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Ideology and Politics at Mexico City: The United States at the 1984 International Conference on Population

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As the international community has observed time after time, UN conferences often depart from scenarios written for them in advance. In 1974, the World Population Conference at Bucharest turned into an ideological confrontation over the structure of the international economic order, with population issues pushed into the background.¹ Only after difficult negotiations was a compromise reached on a World Population Plan of Action with new provisions stressing the interrelations between population and development and the international economic system.² A decade later, in order to review progress under the 1974 Plan and make recommendations for its further implementation, the UN convened a second global conference in Mexico City.³ This time, the developing countries were in a different frame of mind. They no longer spoke of international population assistance as racist, genocidal, or imperialistic, or accused Western nations of advocating population control as a substitute for foreign aid. More and more, the poor nations had come to realize that problems of rapid population growth, infant and child mortality, urbanization, and migration must be addressed, with or without major transformations in the world economy.

At the conclusion of the Mexico City deliberations, the delegations reached agreement on a Declaration and a lengthy set of Recommendations that were in close accord with the draft submitted by the Preparatory Committee.⁴ While generally couched in cautious and diplomatic language, the Mexico City Recommendations included a strong endorsement of the principle that governments should, "as a matter of urgency," make family planning services "universally available."⁵ In the Declaration, governments expressed their concern about global population trends and stated that "social and population pressures may contribute to the continuation of the wide disparity in welfare and the quality of life between developing and developed countries."⁶ The Declaration and Recommendations were widely regarded as a major

achievement for UN officials and members of the international population community, who had worked for years to develop awareness of demographic problems and of what can be done to alleviate them.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, the deliberations at Mexico City, like those at Bucharest, once again failed to conform to the calculations and expectations of conference planners. UN officials and experienced observers did not expect a conference without controversy; what did come as a surprise was the extent to which it was dominated by conflict over the position taken by the United States. On a number of points, this position was at sharp variance with the draft Recommendations that had been formulated just a few months earlier with active US participation. Both in its analysis of the demographic situation and in its policy prescriptions, the US position seemed to challenge some of the basic assumptions underlying national and international population programs.⁷ Replacing the previous emphasis on the need for vigorous government programs to reduce the rate of population growth, the new US position asserted in a formal policy statement that: "population growth is, of itself, a neutral phenomenon." The statement further contended that those developing countries experiencing population pressures should reduce government interference in their economies in order to promote economic growth and thereby reduce fertility. With regard to abortion, the position was much more restrictive than previously; not only should US funds not be used for direct support of abortion-related activities, but they should be withheld from organizations using others' resources for these purposes. The US delegation also raised strong objections to language in the draft Recommendations pertaining to disarmament and to settlements in occupied territories.

At Mexico City, many delegates and observers concluded that the Americans were guided more by broad ideological aims and short-run political considerations than by a genuine interest in the demographic substance of the conference. It was not only the policy position of the United States that led to this conclusion, but the process by which the position was developed, the selection of the US delegation, and the delegation's confrontational behavior during the conference. In important ways, the United States contributed more than any other single country to the politicization of the conference.

The irony of this situation was readily apparent to those who had participated in the Bucharest conference, where it was the United States that had been most seriously offended by the Third World introduction of North-South economic issues. At Bucharest an international political coalition had used the conference as an opportunity to express its ideological values and interests and display new-found influence; by contrast, at Mexico City it was a new coalition in American politics that seized a similar opportunity. In both cases, the coincidence of the timing of the conference with unrelated political events—the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly in April 1974 proclaiming the New International Economic Order and the US presidential election campaign in 1984—probably magnified the impact of the new forces and made it more difficult to foresee their longer term significance.

An important difference between the two conferences, however, was that the developing countries had a much greater influence on the Plan of Action adopted at Bucharest than did the United States on the Recommendations adopted at Mexico City. While the United States captured attention, and while its position may have consequences beyond Mexico City, the final Recommendations of the conference itself nevertheless only partially accommodated US preferences.

In order to explain the role and impact of the US at Mexico City in this article, we (1) examine why North–South economic issues played only a minor role at Mexico City compared with Bucharest; (2) consider how the planning and organization of the conference served to emphasize consensus on most issues, while simultaneously highlighting the discordant behavior of the US delegation; (3) summarize the US position and discuss the reaction at the conference to it; and (4) analyze the domestic political origins of the position. Lastly, we comment on the potential significance of the new US policy and the conference for international population policies and programs.

The political environment of the conference

In the years of planning for Mexico City, one of the greatest fears of its organizers was that a North–South confrontation would recur, not only diverting attention from the primary purposes of the conference, but also weakening the population movement itself. This fear did not materialize, as the only attention to North–South issues at Mexico City was given by some Third World delegations in their formal statements at plenary sessions and a few amendments to the Recommendations intended to draw attention to such Third World economic concerns as the debt crisis. The major reason why the Mexico City conference did not become caught up in North–South issues was that the political climate had changed radically since the Bucharest conference in 1974. At that time, tensions between the advanced industrialized countries and the Third World were at their peak. Inspired and led by the OPEC nations, which were exploiting their new-found control over oil prices, developing countries were attempting to unite in a collective effort to restructure the world economy. The rationale and goals of this effort were outlined in the Declaration and Programme of Action for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) adopted in the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly in April 1974.⁸ High on the NIEO agenda were trade preferences, commodity price stabilization, restructuring of the international monetary system, debt relief, increased development aid, and greater regulation of multinational corporations and foreign investment.

The optimism among Third World leaders that significant gains could be made on these issues was short-lived, however. While the economic gap between developed and developing countries was still vast, North–South confrontation at the political level had greatly diminished by the early 1980s. Severe economic difficulties in the advanced countries, and the election of

more conservative governments in the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, and other Western nations had the effect of discouraging Third World initiatives. OPEC no longer wielded power on behalf of the Third World, or even its own members. Other attempts to establish commodity cartels had proved impossible to sustain.

Equally important were changes in the developing countries themselves. Throughout the 1970s, economic differences among them became increasingly pronounced, leading to differences in their foreign policy objectives and an end to a "trade union" mentality. Significantly, those experiencing the fastest economic development were East Asian and Latin American countries, whose strategies of encouraging foreign investment and export-oriented growth were least in tune with the ideological orientation of the NIEO. To gain economic concessions from the West, they found it increasingly advantageous to pursue bilateral or regional approaches rather than the global strategy associated with the NIEO.⁹ By 1984, changes in government or in the prevailing philosophies in many leading developing countries (including India, Mexico, Algeria, and China) were causing them to pursue more pragmatic and market-oriented development strategies. Moreover, most Third World countries had relatively high levels of indebtedness to the West, which had the effect of making them more cautious in their international political posture.

Beyond these changes in the overall political climate, perhaps the critical reason why the developing countries were not interested in using the conference as a platform for pursuing other political aims was that they supported the objectives of the conference. Much more than they had ten years earlier, the developing countries perceived the desirability of addressing population issues at the international level. While the depth of support in developing countries for population control programs was still open to question, in most countries members of the political and technocratic elites recognized the interrelations between population and development. They were at least receptive to the need to gather and analyze demographic information, make family planning services more widely available, and consider how policies and programs aimed at affecting fertility, mortality, and migration might enhance their country's economic development and social welfare objectives. All of these tasks, especially in a time of severe financial straits for many developing countries, would be facilitated by increasing international assistance and strengthening relevant international agencies.

This change in outlook on the part of a number of developing countries was particularly marked in countries of sub-Saharan Africa and in China, Algeria, and Brazil—countries that at Bucharest had been much more interested in raising economic and political issues than in addressing the population issues on the agenda. Noting that only three African countries before 1974 had population policies, Dr. Fred Sai of Ghana has commented on the rapid changes that have overtaken Africa in the last five years.¹⁰ Just a few months before the Mexico City conference, African economic ministers endorsed the Kili-manjaro Programme of Action on Population, which called for "effective programmes to reduce current high levels of fertility and mortality. . . ."¹¹

Similarly, China came to Mexico City prepared for a serious discussion of population issues. China has had the most vigorous family planning program in the world, with a policy since 1979 of promoting one-child families in order to stabilize its population.¹² At Mexico City, the Chinese delegation of 27 people was the largest from any country and was a highly visible presence. Rather than pursuing unrelated political or ideological objectives or attacking the superpowers, as it had done at Bucharest, the Chinese delegation seemed more bent on convincing those at the conference both of the magnitude of the problems China faces and of its determination to promote family planning.¹³ The delegation was particularly sensitive to charges of widespread coercion in the Chinese family planning program and firmly maintained that coercion in any form was “strictly forbidden.”¹⁴ China’s posture at the conference clearly reflected the declining influence of Maoist ideology in the decade since Bucharest.

