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## RUSSIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC POLICY AFTER 2000

### MOTIVATIONS, SOLUTIONS AND SHORT-TERM RESULTS

#### ABSTRACT

The present study examines the directions of Russia's demographic policy in the context of the accumulating challenges in this area and analyzes the results of this policy as well as the prospects for further development of the situation. The development of the Russian population since the Soviet era shows a steady tendency: the number of births in the regions inhabited by ethnic Russians is seriously declining, with an increase in regions inhabited by ethnic groups traditionally professing Islam. Remedial steps were already taken in the 1990s, but the turning point was 2007, when the regulations related to the introduction of Maternity Capital entered into force. Another important step was the initiation of the national project "Demography", which significantly increased social assistance not only for families with children, but also for the older generation. The Maternity Capital policy positively correlates with the increase in births in the following years, however, after the Crimean events, the positive trend collapses and the birth rate shows a clear decreasing tendency. Undoubtedly, success has been achieved in extending life expectancy. The tendency of a definitely positive net migration is not retreating either. The long-term effect of these processes is the aging of the Russian society and the change of the ethnic structure towards an increase in the number of the country's Muslim population. A significant population growth is observable in metropolitan cities as well as in tourist and agricultural regions of the South-West while peripheral and rural areas are dying out. The fact that despite legislative and organizational efforts the number of the Federation's inhabitants is falling indicates the limited nature of social policies aimed at manual control of social processes.

**Keywords:** Russia, population, demographic policy, demographics, maternity, capital

## INTRODUCTION

The present study focuses on the demographic policy of the Russian Federation after the difficult decade of the 1990s. Its main objective is to present the motivation, the logic and major elements of Russia's demographic policy in the following two decades with a short critical reflection about its effectiveness.

The problem of demographic changes in Russia was perceived as of a primary importance and studied by some researchers such as Eberhardt, whose book of 2002 provided an image of Russia's demographic situation after the disastrous Yeltsin era,<sup>1</sup> or Anatoly Vishnevsky, whose publications, especially the fundamental study about the "Demographic modernization" in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the collection of 2015 concerning the demographic issues in the global perspective are an enduring legacy of assessing the demographic situation in Russia in a broader context. However, the reflection on the demographic policy of Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its effectiveness seems to be incomparably poorer, which is justified by the current nature of this issue. Some introductory contribution to contemporary research on this problem was made by Larisa Popova's study of 2014 published in the *International Journal of Regional Development*<sup>2</sup> and Yuliya Aitova's article in the *Eurasian Scientific Journal* in 2019.<sup>3</sup> A concise analysis presenting a deeper insight into the demographic situation of Russia's regions was published in 2021 by a team of researchers from the Russian Academy of Sciences.<sup>4</sup> The statistical material of this article is mainly based on the data provided by Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) as well as other reliable Russian and international services such as Rosinfostat or Statista. In some cases secondary academic sources referring to the civilizational grounds underlying the demographic processes turned out to be useful.

## THE DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION OF RUSSIA

Today's demographic shape of the Russian Federation is by no means surprising since the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century was actually an arena of a process described by Anatoly Vishnevsky as "a century of demographic demolition of Russia" (столетие демографического разорения России). In a thorough collective analysis published in 2006 he suggests that *if Russia had managed to avoid demographic disasters in the first half of the twentieth century, then, all other things being equal, by the end of the century its population could have been almost 113 million people more than it actually was. And if, in addition, it was*

<sup>1</sup> P. Eberhardt, *Geografia ludności Rosji*, Warszawa 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Л.А. Попова, "The Results of the Modern Demographic Policy in Russia", *International Journal of Regional Development*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2014), pp. 26-38.

<sup>3</sup> Ю.С. Аитова, "Анализ государственной политики России в сфере регулирования демографических процессов", *The Eurasian Scientific Journal*, vol. 11, no. 6 (2019), pp. 1-9.

<sup>4</sup> Т.К. Ростовская, А.А. Шабунова (eds.), *Демографическое самочувствие регионов России. Национальный демографический доклад – 2020*, Москва 2021.

still possible to achieve a decrease in mortality typical of other countries in the last third of the previous century, then this excess would have amounted to almost 137 million people.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, after the end of the *belle époque* Russia became a platform of unprecedented experiments. In WW1 the country lost about 3,311,000 citizens, which constituted 1.89% of the total population.<sup>6</sup> In the next years the Civil War between the Reds and the Whites (1917-1922) took about 1.5 million lives.<sup>7</sup> The most problematic period (as far as the level of unnatural mortality is concerned) is Stalinism. The number of USSR casualties during WW2 is generally estimated at the level of 26-27 million.<sup>8</sup> However, various sources provide different numbers of deaths caused by the internal policy of the regime itself, predominantly by the Great Famine, the Great Purge and the Gulag system. After considering the statistical data from USSR censuses Richard Pipes concludes that only in the years 1932-1939 the country lost 9-10 million citizens.<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, all these losses (about 40 million, which is a significant number, especially if one considers the fact that the Russian Empire's population in 1914 was 164 million and the population of the Soviet Union in 1953 about 190 million) do not exhaust the range of Russia's demographic destruction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What has to be taken into consideration as well is a variety of other negative factors such as alcoholism (the rates of which were increasing until the very end of the Red Empire), insufficient health care, shortage of nutritious food, large-scale deprivation of family traditions, etc.

However, the demographic situation of the USSR was far from catastrophic. According to the official statistics (which may not be reliable), the annual natural growth rate in the years 1959-1969 reached 1.3%, between 1970 and 1978: 0.9%, and in the following decade repeated the same result. For decades (or centuries even) it was the East Slavic component that grew fastest in terms of demographics, whereas the Central Asian or native Siberian and Caucasian elements faced civilizational difficulties, which prevented them from excessive demographic expansion. The tendency was clearly reversed even in the last decades of the USSR. Between 1979 and 1989 the natural population growth in the Russian FSSR reached 7% per decade, in the Ukrainian SSR: 4%, Belarusian: 7%, whereas the population of the Kazakh SSR grew by 13%, of the Uzbek SSR by 29% and of the Tajik SSR by 34%.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> А.Г. Вишнеvский (eds.), *Демографическая модернизация России: 1900-2000*, Москва 2006, pp. 446-447.

<sup>6</sup> N. Mougel, *World War I Casualties*, REPERES, Robert Schuman Center, p. 5, at <http://www.centre-robert-schuman.org/userfiles/files/REPERES%20%E2%80%93%20module%201-1-1%20-%20explanatory%20notes%20%E2%80%93%20World%20War%20I%20casualties%20%E2%80%93%20EN.pdf>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>7</sup> COW, *Intra State War Data*, Intra-State War Data (v4.1), at [www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/COW-war](http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/COW-war), 29 October 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Comp. M. Ellmann, S. Maksudov, "Soviet Deaths in the Great Patriotic War: A Note", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4 (1994), pp. 671-680.

