Demographics and conflict in the 21st century

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In the 21st century, an increasingly accessible, globalised, and technologically advanced world has, and indeed rapidly continues to, shift and transform the populations of each and every state and society.

In the past, demographic trends have been affected by diseases, technological and social advances in healthcare, and scattered conflicts around the world. Though such impacts on demographics were once frequently localised within individual states or regions, our interconnected world not only exacerbates such impacts on a global scale, but also enables and facilitates processes such as global mass population movement with climate change set to increase the speed of demographic change.

Demographic changes often arise from conflict, but they also have the potential to intensify tensions and incite violence. Countries demographics and how they continue to change can incite ethnic conflict, social inequality, conflict over resources and radicalisation in both developed and developing nations.

This ICRA paper provides brief overviews of the pressures and potential for conflict around certain demographics, how this has and can be affected by modern trends, and what we will and would hope to see in the future. Whilst this is not designed to be an in-depth analysis, as with other ICRA Discussion Papers, it gives a useful basis for discussion.

Overview

The aim is to explore how certain demographic fluctuations may impact on or incite conflict in various states, with a particular focus on the effect of climate change and its consequences. Cultural diversity, age, wealth and gender distribution are all aspects for discussion, as well as the tensions they create, and how they traditionally vary from country to country.

The world population is set to grow from an estimated 6.9 billion in 2010 to more than 9 billion by 2050[1]. The demographic make-up of the world is changing. Our society is increasingly older[2], more culturally diverse[3], with a greater contrast between rich and poor, and urban and rural populations[4]. On their own these changes could be argued to be natural as our world becomes more interconnected by travel, technology, and the high-speed exchange of information and ideas[5]. This discussion paper aims to investigate the relationship between such demographic shifts and potential conflict, primarily within the 21st century, and stresses that this relationship has increased and changed due to developments such as increased mass migration globally and climate change[6]. Therefore, we will explore and highlight how these issues affect demographics and incite conflict.

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[1] Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World population Prospects: The 2008 Revision*. http://esa.un.org/unpp/

[2] Lutz, W., Sanderson, W., & Scherbov, S. (2008). The coming acceleration of global population ageing. Nature, 451(7179), 716.

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Demographic fluctuations and their potential for conflict

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VARIABLES

Demography involves several **social, economic and cultural variables**, which divide a population[7], and each variable at its various extremes inevitably incites different forms of violence. Some variables are having greater effect on demographic trends than others. This paper focuses on the two most important trends in order to highlight their relationship to conflict. They are:

A. **Cultural diversity**
B. **Socio-economic trends**
   o   age distribution and life expectancy
   o   gender balance
   o   economic imbalances

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A. Cultural diversity

Across the globe, speed and access to movement, employment and citizenship led to increasingly diverse demographics[8]. Some have argued multicultural and cosmopolitan societies are often those most void of many types of violence[9]. Their population is generally more exposed, aware and subsequently more tolerant and accepting of various cultures, religions, and ethnicities[10]. However, there are specific cultural diversity-related instances and occasions of violence[11], and their number can be unevenly distributed around the world. Within many of the most cosmopolitan cities and countries, demographic cultural diversification happened slowly, and acceptance took time. In contrast, many shifts in cultural demographics today are happening at more rapid speeds[12]. Time as a variable has been given great importance in past examinations of the relationship between

[7] Birdsall, N., Kelley, A. C., Sinding, S. W., & Sinding, S. (Eds.). (2001). Population matters: demographic change, economic growth, and poverty in the developing world. Oxford University Press.

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population shifts and conflict[13], and we find such quicker rates of change increase the chance of violence[14] with even the most multicultural societies beginning to experience many of the negative impacts.

Possibilities for conflict may come primarily from within the host countries' traditional cultural majority, and even be intensified within a state's political system itself[15]. According to the 'National race' laws within Myanmar, for example, only 8 races/cultural groups are legally recognised within the state[16]. This exclusionary practice ostracised many groups, most notably the Rohingyas, which make up 2 per cent of the population and that Myanmar treats as Bangladeshi refugees despite their existence on the land for centuries[17]. Such exclusion has continuously fuelled their persecution, which heightened during the Rohingya crisis that started in 2016[18].

However, even states encouraging multiculturalism may simply lack the infrastructure to immediately accommodate groups who may require new buildings for worship, have varying dietary requirements beliefs dictating what medicine's allowed, and expectations for marriage that can shift and affect the existing every day running of a state[19]. These shifts, if occurring too quickly, may affect and frustrate the local population, but equally a lack of them can actively exclude the minority[20]. Changing too quickly or too slowly exacerbates tension, and finding a balance that could hope to please all parties remains a challenge[21].

