A nation’s power derives from its people. Since, all else being equal, more populous nations do not generally fear less populous nations and more productive peoples do not generally fear less productive peoples, systems of international relations, both ancient and modern, have favored nations that are simultaneously populous and productive. At present, the most populous nations of Asia grow increasingly productive, while many present and former great powers face economic challenges due to shrinking and aging populations. It is against this backdrop that demography, the scientific study of populations, has come to figure prominently in estimations of national power.

The science of demography changed significantly after the industrial revolution. When Thomas Malthus argued in 1798 that populations increase until wages approach subsistence and

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1 Contemporary demographers contemplating the great divide between the societies that followed the industrial revolution and those that preceded it discover, as it were, two humanities — one considerably freer and more powerful than the other. But this view of demography draws too bright a line between the present and the past. Prior to the industrial revolution there may have been little global change in variables of interest to contemporary demographers, but there was variation among regions and regimes. (On this point, see Clark, A Farewell to Alms, especially chap. 1, “Introduction: The Sixteen-Page Economic History of the World.”) As a result, a range of theorists, many perhaps more insightful even than Malthus, considered how humans might seek personal immortality (e.g., Plato, Symposium, 207c-209e) or divine favor (e.g., Genesis 1:28) through their children, and why certain forms of political life sustain themselves more easily than others. Aristotle attributed Sparta’s fall partly to its manpower shortage (Politics, 2.1270a29-34); Polybius credited the Roman republic’s expansive foreign conquests partly to its expansive population (The Histories, 1.64.1-2, 36.17); Augustus worried that Romans’ reluctance to have children under the empire imperiled the regime’s longevity (Tacitus, Annals 3.25). When Machiavelli urged readers of his Discourses to imitate the generosity (relative to Sparta, at least) of Rome’s immigration policy (Discourses on Livy, 1.6), and Rousseau claimed that “all other things equal, the government under which the citizens... populate and multiply, is without fail the best” (Social Contract, 3.9), they adapted ancient insights to modern politics. Precisely because these earlier modes of demography employed methods distinct from those of contemporary sociology that developed after the industrial revolution, they help us to distinguish the permanent problems of populations and politics from more ephemeral matters.
disease and famine check further growth, he accurately described the eighteenth and every preceding century. But the industrial revolution changed everything. Demographers have since discovered that as nations modernize, gains in population initially outpace gains in productivity. Medicine, sanitation, and nutrition act as modernity’s shock troops, extending life expectancy and reducing infant mortality. But as these societies develop further, especially as their populations leave the countryside for the city, birthrates fall – often precipitously. A modernizing nation’s population becomes favorably unbalanced as the last large cohort passes through its working years, and then less favorably distributed as that same generation enters old age. Demographers say that nations enjoy a “demographic dividend” during the first, favorable period, and in the second period nations suffer a “demographic deficit.” This description of the demographic dimension of modernization, known as “demographic transition theory,” has stood up remarkably well for nearly a century. As Malthus stood to the pre-industrial world, demographic transition theorists stand to the industrial world.

Each of the transitions described by contemporary demographers – from the Malthusian world into the early modern world of the demographic dividend, then from demographic dividend to deficit – can be politically and socially wrenching, but the latter is more concerning for U.S. policymakers. The disproportionate number of working-age men and women during the demographic dividend period fuels economic growth. When economic growth slows as

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demographics become less favorable, formerly quiescent populations can grow restive; institutions that were stable in good times can become increasingly fragile; political leaders once content to bide their time may grow impatient. And thanks to generations of economic growth, these populations, institutions, and leaders command considerable resources for asserting their power. The transition from demographic dividend to deficit can thus contribute to international insecurity.

This paper will frame the questions facing U.S. policymakers as they consider the demographic profiles of the “BRICs,” a term coined by economist Jim O’Neill in 2001 to represent Brazil, Russia, India, and China, the nations that he believed would drive global growth. By 2012, he predicted, these nations would account for fourteen percent of global GDP – in the event, they accounted for twenty-one percent, and today the BRICs account for thirty percent of global GDP. Although economists attribute different proportions of this growth to demographic factors, each of these nations has benefitted from favorable ratios of workers to non-workers. In several cases, however, these demographic revels now are ending, with potentially significant consequences for U.S. foreign policy. Let us now survey each of these countries in turn and consider what questions their demographic profiles raise for U.S. policymakers.

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6 O’Neill predicted that the BRICs would account for 14.2% of nominal GDP and 27% of GDP at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). According to the International Monetary Fund’s data, Brazil, Russia, India, and China accounted for 21% of nominal GDP and 26% of GDP at PPP. Notice that O’Neill did not anticipate changes in nominal GDP as accurately as he did GDP at PPP.

7 As we shall see, Russia provides something of an exception to the “favorable demographics” rule among the BRICs. Russia’s falling life expectancy after its revolution, however, did have the morbid effect of constraining Russia’s “dependency ratio.”
Demography and the BRICs

U.S. foreign policy has traditionally attempted to maintain the predominance of the United States in the Western Hemisphere and a balance of power in the Eastern Hemisphere. The rise of the BRICs is relevant to both of these core interests. The magnitude and instability of Brazil’s growth relative to its neighbors is altering the strategic landscape of the Americas. The shifting fortunes of Russia, India, and China may challenge international stability and U.S. national security.

