

**The White Pestilence:
The Implications of Declining Birthrates in the OSCE
Countries**

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One remarks nowadays all over Greece such a diminution in natality and in general manner such depopulation that the towns are deserted and the fields lie fallow. Although this country has not been ravaged by wars or epidemics, the cause of the harm is evident: by avarice or cowardice the people, if they marry, will not bring up the children they ought to have. At most they bring up one or two. It is in this way that the scourge before it is noticed is rapidly developed. The remedy is in ourselves; we have but to change our morals.

Polybius (204-122 B.C.)¹
n.b. Rome annexed the Greek

states in 146 B.C.

Demography is destiny.

Auguste Comte²

Five centuries after the Black Plague devastated Europe, a White Pestilence is now decimating that same continent. Many nations, especially in Europe, are already in a death spiral, losing a significant number of people each year. Listen closely, and you will hear the muffled sound of populations crashing. I am an anthropologist and East Asian specialist by training, so I am going to concentrate on the cultural factors at work here. I will not pit anthropology's poor spears against demography's statistical juggernaut.

First, let's clear up a central misconception. The old "demographic transition" charts showed birthrates leveling off precisely at the replacement rate. But many of today's young adults in Europe and elsewhere are too enamored of sex, the city, and the single life to think about marriage, much less about replacing themselves. A single Swedish woman may eventually bear one child as her biological clock approaches midnight, of course, but she is unlikely to bear a second. What was supposed to be the perfect family—a boy for you and a girl for me and heaven help us if we have three—has been scorned by moderns on their way to extinction. The declining number of traditional families has been unable to fill the fertility gap thus created.

This is the *real* population crisis. This population implosion, by reducing the amount of human capital available, will have a dramatic impact on every aspect of life. Peter Drucker, the late management guru, wrote back in 1997 that "The dominant factor for business in the next two decades—absent war, pestilence, or collision with a comet—is not going to be economics or technology. It will be demographics." ⁹ Drucker was

particularly concerned with the increasing *under*population of the developed countries, but a decade later this reproductive malaise has spread even to the less developed world, and is a truly global phenomenon affecting all OSCE countries and all OSCE partners.¹⁰

By 2004, the U.N. Population Division (UNDP) found that 65 countries, including 22 in the less developed world, had fertility rates that were below the level needed to ensure the long-term survival of the population.¹¹ Most of the rest, the agency warned at the time, were likely to enter this danger zone over the next few decades. In this prediction, the UNDP is certainly correct. In fact, the latest revision of the UNDP numbers, the 2010 revision, shows that 79 countries, including several dozen in the less developed world, have fertility rates that are below the level needed to ensure the long-term survival of the population.

According to the agency's low-variant projection, historically the most accurate, by 2050 three out of every four countries in the less developed regions will be experiencing the same kind of below-replacement fertility that is hollowing out the populations of developed countries today.¹² Such stark drops in fertility, cautioned the UNPD, will result in a rapid aging of the populations of developed and developing countries alike. With the number of people over 65 slated to explode from 475 million in 2000 to 1.46 billion in 2050, existing social security systems will be threatened with collapse.¹³ It will prove difficult, if not impossible, to establish new ones. These sobering projections show that the population of the world will continue to creep up until about the year 2040, peaking at around 7.6 billion people.¹⁴ This is only a fraction more—one-sixth or so—than the 6.5 billion that the planet supports at present. Then the global population *implosion*, slow at first, but accelerating over time, begins. We fall back to current levels by 2082, and then shrink to under 5 billion by the turn of the next century. That population will be much older than we are today.

If this impending population implosion catches you by surprise, you have the UN Population Division (UNPD) to thank. The agency buries its low-variant projection deep within its biennial reports, where only demographic bores like me bother to look. Reporters looking for quick stories skim the UNPD's press releases and the executive summary, which highlight the medium variant projection of 9 billion plus by mid-century. But the medium variant, despite its moderate-sounding name, is anything but middle of the road. All of its numbers hang on a single, unexplained, and incredibly unrealistic assumption—also deeply interred in the UNPD reports—that *all countries will approach a fertility floor of 1.85 children per woman over the next half century.*

How was this fertility floor determined? The UNPD report does not say. Why would fertility in countries like Mexico fall to 1.85 and no further? The UNDP report offers no explanation, despite the fact that many countries have already fallen through this supposedly solid floor. And what about those countries? How will Italy or Spain, for example, climb back up to the fertility floor after spending the last two decades in the fertility basement? The UNPD report is silent.

This slight of hand seems even more evident in the latest revisions. The U.N. Population Division apparently decided that its earlier predictions about world population growth were too restrained. So it upped the ante in its 2010 report, revising almost all of its numbers upwards. It now assumes that people in low fertility countries will suddenly become enamored of babies again. They predict, in short, that birthrates will somehow gravitate to replacement levels again.

Building this new assumption into their numbers has produced the predictable result. The medium variant projection now shows that the world's population will reach 9.3 billion by the time 2050 rolls around — or several hundred million higher than earlier predictions. Not only that, instead of beginning to fall at that point, the UN now claims that the numbers will continue to grow until the end of the century, reaching 10.1 billion in 2100.

The UNDP is supposed to be objective in its predictions, but its latest batch of junk science suggests that it has become anything but. In fact, after the retirement of Director Joseph Chamie, its prognostications seem more and more driven by politics. At the very least, it has produced numbers that tend to show population growth as far more exuberant than it really is. The reason for this, I fear, is that the UN Population Fund provides part of the UNDP budget — and the UNFPA is first, last, and always a population control group. The UNFPA seems to be using its funding to leverage the UNDP into producing numbers that the UNFPA can in turn use to justify the continuation and expansion of population control and abortion.

