

## The Cold War in the *longue durée*: global migration, public health, and population control

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A three-volume history is an impressive monument to Cold War studies. But could it one day be seen as a tombstone? The grave danger inherent in super-power relations might appear to provide enduring reasons to continue studying them indefinitely. A different outcome, after all, could have changed everything. Yet this argument would base the importance of the Cold War on shifting ground: something that might have happened. Only a handful of crises had truly catastrophic potential, and treating them to ever more fine-grained analyses yields diminishing returns. As the Cold War continues to recede into history, scholars will therefore have to work harder to explain its importance to future generations.

If one instead turns to the history of populations and public health – the kind of “structural” history favored by the followers of Fernand Braudel – the period coinciding with the Cold War can be shown to have witnessed changes that were comparable to the impact of global nuclear war, only these changes unfolded over decades and had nearly the opposite demographic effects. The number of people living on earth more than doubled between 1945 and 1989. By the time Germans were living under one government again, world population was growing by the number of people in the reunited nation – more than 80 million – each and every year. The overwhelming majority of them were being born in Asia and Africa. For the largely Russian leadership of the USSR, the higher fertility of Central Asians appeared to pose an existential threat. At the same time, migration flows from the global South began to make non-Hispanic whites a minority in the United States and Islam the second-largest religion in France. And, rather than being forced to flee from cities, people all over the world flocked to them. The mechanization of agriculture and the “urban bias” in national investment strategies contributed to a worldwide exodus from rural areas.

These trends did not arrest the attention of contemporaries as often as the more episodic course of the superpower struggle. But some of the most

famous American Cold Warriors, such as Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson, Robert McNamara, and George F. Kennan, sometimes recognized that they could have more long-term significance. Their fears of “population bombs” and mass migration can appear like a photo negative of the Cold War. They shuddered at the thought of a clash between North and South, and not just armed conflict between East and West. If the “free world” did not actually fall under Communist rule, they worried that the whole world might eventually succumb to famines or uncontrolled migration. Nuclear war would wipe people off the face of the earth, whereas population growth would make the world explode with people. Though scholars who examine the second half of the twentieth century with a Cold War lens often overlook them, these fears shaped policy on decolonization, foreign aid, and international migration. And it was not only Americans who were affected. In 1968, thirty heads of state – including Ferdinand Marcos, Josip Broz Tito, King Hussein of Jordan, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Mohammed Ayub Khan, Indira Gandhi, Park Chung Hee, and Harold Wilson – agreed that a “great problem threatens the world . . . the problem of unplanned population growth.”<sup>1</sup>

But if the history of populations and public health can seem like a photo negative of Cold War history, it does not, in fact, negate the value of research on superpower relations. The “population explosion” appeared menacing not because it was the opposite of nuclear war, but precisely because the two seemed comparable in their potential to change the world. Ignoring one would limit our understanding of the other, whereas together they can reveal important matters that might otherwise remain in the shadows. By bringing to light the Cold War origins of public-health campaigns, or the way population trends could help reframe the superpower conflict – such as giving rise to the concept of a hungry and volatile “Third World” – our assessments of both the international and the global history of the twentieth century might gain greater depth.

This chapter will suggest an agenda rather than proffer definitive conclusions, posing questions that merit much more study. How, for instance, might the Cold War be seen as a struggle to control populations, and not just territory, with the two superpowers adopting contrasting but comparable approaches to policing their biopolitical boundaries? In what ways did East–West rivalries shape global migration, public health, and efforts to control population growth? Alternatively, to what extent did they develop

<sup>1</sup> “Declaration of Population,” *Studies in Family Planning*, 1, 16 (1967), 1; “Declaration on Population: The World Leaders’ Statement,” *Studies in Family Planning*, 1, 26 (1968), 1; and see also Matthew Connelly, “To Inherit the Earth: Imagining World Population, From the Yellow Peril to the Population Bomb,” *Journal of Global History*, 1 (2006), 308–11.

independently, with deeper roots, a different trajectory, and more long-term impact than anything that emerged out of the superpower struggle?

Making comparisons and connections thus requires making distinctions. If managing global migration, improving public health, and controlling population growth were all part of the Cold War, they also have histories of their own. Their causes and consequences need to be understood on their own terms. Once we have put the superpowers in their place, we will be able to see more clearly how the international history of states and the global history of peoples – usually treated as opposing approaches to understanding the history of the world – can actually go together.<sup>2</sup>

### Capitalist and Communist approaches to managing population growth and movement

The ideology of liberalism would appear to preclude policies to harness people's bodies to serve state interests, or deny individuals' ability to move about with the same freedom as capital, goods, and ideas. But the "leader of the free world" was actually a pioneer in employing migration and sterilization to control the composition of its population. In the late nineteenth century, the United States developed both the bureaucratic procedures and the legal precedents to sift and sort immigrants in order to exclude those considered unfit for citizenship in a free country. Asian residents were denied due process and deprived of their property.<sup>3</sup> The United States also pioneered compulsory sterilization of those whom eugenicists deemed to be of inferior quality. Oliver Wendell Holmes, the great American jurist, endorsed such measures by equating them to compulsory vaccination. At the same time, courts upheld federal and state laws that prohibited even doctors from providing contraception to married couples.

The USSR, on the other hand, was the first government in the world to make contraception and abortion available in state clinics – but not because it sought to control population growth. Malthus's idea that fertility would inexorably outstrip available resources was, for Communists, a slander against humanity.<sup>4</sup> Margaret Sanger, the renowned American crusader for scientific

<sup>2</sup> On the distinction between international and global history – and the possibility of a more constructive dialogue – see the exchange "On Transnational History," *American Historical Review*, III (2006), 1441–64.

