

WILL CHINA'S NATIONAL SECURITY OBJECTIVES REMAIN COMPATIBLE WITH RECENT POPULATION TRENDS?

A Review Essay of a Book on Population Decline and Power Politics

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1. Introduction

Susan Yoshihara and Douglas A Sylva, editors, *Population Decline and the Remaking of Great Power Politics*, Potomac Books: Dulles, Virginia, 2012 (the Yoshihara and Sylva book).

The collection of essays in the Yoshihara and Sylva book combines human numbers with current thinking about the sources of international power for the principal purpose of convincing readers that the demographic decline we are now experiencing may be so severe as to cast doubt on the ability of some nations to meet their economic, social and national security objectives. The basic features of both the demography and the theory of international power have appeared in earlier publications. The value of this collection of essays lies mainly in the degree of astonishment it produced after putting the earlier work together with newly assembled facts from a well-selected set of nation-states.

This review essay focuses on China, but it makes use of the information pertaining to other countries in order to achieve informative comparisons. The “wall” upon which the demographic data are projected is that of national security. In its broadest meaning, this could include all things that contribute to the sense of security of the citizens of a given nation-state.¹ That could form the foundation, so the four pillars upon which a sense of security could be built would then consist of the important aspects of national survival: economic, cultural, political, and military. Of these, the last has been most prominent. In US law, for example:

National security is a corporate term covering both national defence and foreign relations of the US. It refers to the protection of a nation from attack or other danger by holding adequate armed forces and guarding state secrets. The term national security encompasses within it economic security, monetary security, energy security, environmental security, military security, political security and security of energy and natural resources. Specifically, national security means a circumstance that exists as a result of a military or defence advantage over any foreign nation or group of nations, or a friendly foreign relations position, or a defence position capable of successfully protesting hostile or destructive action.²

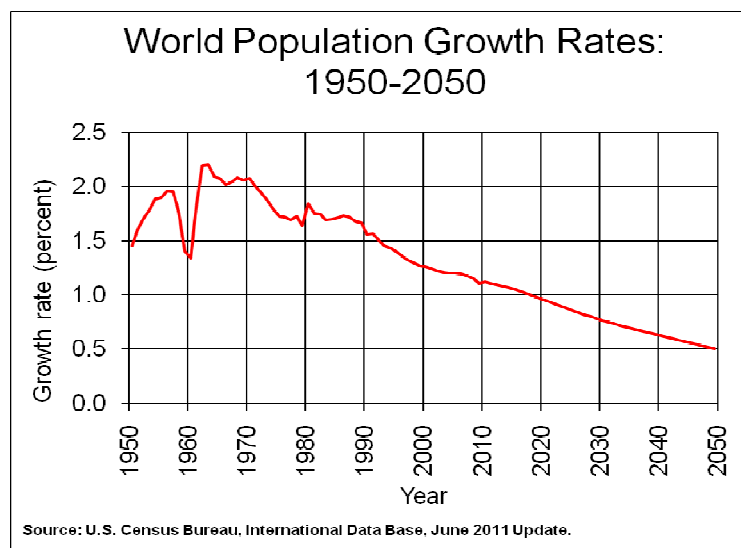
¹ A more precise definition in the same vein comes from Charles Maier: “National security is best described as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing.” It came from an unpublished paper for the MacArthur Fellowship Program, Social Science Research Council, 12 June 1990 and cited in Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_security.

² USLegal at <http://definitions.uslegal.com/n/national-security/>.

The same source quotes the court decision in *Cole v. Young*, 351 US536 (US 1956) as establishing the “definite and limited inclusion of only those activities that are directly concerned with the nation’s safety, as distinguished from the general welfare”. Other nation-states could adopt different definitions, and many have, but the unchanging concern of the US over to the principles of national security exceeded all others, and those principles soon became the *de facto* standard for describing a nation’s security apparatus. This is generally adhered to in the essays contained in the Yoshihara and Sylva book.

2. Global Demographic Trends

The rate of growth of world population reached a peak of 2.2 per cent per annum in 1963-64 (see the chart below), with a maximum in the annual population increment occurring in 1989-90.³ The annual increment declined thereafter, and while those increments will remain positive for the world as a whole, some nation-states are expected to experience a decline in their national population during the period to 2050. Though various factors influence these inter-country differences, the most common factor is the dramatic, but uneven, fall in fertility rates from an average of seven children per woman at the start of the 20th century to fewer than three at the end of the century.⁴



The 75 countries for which total fertility is below replacement level⁵ in 2005-2010 accounted for 47.5 per cent of the world population or approximately 3.2 billion people. Countries with fertility at or above replacement level accounted for 3.5 billion people or

³ US Bureau of Census, “Global Population Profile 2003”, p. 15. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/international/files/wp02/wp-02003.pdf>.

⁴ Susan Yoshihara and Douglas A Sylva, “Introduction”, Yoshihara and Sylva book, Kindle location 215-216 of 7187.

