples, 'Constructing International Identity: The World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization, 1945-1965' (Ohio State Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1998), 211-29; Laves to Huxley, 25 Apr. 1948: UNESCO archives, inactive correspondence files, 312 A 06 (45) '54'.

⁸² World Health Organization, *Official Records*, xlii (Geneva, 1952), 204-6, 237-40; Symonds and Carder, *United Nations and the Population Question*, 58-66.

⁸³ Frank Notestein, 'Demography in the United States: A Partial Account of the Development of the Field', *Population and Development Rev.*, viii (1982), 664-5.

some of its own.⁸⁴ To begin with, it would draw together demographers from different countries and provide them with a neutral setting to develop common practices and common positions vis-à-vis their own governments. This would avoid the national rivalries that afflicted the old IUSIPP. By establishing standards for vital statistics and censuses, demographers could more readily compare and collate the results. A fuller accounting made the gaps easier to identify, and marked disparities prompted questions that could only be answered by further investigation. Projections of growth or decline, even when properly interpreted as an extrapolation of present trends, brought attention to the potential demographic impact of past and current policies. When read as predictions about the future, they were the stuff of headlines. And the very categories used — especially ‘world population’, particularly when issued under the imprimatur of the United Nations — had political implications, since they suggested collective interests and a common destiny.

In the meantime, the initiative returned to NGOs able to act in ways less constrained by national borders and national authorities. In a conference funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and held in June 1952 shortly after the WHO defeat, a gathering of elite American researchers and academic administrators evinced acute concern for how population trends might threaten not merely the United States, but all Western civilization — in terms both of the eugenic ‘quality’ of Western societies, and of their power relative to the rest of the world. They backed the creation of what came to be known as the Population Council, which used Rockefeller and Ford Foundation money to create fellowships and research centres in India and Chile.⁸⁵ By training people from poor countries, it fostered local constituencies for national population control policies. At the same time, it spurred the growth of contraceptive research

⁸⁴ Frank Notestein, ‘Reminiscences: The Role of Foundations, of the Population Association of America, Princeton University and of the United Nations in Fostering American Interest in Population Problems’, *Milbank Memorial Fund Quart.*, xlix (1971), 78. What follows is an interpretation of what Notestein only implied in this article.

⁸⁵ ‘National Academy of Sciences: Conference on Population Problems’, 20–22 June 1952: Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter RAC), RG 5, John D. Rockefeller 3rd Papers, series 1, sub-series 5, box 85, folders 720–3.

and population studies centres in the United States, which would later supply national programmes with new technology and expert consultants.⁸⁶

The year 1952 also marked the founding of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) with Sanger as its first president. The IPPF's central office in London would provide affiliates with advice and money. They included large national associations in India and Pakistan with connections at the highest levels, but also smaller groups which worked under threat of state prosecution, or where governments chose to look the other way. The Pathfinder Fund split off from the IPPF in order to found more of these associations, considering the older group too cautious. Similarly, the Washington-based Population Crisis Committee conducted lobbying and publicity campaigns to convince American officials and the public that only population control could stop the advance of Communism. The IPPF would not make this argument itself, because of its international membership, though it came to depend on the donations that Cold War rhetoric inspired.

In time, dividing roles and dispersing decision-making authority became a deliberate strategy for the population control movement. Considering all the ways in which advocates differed — with some emphasizing its importance for economic development, others for empowering women, still others for protecting the environment, and at least a few continuing to see birth control as a form of 'crypto-eugenics' — they had to advance on multiple fronts through autonomous efforts.⁸⁷ While these different constituencies sometimes worked at cross purposes, decentralization made it easier to survive attacks by adversaries as well as the indifference of the broader public. The key leaders usually understood this, and by sitting on multiple, overlapping boards, they were able to steer ostensibly independent organizations in the same direction.

In 1956, for instance, Frederick Osborn, shortly to become the president of the Population Council, convened an ad hoc

⁸⁶ Osborn application to Ford Foundation, 10 Feb. 1954: Ford Foundation Archives, New York (hereafter FFA), 1953 Grant Files, PA 54-20, Population Council.