<sup>3</sup> Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders, 1834–1937* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Ronald L. Meek (ed.), *Marx and Engels on Malthus* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1953).

contraception and family planning, visited Moscow in 1934 and celebrated its support for reproductive rights. When Iosif Stalin adopted a population-control policy in 1936, it was to *increase* fertility rates, much as Germany, Italy, and France were already doing. The Soviets cut back on contraception, prohibited abortion, and offered cash incentives for large families.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Stalin's campaign to eliminate more prosperous peasants as a class assumed a quasi-eugenic character, with whole families rounded up and sent to Siberia as officials proclaimed the goal of cleansing Soviet society.<sup>6</sup> From 1935, deportations – which would sweep up some 7 million people by 1948 – increasingly targeted national minorities for the unacknowledged purpose of consolidating Soviet control over border regions.<sup>7</sup>

The United States and the USSR therefore pursued divergent but not directly opposing approaches to population growth and movement. They could even agree on how to manage “displaced persons” in Europe at the close of World War II, at least initially. As Tony Judt writes, after World War I the victorious powers in Europe adjusted borders. After World War II, with the exception of Poland, they adjusted populations. This included millions of Italians, Poles, Ukrainians, and Hungarians, but Germans most of all. The allies also agreed that stray Soviet citizens would be repatriated to the East, by force if necessary.<sup>8</sup>

With the onset of the Cold War, compulsory repatriation finally stopped. In 1947, over 1.5 million Soviets, Bulgarians, Romanians, Yugoslavs, and other displaced persons from Eastern Europe still remained in the West. German refugees continued streaming in from the East, eventually totaling some 13 million. There were ambitious schemes to redistribute Europe's “surplus” population around the world through the International Refugee Organization and the International Labour Organization (ILO). But the US Congress posed an insuperable obstacle. Proponents of immigration reform argued that the discriminatory nature of US law offended allies, especially China, and

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Sanger, “The Soviet Union's Abortion Law,” *Women Today*, December 1936; Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 257–61, 327–32, 341.

<sup>6</sup> Amir Weiner, “Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism,” *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), 1114–55.

<sup>7</sup> Terry Martin, “Stalinist Forced Relocation Policies: Patterns, Causes, Consequences,” in Myron Weiner and Sharon Stanton Russell (eds.), *Demography and National Security* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 309, 315, 321–22.

<sup>8</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 22–31.

squandered the opportunity to score propaganda victories against countries behind the Iron Curtain. In 1952, Congress finally provided an opening to those fleeing Communist persecution and lifted the blanket exclusion of Asians.<sup>9</sup>

The United States launched a program to incite more defections. Each new “escapee” could be cheered as an augury of eventual victory in the Cold War. But undermining another government’s authority by luring away its population contravened international norms, provoking Moscow to protest to the UN General Assembly. These polemics masked an underlying *modus vivendi*, made apparent when the United States barred entry to most escapees and tried to settle them in Latin America instead.<sup>10</sup> During most of the Cold War, Communist refusal to allow people to go and US unwillingness to let them come made global migration more manageable. It was only occasionally troubled by such cases as Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson’s advocacy for Jewish émigrés and Fidel Castro’s decision to permit the Mariel boatlift. Otherwise, neither side was willing to change the status quo if that required compromising sovereign control of their borders and thus of their populations.

The Cold War shaped particular migration flows. After being cut off from labor pools to the east, for instance, Germany turned to the south – beginning with Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, then gradually relying more on “guest workers” from Turkey. But the overall pattern of global movement outside the Iron Curtain reflected an extraordinarily complex combination of “push” and “pull” factors. Some were related to the Cold War, including industrial-development strategies that were often funded by foreign aid. But a striking number of migration flows were imperial in origin. The colonial powers attracted and sometimes recruited labor from dependent territories, drawing West Indians and South Asians to Britain, North and West Africans to France, and Haitians, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos to the United States. Gradually, male workers began bringing their families with them. This was especially the case for the United States after 1965, when immigration law permitted family reunification. The expectation was that this policy would reproduce the

<sup>9</sup> Keith Fitzgerald, *The Face of the Nation: Immigration, the State, and the National Identity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 193–97. For the best account of the postwar resettlement programs, see Daniel G. Cohen, “The West and the Displaced, 1945–1951: The Post-War Roots of Political Refugees,” Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> For an extremely subtle analysis, see Susan L. Carruthers, “Between Camps: Eastern Bloc ‘Escapees’ and Cold War Borderlands,” *American Quarterly*, 57 (2005), 911–42.

“American family” as it already existed, i.e., overwhelmingly of European descent. Instead, it initiated a pattern of chain migration that led to increasing numbers of immigrants from Asia and Latin America.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the largest migration flows were not from south to north, but lateral. The 1973 oil crisis was a key turning point. Asian migrant workers streamed to the newly wealthy Gulf states. Conversely, in Europe the recession that came with drastically higher oil prices curtailed recruitment of foreign workers and increased resentment toward those who remained.<sup>12</sup>

If the superpower struggle did not determine the overall pattern or chronology of global migration, it had an episodic impact. Several Cold War conflicts ended with massive refugee outflows, especially from China, Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. But so too did many decolonization and postcolonial struggles, most notably the partitions of India and Palestine, the repatriation of colonial settlers – including some 3 million Japanese – and the expulsion of South Asians from East Africa.

From a long-term perspective, the barriers to emigration faced by citizens of Communist states were just part of a global system that developed through a series of crises and regulatory responses. Since the late nineteenth century, it was premised on the principle that states had sovereign and exclusive power to issue or reject visas and passports and adjudicate appeals from refugees. But, while this system channeled movement, migration always threatened to grow out of control. One reason was that new communications technology made apparent gross differentials in living standards, which were even greater between South and North than between East and West. When hundreds of thousands of East Germans finally brought down the Berlin Wall, they were joining millions more people worldwide who were voting with their feet for the right to live and work where they wished. Unprecedented in both absolute numbers and in proportion to world population, this global movement is one of the signal events of the second half of the twentieth century.

<sup>11</sup> Fitzgerald, *Face of the Nation*, 217–24; Betty K. Koed, “The Politics of Reform: Policymakers and the Immigration Act of 1965,” Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1999, 172–73, 176, 188–89.

<sup>12</sup> David Held, *et al.*, provide an excellent introduction, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 297–322.

