

ESSAY

Malthus Was Not Entirely Wrong

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Thomas Malthus, a British philosopher, and economist predicted in the eighteenth century that the population of the world would continue expanding until growth is stopped or reversed by disease, famine, war, or calamity. His prediction is overwhelmingly rejected as Utopianism due to the fact that India, which has 1.3 billion people, is able to feed itself and is also a net exporter of food due to the Green Revolution in agriculture.

Since the 2000s, India has made remarkable progress in reducing absolute poverty. Between 2011 and 2015, more than 90 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty. Very soon India will replace the USA as the greatest consumer market along with China. The largest markets write the rules of the game, so India and China will soon dictate the global companies to comply by their rules replacing the supremacy of FCC (Federal Communications Commission) of the United States.

Was Malthus entirely wrong? No, I don't think so. Overpopulation is ruining the environment and endangering the future of the earth. As an example, India's Green Revolution is causing major desertification (turning green land into the desert). India is not the victim of desertification alone. Out of the world's arid land, an area of about 12 million square kilometers is affected by desertification. About 10-20 percent of drylands are already degraded. The rapidly expanding desertification threatens more than a billion people living in dryland around the world (Source: Down to Earth, March 9, 2021).

As the megacities are growing in India and China, they are sure to bring apocalypse sooner than later. Cities occupy only 1 percent of the world's land yet they're home to 55% of the world's population. "In 2020, approximately a third of the total population in India lived in cities. The trend shows an increase of urbanization by 4 percent in the last decade, meaning people have moved away from rural areas to find work and make a living in the cities." (Niel, Aron O, July 1, 2021, "Urbanization in India 2020," Statista).

Cities account for 75% of total energy consumption and 80% of total carbon emissions. Additionally, closely packed buildings, asphalt, and concrete trap heat and cause global warming in countries where the heat is already intolerable. India

already has 23 cities with a population of 1 million and more. Sixty more Indian cities are expected to cross the 1 million mark in the next ten years. The majority of the people living in those cities are below poverty levels (earning below Rs. 1,060 per month or \$15 per month).

The quality of life, one of the measures of happiness, in those cities is miserable. People are so busy commuting and earning a living that they are becoming unsocial, soulless, and dehumanized. Plato said, "A great city is not to be confounded with a populous one."

Economic growth in China, India, and Africa is causing consumption of more processed food, preservatives, and fast food causing the rise in cancer, diabetes, and other organ problems.

Water is the lifeline for all living creatures and plants. All the great civilizations in history grew around sources of water including Indus Valley, Rome (Tiber), Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates), Egypt (Nile River Valley), and China (Yellow River Valley). Fresh water in overpopulated cities will get scarcer causing great miseries.

In my opinion, quality of life is more important than becoming the largest economy as a result of an uncontrolled population. Countries having the highest quality of life index and personal income are some of the least populated. Here is the ranking of quality of life for some countries that are sparsely populated:

Switzerland (population 8.6 million; per capita income: \$80,296)

The Netherlands (population 17.4 million; per capita income \$54,422)

Finland (population 5.5 million; per capita income \$46,344)

Iceland (population 369,000 per capita income 73,200)

Denmark (population 5.8 million; per capita income 57,545)

Sweden (population 10.4 million; per capita income 54,075)

New Zealand (population 5.2 million per capita income \$43,415)

Luxembourg (population 632,000; per capita income \$107,641)

India and China rank very low in the Quality-of-Life Index and especially poorly in the Quality of the Environment subcategory. Pollution is a big problem there. Sometimes people go for weeks without being able to walk or run outdoors. With urbanization, it's going to get even worse.

World's population in 2022 is close to 7 billion. It is expected to rise to more than 9 billion by 2050. Needless to say, the consumption created by population growth has placed potentially irreversible strains on the interconnected systems and cycles that comprise the Earth's climate. Water scarcity and biodiversity loss are only a few of the consequences of these forces. These challenges have contributed to a rebirth of the profoundly deprecated philosophy espoused by Thomas Malthus. Malthus, was not entirely wrong, after all.