⁵ The total fertility rate is the average number of children born to a woman over her lifetime. Replacement fertility is the total fertility rate at which newborn girls would have an average of exactly one daughter over their lifetimes. Such an amount would require a total fertility rate of at least 2.0 (for one boy and one girl child on the average), but a rate of 2.1 is generally used to allow for average mortality rates.

52.5 per cent of the world population. It is expected that within the next decades, the number of countries with below-replacement fertility will nearly double to 132 in the 2045-2050 period. This means that, by mid-century, 7 billion people or 76.7 per cent of the world population will be living in these countries. In constructing a medium fertility scenario, it is assumed in the United Nations population projections that 182 countries will reach below-replacement fertility by 2095-2100. This implies that nearly 83 per cent of the world population will be living in a country where the average number of children per woman will be below the replacement level.⁶

3. Demographic Trends for China

The average number of children per woman in China has been below replacement level since the mid-1980s as a result of the one-child policy that was introduced in 1979 by Deng Xiaoping.⁷ It does not necessarily follow, however, that the fertility rates would rise significantly if the one-child policy were to be lifted or substantially modified. Chinese demographers have recently concluded:

With institutional supports from the Chinese government's active participation in and relentless propaganda on population control, rapid socioeconomic development and globalisation have brought about an ideational shift from resisting to embracing the "small family". At the national level, ideal family size has declined to around 1.7 children in 2006; the number is even lower in more developed areas where one child is now the dominant mode of ideal family size.⁸

On the basis of these projections, China will experience a decline in its population within the next 15 years, though demographers disagree as to the precise point in time when China's population will peak. The earliest official estimate is 2025. Subsequent estimates, using minor adjustments to the original estimate, show Chinese population falling off shortly after 2025. This is depicted in the chart on the following page. Other demographers have suggested that China's population has slowed faster than these estimates had assumed, so the peak may occur before 2025 (see note 57 in the Yoshihara-Sylva book).

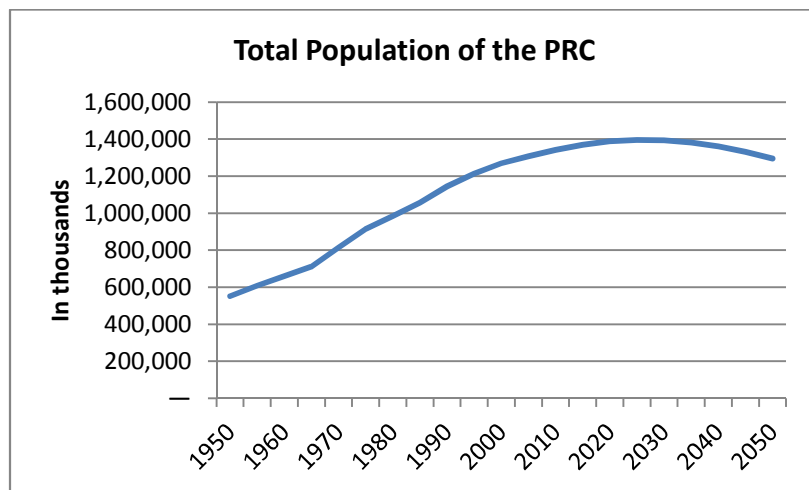
Slow population growth resulting from reductions in fertility leads to population ageing, thus producing populations where the proportion of older persons increases while that of younger persons decreases. In developed countries as a whole, the number of older persons has already surpassed the number of children (persons under age 15), "and by 2050 and 2100 the number of older persons in developed countries will be nearly twice the

⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, Volume 1: Comprehensive Tables", ST/ESA/SER.A/313, 2011, p. 11. Available at: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Documentation/pdf/WPP2010_Volume-I_Comprehensive-Tables.pdf

⁷ Gordon G Chang, "The Geopolitical Consequences of China's Demographic Turmoil", Chapter 8, the Yoshihara and Sylva book, Kindle location 2989 of 7187.

⁸ Yong Cai, "China's Below Replacement Fertility: Government Policy or Socioeconomic Development?" *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (September 2010), p.434. Available for purchase at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/padr.2010.36.issue-3/issuetoc>.

number of children.”⁹ Additionally, fertility is falling at the same time that life expectancy is rising, and “both changes are so deep and sustained as to be entirely new experiences in human history.”¹⁰



Source: Data from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2012). World Urbanisations Prospects: The 2011 Revision, CD-Rom Edition.

Life expectancy in China rose more slowly than most other similarly developing countries between 1900 and 2008 – only 5.1 years to 73.1.¹¹ China is nevertheless expected to catch up during the next few decades.¹² This means that the effects of falling fertility will be magnified, leaving China with an unusually large proportion of older people and a corresponding shortage of people in the normal working-age group. This is already starting to happen:¹³

At the end of 2011, the national population in the age group of 60 and over accounted for 184.99 million persons, occupied 13.7 percent of the total and rose by 0.47 percentage points over the end of the 2010. The national population in the age group of 65 and over accounted for 122.88 million persons, occupied 9.1 percent of the total and increased 0.25 percentage points. Due to the continued low level of fertility and the accelerated process of population ageing, the proportion of population in the working-age group 15-64 declined since 2002,

⁹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, op. cit. (note 6), p. xvi.