## Public health, population growth, and the birth of the Third World

Throughout the Cold War, some argued that it was necessary to go to the root of population problems by managing fertility rates. But the very idea of international aid for what some called “family planning,” others “population control,” seemed likely to stoke tension between the superpowers. In 1948, senior UN officials refused to circulate a proposal by the first director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Julian Huxley, calling for an international conference. Huxley was aiming at “a world population policy” to address both the environmental risks of overall growth and the eugenic danger of relatively higher fertility among the unintelligent. Huxley was told that there was already too much international rancor and that such a conference would merely provoke an ideological debate pitting Malthus against Marx.<sup>13</sup>

This concern was not unfounded. For instance, when the US State Department’s 1949 White Paper defending its China policy cited the Nationalists’ failure to feed a growing population as one of the major reasons for their defeat, it elicited an immediate rejoinder from Chinese leader Mao Zedong. He insisted that Communist revolution and increased production would create “a new China with a big population and a great wealth of products.” For years thereafter, it remained risky for anyone in China to suggest that population growth might pose a problem.<sup>14</sup>

But in the first international debates on aiding population control in the governing bodies of UN agencies such as UNESCO and the World Health Organization, it was not the Americans and the Soviets who squared off. One reason is that the Soviets were boycotting UN bodies for not admitting Communist China. The United States, for its part, did not begin supporting international aid for family planning until the 1960s. In the meantime, the State Department merely tried to stop ugly spats among the Cold War allies of the United States over whether the UN should take action, with countries such as Sri Lanka and Norway pitted against Belgium, Italy, and Lebanon. Some of the most vigorous and persistent combatants in this continuing struggle were Cold War neutrals, including Sweden, India, and – on the other side – Ireland. When the Soviets finally began to take a more active role after 1955, they

<sup>13</sup> Julian Huxley memo to Trygve Lie, March 30, 1948, UNESCO Archives, Paris, inactive correspondence files, 312 A 06 (45) “54.”

<sup>14</sup> H. Yuan Tien, *China’s Population Struggle: Demographic Decisions of the People’s Republic, 1949–1969* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 177–79.

aligned with the Catholic countries of Western Europe and Latin America in opposing international aid for contraception.

Debates over birth control and abortion could not fit into any Cold War framework – or any *international* framework, for that matter – because the politics underlying them were *transnational* in nature. In UN forums, for instance, the United States initially remained neutral because political leaders worried about provoking the Catholic Church. The Holy See, with permanent observer status in UN bodies, was able to work the corridors organizing diplomatic support while at the same time rallying believers worldwide to lobby their respective governments. Proponents of family planning, for their part, were organized in global networks, such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), which fought for affiliate status in the same UN bodies. Some members – especially those from the United States – pushed the IPPF to focus on reducing population growth in poor countries as a way to stop the spread of Communism. But those who conceived of birth control as a human right resisted this agenda, especially since it risked relations with affiliates in Communist countries. The IPPF, like other nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), tried to work with and through states on both sides of the Cold War while pursuing transnational goals – whether feminists inspired by the goal of women’s liberation, environmentalists concerned about keeping the planet habitable, or die-hard eugenisists worried about the proliferation of the unfit.<sup>15</sup>

The first generation of leaders of UN agencies saw in population problems an opportunity to broaden their mandates, even to move toward world government. As the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) director-general, Sir John Boyd Orr, argued, politicians were hung up on adjusting borders. But UN agencies, by focusing on improving the health of “borderline” populations, could make a much greater contribution to reducing international tensions. Similarly, UNESCO’s Huxley pointed out that the population problem “affects the future of the human species as a whole, and not merely the separate nations into which the human species now happens to be divided.”<sup>16</sup> If the population “explosion” posed a threat akin to nuclear war, then population control was no less urgent than arms control. The UN

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Connelly, “Seeing Beyond the State: The Population Control Movement and the Problem of Sovereignty,” *Past & Present*, 195 (November 2006), 246.

<sup>16</sup> Sir John Boyd Orr, “The Choice Ahead: One World or None,” December 14, 1946, Food and Agriculture Organization Archives, Rome (hereafter FAO); J. Orr to Scrutton, 2 September 2, 1947, FAO, RG 1.1, Series A2, Lord John Orr Outgoing Letters; Huxley memo to Trygve Lie, March 30, 1948.



seemed to provide the appropriate forum and agency. Here, too, the choice was “one world or none.”

Like the more ambitious schemes to resettle the “surplus” population of Europe, early UN initiatives to head off a Malthusian crisis came to naught. The United States and Britain defeated Orr’s idea of a World Food Board because they preferred to leave such issues to a proposed International Trade Organization.<sup>17</sup> As many as a third of the member states of the World Health Organization were at the point of withdrawing in 1952 over a proposal to provide birth control.<sup>18</sup> And the issue was kept off the agenda of the first World Population Conference in 1954. When it came to population problems, the world was not divided by Cold War rivalries, but rather by transnational movements that sought to shape the domestic and foreign policies of every state. And these struggles, in turn, could inspire new ways to understand international differences.

Just after the WHO debate, France’s representative on the UN Population Commission, the eminent demographer Alfred Sauvy, wrote a landmark article titled “Three Worlds, One Planet.” It described humanity as being divided between the capitalist West, the Communist bloc, and the “Third World.” The Cold War rivals actually needed each other because they defined their identity through their opposition.<sup>19</sup> Their two paths to modernity would eventually bring them together. The people of the Third World, on the other hand, inhabited an alternate universe. According to Sauvy, “these countries have our mortality of 1914 and our natality of the eighteenth century.” Saving lives with pesticides and antibiotics was cheap, but giving people something to live for was expensive. They would not suffer their plight indefinitely.<sup>20</sup>

Sauvy’s reference to a Third World was meant to evoke the Third Estate of revolutionary France. But this new world was not permitted to speak for itself. Instead, he described how it was emerging demographically, rather than politically. It was a “slow and irresistible push, humble and ferocious, toward life.” In this way, Sauvy suggested that the Third World needed nothing so much as care and feeding until it was mature enough to choose between the two paths to modernization. Dividing the world in three offered an alternative

<sup>17</sup> Amy Staples, “Constructing International Identity: The World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization, 1945–1965,” Ph.D. thesis, Ohio State University, 1998, 211–29.

