# CHAPTER 3

# Demographic Change and the Sources of International Conflict

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With the close of the Cold War, concerns about the global balance of power and strategic stability have diminished, while other threats to international security and the future world order have acquired greater salience among scholars and policymakers. Although some have continued to worry about a rising China or a resurgent Russia, many have identified new types of threats and have constructed new frameworks to explain and grapple with them. While some have augured conflict along civilizational lines (Huntington 1996) and others have trumpeted democracy as the foundation of peace,[1] both pundits and the press have increasingly warned that rapid population growth in the developing world poses dangers to international stability and may spark wars. Some argue that demographic growth in the developing world contributes to social and political turmoil that is conducive to domestic and international violence, while others maintain that declining fertility among the advanced industrialized countries portends a shift in the global military and economic distribution of power, undermining the postwar international order.[2] That American policymakers have recently devoted greater thought to the international implications of demographic patterns is further reason to examine these claims more carefully.[3]

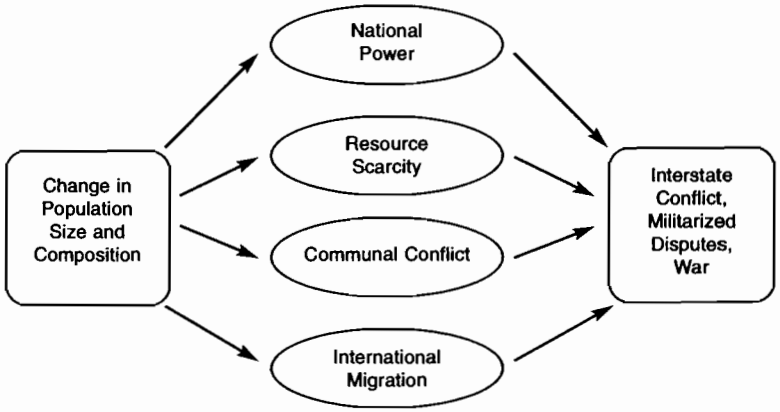
The ramifications of demographic change have received relatively little attention in the mainstream international relations literature, particularly before the end of the Cold War.[4] Although the postwar conventional wisdom has portrayed rapid population growth as injurious to a country's economic health and potentially politically destabilizing, an equally long tradition has depicted population growth as increasing the state's basis for international influence.[5] Nearly every textbook on international politics contains an obligatory discussion of the elements of national power (for example, Morgenthau 1993 [1948]; Organski 1968), and population size is



typically treated unproblematically as contributing to a state's power resources. The relationship between population and national power is a good deal more complicated than that, however, and scholars have explored other connections between demographic change and international conflict. In this review we systematically and critically assess the relationship between these two phenomena by focusing on several intervening variables and their respective causal pathways: national power, resource scarcity, communal conflict, and international migration (see Fig. 3.1).[6]

We argue that many of the predictions forecasting widespread international conflict as a consequence of rapid population growth and the corresponding proposals for drastic reduction of the birth rate in the developing world rest on unsubstantiated premises that deserve greater scrutiny. While these powerfully worded warnings and recommendations satisfy our intuitive sense that population growth gives rise to international conflict, that link is not obvious and certainly not direct. Policymakers may have good reasons—rooted in humanitarian goals, fear of environmental degradation, concern for women's quality of life (Mazur 1994; Sen 1994; Oppong 1996), and domestic political interests—for endorsing policies aimed at curbing population growth in poor countries. However, we take issue with the attempt to justify such policies on the basis of threats to international peace and security. Population growth may, on occasion, contribute to international conflict, but it does so only in combination with other factors and under particular circumstances.[7] The literature commonly posits straightforward links that are neither theoretically nor empirically convincing; what is needed is a better understanding of the conditions under which these hypotheses hold. To deny

FIGURE 3.1 Demographic Change and International Conflict: Possible Linkages



the relevance of demographic factors to international politics would be foolish, but polemics that portray runaway population growth as the next great threat to peace and that recommend population control as a panacea are equally misleading.

## Population, National Power, and International Conflict

Realist writers on international relations trace their lineage to Thucydides and take as a fundamental truth of international politics the famous lesson of the Melian Dialogue—the strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must. They argue that in an anarchic international environment force is the *ultima ratio*, and that the distribution of power, both at the dyadic and systemic levels, is the primary determinant of foreign policy choices and international outcomes. Realists have never been as insensitive to economics as their critics have charged, however, and a strong economic foundation has always been seen as essential to projecting military power and attaining great power status (Earle 1986; Doyle 1997). In the following three sections we explore the relationship between population growth and military power, population growth and economic development, and finally between national power and international conflict.[8]

### *Population and Military Power*

Realists typically endorse two hypotheses relating population and military power. First, they argue that the static indicator of relative population size correlates with the relative *size* of the army and hence with relative military power; a country with a larger population can summon a larger military than can its opponent. While scholars of international relations often eschew the most crude correlations between population size and military power, Hans Morgenthau (1993 [1948]:140–141) is hardly alone in declaring that "no country can remain or become a first-rate power which does not belong to the more populous nations of the earth."[9] Similarly, Katherine and A. F. K. Organski (1961: 15) have written that "though few nations arm to the hilt, the size of the sword is significant.... It is the size of the total population that sets the limit." Second, realists have, in a more dynamic vein, contended that population *growth* bequeaths a larger population and ensures that more young men will enter military service, boosting a state's military resources. As Morgenthau (1993 [1948]:140–141) averred, "shifts in the distribution of power within Europe in recent history have been roughly duplicated by the changes in population trends."

For some realists, the advent of the nuclear era has not significantly weakened the relationship between population and national power. Conventional forces and weaponry remain necessary for small (non-global) wars. Even in a nuclear conflict, some have argued, population would



remain a critical element of power, albeit in the form of technicians and scientists rather than infantry; troops would also be needed as occupying forces once the bomb had been dropped (Organski and Organski 1961; Tapinos 1978). It is worth recalling that the nuclear contest of the Cold War did not render the superpowers' conventional forces irrelevant. In the mid-1980s American military strategists intensely debated the state of the balance on the European front, and the possession of nuclear weapons did not prevent the Soviet Union and China from massing troops along their borders.

This reasoning has justified pro-natalist policies from Hitler to de Gaulle. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill clearly articulated this logic in a 1943 radio broadcast:

> One of the most somber anxieties which beset those who look thirty, or forty, or fifty years ahead ... is the dwindling birth-rate.... If this country is to keep its high place in the leadership of the world, and to survive as a great power that can hold its own against external pressures, our people must be encouraged by every means to have larger families. (Quoted in Morgenthau 1993 [1948]: 143)

This thinking also underlies contemporary concerns about the ability of the advanced industrialized nations to raise and maintain effective military forces as their fertility falls below the replacement rate and as their populations age, leaving them with a smaller manpower pool of military age and a smaller supporting labor force (Saunders 1991; Sarkesian 1989). As Geoffrey McNicoll (1995: 321) notes, "This old conviction that population means power clearly persists: in the United States it is seen in support for international population control efforts in branches of government (National Security Council, Defense Department) not given to welfarist concerns."

Both key links in these hypotheses' causal logic are overly simple, however. Population growth is neither necessary nor sufficient for an increase in the size of the military, nor does a larger army necessarily bring battlefield success. First, whether a country's army is commensurate with its population depends on various factors, including the character of its social and political institutions as well as the expansiveness of the state's definition of its interests. As Nazli Choucri (1974: 29) has written, "only through the mediated influence of technology, social organization, capital and military equipment, and political structure, among other variables, does population become an important consideration." For example, population growth will obviously have very different effects, all else being equal, on the size of the military in a state with mandatory service and in one with an all-volunteer force; however, if state leaders believe that the current armed forces are capable of performing their tasks, population growth can induce a state to abandon conscription.[10] In recognition of this fact, Organski and his colleagues (1972) refined earlier discussions by introducing the concept of "effective population"—that

portion of the population that contributes most directly to furthering national goals—to capture the population's skill level and the ability of the political and economic system to aggregate individual contributions into a common pool of national capabilities. Increments of national power thus result from changes in effective population, not total population.[11]

The mediating effect of state and social institutions between national resources, including population, and state power, particularly the size of the military, cannot be ignored. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the United States compared favorably with the European great powers in population and industrial production, but ranked low on measures of state autonomy and capacity. With a limited ability to convert national resources into state power, the United States remained, until the early 1890s, relatively inactive in foreign affairs and possessed of a military befitting a far smaller and less wealthy state. As the power of the American federal state grew relative to the state governments, and as the executive branch extended its reach over policy, the military and the scope of the nation's ambitions overseas swelled accordingly.[12] Similarly, the size of the French population under the old regime was obviously not dramatically different from that of Revolutionary France, but the turn to the *levée en masse*, wrapped up with changing conceptions of the state and its purpose, produced a vastly larger military force and a starkly different form of warfare. Of course, the success of the Revolutionary armies did not lie in their size alone, but in the marriage "of the professionalism of the ancien régime with the enthusiasm of a Nation in Arms," and later in the brilliance of Napoleon (Howard 1976: 80).