¹⁰ Susan Yoshihara and Douglas A Sylva, “Introduction”, the Yoshihara and Sylva book, Kindle location 187-189 of 7187. An analysis of the causal influences is available in “Nature and Causes of the Mortality Revolution”, Chapter 6 of Richard A. Easterlin, *The Growth Triumph: The Twenty-first Century in Historical Perspective*, University of Michigan Press, 1998.

¹¹ David Leonhardt, “Life Expectancy in China Rising Slowly, Despite Economic Surge”, *The New York Times*, 23 November 2010. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/business/global/24leonhardt.html?_r=1

¹² No author cited, “Life Expectancy of Chinese to Reach 74.5 Years by 2015: Document”, English.news.cn, 11 June 2012. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-06/11/c_131645256.htm.

¹³ National Bureau of Statistics of China, “China’s Total Population and Structural Changes in 2011”, 20 January 2012. Available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/was40/gjtj_en_detail.jsp?searchword=fertility&channelid=9528&record=3. Minor changes to the quoted text were made in the last two sentences.

reaching 74.4 percent in 2011, which represents a drop of 0.10 percentage points over the previous year. Although there will be slight fluctuations in the next few years, the labour supply issues need to [be given] more attention.

At the beginning of this decade, older people living in urban China had an average of three grown children to share the burden of their care; by 2025, they will have just 1.3.¹⁴ Other estimates, based on an assumption that future fertility rates will increase less substantially, show that by 2050 there may be as few as two working-age citizens available to support each retiree.¹⁵

In any event, this group [of working citizens] will shrink rapidly. The working-age population will fall from about 995.8 million people in 2015 to 789.0 million in 2050 according to UN statistics. The proportion of working-age Chinese has already peaked at 72 percent in 2010 and is in seemingly irreversible decline. The start of that decline marks the end of China's "demographic dividend," a bulge in the percentage of the population in the workforce. The country's dependency ratio – the ratio of children and the elderly to the working-age population – started moving in the wrong direction in 2010, a reversal of a positive trend beginning in 1968. The demographic dividend has now become the "demographic tax." Cai [Fang] thinks the ending of the dividend is the greatest threat to China's economic growth, and the prominent demographer may be right. The dividend, for one thing, helps explain how China's share of the global economy could grow so rapidly while its percentage of global population shrank.¹⁶

Due to the decline in fertility and the rising life expectancy, one worker may end up supporting two parents and four grandparents. Other nations face similar problems, but many of them, such as Japan, are well off.¹⁷ China seems certain to grow old before it becomes rich.¹⁸

4. The Potential Impact of China's Population Trends

A convenient framework for an impact analysis of projected population trends¹⁹ is based upon the academic literature that emerged from Hans Morgenthau's 1948 book entitled *Politics Among Nations*. He suggested that the elements of national power should include the following attributes: geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale and the quality of

¹⁴ Phillip Longman, "The Geopolitical Implications of Global Ageing", Chapter 1, the Yoshihara and Sylva book, Kindle location 596-597 of 7187.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 737-738 of 7187.

¹⁶ Gordon G Chang, *op. cit.* (footnote 7) Kindle location 3225-3236 of 7187.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 3248-3258 of 7187.

¹⁸ One of the first uses of this expression, though in a different order (*will China become rich before it becomes old*) was Richard Jackson and Neil Howe in "The Greying of the Middle Kingdom", Centre for Strategic and International Studies, April 2004. Available at: <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/grayingkingdom.pdf>.

¹⁹ This and the following two paragraphs draw information from a short article by the RAND Corporation entitled "The Evolving View of Population as a National Security Variable", 19 October 2010. It is available at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1088/MR1088.chap2.html.

government.²⁰ This was essentially a *static view* since it involved the analysis of the power acquired by a nation-state in relation to its relatively fixed amounts of the specified attributes at a given point in time.

During the 1980s and 1990s, greater emphasis was placed on the way population change influenced the other factors that are relevant to national security and to the occurrence of armed conflict. This is sometimes referred to as the *dynamic* paradigm of population and national security since it specifies *changes* in population trends as both catalysts and shapers of political instability and armed conflict. This approach fitted in with the post-Cold-War era and allowed various scenarios to be constructed in relation to possible replacements of the bi-polar worldview of the US-USSR rivalry. This is the approach that is followed, sometimes in different degrees, with the essays in the Yoshihara and Sylva book.²¹

In assessing the potential impact of population trends on China's national security, we begin by observing the impact that declining fertility, combined with longer life expectancy, has had on nation-states that experienced these trends before China. This includes the Russian Federation and Japan.

4.1 The Russian Federation

The population decline for China is likely to be less than that which is now being experienced by the Russian Federation, but the nature of this experience is nevertheless informative, particularly in relation to past and present actions of the government to reverse the decline in the fertility rate, and the effect of this on the size and strength of the military.