<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization, *Official Records*, 42 (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1952), 131, 240–42.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of identity and the Cold War, see Robert Jervis’s chapter in volume II.

<sup>20</sup> “Trois mondes, une planète,” *L’Observateur*, August 14, 1952.

to the Communist/free world dichotomy as well as to the belief that there was only one world, in which all humanity might share common rights and common duties.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1950s, this conceptual framework of three worlds became increasingly common. Previously, especially when Chinese Communist “volunteers” entered Korea en masse and fought US troops, population trends seemed to portend “the engulfment of Western civilization by the peoples of Russia and Asia.”<sup>22</sup> The Soviets – often typed as culturally “Eastern,” in part because of their persistently higher population growth rates – seemed ideally positioned to lead “Asiatic masses” in a march on the West.<sup>23</sup> But as the USSR courted newly independent nations, especially under Nikita Khrushchev’s leadership, it came to seem more like a competitor to the United States in a common modernization project, though one in which the Soviets always threatened to unite “the rest” against “the West.”<sup>24</sup>

Like Sauvy’s concept of a Third World, modernization or “development” initiatives tended to be conservative in their assumptions about the nature of progress and the need for paternalistic guidance. But they could be quite radical in their ultimate aims, especially in the area of public health. Some aimed for a qualitative transformation that would flatten racial hierarchies and erase cultural differences. In introducing the Point Four program in 1949, the first US foreign-aid initiative for “underdeveloped areas,” the State Department promised that eliminating debilitating disease and malnutrition would not merely make the “Eastern peasant” more productive. It would bring “intangible changes in outlook on life,” with “far-reaching effects on the world as a whole.”<sup>25</sup>

The point, of course, was to change the lethargic and fatalistic peasant into a modern worker and consumer, one who could better resist Communist blandishments. As Kennan had argued in the Long Telegram, Communism

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> W. S. Woytinsky and E. S. Woytinsky, *World Population and Production: Trend and Outlook* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1953), 254–56.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Connelly, “Taking off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North–South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence,” *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), 753–54.

<sup>24</sup> For US–Soviet competition and modernization in the Third World, see Michael E. Latham’s, Douglas Little’s, Fredrik Logevall’s, and Svetlana Savranskaya and William Taubman’s chapters in volume II.

<sup>25</sup> US Department of State, *Point Four: Cooperative Program for Aid in the Development of Economically Underdeveloped Areas* (Washington, DC: US Department of State, 1950). See also J. R. McNeill’s chapter in this volume.

was a “malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue.”<sup>26</sup> Yet the Point Four planners themselves acknowledged that they were carrying on work begun decades earlier by the Rockefeller Foundation, which also intended dramatic demonstration projects to help make the world safe for capitalism. This idea of linking public health and geopolitics would guide not only the United States’ own efforts, but also the campaign by the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) against tuberculosis and the WHO’s effort to eradicate malaria, in part because they were inspired by Rockefeller Foundation veterans such as Fred Soper and were largely underwritten by the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, the very design and construction of research stations charged with exporting a “Green Revolution” to feed the world were expected to change the outlook of the people working there, as the historian Nick Cullather has shown. When farmers took up new strains of wheat and rice, the experience was supposed to transform their whole mentality and make them immune to Communism. The movement of these “miracle” grains was tracked like a new front in the Cold War that could turn the Communist flank in Asia. But, here again, it was the Rockefeller Foundation that had first blazed the trail decades earlier.<sup>28</sup>

If global public-health and biotechnology campaigns are among the most important and least studied episodes in Cold War history, they cannot be explained only in terms of the Cold War. Major declines in mortality rates in otherwise poor countries were already well underway in the 1930s, at least partly because of colonial public-health programs. And leaders of newly independent nations, such as Suharto of Indonesia and Indira Gandhi of India, also had their own agendas in joining the Green Revolution and disease-eradication campaigns, which could not otherwise have become global in scope.<sup>29</sup> For many proponents, “development” signified the triumph of science over politics, of man over nature, and even of man over himself – when it came to population control – in an evolutionary process that trumped geopolitics.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Reprinted in George Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 559.

<sup>27</sup> Staples, “Constructing International Identity,” 388–89.

<sup>28</sup> Nick Cullather, “Miracles of Modernization: The Green Revolution and the Apotheosis of Technology,” *Diplomatic History*, 28 (2004), 227–54; Cullather, “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” *American Historical Review*, 112 (2007), 337–64. See also J. R. McNeill’s chapter in this volume.

<sup>29</sup> For the birth of new nations in the early Cold War period, see Mark Philip Bradley’s chapter in volume I.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 1.

To achieve such a transformation, global public-health campaigns tended to target particular diseases for eradication, such as smallpox, malaria, and river blindness. This led to vertical, single-purpose programs that did not address more complex causes of poverty and ill-health. Disillusion set in when eradication proved impossible, environmentalists began pointing to the collateral damage, and even successes appeared to set the stage for a Malthusian crisis – all factors that were largely independent of the superpower struggle. Public-health campaigns had varied outcomes, but their history cannot be reduced to a Cold War story, any more than the history of global migration can. Instead, it too requires interweaving international history – including superpower rivalries, but also decolonization and the development of UN agencies – with the global history of pathogens, scientific networks, and NGOs.<sup>31</sup>

### The coming of population control

From the beginning, some of the architects of public-health campaigns worried that nature would have its revenge. Improved public health, the Point Four planners acknowledged, “will at the same time intensify one of the great problems in the success of the program – increases in the population of areas already overpopulated under present economic conditions.”<sup>32</sup> This concern was common among British and French colonial officials. In 1948, T.H. Davey, a member of the Colonial Advisory Medical Committee, warned that if new public-health techniques spread throughout the empire Britain might soon confront hopelessly overpopulated and impoverished nations, and find itself “dragged into a war for survival, using against them the most terrible of the weapons which science had produced.” On the eve of the Algerian war, one French administrator wondered whether they ought instead to let “natural selection” among Muslims take its course. But the gathering anticolonial movement compelled both British and French officials to prove that they were improving the lot of their subject peoples.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> I am grateful to Bob Brigham for a dialogue that helped clarify my own thinking on this point.