Typical of the changes that had taken place in a number of developing countries in the past decade, Algeria and Brazil—two leaders of the Third World at Bucharest—revealed a much more positive attitude toward family planning. In each case, the shift was a product of growing economic pressures combined with changing leadership priorities.¹⁵ The willingness of Algeria and Brazil to work within the conference agenda at Mexico City was also consistent with their less confrontational stance in other recent international forums.

Changes in the global political and economic environment in the decade from 1974 to 1984, as well as in the population policies of leading developing countries, caused North–South issues to remain in the background at Mexico City. Yet, as at all international conferences, the potential for any number of other issues to arise was great. The politics of the Middle East, Southern Africa, and East–West relations have been known to seriously disrupt UN meetings on even the most technical of subjects. Many of the population issues on the agenda at Mexico City, moreover, were themselves capable of evoking intense responses—for example, the desirability of quantitative demographic targets for family planning programs, the role of incentives, and policies concerning international migration and refugees. While political differences were inevitable, careful planning and organization by the UN secretariat, aided by members of the international population community, helped to contain most of these differences.

The planning and organization of the conference

The United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the UN Population Division, which shared responsibility for preparations for the Mexico City conference, devoted much time and effort to both the political and the technical dimensions of these preparations.¹⁶ Officials of these UN agencies had a major stake in the success of the conference. It was at their initiative, with support from Third World governments, that the decision was made to hold a second global conference on population (rather than, for example, a special session

of the UN Economic and Social Council). These UN officials and Third World governments shared an interest in increasing donor enthusiasm and support for population programs. Their goal was simultaneously to celebrate the progress that had been made in the population field in the previous ten years and to call attention to the urgent need “to strengthen and sustain the momentum already generated in population activities.”¹⁷ The conference planners were determined to hold a “model” conference that would not be diverted from its primary objectives.¹⁸ Major Western donor countries, which had been skeptical about the idea of having the conference, urged UN officials to keep it well-focused, less expensive, and generally more modest in scale than the Bucharest conference or other previous global conferences on economic and social issues. The challenge for the conference architects was to find a way to achieve their substantive objectives within the limitations set by the donor countries.

The conference purpose and agenda

In establishing the purpose and agenda for the conference, its planners strove to avoid reopening debate on the Bucharest World Population Plan of Action (WPPA) or jeopardizing the gains achieved at Bucharest. Thus, in the resolution of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) calling for the conference, deliberations were to take place “within the framework of the existing WPPA, the principles and objectives of which continue to be fully valid.”¹⁹ The main objective, according to ECOSOC, was to develop recommendations for the further implementation of the WPPA, a definition of the conference’s task that emphasized its technical nature, seeming to imply that agreement already existed on major issues of principle.

Preparations for the conference

Preparations for the conference were designed to provide a solid technical foundation for the recommendations that governments would be asked to approve. Equally important was the need to provide ample opportunity for difficult issues to surface—and be resolved—during the preparatory phases. As with Bucharest, substantive groundwork for the conference was mainly in the hands of the UN Population Division, a unit within the UN Department of International Economic and Social Affairs with a reputation for meeting high scientific standards in the quality of its data-gathering and analysis. In developing both the technical basis and the language of the draft Recommendations, the Population Division was helped by a series of specialized forums. To begin with, it convened four expert groups whose participants served in their individual capacities.²⁰ The members of the four groups reviewed developments and identified issues in the areas of fertility and the family; population distribution, migration, and development; population, resources, environment, and development; and mortality and health policy. The reports of the groups, which were prepared by members of the secretariat, tended to emphasize areas of agreement and skirt more contentious issues. In addition to the expert groups, each of the UN Regional Economic Commissions sponsored intergovernmental

meetings. Although their participants were government representatives, they were mostly from ministries or agencies with population-related responsibilities, and UN secretariat officials were in a strong position to shape their deliberations and final statements.²¹

Political and organizational preparations were carried out in close association with the technical preparations, with leadership and coordination provided by the Secretary-General of the conference, Rafael M. Salas, and his staff. As Executive Director of UNFPA for 15 years and one who is familiar with the international politics of population issues, Salas was personally well prepared to anticipate and defuse potential sources of conflict. He was also able to take advantage of contacts UNFPA has fostered with population specialists in governments, academic institutions, and other nongovernmental organizations in the developed countries and throughout the Third World. The last-mentioned connection was reinforced by the 37 UNFPA field coordinators stationed (as of 1984) in developing countries. In addition, UNFPA has helped establish an organization of parliamentarians in over 40 countries. Through these networks, Secretary-General Salas could effectively communicate his objectives for the conference and reach agreement with representatives of leading countries on how to handle difficult issues.²²

The political and substantive preparations came together in the official Preparatory Committee, which was an enlarged, special session of the UN Population Commission.²³ The role of the Preparatory Committee was to review the draft Recommendations and settle as many issues as possible prior to the conference itself. The first meeting in January 1984, which was to have been the only meeting, drew a number of Third World representatives from permanent missions in New York. It became bogged down in a range of political and personality differences and failed to conclude its business; a second meeting became necessary, by which time conference planners had successfully encouraged leading Third World states to send more technically competent delegates.²⁴ In addition, a working group under the skilled and experienced chairmanship of Dr. Fred Sai had resolved most of the remaining conflicts over the language of the draft Recommendations.²⁵ When the Preparatory Committee concluded its deliberations in March, representatives felt a consensus had been reached that would require few changes when delegations assembled in Mexico City.²⁶

The structure and setting of the conference

Conference proceedings were to be concluded in six working days, and initially governments were requested to send only four delegates each. The latter stipulation was dropped early on. While the limitation on length was also exceeded in the end, it served the purpose of discouraging extended debate on extraneous issues and of limiting the incentives for participants to foment controversy. Most delegations had modest expectations about media coverage, which contributed to the general sense that the conference would not be an effective

platform for pursuing unrelated political objectives. In addition, conference planners decided not to create a special forum for nongovernmental organizations at Mexico City as had been done at Bucharest, where the “Tribune” attracted a heterogeneous group of activists on population issues. It was felt that a Tribune at Mexico City could be disruptive and divert attention from the conference.

In choosing the location for the conference, UN officials were aware that the site of a conference can influence the proceedings. It was no accident that the UN Economic and Social Council accepted Mexico’s bid to hold the conference in Mexico City, the largest city in the developing world.²⁷ As a Latin American country that had been making serious efforts to cope with its population problem since 1974, Mexico was seen as an example for other countries that may be at earlier stages of population policy development. It also helped that Mexico was a leader among Third World countries and at the time of the conference would be head of the Group of 77, the Third World caucus in the United Nations. As a result, even more than would normally be expected of the host country, Mexico was in an advantageous position to provide diplomatic leadership for the developing countries and promote a smooth conference.

Locating the conference in Mexico City, a few hours by plane from the United States, also had several unintended effects. The proximity to the United States made the conference readily accessible to American journalists, academics, and lobbyists. It was also easier for a relatively large contingent of six US Congressmen and their aides to appear on the scene. All of these people mingling in the relatively congested conference areas drew much more attention to the US position and the domestic controversy surrounding it than might have occurred in a more remote location. The large American presence—especially US mass media—made the conference more visible in the United States and throughout the world. Politically, the presence of so many Americans, many of them communicating views that dissented from their government’s official position, added to pressures on the US delegation to soften its stance.

Despite the large-scale and unpredictable intrusion of American domestic politics, the preparations for the conference produced consensus on a draft set of Recommendations, except for some remaining differences on a recommendation concerning disarmament. Even if governments’ preferences diverged on the issues covered in the draft, they were generally comfortable with the broad language that had been agreed on. At the conference, most delegations were content merely to provide an overview of their national population situations and policies along with some rhetorical comments on more general themes. Only about 24 governments (plus the Eastern European countries as a bloc) introduced amendments.²⁸ In the limited time available at the conference, issues on the agenda related to health, aging, urbanization, international migration, and demographic data collection attracted the attention of subgroups among the delegations with special interests. Participants in the conference

were extremely heterogeneous, and the vast majority had expertise on only a few of the substantive issues, if any.²⁹ Under these circumstances, few issues could or did arise involving more than a minority of participants—with the notable exception of those raised by the United States.

