

English Pamphlet Series No. 78
Institute of Population Problems
September 30, 1972

Population Policies in Japan

by

Toshio KURODA

Institute of Population Problems
Ministry of Health and Welfare
Tokyo, Japan

FOREWORD

Population policy is now a new dimension of population study. Very recently urgent need to examine population policy has been recognized by the United Nations, in particular by its Population Commission, and also by many countries including advanced and developing countries alike.

However, conceptually and empirically, major -- often exclusive -- emphasis tended to be laid on fertility control. It is now necessary to redress the balance by giving the other demographic factors greater attention in population policy formulation.

This paper originally contributed by Mr. Toshio Kuroda, Chief, Population Policy Division, to the Second Asian Population Conference held in November 1972 aimed to discuss population policy experience in broad sense in Japan.

September 30, 1972

Masao UEDA

Director

Institute of Population Problems
Ministry of Health and Welfare
Tokyo, Japan

Population Policies in Japan

Introduction

In spite of the persistence of severe population problems and vigorous discussions among social scientists in the pre-war modern Japan, any population policy explicitly designed to influence population was not adopted by the government except war time. Some policies taken by the government may be considered as population policy in the sense that the solution of population problem was the direct goal, but by adopting policy measures on economic sides, leaving population factors untouched.

The considerations of policy always had two aspects, one economic, the other demographic. The demographic aspect is concerned fertility, mortality and migration. Recommendations to reduce mortality have been included in all policies. Population policy considerations in the post-war period are characterized by shifting from fertility reduction to migration factor. In the first decade after the war, major concern was fertility control. The Eugenic Protection Law enacted in 1948 that made abortions and sterilizations available was government policy in the population field. Population Problem Advisory Council recommended quantitative adjustment of population by diffusing contraceptive practices. The executive agencies of

government did not develop major policies to stimulate limitation per se, but public health programs to spread family planning practices were developed directly by government.

With rapid decline in fertility and acceleration of migration, major concern shifted from fertility question to socio-economic problems closely associated with heavy migratory movements. Decentralization of population was partly included in several development planning programs. At present time redistribution is keenly recognized by government as a key factor in formulating a new national reorganizing project.

Pre-industrial stage¹⁾

Briefly referring to experiences of population policies in the feudal period may be interesting because they were explicitly designed to influencing population, and also covering broad fields of population phenomena. It is generally accepted by many Japanese scholars that population increased with acceleration in the first half of the Edo age — Feudal period of the Tokugawa Shogunate, 1603-1867, — but slowed down, approaching increasingly ceiling in the second half of the this age. There are many reasons causing stagnance of population increase. They are famines, epidemics, abortions, infanticides

and postponement of marriage. Particularly, nation-widely increased abortion and infanticide were characteristic of the later stage of the Edo age. The basic reason underlying drastic measures of population control was general poverty in rural societies which not only increased abortion and infanticide, but also promoted out-migration of farmers to find means of living in towns. These facts were factors with which the Bakufu and many fudal clans tried every possible means to cope. They were measures for encouraging marriage, and birth, prohibiting abortion and infanticide, restricting farmers to move out, sending forcibly people in towns back to farming villages and so on. We can assume that a number of policies adopted by the fudal clans were not effective. However, it should be noteworthy that population policies in broad sense including pro-natalistic and redistributive measures of population were adopted, and furthermore Japanese population experienced already demographic "multiphasic" response²⁾ in the 17th century (and even before that time as well).

Prior to the World War II

In the early modern periods after the Meiji restoration (1868) population problems came to be enthusiastic concern of some scholars, but they were not serious interests of the

Government until 1918 when rice riot occurred. On the other hand, contraceptive practices began to be adopted particularly by intellectual people in large cities with the development of Neo-Malthusian movement.

In 1927, a Commission for the Study of the Problems of Population and Food Supply was organized by the Government. Its assessments of population problems stimulated widespread deliberation. Based on continuous discussions eight outline reports were submitted to the Government between 1927 and 1930 on the following subjects: (1) internal and external colonization; (2) adjustment of the labor supply; (3) population policy in the colonies; (4) population control; (5) promotion of industry; (6) improvement of the distribution and consumption of the national wealth; and (7) establishment of a social department in the government. Central problem was to increase rice production to cope with population increase. Actually, population increase rate per year for the five year period, 1925-1930 was highest, 1.53 per cent, in the pre-War period.