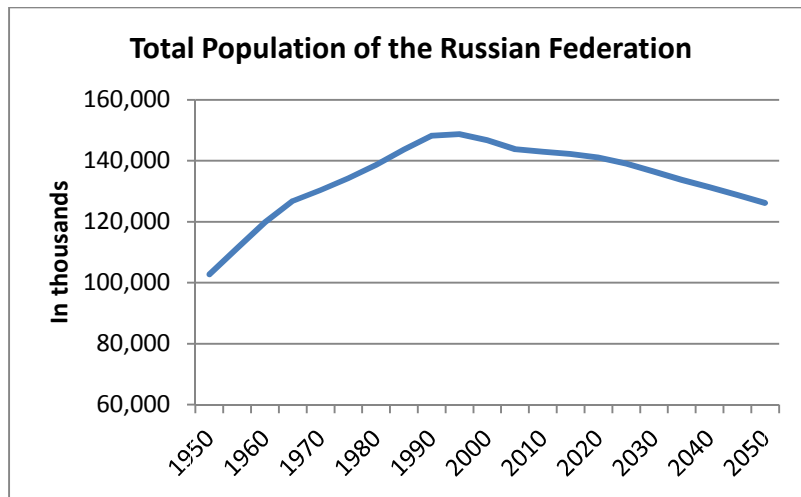
The total population of the Russian Federation peaked at 148.7 million in 1995 and has declined continuously since then (refer to chart on the next page). In addition to the sharp fall in the birth rate in about 1987, mortality rates rose rapidly at about the same time. As a result, the annual number of deaths in the Russian Federation exceeded the number of births in 1992.²² The second chart on the next page indicates that this occurred shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union.²³

²⁰ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 4th edition, New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1967, pp. 106-158.

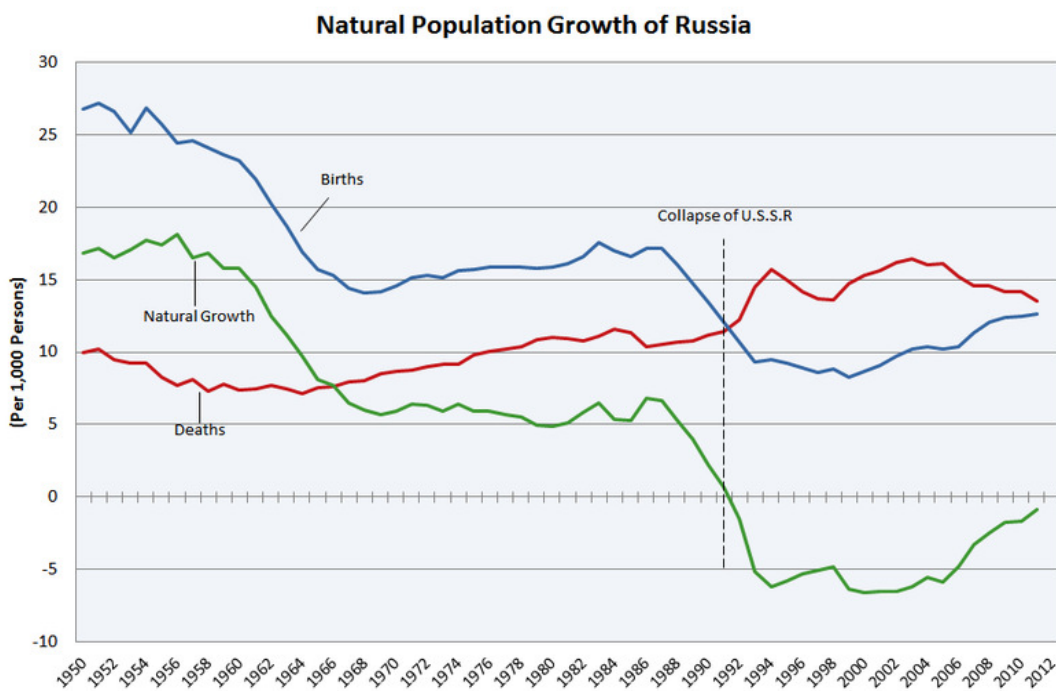
²¹ Another alternative to classical static approach to national power is referred to as the *human capital* paradigm of population, and it is based on the notion that the overall quality and level of skill embodied in a nation's labour force is the most important variable. This also includes labour market flexibility, since this is at least partly dependent upon the overall quality of workers in obtaining new levels of skill, as well as the nation-state's aptitude in applying and improving existing technology. This is examined in more detail in a review essay of a study by the McKinsey Global Institute that will be posted on the G20 page of this Internet site soon.

²² The birth rate is conventionally measured as the number of live births per 1,000 population. While it is correlated with the total fertility rate (see footnote 4 above), the numbers will differ. The population growth rate, as shown in the chart, is the number of live births less the number of deaths per 1,000 population.

²³ The Soviet Union collapsed into fifteen separate countries in December 1991. Further details are available from the Cold War Museum at: http://www.coldwar.org/articles/90s/fall_of_the_soviet_union.asp.