⁸⁷ On 'crypto-eugenics', see Blacker to Dorothy Brush, 13 Apr. 1956: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, Contemporary Medical Archives Centre, C. P. Blacker Papers, box 11, 'Blacker: Correspondence, Eugenics Society, IPPF'.

committee to plan for further expansion. The demographer Frank Lorimer argued that they should promote sound analysis but not organize political pressure or fund propaganda organizations. Osborn took vigorous exception: 'No, there is room and need for many approaches, many would be useful. Would Lorimer wish that Margaret Sanger had never been born? There is need for action groups'. Frances Ferguson of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America argued that IPPF conferences 'are better than these meetings, for they are full of actual representatives of all these Asian countries'.⁸⁸

The IPPF itself exemplified this tendency to combine formal decentralization with informal co-ordination. Its constitution vested power in a governing body composed largely of representatives appointed by each national affiliate. In addition, there were representatives from four regions, each of which had its own governing body, budget and staff: Western Hemisphere, East Asia, South Asia, and Europe–Near East–Africa. Because of overlapping memberships — leaders of national associations were also leaders of regions — the same person would sometimes occupy more than one voting position. This stacked the governing body with like-minded people who, nevertheless, could define planned parenthood differently depending on whether they were speaking for their country, for their region — including the poorer, 'overpopulated' countries of that region — or for the world.⁸⁹

That is why C. P. Blacker, who became administrative chairman of the IPPF, came 'close to blows' over the name of the new organization with an American who insisted it include 'population'. Blacker thought this would needlessly alienate valuable supporters, since it would appear to give priority to controlling growth over their concern for reproductive rights, sexual education and so on.⁹⁰ He worked with Osborn and won broad support for the goal of introducing 'family planning' to 'those who need it most'. This formulation elided the question whether the need was felt by the individuals themselves or by

⁸⁸ Frederick Osborn, 'Notes on Ad Hoc Meeting', 7 Mar. 1956: RAC, Population Council Papers, RG IV3B4.2, General File Series, box 1, folder 7.

⁸⁹ The IPPF constitution is reprinted as Appendix I in International Planned Parenthood Federation, *Fourth International Conference on Planned Parenthood: Report of the Proceedings, 17–22 August, 1953, Stockholm, Sweden* (London, 1953).

⁹⁰ Linder, *Crusader for Sex Education*, 191.

those who knew better — that is, the critical question of who would actually do the planning in ‘family planning’.

Blacker believed that for some countries ‘family planning’ was a strategy and slogan for governments that needed the IPPF’s help in controlling their population growth, and this might even require ‘compulsory measures’. Similarly, Osborn judged that some countries would rely on abortion and sterilization to reduce fertility, and that ‘We must be prepared to accept very different approaches from our own’.⁹¹ They did not have to take responsibility for risky or compulsory measures adopted in other countries. Indeed, they stood for the seemingly progressive position that every country should decide for itself, even while maintaining in other contexts the equally progressive position that family planning was a human right that empowered individuals.

The first two countries to adopt policies to reduce population growth, India and Pakistan, both had well-financed and well-connected family planning associations. In the 1960s many more countries joined in, as a pattern emerged. First, civic and medical leaders would establish a family planning association, often with the advice and support of the IPPF or the Pathfinder Fund. Together they would help to ‘raise awareness’ of high fertility as a problem, whether in terms of population ‘quality’, maternal and child health, or economic development. The Population Council, often with the backing of foundations or influential board members, secured an official invitation for an advisory mission. This mission, in turn, would propose a government programme, promising that aid was available from private foundations and perhaps national and international agencies as well. When the government signed on, it provided further evidence for the broad appeal and acceptability of population control, justifying redoubled efforts to sign up other states and marshal the resources to sustain such commitments.