The Commission for the Study of the Problems of Population and Food Supply functioned in the years from 1927 to 1930. Its recommendations were really comprehensive in the field of population policy. However, population problem already shifted from food to job, when the Commission for the Study of the Problems

of Population and Food Supply was abolished in 1930. Japanese economy was seriously attacked by the World Economic Depression which occurred in 1929 in the United States of America. Unemployment and underemployment increased greatly.

Professor Ueda was seriously concerned with population problems.³⁾ He established a private group to study population problems in Japan. He was concerned with the increase in manpower in the productive ages which cannot be solved by reduction in current fertility. He also pointed out that unemployment in the cities and underemployment in the villages constituted dangers for the future unless there were rapid increases in employment opportunities. His policy conclusions included further industrialization and urbanization, together with a spread of contraceptive practices.

The economic and military developments of the 1930's changed the substance of population problems. This time deficiencies of manpower constituted the problem. Some pro-natalist policies were taken up, but could not reverse the downward trend of fertility which was under way due to economic development, urbanization and public thinking all favorable to declining birth rate.

After the World War II

(1) Moving toward policy

Economic and psychological impacts of the World War II were so severe that pessimism and desperation was widespread among all Japanese people. Extreme imbalance between tremendous increase occurred in several years immediately after war within constricted area and devastated economy brought up population policy problem to the forefront. The Foundation Institute for Research on Population Problems and the Population Problem Advisor Council of the government continued to cooperate to formulate population policies, keeping close contact each other and submitted various recommendations to the government.

As early as 1946, the population planning committee established within the Foundation Institute for Research on Population Problems submitted a report with a "Proposal on the fundamental course and aim of population policy" to the government.⁴⁾ The report stated that the balance between population and carrying capacity had been destroyed, that unparalleled surplus population was now an undeniable fact. Two countermeasures had to be explored : one, an increase of the capacity for supporting population; the other, the

regulation of population itself. As to the possibility of increasing the capacity, the Committee was pessimistic. Its members feared that surplus population would continue, that there might be no way left except requesting the sympathetic co-operation of foreign countries concerning peaceful emigration.

After 1947 the anticipated baby boom occurred, and birth rates rose up to 33 - 34 per thousand population. Death rates declined for more rapidly than had been expected. The government and the public alike became concerned over the future of the country if the number of people continued to increase so rapidly. In view of such an unprecedented difficult situation, in 1949 the government decided to establish a Population Problem Advisory Council to make investigation and deliberation concerning the population of our country in meeting the inquiry of the Prime Minister. The Council was organized into two sub-committees, one on population capacity, the other on population control. On November 29, 1949, the Council made interim recommendations to the government.⁵⁾ Its general conclusion was as follows ; "The solution of our problems demands not only the suppression of population expansion through birth control but also emigration overseas coupled with the rehabilitation of domestic industry and restoration of foreign trade for enhancing the country's population supporting capacity."

The Council realized that the implementation of its recommendations in the economic field or with reference to emigration were limited severely. With reference to conception control, it made four specific recommendations :

- (1) Immediate improvement of health centers, eugenic marriage consultation offices, and similar organizations to train personnel and provide nation-wide public health education on the population problem, family planning, eugenic protection, and techniques of contraception,
- (2) Special efforts to diffuse contraception among lower social-economic groups, with revision of the Livelihood Protection Law to provide materials free of charge,
- (3) The establishment of a government office to administer population affairs, including guidance in family planning, and the strengthening of the Institute of Population Problems and the Institute of Public Health,
- (4) It is essential to exercise precaution not to harm the retention of good social customs and popular morals when information on conception control is furnished and when efforts are made to popularize this control.

Just one year before the submission of recommendations of the Population Problems Advisory Council, the Diet of Japan passed a rather comprehensive modification of the National

Eugenic Law of 1940 in September 1948. Overtly, it was not a measure to reduce population growth. It should be noted, however, that in addition to eugenic and medical justifications, an extension of contraceptive facilities, the performance of abortions of private physicians for reasons of excessive child-bearing as measured by health criteria were permitted. Economic reasons for permitting the operation of interruptions of pregnancy were included in an amendment in 1949, but with prior approval of a Eugenic Protection Committee. However, in the revision of the law in April 1952, a designated physician was allowed to perform the operation without consultation, the only requirement being the consent of the person in question or the spouse. In this way, easier resort to the abortion in legal terms was a major reason to increase cases of induced abortions quickly, and consequently contribute to the sharp decline in fertility at least at its initial stage. It should be reminded, however, that abortion, family planning and related activities taken by the government were presented as health policies, not as solutions to or alleviations of the population problem.