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B. Socio-economic trends

o <u>Age Distribution</u>

Generally, it's difficult to deny a correlating link between a country's age groups and their level of development[22]. In Thompson's demographic transition model, it's argued health, economic and social improvements reduce death rates, increasing the size and average age of a population until further economic and social changes lower birth-rates, leading to a plateauing or shrinking population that becomes increasingly old[23]. Whilst this model has received numerous critiques, such as over-emphasising economic factors and the impact of a country's existing cultural or religious situation[24], it does indicate the contrasting common age distribution of developing and developed states. Within these different demographics make-ups, different pressures and potential for violence arise, leaving the question of whether it is right for developed countries to develop the means to extend the lives of populations when the world is already over-crowded.

For young populations, instances and influences on potential conflict can be significant. In a country like Afghanistan with 61 per cent of the population under the age of 25 and 46 per cent under the age of 15, there is a lack of both experienced leadership, professionals to provide basic services like education and healthcare and fewer job opportunities for the youth[25]. Even those who are trained often leave, with developing countries in general experiencing the substantial effects of 'brain drains'[26]. Such populations become unprotected, unsupported, poor and frustrated, more likely to commit crime, and violence against often unstable governments in civil conflicts[27]; or be at risk of trafficking or radicalisation from extremists[28]. As such, the level of violence influenced and impacted by age distribution is unequally distributed, and theorists have since speculated that their

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[28] Yousef, T. (2003). Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: demography, employment, and conflict. Youth Explosion in Developing World Cities.

demographic issues, alongside a lack of assistance from developed nations, may leave them trapped within perpetuated poverty and violence[29].

    o <u>Gender Balance</u>

Whether based on culture, history or religion, lack of gender balance can lead to conflict, particularly within developing states. Gender inequality is common within leadership positions worldwide[30] which still heavily favours male-lead institutions and other present patriarchies[31].

Firstly and particularly in states with significant and influential religious political authorities, laws which limit female participation can be present. Women lack autonomy over their finances; where they are allowed to go; what they are allowed to wear; who they are allowed to marry; and even autonomy over their own bodies, with countries such as Saudi Arabia legally restricting all of the above[32].

These circumstances can easily lead to violence. Within unequal power relations, there has proven to be a rise in domestic violence[33] [34]. For any women wishing to escape their 'role' in society there can be significant pressures, including arrest, forced marriage and even execution[35]. In Saudi Arabia, for example, the Death Penalty Information Centre (DPIC) seeks the death penalty against women rights activists and even rape survivors for adultery and arrested 17 activists including two US citizens in 2019[36]. As a result, women's right advocates and movements have become increasingly active and open to more physical resistance[37], and the states' response itself can become more disproportionately violent, as seen in Saudi Arabia[38], which creates further instances of state-organised gender related conflict.

Furthermore, certain issues mostly found in the developing world are now seen in the developed world as well, especially as countries become more culturally diverse. Issues once seemingly non-

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existent in the UK such as female genital mutilation (FGM), for example, now require a strict set of legal regimes to combat their rapid rise[39]. Overall, demographic inequality for female populations and its impacts has proven largely universal, and although their potential for tension and violence varies, it is an important factor when discussing the overall relationship and its changes within the 21st century.

    o   <u>Economic imbalances</u>

Finally, this essay briefly looks at economic imbalances as a significant factor when examining demographic related conflict.

Lack of wealth and of companies to invest in means lack of employment opportunities, few available high-quality services, and absence of professionals or stable and reliable governing bodies[40] . Consequently, we are left with a largely vulnerable population frequently reliant on crime for quality of life and a nation open to social and political instability[41]. As a result, these states are largely at the lowest stages of traditional development[42], with significant portions of the population in absolute poverty[43]. Developed states are not immune to such economic fuelled instability[44], particularly at times of worldwide recession where protests and active crime becomes more common. However, having too large or too wealthy an upper class would equally prove problematic. In the past, a small group having too much power over the working or lower class resulted in anything from sporadic violence to full scale revolutions. This is also seen today in areas like Venezuela[45]. Income inequality is found to affect the health and welfare of its citizens, the level of relative poverty, employment and even human rights[46], becoming potential for frustration, tension and violence[47].

This paper has established how varying demographic configurations can result in and relate to conflict in differing areas of the world. These relationships, however, are open to change. Indeed,

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demographic changes have largely accelerated within the 21st century, and this paper argues that the extent of demographic-related conflicts changes as a result of population-impacting trends. This paper will explore two such trends it believes most relevant - <u>Increased mass population migration and climate change</u>. For each, the paper will analyse their pressures upon demographics throughout the world, and the various scenarios and types of conflict they have facilitated or exacerbated.