Until the mid 1960s most of this support came from NGOs. Population Council consultants played a key role in designing some of the first major birth control programmes, such as in

⁹¹ C. P. Blacker, ‘Family Planning and Eugenic Movements’, *Eugenics Rev.*, xlvii (1956), 231; Dudley Kirk, ‘Summary of Ad Hoc Meeting’, 17 Apr. 1956: RAC, Population Council Papers, RG IV3B4.2, General File Series, box 1, folder 7.

South Korea and Taiwan, which they offered as a model for other countries. In India, there were seventeen Ford Foundation consultants working on long-term contracts in the national family planning programme.⁹² Indeed, the national family planning budgets of India, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan, Tunisia, Singapore, Turkey and Malaysia put together were barely equivalent to the \$26.3 million that Ford spent on population in 1966 (over \$150 million in today's currency).⁹³

These countries sought foreign aid in setting up population programmes not always or not only because they were incapable of doing it themselves, but also because proponents needed help in overcoming internal opposition, especially from health ministries loath to divert resources and personnel. Larger, state-run aid agencies such as the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) would not yet provide direct support for birth control, in part because they too were subject to bureaucratic inertia and were more fearful of a political backlash. But Bank president George D. Woods offered to 'help by using its influence to bring recalcitrant governments to reason'. Similarly, Lyndon Johnson vowed he was 'not going to piss away foreign aid in nations where they refuse to deal with their own population problems'.⁹⁴

In the late 1960s the United States finally began to provide large-scale assistance for birth control. Indeed, from 1967 to 1973 USAID provided well over half of all international aid, both public and private. Opponents attacked this initiative as an American attempt to control poor countries. Yet if it had been left to the officials, population control might never have become official US policy. Dwight Eisenhower repudiated the Draper commission recommendation to include birth control

⁹² Meredith Minkler, 'Consultants or Colleagues: The Role of US Population Advisors in India', *Population and Development Rev.*, iii (1977), 413.

⁹³ 'Expenditures on Population', c. Oct. 1966: RAC, Population Council Papers, RG IV3B4.2, General File Series, box 36, folder 526.

⁹⁴ Deverell to Canfield, 5 Apr. 1966: Columbia University Library, New York, Manuscript Collections, Harper & Row, series II, International Planned Parenthood, box 304, 'O'; Joseph A. Califano, *Inside: A Public and Private Life* (New York, 2004), 172–3. For a study of how activists, scientists and senior political leaders collaborated in pushing a crash population control programme, with disastrous consequences, see Matthew Connelly, 'Coercive Population Control in India: Prologue to the Emergency Period', *Population and Development Rev.*, xxxii (2006).

in foreign aid because he feared provoking the Catholic Church. With similar concerns, Kennedy urged the Ford Foundation to devote itself entirely to population control, but finally accepted that USAID might also provide technical assistance.⁹⁵ In 1966 Lyndon Johnson declared that population growth was ‘humanity’s greatest challenge’, second only to the threat of war. But USAID officials were only spending a paltry \$3.5 million, and L.B.J. expressed frustration that his administration did not share his priorities.⁹⁶

USAID only began to push population control because of pressure groups working behind the scenes. Ford Foundation and Planned Parenthood officials helped draft the State Department memorandum that resulted in hiring the first full-time staff. At Draper’s urging, Senator William Fulbright amended the 1963 foreign aid bill to authorize ‘skittish’ bureaucrats to support population research.⁹⁷ But the biggest advance came in 1967, when Draper — now chairing the Population Crisis Committee while also representing the IPPF — persuaded allies in Congress to compel USAID to earmark a growing portion of its budget for population control. To alleviate suspicions of US motives, it was directed to make ‘maximum possible use of multilateral channels for population assistance’.⁹⁸ In fact, when it began funding the IPPF, USAID agreed to get its approval before approaching any government about possible aid for birth control.⁹⁹

Thus, transnational alliances, which now included aid officials as well as activists, experts and programme managers, remained crucial in the advance of the movement. And even as family planning became the province of official policy and foreign aid programmes, proponents strove to create institutions that could control populations without being constrained by normal government oversight. Foreign advisers invariably called

⁹⁵ Piotrow, *World Population Crisis*, 43–8, 73–4, 88.