The low variant projection, which has global fertility falling gradually to 1.35, seems preferable for a host of reasons. First and foremost, it has been historically the most accurate. For two decades and more, the low variant has been a better predictor of population growth. Second, the low variant accurately reflects the fertility rates in dozens of developed countries around the globe. Fertility rates between 1.1 and 1.6 are typical of post-modern societies, even those with strong pro-natal policies. In fact, the UN Population Division admits as much, writing "in recent years fertility has fallen well below replacement to reach historically unprecedented low levels (1.3 children per woman and below) in most developed countries as well as in several less developed ones." The low variant makes the intuitively reasonable assumption that, as additional nations modernize, they will behave like modern nations. Finally, the only effective counter to falling fertility, as we will see in later chapters, is strong religious faith, combined with a tax structure that completely shelters young couples from taxes. But religious faith, in Europe and some other developed countries at least, has long been on the wane. And taxes are on the rise—in part to pay for an increasing number of elderly.

What happens to the world's population *after* 2050 depends on the fertility decisions of those not yet born. It is impossible to predict accurately. But all of the current trends point downward. Women around the world were averaging 5.0 children in 1970. This had fallen to 2.6 by 2002—not far above replacement rate fertility of 2.3—and it is projected to drop to 1.54 children per woman by the year 2050.¹⁵ But who's to say that it will stop there? Shaped by powerful, if partially hidden, economic, political and

cultural forces, the one-child family appears well on the way to becoming a universal norm in many countries. Pockets of higher fertility, driven by religious motivations and traditional values, will still exist. But, as in present-day Japan or Germany, most families will have no more than one child. The number of the aged will skyrocket, and the world's population will be in free fall.¹⁶

This is the *real* population problem.

More Coffins than Cradles

This barren world of tomorrow can already be glimpsed in the Europe of today. For all of Europe, from Ireland in the West to Russia in the East, is aging and dying. French historian Pierre Chaunu has coined an apt phrase for the strange infecundity of present-day Europeans and their overseas descendants, who are failing to produce enough children to replace themselves. He calls it the White Pestilence.

The phrase contains a ghostly echo of the Black Death of the Middle Ages, which emptied out the cities and towns of the continent in successive pandemics of Bubonic plague from 1347 to 1352. But unlike the Black Death, Chaunu's White Pestilence does not fill up the graveyards; it empties out the maternity wards. And it is not the result of bacteria that infect our bodies so much as dark, anti-natal thoughts that invade our minds. These are reinforced by an economic system that puts a premium on expanding the work force at the expense of maternity, and a political system that weakens families, putting those with children at a financial disadvantage that is both unjust and shortsighted.¹⁷ Europe, along with its offspring in North America, Australia, and New Zealand, for some time now has been refusing to pay its debts to those who provide for the future in the most fundamental way—by providing the next generation—and are thus mindlessly committing a form of collective suicide.

Just how bad is the White Pestilence likely to be? Obscured by debates over epiphenomena like exploding immigration and bankrupt pension funds is the brute fact that Europe is already suffering from a devastating, crippling shortage of people. The populations of no fewer than thirteen European countries, including Russia, Poland, and Hungary, have already begun to crash.¹⁸ The total fertility rate for Europe, including the former Soviet Republics, currently averages an anemic 1.4 children per woman, and no increase is in sight.¹⁹ As a result, the current population of 728 million will plunge to only 557 million by the year 2050, a drop similar in magnitude to that occurring during the Black Death.²⁰ At that point, Europe will be losing 3 to 4 million people a year. If the crash continues—and there is no reason to expect it not to—the White Pestilence will over time prove far more lethal than its medieval predecessor. Three out of four Europeans will have disappeared by the end of the 21st century, and the population will number only 207 million. By then the population decline will be irreversible, with the surviving Europeans averaging more than 60 years of age.

Well before this time, the aging of the population will have created unbearable strains on social security and health care systems. By mid-century, seven nations--

Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Romania and Spain—will have populations with an *average age* above 55. At the current time, 1.6 workers support one young or retired dependent. By the middle of the century, each worker will have to support one dependent, placing a huge tax burden on the rapidly declining work force—and further driving down fertility.

Europe is already suffering tremendous economic and social dislocation caused by a rapidly aging population and, in Western Europe, massive in-migration. Baby bonuses and child allowances, such as Poland's 1,000 Zloty bonus (about \$320) to the mothers of newborns, have done little to alleviate the problem. If Europe's problems are bad now, as its population is just beginning to dip, it is frightening to think about how much worse they will become during the coming demographic free-fall.

The plunge has already begun in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 triggered a sharp drop in Russian births, which have stayed low in the years following because of the sudden loss of a social system that formerly provided employment and housing for nearly every Russian, the ongoing economic stagnation, and a general lack of confidence in the future. Current Russian birthrates are the lowest in the nation's history, substantially lower than those achieved during the upheavals of World War I and the Russian Revolution, and equaled only by the worst year of World War II when German armies overran the western third of the country. Russia's population is already decreasing by three-quarters of a million people each year; Ukraine's, by a quarter million.

By 2003 the birthrate had been so low for so long that Russian leaders became concerned. Russian President Vladimir Putin warned the Russian parliament that the lack of babies was "a serious crisis threatening Russia's survival."²¹ Three years later, Putin put in place a one-time payment of \$9,000 upon the birth of a second child, along with additional cash and child-care subsidies for additional children.²² But the crisis, apparently, continues. Russia's population is slated to decrease from 143 million in 2005 to 112 million in 2050. This is the UNDP's medium variant projection, which unrealistically assumes that most Russian couples will start having two children again.²³ It is hard to see how a country can lose a quarter of its population and build a modern economy at the same time. Yet the converse is also true: Until the Great Russian Depression ends the birthrate is likely to stay low. The largest country in the world seems locked into a fatal spiral: a dance of death between demography and depression.