The United States at Mexico City

The fact that the US position dominated the concerns of other delegations at Mexico City was partly a consequence of the scope and significance of the issues it raised. Delegates were also compelled to direct their attention to the US position because the determination of the US delegation to uphold its position delayed the conference proceedings and threatened to dissolve the consensus sought by conference organizers.

But even more important for the US impact at the conference was participants' recognition that the US government, for better or worse, has been the single most important source of leadership and resources for international population programs; a shift in policy by the United States had implications that could not be ignored. In the past 20 years, the US government has pushed harder than any other Western government for developing countries to adopt population policies; it has contributed the most to population research, and, through the Office of Population of the Agency for International Development, has mounted the largest population assistance program of any donor, maintaining a corps of some 60 professionals in Washington, along with advisors in more than 40 countries, and providing support to family planning programs in over 90 countries.³⁰ The United States has also been the pillar of multilateral efforts through the UN system, including the World Bank, and a number of private organizations such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation. In this role, the investment of American funds has helped encourage other Western countries to make contributions to population efforts.

The position the US delegation brought to Mexico City was expressed in the formal policy statement and other documents it circulated; public statements by the head of the delegation, Ambassador James Buckley, and other official representatives; and the 15 amendments it introduced. The position had two major components. One was aimed at protecting US interests on issues that it argued were "extraneous" to the legitimate concerns of the conference, and the other was aimed at promoting the objectives of the Reagan administration in the areas of population, development, and family planning.

The US position on the disarmament and settlements issues

The amendments proposed by the United States at Mexico City called for eliminating two of the draft Recommendations that had been approved in the Preparatory Committee, Recommendation 5 and Recommendation 34. Recommendation 5, the idea of which emerged from one of the expert group meetings and was subsequently strengthened by the Soviet Union, emphasized

the potential development benefits of disarmament; Recommendation 34, initiated by Senegal—with the Palestinians in mind—condemned settlements in occupied territories.³¹ That these two issues became prominent at Mexico City is indicative of heightening confrontation since Bucharest on East–West and Middle East issues, as well as increased determination by the United States to take a stand in international forums on matters it perceives to be related to these issues. In recent years, this determination has been evident even if the particular question is little more than symbolic in its implications and even if the United States is likely to be nearly or completely isolated. Significantly, on Recommendation 5 dealing with disarmament, the United States had some support from other Western countries; a compromise was reached in a working group whereby Recommendation 5 was eliminated, but its basic message was retained in a special paragraph on “Peace, Security and Population” falling between the Preamble and Recommendations.³²

The recommendation on the settlements issue (Recommendation 34, later 36) provoked the most heated encounters of the conference and, in order to reach a resolution, the proceedings had to be extended an additional day. Israel did not attend the second of the two meetings of the Preparatory Committee when Recommendation 34 was introduced. The United States, which had agreed to the draft language of the recommendation in the Preparatory Committee, changed its stance at Mexico City and introduced an amendment to delete it, even though the language did not specifically mention Israel and could apply in other situations around the world. In apparent retaliation, a number of Arab delegations introduced a new amendment that did refer directly to Israel.³³ The Arab delegations had been prepared to accept the consensus of the Preparatory Committee, and, during the negotiations in Mexico City, they indicated their willingness to withdraw their amendment and compromise on the original language. Both the Arabs and the Israelis seemed to want to avoid a full-scale confrontation; the United States nevertheless pursued its case for eliminating the recommendation altogether.³⁴

US delegates claimed that neither the Preparatory Committee nor the conference itself was competent to deal with such a political issue.³⁵ They further held that permitting “extraneous” issues to be debated in specialized UN forums endangered future support for the United Nations. Other delegations felt committed to the consensus reached in the Preparatory Committee, which, after all, did not name Israel; in addition, the US delegation’s contentions were undermined in their eyes by the generally weak support for international institutions displayed by the Reagan administration. Ultimately, the issue came to a vote in which only Israel sided with the United States, with Great Britain, France, and West Germany joining the 87 countries voting to retain the original language of the recommendation. (Twenty-six countries abstained from voting; delegates of the rest of the countries were not present when the voting took place.)

Rather than force the issue to a vote, the US delegation could have simply stated a reservation on the Recommendation, which is common pro-

cedure on international policy statements that are adopted by consensus. Seemingly, the delegation had several political objectives in pressing its position even though it was unlikely to prevail. One was to demonstrate its friendship with Israel, particularly in an election year. It also appears that the delegation wanted to establish a justification for abstaining from the consensus, which Ambassador Buckley sought to do, but was instructed otherwise by the White House and the State Department.³⁶ Finally, the delegation wanted to draw attention to weaknesses its members perceived in the United Nations. Ambassador Buckley commented to the authors in a personal interview that the real issue on Recommendation 34 had more to do with the functioning of the United Nations than with the Arab–Israeli conflict. In his view, the United Nations was “committing suicide” by allowing certain political issues to continually intrude in the wrong forums. Ambassador Buckley’s position expressed a longstanding and widely shared sense of frustration in the United States over the impact of Third World politics on the United Nations. Conservatives in the United States, including Ambassador Buckley, often contend that if other governments are unresponsive to US policy preferences in the United Nations, then the United States should simply withhold support from UN decisions and programs.³⁷

The US position on population, development, and family planning issues

The most notable aspect of the American position at Mexico City was the fundamental change in the American assessment of the consequences of rapid population growth and appropriate policy responses. The official policy statement presented by the US delegation to the conference asserted that “The relationship between population growth and economic development is not necessarily a negative one” and that “governmental control of economies” or “economic statism” had caused population growth in developing countries to change from an “asset” to a “peril.”³⁸ While recognizing that “in some cases, immediate population pressures may require short-term efforts to ameliorate them,” the statement went on to conclude: “. . . population control programs alone cannot substitute for the economic reforms that put a society on the road toward growth and, as an aftereffect, toward slower population increase as well.” The statement clearly indicated that the economic reforms advocated by the delegation were those consistent with a market economy.³⁹

Underlying the US position was the assumption that there is no *global* population crisis that requires drastic forms of intervention by governments. The statement explicitly rejected the analysis and prescriptions of the *Global 2000* report that had been prepared under the auspices of the Carter administration.⁴⁰ By speaking of a “demographic overreaction in the 1960’s and 1970’s,” the statement also implicitly repudiated the high level of commitment and resources that had been devoted in those years to population programs by the US Agency for International Development. During the conference, the US

delegation argued for a more optimistic assessment of the global population and development situation.⁴¹

The American position also reaffirmed longstanding US policy that family planning programs must be purely voluntary:

U. S. support for family planning programs is based on respect for human life, enhancement of human dignity, and strengthening of the family. Attempts to use coercive measures in family planning must be shunned, whether exercised against families within a society or against nations within the family of man.

It then indicated that the United States would not extend population assistance to or through any international or nongovernmental organization that supports abortion or coercive family planning programs, or to any nation “which engages in forcible coercion to achieve population growth objectives.”⁴²

During the conference, it became apparent that despite the radical changes in the premises behind US policy, the effects were less sweeping in immediate practical terms. The most important early result of the new funding restrictions has been the halting of AID support to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, which had been a frequent target of “right-to-life” (anti-abortion) groups in the United States. The statement’s call for “concrete assurances” that UNFPA was not supporting abortion or coercion had created considerable consternation, but during the conference such assurances were accepted in the form of a letter from Executive Director Salas. And the refusal to support country programs engaged in “forcible coercion” lost much of its meaning when, in a press conference, Ambassador Buckley was unable or unwilling to name any countries currently guilty of such practices or likely to be affected by the new policy. On the same occasion, in a statement that underscored the tactical retreat that seemed to be under way, Ambassador Buckley indicated the administration’s intention to continue assistance to voluntary family planning programs and to request from Congress an increase in AID’s budget for this and related purposes.⁴³

While the policy statement of the US delegation and attendant press conferences captured center-stage at Mexico City, the series of amendments to the Recommendations offered by the United States played a greater role in the formal proceedings.⁴⁴ These proposed amendments and their fate help to reveal the level of US determination to push its views, and, no less important, provide insight into the viewpoints of other nations. In response to US proposals, for example, the Preamble to the Recommendations incorporated the optimistic outlook of the Reagan administration on the social and economic accomplishments and prospects of the developing nations. A new paragraph was inserted to recognize the role of the private sector in meeting population and development goals.⁴⁵ Language was also added to take into account the ethical concerns stressed by the United States and others—for example, a catchall statement calling for population policies to “respect human rights, the religious beliefs, philosophical convictions, cultural values and fundamental rights of each individual and couple, to determine the size of its own family.”⁴⁶

The US position on these key points was thus accommodated to some degree in the final consensus reached at the conference. The willingness of other delegates and UN officials to compromise was in all probability less a consequence of their being won over by the arguments of the US delegation than of a desire to avert a situation where the United States would choose to disassociate itself from the consensus. Quite simply, if the United States took such action, the conference would inevitably be branded a failure, with high costs to the international population movement.