MASS MIGRATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE AND THEIR EFFECT ON DEMOGRAPHICS

The relationship between demographics and conflict is increasing due to developments such as increased mass migration around the world and climate change.

➢ INCREASED MASS MIGRATION

As our world is increasingly interconnected and we as groups and individuals have increased freedom to travel from state to state across the globe, the movement of people has inevitably increased in recent years[48]. The UN 2017 International Migration report estimates the number of migrants has increased by 49 per cent since 2000, and is only predicted to rise even further[49]. Such migrations inevitably shift the nature of a state's demographics, and this paper will establish the nature of this change and in what ways such changes may intensify existing demographic related violence or lead to new conflicts.

To investigate how migrant populations are potentially leading to violence through demographic change, we must first understand the demographics of the migrant population itself and the changes this will make to their new host states. Various categories of migrants exist who have often changing demographic makeups, seek different final locations and seek them for different reasons. Traditionally, one can categorise the modern mass migrant population into three large groups: retiring emigrating populations from developed states, economic migrants seeking employment and the displaced refugee and asylum-seeking population.

Providing economic benefits is a key aspect of those migrating from developing countries, often referred to as economic migrants. These workers are often professionally trained in key roles their host state may be lacking. In the UK's National Health Service (NHS), for example, 17.5 per cent of doctors and 24.7 per cent of niche professionals are migrants, frequently from the developing

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[48] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). International Migration Report 2017: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/404).
[49] UN, 2017.

world[50]. Not all arriving economic migrants have professional qualifications, however, and many migrating from developing countries seek more basic labour, frequently in existing cities or others densely populated areas with more readily available employment opportunities[51]. Whilst this is not always a negative outcome, as many accept jobs the local population is unwilling or unable to do, such an economic group receives significantly more stigma both within developing and developed states that may accommodate them[52]. This group, alongside other economic migrants, is demographically diverse in culture, traditionally but unevenly gender equal, young but primarily at 'working age', and, whilst wealthier professional migrating make up a noteworthy 16 per cent, those seeking menial and lower income work make up the vast majority[53].

Finally, we have the most vulnerable of all migrating groups, the refugee and asylum-seeking population (98 per cent of which are fleeing developing states), which is now predicted to include over 65.6 million individuals[54]. Refugee populations, unlike economic migrants who primarily travel to developed nations, are mostly situated in developing countries, with Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, hosting the largest displaced populations[55]. Their purpose is not necessarily to seek opportunity, rather escape threats within their own state. Culturally, this migrating population can be quite diverse and very dependent on the political state and stability of each country, but during the more recent 2015 refugee crisis the population largely arrived from the Middle East's or north Africa's Islamic or Christian communities[56]. The population is made up of primarily young and often working age individuals, with a rising proportion of female refugees, but still slightly leaning towards male predominance[57].

✓ **Population compressions and urbanisation**

The first and perhaps most expected conflict-inducing impact occurs from examining where migrant populations are going. Although retiring or wealthier populations are more likely to migrate to smaller suburban or rural areas[58], this is offset by the vast majority of migrant groups seeking

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[50] House of Commons, 2018.

[51] UN, 2017.

[52] UN, 2017.

[53] UN, 2017.

[54] UN, 2017.

[55] UN, 2017.

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already highly—populated destinations, resulting in increases in <u>population density</u> and <u>population compression in already overcrowded cities, including Lagos, Sao Paulo and other major centres</u>.

People have difficulty accepting living in overpopulated or compressed environments. Harmonious existence, no matter the culture, wealth, age or gender, is extremely unlikely when access to basic resources such as water, food and land and space or services such as healthcare and schooling is detrimentally affected by overpopulation and subsequent increase in diseases[59], leaving many frustrated.

Population compression most frequently occurs in urban areas, which only further adds to the trends in urbanisation we've witnessed in recent years. Increased numbers of young people, both within their state and from mass migrating populations, are heading to cities to seek employment[60] and, especially in the developing world, more readily available infrastructure and basic services[61] [62]. This brings its own pressure beyond population compression, including poor health, sanitation and exacerbated gender issues (many of which can be seen be further explored in ICRA's discussion paper on urbanisation[63]). The current rates of urbanisation are making such pressures and tensions worse. Many cities struggle to provide for their population[64] , particularly with appropriate housing, with many developing state cities now establishing large 'mega-slum' districts, as well as basic services, including healthcare and other vital resources[65]. The developed world is no exception to many of these pressures, often receiving great political pressure[66].

