

POLS303033 Environment, Human Security, and Conflict

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WEEK 5: Population

Overture music

Depeche Mode. 1984. "People Are People." *Some Great Reward*.
<https://youtu.be/MzGnX-MbYE4>

Queen. 1982. "Under Pressure." *Hot Space*.
<https://youtu.be/a01QQZyl-I>

Mather, Mark. 2016. "Break It Down (The Pop Song)." Population Reference Bureau.
<https://youtu.be/b98RmmV-eo8>

Video #1: Introduction

This week begins a new era.

Well, at least a new part of this course.

Over the previous four weeks we outlined some of the most common political, economic, and environmental reasons for civil conflict.

In this second, largest part of this course we focus on six other important potential sources of conflict.

Like my children's building blocks, we are building something. We are building a complex construction of the causes of conflict. Each block here is another explanation for conflict. This week's causes center on people. Some wonder whether one block is a sufficient explanation. Some articles just focus on one block.

Population

I start with an uncomfortable truth—there are a lot of people on this earth.

- More and more people mean more and more clean water and food needs to be made
- More and more people mean more shelter needs to be built.
- More and more people mean more and more jobs need to be created.

Malthus, Thanos, and others have argued that there are too many people and drastic measures need to be taken.

The puzzle today. There are more and more people so you would think that all else being equal there would be more conflict. However, by most measures the world is more peaceful now than in the past. Why?

Today I want to tread a bit on demographers' turf as I have tread on economists a bit and will do other fields in later weeks.

By the end of today you will have a clear idea about:

- Recent trends in world population growth and density
- How population density may have contributed to the 1994 Rwandan genocide
- The risks of youth bulges
- Urbanization trends
- Gaza case study

Videos on population projections

Video 1—9 Billion? A Whirlwind Trip Through Population Trends. *Science Magazine*.
<https://youtu.be/DCPCQrxBUOU>

Video 2—Population growth and climate change explained by Hans Rosling. 2013. *The Guardian*. <https://youtu.be/SxbprYjyyU>

Other interesting videos we don't have time for:

2060 and the world population pyramid | The Economist
<https://youtu.be/QwfH1gYkXTw>

How an ageing population will change the world. The BBC.
<https://youtu.be/x4r0S5qoIXc>

Video #2: Population pressures and conflict

Class outline photo

Global historical population growth

- The world's population growth has taken off in the last century
- Important to realise that what has been exponential is now linear
- For an interesting take Gapminder's Hans Rosling talk about why population will not exceed 11 billion (<https://youtu.be/2LyzBoHo5EI>)

Burundi population density map

Rwanda population density map

Bangladesh population density map

Asia population density map

Australia population density map

Population density of the ACT

- The ACT is the most dense state or territory in Australia

Uganda population pyramid

Burundi population pyramid

Venezuela population pyramid

Australia population pyramid

Japan population pyramid

Youth Unemployment across Europe % graph

Spain, 2012—unemployment rate by gender and age graph

Australia unemployment rate graph

Venezuela unemployment rate

Greece unemployment rate

Thomas Malthus quote

“[T]he power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man.”

-Thomas Malthus 1798 “An Essay on the Principle of Population” (Chapter 1)

Homer-Dixon (1994) path diagram

- Focusing on first stage

How can population dynamics affect resource scarcity and conflict?

- Low population density can encourage relative resource abundance, which can have a mixed effect on conflict.
- High resource abundance can lead to relative resource scarcity.
- Certain distributional characteristics of populations can affect resource scarcity and conflict.
- Populations can affect conflict dynamics.

Amartya Sen quote

“No famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy”
 -Amartya Sen. 1999. Development as Freedom: 152.

Population, resource scarcity, and conflict

- U-shaped relationship between probability of conflict and resource scarcity/abundance

Jack A. Goldstone’s 2016 [1991] Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World.

- Goldstone (2016: 459) suggests that state breakdowns in Europe, China, and Middle East from 1500-1850 came from a single process.
- Population growth led to changes in prices, shifting resources, and increased social demands on relatively inflexible economic and political structures.
- Ideology and culture come to the fore after the original breakdown happens.

Graph of English population and prices, 1500-1800 (Goldstone 2016: 88)

Graph of French population and prices, 1650-1790 (Goldstone 2016: 179)

Graph of Chinese population and prices, c. 1500-1800 (Goldstone 2016: 358)

Goldstone’s (2016:142) path diagram of population’s links with political instability.

Two chapter quotes about demographic pressures.

Lecture question #1: Industrialized agricultural growth has outpaced human need. The resources of Heaven and Earth have not yet been exhausted. Does this suggest that the modern world is systematically different than that Goldstone’s case studies and at lower risk of demographically induced instability?

Let’s turn now to the Percival and Homer-Dixon (1996) article and the Rwandan case.

Video—Brief background on Rwandan genocide

BBC Africa. How could the Rwandan genocide happen?

<https://youtu.be/SVnOGsJY5RQ>

Video #3: Environmental factors and Rwanda's genocide

The BBC video does a better job of providing a brief overview of the Rwandan genocide than I could do.

A few things to note that the video doesn't really touch on.

- The only real mention of the UN mission to Somalia that ended with the battle of Mogadishu in October 1993 was in explaining why the US was not keen to intervene.
 - This case is linked to Rwanda in several ways worth mentioning.
 - The Cold War had barely ended and the UN, which had largely stayed away from multilateral interventions was more able to act
 - This intervention led to the deaths of 18 US soldiers and hundreds of Somali civilians and military fighters.
- In the first hours after the President Habyarimana's plane went down ten Belgian UNAMIR peacekeepers were killed.
- Evidence suggests that they were actively targeted to reduce the likelihood of foreign intervention.
- After France's Operation Turquoise, the population movement into Eastern DRC had substantial long-term effects on the stability of then Zaire, leading to long-term leader Mobutu losing power in 1998, in large part to Rwandan's assistance to a nascent rebel group led by Laurent Kabila.