Source: Data from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2012). World Urbanisations Prospects: The 2011 Revision, CD-Rom Edition.



Source: The chart is reproduced from Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Natural_Population_Growth_of_Russia.PNG.

The changes in Russia’s population growth rates, as displayed in the chart above, require additional explanation. The birth rate accelerated in the second half of the 1960s, then fell sharply in the latter part of the 1980s and remained flat until 2006, at which point it again increased. Both of these upswings have been attributed to a government policy of increasing the birth rate through financial incentives and subsidies. This included cash grants for more children, extended maternity leave benefits and enhanced day-care

services.²⁴ The primary impact of this has been to shorten the interval between births, presumably in providing additional financial security for the added expenses and for the loss of income during the child-minding period.²⁵ This shift in parental age allows additional time to reach the desired or ideal family size but there is insufficient evidence at the present time to indicate that the incentives and subsidies brought about a change in desired or ideal number of children per family.²⁶

Perhaps of greater concern is the upward trend in the number of deaths per 1,000 population, as shown in the chart. This is especially dramatic among working-age men:

In 1992, there was a sharp increase in deaths from non-natural causes. By 1994, mortality rates for males between ages 15 and 64 were about twice as high as they had been in 1986. Rising alcoholism and related conditions have figured prominently in this trend. In the mid-1980s, an anti-alcohol campaign championed by Mikhail Gorbachev was responsible for a brief reversal of the mortality trend, but the increase resumed after the campaign was abandoned in the late 1980s.²⁷

Vladimir Putin has given both of these opposing trends a high priority, with a substantial increase in child benefits and a program to improve health care in Russia, as well as measures to reduce consumption of alcohol:

He [Putin] issued a decree endorsing a “Concept for Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation up to 2025,” which called for Russia’s population to stabilise at about 145 million people by 2025, with overall life expectancy at birth at 75 years (versus 67 then) and total fertility rates at 1.95, up 50 per cent from the years before the plan was enacted. After 2015, according to the plan, births would exceed deaths in Russia. At the same time that the Kremlin is trying to increase births, it is also implementing new public health measures to drive death rates down, including measures that make alcohol more expensive and harder to purchase.²⁸

While it is too early to assess the likelihood of success of this new demographic policy, even before it was announced a panel of experts gathered together by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Russia and Eurasia Program) agreed that expected growth rates in gross domestic product (see chart on the next page) may assist in improving the population

²⁴ Ben W Heineman Jr, “In Russia, A Demographic Crisis and Worries for Nation’s Future”, *The Atlantic*, 11 October 2011. Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/10/in-russia-a-demographic-crisis-and-worries-for-nations-future/246277/>.

²⁵ Julie DeVanzo and David Adamson, “Russia’s Demographic Crisis’: How Real Is It?” Rand Corporation Issue Papers, 28 September 2010. Available at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/issue_papers/IP162/index2.html.

²⁶ Lant Pritchett, “Desired Fertility and the Impact of Population Policies,” *Population and Development Review* Vol. 20, No. 1 (March 1994): 1– 55.

²⁷ Julie DeVanzo and David Adamson, *loc. cit.*, footnote 25.

²⁸ Nicholas Eberstadt, “Russia Toys with Death, *Financial Review*, 4 November 2011. Available at: http://www.afr.com/p/lifestyle/review/russia_toys_with_death_uG4M3VFyb4jqllesiNx10.

trends, thus bringing them in line with the average trend in the European Union.²⁹ A greater concern was expressed for the short-term effects on Russia's labour market and on the military.



In reference to the Russian military, the cohort of recruit-age Russians fell from 21 per cent of the population in 1950 to 14.4 per cent in 2010 and is expected to reach just 9.5 per cent by 2050.³⁰ This will not necessarily lead to a reduced supply of military personnel, but when combined with the other difficulties, as mentioned previously, it is leading to difficulties:

Sergey Stepashin, the then Comptroller General (Chief Auditor) of Russia, wrote that the predicted “reduction in the size of the population and the reduction of population density to a level three times below the world average will create the danger of weakening of Russia’s political, economic and military influence in the world.” In other words, this can be cut down to the simple formula: “the fewer the people, the less sovereignty.” If Stepashin is correct, Russia is a country with major ambitions and very low possibilities to realise these ambitions, but, simultaneously, in possession of a huge military arsenal. The elimination of deferments for full-time students may provide more quantity for the military, but the loss of human capital formation if they do not return to their studies after service could be a loss of quality for the society as a whole. The pro-natalist policies of Putin and Medvedev may well also draw down the number of women who might continue their education.³¹