A central concern of the US delegation was abortion. Ambassador Buckley had been selected as its head largely on the basis of his personal views on the matter and his acceptability to right-to-life groups. While declaring in its official policy statement that “the United States does not consider abortion an acceptable element of family planning programs,” the delegation made no effort to introduce a specific amendment to this effect.⁴⁷ Rather, the US delegation was reasonably confident that the Vatican would take the lead on this issue, as it did by proposing that abortion be “excluded” as a method of family planning.⁴⁸ Other governments felt that the language of the Holy See’s amendment went too far; they agreed to a compromise, supported by the United States, that abortion “in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning,” and calling for “humane treatment and counselling of women who have had recourse to abortion.”⁴⁹

Only one country, Sweden, vigorously objected to the consensus language by stating a formal reservation in the final Plenary.⁵⁰ Although Sweden appeared to be isolated in its liberal position on abortion, there was a great deal more private support by delegates than was reflected in the proceedings. Governments tend to be conservative in their public positions on abortion. In international forums, governments have had what amounts to a tacit agreement to avoid raising the abortion issue at all, preferring to maintain that abortion policy is a matter for each sovereign nation to decide. Although a number of countries have adopted more liberal abortion policies in the past decade, the great majority still forbid abortion or have many restrictions on access to it. More important, even when a policy is established, abortion remains an emotional issue on which consensus is elusive. In recent years, reacting to the trend toward liberalization and the dramatic increase in the number of abortions being performed in some countries, right-to-life movements have been gathering strength, most notably in the United States, but also in Canada, Great Britain, Japan, New Zealand, and Sweden, among other countries.⁵¹ They have received outspoken support from Pope John Paul II, who has been determined to restore the Catholic Church’s authority and influence on matters of contraception, sexuality, and personal morality generally.⁵²

Unresolved in the compromise language of the abortion recommendation is the meaning of the term “promoted.” Does it constitute promotion merely to provide abortion services? To publicize their availability? To refer an unwed pregnant adolescent to a clinic? The practical meaning of the compromise language—that is, in effect, how it will be interpreted by the governments—

cannot as yet be ascertained. Ambassador Buckley, on the one hand, proclaimed US satisfaction with the abortion recommendation as being “almost identical” with the US position.⁵³ On the other hand, Dr. Fred Sai, who served as Chairman of the Main Committee, has said, “Since abortion is not in fact promoted, even though it is everywhere used as a method of fertility control, there was no great difficulty in accepting this particular formulation.”⁵⁴ Inevitably, how the Recommendation is interpreted and applied will depend on struggles in political and bureaucratic arenas.⁵⁵

The adamant position of the United States on abortion was linked politically and ideologically to its posture on another set of issues that became prominent during the conference, those related to the status of women. Despite the emphasis given in previous US policy utterances to the status of women, the US delegation to Mexico City made no mention of this theme in its policy statement.⁵⁶ This position was consistent with the expectations of members of the right-to-life movement and the New Right, most of whom would have been displeased if the US delegation had visibly identified itself with efforts to enhance the status of women. In contrast to the principles that women should have equal rights with men and should have control over their own fertility—including access to abortion counseling and services—these conservative groups tend to uphold a traditional view of the family and the role of women in society. For them, abortion is categorically immoral, with the possible exception of cases where the life of the woman is in danger.⁵⁷ The Reagan administration, on the other hand, felt it could not afford to be seen as opposing efforts to enhance the status of women, as some of the President’s close advisers, eyeing the upcoming election, were concerned about the “gender gap” based on survey reports showing the President to be less popular with women than with men. Perhaps as a consequence of this concern, as well as active lobbying by American women at the conference representing nongovernmental organizations, the US delegation ultimately endorsed a proposal to strengthen the language dealing with women and to elevate the importance of women’s concerns by creating a separate section on the subject near the beginning of the Recommendations.⁵⁸

As the preceding discussion reveals, the United States achieved part of what it sought in the negotiations over the Recommendations. Yet to a great extent it was in an isolated position—much as it had been at Bucharest, albeit for different reasons. General reactions to the US stance ranged from the “benign neglect” preferred by most Western delegations to the extreme annoyance more characteristic of some members of non-Western delegations. Many delegates privately expressed disappointment at what they perceived as the overall lack of knowledge and expertise concerning population and development problems of the Third World among members of the US delegation, the political process by which its members were selected, and the obviously conflict-ridden preparation for the conference as reflected in the last-minute selection of the delegation and drafting of the US position. During the conference, what many participants viewed as a didactic tone adopted by some members of the delegation was an additional source of annoyance.

Because the initial draft of the US position had received widespread unofficial circulation before the conference, many delegates had had an opportunity to discuss the position and crystallize their responses to it. The appearance of unity and harmony among the delegations may have been partially an artifact of the US position: by arriving at the conference with a stand that departed significantly from the Preparatory Committee's consensus on key issues, the United States made the remaining differences among other delegations seem much smaller by comparison.

The responses of most conference participants to the US position were tempered by an awareness that an American presidential campaign was under way. They believed that the position was designed to enhance President Reagan's reelection chances and very likely might be modified once the campaign was over. Furthermore, open disagreement among Americans themselves both before and during the conference led many to question the breadth of domestic support for the position. Before the conference, hundreds of articles and editorials in newspapers and periodicals challenged the position.⁵⁹ The Population Association of America, representing US demographers and population specialists, presented memoranda and statements to Congress questioning the scientific basis of the White House policy statement.⁶⁰ Just before the conference, members of Congress called hearings in order to try to force the administration to change its stance.

At the conference itself, representatives of American academic and non-governmental organizations who actively supported US population assistance were ubiquitous.⁶¹ Dr. Sheldon Segal, the co-recipient of the United Nations Population Award for 1984, a respected American biomedical scientist, and Director of Population Sciences at the Rockefeller Foundation, publicly questioned the US position, arguing the need for the option of safe, legal abortion as a backup when contraceptives fail. He also presented and circulated the results of a Gallup Survey undertaken at the behest of the Rockefeller Foundation and conducted just weeks before the conference. In interpreting the findings, he pointed to the strong support among Americans for family planning assistance to developing countries, noting that they "overwhelmingly reject the notion that the US should tie family planning assistance to others' policies on abortion."⁶² A vivid indication of opposition in the United States to the Reagan administration's policy was the arrival in Mexico City of six members of Congress, who held a press conference to air their dissatisfaction and to decry the lack of consultation between the Executive Branch and Congress in formulating the position, as well as the absence from the delegation of members of Congress, a departure from the typical practice at global conferences.⁶³

These events during the conference were but surface manifestations of a deeper struggle under way within the American political system. In the decade since Bucharest, new forces have made their presence felt, forces that include groups inspired by a high degree of religious and ideological commitment. It is both morally and politically consistent for these groups to extend their longstanding concern over domestic policies in the area of population and family planning to the international level. Domestic politics and ideologies

often affect nations' behavior in international relations, and their impact has certainly been apparent in international deliberations concerned with population issues; however, when they spill over to influence the behavior of a major power—and the leading actor in the international population field—their effects are likely to be greatly magnified. Thus, more than a cursory understanding of domestic political developments in the United States is necessary in order to appreciate the role played by the US delegation at Mexico City and the potential problems ahead for international population efforts.

The domestic political origins of the US position at Mexico City

Members of the population community had been concerned from the time the Reagan administration was elected about the new political pressures being brought to bear on US international population policy. Understandably, however, they did not foresee the turnabout that took place in the US position just two months before the Mexico City conference, or the distinctive new ingredients of the US position—the contention that population growth is a neutral phenomenon, the argument that market economies are necessary to reduce fertility, and the statement that the United States would withdraw support for organizations involved in any abortion-related activities. That these premises were henceforth to guide US policies came as a surprise, not only to many in the international population community, but even to officials in the US government with population responsibilities.