<sup>32</sup> “Point Four: Cooperative Program for Aid.”

<sup>33</sup> T. H. Davey, “The Growth of Tropical Populations,” c. March 1948, “Extracts from Minutes of CAMC 443rd Meeting,” March 23, 1948, and accompanying minutes to file, National Archives, Kew, UK, CO 859/154/6; “L’Algérie du demi siècle vue par les autorités,” undated, Archives d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, Fonds du Cabinet Civil du Gouverneur Général de l’Algérie, 10/CAB/28.

Influential American demographers criticized the colonial powers for failing to effect broad-based development, deemed crucial in reducing fertility rates, without which public-health gains would lead to “overpopulation.” Princeton’s Frank Notestein, who would go on to become the first director of the UN Population Division, argued that “the crux of the problem is the greatest possible reduction of the lag between the downward trends of mortality and fertility. . . This in fact would require a complete and integrated program of modernization.” Until peasants moved to cities, earned salaries, and enrolled their children in school, they would not understand the need to plan smaller families.<sup>34</sup>

But an increasing number of activists, especially in the United States and Britain, were pressing for direct action to reduce population growth in poor countries. Those, like Sanger, who had long pressed for birth control as a basic right were now joined by two new constituencies. For environmentalists like Fairfield Osborn and William Vogt, Notestein’s modernization program would only increase the damage people were already doing to the planet. Paul Ehrlich popularized this position with his 1968 bestseller, *The Population Bomb*. It would also inform the work of the Club of Rome – a group of European scientists, industrialists, and officials – and the landmark study they commissioned on environmental scarcities, *Limits to Growth*.<sup>35</sup>

A third constituency focused instead on population growth as a national security threat. Among them was Hugh Moore, a wealthy entrepreneur, who recruited foreign-policy establishment figures such as Will Clayton and Ellsworth Bunker. For them, “The Population Bomb” – the title of their 1954 pamphlet – represented the danger of a world overrun by “people dominated by Communism.” They eventually circulated over 1.5 million copies. “[W]e are not primarily interested in the sociological or humanitarian aspects of birth control,” Moore privately explained. “We are interested in the use which Communists make of hungry people in their drive to conquer the earth.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Frank Notestein, “Problems of Policy in Relation to Areas of Heavy Population Pressure,” in *Demographic Studies of Selected Areas of Rapid Growth* (New York: Milbank Memorial Fund, 1944), 152.

<sup>35</sup> Fairfield Osborn, *Our Plundered Planet* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1948); William Vogt, *Road to Survival* (New York: William Sloan Associates, 1948); Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968); Donella H. Meadows, et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972).

<sup>36</sup> Donald T. Critchlow, *Intended Consequences: Birth Control, Abortion, and the Federal Government in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 30–33; John Sharpless, “Population Science, Private Foundations, and Development Aid: The Transformation of Demographic Knowledge in the United States, 1945–1965,” in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (eds.), *International Development and the Social Sciences* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 191–93.

President Eisenhower himself was obsessed by population growth in poor countries, confiding to his National Security Council (NSC) that it was “a constant worry to him and from time to time reduced him to despair.”<sup>37</sup> He and his key advisers often kept score in the Cold War by counting the population on each side. Initially, he had intended to replace his predecessor’s Point Four program with promotion of trade, but instead increased foreign aid, in part because of competition from Khrushchev. Eisenhower presented his foreign-aid proposals by describing Soviet and Chinese Communists as engaged in a “fantastic conspiracy” that had seized a third of the world’s population; the United States would have to win the remaining billion.<sup>38</sup> Eisenhower did not consider the issue of population growth only in a Cold War frame. In fact, he complained that American aid had focused excessively on the Communist threat: “[W]e have had a narrower view than we should have. The real menace here was the one and a half billion hungry people in the world.”<sup>39</sup>

But Eisenhower rejected the idea that the United States meet requests for assistance in family planning even when it was backed by a blue-ribbon commission chaired by a longtime supporter, William Draper, and including General Al Gruenther, Admiral Arthur Radford, and John J. McCloy. In view of Catholic opposition, he preferred that NGOs take the lead. After leaving office, he agreed to serve with former president Harry S. Truman as honorary co-chairman of Planned Parenthood. John F. Kennedy felt much the same way, telling Draper that the Ford Foundation – then the world’s wealthiest – should commit itself entirely to population control.<sup>40</sup> In fact, by 1966, when McGeorge Bundy became president of the Ford Foundation, it was spending \$26.3 million on population programs, over \$150 million in today’s dollars.<sup>41</sup>

In the course of the 1960s, the US government began giving ever stronger support to population control, pressing other wealthy nations to join in supplying contraceptives while pushing poor countries to accept them. In some cases, such as India in 1966–67, this meant withholding food

<sup>37</sup> National Security Council (hereafter NSC) Meeting, May 28, 1959, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS (hereafter DDEL), Ann Whitman File, NSC Series.

<sup>38</sup> Burton I. Kaufman, *Trade and Aid: Eisenhower’s Foreign Economic Policy 1953–1961* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 169; Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 150; for more on Eisenhower and the Cold War, see Robert J. McMahon’s chapter in volume I.

<sup>39</sup> NSC meeting, August 18, 1959, DDEL, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series.

<sup>40</sup> Phyllis Tilson Piotrow, *World Population Crisis: The United States Response* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 36–40, 73–74.

