

As world population skyrockets, policymakers will need new ways to deal with a

CROWDED PLANET



BEVERLY MIRELES

When a Sarajevo baby was born two minutes after midnight exactly one week ago, the world reached the symbolic 6-billion mark in population. However, last Tuesday was much like any other Tuesday — babies were born, people died, single-passenger commuters idled their engines in traffic jams, and, somewhere, children went to work sewing soccer balls.

In other words, the world hit the 6-billion mark and kept on keeping on, completely unfazed by the number or implications.

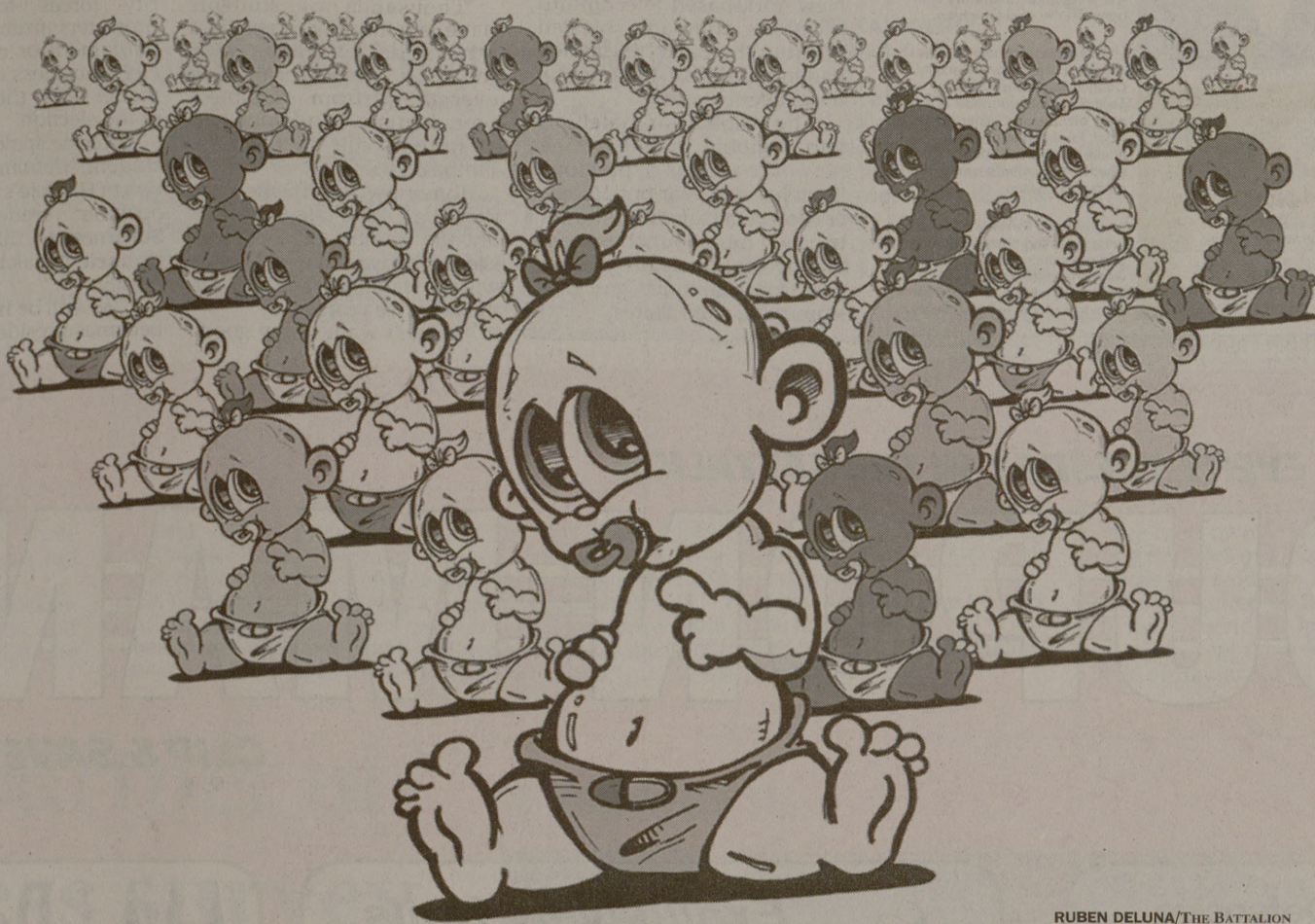
Consider 6 billion, all nine zeros of it. Having this many people on a resource-challenged planet is much like having only 1,000 parking spaces for 20,000 people — it feels good when one gets a spot, but think of all the people circling the lot like vultures.