In the years of planning for the conference and during the two preparatory meetings in January and March 1984, it appeared that the State Department was taking its customary lead in formulating US positions and coordinating plans for US participation in the conference, including nominating the delegation. Richard E. Benedick, the Coordinator of Population Affairs in the State Department, an ambassadorial-level official, was an outspoken advocate of family planning programs and the need for the US government to continue its leadership role. Seemingly, he had the support of Secretary of State George Shultz and UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. In addition, President Reagan himself had issued several favorable statements on the subject, at the Western economic summits in Ottawa and Versailles, as well as in a message to Western Hemisphere parliamentarians.⁶⁴

In these and other statements, the Reagan administration for the most part seemed to be following in the footsteps of its predecessors. Since the early to mid-1960s, when the problem of rapid population growth was recognized by governments, support for US leadership in efforts to deal with it had been broad and bipartisan through both Democratic and Republican administrations. Even though international population issues never attracted more than mild interest from the general public, policymakers viewed US assistance for population policies and programs in developing nations as promoting the long-range economic and security interests of the United States in a stable global

order.⁶⁵ Together with the humanitarian and health arguments for making family planning available and the perception that population programs were relatively cost-effective compared with other aid programs, these systemic considerations provided a compelling rationale for population assistance in the eyes of most US policymakers. With some variations, this perspective continued to prevail during the first three years of the Reagan administration.

As the 1984 Presidential election approached, however, the political objectives and calculations of the White House changed. Leaders of the right-to-life movement met with White House staff in January 1984 to press among other things for a “pro-life” delegation to Mexico City and the removal of Richard Benedick.⁶⁶ Right-to-life leaders originally sought to have US Surgeon-General Everett Koop, a leading supporter of their cause, named as delegation head; the final choice agreed to by the White House was former Senator James L. Buckley, President of Radio Free Europe. As a Conservative Party US Senator from New York in the 1970s, he had worked closely with the right-to-life movement in promoting a constitutional amendment that would have the effect of banning abortion.⁶⁷ From early 1981 through late 1982, he had served as Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, and in that capacity had been regarded as unfriendly to international population assistance. He agreed to serve as head of the delegation on the condition that the policy position would be consistent with his personal convictions on the issues. In late May, White House staff prepared and circulated the first draft of the position that eventually—after some additions recommended by the State Department and AID as noted above—became the policy statement issued by the delegation to Mexico City.

The remainder of the nine-member delegation was then selected. Although most of the members were high-ranking government officials, none had specialized background in the population field. Significantly, Richard Benedick was not included, leading him to resign his position as Coordinator of Population Affairs and seek reassignment elsewhere in the State Department. Eventually, under State Department pressure, it was agreed in the final days before the conference that advisers to the delegation would also be appointed who had more expertise in population matters.⁶⁸

The composition of the delegation and the position it brought to the conference were a victory for those individuals and groups who had sought in various ways since the Reagan administration took office to modify, curtail, or even terminate US involvement in international population programs. This opposition was not confined to the obvious right-to-life groups but had a broader base in an informal political network whose membership cuts across institutional and organizational lines. It included a number of appointees of the Reagan administration, Congressmen and their staffs, and representatives of lobbying organizations and “think tanks.” One of the first moves by members of this network in 1981 was an effort to eliminate the entire AID budget for population assistance. This move was apparently promoted from within the government by staff in the White House and in the Office of Management and Budget.

Ultimately, the budget request was restored after vigorous lobbying by proponents of US population assistance. Their efforts generated Congressional pressure on the administration and reportedly enlisted support from then Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Vice President George Bush as well as other moderate Republicans in the Reagan administration. Many of the latter advocated continued funding—and even a budget increase—for the program.

Despite their failure to eliminate funds for AID's population program, conservative activists continued to make it a target.⁶⁹ Instead of attacking the program as a whole, they focused their efforts on AID expenditures that they claimed were helping to promote abortion. In 1983, under pressure, AID withdrew support for *International Family Planning Perspectives*, a periodical published by a Planned Parenthood affiliate. Funds for the Pathfinder Fund, a private intermediary organization providing family planning technical assistance, were also threatened, but Pathfinder agreed to cease abortion-related activities. The same group of activists also influenced personnel decisions in AID.

This network of actors owes its influence over AID's population program to a new coalition that has become an increasingly powerful force in American electoral politics. The coalition, which formed just before the 1980 Presidential election, is comprised of several separate movements that have been gathering strength in the United States since the 1970s: the right-to-life movement, Protestant fundamentalism, and most important, the New Right wing of the Republican Party.⁷⁰ Although the groups comprising this coalition are not homogeneous, they share some common values and themes, including: conservative views on personal morality and women's rights; opposition to abortion; a desire to see religious institutions and practices receive more overt support from the government; fervent anti-Communism and nationalism; devotion to an ideal of free enterprise and opposition to social welfare programs regarded as "social engineering"; antipathy toward the "Eastern establishment"; and a strong desire for American political leaders to project more confidence and optimism about the future. Many groups who work on behalf of specific objectives do not concur in all of these views or are more moderate in their approach, but each feels it gains benefits, especially increased influence, by being part of the broader coalition.

When it might have been expected to be preoccupied by the 1984 election campaign, why did the New Right coalition take an interest in the Mexico City conference and international population issues?⁷¹ To begin with, members were genuinely concerned about trends they perceived in national and international population programs: the liberalization of abortion policies and the role of international agencies in supporting abortion-related activities; the increased availability of sterilization; and the increased use of incentives and disincentives to promote family planning.⁷² These general concerns were brought into focus in 1983 by accounts from a variety of sources of forced abortions in China.⁷³ Still, the primary agenda of this coalition was a domestic one, and the interest they took in the Mexico City conference is best understood

as a means of helping them meet domestic objectives. First, they probably perceived that passage of antiabortion recommendations at a UN conference would further legitimize and strengthen their national efforts; to the extent that they failed, they would further dramatize to their constituencies the shortcomings of the United Nations. Second, for the right-to-life groups in the coalition, preparing for the conference provided impetus to strengthen contacts with counterparts in other countries and develop the networks necessary to sustain a transnational movement, which could reinforce their work at the national level.

Third, and most important, the New Right coalition needed some tangible achievements in view of its failure to enact its broader social agenda. After having lost, two years earlier, the struggle for an amendment to the US Constitution banning abortion, some of the proponents of the amendment may well have seen activity on the international level as a means to at least partially recoup their losses and keep the movement going. Furthermore, if grassroots supporters and wealthy contributors were to be motivated to do their utmost in the coming election, they needed to be persuaded that the White House was listening to them. Taking on the foreign policy establishment, and especially moderate Republicans who had generally supported US leadership in international population assistance, was a good way for the New Right coalition to demonstrate its political influence.⁷⁴

For the Reagan administration, taking a strong position at Mexico City helped to redeem some earlier promises to the New Right coalition that had been only partially fulfilled in Reagan's first four years in office. While in many ways the position at the conference was more symbolic than tangible in its implications, it nevertheless was meant as a highly visible sign that the Reagan administration was still committed to at least trying to satisfy its promises. At the same time, it was a less expensive and more expedient way to respond to New Right pressures than trying to change the Constitution, rewrite legislation, or alter administrative rules and regulations. Defining policy positions for international conferences is clearly a function of the Executive Branch and is therefore more readily subject to the direction of the President and his White House staff.

How policy statements are translated into subsequent behavior is a very different matter. Whether or not the US position at Mexico City is implemented in a way that produces lasting and significant changes in the US role in international population assistance will depend on an ongoing bargaining process involving both the Executive Branch and Congress. With the second Reagan administration barely under way, the outcomes of this bargaining process can only be conjectured. The White House responses to the importunings of the network of New Right and right-to-life activists depend partly on the personal predispositions of President Reagan and his immediate staff. President Reagan seems to have adopted the network's view that rapid population growth should not be an urgent concern for developing nations, and he is philosophically committed to opposing abortion.⁷⁵ As in his first term, however, he and his

staff must be prepared to decide how hard to push these views if to do so endangers enactment of his administration's other domestic and foreign policy proposals.

In setting these priorities, at least on the abortion issue, the White House may take into account the apparently minor role that the issue played in voters' decisions even though it was much debated during the election campaign.⁷⁶ Moreover, the opposition the White House encountered once the first draft of the Mexico City position paper was leaked to the press and others gave clear indication that the political obstacles to its full implementation are considerable. On the crucial matter of the budgetary allocations for international population assistance, Congress gave the AID program a resounding vote of confidence soon after the Mexico City conference by approving a \$50 million increase for fiscal year 1985, for a total of \$290 million, rather than the \$10 million increase the administration had requested. The new restrictions on abortion funding have resulted in withdrawal of support to IPPF, but no other organization seems immediately affected, and the administrative guidelines for applying these restrictions are still being formulated.