Birthrates are higher—although still running below replacement levels—in Western Europe. What might appear cause for celebration, however, is in fact cause for concern. For birthrates in many Western European countries are being "propped up" by more fertile immigrants. France's estimated Total Fertility Rate, for instance, is running at 1.86 children per woman.²⁴ This is high by European standards, but much of this fertility is attributable to mostly Muslim immigrants. The French government forbids the collection of statistics by race or religion ("We are one people," it maintains), but demographers believe that the immigrant population is about 10% of the whole, and that it is out-reproducing the native-born French population by two or three to one. The

department of Seine-Saint-Denis has both the highest percentage of immigrants in the country--about one-quarter of the population of the department is foreign, mostly Muslim--and also the highest birthrate. Subtracting the 3 or 4 children of the average immigrant leaves the native population averaging only 1.3 children or so, about the European average.²⁵

In 1987 Antonella Pinnelli, a Rome-based sociologist and demographer, called the continent's flight from fertility "very worrisome, because when a society loses the will to reproduce, it loses its vitality."²⁶ Two decades of rock-bottom birthrates later, Italy and other European countries are in danger of losing more than their vitality. Their history, traditions and, indeed, their very existence are at risk. The cross of St. George, the English national flag, has now been banned in British prisons, only the first of what will undoubtedly be many efforts to culturally appease a growing Muslim population. In the end, however, only the numbers matter. Demographers now estimate that France, for example, will be as much as 40% Muslim by 2050.

"In demographic terms, Europe is vanishing," remarked then-Premier Jacques Chirac in 1984. "[Soon] our countries will be empty."²⁷ Empty of Gauls, Teutons, Britons, and Slavs perhaps. But other tribes, more fruitful than the modern-day European ones, will certainly come to occupy the pleasant lands north of the Mediterranean. And the surviving Europeans will retreat to their retirement homes, as the Neanderthals once retreated across the same terrain before the advance of Cro-Magnon Man. In France, as in most of Western Europe, the successor population is already in place.

To put the point bluntly, many of these nations are committing a kind of collective suicide. The Europeans had better make up their minds about who they want to give their countries to, since they don't seem to want it themselves.

Islam Contracepted

The millions of Muslims flooding into Europe are not being driven out of their homelands by population pressure so much as they are being drawn into a demographic vacuum as Europe empties itself of offspring. There are still pockets of high fertility in the Islamic world—impoverished Afghanistan has one of the highest birthrates in the world—but the trend is towards three- and even two-child families.³¹ Indonesia, at 223 million the largest majority Muslim country, had a 2.4 fertility rate in 2005, according to the UNPD.

In recent years a number of Muslim countries have seen fertility declines that are among the largest ever recorded. The only two majority Muslim countries in Europe, Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina, dropped their birthrates farther and faster than most of their neighbors. In the less-developed world, Kuwait, Algeria, Iran and Tunisia all saw their fertility rate drop by two-thirds during the last three decades of the Twentieth Century. All were at or below replacement by 2000. The "least developed countries," UN parlance for the poorest of the poor, generally saw smaller declines. But here, too, the

Muslim states of Bangladesh, Sudan, and the Maldives all cut fertility by a third or more, and are currently averaging three or four children.³²

The Koran, like the Torah and the Bible, comes down firmly on the side of natality. But Islam lacks a central religious authority, and any Imam can issue a *fatwa*—an Islamic religious opinion. Knowing this, the population control movement has sought out and cultivated liberal Muslim clerics, encouraging them to rethink Islam's traditional encouragement of childbearing.

One of the earliest Muslim countries to be targeted for re-education in this way was Egypt. As the Middle Eastern country with the largest population, it was listed as a "country of concern" in a key National Security Council study in the early seventies.³³ The U.N. Population Fund immediately moved in, among other things helping to set up an International Center for Population Studies and Research at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. In the years following, it carried out a series of projects on "Population in the Context of Islam" which were consciously designed to shift religious opinion.

Nevertheless, it was 1988 before the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University could be induced to issue a major *fatwa* affirming the acceptability of family planning "for personal and national justification." He decreed that contraceptive use was permissible "in the case of a three-child family who can afford more children physically and financially, but who want no more children because their country has a population problem."³⁴ Consequently, the Egyptian birthrate has fallen sharply in recent years, and by 2006 women were averaging only 2.74 children.³⁵

Birthrates are also falling in relatively prosperous, Westernized Turkey, despite the exhortations of government leaders to have more children. "Our population which is nearing 65 million is not enough," warned Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan of the Islamist Refah Party in 1995. "Population is the power by which we shall establish right in the world," he told a cheering crowd. "These would-be westerners [i.e., population control advocates] are trying to reduce our population. We must have at least four children."³⁸ As the fertility rate fell past 2.5 children per women in 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, soon to become Turkey's prime minister, attacked contraception as "straight out treason to the state." "Have babies," he urged Turks. "Allah wants it."³⁹

Japan: Land of the Setting Sun

A decade and a half ago, the Japanese economic boom appeared well nigh unstoppable. Industry was flourishing under the guidance of *Long Range Vision* plans issued by elite bureaucrats at the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). The *salarimen*, as the Japanese middle class are called, were grinding away at their customary 70-hour work week. Economic growth was consistently running at 4 to 5 percent a year, and Japan's trade surplus with the U.S. was surging toward the \$100 billion dollar mark.