<sup>9</sup> R. Pipes, *Communism: A History*, New York 2001, p. 67 ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Население СССР по данным Всесоюзной переписи населения 1989 г.*, Москва 1990, pp. 8-9.

The demographic situation of Russia (and a number of other post-communist countries) worsened dramatically and suddenly with the collapse of the old regime. The rates observed after 1991 leave no doubt as to the fact that there was both a significant decline in fertility and a significant increase in population mortality. As Eberhardt points out, referring to the Russian statistical yearbook from 2000, in 1991 there were 1,795 thousand births and 1,691 thousand deaths, while in 1999 1,259 thousand births and 2,217 thousand deaths. Thus, between 1993 and 1999 the natural birth growth was strikingly negative reaching a yearly level no higher than -4.8%.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, the number of inhabitants decreased drastically: from 1992 to 2000 it fell from 148.6 to 146.3 million. Until the end of the new century's first decade the number of Russians dropped to 142.7 million. Over the next few years – until 2014 – the tendency was reversed and the population grew (at a very moderate speed). Every year the number of Russians increased by several hundred thousand. At the beginning of 2014, the Rosstat counted 143.7 million Russians – a million more than in 2009. After the annexation of Crimea, at the beginning of 2015, Russian sources present the official number 146.3 million citizens. In other words, the population grew by 2.6 million, which has not been recognized by the majority of states but in Russia is treated as *fait accompli*. By the beginning of 2016, the population reached 146.5 million people, and by the end of 2017 – 146.9 million. However, in 2018, Russia's population decreased again reaching only 146.8 million. As a result, in 2019, in spite of the incorporation of Crimea, Russia was inhabited by only half a million citizens more than in 2000. The natural increase in statistics was recorded only in 2014 and 2015. In the other years, the death rate exceeded the birth rate; the very moderate growth was only a result of territorial gains and immigration.<sup>12</sup>

## THE YOUNG STATE CONFRONTING A DISASTER: FIRST STEPS

The sudden demographic collapse, contrary to stereotypical opinions, was realized and considered by Yeltsin's team in early 1990s. In the second year of post-totalitarian changes, in 1993, the Commission for Women, Families and Demographics was established by presidential decree.<sup>13</sup> The Commission informed the central organs of power about the reasons and far-reaching consequences of the demographic collapse, such as the situation of families or the prospects of abnormally high mortality.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Демографический ежегодник России*, Москва 2000, p. 19. Cited by: P. Eberhardt, *Geografia ludności...*, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Федеральная служба государственной статистики, *23110000100100200001 Общаций прирост постоянного населения*, at <https://showdata.gks.ru/report/278934/>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Президент Российской Федерации, Указ от 15 ноября 1993 г. N 1908 *О Комиссии по вопросам женщин, семьи и демографии при Президенте Российской Федерации*, at <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=EXP;n=227012;dst=100101#VjuGPnSGIИпо7sb>, 11 October 2021.

<sup>14</sup> *Доклад Комиссии по вопросам женщин, семьи и демографии при Президенте Российской Федерации (в соответствии с решением Комиссии 04.02.97 г.)*, at [http://vivovoco.astronet.ru/VV/NO\\_COMM/DEMOGOV.HTM](http://vivovoco.astronet.ru/VV/NO_COMM/DEMOGOV.HTM), 11 October 2021.

The first important regulation enacted to reverse the negative trend was the Federal Law of May 19, 1995 No. 81-FZ *On State Benefits to Citizens with Children* (Федеральный закон от 19 мая 1995 г. № 81-ФЗ *О государственных пособиях гражданам, имеющим детей*). The act allowed for a series of benefits:

- maternity allowance;
- a one-time allowance for women registered with medical institutions in the early stages of pregnancy;
- a one-time allowance for the birth of a child;
- monthly childcare allowance (1,500 RUR monthly for the first child and 3,000 RUR for every next child);
- monthly child benefit;
- a one-time allowance when transferring a child to a family for upbringing (8,000 RUR);
- a one-time allowance for the pregnant wife of a conscript (14,000 RUR in 1995);
- monthly allowance for the child of a conscript.<sup>15</sup>

The state finances in the 1990s were in a deplorable state. Hence, the funds allocated to social assistance were very modest; it also applied to material aid for families with children. Galloping inflation was another key factor that significantly worsened the situation of families and hindered a meaningful response to worsening child poverty. In the year, in which the act was passed, the inflation rate reached 131.33%.<sup>16</sup> In this situation, due to the obvious and very dynamic loss of value of the benefits, Art. 4.2 of the Act provided for their annual indexation. However, the indexation scale has not been statutorily correlated with the inflation level determined by the relevant institution.

There is no wonder that the results of these modest steps in the extremely difficult financial conditions of the transitional period were unsatisfactory. The dynamics of natural population growth in the years 1995-2007 was consistently negative, reaching alarming results in the following years.

Natural growth of the number of people per 1000 citizens:

- 1995: -5.7%
- 2000: -6.6%
- 2001: -6.6%
- 2002: -6.5%
- 2003: -6.2%
- 2004: -5.5%
- 2005: -5.9%
- 2006: -4.8%
- 2007: -3.3%.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Федеральный закон от 19.05.1995 г. № 81-ФЗ *О государственных пособиях гражданам, имеющим детей*, Art. 3, at <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/7871>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>16</sup> СтатБюро, Инфляция в России в 1995 году, at <https://www.statbureau.org/ru/russia/inflation/1995>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Статистика и показатели, *Рождаемость по данным Росстат*, at <https://rosinfostat.ru/rozhdzaamost/>, 11 October 2021.

## 2007: THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

The demographic concern of Putin's Russia has been widely known for two decades. The president has been expressing his preoccupation with this topic since the first of his annual messages to the National Assembly on July 8, 2000. In this significant speech, he expressed his awareness that *several years the average population of the country decreased annually by 750 thousand people. And if [...] the forecasts are based on the real work of people who understand this – in 15 years there may be 22 million fewer Russians, [...] this is one seventh of the country's population. If the current trend continues, the nation's survival will be in jeopardy. We are really in danger of becoming a decrepit nation. Today the demographic situation is one of the most alarming.*<sup>18</sup>

More concrete steps to reverse the fatal trend were taken in the second half of the 2000s. What for many years became the most important element of Putin's demographic policy was the Maternity Capital. The introduction of the program was announced by Vladimir Putin on May 10, 2006 in his address to the Federal Assembly. The program was developed on the basis of data from the 2002 census, which signaled a significant decline in fertility.