To make matters even more complicated, the population will not just stop at even 7 billion. U.N. demographers have projected the global population to reach the 7 billion mark in just 12 years, and although birth rates seem to be slowing, the population should still arrive at 9 billion by 2050.

Something else to ponder: The United States and Japan may have rapidly aging populations, but Africa, Asia and Latin America have over one billion youths just entering their reproductive years. According to U.N. population experts, this so-called "youthquake" guarantees another population jump through 2050.

The 6-billion mark is a milestone but also an impediment. Especially in the United States, where money for family planning is easier to come by, people must regard carefully the complications of increased population on religion, disease and consumption of resources.

When looking at the statistics, one initially has to appreciate the global population would be much higher if countries such as China had not taken extreme and



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

sometimes unlawful measures. Last week, China announced to the world that if it had not implemented its "one-child" policy 20 years ago, China's population would be more than 300 million greater than its current population of 1.25 billion. And while China's drastic measures should not be celebrated, it serves to illustrate the effect family planning has on global population.

Family planning, long contested by pro-life groups and the Roman Catholic

Church, is now a necessity. Although religious groups may rally against all types of family planning, from sexual education to condoms, they have to admit the world would be a much more crowded and unhappy place if family planning had not been implemented in industrialized societies.

Studies show educated women tend to have fewer children than uneducated ones, and U.N. statistics show there currently are at least 460 million illiterate

women globally. The implication of this ratio of educated women to birth rates is clear. How many of the 370,000 babies born last Tuesday were unwanted or destined for a life of illiteracy and poverty?

Increased population also will have effects on global health. As more people are born, more space is filled, shoving people into previously uninhabited areas or smaller living spaces. Either way, health will be affected. As people live in

increasingly cramped environments, or in previously uninhabited surroundings, there always is the chance new pathogens will surface, old diseases will reappear or resources needed to cure disease will be destroyed by encroaching populations.

Many biological cures found in the rainforest already have been decimated because of the need for more living space. As it is, world health is a huge problem in both industrial and developing countries. Health care and disease can only get worse in a world with fewer resources and more opportunities for communicable diseases to flourish.

Though unwanted babies and disease are of greatest concern, the problem that will probably most haunt Western civilization is consumption rates.

More people means more valuable resources will disappear more quickly. In the United States, conspicuous consumption is an American dream — a born-and-bred way of life for many citizens.

Considering that many middle-class families in the United States have cars for nearly each family member, gas consumption alone is staggering.

Add in sport utility vehicles (SUVs), luxury sedans and basically every other vehicle but Yugos, and people already have a gas resource shortage.

And what about water and electricity? Even accounting for the fact 80 percent of the world's resources are used by 20 percent of its population, a shortage is still a shortage. Whether people choose to consume less or reproduce less, change definitely is on its way.

The 6-billion mark already has visited itself upon the world, and no force short of an act of God will keep us from the next billion.

However, if people think about the implications of a lack of family planning, perhaps they might be more willing to buy that next condom or decide on that Yugo. Every bit counts when 6 billion people are involved.

Beverly Mireles is a junior microbiology major.

United Nations awash in woes

At the silver anniversary of U.N. peacekeeping, it is time to reflect seriously on the costs and benefits of U.N. missions.



ELIZABETH KOHL

Since 1984 the United Nations has been dedicated to preserving peace, so much so that the first of four goals outlined in the organization's charter is to "maintain international peace and security."

But because of a lack of respect for U.N. forces entering contentious regions, this task is becoming increasingly difficult, and international troops are being put at risk.

Sunday, the 24th, has officially been dedicated as United Nations Day.

As the United Nations celebrates its silver anniversary of global peacekeeping Sunday, U.N. Day, it is time for the effectiveness of U.N. peacekeeping forces to be re-evaluated.

In the event of an international crisis, the U.N. Security Council establishes a plan of action in accordance with the consent of the host government.

After the Security Council requests the necessary number of international volunteers, member nations provide troops and equipment to support the peacekeeping plan.

These troops then enter countries of unrest, under the U.N. banner and wearing U.N. uniforms.

Because of a lack of response by many member nations, peacekeeping forces often find themselves inadequately staffed to handle escalating situations. This lack of manpower can result in an unsafe environment for or even the withdrawal of the troops.

Even in the event enough soldiers are available to support U.N. peacekeeping actions, these troops pose little threat to local

militants. According to a report by the United Nations Department of Public Information, "U.N. troops carry light arms and are allowed to use minimum force only in self-defense or if armed persons try to stop them from carrying out the orders of their commanders."