Conceding defeat, Harvard academic Ezra Vogel wrote a book called *Japan as Number One*, admonishing Americans that we were falling behind because of our lack of Japanese-style "central direction" and "government and business cooperation." We should, he advised us, "adopt policies more suited to the postindustrial age."⁴¹ Others feared that if we didn't join them, they might beat us. *The Coming War with Japan* had the yellow peril once again leading a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere," and once again threatening Pearl Harbor.⁴² Both became bestsellers.

It wasn't long thereafter that the Japanese economy ran into a demographic brick wall. Economic growth stalled, averaging an anemic one percent growth for most of the nineties. During the Asian economic downturn of 1998, Japan's GNP actually *shrank* by 2.8 percent. Never number one, the Rising Sun soon slipped to fourth, behind the European Union and China.⁴³

The experts told us that crony capitalism, corruption, and protectionism were to blame. But when has this not been true in post-World War II Japan? The Liberal Democratic Party has been in power since it was formed by a coalition of three conservative parties in 1956. It is bound together less by a political philosophy than by loose alliances between factional leaders who trade favors, give and accept bribes, and are periodically disgraced and forced out of office by scandal. The subterfuges used by Japanese bureaucrats to keep out foreign-made goods in key industrial sectors are legion. Don't bother looking for American-made cars on Japanese highways; you won't see any.

What really happened in the 1990s is that the yellow peril turned quietly grey. For over four decades now, the Japanese people have been having too few little Mikis and Yosukus to replace themselves. The Japanese fertility rate first fell below replacement around 1960. After fluctuating around 2.0 for the next 15 years, it began to sink again in 1975. By 1990 it had reached 1.57, leading Japanese journalists to invent the term "1.57 shock." Further shocks followed at regular intervals: "1.53 shock" in 1992, "1.47 shock" in 1993, and the "1.38 shock" in 1998. Since then the fertility rate has hovered around 1.4 children per woman. The voluntary childlessness of the Japanese exceeds even the forced-pace population reduction in China's one-child policy.

This prolonged Japanese birth dearth has resulted in what Yamada Masahiro of Gakugei University calls the world's first "low-birthrate recession." With ever smaller cohorts of new workers, the *salarimen* have been getting wrinklier and their ranks thinner, year by year. The depopulation crisis has already forced Japan to slash pensions and raise the retirement age from 60 to 65 to keep pension funds afloat. By 2040, says the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the rise in the ratio of dependent old to working young may be reducing Japan's growth in living standards by three-quarters of a percentage point per year, cutting Japan's GNP by 23 percent by mid-century as a result. Japan is suffering from the four "D's": Debt, deflation, and declining demographics—and the latter two are ultimately responsible for the first two.

Japan is on the brink of a major demographic meltdown. Japan's population of 127 million has stopped growing and—if the birthrate continues at this low level—will

soon begin to shrink at an alarming pace. According to U.N. estimates, by the year 2050 Japan will have 35 million fewer people than it does now. The 92 million Japanese who remain will have a median age of 54, with those aged 75-80 constituting the largest five-year population cohort. The ratio of workers aged 20-65 to retirees will have fallen to just over one-to-one. By then, barring a striking upturn in fertility, Japan's complete demographic collapse is virtually assured: Projections show so few women of childbearing age that the population decline will inevitably accelerate. A population bust, like an explosion, proceeds in geometric progression.

Yet there are foreign observers, like Victor Mallet of the *Financial Times*, who are celebrating the decline of the Japanese population as good for the world and for Japan itself. Mallet bases his optimism on the fact that the "the labor force has been rising this year as older people rejoin the workforce and more women take jobs. Robots and immigrants É will also help to keep the economy growing."⁴⁴ Each of his proposed measures, however, is either a temporary stopgap measure, or is self-defeating. The newly rehabilitated elderly will soon be forced to retire again, this time for good. As for women joining the work force in greater numbers, this will surely drive the birthrate down even more, exacerbating the labor shortage over time. Nor is immigration likely to solve Japan's problems. It would take an estimated 600,000 immigrants *a year* to offset the impending decline in the labor force, an influx of such magnitude that would shake Japan's homogenous and insular monoculture to the core.

Staking Japan's future on the promise of robot manufacture seems an equally dubious proposition. While it is true that more than half of the world's industrial robots--57 percent to be exact--are located in Japan, few jobs off the assembly line are suited for robots, at least at their present level of sophistication.⁴⁵

Mallet's *laissez faire* attitude towards Japan's demographic crisis is emphatically not shared by the Japanese leadership. Reacting to reports that the 2006 total fertility rate had dropped to 1.25, the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, announced on January 26, 2007, that he would "set out a full-scale strategy to reverse the declining birthrate." A "Strategic Council to Study Measures to Support Children and Families" has been established, with instructions to report on ways to encourage more births that go beyond the current--and largely ineffectual--child allowances. Still, it remains to be seen whether any post-modern society, including Japan's, can revive a sagging birthrate.⁴⁶

The old age tsunami that is about to hit Japan will not spare other Asian countries. The Four Tigers—Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore—are already getting long in the tooth. China and India, the world's two demographic giants, are tottering along not far behind.

The Crisis of the Empty Cradle

Unlike the endlessly propagandized Ócrisis caused by our burgeoning numbers,Ó the crisis of the empty cradle has crept upon us quietly. Classic Ódemographic transitionÓ theory assumed that parents in pre-modern societies were

motivated to have many children to ensure that at least two survived to adulthood. Cradles were kept full because so many newborns departed via coffins so soon after their arrival. Reduce the infant and child mortality rate, the theory went, and parents would adjust their childbearing downward to compensate. A new and stable equilibrium of low mortality *and* low fertility would result in zero population growth.