Finally, such compression and urbanisation have the indirect effect of shaping the potential pressures and subsequent tension within rural areas as well. With much of the youth population being absent, the available working age population in rural districts is shrinking. Therefore, the overall level of economic activity in rural areas is largely found to be lacking or stagnating, either due to underdeveloped agriculture or falling consumption with little attractive work opportunities. Within many rural areas there's lack of resources and much of the existing working age population is

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[64] Montgomery, M. R., Stren, R., Cohen, B., & Reed, H. E. (2013). Cities transformed: demographic change and its implications in the developing world. Routledge.

[65] Langton, 2010.

[66] Thayer, B. A. (2009). Considering population and war: a critical and neglected aspect of conflict studies. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 364(1532), 3081-3092.

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increasingly falling to homelessness, addiction and crime[67]. In developed states older and retiring population emigrating from other developed countries is replacing this population[68]. Whilst they may provide a small substitute for economic consumption, they equally put further strain on social and healthcare services, and various developed states have reported the biggest strains on their healthcare occurs within these rural populations[69].

✓ **Ethnic issues**

Unlike slower migration in the past which allowed a gradual and more acceptable path to multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism[70], the sudden arrival of new ethnic groups into areas with national historic and traditional cultures is likely to result in resistance or rejection by local populations[71], with disputes and violence between locals and incoming groups.

Increased population compression allows for more interaction and opportunity for disputes and potential violence, which is often attributed to ethnicity. Furthermore, its focus on urban areas results in direct competition for locations, space and resources[72] [73].

Demographically dominant groups see the migrating minority as a threat. Particularly for refugee and asylum-seeking populations, there have been high levels of reactive restrictions and other systematic controls on their daily lives in host countries. Their ability to exist and to be economic contributors within host populations therefore diminishes[74]. To acquire asylum in many European and other developed countries is proving increasingly difficult, but once it has been granted, many are not allowed to work, are constantly monitored, struggle to receive enough to support themselves, or gain any level of significant access to services, and experience prejudice by local courts and the police[75].

[67] Gilling, D. (2016). Governing crime in rural UK: risk and representation. In Rural Policing and Policing the Rural (pp. 83-94). Routledge.

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[74] Holmes, C. (2015). A Tolerant Country?: Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities. Routledge, New York

[75] Holmes, 2015.

The immigrant groups are often perceived as an uncontrollable population overtaking or consuming the demographic majority, taking away their jobs, being a primary cause of, crime and straining resources through overpopulation[76]. Examples of 'hate crime' across Europe and North America have risen since the turn of the 21st century[77], especially against female members in receiving populations[78]. Assaults by indigenous populations on migrants also increased.

✓ **Social and class-based issues**

The inevitable socio-economic and class-based demographic shifts may intensify existing interclass tensions or establish new class related conflicts of their own.

As mentioned previously, populations from developing countries are often young, and a large proportion is seeking more menial lower income jobs[79], traditionally assigned to the majority of indigenous lower classes. However, the type of work and low wages can cause sectarian tension with the state's existing lower-class population[80]. Unskilled local labour is frequently left with the highest level of unemployment throughout both the developed and developing world[81]. As a consequence, there is a strong dislike and negative perception of all foreign, though often primarily cultural or ethnically 'alien', populations within the developed world's lower-class workforce[82]. Indigenous populations frequently instigate sectarian disputes and 'hate crime' against the migrant population[83].

✓ **Radicalisation and extremism**

The young struggling migrant population that is frequently rejected or subjected to abuse[84] is often frustrated and vulnerable to physical and mental health issues, especially in more compressed or developing states[85]. As a result, migrant populations have often lashed out and acted violently

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[85] Bhugra, D. (2004). Migration and mental health. Acta psychiatrica scandinavica, 109(4), 243-258.

towards their host state, as well as occasionally being involved with or resorting to local or international crime.

However, where this becomes most serious, is when examining how such a group is further open to exploitation by other parties[86], that both use demographics for reasoning and persuasion, and subsequently initiate demographic-motivated and demographic-related conflict at an often-international scale. These can include human trafficking and other forms of organised. Various extremist groups actively recruit from this section of a young male population which has few economic and social opportunities[87].

Thanks to the internet extremist groups now have greater access to these migrant populations that are often young, feel isolated or unloved within their 'home' and are desperately lacking opportunities or a sense of purpose[88] [89]. Since 2001, it is estimated that civilian targeted terrorist attacks in the world initiated by radicalised individuals who once migrated, often to initially flee from oppression themselves, are on the rise[90].

➢ THE GROWING IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The increasing effects of climate change on global demographics include increased water insecurity, de-forestation, desertification, mass migration and urbanisation, rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events.