4.2 Japan

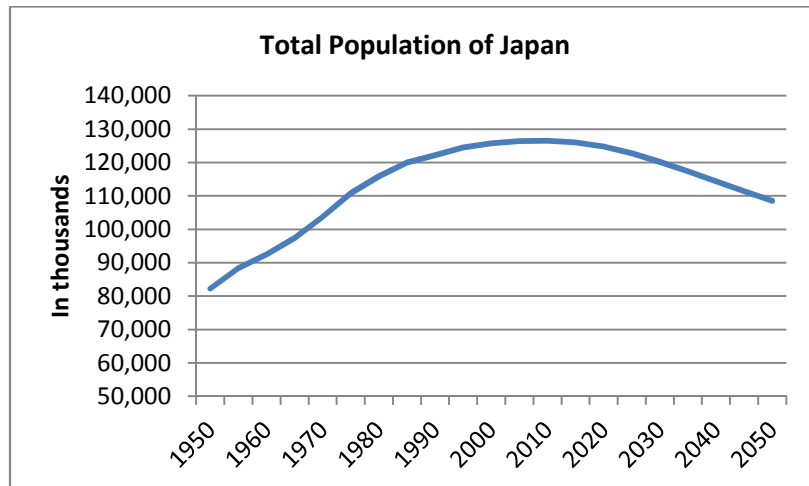
According to recent statistics, Japan tops the global list in all categories of ageing, fertility decline and population decline, the last of which is shown in the chart on the next page.

²⁹ The report stated that the demographic challenges remain significant but they should be manageable and that, while stable economic growth is not guaranteed, Russia’s economic future in the near term looks relatively bright. The way in which economic growth might influence demographics was not mentioned. Andrew C. Kuchins, *Alternative Futures for Russia to 2017*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, November 2007, from “Significant Points of Group Consensus and Disagreement”, pp. 2 and 3. Available at: http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/071214-russia_2017-web.pdf.

³⁰ Murray Feshbach, “Population and Health Constraints on the Russian Military”, Chapter 4, Yoshihara and Sylva book, Kindle location 1634-1640 of 7187.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 1776-1784 of 7187.

Demographers continue to treat that nation as a front-runner in the greying process by which the proportion of older people increases relative to those of younger people. Perhaps more importantly, the speed of population aging is expected to accelerate in the coming years. “Japan’s massive age wave is the result of a perfect demographic storm: plunging fertility, soaring life expectancy, and negligible net immigration.”³²



A key finding in the chapter on Japan (refer to footnote 32 below) is that “wrenching decisions await Japanese policymakers and defence planners as depopulation pressures begin to limit Tokyo’s strategic options in the decades to come.”³³ The National Defence Program Guideline states the broad outline for Japan’s defence priorities, including anticipated force levels in both qualitative and quantitative terms and indicated a commitment to recruit, cultivate, train and educate high quality personnel to meet the challenge of the diversification and internationalisation of Self-Defence Forces missions.³⁴

It is recognised that in developing defence priorities, account has been taken of the declining number of young people in Japan as a result of the low birth rate and fiscal conditions that are likely to remain unfavourable for some time in the future. As a result, the objectives for the near future include the following:

- To act in concert with Japan’s main ally, the United States, but to also engage in “multilayered security cooperation” with South Korea, Australia, NATO, India, China, Russia, and the United Nations.³⁵

³² Attributed to Richard Jackson and Neil Howe by Toshi Yoshihara, “The Setting Sun? Strategic Implications of Japan’s Demographic Transition”, Chapter 7 off the Yoshihara and Sylva book, Kindle location 2582 of 7187.

³³ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 2576 of 7187.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 2608-2614. Note that the report referred to is *Japan’s Visions for Future Security and Defence Capabilities in the New Era*, 2010, and is available at: http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/shin-ampoboueie2010/houkokusyo_e.pdf.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 2718 of 7187.

- To participate specifically in United Nations peace-keeping activities and other activities to deal with non-traditional security issues, such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and counter-piracy initiatives.³⁶

This is viewed as a redefinition of the National Defence Program's primary mission, and has been formulated with recognition that Japan will become increasingly vulnerable to faster-growing states that may be inclined to act more aggressively with a larger reservoir of manpower to overwhelm a smaller neighbour or to act pre-emptively in order to prevent a possible shift in the balance of power that is considered to be intolerable. This vulnerability is weighed against a risk aversion that can be expected to emerge from an "older electorate [that] may be temperamentally inclined towards conciliatory policies while smaller families may become reluctant to place their children in harm's way".³⁷

4.3 Implications for China

Following the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 officers in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) gained influence, and they have not passed up the opportunity to exercise their strength.³⁸ They have been pushing the country's foreign policies in more aggressive directions, getting the leadership to finally abandon the long-honoured "bide time and keep a low profile" philosophy of Deng Xiaoping.³⁹ The new military build-up in China, both in terms of personnel and equipment, may be difficult to maintain with a continuation of a China's current population policies. As stated by Gordon G Chang:

In a one-child nation, however, [a] son's death in combat means the extinction of the family line. That, for many parents in a society attaching great importance to continuing bloodlines, would be completely unacceptable. China's "little emperors" may or may not be selfish, spoiled, and self-indulgent— and therefore not likely to sacrifice themselves for the nation— but Chinese parents are surely more protective of the lives of their only sons than their counterparts in the Maoist era.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 2736 of 7187.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 2695-2697 of 7187.