Whether the United States continues on the course it set in Mexico City ultimately depends on the ability of the coalition of New Right, right-to-life, and Protestant fundamentalist activists to secure its position in American politics. Groups with strong, coherent ideologies have always found it difficult to survive, much less gain and hold on to power, in the American two-party system, with its natural gravitation toward centrist positions. To the extent that such groups are successful in electoral politics, their ideological purity has inevitably been diluted. On the other hand, even when it is unlikely that they can prevail in pursuing their policy goals, their high level of ideological commitment often leads them to resist compromises. Without doubt, the deep differences between the New Right coalition and the proponents of US international population assistance will be the cause of conflict for some time to come—with no clear or final resolution.

Conclusion

In much the same way as the Third World call for a New International Economic Order unexpectedly enveloped the Bucharest conference, the dramatic change in US policy just before Mexico City diverted the conference from its original concerns and objectives. International civil servants can do much in advance of a conference to promote agreement, especially when they are dealing with specialized functional areas where they can facilitate policy coordination through networks of officials who are well known to one another. But the sudden intrusion of bloc politics, as at Bucharest, or domestic politics, as at Mexico City, is mostly beyond their control. It is even more difficult to accommodate these intrusions when they are motivated by strongly felt ideological, religious, or ethical values, and are reinforced by significant political and organizational resources.

Despite the politicization of the proceedings at Mexico City, the conference produced some noteworthy accomplishments. Exchanges at the conference itself, as well as throughout the lengthy preparations, forged new links among governments and international organizations and encouraged additional groups and governments, especially in Africa, to take an interest in population problems. Partly as a consequence of the political controversy, the conference—and the population issues on its agenda—were given a new and heightened visibility. Potentially, the most significant achievement was the consensus on the Declaration and Recommendations reaffirming and extending the 1974 World Population Plan of Action. While the conference in Bucharest had been even more conflict-ridden than its successor in Mexico City, the 1974 Plan nevertheless became a document of enduring value, which governments, international agencies, and activists could use to legitimize population, family planning, and related programs throughout the Third World. Members of the international population community seem to feel that the consensus of Mexico City provides them with an even stronger mandate.⁷⁷

Beyond acquiescence by governments to a common set of recommendations, UN officials had a much more ambitious goal at Mexico City—to revitalize the international population movement. In recent years, the movement has lost much of the dynamism and excitement that was previously apparent. Organizations that were at the forefront have been less vigorous in promoting and assisting population activities in developing countries—including the World Bank, the Swedish International Development Authority, and the Ford Foundation. The US Agency for International Development, while still a leader, has had to cope with new legislative and bureaucratic constraints. Contributions to the UN Fund for Population Activities have been leveling off, as has overall international population assistance.⁷⁸ While it is premature to assess the impact of the conference on the agencies of the “international population system,” Mexico City may have achieved at least part of its purpose, as it appears that participants from donor countries and developing countries alike departed with a renewed commitment to strengthening population policies and programs.

Paradoxically, the United States may have inadvertently contributed to this renewal. Conflict tends to generate interest in an issue and, for those who find themselves on the same side of the struggle, promotes a spirit of unity. But even more important, by relinquishing the tutelary role it once played, the United States made it clear that what countries do about their population problems is a matter of their own choosing and made it incumbent on other governments and international agencies to assume greater responsibility themselves for making hard choices. On the other hand, the abrupt changes in US policy and the premises behind it are likely to diminish US credibility and create confusion. Such confusion will undoubtedly be harmful at a time when other donor governments and international agencies are still attempting to gain wider acceptance for the propositions that rapid population growth impedes development and that governments in developing countries should encourage

individuals and couples to avail themselves of a full range of family planning services, including sterilization and abortion.

Aside from signaling to other nations that the United States may abdicate its leadership role in population policy formulation, the US position at Mexico City also raised doubts about whether the United States would continue to allocate substantial financial resources to population activities. These doubts arise at a time when a World Bank analysis suggests that the current level of population assistance needs to be quadrupled.⁷⁹ Although the US Congress greatly increased funds for population programs in FY1985, it is uncertain whether it will continue to be as supportive in the absence of encouragement from the Executive Branch. Moreover, if political considerations and conflict begin to affect organizational and management aspects of the AID population assistance program that are mostly beyond the reach of Congress, the ability of the program's professional staff to provide technical guidance and adapt to the needs of individual countries will be weakened—at a time when these needs are becoming increasingly varied and complex.

The Mexico City conference demonstrated that the international population system has the will and capacity to survive and move ahead. Without active cooperation and leadership from the US government, however, it will be a different system: it will be a system deficient in the resources, expertise, and drive that are essential to its long-run effectiveness.

Notes

The authors attended the Mexico City conference as observers. This analysis is based on extensive interviews with participants both during and after the conference as well as in the years preceding. We wish to thank the interview respondents for sharing their thoughts and ideas with us. We are grateful to the Compton Foundation for its support, which made this study possible. Finally, we wish to thank Jane Hutchings and Amy Sheon for their assistance, and our colleagues Alison McIntosh and Gayl Ness for their comments.

1 For an analysis of the political dynamics of the 1974 conference, see Jason L. Finkle and Barbara B. Crane, "The politics of Bucharest: Population, development, and the New International Economic Order," *Population and Development Review* 1, no. 1 (September 1975): 87–114. A review of the Bucharest conference is also contained in W. Parker Mauldin, Nazli Choucri, Frank W. Notestein, and Michael Teitelbaum, "A report on Bucharest," *Studies in Family Planning* 5, no. 12 (December 1974): 357–395.

2 See the World Population Plan of Action, reprinted in *Population and Development Review* 1, no. 1 (September 1975): 163–181.

3 See UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 1981/87.

4 The draft Recommendations for the Mexico City conference are contained in United Nations, *Report of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population, 1984, on its resumed session* (New York: UN Doc. E/1984/28/Add.1, 28 March 1984), pp. 5–36. The final Recommendations appear in United Nations, *Report of the International Conference on Population, 1984, Mexico City, 6–14 August 1984* (New York: UN Doc. E/CONF.76/19, 1984), pp. 8–40.

5 United Nations, *Report of the International Conference on Population*, cited in note 4, pp. 23–24. Recommendation 25 states: "Governments should, as a matter of urgency, make universally available information, education and the means to assist couples and individuals to achieve their desired number of children. Family planning information, edu-

cation and means should include all medically approved and appropriate methods of family planning, including natural family planning, to ensure a voluntary and free choice in accordance with changing individual and cultural values. Particular attention should be given to those segments of the population which are most vulnerable and difficult to reach.” (The comparable passage in Recommendation 29 (b) of the 1974 Plan “recommended that all countries . . . encourage appropriate education concerning responsible parenthood and make available to persons who so desire advice and means of achieving it.”)

6 The Declaration also appears in United Nations, *Report of the International Conference on Population*, cited in note 4, pp. 2–5. The full texts of the Declaration and of the Recommendations were reproduced in *Population and Development Review* 10, no. 4 (December 1984): 755–782.

7 See *Policy Statement of the United States of America at the United Nations International Conference on Population*. The text of the statement is reproduced in *Population and Development Review* 10, no. 3 (September 1984): 574–579.

8 UN General Assembly Resolution 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI).

9 See Stephan Haggard and Chung-in Moon, “The South Korean State in the international economy: Liberal, dependent, or mercantile?,” in John Ruggie (ed.), *The Antinomies of Interdependence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 160–165.

10 Fred T. Sai, “The population factor in Africa’s development dilemma,” *Science* 226 (16 November 1984): 801–805.

11 See United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, *Kilimanjaro Programme of Action on Population* (New York: UN Doc. ST/ECA/POP/1, 1984), p. 7. This document includes Resolution 506 (XIX) adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers in Addis Ababa in May 1984. Fred Sai also provides a reminder that obstacles to translating these policy statements into action are manifold: “Apart from Mauritius, no African country has a family planning program that is really reaching the people and that can make a demographic impact in the next decade or so.” He proposes a

“careful international campaign” to increase African leaders’ concern about population growth rates (Sai, cited in note 10, p. 805).

12 See Shen Guoxiang, “A brief introduction to China’s family planning programme” (Mexico City: Chinese delegation, mimeo., August 1984).

13 During the conference, China nevertheless felt compelled to criticize the United States for seeking to impose its economic system on others. *New York Times*, 11 August 1984, p. 3.