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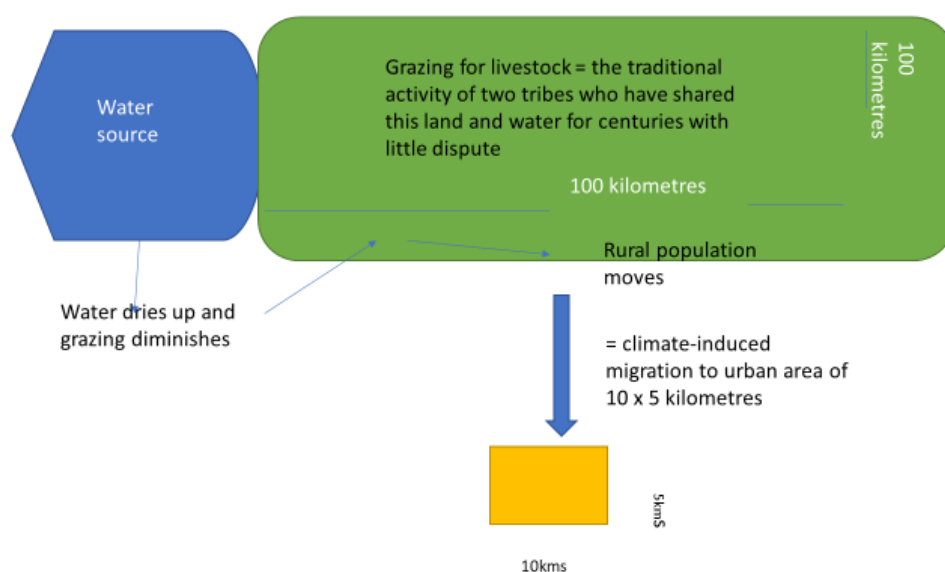
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[89] Berger, 2015

[90] Simcox, R. (2018). The Asylum-Terror Nexus: How Europe Should Respond. Heritage Foundation.

Example: Inward migration from traditional grazing lands to compression in an urban area

Grazing for livestock = the traditional activity of two tribes who have shared this land and water for centuries with little dispute

Water source

100 kilometres

100 kilometres

Water dries up and grazing diminishes

Rural population moves

= climate-induced migration to urban area of 10 x 5 kilometres

5kmS

10kms

The result = population compression, unfamiliar territory, few resources or employment = violence and disease

✓ Water insecurity and desertification

As temperatures rise and droughts become more frequent and increasingly severe with extreme weather patterns[91], the availability, distribution and overall quality of freshwater sources will likely decline[92]. Consequently, much of the existing arable land assigned to agriculture is drying up leading to a process of desertification. Such water scarcity is being experienced worldwide but currently the effects are most extreme within the developing world and its low income rural communities[93] that are already most vulnerable to water insecurity[94].

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[93] Jones, B., Tebaldi, C., O'Neill, B. C., Oleson, K., & Gao, J. (2018). Avoiding population exposure to heat-related extremes: demographic change vs climate change. Climatic change, 146(3-4), 423-437.
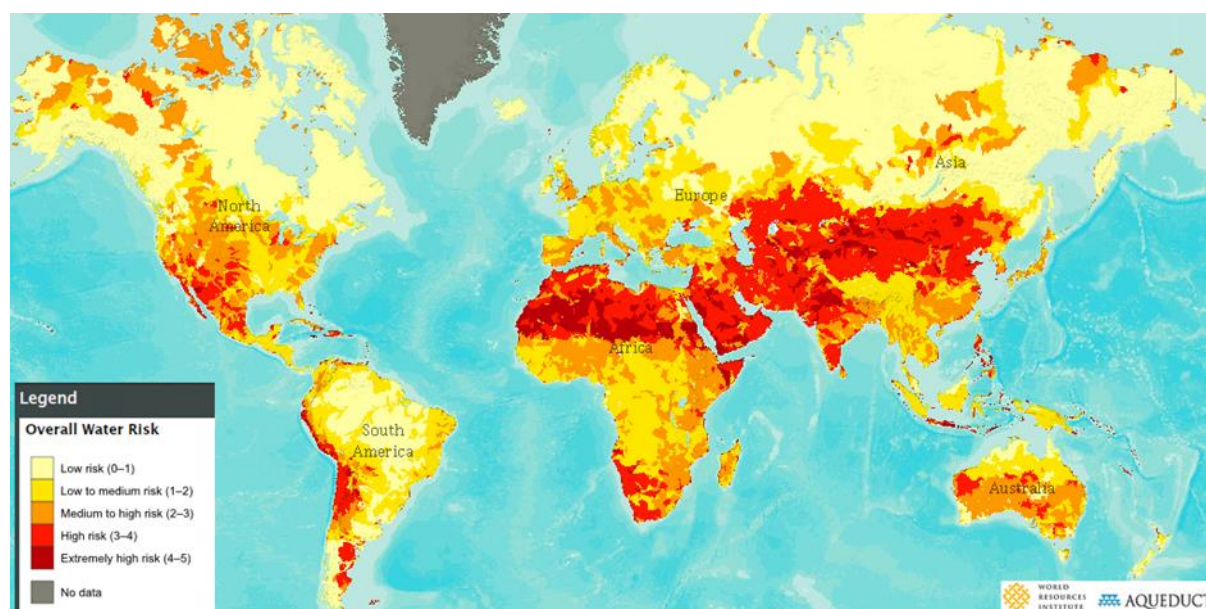
[94] UN Water, 2019

