

Overpopulation and International Conflicts: An Update

Keywords: Overpopulation; Fertility; Gender imbalance; International conflicts; Ukraine

Abstract

Environmental damage is proportional to the population density. Overpopulation leads to fresh water and food shortage. Compared to the population growth, the increase in carbon emissions was faster in developing countries than in high-income ones. The population-related factors are expected to be critical in the dynamics of climate changes. Related topics of temporary and fictive marriages, sexual and reproductive coercion are discussed here. Besides, the current conflict in Ukraine is briefly delineated. The need for the birth control in overpopulated parts of the world has been obfuscated by conflicting national and global interests: the population growth has been regarded as a tool helping to the sovereignty and defense. High fertility has been propagandized to boost up military and labor resources. Smoldering international conflicts contribute to higher birthrates. An authority concentrated in the most developed parts of the world could counteract the global overpopulation, ethnic and gender shifts thus preventing international conflicts.

Introduction

This article is an update and continuation of the preceding papers [1,2]. Its aim is to draw attention to the overpopulation and gender imbalance that are increasingly important these days as potential causes of conflicts. The ecological damage is generally proportional to the population density. The demographic growth contributes to the shortage of drinking water and food [3,4]. Many countries are experiencing water shortages while agricultural production increases partly through overexploitation and pollution of water resources, groundwater depletion, deforestation and other kinds of environmental degradation [4,5]. The humankind is in a demographic deadlock [6], while no realistic solutions have been proposed. Such solutions would require a revision of certain ethical clichés and propagation of new principles, in particular, that no population group on a national or international scale, neither ethnic nor confessional minorities, may obtain advantages because of a faster growth, even if it would disagree with numerical democracy. In view of the global overpopulation, those who have had many children should logically live in more crowded conditions. Acceptance of this principle could build a basis for international understanding and trust. Without procreative competition, different peoples would be more likely to live in peace. The population-related factors are important for the dynamics of climate changes. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the population grew faster in less developed countries than in more developed ones; while the ratio of greenhouse gas emissions to the population growth was estimated at 2.8 in developing countries vs. 1.6 in developed parts of the world [7]. The forthcoming industrialization of the regions formerly regarded as developing is significant due to generally less efficient environment conservation measures, and above all due to vast dimensions of the process, proportional to the population size.

In the last thirty years economic realities facing a majority of



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workers have become more severe worldwide. The unemployment is driving national problems [8], aggravated by the overpopulation in many regions. The Fourth Industrial Revolution comes along with fears of unemployment but expected to create new jobs for skilled workers [9-11]. The artificial intelligence offers opportunities for industries employing workforce with applicable modern training, while numerous less prepared workers may lose their jobs [12]. Considering the widespread poverty, the increase in the labor productivity per se is favorable because few workers will be able to provide livelihood for many people. Globally coordinated unemployment protection could support the disadvantaged, help people to deal with changes and develop professional skills according to new demands [11]. For the international projects, a stronger global governance by a compassionate leadership is needed [10,13], which is hardly imaginable today in view of the current and potential conflicts. Apropos, the service in overmanned militias both in the Donbass and in Chechnya has been a remedy against exuberant unemployment due to the overpopulation in the latter area and coal mines closures in the former one. The unemployment in the Donbass has been caused by an abrupt decline in production and corrupt policies in the 1990s [14]. Apparently, this is one of the reasons of subsequent conflicts.

The former Soviet Union

Birthrate inequalities lead to a steady growth of certain minorities. In the former Soviet Union (SU), the greatest ethnic shifts have been observed in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The emigration of ethnic Russians from the above-named territories began decades ago having accelerated after the dissolution of SU. The immigration to the Russian Federation (RF) from Central Asia is conspicuous. In the Caucasus, the percentage of Russians in the population is decreasing. The highest birthrates within RF were registered in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Tuva; the fastest population decrease - in Pskov, Tambov, Tula and Tver provinces. The maximal contribution to the population decline in the period 1992-2019 was made by Saint Petersburg (652 thousand people) and surrounding oblast (414), Pskov (237), Vologda, and Novgorod provinces (185 thousand each) [15]. In Dagestan, the birthrate of indigenous peoples is approximately twice as high as among Russians [16]. The resettlement of ethnic Chechens from mountains to lowlands is going on [17]. The Armenian minority is

increasing in the South of Russia, especially on the Black Sea coast, where they have extensively participated on the privatization and construction of houses including mini-hotels for tourists [18]. In the above-named regions, the proportion of indigenous peoples from the Caucasus is growing, while ethnic Russians are leaving the area [19]. According to surveys, the most frequent reasons have been crime, threats and abuse of children [16]. The birthrate in Moscow is one of the lowest in RF, while the population increase is nearly the highest thanks to the immigration accounting for 83.7% of the growth in the period 2012-2018 [20]. One of 7 infants in Moscow is currently born to a migrant woman coming predominantly from the Caucasus or Central Asia. The phenomenon of “guest” or “parallel” (i.e. temporary and fictive) marriages becomes more widespread [21,22], being used to obtain lodging and residence permit (discussed below). Almost in all Far Eastern territories of RF, the ethnic Russian population dwindled in the period 2002-2010. Since the turn of the millennium, migrations to the Russian Far East from Central Asia and China have been increasing [23]. The population growth in the Far East has been maximal in republics of Buryatia and Yakutia due to higher birthrates of the indigenous ethnic groups [24].