No such equilibrium was ever reached. In the developed countries, trends like more education, especially for women, the widespread availability of birth control devices, legalized abortion, the move from farm to city, the decline of religious belief, anti-natal propaganda and the dominance of a radically individualistic, materialistic worldview have caused the birthrate to continue to plummet ever lower. Materialism, in its various forms and guises, is probably the chief culprit, given that it creates an overarching worldview in which children are cast as the enemies of wealth and happiness. I once received a letter from a friend who lives in Florida. A neighbor of his, a young woman who commutes 50 miles one way to work, was bemoaning how little time she had to spend with her four-year-old son. My friend suggested that she sell her \$40,000 SUV and get a job closer to home. Not only would she have more time to spend with her son, he told her, she would probably also be money ahead. She shook her head. "You don't understand," she said. "My husband and I *love* this SUV." Who was it that said that no man can serve two masters? The young woman in Florida apparently believes that she is driving an SUV. But in fact it is driving her.

Of all the factors affecting fertility, all but one works to keep the cradle empty. The sole exception is the raft of advances in human reproductive technology. But helping tens or even hundreds of thousands of infertile couples to conceive a child hardly counterbalances the millions who consciously limit themselves to one or no children.

Those who actually work in the field of reproductive endocrinology have long admitted what the population controllers are loath to admit, that fertility delayed is fertility denied. At a gathering of the American Fertility Society held in San Antonio in the mid-nineties, the speaker, Dorothy Mitchell-Leef, a prominent reproductive endocrinologist, asserted that "modern American women have been sold a bill of goods." American women have been encouraged by both "doctors and authoritative voices in the culture" to believe that they could start a family just as easily at 38 as at 22--perhaps even more easily, because in their late thirties they would be financially better off. Medical advances—injecting hormones, in vitro fertilization, and screening of genetically damaged fetuses—made the usual biological limits seem old-fashioned. Not only is this picture false, she went on, but the fallacy of this view has been known for decades. A French study, conducted way back in the '70s, followed women with infertile husbands who were trying to get pregnant through artificial insemination. The results showed that the chances of conception diminished sharply with age, with fertility showing a significant drop after age 30 and a sharp decline after 35. It was time, Mitchell-Leef asserted, for doctors to "begin telling women that if having children was a high priority, they should think of having them earlier in life rather than later." Her audience of professional American women, many of whom had experienced firsthand the "grief felt by women whose infertility treatments had failed, burst into applause."⁴⁹

The overall pattern in the developed world seems too evident to ignore. Once people are educated, urbanized, and begin to enjoy a certain level of wealth, birthrates plummet. More and more couples live in urban conditions where children provide no economic benefits, but rather are, as the Chinese say, "goods on which one loses." Education delays marriage and provides other options for women besides marriage and family. For materially minded couples in countries where the state provides old age benefits, the way to get ahead is to remain perpetually childless. Why give up a second income to bring a child into the world who will never, at least in material terms, repay your investment? Why provide for your future in the most fundamental way, by providing the next generation, if the government has pledged to keep you out of the poorhouse in your dotage anyway.

As Phillip Longman has remarked, the modern nanny state has created a strange new world in which the most "successful" individuals in material terms are the most "unfit" in biological terms. In all previous ages of human history wealth and children went hand-in-hand. Wealth made it possible to marry earlier, to bring more children into the world, and ensured that more of these children survived. Numerous progeny in turn virtually guaranteed continued family prosperity. But no longer. The cradle-to-grave social welfare programs found in developed countries, along with the heavy tax burden these demand, have not merely made the care and feeding of children superfluous to wealth; they have made children themselves wealth's enemy.⁵⁰

True enough, some may answer. But what is behind the radical declines in fertility that we are now seeing among still poor peoples in Turkey, Egypt, and Albania? Peoples who do not yet dream of SUVs, of education beyond the village primary school, or even employment outside the family field? Why are people in countries where the state does not even provide a bare minimum of support for the elderly also radically downsizing their families? Why, in countries where infant mortality rates are still relatively high, are couples failing to fill empty cradles?

The answer is that the demographic implosion that has occurred "naturally" in the developed world has been in large part imposed by force on the less fortunate, less powerful peoples of the world. The U.S. and other developed countries consciously set out in the sixties to engineer a radical decline in Third World fertility. Weak nations, dependent on the U.S. and Europe for financial aid, military security, or access to markets, were bullied or suborned into mandating anti-natal measures. Paid for by the West, these measures ranged from the free provision of contraceptives to enforced sterilization programs. Hapless villagers worldwide have been subjected to clever marketing schemes, bait-and-switch health ploys, anti-family TV soap operas, and even blunt coercion in an effort to deprive them of the free exercise of their fertility.⁵¹

Their governments, despite having adopted population control programs under duress, are slow to abandon them even after birthrates begin to plummet. Let's take a look at another OSCE Partner for Cooperation, South Korea. South Korea in 1961 embarked on a family planning program at the insistence of the U.S. government. The

program quickly evolved into a *de facto* two-child-per-family policy, complete with strong punitive measures against those who dared violate this limit. Civil and military officials with more than two children, for example, were denied promotions or even demoted. Third and higher order children were declared ineligible for medical insurance coverage, educational opportunities, and other government benefits. Couples who agreed to sterilization were given priority access to scarce public housing. This did matters stand for three long decades.