Figure 1: Global map indicating distribution of water risk. Source: (World Resources institute, 2015)

As water availability decreases, demographic change in the developing world increases. Many rural populations are migrating to cities (see example above) such as Nairobi, Lagos, Sao Paulo and many others. However, the infrastructure of these urban areas is not structured for large population increases with the result that mega-slums are created within which there are scarce employment opportunities, high levels of crime, low levels of health care, and which critically provide recruiting grounds for criminal and militant organisations.

With water scarcity comes food insecurity; and with food insecurity and lack of water the possibilities for political instability increase. These compressed and frustrated populations are prone to violence directly against the state, which fails to provide for their population[95] [96].

Water sources like lakes and rivers are rarely located within the territory of a single country, and the issues over the control of water extend to multiple nations[97]. As populations located by water sources increase, their importance grows. Dams are built and with damming come interstate disputes as upstream states benefit at the expense of downstream states[98]. Therefore, states may

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resort to drastic measures to maintain security, like in the case of Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt[99]. One emerging question now is; '…will longstanding water treaties between states sharing water resources be sustainable under these pressures…?' India and Pakistan, both adversarial states, have recently had discussions over the Indus river system, as lower water levels have challenged both countries that are bound by the water treaty governing the use of the Indus which was signed in 1960, and takes little account of the kind of demographic change now taking place.

Water insecurity is also becoming an increasing reality in much of North America and the Mediterranean region[100]. In cities like London, water supplies are declining and climate change is often blamed[101]. Indeed, whilst small changes most dramatically affect the developing world, it appears that they also affect areas within the 'global north' whose water insecurity is increasing at the quickest rate (figure 2).
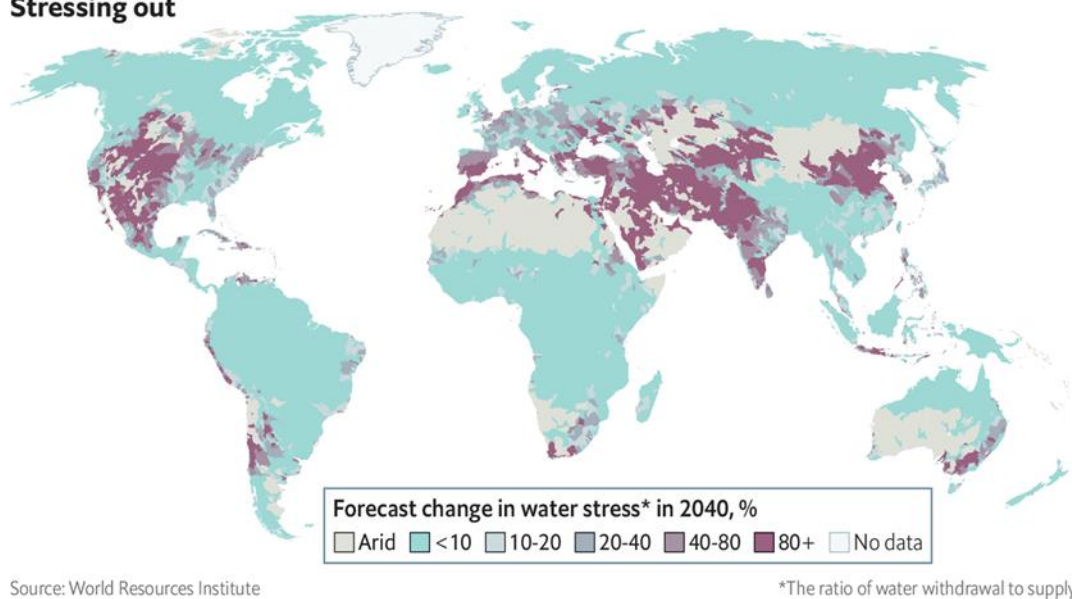

Figure 2: Forecasted change in water stress in 2040. Source: World Resources Institute, 2015.