³⁸ Greg Jaffe, "China Strengthens Military, Pentagon Report Says", *The Washington Post*, 19 May 2012. Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/china-strengthens-military-pentagon-report-says/2012/05/18/gIQAgobZU_story.html. Note that the Pentagon report indicates that even as China prepares for a wider variety of military operations, "preparing for contingencies in the Taiwan Strait remains the principal focus and driver of much of China's military investment." China is also investing in longer-range cargo aircraft and logistics capabilities that will allow it to perform missions beyond its territorial boundaries. Some of these missions, such as humanitarian relief and counter-piracy operations, are seen as positives by US officials. Additionally, modern short-range ballistic missiles and attack submarines "appear to be designed to keep back US forces in the unlikely event of a conflict." This suggests that the Pentagon is not yet concerned with global military ambitions from China. That nation's more assertive position goes well beyond "keeping a low profile" but it could be interpreted as extending, at the present time, only to national security through increased defensive capabilities.

³⁹ Gordon G Chang, *op. cit.* (footnote 7) Kindle location 1634-1640 of 7187.

But would autocratic Chinese leaders care what parents thought of military adventures abroad? Even nominally top-down political systems like China's must be responsive to public opinion—and China's may be more sensitive to popular attitudes than most democracies due to the extreme insecurity of Beijing's leaders. Consequently, mass-casualty wars started by China could easily become a thing of the past. The country is unlikely to become as "debellicized" as Western Europe in the next, say, two decades, but in China's demographic profile we can, even today, see the beginnings of the trend toward "warlessness."⁴⁰

In reference to the difficulties currently experienced by the Russian Federation in recruiting contract military personnel, and in having a sufficient pool of potentially healthy conscripts, China is likely to avoid these for the near future:

[T]he People's Liberation Army has begun to attract university graduates because there are so few opportunities available for them in other fields. These days, the highly educated in China are accepting positions as, among other things, domestic servants, nannies, and collectors of "night soil" — at one point in 2010, more than eleven hundred university graduates applied for eight jobs gathering excrement in prosperous Wenzhou, in Zhejiang Province. In these circumstances, who would not want to serve as a second lieutenant? In 2009, 130,000 college graduates joined the PLA. That was more than three times the number in the preceding year and sixty-five times more than in 2001. Increases in educational levels should help China's armed forces eventually deliver a more destructive punch, even if their numbers are smaller.⁴¹

China may not be the next Japan, but it is apparent that China is beginning to travel down the same path. This makes it a serious concern for the leaders of the People's Republic, who have always believed population and power go hand-in-hand.⁴² There is reason to believe that they are already taking it seriously despite giving little or no official recognition to the problem. China's one-child policy is likely to remain in place until China makes more progress in reducing greenhouse gases. A report issued by Xinhua in December 2009 stated that China's declining population growth converts into a reduction of 1.83 billion tons of carbon dioxide emission in per annum.⁴³

Chinese officials are likely to be monitoring Japan's progress in "multilayered security cooperation", but it is most unlikely that China will announce that it is engaged in such monitoring. Similarly, it is evident that both Russia and Japan are relying at least to some

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 3095-3104 of 7187. Note that the word "debellicized" can be attributed to British historian Sir Michael Howard in the context of "the unwillingness to consider war as a legitimate option under any circumstances."

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Kindle locations 3272-3273 of 7178. The mismatch of supply and demand for university graduates in China remains a worry, especially in view of the projected number of 7 million new graduates each year. Since the desire for higher education is culturally embedded in China, a balance can be achieved only by moving more rapidly into a high-technology and services oriented-economy. Refer to: <http://www.econmatters.com/2011/07/college-graduates-too-many-in-china-not.html>.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Kindle location 3333 of 7188.

⁴³ "China's Population Policy Helps Slow Global Warming, Says Official", Website of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America: <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/xw/t632992.htm>

extent on their current and future leadership roles in international organisations. As stated in the introduction to the Yoshihara and Sylva book:

The future prominence of these organisations is not guaranteed, however, especially since global ageing will reinforce the role of the sovereign state at their expense in the decades ahead. Europe has the most to lose if and when this happens. Its native population in relative decline due to low birth rates and immigration, Europe is constrained by the high price of social democracy. At the same time, Europe has based its security policy explicitly on United Nations' goals, and has aligned its military policy in a significant way toward peace-keeping in order to fulfil this aim. More important, Europe's idea of itself – and its projection of power – has included “civilian power” since the end of the World War II. Today, civilian power is a way to offset the dearth of soldiers and cost of hard power by replacing it with human rights and other normative aspects of soft power centred at international and European institutions.⁴⁴

It is not necessary for China to *follow* this lead, but the Chinese authorities should *observe* such a lead either to stake out an alternative direction or to achieve non-conflicting objectives.