By the time the government began to rethink this policy in the mid-nineties, the fertility rate had dropped to an anemic 1.7 children, the population was aging rapidly, and had developed a full-blown labor shortage. Moreover, the country was experiencing an epidemic of sex-selective abortions, in which Confucian-minded parents anxious for sons were ending the lives of girl fetuses because of their gender. With young women in increasingly short supply, the population was poised to drop precipitously.

It was 1996 before the South Korean government finally got out of the population control business, announcing on June 4th of that year that all restrictions on childbearing would be lifted. No new pro-natal measures were enacted, however, unless one counts the government's promises that public health clinics would soon begin offering infertility treatment (in addition to birth control) and that it would crack down on sex-selective abortions.⁵²

But if the government thought that, left to make their own decisions about family size, the Koreans would begin reproducing themselves, it badly miscalculated. Thirty-five years of anti-natal education and policies, combined with South Korea's rapid modernization, had done its work. With nary a pause, the birthrate continued to drop. It reached an all-time low of 1.2 in 2004, with the South Korean population now poised to shrink in absolute numbers.⁵³

Thailand is another OSCE Partner for Cooperation that, strongly encouraged by the U.S. government, undertook a full-blooded population control program in 1962. Forty-five years later, its demographic profile resembles that of the dying West. Its villages are bereft of children, its schools are closing down for lack of students, and its population is rapidly aging. The average Thai mother today has 1.6 children, well below the replacement rate level of 2.2.

Many in Thailand are now having second thoughts. Tiang Phadthaisong, a researcher from Chiang Mao University in Northern Thailand, is among those who believe that "the family planning program has been too successful." In 1997, when the TFR was passing 1.9, Tiang published a paper called "The collapse of Thai society: the impact of family planning," in which she detailed the demographic disaster awaiting the Thai people. End family planning policies, she urged the government, so that the birthrate can once again rise to replacement levels.⁵⁴ Her pleas have fallen on deaf ears, even as the birthrate continues to fall.⁵⁵

The profound changes in the human condition caused by long-term, below-replacement birthrates can rightly be termed a Demographic Revolution. But unlike the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, or the Information Revolution of the late twentieth, or the Democratic Revolution that succeeded the fall of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe (if not in Russia itself), all of which vastly improved the lives of billions, most of the consequences of the ongoing Demographic Revolution will be negative.

Population growth has been an important escalator of consumer demand. Try selling cars, houses, refrigerators, or anything else, for that matter, in a depopulating country. Or try to seek profitable investments in the stock market when millions of elders start liquidating their IRAs and 401Ks to survive. This is not to say that some few sectors of the economy, such as pharmaceuticals and health care, will not expand. But as Peter Drucker clearly saw, shrinking demand elsewhere will more than offset these gains in a few sectors.

Falling birthrates are also drastically shrinking family circles. Consider China's forced pace fertility reduction program known as the one-child-per-family policy. The first generation of children born under this policy has no brothers or sisters. These only children are now producing a second generation who are missing not only siblings, but uncles, aunts, and cousins as well. Demographer Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute looks ahead to a world in which "for many people, 'family' would be understood as a unit that does not include any biological contemporaries or peers" and that we may live in "a world in which the only biological relatives for many people—perhaps most people—will be their ancestors."⁵⁷ Lacking close family ties, many seniors will be socially isolated and painfully lonely. As Ben Wattenberg has remarked, "Young DINKs (double income, no kids) may be cute. Old LINKs (low income, no kids) may be tragic. Clergymen say that the saddest funerals are those in which the deceased has no offspring."⁵⁸

Modernity alone would have been sufficient to effect a demographic transition in South Korea and elsewhere, but the population engineers were not content to wait. They artificially induced a precipitous fall in birthrates by strict, nationwide anti-natal policies and, with the assistance of U.S. family planning funds, have produced a full-blown Demographic Revolution.

The hundreds of millions of dollars that foreign agencies like USAID poured into Korea's two-child policy is but a tiny fraction of the \$100 billion or so that has been spent on fertility reduction programs in the world at large. Imagine putting billions of dollars into programs to undo the Industrial and Information Revolutions, and you will understand the insanity of our current approach. We are making the old age tsunami predicted by Peter Drucker and others even worse. And, as we do so, we are causing a flood of human misery and a global economic malaise.

Footnotes

¹ Polybius, *The Histories*, Volume 6. Quoted in Robert de Marcellus, "A Foundering Civilization," *Human Life Review* 28:1-2 (Winter/Spring 2002), pp. 7-18.

² The phrase "Demography is destiny" is generally attributed to Auguste Comte (1798-1857), a 19th century French mathematician and sociologist.

³ Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (Ballantine Books, 1968; a Sierra Club edition followed in 1969, to which the following page citations refer.) The "battle" phrase is from the Prologue. For the denial of food aid, pp. 143, 148.

⁴ Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992) is filled with such bombast, pp. 177, 40, 78

⁵ *Social Problems*, 4th ed., (Addison Wesley Educational Publishers, 1990), Chapter 17, "Population," p. 487.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, *Global Population Profile 2002*, p. 22.

⁷ Table IV.1. "Life Expectancy at Birth by Development Group and Major Area, Estimate and Medium Variant, 1950-1955, 2000-2005, and 2045-2050," United Nations Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision*, Volume III, Analytical Report, p. 55. The increase in life expectancy in the less developed world would have been even more dramatic without the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the resurgence of malaria, in Africa. In Chapter 6 we will explore the extent to which population control programs are responsible for rising mortality in Africa.

⁸ Joel Cohen, "Human Population: The Next Half Century," *Science* (2003) 302:1172-1175. The U.S. Census Bureau puts the percentage at 2.2 percent and the years at 1963-1964. See the U.S. Census Bureau's *Global Population Profile 2002* (2004, U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 3.