(2) New moves toward policy

The Foundation Institute for Research on Population Problems continued to make efforts to achieve comprehensive

national policies in the population field throughout the period after the lapse of the Population Problem Advisory Council established by the Cabinet. Two subcommittees were established within the Foundation Institute, one on Population and the Standard of Living, the other on the Quantitative Adjustment of Population. The later subcommittee considered the diffusion of family planning as a part of general population policy, and the "Resolution concerning the diffusion of family planning as population policy" was adopted by the Foundation Institute and submitted to the Welfare Minister and other members of the Cabinet as recommendations of the Institute in 1954. The Foundation Institute proceeded on the assumption that the limitation of population increase was essential to the reduction of population pressure in Japan. The resolution says that "In view of the foregoing, it is necessary for the Government to adopt strong and adequate measures immediately for the through practice and diffusion of family planning as a part of the general population policy". The Subcommittee carefully made a clear distinction between the diffusion of family planning and guidance in contraceptive techniques. It felt the reasons for family planning lie in attitudes toward life based on modern rationalism; family planning should be

considered as guidance for living.

The other subcommittee on Population Standard of Living considered disguised unemployment problems and adopted "Resolutions on underemployment countermeasures" in 1956. In the preamble to the Resolution, the subcommittee made clear that the core of population problems in Japan lies in the employment problem, and pointed out that the majority of additional increase of labor of labor force, substantially exceeding one million per year, were forced to enter positions where productivity is low and income also low. The subcommittee proposed detailed recommendations on the assumption that countermeasures for disguised underemployment should be a part of general population policy.

Building on the work of the Foundation Institute for Research on population, the newly established (1953) Population Problem Advisory Council of the Welfare Ministry submitted its two recommendations, one on quantitative adjustment of population in 1954, the other on the measures of potential unemployed in 1958.

In the preamble to the "Resolution on the quantitative adjustment of population" the Council recognized the persistent overpopulation of Japan and pointed out that "If the matter should be left to run its own course, it would intensify the instability of livelihood as well as the difficulty of establishing a self-sup-

porting economy, thereby bringing about the confusion of social order and possibly further obstructing the promotion of international peace". It was also noted that emigration and eugenics are important problems, but priority was given to family limitation.

The text of the resolution begins as follow :

"In order to solve the important problem of population now confronting our nation, it is necessary beyond dispute to adopt a policy for promoting the strength to support its population. However, in the light of the prevailing situation in which the pressure of population is only hampering the accumulation of capital and rationalization of industry, it is necessary for the government to adopt a policy designed to check the growth of population.

It is necessary that the government should take up the conception-control movement hitherto conducted from the standpoint of protection of maternity, but should now adopt it also from the standpoint of the planning of families as a link in the chain of the overall population policy, provide every person desiring birth control with adequate means and facilities, and further take steps to remove any obstacles and friction hindering the popularization of that practice."

(3) After demographic transition

The mid 1950's may be a turning point in socio-economic and demographic context. The demographic transition completed, birth and death rates stabilizing at very low level, and also rapid economic growth was at its incipient stage around the middle of the 1950's.

A white paper on population published in 1959 by the Population Problem Advisory Council pointed out changing situation population in detail and gave a warning to the government and public people about the serious problems caused by rapid population change. In its conclusion, the white paper mentioned three major problems : first, employment problems accompanied by rapid increase of working age population; second, diffusion of rational family planning practice in view of strong fertility limitation ; third, population quality problem growing serious coupled with poverty. The Council recognized new dimension of population problems in transition namely specific population pressure caused by tremendous increase of productive age population, although population increase rate was to a great extent reduced.

So-called double income programme was initiated by the government in 1960 to achieve a rapid industrial development on the basis of local development programmes and heavy and chemical

industrializations. Public and private investment was greatly expanded. Economic growth rates continued to exceed those expected by the government. However, predominant emphasis were placed on economic development in order to approach the advanced level attained in the developed countries as quickly as possible, and consequently population aspects of social development tended to be neglected by the government.