⁹⁶ State Department circular, 20 Dec. 1966: *Declassified Documents Reference System*, CD-ROM 1996010100299, fiche 1996-25; ‘Excerpts — News Briefing’, 16 July 1968: Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas, LBJ Papers, Files of S. Douglass Cater, box 66.

⁹⁷ Piotrow, *World Population Crisis*, 68–9, 72–5.

⁹⁸ Rusk to US Embassy, Port of Spain, 28 Nov. 1967: USNA, RG59, Central Files, 1967–9, Soc 13-3, box 3122.

⁹⁹ ‘Tenth Meeting of the Management and Planning Committee’, 9 Nov. 1967: IPPF Archives, London, 1.4.1.1.3, ‘IPPF Management and Planning Committee’.

for independent agencies with authority over family planning staff and budgets, either within a health ministry or entirely outside it, answering directly to the national leadership (elected or not). In such countries as Bolivia, Bangladesh, South Korea, Pakistan, Thailand and Tunisia, two-thirds or more of the family planning budget was provided by foreign donors.¹⁰⁰ That was more than enough to blur lines of authority and loyalty among state family planning officials, who sometimes competed with one another for international fellowships and travel grants, not to mention plum jobs with international agencies.¹⁰¹ The lead researcher of the first UN fertility study in India was reputed to earn more than the Prime Minister.¹⁰²

Under Reimert Ravenholt, USAID's population office itself enjoyed extraordinary autonomy in expending the sums earmarked by Congress. Well over half went to international and non-governmental organizations, unprecedented for USAID, but just as his supporters had intended. His preferred strategy was 'national inundation', based on the idea that making contraceptives freely available, ideally at the very doorstep of consumers, could increase usage.¹⁰³ Massive purchasing contracts of as many as 100 million monthly pill cycles also ensured that pharmaceutical companies would join in defending his growing budget (and encourage corporate support for the IPPF). When some of these US-supplied contraceptives were siphoned off and resold, Ravenholt was unconcerned: this black market constituted a free distribution network.¹⁰⁴ He also used NGOs to provide training in sterilization and distribute low-cost abortion kits, even where abortion was illegal. Ravenholt's strategy, according to a Population Council officer, was 'to make abortion so easy to perform and so widely available that legal restrictions

¹⁰⁰ Dorothy L. Nortman and Ellen Hofstatter, *Population and Family Planning Programs: A Compendium of Data through 1978*, 10th edn (New York, 1980), 37.

¹⁰¹ Nehru minutes to file: National Archives of India, New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs, American Division, file 67(4)-AMS/58.

¹⁰² Pascal Whelpton, 'Report on People and Institutions in India', Apr. 1954: RAC, Population Council Papers, RG IV3B4.2, General File Series, box 32, folder 470.

¹⁰³ Stephen W. Sinding, 'Learning by Doing: Testing the Supply-Side Hypothesis at USAID', paper provided to the author.

¹⁰⁴ William Boynton, 'AID Contraceptive Supply Program by the Office of Population', 24 Nov. 1978, available online at <<http://www.ravenholt.com>> (accessed 20 July 2006); Reimert Ravenholt, personal communication with the author, 6 Apr. 2006.

would be meaningless'.¹⁰⁵ When Ravenholt's superiors tried to remove him, they found it was all but impossible: his supporters were too numerous and too influential.¹⁰⁶

USAID's population programme was thus not a simple instrument of US foreign policy, but a kind of public-private partnership, one that included — though it did not acknowledge so — people who flouted the law, and even some who pilfered from USAID itself. This programme greatly benefited population groups, but it was also beholden to them. Even so, as long as USAID provided 40 per cent of the IPPF budget, not counting virtually unlimited supplies of contraceptives, family planning volunteers were vulnerable to charges of operating a front organization. In 1968 Draper himself was shocked to discover that, when USAID funding was combined with individual and corporate donations, 90 per cent of the IPPF's funds originated in the United States. He insisted that IPPF affiliates raise more money locally and importuned aid officials in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Japan.¹⁰⁷ While all of them made contributions to the IPPF, and also provided bilateral aid to other countries, a truly global population control campaign had to be carried out under UN auspices. International agencies were more acceptable than USAID in Latin America, the region with some of the highest rates of population growth. Even in areas with less religious opposition, such programmes risked highlighting ethnic and racial divisions. Many states, especially in Africa, would not even report census results, since revealing differential fertility among different communities might spur conflict between them.¹⁰⁸ Only the United Nations could claim to act in the name of all humanity, in that way making population control appear apolitical.