Nor does the second step in the realist causal chain hold, for the size of a state's army does not translate smoothly into military effectiveness, whether in winning wars or helping states prevail in crises and disputes. Numbers may matter, but the historical record does not demonstrate that, to paraphrase Voltaire, God is always on the side of the bigger battalions.[13] From the Greek defeat of the Persian armies at Marathon in 490 B.C.E. to the English victory at Crécy in 1346 to Germany's triumph in the 1940 battle for France, superior doctrine and armaments have overcome overwhelming numbers. Raw manpower is not sufficient, as the failure of "human wave" tactics, employed by China against Vietnam in 1979 and by Iran against Iraq in the 1980s, has demonstrated (Freedman 1991). States with relatively small populations have compensated with advanced technology, better tactics and strategy, the advantage of surprise, or a more efficient military organization.[14] A severely outmanned Israel has repeatedly defeated its Arab neighbors in various wars, and Britain succeeded in conquering India despite far fewer troops and armaments that were at best equal.[15]

Just as the size of an army is not a powerful predictor of military success, there is evidence that the dyadic balance of power, reflecting overall military capabilities including industrial capacity, is not the primary determinant of the diplomatic outcomes of crises that do not escalate to war.[16] As Maoz (1983: 221) argues, "initiators of serious interstate disputes tend to disproportionately emerge as victors not because they are stronger than targets but because they are able to demonstrate that the stakes of the dispute are more important to them than to their opponents." This conclusion regarding the balance of resolve is consistent with George and Smoke's (1974) emphasis on the importance of the "asymmetry of motivation," with rational choice models that incorporate preferences as well as power-based constraints (Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992), and with a number of studies that attempt to explain "why big nations lose small wars" (Mack 1975; Paul 1994).[17]



Pessimistic prognostications regarding fertility patterns and the West's ability to raise adequate military forces implicitly assume that war today is much as it was in the time of Frederick the Great.[18] However, technological developments are increasingly rendering the military's size even less relevant to the outcome of international conflict.[19] Nuclear weapons, which require a relatively limited number of technical and strategic staff to maintain and operate them, would render differentials in population less important were they to proliferate widely (Deudney 1990: 472–473). More important, the heralded information revolution in military affairs will likewise privilege an army's skill and training over its absolute size. As Eliot Cohen has noted,

> At long last, after a reign of almost two centuries, the age of the mass military manned by short-service conscripts and equipped with the products of high-volume military manufacturing is coming to an end.... Future technologies may create pockets of military capability that will allow very small states to hold off larger ones, much as companies of Swiss pikemen could stop armies sweeping through their mountain passes or a single, well-fortified castle could hold immensely larger forces at bay for months. (Cohen 1996: 47, 53)

In assessing the lessons of the Gulf War, scholars may dispute whether superior American skill, inferior Iraqi tactics, and better American arms were all essential to the complex story of a crushing U.S. victory, or whether skill and technology were each sufficient, but no one believes that numbers were critical to the outcome (Biddle 1996, 1997; Press 1997).[20] The most advanced and effective armaments require more highly educated and technically proficient manpower to operate and maintain them, skills that are in relative abundance in the industrialized world.[21] As the information revolution continues to transform the battlefield over the coming decades, sheer numbers, never the sole determinant of war's outcome, will in all likelihood continue to decrease in importance.[22]

In terms of national strategy, the impact of declining birthrates must be judged in the context of missions that need to be performed. If peace enforcement operations in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s—low-intensity, regional conflicts rather than massed forces along a central front—represent the future of warfare and of NATO's likely missions, the

West's military power, though perhaps not its willpower, will suffice. None of this is to deny, of course, that demographic factors are important considerations for military planners. The composition of the population determines the overall numbers of service-age men, affects the gender balance of the armed forces, and influences government options regarding its policies for raising forces. The size of the army influences how strategists weigh their options. None of these "demographic" facts is independent of social and political institutions, however, and numbers may be far less important than factors such as technology and level of education. Population growth alone does not translate into a larger army, and a larger military is not the same as a more effective or successful one.

Although the link between population growth, the size of the armed forces, and military power is tenuous, state leaders have often found this logic persuasive. Throughout the Cold War, American and European strategists worried about the huge Warsaw Pact numbers advantage along the central front, and Israeli generals have expressed concern about similar disparities with their neighbors to the east. Such thinking was most pervasive before World War I, when European statesmen, influenced by the Prussian model of the short-service conscript army, were engaged in "the increasingly obsessive numbers game of comparative demography" (Best 1989: 14; Howard 1976: 99–100, 105–107). Dispassionate analysis may reveal that such connections are far weaker than many suppose, but perceptions are the stuff of politics. To the extent that this strategic belief, no matter how erroneous, influences military manpower policies and strategy, it affects the likelihood of war.

Let us now turn from change in the size of the population to change in its composition. Some have suggested that if rapid population growth contributes to segmental cleavages (differences among classes, ethnicities, age groups, gender, and so on), these divisions within the populace will undermine the nation's integration and cohesion and hence its capacity for collective action (Choucri 1974: 74; Sarkesian 1989).[23] One clear example of ethnic cleavages undercutting military strength is Austria-Hungary prior to World War I. Austrian leaders had to form a cohesive military organization out of eleven different nationalities while dealing with the continued refusal of the Magyars to support army reform or increases in military recruitment without guarantees of more autonomy and other concessions that would weaken centralized command (Williamson 1991).

We will assess a related set of arguments in greater detail in the section on ethnic composition, but for now two points will suffice. First, in modern, large-scale societies, an individual must construct a political identity out of a host of possible identities—ethnicity, religion, race, class, gender, nationality—and there is nothing given about which will seem most apposite. Segmental cleavages will affect national power only if they are highly salient and politically mobilized. Identity is, then, as much a product of political context and contest as it is their source (Dirks, Eley, and Ortner 1994). Moreover, one need not be a radical constructivist to recognize that the meanings individuals attach to their identification with a larger group are subject to flux. Under urban political machines in the United States, ethnic identification was a critical marker of one's political loyalties, and the number of new Irish or Italian immigrants portended shifts in power; however, even as these hyphenated Americans have maintained a connection with their immigrant ancestors' homelands, these groups have largely melded into the single category of white ethnic. These identities have become less politically and economically relevant, mass ethnic political machines have declined, and the old ethnic foundation of politics has eroded (Waters 1990).[24]



Second, this hypothesis, although intuitively plausible, requires far greater specification regarding the expected outcomes and the causal mechanisms that lead to them. Rapid population growth would more likely be disruptive to national cohesion when it either upsets the balance between two or more ethnic or religious groups nearly equal in size or narrows the gap between two groups that are far apart, than when it further widens an already large disparity. When a far weaker group declines in influence, its capacity to fracture the nation and undermine the country's ability to project power on the international stage is correspondingly circumscribed. These hypotheses must be qualified, however, for a group's population size alone does not reveal a great deal about its political power, even in a democracy. In addition, changes in the population's age structure might have little impact on national cohesion. Although the large youth cohort might, for example, strenuously object to a military venture in which it would suffer disproportionately, it may have relatively few political resources at its disposal. As noted earlier, assuming a particular institutional and technological context, a larger youth cohort may simply increase the size of the army and add to military capability, while remaining largely incapable of altering national policy. Thus the hypothesis must further specify which trends in which segments have what political effects under what types of political institutions.

### *Population and Economic Development*

The relationship between population growth and the economic components of national power involves a long-standing debate in demography and economics, one with important implications for national security. For some, population growth underpins a rise in national income and industrial wealth, and the expanded economy can then serve as the foundation for potential military power as well as for economic coercion (Organski and Organski 1961: 21–26; Davis 1958). Others, drawing on the work of Malthus and his followers, see rapid population growth as undermining the economy and contributing to resource scarcities.[25] The strength of both sets of theoretical arguments, under varying conditions, prevents any easy resolution of this still-raging debate, and the empirical evidence

is inconclusive. Amartya Sen (1994: 62) has elegantly characterized these positions as "dismissive smugness" and "apocalyptic pessimism," warning that such a polarized debate prevents a more nuanced and genuine understanding of the relationship between population and development.

The Malthusian tradition presents the best known reasoning regarding the negative effects of population growth. Although population growth raises total productive capacity, that rise in productivity will fall short of the increase in labor supply. Given fixed natural resources, particularly land, agricultural productivity progressively diminishes, and population invariably outruns food supplies. The persuasiveness of the neo-Malthusian case turns on the highly contested concept of "carrying capacity," defined as the optimum population that a given resource base can support. The hypothesis that crisis ensues when the population exceeds the land's carrying capacity is meaningful, however, only if the point at which this occurs can be objectively identified independent of its predicted social and political consequences. This accomplishment has eluded scholars, for different societies define the minimally acceptable standard of living in different ways at different times. Moreover, the possibility of trade for food resources renders a particular country's "carrying capacity" meaningless (McNicoll 1995: 317; Bharadwaj 1996: 5; Davis 1991: 5–8). Although analysts of a Malthusian bent continue to invoke the concept when they decry "overpopulation," this critical point can be identified only after the fact.

Empirically, the Malthusian model, while perhaps adequate as an explanation of dynamics in the preindustrial period, cannot comprehend Europe's "demographic transition" over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when decreasing mortality contributed to rapid population growth but combined with steady economic gains.[26] Nor can neo-Malthusian accounts make sense of the industrialized world's fertility decline in the context of continuing economic growth (Wrigley 1996). Some scholars have even challenged these accounts on their own turf, dating Europe's escape from its Malthusian chains not to the Industrial Revolution, but to the discovery of the New World, the invention of the printing press, the Reformation, and so on (Weir 1991).

The proposition that population growth is beneficial to development in the long run is based on three lines of argument. First, since Adam Smith, economists have argued that larger internal markets are more likely to be capable of exploiting economies of scale; the larger the population, the greater the possible productivity gains (Easterlin 1996; Weiner 1971). This claim is weakened by the fact that international trade permits states to specialize in particular sectors and still reap the higher productivity generated by economies of scale.

Second, Julian Simon (1981, 1986, 1989) has argued that the Malthusian model is excessively static and ignores the possibility of technological advance, which engenders productivity gains and increased output despite the exponential growth in population. In fact, Simon has averred



that in the long run population growth encourages such innovation by producing intense demand for higher levels of output to maintain aggregate social satisfaction, and by boosting the supply of useful ideas by inducing changes in resource prices, thereby providing incentives to entrepreneurs. In addition, population growth increases the supply of creative intelligences: more heads means more good ideas. As Simon has argued, the short-term economic problems generated by rapid population growth

> eventually lead to increases in technology, by way of both the "demand-side" increase in payoff to invention, as well as from the "supply-side" increase in potential investors in the larger population.... Nor is there a physical limit upon capacity. Should the need arise, processes such as hydroponics can produce incredible amounts of food in tiny compass of space, even without soil. (Simon 1989: 178–179)

Richard Easterlin (1996) attributes population growth primarily to new techniques of disease control, which reduce mortality rates, but these advances also promote societal attitudes favorable to further innovation and hence material progress (Eberstadt 1991). This cycle of population growth, short-run pressure on resources, and long-term adjustment by way of technological change has been enacted repeatedly over the course of human history, and faith in human ingenuity sustains the optimists' confidence in the future.[27]

Finally, akin to Simon, others have maintained that the neo-Malthusian model is unrealistic in assuming that human beings are incapable of recognizing threats to their well-being and adjusting to their environment, and have argued that temporary Malthusian pressures are ultimately resolved by adaptive changes in individual behavior. As McNicoll argues,

> Human economic and demographic history has been a long story of unsustainable growth somehow sustained.... The assertion that things are now closing in, that long-standing adjustment processes can no longer be taken for granted, has much weight: but expressed without allowance for adaptive response, or with blanket condemnation of responses that do take place, it invites (and often receives) disregard. (McNicoll 1995: 315)

Similarly, Kingsley Davis (1963) has argued that human beings will tailor their demographic behavior, opting for later marriage, celibacy, abortion or contraception, or emigration. Ester Boserup (1965) has pointed to the possibility of adopting different methods of production; advanced techniques that yield higher output are also more labor-intensive, requiring the sacrifice of leisure time, and people do not turn to them until compelled.[28]

Another response, though posed more at the societal than at the individual level, is to narrow the meaning of "scarcity." Beyond some minimal

level of caloric intake and nourishment, "scarcity" (or "necessity") is a cultural construct.