The essence of the program is to provide the parents with financial resources that can be used in the period of their child's growing up and development. The goals were divided into four sections:

- 1) improvement of living conditions,
- 2) providing education for children,
- 3) the formation of a funded pension for women,
- 4) purchase of goods and services intended for social adaptation and integration of disabled children into society.<sup>19</sup>

The program was launched on January 1, 2007. The payments at that time concerned only the second and subsequent children and amounted to 250,000 per child. However, with each passing year, the value of maternity capital increased. Since 2020 the program has been providing some assistance to the first child as well. For families in which a second child has appeared since 2020, maternity capital is additionally increased by 155,550 rubles. For families in which a third child or subsequent children were born after Jan 1, 2020, the maternal (family) capital was set at 639,431 rubles. 83 kopecks on the condition that earlier the right to additional measures of state support for families with children did not arise.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Президент Российской Федерации, Послание Президента Российской Федерации Федеральному Собранию от 08.07.2000 г. *Государство Россия. Путь к эффективному государству (О положении в стране и основных направлениях внутренней и внешней политики государства)*, at <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/22401>, 11 October 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Федеральный закон от 29.12.2006 г. № 256-ФЗ *О дополнительных мерах государственной поддержки семей, имеющих детей*, Art. 7, p. 3, at <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/24820/page/1>, 11 X 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Пенсионный фонд Российской Федерации, *Материнский (семейный) капитал*, at <https://pfr.gov.ru/grazhdanam/msk/>, 5 June 2021.

The logic of Maternity Capital resulted from the assessment of the fertility status of the Russian society in 2006. As it was found that the most typical model of the Russian family is 2+1, which of course did not ensure the simple reproduction of generations. The emphasis was placed on promoting a greater number of children, no matter how big the number actually was. The idea of the Maternity Capital, which seemed beneficial for the society at the first sight, faced some criticism. One of the leading oppositionists, Boris Nemtsov (assassinated in the downtown of Moscow on Feb 27, 2015), stated that the program could not achieve its goals because the proposed amount of the allowance was certainly not able to contribute effectively to the purchase of real estate. Moreover, the structure of this support promotes rather families of alcoholics. He was also bold enough to say that the measures proposed by Putin to increase the birth rate *will further stimulate the birth rate in regions populated mainly by Muslims, and will not in any way affect the birth rate in the predominantly Russian areas. Therefore the interethnic balance will be upset in this way, which is mortally dangerous for the future of Russia.*<sup>21</sup>

Is there a positive correlation between the program operation and the birth statistics? To some extent there is, as in 2006 the natural population growth amounted to -4.8%, in 2007 -3.3%, in 2008, i.e. in the second year of the program, -2.5%, in order to continue towards real growth, so as to achieve its highest rate so far in 2015, i.e. 0.3%.<sup>22</sup> However, Nemtsov's position seems to have been proven correct, stating that the Maternal Capital will probably stimulate the natural growth in the regions inhabited by Muslim population. Taking Chechnya as a representative example we observe a strict correlation between the flow of allowances and higher birth rate.

Natural growth of the number of Russia's inhabitants per 1000:

1991: 14.6 (still in USSR)

2005: 19.8

2006: 18.9

2007: 22.4

2008: 24.8

2016 (the lowest result): 16.6.<sup>23</sup>

The statistics in an ethnically typical Russian province – Ivanovo Oblast present analogous although consistently negative demographic dynamics.

Natural growth of the number of people per 1000 citizens:

1991: -4.2 (still in USSR)

2005: -13.3

2006: -11.0

<sup>21</sup> Б. Немцов, “Я не могу быть исламофобом, так как люблю своих детей”, Комментарий ИА Islam-News, at <https://nemtsov-most.org/2017/08/02/boris-nemtsov-i-can-not-be-an-islamophobe-because-i-love-my-children/>, 11 October 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Статистика и показатели, *Рождаемость по данным Росстат*, at <https://rosinfostat.ru/rozhdanost/>, 11 October 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Статистика по России, *Чечня*, at <https://russia.duck.consulting/regions/95#collapse501797>, 11 October 2021.

2007: -10.0

2008: -9.0

2016: -5.2

2017: -6.2.<sup>24</sup>

The year 2007, however, was not only a new starting point of the implementation process. The previously developed assumptions, now put into practice, were included in a legal framework by another fundamental act, which was the presidential decree that confirmed the *Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2025* (*Концепция демографической политики Российской Федерации на период до 2025 года*) developed by the government.<sup>25</sup> This document, summarizing the conceptual efforts and the previous experience, was later amended due to changes in financial and political circumstances; remaining, however, a very general embodiment of the typically Russian wishful thinking. The most important objectives drawn in Art. 3 of the decree were to stabilize the population by 2015 at the level of 142-143 million people and create conditions for its growth by 2025 to 145 million people, as well as improve the quality of life and increase life expectancy by 2015 up to 70 years, by 2025 – up to 75 years.

The relative success of the program in the years 2007-2015 temporarily extinguished the alarmist rhetoric about Russian demographic problems. Soon, however, important signals appeared on the horizon that despite high costs, Maternity Capital only partially passed the test and that it turned out to be insufficiently effective in the long term. The limited nature of the operation of Russian assistance programs in the field of demographic policy has been noticed by Russian researchers. An example may be the study of Aygul F. Validova, who, citing the “classic” arguments of Gary Becker, T. Paul Schulz and Robert J. Willis,<sup>26</sup> states that, as could be expected, the impact of a policy applying financial incentives can be detected, being, however, well below expectations. In the case of contemporary Russia recent research has proven again that the decision about having a child is predominantly rational and that the subsidy measures have helped in a number of cases to speed up the birth of the first child, but have not substantially altered the overall intention on the planned number of children.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Статистика по России, *Ивановская область*, at <https://russia.duck.consulting/regions/37#collapse501734>, 11 October 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 9 октября 2007 года № 1351 *Об утверждении Концепции демографической политики Российской Федерации на период до 2025 года*, at <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/26299>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>26</sup> G.S. Becker, *A Treatise on the Family*, Cambridge 1981; T.P. Schulz, “A Preliminary Survey of Economic Analyses of Fertility”, *American Economic Review*, vol. 63(2) (1973), pp. 71-78; R. Willis, “A New Approach to the Economic Theory of Fertility Behavior”, *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 81 (1973), pp. S14-S64.

<sup>27</sup> А.Ф. Валидова, “Влияние «материнского капитала» на рождаемость по данным российских обследований домохозяйств”, in *Демографическая и семейная политика в контексте целей устойчивого развития: сборник статей IX Уральского демографического форума*, в 2-х томах, Том I, Екатеринбург 2018, pp. 507-509.



What finally justified Validova's cautiousness and once again confirmed the regularities indicated by the former demographic policy theorists were the levels of the natural growth rate after 2015, the last (and the best) of good years, when it reached +0.3 people per 1000 citizens. Since then the level of natural growth has been decreasing again reaching -0.01 in 2016, -0.9 in 2017, -1.6 in 2018, -2.2 in 2019 and 2020.<sup>28</sup> This new, negative tendency could be explained by many factors, but one thing is beyond doubt: the downward trend could not be stopped permanently. Thus, there was an incentive for further efforts to secure the "recruiting base" for the future.