Taking into account such an imbalanced progress of social and economic development, and also irregular change of population by age in near future, the Population Problem Advisory Council carefully examined the situation on the basis of the report on "Countermeasures for improving population quality" made by the Foundation Institute for Research in Population Problems, and made a resolution on the improvement of population quality and submitted it to the government.

The resolution points out two reasons why the Council requests at this moment the government to adopt positive policy for improving population quality, which should be a permanent policy of the government in any times. One is that economic growth policy cannot achieve its desired objective without manpower who are superior in physical, intellectual, and mental ability. Development of human abilities needs not

only improvement of educational system, but also the elevation of population quality and establishment of basic conditions necessary for that purpose. Another is a demographic reason. Demographic transition completed in a very short span of time inevitably brings about accelerating decrease of the proportion of young adult people for total population. They are next generation who are responsible for the society in a few decades ahead. The Council recommended eight major measures : First, promotion of health and physical ability ; second, sound rearing of child population ; third, enhancement of hereditary guidance and consultation services ; fourth, strengthening assistance to mentally and physically handicapped people ; fifth, betterment of environments for life and work ; sixth, creation of child allowance system and improvement of social security system ; seventh, systematic promotion of health and welfare ; eighth, strengthening of institutes and organizations making studies on population and related problems, including the existing Institute of Population Problems, Ministry of Health and Welfare.

Rapid economic growth which started since around 1957, was made possible by rapidly concentrating and accumulating population and industries in some limited urban areas, actually in the three giant cities -- Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya -- and in the

three great metropolitan areas surrounding these three cities. Heavily crowded urban areas inevitably came to produce environmental disruption. Rural areas were suffering from depopulation and high proportion of older people due to heavy out-migration of young people to urban areas, various diversified development planning and programmes at national, regional and local levels were increasingly developed since around 1960. The Population Problem Advisory Council, upon request of the Minister of Health and Welfare, submitted opinions concerning regional development from the standpoint of population problems in August 1963.

The Council emphasized two basic objectives of regional development, one is that eventual goal of regional development is to increase real welfare of population, namely nation as a whole or people in regions. Another is the necessity of balanced growth of regional economic and social development. From these standpoints and also taking into account the serious emerging effects of heavy migratory movements on human welfare in regions, adequate redistribution policy of population by adjusting volumes and speed of migration was recommended by the Council. For that purpose, implementation of regional development policy designed to locate and develop industries requiring many employments in local areas was emphasized as most desirable from the standpoint

of population problems.

Many other important points which should be paid attention in connection with regional development policy were mentioned :

(1) shrinking trend of increment of productive age population and increasing trend of middle and high age population accompanied by the change in age composition of population ; (2) necessity of modernizing agriculture and small-sized enterprises in cities ; (3) creation of urban place with high quality of environment ; (4) promotion of health and welfare, and so on, including another five points.

After 1965

In the post-war period, population problems changed in its nature and emphasis as economic progress and social change proceeded. Basically two changes are pointed out. One is the shift from quantity to quality problem of population. Another is the transition from economic-oriented problem to the equilibrium-oriented problem between economic and social development. Unprecedented demographic and socio-economic transformation overlapping each other produced population problems with different emphasis in its nature, and policy also shifted from simple fertility control to quality improvement, and most recently to migration and redistribution dimension.

The first one in the field of population policy which was made public after 1965 was a interim report of the Population Problem Advisory Council submitted to the government in August 1969. (The full text of the report can be found in Studies in Family Planning, No. 56.) The Council continued to examine the recent population trends in Japan by the request of the Minister of Welfare since April 1967, and submitted the above interim report in 1969. It is especially noteworthy to note that the interim report made detailed analysis on population reproduction and concluded that stationary population should be considered as desirable.

The final report of the Council was submitted to the Minister of Welfare in October 1971. The Council made detailed analysis on the population trend and its socio-economic and ecological implications. The fundamental recognition was drastic change of age composition of population, namely rapid ageing process of population already under way, and extremely accelerated migratory movements.