<sup>41</sup> “Expenditures on Population,” c. October 1966, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, NY, RG IV3B4.2, Population Council, General File, box 36, folder 526.

shipments.<sup>42</sup> As Johnson put it, “I’m not going to piss away foreign aid in nations where they refuse to deal with their own population problems.”<sup>43</sup> Between 1968 and 1976, as population-control campaigns assumed massive proportions – employing hundreds of thousands and sterilizing millions – the United States provided more than half of all international aid. Several countries, including Bangladesh, South Korea, Pakistan, Thailand, and Tunisia, used foreign aid for two-thirds or more of their family-planning budgets.<sup>44</sup>

But, all along, the political sensitivity of promoting contraception, especially in the Catholic countries of Latin America, led the United States to also work indirectly through NGOs and international organizations, especially the World Bank under Robert McNamara and a new UN agency, the UN Fund for Population Activities. All this would be impossible to explain absent the Cold War. But it was also driven by the specter of North–South conflict. “There are 3 billion people in the world and we have only 200 million of them,” Johnson told troops guarding the Korean demilitarized zone in November 1966. “We are outnumbered 15 to 1. If might did make right they would sweep over the United States and take what we have.”<sup>45</sup>

The strongest and most consistent support for international aid for family planning did not actually come from Washington. In UN debates and per capita contributions, the Scandinavian countries were always in the lead, regardless of their allegiance in the Cold War. Sweden was the first country to support family planning as part of its foreign-aid program – beginning with Sri Lanka, followed by Pakistan. It was considered a means to address the root causes of international conflict. In the 1970s, Norway provided even more aid per capita. Here, too, it was justified by fear of “a catastrophe of unknown dimensions,” of “hunger crisis or war,” as two Norwegian MPs put it during a parliamentary debate.<sup>46</sup>

The countries that accepted such aid – and often solicited it – played on fears of North–South conflict. India and Pakistan were the first to adopt

<sup>42</sup> Matthew Connelly, “Population Control in India: Prologue to the Emergency Period,” *Population and Development Review*, 32 (2006), 629–67.

<sup>43</sup> Joseph A. Califano, *The Triumph and Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson: The White House Years* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 154–55; Califano, *Inside: A Public and Private Life* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 172–73.

<sup>44</sup> Dorothy L. Nortman and Ellen Hofstatter, *Population and Family Planning Programs: A Compendium of Data through 1978*, 10th ed. (New York: Population Council, 1980), 37.

<sup>45</sup> “Remarks to American and Korean Servicemen at Camp Stanley,” November 1, 1966, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966*, book II (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1967), 1287.

<sup>46</sup> Sunniva Engh, “Population Control in the 20th Century: Scandinavian Aid to the Indian Family Planning Programme,” Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, 2005.



34. An elephant displaying banners with slogans promoting birth control in India, 1970. Governments and international organizations spent large sums on such efforts during the Cold War.

policies to control population growth. As India's ambassador to the United States, M. C. Chagla, explained, it made no sense to "build up military bases and enter into military alliances in defense of democracy when you allow the barricades to be overrun by advancing population." Hamid Nawaz Khan of the All Pakistan Women's Association insisted that "States ought to adopt vast programs of controlled reproduction if they don't want to remain powerless before a human tidal wave which will certainly bring about an immense decline of civilization."<sup>47</sup> They took pride in exercising leadership in a population crisis they considered more grave than the Cold War.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> M. C. Chagla, "Text of Address," 11 May 1961, Archives of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, London (hereafter IPPF), series B, reel 715, frames 2131–37; Commission Économique pour l'Asie et Extrême-Orient, Procès-Verbaux Officiels, 16th session, March 9–21, 1960, 223rd meeting, Archives de la Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, Asie Oceanie 1956–1967, Dossiers généraux, ECAFE, June–August 1960, dossier 441.

<sup>48</sup> P. N. Haksar to I. Gandhi, 30 July 1969, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, P. N. Haksar Papers, Subject Files, file number 42.



At the first World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974, Cold War alignments broke down completely over a proposed “World Population Plan of Action” (WPPA). The US team under Casper Weinberger wanted targeted reductions to achieve replacement-rate fertility worldwide by 2000. In a high-level review, US policymakers had agreed that otherwise food riots and revolution would close markets to US investment, and raw-material-exporting countries would be led to form more cartels such as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries just to acquire the means to feed their people.<sup>49</sup>

But the “Group of 77” non-aligned countries seized the opportunity to press for a “New International Economic Order,” in which countries of the South would take control of their assets and work together to improve terms of trade. China was the first to declare its opposition to the population plan, insisting that the future of mankind was “infinitely bright.” France and Algeria – otherwise unlikely allies – agreed the WPPA was too pessimistic. The USSR and its East European allies opposed numerical targets, but not international aid for family planning. When China’s representative condemned the two superpowers as equally imperialist, the Soviets in the audience turned around and shook hands with their American counterparts.<sup>50</sup>

The line best remembered from the Bucharest conference was that delivered by Karan Singh, India’s minister of health and family planning. Declaring that “the best contraceptive is development,” Singh captured the essence of a new WPPA which dropped fertility-reduction targets. Outside the international limelight, however, national population programs in this period – including both India’s and China’s – increasingly resorted to incentive payments and even physical force to induce people to have fewer children. After Indira Gandhi suspended the constitution in 1976 and arrested tens of thousands of opponents, she launched a campaign in which some 8 million people were sterilized in a single year. In 1983, 20 million people in China submitted to vasectomies or tubectomies during a national crackdown against violators of the one-child policy. Considering that India’s program was developed in close collaboration with Western consultants while China’s was the work of

<sup>49</sup> P. Claxton to Members of Inter-Agency Committee for the World Population Conference, 5 December 1973, United States National Archives (hereafter USNA), Washington, DC, Nixon Papers, NSC Institutional Files, Study Memorandums, NSSM 200, box H-204; R. Ingersoll to G. Ford, December 14, 1974, Declassified Documents Reference System, Document Number: CK3100290297.

<sup>50</sup> C. Weinberger to H. Kissinger, September 19, 1974, USNA, Nixon Papers, NSC Institutional Files, Study Memorandums, NSSM 200, box H-204.

Communist cadres, these two campaigns were remarkably similar, including time-bound targets, a mix of government workers and nongovernmental volunteers, use of mobile contraceptive and sterilization teams, payments and penalties to ensure compliance, and an interministerial committee to oversee it all. Both countries could also count on financial support from international and NGOs, such as the UN Population Fund, the World Bank, and the IPPF.