⁹ Peter Drucker, "The Future that Has Already Happened," *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 1997, 20, 22, 24.

¹⁰ Some researchers have attempted to make the case, counterintuitive at best, that an aging and shrinking population will not create serious economic and social problems. I have not been generally impressed by these efforts. Economist Phil Mullan, for example, has written *The Imaginary Time Bomb* (I. B. Tauris, New York: 2002), a self-described effort to debunk unfounded anxiety about the consequences of societal aging. Mullan's conclusion, that "The economic importance of population changes is often grossly exaggerated," (p. 212) seems remarkably modest in view of his thesis. It is also one that, given the incessant scaremongering over the population bomb, I have no trouble assenting to.

¹¹ Very low fertility is not limited to the more developed regions. Of the 148 countries and territories defined by the U.N. Population Division as "less developed regions," 22 have below replacement fertility. The U.N. has issued two recent reports on this surprising development (2000, 2003), and a number of articles have been dedicated to this topic (Morgan, 2003; Goldstein, Lutz and Testa, 2003; Billari and Kohler, 2004).

¹² The UN Population Division labels its three principal population projections the "high variant," the "medium variant," and the "low variant." Each is calculated using different assumptions about future fertility. The medium variant unrealistically assumes that all countries will approach a "fertility floor" of 1.85 over the next half century. It does not explain how this "fertility floor" was determined, nor does it explain how countries such as Italy will regain the "fertility floor" after spending the last two

decades in the òfertility basement.Ó The high variant is even more unrealistic. It assumes that the fertility rates of all countries will converge on 2.35, a fertility rate that has been achieved by *no* developed country, even those with strong pro-natal policies. I favor the low variant, which has fertility falling to 1.35. *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision, Volume III, Analytical Report*, p. 33.

¹³ United Nations Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision* [working paper]. Volume I, "Comprehensive Tables."

¹⁴ The UN Population Division's medium variant projection, which assumes that the TFR in low fertility countries will rise to 1.85, is 9.1 billion. Only the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its *Special Report on Emissions Scenarios*, is still discussing a total population of 15.1 billion by 2100, a number that is supported by no demographic projections that I know of.

¹⁵ Replacement rate fertility is the level of fertility at which each successive generation of women produces exactly enough offspring so that the same number of women survive to have children themselves. Replacement rate fertility is often said to be 2.1 children per woman over her reproductive lifetime, but this is in fact the replacement rate fertility of a relatively developed country. For the globe as a whole, the replacement rate fertility estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2002 was 2.3. See *Global Population Profile, 2002* available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/wp-02.pdf>, especially p. 21

¹⁶ A June 29, 1999 report from the UN Population Division projected that by 2050 1 person out of every 5 will be 60 years or older. By 2150, this figure will be 1 in every 3.

¹⁷ For a good discussion of how the liberal welfare state relentlessly suppresses fertility, see Phillip Longman, *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity [And What To Do About It]*, esp. Chapters 10 and 12.

¹⁸ The nations whose populations are currently declining are Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Hungary, Poland, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia, Czech Republic, Serbia and Montenegro, and Estonia. Were it not for massive immigration from Eastern Europe, the populations of Spain, Italy and Germany would be declining as well.

¹⁹ Table 3. òTotal Fertility for the World, Major Development Groups and Major Areas, 1970-1975, 2000-2005, 2045-2050, by Projection Variants.Ó In *WPP 2004, Analytical Report*, p. xxi.

²⁰ Table 1. òPopulation of the World, Major Development Groups and Major Areas, 1950, 1975, 2005, 2050, by Projection Variants.Ó *WPP 2004, Analytical Report*, p. xviii.

²¹ *Wall Street Journal*, January 24, 2003.

²² C. J. Chivers, "Putin urges plan to reverse slide in the birth rate," *The New York Times* (May 11, 2006).

²³ United Nations Population Division, òWorld Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision Population Database,Ó <http://esa.un.org/unpp/p2k0data.asp>. Another UNDP publication, *World Population to 2300*, has Russia's population declining to 101.5 million by 2050, and to 80 million by the end of the century. See *World Population to 2300* (UNDP, 2004, Tables 5, 8, and Figure 39). The Russian decline is alarming because it is fed not only by a declining and well-below replacement level birthrate, but also by an unprecedented rise in the numbers of early deaths of working-age men. The dramatic increase in deaths of Russian men aged 30 to 50 has pulled down male life expectancy from a 1991 average of

63.5 years—which was already well behind most other nations—to an astonishing 57.7 years in 2004. Russian population declining as births, life expectancy drop, *The Washington Times*, 26 September 2006, p. A12. The World Bank's 2005 report, *Dying Too Young: Addressing Premature Mortality and Ill Health Due to Non Communicable Diseases and Injuries in the Russian Federation*, also pegs male life expectancy at 57.7.

²⁴ This is the estimate given in the CIA's *The World FactBook*, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/fr.html>. Other estimates are comparable.

²⁵ See "France's End," by Joseph D'Agostino, for an extended discussion of Muslim immigration and Europe's new demographic realities. *PRI Review* (November-December 2005) 15 (5):1, 6-7.

²⁶ "Falling Population Alarms Europe," *The Washington Times*, 2 December 1987, pp. 1, 8, at 8.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Tess Livingstone, *George Pell: Defender of the Faith Down Under* (Ignatius Press, 2002), p. 314.

²⁹ Personal communication, November 2005.

³⁰ Tom Wonnacott, "Census shows youth will be missing from next generation," *PRI Review* (May-June 2003) 13(3): 5-6.