At the end of 1966 the General Assembly finally endorsed UN assistance for population training, research and advice.

¹⁰⁵ 'Minutes of the Directors' Meeting', 9 Mar. 1976: RAC, Population Council Papers, RG IV3B4.2, Acc. II, George Zeidenstein, box 2, Officers' Meetings, July 1975 – June 1976; 'Officers' Meeting: Minutes', 13 July 1976: *ibid.*, Acc. 85-41, box 1, Officers' Meetings, 7/76-3/77.

¹⁰⁶ Ravenholt was helped by the fact that close family members worked for influential Democratic senators. He was finally demoted and then resigned, but only after a struggle lasting over two years.

¹⁰⁷ Draper to Canfield, 11 Mar. 1968: Columbia University Library, Manuscript Collections, Harper & Row, series II, International Planned Parenthood, box 301, 'A'.

¹⁰⁸ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, 1985), 194–6.

Once again NGOs were instrumental in translating official policy into actual programmes to curb population growth. When U Thant met with Draper along with other NGO leaders, the Secretary-General projected incremental growth in UN expenditures, rising from \$1 million to \$1.7 million over five years, perhaps supplemented by a special 'Trust Fund' for 'experimental field projects' otherwise impossible without a more explicit mandate.¹⁰⁹ By the end of the first year of the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), Draper was pressing for a \$100 million budget. He joined John D. Rockefeller 3rd, George Woods, USAID director John Hannah and other heavy-hitters to criticize UN agencies for waiting for authorization from member states to do more: 'a classic delaying tactic'. He urged that a population commissioner should instead be given wide-ranging powers to administer the UNFPA on behalf of the Secretary-General, answering only to a committee appointed by donor and receiving countries.¹¹⁰ The undersecretary-general for General Assembly affairs, Chakravarthi Narasimhan, greeted this report as 'an opportunity as well as a challenge'. He suggested that the UNFPA should instead have just an advisory board, including representatives from such groups as the IPPF. In fact, it was later explained, this board would 'function primarily as a fund-raising group'.¹¹¹

Rafael Salas was appointed the first director of the UNFPA, at Rockefeller's recommendation, and only consulted countries favouring population control in drawing up its principles and procedures.¹¹² He did not present them to the Economic and Social Council, explaining that he did not want 'his wings being clipped' by countries opposing population control, such as France and the USSR. Even representatives of friendly

¹⁰⁹ 'Additional Financing of the Expanded United Nations Population Program', 12 June 1967: United Nations Archives and Records Centre, New York (hereafter UNARC), S-0512-0038, Office of the Secretary General, Records of U Thant, 1961-71, DAG-1/5.2.1.6-4.

¹¹⁰ Draper to U Thant, 24 Apr. 1968: *ibid.*; Juan de Onis, 'Major U.N. Effort to Curb Birth Rate Asked in Study', *New York Times*, 25 May 1969.

¹¹¹ Chakravarthi Narasimhan, 'UNFPA', 13 Aug. 1969: UNARC, S-0512-0038, Office of the Secretary General, Records of U Thant, 1961-71, DAG-1/5.2.1.6-4; Buffum to Department of State, 8 Jan. 1970: USNA, RG59, Central Files, 1970-3, Soc 13-3, UN, box 3037.