The current conflict in Ukraine should be commented here. The Ukrainian Soviet Republic was established in 1918 as a result of the Bolshevik voluntarism, disregarding ethnic and linguistic realities let alone the people's will [25]. The transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954, extracting it from the Russian territory, was Nikita Khrushchev's decision. Most of the residents in the southern and eastern parts of today's Ukraine are native Russian speakers. Published statistics about ethnic composition may be misleading. During the Soviet time, the ethnicity ('nationality') was written in passports; many residents registered as Ukrainians for the reasons of convenience but continued to share the common Russian identity. In view of the current conflict, the double standards should be pointed out: no sanctions were imposed against Israel for comparable military actions. Another example is Kosovo, where geopolitical decisions were taken in consideration of the Albanian majority that had developed due to the higher birthrate and immigration [26,27]. Apparently, an adequate solution for Ukraine would be a division between the European Union and RF after referendums held separately in each province [28]. The Polish territory could be extended in the East in return to the German lands in the West of the country. It can be reasonably assumed that the whole Ukraine except Bukovina and Galicia (West Ukraine), would vote for unification with Russia, among others, because of economical and linguistic reasons. Admittedly, the right to travel to the European Union may be a motive for some people to keep Ukrainian passports but this is a temporary consideration. The optimal solution would be extension of the European Union to the Pacific Ocean, incorporating both Russia and Ukraine [28]. It would make possible grandiose construction projects, offering employment to many people. The current conflict is distracting citizens from internal problems. The inflation is used to separate them from savings. All those participating (factually or on paper) in the current conflict will obtain the war veteran status thus acquiring considerable privileges over fellow-citizens.

The Middle East

Many developed nations undergo ethnic shifts while some minorities are becoming majorities. Apparently, minorities should

not grow faster than titular ethnicities to avoid interethnic conflicts. Many people of Jewish descent are aware of that. Reportedly, about a half of Jewish women 30-34 years and men over 45 years old in the United States are childless [29]. However, in the traditionalist milieu a higher fertility is maintained. In some cities, New York in the first place, the Jewish population is considerable. Since the second half of the 1940s, Jews had a possibility to live a normal life almost all over the world. The migration to Palestine occurred after individual decisions. During the 1860s, the number of Jews in Palestine was around 14,000 or 4% of the total population of 350,000 [30]. From 1948 to 2002 the population of Israel increased from 806,000 to 6.3 million (including occupied territories – 9.8 million) [31]. Despite popular beliefs, the fertility rate of Israeli and Palestinian women is approximately equal (3.1), higher than in Iran (1.8), Tunisia (2.0), Saudi Arabia (2.1) and some neighboring countries, being the highest in developed parts of the world. Combined with immigration, the population of the arid territory, largely dependent on the foreign help and water desalination, heads to ~16 million by mid-century [32]. Even friends of Israel cannot answer the question, why Palestinian Christians and Muslims should cede the land, immovable property and water sources to immigrants from different continents, including those who declared themselves Judaists just because it was officially required for the “repatriation”. Religious motives place them on a par with other obscurantists. The migrants understood that they were going to dispossess other people and to live partly at the expenses of foreign aid, coming predominantly from the United States and Germany. In view of the current events in Ukraine (discussed above), the double standards should be stressed once more: no sanctions were imposed against Israel for comparable military actions. On the contrary, financial and technical aid was massively provided. Israel has been the largest beneficiary of American help since the World War II [33,34]. By 2003, over a half of the economy of Palestinian Territories was dependent on the foreign aid [35]. Apparently, certain spheres on both sides have acted for mutual benefit in receiving foreign aid: some get it from the West, others from oil-producing countries. This may pertain also to the terrorism. Both sides of the Middle Eastern conflict have applied terrorism [30]. The state-sponsored terrorism is a known political instrument [36]. The state violence is generally more destructive than that carried out by non-state actors [37].

The agriculture in conditions of insufficient water and energy supply is economically and ecologically unfavorable as imported oil is burnt for the water desalination, which is accompanied by greenhouse gas emissions. The agricultural sector is the largest water consumer followed by domestic and industrial sectors [38]. Green spaces in towns are watered as well. The water consumption in Palestine exceeds natural replenishment, while pollution intensifies the pressure on water resources [38]. In future, the gap between the water supply and demand will probably widen [35]. The energy for desalination could be supplied by nuclear power plants. Well-run nuclear plants pose less risk than fossil fuel power stations [39-41]. Obviously, durable peace is needed because nuclear facilities are potential targets.