It must be admitted, however, that one of the parameters of Russia's demographic development has undoubtedly improved. It is the average life expectancy. As it turned out, at least in terms of trends until 2021, the assumptions of the *Concept of Demographic Development* have been achieved and very decently. According to Macrotrends the dynamics of life expectancy in Russia was as follows:

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
67.14	67.77	68.39	69.02	69.64	70.27	70.67	71.08	71.48	71.89	72.29	72.43	72.57	72.70	72.84

Source: Macrotrends<sup>29</sup>

This tendency was reflected not only in a steady material trend in Russia's demographics but soon became a more important point of interest among lawmakers.

## THE NATIONAL PROJECT "DEMOGRAPHY"

The new offensive began in 2018 when Putin called the low birth rate a national problem again and, issuing the Decree No. 204 of May 7, 2018, instructed to develop a more efficient program that should improve the demographic situation in the country.<sup>30</sup> Recognizing serious problems in the functioning of the state's "soft" sectors, in 2019 the Russian government adopted for implementation some projects that provide guidelines for the authorities subject to the prime minister's powers (the militarized ministries and the ministry of foreign affairs are officially part of the government, but they are subordinate to the President). In 2021, the following projects were under implementation: Demography, Healthcare, Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Education, Culture, Safe High-Quality Roads, Housing and Urban Environment, Ecology, Science and

<sup>28</sup> Статистика и показатели, *Рождаемость по данным Росстат*, at <https://rosinfostat.ru/rozhdacemost/>, 11 October 2021; Statdata, *Прирост/убыль населения России на 2020*, at <http://www.statdata.ru/prirost-naseleniya-rossii>, 11 October 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Macrotrends, *Russia Life Expectancy 1950-2022*, at <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/RUS/russia/life-expectancy>, 21 October 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 07.05.2018 г. № 204 *О национальных целях и стратегических задачах развития Российской Федерации на период до 2024 года*, at <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/43027>, 14 October 2021.

Universities, Small and Medium Enterprises, Digital Economy, Labor Productivity, International Cooperation and Export, Comprehensive Plan for Modernization and Expansion of the Main Way Infrastructure.<sup>31</sup>

“Demography”, which is No 1 on the list, includes 5 federal projects (FP):

“Financial support of families at the birth of children”,<sup>32</sup>

“Promotion of Employment”,<sup>33</sup>

“The Older Generation”,<sup>34</sup>

“The Health of the Nation”,<sup>35</sup>

“Sport as a Life Standard.”<sup>36</sup>

The shape and objectives of each of the projects are described by detailed “program passports” in the same way as in the case of the general program. It follows from the entries present in individual “passports” that the general sum allocated for the implementation of the project amounts to 3.5 trillion rubles. In the main passport of the project the list of the key objectives is provided; generally, the authors intend to:

- increase the “healthy life expectancy” of Russians to 67 years,
- reduce the mortality rate of the country’s pensioners from 38.1 per thousand in 2017 to 36.1 per thousand by 2024,
- raise the birth rate from 1.62 (2017) to 1.7 by 2024,
- increase the number of citizens who lead a healthy lifestyle and play sports from 36.8% in 2017 to 55% in 2024.

The program also includes more detailed tasks such as development and implementation of programs for financing families at the birth of children or creating conditions that will allow women with children to take up a permanent job. Another task is to achieve 100% availability of preschool education for children under the age of 3, create additional places in kindergartens in peripheral regions of the Russian Federation, implement aid programs and improve the living standards of pensioners, develop long-term care programs for disabled people and senior citizens, organize training programs

<sup>31</sup> Национальные проекты России, *Демография*, at <https://xn--80aaparmemchfmo7a3c9ehj.xn--p1ai/projects>, 12 October 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Минтруд, *Паспорт федерального проекта «Финансовая поддержка семей при рождении детей»*, at <https://mintrud.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Ministry-0-1171-src-1631193510.0461.pdf>, 12 October 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Минтруд, *Паспорт федерального проекта «Содействие занятости»*, at <https://mintrud.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Ministry-0-1172-src-1631193699.5099.pdf>, 14 October 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Минтруд, *Паспорт федерального проекта «Старшее поколение»*, at <https://mintrud.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Ministry-0-1173-src-1631197511.7038.pdf>, 14 October 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Минтруд, *Паспорт федерального проекта «Формирование системы мотивации граждан к здоровому образу жизни, включая здоровое питание и отказ от вредных привычек»*, at <https://mintrud.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Ministry-0-1174-src-1631197559.3506.pdf>, 14 October 2021.

<sup>36</sup> Минтруд, *Паспорт федерального проекта «Создание для всех категорий и групп населения условий для занятий физической культурой и спортом, массовым спортом, в том числе повышение уровня обеспеченности населения объектами спорта, а также подготовка спортивного резерва»*, at <https://mintrud.gov.ru/uploads/magic/ru-RU/Ministry-0-1175-src-1631197597.5877.pdf>, 14 October 2021.

and additional education for citizens of pre-retirement age, motivate Russians to lead a healthy lifestyle through media campaigns and engaging Russians in health promotion activities, create accessible conditions for physical education for citizens of all ages, provide Russia's regions with sports facilities.<sup>37</sup>

The project is predominantly aimed at providing material assistance to citizens with children. Within the framework of the program, it is planned to create favorable conditions for the life of a family and the birth of children, to minimize the consequences of a bad material situation of citizens. The project offers several aids to families with children. One is the monthly payments for the first and second child (so called "Putin's benefits"). Families whose income does not exceed 150% of minimum subsistence level established in the region of residence are entitled to this kind of assistance.

The project included the Maternal Capital into its structure. What seems interesting in the newest form of this aid is the fact that it is much more oriented on the improvement of the family's living conditions. If the family has a child born after January 1, 2018, even if he/she is the firstborn, one can take out a mortgage at a preferential rate of 6% per annum for the entire duration of the loan agreement. The reduced interest rate will be valid throughout the entire period of the agreement. The program also provides for the increase of the volume of in vitro fertilization. At the expense of the compulsory medical insurance program, about 570,000 families will be able to use the IVF procedure free of charge.

The complex demographic initiative is also aimed at the promotion of the employment of women. The Ministry of Labor by the program "Promotion of women's employment" (a part of the "Demography" project) proposes to train 150,000 nannies and create 9,000 preschool groups. Also, low-income families were supposed to get a babysitting service for free. At the same time, it was expected that by 2021 the shortage of preschool institutions would be completely eliminated. For this, 255,000 additional places were planned to be created for children under 3.<sup>38</sup>

Last but not least, the passport of the "Demography" program also allowed for the improvement of the quality of lives of senior citizens and people in the pre-retirement age thanks to the "Older generation" project. Its main tasks boil down to perfecting the quality and availability of medical care. However, the project also assumes the creation of so called "silver universities": literary clubs, music and sports sections that help senior citizens keep active.<sup>39</sup> One could ask whether a program like that is only a polite expression of sincere or theatrical sympathy toward the older generation. In fact the real reason for attention seems to be different. According to a Levada Analytical Center survey, *in the portrait of supporters of United Russia, the age group 55 and older*

<sup>37</sup> Правительство Российской Федерации, *Паспорт национального проекта «Демография»*, pp. 2 ff, at <http://static.government.ru/media/files/Z4OMjDgCaeohKWaA0psu6lCekd3hwx2m.pdf>, 24 October 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Национальные проекты России, *Демография*, at [https://xn--80aapampemcchfmo7a3c9ehj.xn--p1ai/projects/demografiya/pomoshch\\_semyam\\_pri\\_rozhdenii\\_detey](https://xn--80aapampemcchfmo7a3c9ehj.xn--p1ai/projects/demografiya/pomoshch_semyam_pri_rozhdenii_detey), 24 October 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Минтруд, *Проекты, Демография: Старшее поколение*, at [https://xn--80aapampemcchfmo7a3c9ehj.xn--p1ai/projects/demografiya/starshhee\\_pokolenie](https://xn--80aapampemcchfmo7a3c9ehj.xn--p1ai/projects/demografiya/starshhee_pokolenie), 24 October 2021.