¹¹² John D. Rockefeller 3rd, 'Possible Candidates', 16 June 1969: UNARC, S-0512-0038, Office of the Secretary General, Records of U Thant, 1961-71, DAG-1/5.2.1.6-4; 'Record of Meeting', 14 Jan. 1970: PRO, OD 62/25.

states, such as the United Kingdom, found this, 'to say the least, odd'. A US diplomat judged that it would be impossible to limit the advisory board to a purely public relations and fund-raising role.¹¹³ As the UNFPA budget began to double and double again, doling out grants to governments, NGOs and other UN agencies, it functioned without any effective oversight. It was unprecedented, as the French representative pointed out in an angry speech to the Population Commission, that an agency would act in the name of the United Nations without having to answer to them, free to dispense money to pharmaceutical companies and family planning associations anywhere in the world.¹¹⁴

Now that population control proponents had seized the high ground at the United Nations, they wanted it to pursue a 'global population strategy' to unite the efforts of national, international and non-governmental agencies.¹¹⁵ As Salas put it,

Nothing less than the development of a universal will offers any real hope of solving the world's critical population problems. The magnitude of the task and the limitations on the time to accomplish it override all ideological, religious, and racial differences and call for universal concern, universal determination, and universal action.¹¹⁶

In fact, the target of this effort was rather more specific. For the president of the Population Council, Bernard Berelson, it was 'illiterate and uninformed villagers'. He estimated that cutting birth rates by half in the developing world would require opening thousands of clinics, hiring hundreds of thousands of workers, and averting over a billion births by the year 2000. 'We are undertaking a virtually unprecedented effort at deliberate social change of a very great magnitude'.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ D. F. Milton to Wilberforce, 20 Mar. 1970, and Wilberforce to D. F. Milton, 24 Mar. 1970: PRO, OD 62/25; Yost to State Department, 23 Jan. 1970: USNA, RG59, Central Files, 1970-3, Soc 13-3, UN, box 3037.

¹¹⁴ Alfred Sauvy, 'Projet de création de poste d'un Commissaire des Nations Unies à la Population', c. Oct. 1969: Centre des archives contemporaines, Fontainebleau, Fonds Alfred Sauvy, versement 20000115, article 7.

¹¹⁵ 'United Nations Fund for Population Activities Advisory Board Meeting', 25 May 1970: PRO, OD 62/27.

¹¹⁶ Rafael Salas, 'The Contribution of the United Nations', c. Apr. 1972: UNARC, S-0513-0233, Office of the Secretary General, Records of Kurt Waldheim, DAG-1/5.3.3.4.3.

¹¹⁷ Bernard Berelson, 'The Present State of Family Planning Programs', May 1970: PRO, OD 62/26.

Berelson worried that simply making contraceptives available to every household would not overcome 'peasant resistance to change'. In a highly influential article he surveyed different means of going 'Beyond Family Planning'. He was sceptical about the ethical acceptability and effectiveness of coercive measures, but he also observed that 'there seems to be "natural history" progression in family planning from softer to harder methods'. He called for research on 'a mass involuntary method'.¹¹⁸ A Ford Foundation report judged that if effective sterility could be induced by 'a contraceptive aerial mist' delivered by plane, it would make family planning programmes unnecessary in places like India.¹¹⁹

Berelson estimated that even conventional family planning, including vast 'information-education-communication' campaigns intended to reshape people's attitudes towards childbearing, would require about a billion dollars. For Draper, it was at least three billion dollars, a sum equivalent to more than a third of all international development aid. He urged UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim to appoint his predecessor, U Thant, as personal representative in organizing the World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974. Here a global strategy together with aid goals could win the approbation of both official delegates as well as a 'tribune' composed of private citizens and NGOs.¹²⁰ By this point, Salas was emboldened to issue ultimatums to the UN Secretariat itself, such as when he threatened to bypass the undersecretary for economic and social affairs, Philippe de Seynes, if he did not agree to give operational control to the World Bank in a \$26.4 million project in Indonesia.¹²¹

De Seynes concluded that the population control movement was out of control, and warned Waldheim accordingly:

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*; 'Beyond FP', attached to 'The Ford Foundation's Activities in Population', Aug. 1968: FFA, file 001405, and, for the published version, see Bernard Berelson, 'Beyond Family Planning', *Studies in Family Planning*, xxxviii (1969). On involuntary method, see Southam to Saunders, 31 July 1969: FFA, International Division/Population Papers of Lyle Saunders, series I, box 1, folder 10.