> Faced with overpopulation, we have occasionally invented or adopted new technologies to increase production, but we have also accepted a wider range of foods as "edible" and accepted altered and often increased labor inputs in production while settling for declining nutritional quality.... Resource scarcity may not be so much a function of population density vis-à-vis fixed and immutable resources as it is a function of socially defined demand against technologically augmented supply.[29] (M. Cohen 1984: 27, 31)

Although the "revisionist" challenge to the Malthusians has usefully broadened the population debate, its claims have hardly been widely accepted. The assumption that technological advancement will always eventually outrun population growth is neither sufficiently justified theoretically nor confirmed empirically (Tir and Diehl 1998: 325–326; Homer-Dixon 1991, 1994). Critics have noted that technological change is a product of investment in research and education, which are policy choices located at the firm and national levels, while population growth results from inputs at numerous levels, including that of the individual, and there is no necessary link between the two phenomena. Furthermore, these explanations generate as many anomalies as they answer. Within Boserup's model, for example, without rising numbers there is no incentive to innovate (Wrigley 1996: 10).

Homer-Dixon (1995) has suggested that future environmental problems, partly a product of population growth, may reduce the supply of ingenuity in society. The concomitant resource scarcity will intensify distributional conflict, and dominant elites will impede efforts to reform existing social institutions and practices or to establish new ones if these encroach on their interests. Moreover, many poor societies lack the financial and human capital needed for vigorous, timely research; under conditions of resource scarcity, the needed capital is even harder to come by, since saving is depressed and capital is diverted to short-term necessities. The result in such societies is a chronic "ingenuity gap," preventing smooth response to emerging scarcity.[30]

Small cultural or ethnic minorities often play the dominant roles in entrepreneurship and innovation, however, and there is no evidence that their decisions are linked to the size of the population, as Simon's claims would lead one to expect (McNicoll 1984: 199, 201). Finally, in developing countries innovations are largely imported from abroad, limiting the effect of population growth on the pace and direction of technological change (Horlacher and Heligman 1991: 363).

Unfortunately, the historical record does not allow for a definitive resolution of this debate regarding the relationship between population growth and development. As several recent studies have noted, the revisionist view appears to have become the new conventional wisdom. The



many cross-national studies, based on the experiences of the industrialized West as well as the more recent experiences of the less-developed regions, have failed to document that population change either slows or bolsters economic growth. At a recent United Nations-sponsored meeting on the subject, the consensus was that "past population growth may not have played a dominant role in either enhancing or retarding the economic progress of developing countries. Non-demographic factors such as technical and institutional adjustments, the choice of technologies, and specific public policies appeared far more important" (Horlacher and Heligman 1991: 368; National Research Council 1986; Eberstadt 1991, 1998; McNicoll 1995; Easterlin 1996). In a recent study prepared for the Overseas Development Council, Robert Cassen (1994: 2) concluded that "the available evidence does not clearly show that population growth exerts a negative influence on development.... The issue of whether per capita economic growth is reduced by population growth remains unsettled. Attempts to demonstrate such an effect empirically have produced no significant and reliable results." However, these conclusions are based on research that has examined the experience of developing countries in the aggregate rather than individually.

Over the course of the twentieth century, as demand for goods and services has surged, income has also risen, and, perhaps most surprisingly, long-term real prices for primary commodities have fallen sharply (Eberstadt 1998). Where population growth has coincided with a decline in real per capita income, as in sub-Saharan Africa, the main reasons for the region's economic collapse have been attributed to its political, not demographic, troubles. As Amartya Sen has written,

> [W]hat we have to ask is not whether things are just fine in the third world (they obviously are not), but whether population growth is the root cause of the deprivations that people suffer. The question is whether the particular instances of deep poverty we observe derive mainly from population growth rather than from other factors that lead to unshared prosperity and persistent and possibly growing inequality.[31] (Sen 1994: 65–67)

While demographers and economists continue to sort through these hypotheses and the evidence and seek to establish more restrictive scope conditions for their theories, political scientists must at the very least conclude that the relationship between population growth and economic growth is largely indeterminate outside specific societal and institutional contexts.

### *National Power and International Conflict.*

Although national power (or the dyadic or systemic distribution of power) plays a role in a variety of theories of international conflict,[32] it is most central in realist approaches to international relations.[33] Drawing on

the insights of the classical realists, some contemporary foreign policy theorists, commonly known as "offensive realists," relate increases in relative state power, defined as national power discounted by limitations on state extractive capacities, to more expansive conceptions of the national interest and a more assertive foreign policy. In this view, the international system's competitive imperative drives states to seek to maximize their relative power and influence (Mearsheimer 1990; Schweller 1994; Zakaria 1998).[34] This hypothesis does not necessarily imply violent conflict, for that depends on the responses of other states. However, *ceteris paribus*, as states grow more powerful, they will become more active on the international scene, more likely to endure tense international episodes and foreign relations, and more likely to get into violent scrapes.

This theory captures important elements of foreign policy: States that lack substantial military power and potential know their limits and refrain from challenging the status quo. However, the link between state power and the definition of the national interest is far more problematic than this hypothesis suggests. First, while many would agree that "much imperial expansion is unproblematic: the strong conquer the weak because it pays" (Snyder 1991: 10), states whose power is on the rise do not seek to extend their influence continuously or uniformly. In its most general formulation, this offensive realist hypothesis does not seem to allow for variation of this kind. In fact, its proponents have conceded that states are not blind, power-mad revisionists, but prudent actors who calculate the costs and benefits of particular moves, refraining from expansion when they anticipate a strong balancing reaction. Other scholars have offered a series of hypotheses laying out the conditions most amenable to and those most resistant to aggression by systematically combining an analysis of relative power with an additional critical variable, such as the offense-defense balance or the degree of threat (Jervis 1978; Walt 1987; Glaser 1994; Van Evera 1999).

Second, although rising challengers may seek to shape the international rules of the game in a way that promotes their interests, those interests, and the way in which they are pursued, do not follow deterministically from the possession of power. As John Ruggie (1983) has pointed out, Germany's plans for the postwar international economic and political order diverged greatly from those the United States actually put into effect: the social purpose informing states' ambitions matters to the outcome. Moreover, the strong have multiple instruments at their disposal—coercive diplomacy, military force, economic statecraft, covert operations—and the offensive realist hypothesis yields little insight into which they will seek to employ. Increasing relative power may provide states with the opportunity to expand, but the motive and the intensity with which it is held do not automatically follow.[35]

A second important line of thinking is power-transition theory (Organski and Kugler 1980; Kugler and Organski 1989; Kugler and Lemke 1996) or the closely related hegemonic transition theory (Gilpin 1981).[36] According to these theorists, international politics has been a story not of recurrent formations of the balance of power, but of cycles of international dominance, decline, and transition. In nearly every period, a single state sits atop the international system, having used its power to shape the rules of the game and international political, economic, and legal institutions in a manner highly beneficial to itself. Differential rates of economic growth, technological diffusion, and hegemonic overextension eventually lead to a shift in the distribution of power, however, and a challenger arises. The probability of war is greatest when the power of the rising challenger overtakes that of the declining leader, though there is some debate as to whether the challenger initiates the war in order to accelerate the power transition and secure the benefits of hegemony for itself (Organski and Kugler 1980; Kugler and Organski 1989), or whether the declining leader initiates a preventive war to block the rising adversary and secure its own position while that opportunity is still available (Levy 1989a; Van Evera 1999).[37]



Although both Organski and Gilpin developed power transition theory to apply to the system hegemon and its leading challenger, the theory can also be applied to regional systems (as developed by Lemke [1996] in his "multiple hierarchies" model) or at the dyadic level to any pair of states (or non-state actors, for that matter), and the preventive war hypothesis is essentially dyadic in nature. The basic power transition hypothesis is that a preponderance of power within a dyad is stabilizing in the sense of minimizing the probability of war, while parity is destabilizing. A power shift combined with parity is highly dangerous, in part because conditions do not facilitate a negotiated settlement between the declining and rising states. No settlement is enforceable because the rising state cannot credibly commit to not using its preponderant power in the future to overturn the settlement and exploit the formerly dominant power (Fearon 1995).[38]

Another link between national power and international conflict has been proposed by Edward Luttwak (1994, 1996), who argues that the declining birthrate in the industrialized world has resulted in a general reluctance to lose soldiers in battle and has contributed to the widespread societal aversion to war. Luttwak concludes that the world is no longer inhabited by classic great powers which pursue claims and use force in matters far beyond their immediate security, and that without great powers to impose international order there will be chronic chaos. A further implication of Luttwak's argument is that countries with a "youth bulge," with larger youth cohorts, which are located in the developing world, will be more comfortable with war and may be tempted to undertake aggressive military ventures that threaten the interests of a West devoid of the martial spirit; thus falling fertility renders the West vulnerable.

This argument is logically flawed and empirically unsupported.[39] First, according to Luttwak parents with many children care less deeply when one falls in battle than do their counterparts with fewer progeny.

Luttwak's argument is based on the assumption that parents' concern for their children's safety is finite and that the more children there are, the less love for each—hence his reliance on the metaphor of "the family's emotional economy"—which is highly implausible. Second, birthrates everywhere in the West began declining by the early twentieth century, but that hardly prevented Europe from suffering the consequences of two world wars, often with enthusiastic popular support, and the postwar baby boom does not appear to have sparked any unusually aggressive impulses in the West as those children came of military age. Third, even were Luttwak correct that public attitudes toward war are rooted in demographic trends, the public does not control the decision to engage in warfare, even in democracies. While popular opinion is critical in the long term, policymakers often make decisions that run against the popular vein in the short term. Whether they can succeed in shaping the public's view of the operation and its implications over the long haul is an open question, but the limited decision to go to war may be made relatively independently of public views.