5. The Book in Review

It was mentioned in the beginning paragraph of this review essay that the value of the Yoshihara and Sylva collection of essays lies mainly in the degree of astonishment it produced after putting the earlier work together with newly assembled facts from a well-selected set of nation-states. After discussing some of those earlier works and a few assembled facts we can now consider how this was achieved. None of the nine authors of the chapters in the Yoshihara and Sylva book would be identified specifically as demographers. Yet, they each have more than a “foot in that camp”. They clearly convey the major characteristic that places demographers in valued positions for discussions of national security. While they undoubtedly have prior viewpoints and initial positions based on conventional thought, they focus almost entirely on facts and then relate these facts to conventional thought. Other analysts sometimes tend to do it the reverse way and try to fit the facts to prior viewpoints.

A minor characteristic that also contributes to demographer's value is the unusually high degree of agreement among them. This is undoubtedly the result of utilising data for which the trends will change slowly between now and 2030. For example, all the women who will be in their childbearing years in 2030 have already been born, so we have a relatively solid base on which to construct scenarios with different birth rates. In contrast, we have no idea how many submarines China and the US will deploy in the Pacific in 2030 and what is more to the point, we have no way of even beginning to know.

Looking at it from the other side, demographers have a characteristic that makes them less than fully appealing to anyone other than fellow demographers, actuaries or statisticians:

⁴⁴ “Introduction”, Yoshihara and Sylva book, Kindle location 378-390 of 7187.

they generally deal with rather unexciting and sometimes boring sets of facts. It is largely for this reason that they do not always receive the attention they deserve. A variety of academic studies, government reports and white papers about defence strategies and national security appeared during the last several years. Although a discussion of these is beyond the scope of this review essay, it is convenient to point out what these studies generally missed by ignoring the “boring sets of facts”:

Barring [unlikely] scenarios, our analysis concludes that the greying of the great powers will bring about more turbulent relations in the coming decades. Population size is not a sufficient factor in measuring national power, but it is a necessary one. Global ageing will only accentuate this fact. Nor will nations be able to completely replace dwindling manpower with technological solutions. That said, shared technology can be a strategic leveller and can build trust among allies.⁴⁵

In terms of China’s likely ability to meet national security objectives Gordon G Chang’s view of the destabilising effect of demographics is based on the notion that ageing nations will face “closing windows” on their main foreign policy goals:

As the contraction of China’s working population restricts military manpower, China will have to consider dealing with manpower-intensive operations such as taking over Taiwan, Mongolia, and other disputed areas sooner rather than later. Chang demonstrates that China is already skirmishing with its neighbours, Russia and India, and that tensions are on the rise. Beijing encourages the continuous flow of immigrants into Russia, even though it makes Moscow uneasy. Seeing a window closing, China is using its temporarily growing population to virtually incorporate key contested areas by assimilation. For its part, Russia has chosen to ignore the incursions rather than allow them to interfere with tightening economic ties with China, but how long Moscow will look the other way is uncertain.⁴⁶

Contrary to much of the literature generated by the numerous international relations think-tanks, Chang sees little or no US-China conflict at the brinkmanship level. He stated that “[b]ecause the Chinese are obviously obsessed by population and believe the Americans are in terminal decline, they see the Indians as their long-term competitors.⁴⁷ It is impossible to know who is correct, but it is possible to make an assessment based upon the degree of completeness of the analysis and of the data presented. It would appear that at least some think-tank thoughts are tanking (with the Scottish usage implied here to mean “badly defeated”) in the absence of demographic input. That is best recommendation for the Yoshihara and Sylva book that this reviewer could proffer.

⁴⁵ Susan Yoshihara, “Conclusion: Population, Power and Purpose”, Yoshihara and Sylva book Kindle location 4078 of 7187. This implies that alliances that include nations that are at the forefront of military technology are likely to be valuable to all members of such alliances, and conversely, nations that are a long way from achieving that level of technology are unlikely to comprise a major threat for many years.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 3795 of 7187.

⁴⁷ Yoshihara and Sylva book, Kindle location 3282 of 7187.

ANNEX

LIST OF CHAPTERS IN THE YOSHIHARA AND SILVA BOOK

Foreword by Nicholas Eberstadt

Introduction by Susan Yoshihara and Douglas A Sylva

Part I: Prospects, Precedent and Principles

Chapter 1 – The Geopolitical Implication of Global Ageing by Phillip Longman

Chapter 2 – Strategic Effects of Demographic Shock: The Classical Precedent by James R Holmes

Chapter 3 – Population in the Study of Geopolitics by Francis P Sempa

Part II: The End of Western Consensus?

Chapter 4 – Population and Health Constraints on the Russian Military by Murray Feshbach

Chapter 5 – Europe’s Strategic Future and the Need for Large-Family Pronatalism: A Normative Study of Demographic Decline by Douglas A Sylva

Chapter 6 – America’s Demographic Exceptionalism and the Future of US Military Power by Susan Yoshihara

Part III: Turbulence in Asia’s Rise

Chapter 7 – The Setting Sun? Strategic Implications of Japan’s Demographic Transition by Toshi Yoshihara

Chapter 8 – The Geographic Consequences of China’s Demographic Turmoil by Gordon B Chang

Chapter 9 – India’s Demographic Trends and Implications for Asian Strategic Landscape by Lisa Curtis

Conclusion: Population, Power and Purpose by Susan Yoshihara