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✓ <u>Rising sea levels and forced coastal migration</u>

An additional climate change related issue is worldwide sea level rise, and its significant impact upon demographics and conflict in coastal regions.

Currently, the scientific community agrees that climate change, through thermal expansion and melting ice caps, has enabled an unprecedented and worrying rise in sea level across the globe. In the 21st century, sea levels are already estimated to have risen by an average of 30cm, which looks set to triple by 2050[102]. This places a significant impact on the world's coastal regions and small Island nations (Figure 3).
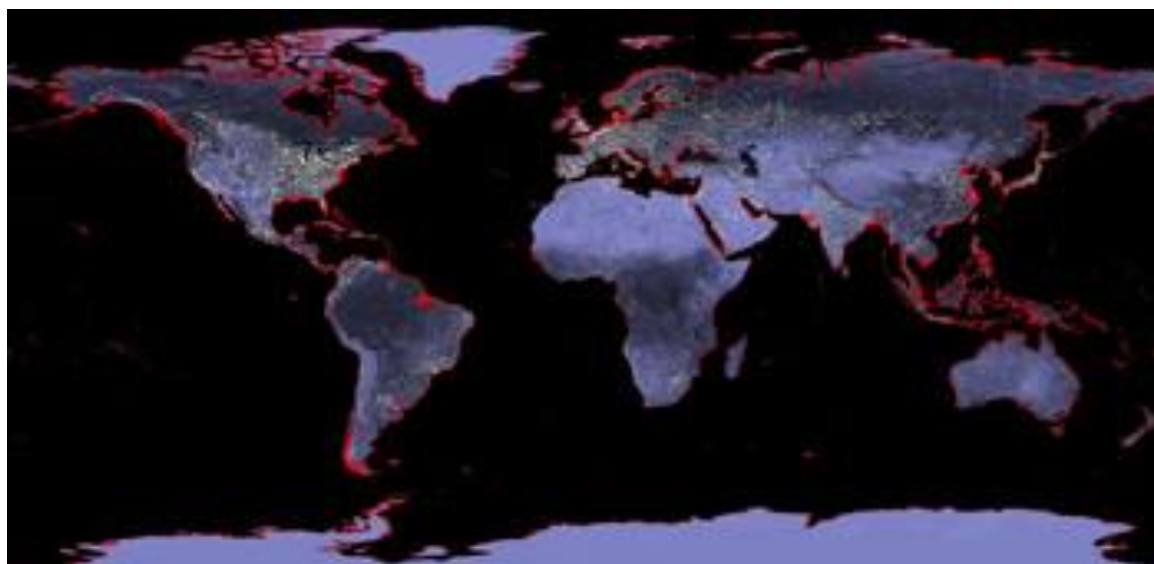

Figure 3: World Map with areas under 10 metres above sea level highlighted in Red. *Source: NASA*

It is concerning that 10 per cent of all human life lives under 10 metres above sea level, and two thirds of all the world's major cities exist in vulnerable low lying or coastal areas[103]. These populations will be eventually forced to migrate or suffer potentially life-threatening consequences[104].

Such a situation highlights the demographic impact this rapidly growing group of 'environmental migrants' can have on its own and the potential for conflict that arises[105]. Much of this we've seen before, with a large population having to resettle, normally in a safer inland or better protected but

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[104] Brzoska and Fröhlich, 2016.
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already populated area, resulting in the inevitable tensions of population compression, urbanisation and the rapid arrival of a potentially culturally different group.

The consequences of environmental migration caused by rising water levels in the oceans include:

➢ Loss of possessions, including land and homes;

➢ Economic vulnerability[106];

➢ Large camps or settlements of environmental refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs)[107], where there is lack of basic services and opportunities, high levels of crime, gender-related violence, and lack of hope of returning home. The camps become recruiting grounds for criminally-motivated groups including extremists[108].

Such environmental effects cannot be underestimated, as they could even result in the demographic and political collapse of certain states. In the Maldives for example, 200 Inhabited Islands may have to be abandoned by 2100 because of rising sea levels[109]. With an average height of 3 metres above sea-level[110] muost of the population lives in coastal areas, but all attempts to protect them have either proven ineffective, or more targeted towards more influential or wealthier areas[111]. The general population has often been forced to move, forming large scale environmental migrant areas, or migrated to nearby India and Pakistan[112]. This demographic situation has meant the country's substantial service and tourist industry, which are the country's primary sources of income and often relies on lower income workers, are at substantial risk of collapsing[113]. As a result, political instability has become rampant and some believe the Maldives may not even exist as an autonomous state by the end of the century[114].