Throughout this discussion of population, national power, and international conflict, we have consistently skirted around one central issue: the conceptualization of power. As Robert Dahl suggested long ago, the scope (influence over which issue), domain (target of influence attempt), and weight (quantity of resources) of power must be specified if the concept is to be meaningful (Dahl 1957; Baldwin 1989). Often in international relations, power is portrayed as a *property* of an individual state, rather than as a *relation* between units.[40] The large number of quantitative research efforts, and many qualitative ones, that aim to discover correlations between the distribution of national capabilities and international outcomes proceed in precisely this fashion, focusing only on the question of weight and assuming that power defined in terms of objective indicators is a fungible instrument of political influence. This makes for parsimonious theories of power and international conflict, but at the cost of ignoring the critical questions of power over whom and for what purposes. Great military resources or economic capacity or population may then be useful in some contexts but not others (Keohane 1986), and whether a growing or shrinking population contributes to a nation's influence may depend on the issue area and the target. However, discussions of population and power, whether by demographers or international relations specialists, have not yet extended much beyond the crudest of such claims.

## Population Growth, Resource Scarcity, Economic Decline, and International Conflict

Another important path from rapid population growth to international conflict proceeds through the intervening variable of resource scarcity, and more broadly, poor economic prospects. A basic hypothesis is that once the population passes a certain threshold, it exceeds the nation's carrying capacity, and the result is a dearth of resources and a reduction in individual living standards. We have argued that the concept of carrying capacity is problematic, in that it is hard to specify a priori, that it cannot be separated from its political and social institutions and the distribution of resources, and that it is somewhat dependent on the society's (or individuals') definition of what constitutes the minimally acceptable standard of living (Gurr 1985: 54–55). Nevertheless, numerous studies have discovered that population growth and resource scarcity are closely intertwined, with important political effects. Less explored, and more often simply asserted, in this literature is the further link to international conflict.[41]

Although the revisionists, led by Julian Simon, have often seemed to argue that resource scarcity driven by population growth has been more myth than reality—and that is certainly an important aspect of their work—a crucial caveat has often been lost: the dynamics of technological advance usually kick in only in the long term, leaving an opening for resource scarcity and its political consequences in the short run (Tir and Diehl 1998; Goldstone 1997). Debilitating shortages may develop even more quickly today due to the size of populations and the resource-intensive nature of their economies (Homer-Dixon 1994: 155–156).[42]

Scholars have offered three explanations for how resource scarcity and economic decline contribute to political instability and civil strife. First, relative deprivation stemming from poverty and resource competition produces feelings of frustration and impulses toward aggression, which in turn cause social upheaval (Gurr 1970, 1985). However, although the deprivation hypothesis yields insight into the motives of dissatisfied individuals, the poor, who have suffered significant relative deprivation, lack the resources and opportunity to rebel and are faced with a classic collective action problem. Second, and in response to the inadequacies of the first, resource scarcity produces internal conflict only when it undermines state capacity, provides incentives for vigorous elite distributional conflict, and breeds discontent among the masses. Consequently, long before societies reach the nadir of privation, state institutions for resolving social conflicts and distributing goods may collapse in the face of persistent population pressure and limited resources, opening windows for individuals and groups to engage in violence (Goldstone 1991, 1997). Third, state elites may seek to capitalize on resource scarcities and related social grievances and to advance their parochial interests by instigating intergroup violence (Kahl 1998). Thus, regardless of their position on the broader, long-term relationship between population and economic development, many scholars recognize that rapid population growth can in the short run contribute to political instability.[43]

A number of empirical studies have examined the links between population pressure, resource scarcity, and international conflict, with mixed results. Many, conducted in a behavioral vein, are far stronger on findings than on an explanatory framework. Choucri (1974) analyzed the role of

four dimensions of population—size, change, distribution, and composition—in producing conflict in 45 cases in the developing world between 1954 and 1972.[44] She concludes that population factors were important in 38 of these, with size and change less important than composition and distribution; population pressures on resources were important in 19 of these cases, and were the central or sole determinants in 10 out of 45. However, Choucri also notes that population density is, by itself, not particularly important, and that even when the concentration of numbers is judged in relation to available or mobilizable resources, there is no necessary link to external aggression. When states do expand, she further argues, they may conquer a territory prized for its symbolic value, not its resources or ability to reduce high population density.

Some have criticized Choucri's study for analyzing only cases in which conflict has occurred, leaving open the possibility that the same conditions she hypothesizes to be associated with conflict may also be present in cases in which that is not the outcome,[45] and for exaggerating the contribution of population to international conflict. Kleinman (1980: 50–51) remarks that Choucri's "listing of population factors is so inclusive that it is surprising that it was not possible to find a population factor for the remaining seven instances of violence."

A contemporaneous study, conducted by Bremer, Singer, and Luterbacher (1973), is more skeptical of population's importance, defining the critical aspects of population more narrowly, but is quite consistent with Choucri's findings. Examining the war-proneness of European nations between 1816 and 1965, Bremer and his colleagues found that there was little correlation between population density and the propensity of states to initiate or participate in war.

Comparing the Choucri and Bremer studies, it is worth noting that their samples are quite different and that the temporal periods overlap only slightly. Although Choucri found distribution variables, like population density, occasionally important, it was the location with regard to borders and population that was critical, not density per se. Finally, Bremer and his co-authors acknowledged that their findings might not be applicable in less technologically advanced areas outside the European context, and that they had not tested for a non-linear relationship between density and conflict, so that they could not rule out the possibility that conflict is more likely above a particular, if as yet unspecified, crowding threshold.

Most recently, a study by Tir and Diehl (1998) confirms a modest correlation between population growth, although not population density, and states' involvement in militarized interstate disputes between 1930 and 1989. However, population growth shows little relationship in this study to the likelihood of a state initiating the conflict, which raises questions about hypothesized causal mechanisms and the likelihood of the conflict escalating to war.[46] Two points are worth noting. First, the causal mechanism supposedly being tested is that states with growing populations will have difficulty adjusting to resource scarcities and attendant environmental

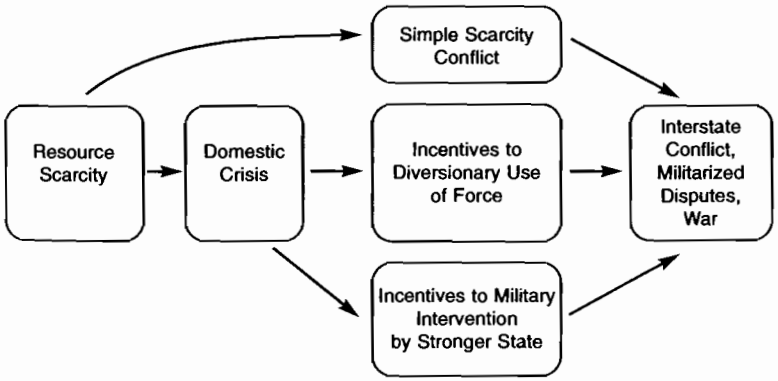


problems. As Tir and Diehl (1998: 330) acknowledge, the empirical analysis does not include a variable specifically devoted to resource scarcity or perceptions of it, leaving the causal claims entirely unexamined. Second, the study raises, but does not resolve, an interesting conundrum in its findings—why does population growth contribute to militarized interstate disputes, but have no correlation to the initiation of the conflict or its escalation to war?

There are at least three possible ways of linking resource scarcity and economic ill health (and short-term political instability) with international conflict (see Fig. 3.2). First, decision-makers may use military force in an effort to eliminate scarcity—what Homer-Dixon (1991, 1994) calls "simple scarcity conflicts."[47] Conflicts over renewable resources (for example, fisheries, forests, cropland) are fairly rare, but conflicts over oil and other non-renewable resources have played a significant role in the history of the twentieth century, as illustrated by Japan in World War II and also by the Gulf War. Homer-Dixon has conjectured that war is more likely over non-renewable resources such as petroleum and mineral resources, since these can be more directly and immediately converted into state and military power than can arable land and fish. One exception is water, which is essential for personal and national survival and has been central to political conflicts in various regions (Gleick 1993; Lowi 1993). It is important to note that war for oil and minerals is then undertaken not as a consequence of domestic political instability, but as a strategic decision for national security.

A related, but still broader, argument is Choucri and North's (1975, 1989) "lateral pressure theory" of international conflict, in which a growing population and advancing technology generate increasing domestic demands for resources that cannot be satisfied by a state's domestic

FIGURE 3.2 Resource Scarcity and International Conflict



endowments or existing levels of trade. These demands produce "lateral pressure" for access to raw materials and markets and often for political control. As these empires expand and compete for territory and resources, action-reaction cycles of arms buildups and alliance-building ensue, culminating in violent conflict and possibly full-scale war. Aside from narrow methodological difficulties, several theoretical problems arise. Choucri and North fail to consider the conditions under which free trade might be a viable alternative to colonization as a means of acquiring the external resources that promote economic growth, although in a more recent study they construct a revised model that seeks to explain the behavior of both autarkic Japan before World War II and free-trading Japan after World War II (Choucri, North, and Yamakage 1992). Moreover, the link between colonial expansion and war requires further development, especially because others have argued that colonial expansion served as a "safety valve" that diverted great power competition from the core to the periphery of the system (Morgenthau 1993 [1948]). The fact that a number of serious colonial rivals became allies during World War I runs counter to the model's expectations.

However frequently resource wars have occurred in the past, some have argued that they are less likely to occur in the future. First, some suggest that because of the nature of the global trading system, states no longer experience resource dependency as a major threat to their security and political autonomy (Deudney 1990; Lipschutz 1989).[48] There is some truth to this claim: during the Gulf War, increased drilling by Saudi Arabia and Venezuela kept petroleum prices from rising too rapidly, and despite serious restrictions on Iraqi oil production since, global crude prices remained low. However, one clear motivation (among others) for American and UN intervention in the Gulf War was to maintain access to oil supplies at acceptable prices, given the centrality of oil to the economies of the United States, its allies, and indeed the industrialized world. Moreover, the United States has continued to stockpile strategic reserves of oil and other resources, which suggests that American leaders continue to believe that resource dependency is a potential threat to national security. It has also been argued that the possibility of substitution of resources makes scarcity an unlikely cause of war (Deudney 1990: 471). Although substitution is possible, alternatives to petroleum and various other strategic minerals are simply not yet cost effective, and thus war for resource access may be perceived as rational.