All this aroused growing opposition from the Vatican, swelling numbers of evangelical Christians, and conservative Muslim leaders. They also organized transnationally to gain control of the agenda at international population conferences. In 1984, pro-life activists in the United States and Latin American bishops succeeded in persuading the Reagan administration to reverse US policy at the World Population Conference in Mexico City. Strong congressional opposition made it impossible to cut family-planning assistance. But, henceforth, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was barred not merely from backing coercive programs, but from assisting any organization, such as the IPPF, that provided abortion. Japan helped pick up the slack, but only on condition that the Population Fund and IPPF continue aiding China's one-child policy. One incredulous Reagan administration official noted that the new US stance denying that population growth hindered development was identical to Communist dogma.<sup>51</sup>

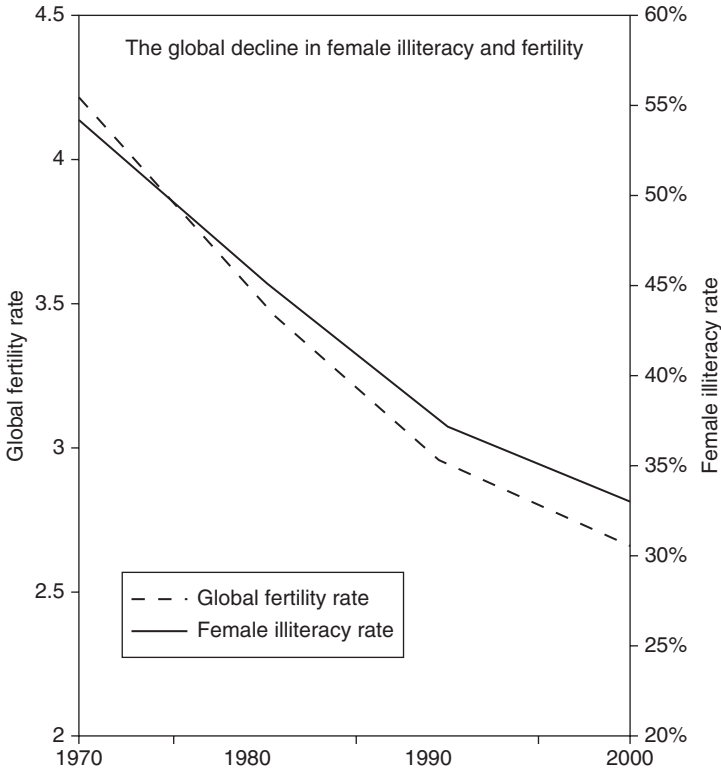
In fact, the Soviets were themselves reconsidering. For quite a while already, some US officials had considered population control as eminently suited to superpower cooperation, as did independent analysts such as C. P. Snow and Andrei Sakharov in 1968.<sup>52</sup> Moscow was already softening its stance with regard to international population assistance, no longer assuming it was "a Malthusian trick on the part of the imperialists to keep down the size of the coloured population of the world."<sup>53</sup> With the 1979 census, authorities worried that the USSR itself had a problem with the relative growth of its Muslim population. It was increasing three times faster than the Great Russian population. Russians were projected to make up less than half the total population of the USSR by 2000.<sup>54</sup> At the Communist Party Congress in

<sup>51</sup> R. Levine to R. McFarlane, July 11, 1984, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, CA, Executive Secretariat: NSC: Records: Subject File, box 82.

<sup>52</sup> Robert C. Cook, "Spaceship Earth in Peril," *Population Bulletin*, 25 (1969), 1–21.

<sup>53</sup> H. W. King, "Soviet View on Population," July 10, 1969, National Archives, Kew, UK, FCO 61/507.

<sup>54</sup> Murray Feshbach, "Reading Between the Lines of the 1979 Soviet Census," *Population and Development Review*, 8 (1982), 349, 356–57.



Graph 2. The global decline in female illiteracy and fertility

The worldwide decline in fertility rates corresponds far more closely with the worldwide decline in illiteracy among women than with population control programs. Data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UN Population Division. Graph adapted from FEWER, copyright © 2004, by Ben J. Wattenberg, by permission of Ivan R. Dee, Publisher.

1981, several speakers voiced concern about population trends. Moscow implemented a series of measures to increase family size outside the Muslim republics, including paid leave for new mothers. But it made little difference. Fertility rates in Russia continued to decline through the end of the Cold War while mortality soared.<sup>55</sup>

In view of the radically diverging population dynamics of different countries, the UN World Population Conference that took place in Cairo in 1994

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 358. Regarding the Soviet debate over a “differentiated” population policy, see Cynthia Weber and Ann Goodman, “The Demographic Policy Debate in the USSR,” *Population and Development Review*, 7 (1981), 281–87.

may prove to have been the last of its kind. The end of the Cold War changed the atmosphere of the event, as a host of different constituencies jockeyed for position over a changing international agenda. But the substance of the debate was not radically different: the Vatican and its allies maintained that contraception was always immoral; others continued to argue that population growth, poverty, and mass migration persisted as security threats; and environmentalists still insisted the earth itself must weigh into the balance. But the big winners were feminists, who managed to win acceptance for a platform that placed reproductive rights and health at the center of development. It was a defeat for both the old-guard population-control establishment as well as for their pro-life opponents, despite a last-ditch diplomatic campaign personally directed by Pope John Paul II. Far more important than the end of the Cold War in this outcome was the fact that population growth had begun to slow worldwide. But it was only because of grassroots organizing – begun decades earlier – that feminists were able to seize this opportunity and carry the day.<sup>56</sup>

More generally, the period before and after the end of the Cold War reflects continuity rather than change both in population trends and in policies intended to shape them. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia has pursued ever more extreme measures to reverse fertility declines. In the United States, a new population boom that began in the 1980s – largely fueled by immigrants and their children, many following the pattern of “chain migration” established in the 1960s – shows no sign of dissipating. As for foreign aid for family planning, aside from during the administration of William J. Clinton, until 2008, the Mexico City policy has continued to preclude US support for the UN or the IPPF.