Different states give money and troops to current UN interventions

- Overview from Council on Foreign Relations

Percival & Homer-Dixon (1996: 271) think "environmental factors do not provide an adequate explanation of the genocide in Rwanda."

Percival & Homer-Dixon (1996)

- Percival & Homer-Dixon (1996) argue that demand and supply scarcity existed, but it was **not structural** as incomes were rather evenly distributed (Gini=.26).
- "Urban areas had few opportunities for employment, and rural-urban migration was restricted after the onset of the civil war. Migrants had little choice but to move to and settle in hillside areas." (p. 280).

Percival & Homer-Dixon (1996) hypotheses

- H1: High levels of **grievance**
- H2: Transition from **authoritarian rule**
- H3: Manipulation of **ethnic identity**
- H4: **Elite insecurity** in the context of the Arusha Accords

Percival & Homer-Dixon (1996: 286) path diagram

Population leads to resource scarcity

- **Demand-induced scarcity** resulting from population growth
- **Supply-induced scarcity** from degradation of resources

Photo of first page of Anderson (2000)

- A bunch of work built on Percival and Homer-Dixon (1996)
- For instance, Andersen's (2000) focuses on:
 - Structural adjustment programs
 - Multiparty democratization
 - Peace negotiations and implementation

Source: Anderson, Regine. 2000. "How multilateral development assistance triggered the conflict in Rwanda." *Third World Quarterly* 21(3): 441– 456.

Video #4: Youth bulges and conflict

In the words of Whitney Houston: "I believe the children are our future."

The question is what type of future will they inherit and what will they do before they settle into middle age?

Occupy Wall Street photo

Young Nepali protests

Table of Australian homicide offenders by age

Figure of homicide offenders by employment status

- Most young offenders are unemployed.

World map of median age, 2011

Table of median ages, 2015

- Rwanda is 20 years younger on average than Australia.

How do youth bulges lead to violence?

What is so dangerous about youth bulges?

- Urdal (2006) mentions both motive and opportunity arguments but says they have same empirical implications:
 - H1: Mere size (+)
 - H2: Demographic dividend*bulge (-)
 - H3: Economic growth*bulge (-)
 - H4: Higher education*bulge (+)
 - H5: Urbanisation*bulge (+)
 - H6: Autocracy*bulge (+)
- Homer-Dixon (1999) might suggest structural scarcity.
- **Structural scarcity** because of unequal distribution

Video #5: Urbanization and conflict

Lecture question #2: Can you think of another interactive relationship that may explain youth bulges link to conflict?

Urbanisation trends

- 54% of the world's population lives in urban areas in 2014 (UN 2014)
 - 3.9 billion in urban areas
- 3.4 billion people in rural areas

Regional urbanization rates table

A majority of the world's population lives in urban areas graph

Urbanization graph by world region

What countries contribute to urbanization graph

How might urbanization lead to conflict?

Urdal's (2006) Hypothesis 5: Urbanisation*bulge (+)

- Urbanization can lead to scarcity—especially fresh water.
- Goldstone suggests that urbanization that is not matched by increased job opportunities and economic growth can increase risk of violence.
- Social and cultural change in dense cities may also reduce opportunity costs.

Lecture question #3: Urbanization makes it easier for people with grievances to coordinate and act on their grievances. Urbanization also makes it easier for governments to control

their population and provide services. Do you think urbanization is an important driver of conflict?

Population displacement

- Why do people leave their homes during war?

Videos—Gaza backgrounders

PBS NewsHour. 2019. Water crisis may make Gaza Strip uninhabitable by 2020.
<https://youtu.be/qczF1a7jdD0>

Al Jazeera. 2012. Palestinian population boom worries Israel.
<https://youtu.be/iSxz9zJg88I>

Al Arabiya. 2011. Gaza Strip: Population explosion.
https://youtu.be/nB_Sbi2fvos

Video #6—Gaza-population pressures and low-intensity conflict

This picture is from late August 2020 and shows Israel's iron dome in action shooting down Hamas rockets. As of an hour or so there had been nearly daily attacks since August 6.

There have been a regular launching of balloons with incendiary devices from Gaza into Israel that have led to a number of fires during this hot summer season.

As a result, Israel has cracked down on its blockade of Gaza including the one border crossing and fuel for Gaza's power plant leading it to shut down.

Daniel Byman's brief Brookings's blog post provides a brief overview of why the situation in Gaza periodically escalates, but also why Hamas and Israel has not declared an all-out war.

Source: Byman, Daniel L. 2019. "Why Gaza Hasn't Erupted into All-out War."
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/05/10/why-gaza-hasnt-erupted-into-all-out-war/>.

Gaza maps

- 40km of coastline

Gaza Strip fast facts

Population: 1,918,221 (July 2020 est.)

Area: 360 sq.km. (less than 1/6th of the ACT's 2,358 sq.km.)

Pop. density: 5,328 per sq.km. (ACT's is 151)

Median age: 18

Urbanization: 76.7% (July 2020 est.)

Unemployment (total): 42.2%

male: 37%

female: 69.4%

Source: CIA Factbook

Gaza population pyramid

A map of ACLED violence around Gaza since 2019

UCDP background on Hamas screenshot

Exeunt music

Karen Elson. Mouths To Feed.

<https://youtu.be/luqkL-uVY7E>

LunchMoney Lewis. 2015. "Bills." Explicit lyrics warning.

https://youtu.be/_IrQHeDcMi8

Ludachris. 2006. "I Got Mouths to Feed." Explicit lyrics warning.

<https://youtu.be/CalVNnAOIec>