Second, with the spread of small arms and national consciousness, some argue, conquest is now more expensive than ever before; consequently, "schemes of resource imperialism are now more appealing to romantic militarists than practical policy-makers" (Deudney 1990: 470–471; Kaysen 1990). However, neither nationalism nor small arms were in short supply in the middle decades of this century, and that hardly prevented Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union from undertaking imperialist ventures. Recent research has demonstrated that the conquest



of industrial society can be quite profitable from a narrow economistic perspective, and that the very institutions and infrastructures of modern society that were thought to provide the backbone of resistance can also be used to enforce rule. A ruler willing to be sufficiently brutal can stamp out serious resistance (Liberman 1996).[49] Finally, even were this argument valid regarding the industrialized world, resource imperialism might still make sense in the developing world.

Second, resource scarcity may also create incentives for political leaders, faced with crisis at home, to provoke external conflict to quiet their domestic opposition. They may seek to distract their detractors by launching a "diversionary war" or, perhaps more likely, engage in the diversionary use of force short of war, which may escalate to war through a conflict spiral. Leaders understand this, and, by coupling hard-line foreign policies with patriotic and nationalistic rhetoric, they can forge domestic unity against a common enemy.[50] The resulting "rally 'round the flag" effect may be temporary, but it nearly always follows from the use of military power abroad, regardless of the wisdom or success of that action (Russett 1990a).

Although early quantitative studies did not find strong relationships between internal and external conflict, they were theoretically mis-specified and empirically problematic (Levy 1989b); more sophisticated recent studies have generally confirmed that the use of external force is a function of domestic economic and electoral cycles and of presidential approval ratings (Ostrom and Job 1985; Russett 1990b). These findings have been reinforced by historical studies of diversionary behavior in a variety of cases, including World War I (Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany), the Falklands/Malvinas War, and the Arab-Israeli Wars.

Finally, it is also conceivable that resource scarcity and concomitant political weakness in one state will invite a stronger state to intervene militarily (Blainey 1988). Political crisis has historically often served as an incentive to attack, in two ways. First, the stronger state may seek to exploit a temporary window of opportunity created by the disruptive effects of political turmoil, as illustrated by Iraq's attack on Iran in 1980 in the wake of the revolution (Walt 1996). Second, the stronger state may desire to influence the outcome of the struggle for political power. The Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and of Afghanistan in 1980 took this form, as did U.S. interventions in Latin American countries. This has been one of the traditional motives for the strong to intervene in the domestic political affairs of their weaker neighbors.

## Population Growth, Ethnic Composition, and Conflict

One common hypothesis in the literature is that differential population growth among communal groups, both within and across borders, revises the existing and likely future distribution of power among the relevant

groups and disrupts political arrangements, engendering ethnic tension and conflict. Within the Soviet Union, fertility rates among Muslims far outpaced those of Slavic and other non-Muslim citizens; had the Soviet Union not collapsed, Russians would soon have been a minority. As the non-European republics became less Russian, and as the European republics became more so, the country's changing ethnic composition had far-reaching implications for the composition of the army as well as for demands for education, housing, and social services in general (Anderson and Silver 1995: 168).[51] More dramatically, the changing Christian-Muslim balance in Lebanon has been blamed for upsetting that country's finely tuned political system in the 1970s and throwing it into decades of turmoil. Other within-border examples include Belgium, Nigeria, and South Africa. Across-border cases include Western Europe and North Africa; Israel and the Arab states; Greece and Turkey; and Mexico and the United States (Weiner 1971; Choucri 1974; Tapinos 1978; Azar and Farah 1984; Eberstadt 1991; Freedman 1991; Homer-Dixon 1994; Goldscheider 1995; Brown 1997; Teitelbaum and Winter 1998).[52]

Although the proposition that differential growth in the populations of ethnic communities produces tension and conflict is widely held, it lacks a firm theoretical grounding. First, it overpredicts ethnic conflict. Since ethnic groups within a society generally have different fertility rates and different rates of immigration, one would expect to see nearly all societies riven with paralyzing ethnic conflict, but large-scale ethnic violence remains the exception rather than the rule (Fearon and Laitin 1996). Second, the hypothesis fails to recognize that identity is a variable. A particular identification, whether along gender, class, ethnic, or religious lines, is neither constant nor exclusive, and thus a full explanation of the dynamics of ethnic conflict must explain why a particular ethnic identity comes to dominate all other possible identities and why violent conflict follows. For example, despite significant economic disparities between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir, and Hindu dominance of most political and economic institutions, prior to 1989 there was little widespread communal tension because the two communities shared a common Kashmiri identity (Ganguly 1996). Similarly, English workers embraced a class identity that joined home and work, while their American counterparts were mobilized along ethnic lines in residential communities (Katznelson 1985). To be convincing, these propositions regarding the relevance of demographic trends to ethnic conflict must be reformulated as either relying on the caveat that the ethnic cleavage is highly salient or persuasively linking the salience of ethnicity to population patterns.[53]

From the first perspective, recent, more explicitly theoretical work offers a foundation for hypotheses elaborating the link between demographic change and ethnic conflict. Direct conflicts of interest may explain ethnic tension, but they are not sufficient to account for actual violent conflict among ethnic groups. James Fearon has modeled ethnic conflict as a form of "commitment problem." Under conditions of deteriorating state



power, ethnic majorities cannot convincingly guarantee that they will not take advantage of their superior resources to exploit ethnic minorities, and the latter may see fighting now, for an independent or autonomous region, as the superior alternative to forging an unstable pact with the former and having to fight later (Fearon 1998; Lake and Rothchild 1996).[54] Ethnic conflict, argues Fearon, is a species of preventive war.[55]

For these authors, "state weakness" is apparently a necessary precondition for violent ethnic conflict, but more careful reading reveals that they are, despite strong rhetorical claims to the contrary, highly ambiguous regarding this scope condition. State weakness, some acknowledge, cannot be limited to objective state collapse, but may be based on groups' time horizons or state strategies for coping with dissent. Lake and Rothchild (1996: 44) concede that "if plausible futures are sufficiently threatening, groups may begin acting today as if the state were in fact weak, setting off processes ... that bring about the disintegration of the state. Thus, even though the state may appear strong today, concerns that it may not remain so tomorrow may be sufficient to ignite fears of physical insecurity and a cycle of ethnic violence." They conclude that "in the end, ethnic groups are left without reliable safety nets. There is no form of insurance sufficient to protect against the dilemmas that produce collective fears and violence" (Lake and Rothchild 1996: 57). Ethnic entrepreneurs can create the structural conditions and mindsets that are conducive to violent ethnic conflict—the state weakness that makes credible commitment problematic—rather than merely taking advantage of such conditions when they present themselves (Gagnon 1994/1995).[56] Thus it is not clear that these attempts to specify the scope of violent ethnic conflict have made much progress and have solved the overprediction tendency.

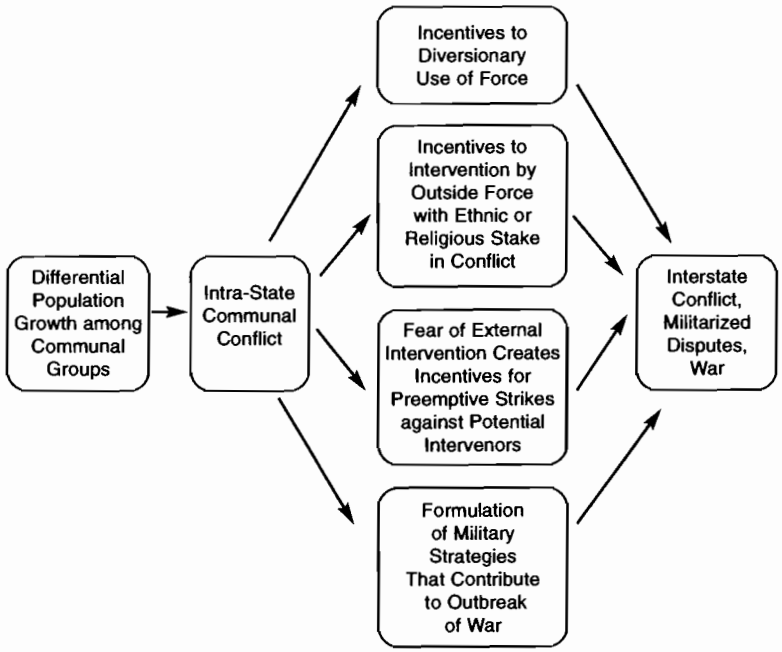
Demographic trends can also affect the salience of ethnicity. Recent work in sociology has suggested that an individual's social network affects the likelihood of identification along ethnic lines. "Young adults living alone," writes Goldscheider (1995: 6), "may be less likely to identify themselves ethnically, while families with young children may be linked to ethnic communities through family networks, jobs, schools, friends, and neighborhoods." Given the multiplicity of social identities in modern pluralistic societies, ethnic social networks—tied to places of residence and family connections, to economic activities and enclaves, expressed in political ties and cultural forms of expressions—are important to understanding why ethnic populations may fear future shifts in the balance of power. One limitation here is that networks are not a purely structural phenomenon, and insofar as individuals choose which networks to join, social networks are less a cause of ethnic identification than a reflection of it.

Rogers Brubaker's (1996: 21, 19) recommendations regarding the study of nationalism are apropos here: he recommends focusing on "the processual dynamics of nationalism," on "nationness as an event, as something that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops, as a

contingent, conjuncturally fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action." His suggestion is both troubling and suggestive, troubling because the focus on nationalism's dynamics as "governed by the properties of political fields, not by the properties of collectivities" (Brubaker 1996: 17) fails to provide strong grounding for explanations of the varying success of nationalist appeals, but suggestive in its attention to the ways in which the salience of ethnicity and nationalism is highly contingent. This is an under-explored area within the ethnicity and nationalism literature, and answering that question is key to understanding how and when demographic change contributes to national/ethnic tensions and conflict and when it has relatively little impact.

Finally, several causal mechanisms can link domestic ethnic violence to international conflict (see Fig. 3.3). First, political leaders may seek to smooth over ethnic divisions by attacking (and sometimes creating) a common external adversary. Although much theoretical work remains to be done fully to explicate the dynamics of this scapegoat hypothesis, the validity of this link is borne out by numerous historical incidents. Second,

FIGURE 3.3 Communal Conflict and International Conflict






ethnic conflict undermines the capacity of the central state, possibly to the point of collapse, thereby providing an incentive for other states to exploit its current weakness. Such ventures may, however, backfire if the warring ethnic groups band together and overcome their differences to repel the invader. In anticipation of ethnic problems, concomitant state weakness, and external attack, leaders may have incentives to launch preventive strikes against likely adversaries. Variants on both these mechanisms were discussed at greater length earlier.