The Council emphasized that priority should be given to the following seven policies : First, sound rearing of child population ; second, measures corresponding to ageing of population ; third, formation of sound family ; fourth, housing

improvement ; fifth, measures for traffic accidents ; sixth, prevention of environment disruption ; seventh, promotion of establishing new communities. In sum, the basic idea of the Council was the promotion of human welfare, establishment of adequate human life under serious impacts of demographic and socio-economic change. It might suggest a new dimension of population policy, because it is not concerned with policies directly influencing population factors. However, on the other hand, it should be noted that the government has increasingly come to recognize the necessity of population redistribution policy which falls exactly under the category of population policy. That will be discussed later.

Development Planning and Population Policy

As early as 1962, the government recognized the necessity that excessive concentration of population and industries in great cities should be prevented, and balanced regional development should be promoted. In 1962, a National Overall Development Project was adopted, and a New Industrial Cities Promotion Law was enacted. This law, in particular, aimed to establish several new industrial cities which were expected to slow down migratory flow into great cities and be able to be growth points in local areas.

In 1969 a New National Overall Development Project was adopted, which affirms as its basic principle that regional development should give priority to the welfare of the citizenry rather than to the furtherance of industrial production alone. Increasing awareness of people on environment disruption in great cities -- air and water pollution, traffic congestion, inadequate housing, noise disturbances, and all the rest --, and increasing employment opportunities in local cities and towns seemed to function as incentives to cause return migration.⁶⁾ The results of the 1970 census also indicates that major transformations in redistribution of population are under way. Great cities showed depopulation for the first time

during the quinquennial period, 1965-70, or remarkably slowing down of increase. Population increase rates in the last intercensal period in the three great metropolitan areas indicated the lowest among those in the post-war period. The fastest growth rates for urban entities were registered by medium-sized cities with populations between 200,000 - 290,000 persons, and not by large-sized cities. However, it is also true that heavy accumulation of population is still continuing even though rapidity is reduced. Various expert committees⁷⁾ of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister came to the same conclusion that the decentralization policy of population and industries should be adopted in order to attain maximization of people's welfare.

How to implement redistribution policy effectively is a formidable task for the government. The policy extends over various fields of social, economic, fiscal arrangements, and urban, rural problems, and also environment. Expectation and desire of people toward space selection of residence and work are basic factors for formulating redistribution policy. It seems to be clear that the migration and redistribution of population is now the most urgent population policy facing the present Japan.

NOTES

- 1) The major sources are as follows: Sekiyama, Naotaro. Nihon jinkoshi (Population history in Japan), 1942. Honjo, Eijiro. Nihon jinkoshi (Population history in Japan), 1910. Takahashi, Bonsen. Datai mabiki no kenkyu (Studies on abortions and infanticides), 1936. Tachi, Minoru. Jinko mondai no chishiki (Introduction to population problems), 1969. Taeuber, I. B. The population of Japan, 1958, Part I, ch. II.
- 2) Davis, K. The theory of change and response in modern demographic history, Population Index, vol. 29, No. 4, October 1963, pp. 345-366.
- 3) Ueda, Teiji. Wagakuni genkano shitsugyo to jinkomondai (Current problems of unemployment and population in Japan), in Nihon Jinkomondai Kenkyu (Population Studies in Japan), edited by Ueda, Teiji, 1933.
- 4) Jinko mondai kenkyu-kai, zaidan hojin, jinko taisaku iinkai (Foundation Institute for Research on Population Problems, Population Planning Committee. Proposal on the fundamental course and aim of population policy, Tokyo, November 30, 1946. (Typescript).
- 5) Jinko mondai shingi-kai kengi (Recommendations of the Population Problem Advisory Council), Nov. 29, 1949. Recommendations are composed of two parts, one on population supporting capacity, the other on population control.
- 6) More detailed information and analysis on the newly-noted migration patterns are found in the following papers: Kuroda, T., "A New Dimension of Internal Migration in Japan", English Pamphlet Series, No. 69; Institute of Population Problems, 1969; Kuroda, T., "Migration, Distribution of Population and Development", presented as a working paper for the Second Asian Population Conference held in Tokyo for 1-13 November, 1972.
- 7) See, in particular, Shin-jidai no Ritti to Kotsutaikei (Location and Transportation System in New Era -- Report of the Expert Committee on Location and Transportation, Economic Advisory Council), edited by the Overall Planning Bureau of the Economic Planning Agency, 1972.