³¹ Muslim majority countries near or below replacement birthrates include Algeria at 2.5, Azerbaijan at 1.85, Bosnia-Herzegovina at 1.32, Tunisia at 2.0, Iran at 2.12, Kuwait at 2.4, Lebanon at 2.3, and Turkey at 2.5., Indonesia at 2.4., and the United Arab Emirates at 2.5. Egypt and Libya, at 3.3 and 3.0 respectively, are higher, with Saudi Arabia and Iraq, at 4.0 and 4.8 respectively, are higher still. Afghanistan, on the other hand, has a reported TFR of 7.5, one the highest in the world. From the 2004 WPP.

³² The figures come from Table III.5. "Ten Countries and Areas with Largest Per Cent Declines in Total Fertility, by Development Group, 1970-1975 to 2000-2005," UNDP, WPP, p. 43.

³³ Egypt was listed as a country of special concern in "National Security Study Memorandum 200," Chapter 5.

³⁴ "Al-Azhar Fatwa Committee's point of view on birth planning," PMID: 12343622 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE], Population Sciences (Cairo, Egypt), 1988; (8):15-7,

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=pubmed&cmd=Search&itool=pubmed_AbstractPlus&term=%22Al%2DAzhar+Islamic+Research+Academy%2E+Fatwa+Committee%22%5BCorporate+Author%5D.

³⁵ As I have explained, I have here used the low variant projection of the U.N. Population Division, which shows a TFR for 2005-2010 of 2.74. The earlier numbers for the 2000-2005 period were, of course, higher at 3.3. The 2006 CIA's *The World FactBook* gives a figure of 2.83.

³⁶ "Fewer Means Better," *The Economist*, 5 August 1995, 41.

³⁷ "Iran Promoting Birth Control in Policy Switch," *The Washington Post*, May 8, 1992.

³⁸ Yeni Yuezul, quoted by Youssef Courbage, "Nouveaux horizons démographiques in Méditerranée," National Institute of Demographic Studies (Paris, February 27, 1995),

<http://www.ined.fr/englishversion/publications/collections/courbage/chapter3.pdf>

(accessed November 2006).

³⁹ "Contraception is Treason, Turkish Islamist Leader Says," *Agence France Presse*, February 16, 2002.

⁴⁰ The WPP gives the TFR for Occupied Palestinian Territory as 5.00 (medium variant) or 4.75 (low variant) for 2005-2010. For Israel it reports 2.66 (medium variant) and 2.41 (low variant).

⁴¹ Ezra Vogel, *Japan as Number One*, (Pelanduk Publications, Selangor, Malaysia, 2001).

⁴² George Friedman and Meredith Lebard, *The Coming War with Japan* (St. Martin's Press, 1991)

⁴³ On a Purchasing Price Parity basis.

⁴⁴ Victor Mallet, "Procreation does not result in wealth creation," *Financial Times* (January 4, 2007),

⁴⁵ For a discussion of robots and the Japanese future, see Eamonn Fingleton's, *In Praise of hard Industries* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

⁴⁶ "Prime Minister Abe to set up a strategic council to counter the falling birthrate," *Asahi Shimbun* (January 28, 2007), p. 1. The Minister of Health, Hakuo Yanagisawa, tried to directly encourage women to have more children by saying: "The number of childbearing machines is fixed. Each [women] should do her best." Needless to say, this clumsy word choice provoked calls for his resignation. See "Prime Minister reprimands health minister for his inappropriate remarks referring to women as "child-bearing machines," *Tokyo Shimbun* (January 29, 2007), p. 2.

⁴⁷ I witnessed the arrival of female infanticide to the Pearl River Delta during my fieldwork there in the early eighties.

⁴⁸ Nicholas Eberstadt, "Growing Old the Hard Way: China, Russia, India," *Policy Review*, Hoover Institution, April, May 2006,

<http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/2912391.html>. See also, "Old Age Tsunami," "Opinion" section, *WSJ*, November 15, 2005.

⁴⁹ Scott McConnell, "Delayed Motherhood: Is it Good for Society?" *New York Post*, 24 May 1995.

⁵⁰ See Phillip Longman's *The Empty Cradle*, for an extended discussion of this problem, especially Chapter 7, "The Cost of Children." *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity and What to Do About It* (Basic Books, 2004), 240 pp.

⁵¹ In the absence of a general theory of fertility change, it is impossible to offer any reliable, quantitative estimates of the precise impact of these diverse programs. But, as we will see in succeeding chapters, these programs have often been coercive in character and their impact on fertility necessarily dramatic. To put it another way, one doesn't require a general theory of fertility change to interpret or explain the low fertility rate of a woman who has been forcibly sterilized.

⁵² "Government to Do Away With Birth Control Policy," *Korea Times*, June 5, 1996.

⁵³ In 2006, the number of babies born in the city of Seoul increased slightly, but it seems unlikely that this is the beginning of a resurgence in Korean births. "New Babies Rise Again in Seoul," Kang Shin-woh, *Korea Times*, January 19, 2007.

⁵⁴ "Thailand's Grim Harvest," *Population Research Institute Review*, January/February 1997, p. 14.

⁵⁵ According to the U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base, the Total Fertility Rate in 2005 was 1.6. See <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbsum.pl?cty=TH> (accessed on March 5, 2007).

⁵⁶ U.N. Population Division, *World Population Policies, 2005*,

http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WPP2005/Publication_index.htm.

⁵⁷ Nicholas Eberstadt, "World Population Implosion," *The Public Interest*, 1996.

⁵⁸ "The Bomb that Fizzled," Ben Wattenberg, *New York Times Magazine*, 23 April 1997.