*predominates (45%)*<sup>40</sup>. In fact, the electorate of the ruling party is older than any other in Russia, which explains the special concern about the future of this group. Keeping this electorate alive as long as possible is in the best interest of the ruling elite, and in particular of the Kremlin.

## THE PRO-LIFE MEASURES

One of the most obvious points of interest for any authoritarian government is the question of abortion. For some regimes, accepting abortion may be a way to gain social peace, while supporting it may reduce the size of an unwanted nation. The abortion ban may be motivated by the need to increase the population in order to gain advantage over other countries and create the prospect of increasing the size of the armed forces in the future. Democratic governments, or at least those that recognize the importance of human rights, may not allow abortion for the sake of protecting the inalienable right to life. This is the case in Poland and many Latin American countries. Often, however, this type of government assumes the right to abortion as a guarantee of a woman's freedom of choice, an extreme example of which is Japan. In general, democratic states avoid instrumentalizing the question of abortion finding it too personal to use it as a political device.

In this respect, Russia has so far resembled Japan or the countries of Western Europe. The legislation from the post-Stalinist USSR<sup>41</sup> was generally still applied, possibly for fear of social discontent. However, in the crucial 2007 an order of the Ministry of Health and Social Development described more precisely and strictly the particularities concerning the legality of abortion.<sup>42</sup>

In 2011 a new federal bill stated that termination of pregnancy at the request of a woman may be carried out at a gestational age of up to twelve weeks and not earlier than seven days from the moment a woman applies to a medical organization for artificial termination of pregnancy during the eighth to tenth week of pregnancy.<sup>43</sup> The penalty for illegal abortion is not imposed on the mother, but on the person performing the procedure with the amount of the penalties determined by the amendment

<sup>40</sup> Аналитический центр Юрия Левады, *Образ парламентских партий в общественном сознании*, 20 April 2021, at <https://www.levada.ru/2021/04/28/obraz-parlamentskih-partij-v-obshhestvennom-soznanii/>, 30 July 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Указ Президиума ВС СССР от 23.11.1955 *Об отмене запрещения аборт*, at <http://base.garant.ru/57499465/>, 27 October 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Министерство здравоохранения и социального развития Российской Федерации, Приказ от 3 декабря 2007 г. N 736: *Об утверждении перечня медицинских показаний для искусственного прерывания беременности* (в ред. Приказа Минздравсоцразвития РФ от 27.12.2011 N 1661н), at <https://normativ.kontur.ru/document?moduleId=1&documentId=193660>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>43</sup> Федеральный закон от 21.11.2011 N 323-ФЗ (ред. от 02.07.2021) *Об основах охраны здоровья граждан в Российской Федерации* (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.10.2021), Art. 56, at [http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_121895/5e5a1accfe61df97f5fcb684e12cab5fee05e25/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_121895/5e5a1accfe61df97f5fcb684e12cab5fee05e25/), 25 September 2021.

of July 21, 2014, which does not provide for imprisonment, but only a fine of up to 40,000 to 100,000 rubles.<sup>44</sup>

In September 2021, the Russian government accepted the final plan concerning the realization of the *Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2025*. The plan provides for *an increase in the proportion of women who underwent pre-abortion counseling in order to maintain pregnancy in the total number of women who applied for an abortion to 80 percent in 2025; 50% increase in the proportion of women who received social, legal and psychological assistance during pre-abortion counseling, allowing them to maintain a pregnancy*.<sup>45</sup> Although the expectations concerning the shape of pro-life legislation were sometimes based on alarming news (where the example of Poland became a point of reference)<sup>46</sup>, the real plan took the form of an inventory of positive actions to encourage pregnancy.

It would be a euphemism to say that the plan for implementing the *Concept of Demographic Development...* has a certain ideological component. In Art. 1 of the plan it is clearly stated that one of the measures of implementing the assumptions of the original document is conducting an information campaign aimed at popularization and promotion of “traditional family values”, at substantial support and protection of family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood. The government wanted to achieve genuine popularization and promotion of traditional family values and responsible parenting. It was expected that at least 2.5 million people annually use the resources of the Internet portal “I am a parent!” ([www.ya-roditel.ru](http://www.ya-roditel.ru)); at least 5 million people be annually involved in activities to promote traditional family values, increase the prestige of the family and responsible parenting; at least 80 constituent entities of the Russian Federation annually hold regional events within the framework of the All-Russian competition “Family of the Year.”

## THE RESULTS

Assessment of the practical results of long-term demographic policy is always a difficult task, because it must take into account hardly intelligible aspects and black swans whose occurrence is impossible to predict. Nevertheless, hard data is of the greatest importance as it gives the most certain picture of the situation. The only problem may

<sup>44</sup> Федеральный закон от 21.07.2014 N 243-ФЗ О внесении изменений в Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях и статью 56 Федерального закона *Об основах охраны здоровья граждан в Российской Федерации*, Art. 1 1) 1, at [http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_165845/3d0cac60971a511280cbba229d9b6329c07731f7/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_165845/3d0cac60971a511280cbba229d9b6329c07731f7/), 23 September 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Правительство Российской Федерации, Распоряжение от 16 сентября 2021 г. № 2580-р: *План мероприятий по реализации в 2021-2025 годах Концепции демографической политики Российской Федерации на период до 2025 года*, Art. 24, at <http://static.government.ru/media/files/QFHN57LF3pa7KdeiThGuxg90XpAnvYdh.pdf>, 17 September 2021.

<sup>46</sup> See: Н. Чернова, «Сдохни, но роди», *Новая газета*, № 140, 18 декабря 2020, at <https://novaya-gazeta.ru/articles/2020/12/16/88400-nazyvaetsya-sdohni-no-rodii>, 25 October 2021.

be the reliability of the sources, including the methodology of data collection, which, however, is outside the scope of this study.

One of the most basic indicators of demographic success or failure is the number of births and deaths and its dynamics throughout a period, in which a policy was implemented. In spite of the fact that Russia experienced an optimistic period with positive natural growth (difference between births and deaths) in the years 2013-2016, the data concerning the following years turned out to be negative again.