### The Cold War in a more global perspective

What, then, will be the place of the Cold War in the *longue durée*? Juxtaposing diplomatic history with global history shows how much less “we now know” about matters that may have far more long-term significance. After all, as missiles lay dormant in their silos, some of the most lethal or crippling diseases, including smallpox and polio, were all but eradicated. While emergency rations in fallout shelters decayed and fell into dust, acute famines became increasingly rare. Improvements in nutrition and public health contributed to more than just a dramatic gain in life expectancy for billions of

<sup>56</sup> Dennis Hodgson and Susan Cotts Watkins, “Feminists and Neo-Malthusians: Past and Present Alliances,” *Population and Development Review*, 23 (1997), 469–523.

people. They made them visibly bigger and measurably smarter (iodine deficiency alone shaves inches and IQ points).<sup>57</sup> And if people continue reading Cold War history in the future, it may be because of the rapid spread of literacy around the world.<sup>58</sup>

Some argue that controlling population growth helped China and the “Asian tigers” take off, redistributing the world’s wealth and power in ways at least as significant as the demise of Communism.<sup>59</sup> Too often they fail to note the collateral damage caused by coercive campaigns, which sterilized tens of millions of people and made women a minority in societies that give preference to sons. Moreover, many hundreds of millions more people freely sought out contraception without having to be bribed or threatened. The main reason for the decline in fertility, as nearly as can be determined, was not government population-control programs, but women’s increasing access to education and therefore to opportunities other than child-bearing (see Graph 2).<sup>60</sup> This both reflected and reinforced revolutionary changes in gender relations and family formation. The size of the average family has fallen by more than half since 1960, and the elderly are beginning to outnumber the young in Europe and East Asia. Nevertheless, the continued momentum of population growth and increasing consumption now portends what may be even more dramatic developments in the decades to come, above all the prospect that the buildup of greenhouse gases will heat the atmosphere, melt polar ice caps, and flood coastal regions worldwide. Altogether, these trends are literally remaking humanity and changing the face of the earth.

Yet if global history must be understood on its own terms, our understanding will be limited if we do not recognize that international politics could also have a global impact. Differences between the United States and the USSR, such as over freedom of movement, created a *modus vivendi* that made migration more manageable. The concept of a “Third World” emerged from a debate about population growth and poverty, but it caught on only because it also described the arena of an expanding Cold War. Global

<sup>57</sup> Robert William Fogel, *The Escape from Hunger and Premature Death, 1700–2100: Europe, America, and the Third World*, ed. by Richard Smith, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>58</sup> Wolfgang Lutz and Anne Goujon, “The World’s Changing Human Capital Stock: Multi-State Population Projections by Educational Attainment,” *Population and Development Review*, 27 (2001), 323–39.

<sup>59</sup> Nancy Birdsall, Allen C. Kelley, and Steven W. Sinding, *Population Matters: Demographic Change, Economic Growth, and Poverty in the Developing World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>60</sup> T. Paul Schultz, “Demand for Children in Low Income Countries,” *Handbook of Population and Family Economics*, 1 (1997), 380–84.

public-health campaigns, including aid for family planning, were rooted in an ideological inheritance from empires and philanthropic foundations. But one cannot explain their astonishing growth without accounting for East–West competition.

We can begin to assess the Cold War's impact on history over the *longue durée* only by situating it in a more global perspective, one that takes account of changes in populations and the environment, and not just national governments and international borders. The influence of the Cold War on campaigns to eradicate smallpox and malaria, even if it turns out to be relatively small, may ultimately count for more than all the arms-control agreements put together. It is too soon for definitive conclusions. But the foregoing analysis suggests it is high time historians reconsidered the attention that has been given to different aspects of this era – especially since a satisfactory account of migration, public health, and population control will require far more archive-based studies than have been cited here. As long as people care about where they live, and how long they live, and how many others will be sharing the world with them, these studies should find a large, if not growing, audience.

Even in terms of understanding the Cold War itself, the tight focus on interstate relations, conventionally defined, seems misplaced. Thus, we know Robert McNamara, the secretary of defense, but not the McNamara who transformed the World Bank. We know Dean Rusk as secretary of state and McGeorge Bundy as national security adviser, but we know little about how they ran the largest private foundations in the world. Others who never attained Cabinet positions in any US administration but still managed to change population trends and public health worldwide, such as William Draper and Fred Soper, are virtually unknown in the annals of international history. One of the most striking political developments over the past century has been the growth of international and nongovernmental organizations.<sup>61</sup> Yet even the relatively few historical studies we have tend to examine only a tiny subset of what they did, typically that part which might fit into gaps in Cold War historiography as presently constituted – i.e., a literature based squarely on state archival collections. In the larger agenda of the UN agencies, arms control and peacekeeping have occupied a rather small place, and the Ford Foundation devoted far more resources to developing and exporting biotechnology than to subsidizing anti-Communist intellectuals.

<sup>61</sup> For a more thorough discussion of nongovernmental organizations, see Matthew Evangelista's chapter in this volume.

Intellectual histories of modernization theory have also tended to have a laser-like focus on the struggle between the superpowers. But the idea of modernity is bigger than both the United States and the USSR. Public-health and population-control projects offer exciting new areas for exploration. These were indeed modernization projects. But unlike most other kinds of modernization, the process of turning peasants into wage-earning workers and consumers became quasi-biological in nature. In this way, it revealed one of the more important tensions in the very idea of modernity. If it means anything, modernization means taming nature and harnessing it to a social agenda – which is one reason why hydroelectric dams, despite all their problems, became such potent symbols. Controlling peoples' bodies and harnessing their sexual energy for social purposes is an even more awesome display of power. We will be living with the consequences for decades to come.

Perhaps the most important thing that has happened in the past hundred years, even the past thousand years, is that people have learned that we might remake ourselves as a species, controlling not only our numbers, but also our very nature. But making that happen has usually required the cooperation of governments, which have their own agendas. Whether such efforts succeed or fail, they demonstrate why it is becoming ever more difficult, even misleading, to separate the history of events from the history of “structures,” or the international history of states from the global history of peoples. The challenge for historians, and everyone else, is to explain how over the *longue durée* these different fields, too long treated in isolation, are becoming one and the same.