Third, ethnic conflict may compel states to adopt military strategies that hamper their effectiveness and, under some conditions, possibly contribute to the outbreak of war. A notable example of diminished military effectiveness is the Russian armed forces at the start of World War I. Before 1914, the Russian military, fearful of the political consequences of concentrating troops of any single ethnicity in one location, widely dispersed its armies, which significantly slowed the process of mobilization. The slow pace of Russian mobilization encouraged Germany to believe that it could successfully execute the Schlieffen Plan, which focused on defeating France quickly in the west before turning to face the delayed but potent threat from Russia in the east.

Fourth, if differential population growth among ethnic or religious groups results in the poor treatment of minorities, outside parties with an ethnic or religious stake in the outcome may come to their aid, threatening conflict across boundaries. Ill treatment of Greek minorities in Turkey and of Turks in eastern Thrace, whether real or perceived, has certainly contributed to tensions between these Aegean neighbors.[57] Shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, concerns about the fate of ethnic Russians in other former Soviet republics fueled the popularity of nationalists and their calls for more assertive policies in the "near abroad." More clearly still, Islamic fighters from Afghanistan, out of work in the early 1990s with the installation of a stable central government, found a cause in the plight of their Muslim brethren in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

## Migration and International Conflict

Rapid population growth can lead to migration within and across borders. Short-term resource scarcities generate incentives for people to move to locations where supplies are more plentiful, and ethnic conflict may force refugees to flee their homes for safer ground. By changing regional population balances among ethnic groups, overwhelming urban infrastructures, creating pressure on limited water and food supplies, and suppressing agricultural and industrial production, internal migration, driven by population growth, can create additional stresses on social and political institutions (Swain 1996). External migration can also produce tension within the host country if it poses new economic or social burdens. Migration may also provide elites with incentives to play the

nativist card and incite intergroup conflict as a means of shoring up their political base (Swain 1996: 969–970; Saunders 1991: 2). The internal implications of these dynamics have been explored above. Finally, migration, as a source of population change, may indirectly contribute to international conflict by bolstering or undermining national power, altering a country's ethnic or communal composition, or giving rise to resource scarcities—the three other causal pathways examined in this paper. This section of the essay will instead assess the hypotheses offered regarding the direct international consequences of migration across borders.

There are several paths by which migration can contribute to international conflict:[58] First, migrants may seek to influence their host government to pursue aggressive policies vis-à-vis their country of origin. As Myron Weiner (1985: 451) notes, migrants "have been critics of their country of origin and pressured their host government to influence the domestic politics of their country of origin." In several cases, migrants have actually succeeded in pulling the host country into war: East Pakistan and India; Khmer refugees in Thailand; Afghan refugees in Pakistan (Freedman 1991; Weiner 1992/93: 198–201; Sheffer 1993; Shain 1993; Miller 1998: 23–24).[59] However, others have argued that this problem is quite limited, since migrants, politically marginal in their home country, normally possess a limited ability to organize politically and successfully make demands on the government of the receiving country (Homer-Dixon 1994: 159).[60] With either position capable of citing a large number of relevant examples, neither has succeeded in establishing a convincing generalization; whether migrants are politically powerful or powerless depends on the particular context.

Second, mistreatment—real, perceived, or manufactured—of migrants can lead their country of origin to seek to intervene on their behalf (Organski and Organski 1961: 138, 242). As noted above, this dynamic has often led to international tension in the past. Russian sensitivity in the post–Cold War period to the treatment of ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics is a case in point, and just a few years ago American hawks were pointing to Russian nationalist rhetoric regarding the "near abroad" as representing a real threat to international security (Brubaker 1993). Other cases include tensions between India and South Africa over the latter's treatment of its Indian minority, Chinese concern over the status of Chinese communities throughout Southeast Asia, and Mexican denunciations of perceived discrimination against Mexican nationals in the United States (Poku and Graham 1998).

Further, classifying migrants as refugees with a well-founded fear of persecution implicitly accuses and condemns the country of origin, fostering an antagonistic relationship (Weiner 1992/93: 198–199). In the early 1990s, China regarded the American debate over whether Chinese students should be permitted to remain in the United States as interference in its internal affairs. The United States' relations with Russia and Cuba are other good examples. While such moves may contribute to worsening diplomatic relations, it is unlikely that they could, in the absence of further provocation and deeper conflicts of interests, lead to international violence.



Fourth, further conflict can emerge over a state's migration policies. Where one state permits, promotes, or forces emigration to a state that forbids or restricts entry, the situation has the potential for international tension, creating a "high" politics over population movements. The United States has been involved in a series of such incidents with Cuba and Haiti over the last two decades (Zimmermann 1995; Zolberg 1995). Where one country restricts emigration that another seeks to promote, migration policies may become a bargaining chip in a larger negotiation package. A key example here is wrangling between the United States and the Soviet Union over the fate of Soviet Jews (Weiner 1985; Swain 1996).

In addition, the presence of combatants in refugee camps can make the host country into a target for foreign attack. Foreign forces may feel justified in pursuing the enemy across the border, commonly threatening the safety of host country citizens. This story has been enacted repeatedly across Africa. Moreover, in many regions, ethnic groups straddle national boundaries, and ethnic conflicts are not easily confined to the country in which they originated (Jacobsen 1993).

Sixth, migrants can themselves become a threat to the security of the host country by launching terrorist attacks, illegally smuggling weapons, trafficking in drugs, and so on. Palestinians have posed a security problem for Arab states, such as Lebanon and Jordan; Pakistan's decision to arm the Afghan refugees has in turn limited its dealings with the governments of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union (Weiner 1992/93: 201–202; 1993). Fighting among rival factions in refugee camps can spill over into the local community (Jacobsen 1993).

At present the literature on the consequences of international migration consists of a set of generalizations, each with relevant examples, rather than a set of testable propositions laying out the conditions under which one expects to see international conflict as a consequence of migration. This is an essential first step, generating a series of puzzles and a wide range of expectations, but the literature has not yet made the move to theory, leaving unclear which of these causal paths is most likely and when. Whether migration heightens tensions between states often depends on whether it is viewed as undermining national security or domestic harmony, but the process by which threats are constructed and by which boon is transformed into bane remains poorly understood and under-theorized.[61] Nor has the literature generally distinguished between the possible international repercussions of migration: a rise in international tension, a militarized interstate dispute, or war. As scholars continue to pin down the relationship between migration and these phenomena, they must remain attentive to the different levels of international conflict and offer clear hypotheses regarding when one would expect to see one rather than the other as a consequence of migration.

## Conclusion

Few would deny that population growth and decline and other demographic factors are dynamic processes with important ramifications for international politics. Specifying the precise paths through which they might impair national security and contribute to international conflict is another matter. In the preceding discussion of four important causal factors joining these phenomena—national power, resource scarcity, ethnic composition and communal conflict, migration—we have questioned the theoretical logic and empirical validity of many of the hypotheses that proliferate in the relevant fields of international relations and demography.

The intersection of demography and international relations is marked by a paucity of well-developed theory, partly because scholars in each discipline rarely devote attention to these questions and because they generally do not read the literature of the other discipline. Consequently students of international relations often blithely assert that a growing population underpins a country's increasing ability to project power and exert influence on the international scene, ignoring the raging debate in economics and demography over the relationship between population growth and development. Meanwhile, demographers often offer simplistic hypotheses regarding the international consequences of population growth without sufficiently considering how political processes might affect those dynamics.

Moreover, while the prevailing literature addresses some plausible mechanisms linking a variety of population factors to interstate conflict, it has not generally recognized that this process is analytically distinguishable from that leading to militarized disputes or war. One of the earliest modern students of international relations to write on the subject, Quincy Wright (1958: 260–263), recognized this: "[Population] movements may affect the balance of power and the prosperity of peoples, but there are always alternative methods for meeting these problems. Population differentials or population pressures never create a necessity to go to war though they may create a necessity for action." More recently, Tir and Diehl (1998) indicated their sensitivity to this difficulty by testing separate hypotheses on militarized interstate disputes and wars. This review has sought to demonstrate the advantages that a broader perspective, rooted in international relations theory but familiar with demographers' findings, can bring to this project at the nexus of these two disciplines.

Reviewing the literature of the last several decades, one is struck by how little progress has been made since Wright wrote on the subject over forty years ago. Although Wright clearly believed political demography was of great import, he concluded that a country's population is indeterminate with respect to foreign policy, that both overpopulation and underpopulation had been associated in the past with peaceful and escalatory national policies. Moreover, Wright found no correlation between



war and either rising or declining world population. He noted and cautioned against "the temptation to state over-precisely and without adequate qualification, the international consequences, of, or the remedies for, population conditions" (Wright 1955: 365). Many contemporary scholars have been much less sensitive to Wright's concerns.

There are also important methodological issues to consider. The linkages between population growth and international conflict are admittedly convoluted and difficult to trace, but scholars should not entirely sacrifice rigor on the altar of richness, abandoning the quest for spare, generalizable causal models. For example, although Thomas Homer-Dixon's project on environment, population, and security has made a significant contribution by generating an intricate set of hypotheses as to the conditions under which demographic change fosters conflict, and by illustrating these hypotheses with a series of richly detailed case studies, the complexity of these models and their excessive particularity undermines their utility for theory construction.[62] History is messy, but social science usefully employs narrower lenses, focusing on a limited number of variables while recognizing that such an account is necessarily incomplete. As in so many other areas, we need to strike a better balance between richness and rigor in the study of demography and international conflict.

Although scholars of international relations have not yet devoted much attention to demographic factors, we anticipate that this will prove a productive area of future research along the lines of the four causal paths presented above. Past work on the relationship between population growth, national power, and international conflict has been marked by bold claims that upon further examination appear far weaker and more contingent. The still-raging debate between neo-Malthusians and revisionists leads to the conclusion that outside of specific societal, cultural, and institutional contexts the relationship between population growth and economic growth is indeterminate. As demographers and economists sort out the evidence and establish more restrictive scope conditions for their theories, political scientists can begin to incorporate them into more determinate hypotheses regarding the sources of international influence.

While many students of international relations have commented on the link between population growth and military strength, a rising population does not imply an increase in the size of the armed forces, and a larger military has never smoothly translated into military effectiveness. Nonetheless, state leaders have often pursued pro-natalist policies and decreed mass conscription in the belief that a large youth cohort is the key to military success, and such beliefs—not scholars' findings—shape political decisions. Thus numbers will, given a particular strategic culture, affect how policymakers assess the balance of power, weigh their policy choices (for example, to wage preventive war, to appease, or to stand firm), and design their military strategy. Whether and how population growth affects military power and the causes of war and peace are contingent upon the prevalence of a particular set of beliefs among policymakers.