¹¹⁹ 'Indian Family Planning: Is Failure Inevitable?', c. Nov. 1967: FFA, report 006866.

¹²⁰ Berelson, 'Present State of Family Planning Programs'; William Draper, 'Aide-Memoire on Conversation with the Secretary-General', 4 Apr. 1972: UNARC, S-0513-0233, Office of the Secretary General, Records of Kurt Waldheim, DAG-1/5.3.3.4.3.

¹²¹ Salas to de Seynes, 30 Jan. 1972: UNARC, S-0290-0019-05, 'UNDP — UN Fund for Population Activities'.

There is no doubt that General Draper and other private individuals have done a magnificent job in fostering the role of the United Nations in the population field and raising considerable sums of money. However, I believe that an excessively active involvement on their part in the development of the United Nations activities and in matters of administration and management, as well as in the elaboration of United Nations population policy, could conceivably become compromising and lead to serious embarrassment.¹²²

At de Seynes's urging, the UN Population Division — still dominated by demographers rather than family planning experts — took charge of preparations for what came to be known as the 'World Population Plan of Action'. This cautious and consensual document was further watered down at the Bucharest conference by a coalition of states insisting that 'development is the best contraceptive'.¹²³ The UNFPA was, in any case, proving incapable of developing a strategy of its own, or even of spending all the money that was pouring in. It was not yet in a position to develop its own programmes, only to acquiesce to demands from other UN agencies peddling ongoing projects with little or no bearing on fertility reduction. While urging measures to strengthen the UNFPA, and maintain its independence, a critical report by Ernst Michanek of the Swedish International Development Agency contributed to Waldheim's conclusion that its wings would, indeed, have to be clipped. A 1972 General Assembly resolution required that it answer to both the Economic and Social Council and the governing body of the UN Development Program.¹²⁴

Efforts to transcend state sovereignty in the campaign to control world population never entirely succeeded, but proponents never stopped trying. The UNFPA would eventually grow to the point that it exercised considerable authority over the population work of other UN agencies, but it would always have to answer to governments. 'U.N. bodies are too official', Michanek reluctantly concluded, addressing other population control leaders at a meeting held at Bellagio in Italy in 1973.

¹²² De Seynes to Waldheim, 6 Apr. 1972: UNARC, S-0513-0233, Office of the Secretary General, Records of Kurt Waldheim, DAG-1/5.3.3.4.3.

¹²³ J. L. Finkle and B. B. Crane, 'The Politics of Bucharest: Population, Development, and the New International Economic Order', *Population and Development Rev.*, i (1975).

¹²⁴ 'Report to the Secretary General of the United Nations from the Review Committee of the UNFPA', Oct. 1972: UNARC, S-0290-0017-05, 'UNDP — Report of the Michanek Committee'.

'They are too afraid of government. They are not in a position to give a strong enough position to nongovernmental institutions . . . [The UNFPA] isn't strong enough to take on this particular job, and we are now trying to find somebody who is'. The meeting ruled out any 'superagency that would attempt to coordinate all population efforts'. But it was only one of a series which the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations organized on the banks of Lake Como to facilitate more informal co-ordination. In this case, it included Rockefeller, Ravenholt, Berelson, World Bank president Robert McNamara, the director-general of the IPPF, and the former administrator of USAID, as well as the officials in charge of population work at Britain's Overseas Development Administration, the UN Secretariat, the WHO and UNESCO.¹²⁵

Even without a superagency to supervise them, these institutions could be truly formidable when they collaborated in pushing population control on a particular state. In 1981, for instance, a donor consortium presented Kenya with a plan for a National Council on Population and Development (NCPD). Its executive committee and staff would have to be selected with World Bank approval and include NGO representatives. This council would be in charge of the budget and direction of 'demand creation' activities, eventually focusing on 'national laws and policies on fertility, and pilot schemes of incentives to reduce fertility'. The Kenyan Ministry of Health opposed this initiative, but the World Bank made it a condition for the release of a structural adjustment loan. Kenya finally received the loan on the same day it agreed to the NCPD.¹²⁶