In 1,000:

2013: 22.9

2014: 38.78

2015: 32.72

2016: 5.34

2017: -134.45

2018: -223.23

2019: -316.16

2020: -668.73<sup>47</sup>

According to Rosstat, the ratio of the natural growth of the population (per 1000) in June 2020 has been negative overall in the country in all months since Jan 2019 ranging from -9.5 in Aug 2019 to -63.0 in May 2020.<sup>48</sup> The following months appeared to be even more disastrous. The comparison between the data concerning July in 2019, 2020 and 2021 leaves no doubt about the tendency:

	Births (in thousands)	Deaths (in thousands)
2019:	140.7	151.6
2020:	130.7	181.5
2021:	124.7	215.3

Source: Федеральная служба государственной статистики, *Оперативные демографические показатели за июль 2021 года*, at <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/demograf-07.pdf>, 25 March 2022.

What turned out to be an important factor that could only be partially neutralized by conducting an appropriate health protection policy, and thus also demographics, was the

<sup>47</sup> Statista, *Natural Population Increase in Russia from 1990 to 2020*, at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1010200/natural-increase-in-russian-population/>, 29 October 2021. According to some forecasting studies, the population of Russia, despite the negative values of natural population growth rate (the annual difference between births and deaths), will gradually increase due to the high migration ratio. According to Countrymeters data, in 2021 the natural increase was -167,858 people, but the migration ratio of 227,703 balanced this decrease with an excess. This allowed the authors of the website to estimate the population growth in Russia in 2022 at 59,870 people. These predictions, however, had to face difficulties in estimating these numbers due to a certain decrease in the population caused by the war in Ukraine, when after a month of war tens of thousands of Russians left for Armenia and other destinations that had not yet been closed to them. See: Countrymeters, *Население России*, at [https://countrymeters.info/ru/Russian\\_Federation#population\\_2022](https://countrymeters.info/ru/Russian_Federation#population_2022), 25 March 2022.

<sup>48</sup> Федеральная служба государственной статистики, *Оперативные демографические показатели за январь – июль 2020 года*, slide 3, at [https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/BgjLrP31/demogr\\_01-06.pdf](https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/BgjLrP31/demogr_01-06.pdf), 29 October 2021.

coronavirus pandemic initiated by the events in Chinese Wuhan in 2019. Regardless of the overall modest results of Russia's demographic policy, the emergence of the coronavirus has made the plans of lawmakers and government experts come to naught. The scale of the problem can be seen in the comparison of data from September 2020 and September 2021 provided by Rosstat in October 2021. The number of deaths in Sep 2020 in the whole country amounted to "only" 5,438, while a year later it reached 39,638 cases, which was an increase of 728, 9% year on year. By the end of September 2021, Rosstat found nearly 300,000 deaths from Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic, the vast majority (about 88%) of which are deaths caused by viral exposure alone, without comorbid diseases.<sup>49</sup>

If this data is to be believed, how to explain such a serious increase in the death rate? Firstly, a significant proportion of the actual Covid-19 casualties might have been overlooked; the deaths could have been wrongly explained by other causes. Secondly, the paralysis of the health service, mainly in the provincial areas, may have prevented people suffering from other ailments from being properly provided with medical aid. Thirdly, one may also provide for the occurrence of other factors causing a significant number of deaths, such as deterioration in the quality of life or the aging of larger age groups. Although the general natural growth rate is a very basic indicator of the demographic situation in any country Russia's demographic policy was predominantly directed towards the growth of births. It was quite natural: the reform of demographic policy aimed at a substantial reparation of the shrinking labor force as well as the reduction of the recruitment base for the armed forces in the coming decades. However, after the relative success after 2006 when the number of births grew every year, since the mid-2010s we can observe another downward trend:

2006:	1 479 637
2007:	1 610 122
2008:	1 713 947
2009:	1 767 687
2010:	1 788 948
2011:	1 796 629
2012:	1 902 084
2013:	1 895 822
2014:	1 947 301
2015:	1 944 136
2016:	1 893 256
2017:	1 689 884
2018:	1 599 316
2019:	1 484 517
2020:	1 435 750 <sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Федеральная служба государственной статистики, *Сведения о числе зарегистрированных умерших с установленным диагнозом коронавирусной инфекции за сентябрь 2021 года*, at [https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/edn09\\_2021.htm](https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/edn09_2021.htm), 29 October 2021.

<sup>50</sup> World Table, *Таблица рождаемости по годам (Россия)*, at <https://worldtable.info/gosudarstvo/tablica-rozhdaemosti-po-godam-rossija.html>, 29 October 2021. Comp. Statista, *Crude Birth rate*

As it has already been mentioned (with reference to Macrotrends data), what should be considered as an obvious achievement was the growing life expectancy in the 2010-2020 decade.<sup>51</sup> This parameter, although being a symptom of bettering living standards, when confronted with the collapsing birth rate leads to a troublesome challenge for many of today's (predominantly well-off) societies: their continual aging. Within the decade in question the share of senior citizens in Russia went up from 13.11% to 15.51%.<sup>52</sup>

As Valentina Gorbunova correctly states, population aging trends have a number of negative consequences for the socio-economic development of the country as a whole. One can list such factors as an increase in budgetary expenditures for financing social programs and constitutional obligations in the field of pension insurance, medical and social services for elderly citizens; changes in the structure of the employment and unemployment market, an increase in the share of the oldest part of the population, including the growing group of people in post-retirement age, in the structure of employment; changes in consumer demand for goods and services for elderly citizens, the development of new types of goods and social services; the need to form a social infrastructure focused on meeting the needs of elderly citizens. So far, however, the state has not been coping very well with the growing problem. It is enough to take into account the fact that while in 2005 it had 1,390 nursing homes for the elderly, in 2017 only 1,307. At the same time, the number of residents increased from 235,000 to 283,000.<sup>53</sup> Aging societies, which usually fall deeper and deeper into the demographic trap, trying to make up for the losses usually resort to immigration, a medication that temporarily relieves the most acute pain, leaving, however, some side-effects. This cure has been effective in the case of Russia for a long time. Between 2000 and 2020 the migration rate has always been positive with the lowest official level in 2004 (41,275) and the highest in 2014 (299,990). What could always be expected (actually with no satisfaction) is the fact that the migration was nearly always directed toward cities whereas the rural areas have always had a negative balance (at best it was -7,000).<sup>54</sup>

According to the operational records for January-December 2020, the trend of population growth due to migration continues in Russia, although the migration growth decreased by 63% compared to similar data for 2019 and was able to compensate for the increased natural population decline by only 15%.<sup>55</sup> Generally, however, the migration

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*in Russia from 1840 to 2020*, at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1038013/crude-birth-rate-russia-1840-2020/>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>51</sup> Сomp. Росинфостат, *Продолжительность жизни по данным Росстат*, at <https://rosinfostat.ru/prodolzhitelnost-zhizni/#i-3>, 24 October 2021.