Even if the population revisionists' expectations are borne out in the long run, resource scarcity may set in and economic performance may suffer in the short term. Through this intervening path, population growth may contribute to international conflict in one of three ways: the seizure of resource-rich territories to alleviate scarcity, the diversionary use of force to rally public support around the political leadership, and opportunistic military intervention in the suffering country by an outside power. All three mechanisms are plausible, but the theories that would help identify when each is most likely to operate remain insufficiently developed. Similarly, scholars have so far examined a number of ways in which migration might contribute, and has in the past contributed, to international tension and conflict, but these remain a set of unintegrated hypotheses, empirical generalizations not grounded in a strong theoretical edifice. Although work on the causes of migration and refugee flows is becoming increasingly theoretically sophisticated, more thought must be applied to their consequences, to the conditions under which they are most and least likely to exacerbate international tensions.

Finally, one of the more intriguing hypotheses in the literature is that differential population growth among ethnic groups sparks conflict, as growing groups employ their newfound power to restructure existing political, economic, and social institutions at the expense of declining groups. This proposition takes the mobilization of ethnic/national identity for granted, however, and the process by which identities are mobilized is not particularly well understood. Demographic change, including population growth and movement, may play an important role in highlighting the salience of particular cleavages, thus allowing for their exploitation by ethnic entrepreneurs. Moreover, as some sociologists have argued, particular age cohorts may be more likely to take part in ethnic networks, and thus fertility patterns may have a great impact on the degree of ethnic identification across society. These claims await further theoretical analysis and empirical examination.

Rapid population growth in the developing world is hardly welcome, but it does not by itself pose a serious threat to international peace and security. While we have identified several mechanisms through which demographic change may contribute to international conflict, the more common result is domestic disruption and perhaps violence. Inspired by humanitarian ideals or pressured by domestic interest groups, policymakers in the industrialized world may strive to devote resources to combating rapid population growth and to offer aid to developing nations as they cope with exploding populations. Their counterparts in poorer countries may, confronted with economic crisis and resource scarcity, be eager for help in containing the seemingly inexorable rise in numbers. International conflict is a possible outcome, but the links between it and population growth are complex and indirect, with social institutions, political considerations, and the international environment all mediating. By successfully manipulating these intervening factors—by no means an easy



task—Western policymakers whose central concern is preserving international peace could achieve their goal even as rapid population growth rages unabated. At stake is the kind of world in which we wish to live, the international milieu, but not international order.

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## Notes

1. While democratic states are involved in war as frequently as non-democratic states, liberal democracies rarely, if ever, go to war with each other. Although a consensus has formed around the law-like status of this finding—it has been described as coming "as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations" (Levy 1989a: 270)—the theoretical explanation for this phenomenon remains highly contested (Brown et al. 1996).
2. For a sampling of such views, see Wattenberg 1987; Foster 1989; Myers 1989; Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1990; Homer-Dixon 1991; Helman and Ratner 1992/93; Kaplan 1994, 1996; Luttwak 1994; Chase, Hill, and Kennedy 1996. For a variety of European concerns regarding declining fertility, see Michael Specter, "Population Implosion Worries a Graying Europe," *New York Times*, 10 July 1998, A1; Teitelbaum and Winter 1998.
3. Both President Clinton and Vice President Gore reportedly read carefully Robert Kaplan's jeremiad, "The Coming Anarchy" (1994). In 1994 Thomas Homer-Dixon briefed Gore and other top administration officials; see Saul Friedman, "'Failed States' Bring World Crisis Nearer," *Newsday*, 18 August 1994, A6. On the new ecological focus of U.S. foreign policy, see also Gore 1992; Steven Greenhouse, "The Greening of U.S. Diplomacy," *New York Times*, 9 October 1995, A6; Dabelko and Simmons 1997; Pirages 1997.
4. Important exceptions include Sprout and Sprout 1971; Choucri 1974; Choucri and North 1975; and, more recently, Homer-Dixon 1991, 1994. Also relevant here is Leroy 1978.
5. On the association of population with power, particularly among the encyclopedists of eighteenth-century France, see Keegan 1987.
6. In the earlier literature on rapid population growth, much was made of the effects of "overcrowding" derived from studies of animal behavior. We have not discussed these approaches because their claims regarding intrasocietal conflict have been severely criticized in the last two decades. Moreover, the distinctive prediction of these hypotheses was social anomie and violence, not international conflict. See various essays in Choucri 1984.
7. For the purposes of this essay, we adopt a traditional conception of "security." On the problems with casting the environment debate in national-secu-

have been offered by Ullman 1983; Mathews 1989; Rothschild 1995. It is worth noting that Ullman has himself retracted his earlier, highly influential claims; see Ullman 1991.

8. We focus here on the consequences of population growth for economic development and military power and potential. Many of these hypotheses can be reversed to generate expectations regarding the consequences of population decline. On the political implications of population decline, see McNeill 1990.
9. To be fair to Morgenthau, he recognizes that "the largeness of population" has also at times served as an obstacle to the development of national power and that the age distribution within a given population is also important (1993 [1948]: 142). But the dominant thrust of the text is that a large population bequeaths great international influence, and at best Morgenthau provides no guidance to the analyst seeking to understand when population augments, and when it undermines, a nation's power.
10. Depending on the extractive capacity of the state, population growth can also affect military strategy, particularly with respect to the tradeoff between the internal mobilization of manpower and armaments and the formation of military alliances. On the tradeoffs (or lack of such) between arms and alliances, see Barnett and Levy 1991; Morrow 1993; Christensen 1997. On intra-alliance dynamics, see Krebs 1999.
11. Although Organski et al. (1972) recognize that the level of contribution varies across individuals and across issue areas, that contributions are intermittent, and that specific individuals drop in and out of the effective population, they nonetheless proceed to operationalize the category in terms of the number of employed agricultural workers, a measure that takes none of this into account. Moreover, this figure ignores the political activist class, the military, and the fact that agricultural workers in the industrialized world produce for both national and international markets. Finally, the authors note that beyond some optimum level, effective population becomes dysfunctionally large, as nongovernmental groups come to dominate the state. As we argue later, it is not clear how to ascertain that optimum point except in post hoc fashion.
12. On the American case, see Zakaria 1998. On the bulky, but nonetheless useful, concept of "state strength," see Skocpol 1985; Ikenberry et al. 1988.
13. This widely cited saying has been ascribed to many sources, often Napoleon, occasionally Frederick the Great. John Keegan (1987) asserts that it comes from Voltaire.
14. The size of the military certainly influences doctrine. A small army is unlikely to engage in a war of attrition against a larger enemy, while a larger force might find that option more attractive. However, strategy is not *determined* by circumstances and always involves an element of choice; accounts of the process by which militaries actually reach their doctrinal decisions stress the importance of individual decision-makers and chance. Two examples: Germany would not have adopted blitzkrieg in 1940 without a plane crash that led to fear that the war plans had been divulged to the Allies, the postponement of the attack, and a search for alternative strategies, and without Hitler's eventual endorsement of blitzkrieg. Moshe Dayan's return to the Israeli government in June 1967 ensured the rejection of a limited-aims strategy, which Yitzhak Rabin had favored. See Mearsheimer 1983.
15. On the latter case, see Rosen 1996; for further examples, see Howard 1976.



16. This section builds on Levy 1989c.
17. The influence of the balance of resolve relative to the balance of capabilities reflects how such crises originate in the first place. Since states tend to challenge the status quo only when they are very highly motivated, any analysis that fails to endogenize the role of resolve in crisis bargaining, including the diplomatic or domestic political costs of backing down ("audience costs"), may be seriously flawed (Fearon 1994a, b).
18. Note that such arguments seem to favor indigenous growth over population growth from other sources (e.g., migration). Were the actual population levels considered at risk, Western countries could easily rectify the situation by adopting more open borders and looser citizenship policies. The racist subtext of such concerns is much more explicit in the rhetoric of extreme Russian nationalists, such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who see the country's demographic decline as boding ill for its status as a great power.
19. For a contrary view, see Wright 1958. Wright has suggested that as developing countries become more technologically proficient, technology will equalize across the international system, and population can be expected to become more salient, a more critical determinant of national power. Wright's implicit claim that technology will achieve some ultimate stasis is problematic, for technology is a process marked by ever-present flux. Technological diffusion is also gradual and uneven.
20. For an argument that is skeptical of the power of technology alone to yield victory, and even of the military advantages of advanced arms, see Handel 1981.
21. Some scholars have expressed alarm over the current and expected skill-level of the U.S. armed forces. They note that if the military continues to employ more complicated weaponry, it may be caught between the need for highly educated technicians and specialists and a diminishing supply of recruits able to absorb the complex training (Handel 1981; Binkin 1986; Foster et al. 1987). This is a far more serious problem for developing countries.
22. However, technology does not diffuse evenly or always rapidly across the globe, and states outside the advanced industrialized world will be slower to absorb such technological developments into their armed forces and military doctrines. Consequently, in such states the relative impact of numbers will decline more slowly.
23. Choucri (1974: 184–185) acknowledges later that the evidence regarding segmental differences and national power is highly mixed.
24. Even as older ethnic categories have lost their political relevance, "new" ethnic groups, notably Latinos and Asian-Americans, have become major players in their own fashion on the American political scene.
25. The following discussion of the effects of population growth, both positive and negative, draws, in addition to sources cited below, on McNicoll 1984, 1994, 1995; Bharadwaj 1996; Easterlin 1996: chapter 7.
26. A large literature has persuasively criticized the so-called "demographic transition theory" as less a theory, or even a set of empirically testable propositions, than a description of and generalization from the European experience. Even as the latter, it is inadequate as anything more than a first cut, for the timing and pace of the eventual declines in fertility bore no relationship to the level or pace of economic development: Fertility rates declined in France and in China while their respective economies were still largely agrarian, but declined in England long after the onset of industrialization. Moreover

demographic transition theory predict either the spectacular postwar mortality decline in the developing countries, in the absence of significant economic development, or the baby boom in the advanced nations. Finally, it is not clear that the model is applicable outside the European context, for, as McNicoll has observed, "such 'surface' characteristics as family forms, tenurial arrangements, local authority structures, and political traditions have played a significant part in both economic and demographic outcomes" (1995: 319). See Organski et al. 1984; Davis 1991: 13–17; McNicoll 1994, 1995; Teitelbaum and Winter 1998: 197–198.