Controlling the population of the world unavoidably required working with and through particular states. The population control movement was not responsible for every project: the largest, China's one-child policy, was influenced by it, but developed quite independently.¹²⁷ But it did provide many comparatively 'soft' states with extraordinary new means to

¹²⁵ 'Third Population Conference: Summary and Projections', 12 May 1973: FFA, report 010334.

¹²⁶ 'Draft Appraisal Report', 16 Mar. 1981: UNARC, Q400-R021-SU24, UNFPA Global and Interregional Project Files, box 9, KEN 1981-1982-1983; World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department, *Population and the World Bank: Implications from Eight Case Studies* (Washington DC, 1992), 54.

¹²⁷ Susan Greenhalgh, 'Science, Modernity, and the Making of China's One-Child Policy', *Population and Development Rev.*, xxix (2003).

exercise surveillance and control over their citizenry, most dramatically demonstrated during the mass sterilization drives of India's Emergency Period.¹²⁸ It remains doubtful whether many would otherwise have undertaken such programmes, with all their costs and risks. Even so, it is still not clear how much they contributed to declines in fertility.¹²⁹ But regulating fertility through contraception, abortion and sterilization changed the lives of countless millions of people, who in the past would have tried abstinence, withdrawal or delayed marriage.

This movement is remarkable not just for what it accomplished, but for its sheer audacity in trying to control the population of the world without having to answer to anyone in particular. Population controllers could never completely ignore state sovereignty, especially when it was useful to them — such as when some governments insisted on their right to implement coercive policies. But they did create a network of public and private agencies that constituted a novel form of global governance. This phenomenon is more obvious and more controversial when it occurs in a defined territory, such as a 'failed state', where the 'international community' exercises stewardship. The population control movement demonstrated how it can also work in non-territorial domains, such as reproductive behaviour. Indeed, this was far more subversive of state sovereignty than a programme designed to restore one state's capacity. Proponents were trying to reshape the bio-political boundaries and composition of *all* polities in the name of global norms.

Population control was not, therefore, the quintessential state-building project, but a transnational social movement. Population controllers tended to share both a sense of belonging to a 'world population' — albeit the small, conscious part of it — and a determination to remake their own societies, whether by eliminating 'social problem groups' or merely preventing unwanted children. Whether it was a faith or a science, they claimed their cause advanced the interest of all humanity.

¹²⁸ Marika Vicziany, 'Coercion in a Soft State: The Family Planning Program in India, Part I: The Myth of Voluntarism', and 'Part II: The Sources of Coercion', *Pacific Affairs*, lv (1982–3).

¹²⁹ See, for instance, the exchange between Lant H. Pritchett on the one hand, and John Bongaarts, James C. Knowles, John S. Akin and David K. Guilkey on the other, in 'The Impact of Population Policies', *Population and Development Rev.*, xx (1994).

Governments, on the other hand, were a means to an end. Even the nation was not the fundamental unit of analysis. Rather, it was the population as a biological category that provided the appropriate locus of action. 'Seeing like a state' leads us to miss this way of looking at the world, and how some people hoped to change it.

Rather than trying to see like an international or non-governmental organization — and exchange one kind of myopia for another — scholars must strive to recognize the full complexity of contemporary international and global history. By looking more closely at how these institutions can collaborate in controlling people, we can see how world politics is becoming more pluralistic without necessarily becoming more democratic. The challenge, for historians like everyone else, is to envision transnational means to address transnational problems that will not simply create new forms of unaccountable power.¹³⁰

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¹³⁰ A more complete version of this argument will appear in Matthew Connelly, *Unnatural Selection: The Population Control Movement and its Struggle to Remake Humanity*, Harvard Univ. Press, forthcoming.