14 Shen Guoxiang, cited in note 12, p. 6.

15 See excerpts from a speech on population issues by Algerian President Boumediène in *Population and Development Review* 4, no. 2 (June 1978): 372–373. The change in the Brazilian perspective was highlighted in an article in the *New York Times*, 28 July 1984.

16 As specified by the UN Economic and Social Council in its resolution authorizing the conference, UNFPA’s Executive Director, Rafael Salas, served as Secretary-General of the conference, and the Director of the UN Population Division, Léon Tabah, later succeeded by Sankar Menon, served as Deputy Secretary-General. See UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 1981/87.

17 See United Nations, Department of Public Information, “International Conference on Population—1984” (New York: UN Doc. DESI FACTS 84/3, June 1984).

18 For an overview of the decision to hold the Mexico City conference and the preparations for it, see Donald F. Heisel, “The road to Mexico City: Preparation for the 1984 International Conference,” *Managing International Development* 1 (September/October 1984): 23–44.

19 UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 1981/87.

20 See Léon Tabah, “Preparations for the 1984 International Conference on Population,” *Population and Development Review* 10, no. 1 (March 1984): 81–86. The groups met in various locations for four days each in early 1983. Their recommendations were submitted to the Preparatory Committee in the form of reports prepared by the secretariat (UN Doc. E/CONF.76/PC/6,7,8,9). The proceedings and background papers of the groups were

subsequently published and made available at the conference, although they were not part of the basic conference documentation.

21 See United Nations, *Recommendations of the regional economic commissions for the further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action at the regional level—Report of the Secretary-General* (New York: UN Doc. E/CONF.76/6, 20 June 1984).

22 The Secretary-General of the Bucharest conference, Antonio Carillo Flores, was an experienced diplomat but had had little prior experience with population issues in the international arena and was less than fully familiar with the international population network.

23 The Population Commission is an intergovernmental body reporting to the Economic and Social Council; governments usually send demographers or other population specialists as their representatives.

24 Peters D. Willson drew attention to the role of permanent mission delegates in politicizing the Preparatory Committee, in "The 1984 Conference on Population: What will be the issues?," *International Family Planning Perspectives* 10 (June 1984): 43–48.

25 Dr. Sai, a Ghanaian, previously served in a high-level capacity in the International Planned Parenthood Federation headquarters and chaired the International Conference on Family Planning in the 1980's, a major conclave of the international population community held in Jakarta in 1981. He subsequently became Chairman of the Main Committee at Mexico City and in that role greatly facilitated the movement toward final agreement on the Recommendations at the conference.

26 See United Nations, *Report of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population, 1984* (New York: UN Doc. E/1984/28, 17 February 1984), and *Report of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population, 1984, on its resumed session*, cited in note 4.

27 By contrast, the 1974 conference was held in Bucharest, Romania, a socialist state with low fertility and a pronatalist policy.

28 Great Britain, France, West Germany, Sweden, and Norway were some of the Western governments that did not offer amendments.

Among those who did—e.g., Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, Japan, and Italy—the concerns in the amendments related mainly to the status of women, aging, adolescent pregnancy, and human rights aspects of family planning.

29 No single category of officials dominated among the delegations, which included representation from parliaments and foreign ministries; development planning and aid ministries; social welfare, domestic affairs, and immigration ministries; health ministries; and family planning, demographic, and statistical agencies.

30 For an early account of the US role in international population assistance, see Phyllis T. Piotrow, *World Population Crisis: The United States Response* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973). See also Margaret Wolfson, *Profiles in Population Assistance: A Comparative Review of the Principal Donor Agencies* (Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1983), pp. 133–154. For a more critical view, see Donald Warwick, *Bitter Pills: Population Policies and their Implementation in Eight Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

31 The Preparatory Committee did not reach agreement on a draft text for Recommendation 5, but the version preferred by the Soviet Union stated in part: "... Governments and international organizations are urged to accord the highest priority to fostering international relations and to redirecting resources through implementation of measures of disarmament from military purposes to programmes in the social and economic spheres." The proposed text for Recommendation 34, as agreed in the Preparatory Committee, stated: "Population distribution policies must be consistent with such international instruments as the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949), wherein article 49 prohibits individual or mass forcible transfers from an occupied territory and forbids the occupier from transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. Furthermore, the establishment of settlements in territories occupied by force is illegal and condemned by the international community." United Nations, *Report of the*

Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population, 1984, on its resumed session, cited in note 4, p. 13 and p. 22.

32 Paragraph 12 in United Nations, *Report of the International Conference on Population*, cited in note 4, p. 14.

33 See *Proposed amendment to Recommendation 34: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia* (Mexico City: UN Doc. E/CONF.76/MC/L.60, 8 August 1984).

34 An American official told the authors that an Arab delegate indicated to him the desire of the Arab countries to reach a compromise on this issue. An Israeli delegate, similarly, conveyed to one of the authors that the draft Recommendation was not particularly distressing, inasmuch as such a statement had become almost a ritual at UN gatherings.

35 In order to justify the change in the US response to draft Recommendation 34 from the Preparatory Committee to the conference, Ambassador Buckley stated in the formal plenary that in agreeing to the draft language on this issue, the US representative to the Preparatory Committee had acted "beyond his area of expertise."

36 See *New York Times*, 17 Aug 1984, p. A6.

37 Ambassador Buckley's views in this regard are stated in a recent article based on his experience in Mexico City, "All alone at the UN," *National Review* 36 (14 December 1984): 25–28.

38 *Policy Statement of the United States*, cited in note 7.

39 These contentions in the US position were grounded primarily in the views of several economists whose writings in the late 1970s and early 1980s gave new intellectual legitimacy and ammunition to critics of population programs. See Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981); and P. T. Bauer, *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

40 See United States, Council on Environmental Quality and Department of State, *Global 2000 Report to the President*, Vols. I,

II, and III (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1980).

41 The US delegation prepared and circulated a "data packet" during the conference to help justify its claims that significant progress had been made in fertility, mortality, health, nutrition, education, and income. Critics pointed out that the aggregate data showing gains over a period of two or more decades often blurred important regional and country variations and backsliding on a number of dimensions in recent years. The table in the data packet showing growth in GNP per capita since 1960 indicated that low-income countries stood at \$280 in 1982 and middle-income countries at \$1,520. It omitted the figure of \$11,070 for industrial market economies, a large gap even considering the difficulties in comparing GNP data between economies at different stages of development. The source of these figures was the World Bank, *World Development Report 1984* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 218–219. Ironically, the major theme of the World Bank report was the need for stronger policies to reduce rapid population growth. A more complete account of the debate on demographic and economic progress is part of an analysis of the conference undertaken by Deirdre Wulf and Peters D. Willson, "Global politics in Mexico City," *Family Planning Perspectives* 16 (September/October 1984): 228–232.

42 The policy statement presented by the United States at Mexico City had initially been drafted in the White House rather than in the State Department as would have been normal procedure. Some minor changes in phrasing were made in the final statement, and new sections were added based on the State Department's response to the first draft. The new sections, entitled "Population, development, and economic policies," "Health and humanitarian concerns," and "Technology as a key to development," made explicit US support for voluntary family planning programs as a means of improving "quality of life." In addition, in the second version, the policy on funding abortion activities was clarified so that assistance to national family planning programs that provide abortion would not be cut off but would be channeled through "segregated accounts which cannot be used for abortion." The rationale for treating governments

differently from international public or private organizations was that the former, unlike the latter, are sovereign entities.

43 Press conference by the US delegation in Mexico City, 5 August 1984.

44 See the amendments proposed by the United States in UN Docs. E/CONF.76/MC/L.6, L.20, and L.52.

45 See Paragraph 13 in United Nations, *Report of the International Conference on Population*, cited in note 4, p. 14. See also Recommendation 3, which calls for countries to encourage, "wherever appropriate, entrepreneurial initiatives" in their development policies (*ibid.*, p. 15).

46 See Recommendation 13 (*ibid.*, p. 19).

47 The United States did successfully propose to delete the word "illegal" from draft Recommendation 13, providing for "humane treatment and counseling of women who have had recourse to illegal abortion." The effect of this amendment would be to draw attention away from the health problems of illegal abortions.

48 Wulf and Willson observed that "the U.S. delegation played a remarkably passive role on this issue in the drafting committee once the Holy See had proposed its amendments" ("Global politics in Mexico City," cited in note 41, p. 230).

49 See Recommendation 18 (e) in United Nations, *Report of the International Conference on Population*, cited in note 4, p. 21.