Without the ability to enforce actual peacekeeping, U.N. forces provide only a facade of a military presence. In many situations, U.N. forces are deployed into areas where the rivals they are trying to reconcile are heavily armed and previously have tak-

peacekeeping efforts to monitor the truce between the Georgian government and separatists in the region of Abkhazia.

The abduction of these U.N. staffers was made possible because of retaliation by the United Nations was unlikely.

Yet another problem with U.N. peacekeeping lies directly in the diversity of rebels felt nationalities in its forces. Many of today's conflicts erupt over ethnicity and nationality, and as diversified peacekeeping groups enter regions, the risk of fueling the conflict increases.

For instance, a Bulgarian U.N. staffer recently was killed by an angry mob in Kosovo for giving the time of day in the wrong language. U.N. officials now warn personnel of the dangers of speaking Slavic languages in Kosovo, but the price of that lesson has already been too high.

In recognition of the 1,580 U.N. staffers who have died in the past 50 years, it is time for the U.N. to revamp its peacekeeping policies.

Member nations should be pressured to support the United Nations by all means possible, but especially by volunteering adequate numbers of troops. The scope of peacekeepers' influence must be increased.

These forces should be given the same power as any other standing military. If U.N. forces were more intimidating, perhaps they would be more effective.

Elizabeth Kohl is a junior accounting major.



ERIC ANDRAOS/THE BATTALION

en up arms against one another. Positions within the U.N. forces, such as military observers, are further put at risk by U.N. policies, requiring them to be unarmed.

Recently in the country of Georgia, which lies on the edge of the Black Sea between Turkey and Russia, six U.N. military observers were abducted by local militants. These observers, along with 96 others, were part of

MAIL CALL

Nuclear conflict not likely to result from Pakistan coup

In response to Mark Passwaters' Oct. 15 column.

This is in response to Passwaters' prediction of doom in the form of "nuclear armageddon." The column insults the intelligence of the people who govern their respective countries with his suggestion that the dispute over

Kashmir could lead to a nuclear confrontation anytime.

His statement that "as the skirmishes increased in ferocity, India and Pakistan both threatened the other with full-scale war and nuclear annihilation if fighting did not stop" is false. At no point, during the entire conflict was a nuclear war even considered an option, and neither of the countries wanted a full-scale war.

Also, Passwaters must be really short on memory if he thinks that, "never before in human history have two nuclear nations with

so much hatred toward each other had an issue that could lead to confrontation anytime." The United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union could have easily triggered the third world war during the Cuban crises.

Dramatizing issues or giving half-informed truths are not good examples of responsible journalism. The article could have been a really good one had he gotten all his facts right.

Anuradha Mukherji
Graduate Student

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

Editorials appearing in *The Battalion* reflect the views of the editorials board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.

EDITORIALS BOARD

- SALLIE TURNER
Editor in Chief
- MARIUM MOHIUDDIN
Managing Editor
- CALEB MCDANIEL
Opinion Editor
- EMILY R. SNOOKS
Campus Editor
- CARRIE BENNETT
Community Editor

Q-DROPPING THE BALL

Poor professors partly responsible for the popularity of Q-drops

Dr. Rayford G. Anthony, head of the Department of Chemical Engineering, apparently believes the "Q" in Q-drop stands for "quitters."

Anthony's plan to phase out Q-drops in chemical engineering classes is founded on the shortsighted assumption that most students use their Q-drops to lazily cop out of challenging courses.

Unfortunately for Anthony, no department is able to unilaterally alter Q-drop policy. His proposal will have to be approved by a committee made up in part by student leaders, which means it most likely will never become a reality.

But a vital point should be made. If faculty members are concerned about students frequently Q-dropping their courses,

they should realize penalizing students by curtailing their choice to drop is not the solution.

Instead, administrators should investigate the reasons why Q-drops are so frequently used. They must remain open to the possibility that poor instructors, rather than lazy students, often are responsible for high Q-drop rates.

Rather than discouraging students from using Q-drops, administrators should encourage professors to pay attention to their pedagogy. Holding instructors more accountable for their pupils' success would more permanently dissuade students from dropping. Departments must put a premium on professor proficiency if they wish to keep students enrolled in their programs.

Administrators also must be less averse to making statistics on faculty performance readily accessible to students. Professors historically have been unwilling to allow grade distributions to be widely disseminated. But if students knew more about their teachers when they registered, they would be less likely to Q-drop unexpectedly tough classes. By giving students easy access to syllabi and professors' Q-drop rates, they can make more informed decisions as consumers.

Administrators will not endeavor themselves to Q-dropping students by assuming them to be apathetic. If a course is too tough, it may as easily be the fault of the professor as it is the fault of the pupil.