<sup>52</sup> Statista, *Russia: Age Distribution from 2010 to 2020*, at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271344/age-distribution-in-russia/>, 24 October 2021.

<sup>53</sup> В.В. Горбунова, "Старение населения и его влияние на социально-экономическое развитие современного российского общества", *Научное обозрение*, № 1 (2019), p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Статистика и показатели, *Статистика миграции по данным Росстат*, at <https://rosinfostat.ru/migratsia/>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>55</sup> Е. Щербакова, *Миграция в России, предварительные итоги 2020 года*, at <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2021/0895/barom01.php>, 12 October 2021.



trends have steadily continued. The population of the Russian Federation was therefore constantly replenished by immigrants, the majority of whom slightly depleted the population of the post-Soviet Central Asian states. However, the coronavirus crisis and very low exchange rates of the Russian currency in the global financial market worsened the prospects of immigration flows to Russia and efforts to obtain Russian citizenship.

In order to get a more concrete picture of the relationship between the assumptions of the government or the presidential administration and the consequences of their policies, it is worth citing the example of plans concerning the Far Eastern Federal District. The region has long been of particular interest to central authorities for several reasons. One of them is the presence of raw material deposits, mainly hydrocarbons, which the Federation authorities are very interested in exporting to China and Japan. Another is certainly the fact that the region is adjacent to the main geopolitical rivals of the Russian Federation: China, the United States and Japan. It was a well-known fact that despite some efforts to further colonize this area, its population was systematically declining throughout three decades. This involuntarily intensified the impression that Russia has a strategically important region, but actually neglected and subject to Chinese colonization. In the *Concept of the Demographic Policy in the Far East for the Period up to 2025* the Far Eastern Federal District was expected to increase its population from 6.18 million in 2016 to 6.23 million in 2019. In reality, however, in 2018 the population of the region had been continually decreasing. On Nov 3, 2018 a presidential decree<sup>56</sup> shifted two subjects of the Federation: Buryatia and the Zabaykalsky Krai from the Siberian Federal District to the Russian Far East. Thus, the Far Eastern District succeeded on paper. In fact, however, the population continued to decline in each of the district entities, including those that were added. The intended goal has not been achieved. On the contrary, the downward trend was maintained peaking in 2020 when the Far Eastern District lost 45,150 inhabitants,<sup>57</sup> which at that time was about 0.56%. The organizational success of the project was also quite limited. Although the allocation of financial means is always the easiest task and its implementation is generally not questioned, the more challenging commitments are more problematic, the initiative of filling the preschool gap being an exemplary case. In 2019, 79 thousand new places were opened in nurseries for toddlers from two months to three years old. This is only 85% of the planned, indicated in the annual progress report on the implementation of the pilot state program "Development of Education", which was approved at the end of February 2019. As a result, the availability of preschool education for children under three years old was 87.4% instead of the planned 94%.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 3 ноября 2018 года *О внесении изменений в перечень федеральных округов утвержденный указом Президента Российской Федерации от 13 мая 2000 года*, Но 849, at <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201811040002>, 27 October 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Федеральная служба государственной статистики, *23110000100100200001 Общий прирост постоянного населения*, at <https://showdata.gks.ru/report/278934/>, 29 October 2021.

<sup>58</sup> А. Ивушкина, "Если не спешат расти: устранить дефицит мест до 2021 года не удастся", *Известия*, 18 March 18 2020, at <https://iz.ru/987982/anna-ivushkina/iasli-ne-speshat-rasti-us-tranit-deficit-mest-do-2021-goda-ne-udastia>, 25 October 2021.

## CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the Kremlin and the government's position concerning the demographic situation of Russia, one can easily realize that Russia's demographic policy is not only a collection of abstract ideas resulting from wishful thinking. The steps taken by the state before and after 2007 offer a set of useful aids to families and even to senior citizens. The content of the presidential addresses to the National Assembly and various documents may indirectly suggest that the main concern is about labor force and the military recruitment base, which became obvious in the situation of military interventions. However, the legal and organizational efforts usually look much better on paper than in reality.

Although in the first years after 2007 the authors of social pro-family programs could feel some satisfaction, after 2015 the demographic data show another wave of regression with no clear hope for recovery. In other words, the dynamics of birth rate and social pro-demographic legislation in force do not seem to correlate in the whole analyzed period. What seems to be more convincing is some correlation between birth rate and the general economic situation in the country since the positive demographic trends, especially the growth of the birth rate, were usually linked to the general economic prosperity and to the feeling of internal and geopolitical security. The birth rate unexpectedly began to collapse again after 2015, which might be connected with the Crimean crisis and the international sanctions put on Russia as a consequence. Some attempts to develop "family values" and to discourage women from abortion have not helped to limit the new regression of the birth rate so far.

What should be listed among the main demographic tendencies in Russia's demographic development until 2022 was a relatively low birth rate but growing life expectancy and a still positive net migration rate. This combination of these trends leads to the visible aging of Russia's population. We can also observe continually growing disproportions between the demographically privileged cities and dramatically shrinking rural areas, which reduces the natural traditional Russian demographic reservoir even more. It can be expected that the real size of the population in the biggest cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Ekaterinburg or Krasnodar and in the South-Western agricultural and touristic areas is higher than officially declared in statistics because of legal and illegal immigration both from "near abroad" – Central Asia or South Caucasus and from more problematic Russian regions. On the other hand, the scale of the extinction of the periphery and rural areas is likely to become cause for much more serious concern than one might expect from its presence in the media or in published research results. In other words, Russia is becoming a collection of vibrant and overpopulated monstrous centers surrounded more and more by civilizational vacuum. The positive migration rate and visible differences between the fertility rate of the ethnic groups traditionally professing Islam and the Slavic substrate foster the development of ethnic diversity, actually the Islamization of Russian largest urban centers. The workforce in Russia, as well as the military recruiting base, can rely less and less on Russian

ethnic substitution and thus become increasingly dependent on immigration, the tides of which are coming predominantly from Central Asian Muslim states. In the public discourse the significant growth of the Muslim share in Russia's population is not always a problematic and hidden issue only. In 2019 Ravil Gainutdin, the chairman of the Council of Muftis, openly noted that *according to experts, Russia's [Muslim] population will increase to 30 percent in a decade and a half*<sup>59</sup>.

Any sensible explanation of this state of affairs is not possible by pointing to one or two regularities, which the Russian expert community is also aware of. There is no doubt, however, that the current demographic policy, despite its ambitious goals and far-reaching measures, has not brought the expected results. The conclusions of a fundamental research project, whose results were published in 2021 by the Russian Academy of Sciences, are significant in this case. According to the editors of the study, Tamara Rostovskaya and Alexandra Shibunova, we have to do with unavoidable antinomy. As they claim, the problem of insufficient effectiveness of socio-demographic policies lies in the existing contradictions of interests of the social institutions involved in its implementation. The country's economy needs a worker (not burdened with children and family), as well as an active consumer. The value of personal freedom and a comfortable life is increasing among the citizens, but at the same time, a demand for an increase in the birth rate from the state is formed as a response to increasing depopulation.