27. An amusing and relevant anecdote: in 1980, three environmentalists bet Julian Simon that the price of a basket of five metals would rise over a ten-year period; Simon, who thought it would decline, won the bet. See Myers and Simon 1994: 99, 206.
28. Along similar lines, see Ruttan and Hayami 1991; Wrigley 1996. Kleinman (1980) weaves together elements of all these arguments.
29. Similarly, an anthropologist reports that "I ask my students how they feel about being increasingly crowded by the growing population, and they reply, 'We're not crowded.' ... Whatever environment you're born into is the one that seems normal." See Malcolm W. Browne, "Will Humans Overwhelm the Earth? The Debate Continues," *New York Times*, 8 December 1998, D5.
30. See also Gurr 1985. Homer-Dixon (1995) also notes that the supply of ingenuity will be limited by market failures and constraints on scientific advance, but these factors are independent of resource scarcity and population growth.
31. Sen (1994) is careful to note that a lower population growth rate could have reduced the magnitude of the fall in per capita GNP, but argues that rising population was much less important than exploitative and combative political rulers (and the Cold War) in undermining economic stability.
32. For reviews of theories of war, see Levy 1989a, 1998; Vasquez 1993; Van Evera 1999.
33. "International conflict" encompasses a wide range of phenomena, from war to militarized interstate disputes to nonmilitarized interstate tensions. With occasional exceptions, the literature on demography and conflict has failed to distinguish among the large number of possible conflictual international outcomes to which population growth may contribute. At each stage in the analysis we will attempt to clarify these relationships more precisely.
34. On the debate between offensive and defensive realism, see Lynn-Jones 1998; Rose 1998.
35. As Lynn-Jones (1998: 179–180) argues, offensive realism does not "offer predictions about the magnitude and character of a state's expansion." In fact, models of war that attempt to incorporate actors' utilities as well as power give significantly better predictions than do more narrow balance of power models (Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992).
36. Although differing in important ways, the two approaches are sufficiently similar for our purposes.
37. The declining state has a number of strategies at its disposal, ranging from retrenchment to appeasement to preventive war (Gilpin 1981), but there has been very little research on the conditions under which each response is most likely.
38. Note that the power transition/preventive war hypothesis, possibly reinforced by hypotheses of loss aversion that predict risk-acceptant behavior to avoid losses or recover recent losses (Levy 1997), implies that the main threat to the peace comes not from those increasing in power, but rather from those decreasing in relative power. International conflict, in this view, is driven more by fear than by ambition.



39. One might dismiss Luttwak out of hand if not for the fact that his suggestion has been approvingly cited over the years. Two recent mentions are Kupchan 1998: 52–53; and Charles Lane, "TRB: Casualty Attitude," 26 October 1998, *The New Republic*, 6.
40. The power literature is extremely large and "essentially contested," to borrow Steven Lukes's term. We need not burrow deeply into these debates here to note that many thinkers on power would decry the crude treatment of the concept by mainstream IR theorists.
41. Some make the strong claim that overpopulation, presumably operating through resource scarcity, is one of the driving forces of international conflict. McNeill (1982), for example, argues that the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were a consequence of French population pressures, while Great Britain coped with its demographic problems by establishing an overseas empire and exporting both goods and people. Similarly, both World Wars erupted in an effort to cope with overcrowding in East-Central Europe: "the statesmanship of the Great Powers surely reflected the aggressive politics of expanding populations." (McNeill 1990: 20–21)
42. For a contrary view, which argues that advanced industrial societies rely less on minerals, energy, and raw materials to produce wealth ("dematerialization"), see Farinelli 1996. Drawing particularly on the cases of Japan and Germany, Prodi (1996: 126) argues that today the key to economic success is not investment in physical capital, but in human capital, in education: "The novel characteristic of the last generation of economic development is the weak correlation between the availability of resources and prospects for long-term growth in all countries of the world.... All empirical data demonstrate that land and raw materials have not been the foundations of the economic growth of the last generation."
43. For many, the question is not one of whether rapid population growth has negative short-term economic impact—Sen (1994), for example, despite his attention to political factors, concedes that it does—but whether it is the most important variable. Occupying middle positions on the continuum, Sen (1994) and Goldstone (1997) simply have different emphases, but not starkly different arguments.
44. Choucri (1974: 90–91) operationalizes international violence or conflict as "any armed conflict involving regular armed forces, a certain degree of organized fighting, and sustained violent encounters and armed clashes." Choucri's study is based on an MIT data set—the Computer Aided System for the Analysis of Local Conflict—from which she extracted only the Third World cases and incorporated a number of "additional cases which seemed particularly revealing from a political perspective." A number of relevant cases, notably conflicts between India and Pakistan, were excluded because they would have involved too much additional coding.
45. In more technical terms, Choucri has committed the methodological sin of selecting on the dependent variable (Tir and Diehl 1998: 326).
46. Tir and Diehl (1998) control for geographical proximity (contiguity), military capability, and level of development. Because capability is correlated with

population, however, controlling for military power misses some of the effect of population growth. In addition, population may wield its effects through development, either by retarding economic growth (neo-Malthusian position) or promoting it (Julian Simon and other revisionists).

47. See also Gurr 1985: 65. Note that militarized conflict may arise either through the direct use of force or as a result of a conflict action-reaction spiral beginning with responses to lower-level threats.
48. This may also be because economic growth is no longer dependent on investment in raw materials (see n. 46 above). This hypothesis reflects the broader view of "commercial liberalism" that an open trading system and extensive economic interdependence is a force for peace. Although the majority of recent empirical studies support the liberal hypothesis on interdependence and conflict (Oneal and Russett 1997; McMillan 1997), some research points in the other direction (Barbieri 1996), supporting the realist argument that economic interdependence either has no systematic impact on the outbreak of war or that asymmetric interdependence actually increases the probability of war.
49. Notwithstanding the title of his book, Liberman is not arguing that conquest pays in the broadest sense: Clearly it did not for Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union, who provoked overwhelming balancing coalitions. Nonetheless his analysis is apposite, demonstrating that the conquest of industrialized nations is worthwhile in a more limited sense. Although Liberman does not examine whether his conclusions remain valid given the "postindustrial" turn in national economies, we are skeptical that it would render obsolete his insights regarding the cumulativity of industrial resources; physical and even human capital is relatively immobile and can still be exploited by a conqueror. Moreover, much of the developing world still awaits industrialization.
50. Among writers on demography and international relations, this possibility was noted by Organski and Organski (1961: 243–244): "if a nation cannot or will not solve the problem by economic change at home, it may seek to solve it by arming and threatening others, for an army affords employment; military production provides more jobs; and militant nationalism takes people's minds off other problems."
51. For some, population trends within the United States are cause for concern, as increasing numbers of Latino and Asian Americans augur a shift in political power from the north and east to the south and west, from Europe-centered issues to Hispanic/Pacific problems. These demographic patterns, according to this view, are forecast to spark an intense contest for entitlement priorities between predominantly Caucasian retirees and predominantly nonwhite children, mothers, and unemployed, and are likely to provoke ethnic and racial conflict as African-Americans fear their jobs will go to Hispanic-Americans and as poor whites dread a diverse gray/brown threat—that is, from the aging population and from other ethnic groups (Kennedy 1993: 50–51).
52. The discussion that follows will focus more extensively on the arguments linking demographic change to internal ethnic conflict; many of the same arguments are applicable at the international level.
53. Ethnic identity is not the only possible salient political cleavage. Consequently Fearon 1998, as well as Lake and Rothchild 1996, explicitly assume that ethnicity is the society's focal political division.



54. Numerous other theoretical frameworks have been offered to explain violent ethnic conflict (Brown et al. 1996, 1997) and some are quite convincing, both theoretically and empirically, but these are less useful for making sense of its links to demographic change.
55. For an attempt to model ethnic conflict as a security dilemma, see Posen 1993.
56. For other ambiguous statements, see Lake and Rothchild 1996: 48, 52, 55. A further problem of characterizing violent ethnic conflict as the consequence of a commitment problem (and hence as a form of preventive war) is that this implies that the conflict is initiated by the declining minority, but ethnic conflict is also at times (and perhaps more often) undertaken by the majority group seeking to exploit its greater power and attain its ends at the expense of minorities.
57. On the postwar Greco-Turkish conflicts, and particularly the role of NATO, see Krebs 1999.
58. Causality of course goes both ways. International and internal conflict have been important sources of migrants and refugees. The resulting endogeneity problems force the analyst to give careful attention to questions of causation.
59. Migrants also sometimes become pawns in, rather than causes of, inter-state conflict, as the host country, for its own reasons, actively supports them in their quest to change the regime of their homeland. The United States' support for Cuban exiles is well known. For other examples, see Weiner (1992/93: 199).
60. Suhrke 1993 partially endorses this claim, arguing that refugees, as opposed to migrants, are unlikely to successfully foment conflict, and hence the consequence of their efforts is more often oppression than destabilization.
61. For an interesting, suggestive discussion of changing Australian views on migration, from "populate or perish" to "diversify or decline," see Freeman 1993.
62. For the most recent statement, and a set of case studies on Mexico, Gaza, South Africa, Pakistan, and Rwanda, see Homer-Dixon and Blitt 1998.

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# Contents

List of Illustrations vii
Acknowledgments ix
Notes on Contributors x

Introduction *by Myron Weiner and Sharon Stanton Russell* 1

PART ONE Population Dynamics and National Security: Theories and Evidence

1. International Migration: Predicting the Unknowable 21
*Michael S. Teitelbaum*
2. Demography, Environment, and Security: An Overview 38
*Jack A. Goldstone*
3. Demographic Change and the Sources of International Conflict 62
*Ronald R. Krebs and Jack S. Levy*

PART TWO State Responses to Demographic Trends

4. Keepers of the Gates: National Militaries in an Age of International Population Movement 109
*William J. Durch*
5. Plural Nationality: Facing the Future in a Migratory World 154
*T. Alexander Aleinikoff and Douglas Klusmeyer*
6. Migration and Foreign Policy: Emerging Bilateral and Regional Approaches in the Americas 177
*Susan Martin*

PART THREE Demographic Engineering and National Security Objectives

7. Demography and Security: Transmigration Policy in Indonesia 199
*Riwanto Tirtosudarmo*