50 Sweden had supported the original draft language, which referred to women who have recourse to *illegal* abortion. It argued that "a major step towards the elimination of illegal abortions is to provide all women in the world with access to legal and safe abortions" (*ibid.*, p. 21).

51 The legal and political status of abortion worldwide is well summarized in Henry P. David, "Abortion: Its prevalence, correlates, and costs," in R. A. Bulatao and R. D. Lee (eds.), *Determinants of Fertility in Developing Countries: A Summary of Knowledge* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1983), pp. 684-686.

52 In a recent issue of a periodical edited by William F. Buckley, Jr., a leading American Catholic conservative, an editorial indi-

cates that the Pope is "attempting to deal with the demoralization of his Church that was an unintended consequence of Vatican II." The editorial draws a parallel between the Pope and Jerry Falwell, a Protestant fundamentalist leader in the United States. See "Reflections on Fundamentalism," *National Review* 36 (14 December 1984): 17. The current views of the Church are well reflected in the Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family—Presented by the Holy See to all Persons, Institutions, and Authorities Concerned with the Mission of the Family in Today's World, 22 October 1983* (Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1983). This document was circulated by the delegation of the Holy See at the Mexico City conference, along with a statement by Pope John Paul II in which he declared that contraceptive programs "have increased sexual permissiveness and promoted irresponsible conduct," and from such programs "a transition has in fact often been made to the practice of sterilization and abortion, financed by governments and international organizations." *Address of Pope John Paul II to Dr. Rafael M. Salas, Vatican City, June 7, 1984* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee for Pro-Life Activities, 1984), p. 3. See also "Text of the intervention of the Holy See's delegation, Bishop Jan Schotte, at the United Nations International Conference on Population, Mexico City, 6-13 August 1984" (Mexico City: Holy See, mimeo., August 1984).

53 James Buckley, "All alone at the UN," cited in note 37.

54 Fred T. Sai, "A tremendous success," *Populi*, vol 11, no. 4 (1984), p. 24.

55 Wulf and Willson also draw attention to this problem of interpretation: "In the past, the Reagan Administration has indicated that mere reference to abortion constitutes 'promotion.' Family planning providers, on the other hand, would probably argue that the 'promotion' of abortion involves encouraging its practice in place of or in preference to contraception." "Global politics in Mexico City," cited in note 41, p. 231.

56 An official policy paper issued by the Agency for International Development indicates that coordinating provision of family planning services with policies and programs

to broaden women's access to education and employment is among the "basic premises of US population assistance." See United States, Agency for International Development, *A.I.D. Policy Paper: Population Assistance* (Washington, D.C.: Agency for International Development, September 1982), p. 5. Also see "United States population assistance policy," *Population and Development Review* 9, no. 1 (March 1983): 185–192.

57 See Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 228–236.

58 See Section B of the Recommendations on the role and status of women, in United Nations, *Report of the International Conference on Population*, cited in note 4, pp. 16–17. Efforts to strengthen the Recommendations in this area were spearheaded by the delegate from Zimbabwe, aided by official delegates from other countries and an active caucus of female nongovernmental participants from both Western and Third World countries.

59 According to one tabulation, 245 editorials opposed to the official US position appeared between June and September, with only 37 supportive and 20 mixed. See "Summary of editorial opinion on population" (Washington, D.C.: Population Crisis Committee, mimeo., n. d.).

60 A statement prepared by Michael S. Teitelbaum, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee of the PAA, commented that the author of the draft paper was "either unaware of 50 years of demographic research, or deliberately ignored it." See statement for the "Congressional briefing on White House population position paper" (Washington, D.C.: Population Association of America, mimeo., 27 June 1984), p. 1.

61 Among the organizations represented were Family Planning International Assistance/Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the Ford Foundation, the Population Council, the Population Crisis Committee, the Population Institute, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

62 The survey indicated that 83 percent of the American people saw high population growth rates as a hindrance to economic development and 57 percent supported US as-

sistance to countries for reducing population growth rates. Only 24 percent felt that US family planning assistance should be withheld from countries where abortion is legal. See Sheldon J. Segal, "US population assistance to developing countries: Gallup Survey findings, July 9–15, 1984" (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, mimeo., 3 August 1984).

63 Press conference of members of the US Congress, Mexico City, 11 August 1984.

64 See United States, Department of State, "US international population policy and the Reagan Administration" (Washington, D.C.: State Department, mimeo., June 1984). Pertinent statements from the summits in Ottawa and Versailles and from the message to the Western Hemisphere Parliamentarians are reproduced in the following issues of *Population and Development Review*: 7, no. 4 (December 1981): 726; 8, no. 3 (September 1982): 639; 9, no. 1 (March 1983): 193.

65 A typical statement along these lines was that in a speech prepared by Richard Benedick, in the spring of 1984, just before the new US position was announced: "The United States Government's concern about demographic developments is based on our traditional respect for human dignity and on our interest in worldwide economic development and political stability. The changes and imbalances being brought into play by unprecedented population growth in many countries are contributing to an increased potential for political instability, social unrest, extremism, mass migrations, and possible international conflicts over scarce land or resources." The speech, "World population growth and economic development," appeared in a publication of the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, *World Affairs Journal* 3 (Summer 1984): 38–44.

66 They also reportedly threatened to oppose the administration's proposals for Central America unless AID stopped supporting population programs in the region. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "US-sponsored sterilizations," *The Washington Post*, 22 February 1984.

67 See Connie Paige, *The Right to Lifers: Who They Are, How They Operate, Where They Get Their Money* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 119.

68 According to several accounts, the advisers were generally excluded from the deliberations of the delegation.

69 See a report in a Catholic periodical, "Calls for dismantling AID population control empire," *The Wanderer* (3 February 1983).

70 The development of these movements and how they differ from the dominant liberal ideology in the United States is briefly discussed in Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Murray J. Edelman, *American Politics: Policies, Power, and Change* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1981), pp. 218–222. See also A. James Reichley, "The Reagan coalition," *The Brookings Review*, vol 1 (Winter 1982): 6–9. More journalistic histories of how this coalition emerged are presented in Connie Paige, *The Right to Lifers*, cited in note 67 and Andrew H. Merton, *Enemies of Choice: The Right-to-Life Movement and Its Threat to Abortion* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1981).

71 For further comments on the activities and views of members of the coalition in connection with US population assistance and its position in Mexico City, see Bruce Stokes, "US switch on family planning raises fear about economic development," *National Journal* 16 (4 August 1984): 1476–1479; and Constance Holden, "A 'prolife' population delegation?," *Science* 224 (22 June 1984): 1321–1322.

72 See, for example, Donald P. Warwick, "Foreign aid for abortion," *Hastings Center Report* (April 1980): 30–37.

73 See Steven W. Mosher, *Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese* (New York: The Free Press, 1983). A number of additional reports are cited in National Right to Life Committee, "Forced Abortions in China," *Factsheet* (2 May 1984).

74 In reference to the White House draft position paper, a conservative Washington newspaper quoted a senior Senate aide as saying, "The document has exposed the great

chasm between the White House and the foreign policy establishment at the State Department and AID. . . . It is a manifesto that fuses the two hot wires of social conservatism—particularly the President's solid pro-life philosophy—and supply-side economics into an explosive combination that projects a very dynamic philosophy of what we should be bringing abroad." George Archibald, "White House backed on population paper," *Washington Times*, 15 June 1984, p. 1A and 12A.

75 President Reagan's personal views are contained in a pamphlet made available by the US delegation at its first press conference, Ronald Reagan, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, n. d.). In a televised debate during the Presidential campaign, President Reagan responded to a question about the "population explosion" by stating that it has been "vastly exaggerated—over-exaggerated." *New York Times*, 22 October 1984, p. 85.

76 A *New York Times*/CBS News national poll of voters indicated that only "nine percent of Mr. Reagan's voters identified abortion as a key issue," and that "Mr. Reagan's personal style and handling of the economy . . . were the dominant strains in his re-election." *New York Times*, 11 November 1984, p. 30.

77 See accounts of the conference by leading participants in the UNFPA journal *Populi* 11, no. 4 (1984): 4–41. For more critical assessments of the consensus and the problems ahead, see Paul Demeny, "Bucharest, Mexico City, and beyond," *European Journal of Population* 1, no. 2 (1985); and Charles B. Keely, "Population: The gathering crisis," *Worldview* 27, no. 11 (November 1984): 4–8. [Demeny's paper is reprinted in this issue, pp. 99–106.]

78 See the World Bank, *World Development Report 1984*, cited in note 41, p. 179.

79 World Bank, *World Development Report 1984*, cited in note 41, p. 180.