As it has been concluded in the study, the main obstacles to the birth of the desired number of children, according to the respondents themselves, are primarily material difficulties and uncertainty about the future. The significance of individual reasons is somewhat different in the eyes of respondents of different ages. As far as the latest generation of young adults is concerned, it is the shortage of satisfactory jobs that is probably most significant for young respondents under the age of 30. However, being very busy at work interferes with having children at a young age.<sup>60</sup>

There are many approaches and theories providing arguments concerning the contemporary demographic situation of the state and the effectiveness of its demographic policy, which are also discussed in the Russian Federation. The alarmist tone is generally dominant, not only in the rhetoric of Russian politicians and specialists. The narrative similar to that of Putin and other important representatives of the Russian Federation's authorities is also noticeable in other countries, as exemplified by the clearly expressed concerns of Chinese officials. After years of "one-child policy" in force in the People's Republic of China, the indisputable position of the Middle Kingdom as the world leader in the area of demographic resources has been threatened. As Chen Hao, Xu Ruihui, Tang Tao, Gao Hong in their analysis in PBC Working Paper No. 2021/2 claim, China is going through worrying demographic processes. Its pension burden is increasing rapidly relative to the United States. Although in 2019 China's old-age dependency

<sup>59</sup> A. Avilov, "Russia Will Be One-Third Muslim in 15 Years, Chief Mufti Predicts", *The Moscow Times*, 5 March 2019, at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/03/05/russia-will-be-one-third-muslim-in-15-years-chief-mufti-predicts-a64706>, 25 October 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Т.К. Ростовская, А.А. Шабунова (eds.), *Демографическое...*, p. 206 ff.

ratio was 7 p. lower than in the US, it is expected that in 2050 the proportion will reverse. The age pyramid in China, still “correct” now, is going to be deformed because of the shrinking share of the youngest and middle-aged generation, which is visibly yielding to the thriving Silver Power. The authors are especially concerned about the emergence of India’s late-mover advantage and the fading dividend of China. As they realize, India’s economic growth has tended to approach China’s. Finally, they are afraid, India will surpass China in terms of the number of citizens about 2050. With the much less burdening old-age dependency ratio in India the changes will have a significant impact on the balance in labor force, definitely not in the favor of China.<sup>61</sup> Some concern, in spite of high-level political correctness leading to the outwardly expressed satisfaction with the country’s diversity, may be caused by the gradually changing ethnic structure of China, where in 2020 *compared with 2010, the population of the Han ethnic group grew by 4.93 percent, while that of the ethnic minorities increased by 10.26 percent, and the share of the ethnic minorities increased by 0.40 percentage points.*<sup>62</sup> The attitude to the demographic question is relatively similar in large post-totalitarian countries, with Russia being no exception. It generally boils down to the traditional concern about the size of the labor force and the recruitment reservoir for the military forces. What may underlie the social policies of several post-totalitarian states is Adolphe Landry’s theory, which assumes three stages (models) in the demographic development of nations. The first model is characterized by balancing the density of population by mortality; it is the time where sacrifice and the idea to prolong one’s own family’s development was predominant. Stage (model) 2, which was characteristic of 18<sup>th</sup> century developed European states, was the one where people began to regulate the number of their children (or, generally, the shape of their families). In that period people strove to a certain level of well-being for themselves and their families, correspondingly to the lifestyle of the social stratum to which they belonged. Finally, the third (contemporary) stage is conditioned by the trend towards higher living standards and the practice of birth control in marriage, which actually means that nowadays fertility has become the main factor determining the change in population. Landry’s book on the demographic revolution expresses a deep concern about a possible change in the balance of powers. In his opinion, the task of the state is to counteract negative demographic processes in order to maintain or strengthen the state’s power.<sup>63</sup>

Although such a position is justified in the reality of agrarian and industrial societies, the post-industrial approach to this issue may propose different (though not necessarily convincing) preferences. Such a surprising point of view is represented by the “pope of Russian demographers”, Aleksandr Vishnevsky, who is quite skeptical about

<sup>61</sup> 陈浩, 徐瑞慧, 唐滔, 高宏; 关于我国人口转型的认识和应对之策, “中国人民银行工作论文”, 2021/2, 2021年3月26日), p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> Ning Jizhe, *Main Data of the Seventh National Population Census News Release*, National Bureau of Statistics of China, at [http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202105/t20210510\\_1817185.html](http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202105/t20210510_1817185.html), 4 July 2021.

<sup>63</sup> M.A.A. Landry, *La révolution démographique. Études et essais sur les problèmes de la population*, Paris 1934.

the possibility to direct the demographic behavior of the society. The main idea that can be concluded from his book of 2019 is that the supposition that by participating in the life of society socialized individuals can behave as they please, is sociologically naive. The author of the handbook proceeds from the idea of society as a self-organizing system and interprets the demographic transition as a classic example of such self-organization, a spontaneous response of the system to a historically conditioned violation of the balance of fertility and mortality. He considers the threat of global depopulation mythical, but at the same time recognizes the seriousness of the problem of population decline for many post-transition countries. The only solution to this problem for them, as he believes, may be the reception of immigrants.

Vishnevsky does not share Landry's concern, resorting rather to the tradition of Claude Bernard, Walter Kennon, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Norbert Wiener, Max Weber or Talcott Parsons. He puts forward the idea of the systemic nature of the demographic transition, which ensures the restoration of the balance of fertility and mortality lost as a result of an unprecedented decrease in mortality. What might be surprising, he does not think that this leads to *a violation of this balance due to an unlimited decline in fertility, as it seems to many*.<sup>64</sup> In other words, Vishnevsky supports a very different, Spencerian empirical logic underlying the development of societies, where the artificial actions of the government may interfere with the natural evolution of the society, which should be given the freedom to feel what it needs most. The solution, as he believes, should be experimental, not theoretical.<sup>65</sup> Such an attitude, however, seems to be entirely unacceptable for the contemporary post-totalitarian authorities revering the anthill axiology.

Does the state's approach to demography have anything to do with its totalitarian past? Undoubtedly, one odium of the idea of the ubiquitous state is emperor Augustus' obsession with making the state self-reproducing forever. The authorities are supposed to ensure the survival of the state, so it should embrace with its omnipotence the decisions of family members about the future shape of this basic unit, mainly about the number of children. However, as it was primarily put into by Spencerian assumptions, the case study of Russia shows that limitless development is a utopian project; trying to create an always young and bold empire the decision makers will sooner or later crash into the wall of natural and unintelligible resistance.

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<sup>64</sup> А.Г. Вишнеvский, *Демографическая история и демографическая теория: Курс лекций*, Москва 2019.

<sup>65</sup> А.Г. Вишнеvский, "Демографический переход и проблема демографического саморегулирования", *Социологический журнал*, 2019, Том 25. № 4, p. 94.

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