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✓   <u>Increased natural disasters and violence</u>

Finally, this paper explores the effect of climate change on the relationship between demographics and conflict in the 21st century through the recent trend of increased extreme weather events and natural disasters. The academic community agrees that extreme weather events, such as droughts, flood, tsunamis, earthquakes and hurricanes are on the rise[115] [116]. These events are not only more frequent, but also more severe[117], and this is due mostly to the rise in global temperatures. The Australian bushfire crisis in December 2019 and the beginning of 2020 took place when temperatures were three degrees above average; the demographic affect has yet to be assessed; however, inward migration from rural areas to cities is likely to be a consequence.

These events can have a significant effect on an area's demographics. Certain areas become more dangerous and populations are frequently being forced to flee or cluster[118]. Conflict, particularly societal or ethnically motivated, becomes more likely to erupt[119]. Certain populations, either compressed or as a geographically or culturally isolated demographic group, can often find themselves competing for resources and survival (Langton, 2010). This can result in looting, as well as violence, ethnically fuelled hate crimes, domestic violence and all manner of other illegal activities, especially within the less economically secure demographics[120].

However, it is the demographic nature of those affected that mostly dictates and decides the nature of conflict[121], not just how the demographics are changed. Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, Louisiana in August 2005. This is a city with high levels of inequality; those living on the lowlands and therefore most at risk in case of hurricanes and subsequent flooding were not only New Orleans's poorest, but frequently included a higher than average level of ethnic minority

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groups[122]. The most vulnerable had the least options for protecting themselves or fleeing from the disaster, but also received the least initial support from the US government[123].

The 2015 earthquake in Nepal and the 2019 Cyclone Idai in South-East Africa are two examples of natural disasters in two lower income developing states that show how inadequate government response to natural or man-made disasters can lead to societal unrest.

In Nepal, the ethnic minorities of the Tamang and Chepang peoples were particularly at risk[124]. However, support for this group from the local government was slow, and looting, as well as other acts of violence took place, especially against the female population[125]. In the aftermath of the earthquake within these poor and mountainous regions government rescue efforts took longer compared to response in the rest of the country[126]. Many within the rural communities have since migrated to the capital city, Kathmandu, causing increased economic pressure and resource strains on already poor infrastructure[127], and many victims, particularly those within the ethnic minority and those forced to migrate to more densely populated areas, became involved in crime and militancy in order to survive[128].

In the aftermath of Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe competing ethnic and criminal destabilising factors emerged. Mozambique is a strongly religious, primarily Christian, and very patriarchal state with international concerns about freedom for women[129] [130]. Today, the UN is still investigating claims that government officials and leaders who took advantage of the post-disaster conditions in the country have committing blackmail to sexually exploit local women in exchange for aid and support[131].

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[131] Bhalla, (2019)

Final Remarks

Territorial disputes, ethnic rivalries, poverty increase and rising competition for natural resources, including minerals, fresh water and arable land are all affecting demographic shifts, which in turn can lead to conflict situations. Modern pressures, including mass migration and climate change contribute to changes in the relationship between demographic fluctuations and their potential for conflict.

As mass migration becomes more common, and climate change takes a greater and more potent role in our modern life, demographic changes increase and the likelihood of demographic change as a key element in conflict looks to increase as well. Changes in climate patterns across the world and the effects that these changes have on water and its availability must become a primary concern when faced with demographically-induced conflicts. Lack of water leads to decreased agricultural potential and food production, and population migration and compression. Limited access to basic resources and to services such as healthcare and schooling favour the spread of diseases and possible inter-cultural pressures.

We are becoming more compressed, more urbanised, more rapidly diverse, more unequal and more under pressure from modern processes than ever before. Future conflict is likely to be increasingly urban in nature and outside state control. The consequent cultural shift is swift but integration of one culture into another is slow and acceptance takes time which we do not have.

A response must be global as the connecting globalised system can accelerate the potential for conflict. Modern extremist groups would struggle to recruit if it weren't for the internet and rapid spread of information. It is our modern methods of transportation that allow and even encourage the rapid mass movement of workers and refugees, and it is our globalised and rapidly increasing industries that continue to change our planet. These responses must become more sensitive to the demographics of affected areas and how they are changing. Sacrifices may have to be made.

Discussion points

- ➢ How can diversity and gender balance help prevent conflict?
- ➢ How can climate-induced migration be controlled?
- ➢ How can climate-induced migration be prevented at a local level?
- ➢ How can governments mitigate the effects of population compression and urbanization?