Birthrate inequalities, migrations, sexual and reproductive coercion

It is known that birthrate inequalities eventually resulted in geopolitical transformations. Here follow some details in addition to previously published considerations [2,42,43]. In societies with the

rape myth acceptance, sexual violence is seen as a method of acquiring wives [44,45]. In this connection, battered woman syndrome and learned helplessness must be timely recognized [46,47]. Temporary and fictive marriages are becoming more widespread within the framework of migrations [21], being used to obtain lodging and residence permit. Reportedly, ~70% of sexual violence cases in Moscow are committed by immigrants from Central Asia [48]; some other ethnic groups are also active in this field. About 75% of rapes in the Moscow province (oblast) were perpetrated by migrants [48]. Sexual and reproductive coercion are rooted in the animal world; for example, forced copulation is a contingent response of male orangutans to resistance by females varying in their willingness to copulate. Females frequently undergo aggression, even from those males with whom they mated preferentially. It is likely that the avoidance of aggression is a motive of the yielding behavior by females generally contributing to a higher fertility [49]. In humans, reproductive coercion has been associated with forced sex, threats of physical harm and verbal abuse; more subtle forms include threats to withhold resources [50]. Certain official or unofficial policies aimed at fertility elevation potentially disregard reproductive rights of women [2,22]. The sexual and reproductive coercion is not always realized as such by victims. Intimidation and violence can prevent a woman from describing certain acts as coercion [51]. In the author's opinion, the contraceptive sabotage must be regarded as crime with infliction of bodily harm if an abortion or unwanted pregnancy sexually transmitted or genetic disease was inflicted. Cases are known when a hereditary disease was concealed from the partner and then acquired by offspring [2,43]. For example, 20-25% of European (Ashkenazi) Jews carry a mutation for a genetic disorder [29,52]. The prevalence of the following conditions is above-average: Gaucher, Tay-Sachs, Niemann-Pick, Canavan diseases, Alport, Bloom, Lynch, Wolfram syndromes, Glanzmann thrombasthenia, Fanconi anemia, adrenal hyperplasia, thromboangiitis obliterans, torsion dystonia, osteoporosis, cystic fibrosis, mucopolidosis IV, pentosuria, dysautonomia, diabetes, polycythemia vera, leukemia, some cancers, ophthalmic and other disorders [29,52-61]. Screening of the Ashkenazi population for recessive disease-causing mutations is recommended [52,61-63]; one grandparent suffices to offer a genetic examination [52]. The problematic heredity may give rise to conscious or subconscious motives to look for partners from different ethnic backgrounds [2]. Israel plays a leading role in the development of genetic counseling: more than 10,000 people are tested there every year. The Zionist eugenics was designated as a selective prenatal policy backed by modern genetic technologies [29]. A motivation for eugenics has been a fear of hereditary degeneration in the human stock [64]. "Do not have children unless you are sure that they will be healthy both mentally and physically" [29]. This suggestion is not realizable in conditions of sexual and reproductive coercion, contraceptive sabotage or concealment of a heritable disease from the partner.

The social progress is supposed to go along with improvements of morals. However, migrations confound this process. Fictive marriages and reproductive coercion are used to spread certain genotypes and/or to cement marriages arranged to obtain a residence permit or accommodation. This is a probable cause of increased birthrates observed immediately after immigration [65,66]. In certain ethnic-social settings boys may be instructed within their families.

Sexual experiences with relatives are not unusual in chaotic and some traditional milieus [67]. It was reported that 49% of the "child perpetrators" had been sexually abused prior to their own abusive behaviors [68]. Studies indicate a link between the childhood sexual abuse (including incest) and sexual crime committed by victims in their later life [69,70]. Various methods are used: seduction and persuasion, reproductive coercion and contraceptive sabotage, marriage fraud and deceit, alcohol and drugs, intimidation and violence. In view of the advancing globalization, women should be aware of these strategies. Another demographic problem, the deepening gender imbalance, has been discussed previously [1,42,71]. It should be mentioned here that the growing excess of males can contribute to their marginalization, antisocial behavior as well as militarism and international conflicts.

Conclusion

In the past, the overpopulation was counteracted by wars, pestilence and famine. Today, scientifically based humane methods can be used to regulate the population size taking account of ecological and economical conditions in different regions. Large projects could be accomplished to improve the quality of life all over the world: irrigation systems, nuclear and other energy sources as an alternative to fossil fuels etc. Hydroelectric power plants can be built on large rivers to produce hydrogen as eco-friendly energy carrier. New substances used in the industry, nutrition and medicine must be tested in large animal populations to achieve statistical significance and record rare stochastic outcomes. Such projects would create many jobs, being a reasonable alternative to excessive military expenditures. Not only durable peace but also mutual trust is required for that. Unfortunately, trust can be abused while certain individuals and institutions seem to be unreliable. Trust is good, but checking that trust is not abused is also necessary. In conclusion, the birth control has been obfuscated by presumed national interests: the demographic growth was supposed to strengthen the sovereignty and defenses. Smoldering international conflicts contribute to the population growth in corresponding regions.

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