Latin America: The Rise (and Decline?) of Brazil

Latin America has recently transitioned to demographic deficit. In the early 1950s, Latin America’s population was expanding by 2.7% annually, more rapidly than any other region in the world, but today its growth has slowed to 1.1%, comparable to Asia (1.0%) and North America’s (0.9%) and considerably less than Africa’s (2.5%). In that same period, Latin American fertility has fallen dramatically – from six children per woman in the 1950s to just over two today – and urbanization has progressed rapidly. The percentage of the Latin American population that lives in cities is 79.5%, greater than in any other region except North America.

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9 The next-highest rates of growth in the period 1950-1955 were 2.2 in Oceania and 2.1 in Africa. In 2010-2015 the population of Asia grew at 1.1%; the population of North America grew at .9%; the population of Africa grew at 2.5%.

10 Seventy-nine percent of Latin America and the Caribbean’s population is urban, compared to 82% of North America’s. South America (the nations south of the Panama Canal) has 83% of its population living in cities, greater than any sub-region except Australia (89%). The shock of urbanization, however, has not been as great as in China, since the population of Latin America and the Caribbean was started from a higher rate of urbanization. If one compares 1950 to 2014, for instance, Latin America and the Caribbean changed from 41% of population living in cities to eighty percent, whereas China changed from 12% to 55%. For these figures, see *UN World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision*. 
Until recently, Latin American policymakers were challenged by the size and growth of their populations; now, these same nations face a different set of challenges associated with caring for the old rather than the young.11

Given Brazil’s outsized power relative to its neighbors, the demographic challenges resulting from its aging population are of particular interest to U.S. policymakers.12 Brazil accounts for 39% of Latin America’s population, 49% of its GDP, and over 50% of its military spending.13 Brazil has started to translate its growing power into regional and global influence by promoting South American economic integration, deploying a large peacekeeping force to Haiti, and advocating greater inclusion of developing countries in international organizations.14

Brazil’s selection to host the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games attest to the

13 In 2014 Brazil’s population was 206.1 million; the population of Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole was 525.5 million (The World Bank, “Brazil,” 2015, http://data.worldbank.org/country/brazil, and “Latin America & Caribbean (developing only),” 2015, http://data.worldbank.org/region/LAC). Brazil’s share of the global economy has increased steadily since 1970, and today it is the seventh-largest economy in the world based on purchasing power parity (PPP). Among its immediate neighbors in South America Brazil looms larger still. Its economy is more than five times larger than the next-wealthiest nations (Argentina and Columbia), and its military spending is significantly greater as well. Brazil’s GDP was $2.3 trillion in 2014, compared to $540.2 billion in Argentina and $377.7 billion in Colombia (The World Bank, “Argentina,” 2015, http://data.worldbank.org/country/argentina, and “Columbia,” 2015, http://data.worldbank.org/country/columbia). For data on military spending see the database compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), http://milexdata.sipri.org/. According to SIPRI, Brazil spent $36.9 billion on its military in 2011, compared to $10.3 billion in Colombia and $5.4 billion in Chile.
14 Brazil, along with Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, established the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) in 1991; in 2008, Brazil joined its neighbors in establishing the Union of South American Nations (Unasur). On Brazil’s role in Haiti see in particular Peter Meyer, “Brazil-U.S. Relations” (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 9 February 2011), p. 13, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33456.pdf. Brazil has commanded the U.N. Stabilization Mission since 2004. Meyer reports that “some 10,000 Brazilian military personnel have rotated through the country since the start of [the mission], and with 2,200 officers and soldiers currently on the ground, Brazil is the largest peacekeeping contingent in Haiti.”
country’s weight on the international stage. However, as is the case in many Latin American nations, Brazil’s demographic tailwind is reversing to a headwind - The proportion of Brazilians over the age of sixty-five is growing rapidly, for instance, and this deficit transition may hinder Brazil’s development.

   In hand with these demographic difficulties, Brazil faces severe economic challenges. Brazil’s economy grew at a slow but steady annual rate of 0.8% between 1995 and 2002, under President Fernando Henrique Cordosa, and it then sped to 2.5% annual growth between 2003 and 2011 under Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.15 However, Brazil’s economic liberalization under Lula was not durable. The economy stagnated between 2011 and 2014; economists at the World Bank expect it to contract in 2015.16 The Brazilian government’s lavish spending on sporting events and a rash of corruption scandals have contributed to instability that few would have anticipated just a few years ago.

   Despite its economic downturn, Brazil remains the most powerful nation in Latin America and the fifth largest country in the world by land mass and population. Brazil has the potential to be a valuable economic and security partner for the United States, though its internal economic, political, and social struggles have weakened these bonds.17 Brazil also faces vast inequalities among ethnic groups and races, between genders, and between rural and urban populations. U.S.-Brazil relations have been further challenged by a range of recent events,

17 The 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy, for instance, “seek[s] to advance [the United States’] economic partnership with Brazil, as it works to preserve gains in reducing poverty and deliver the higher standards of public services expected by the middle class.” White House, National Security Strategy, May 2015, p. 27.
including Honduras’s 2009 constitutional crisis to Brazil’s negotiations with Iran at the G-15 Summit in 2010. The future of U.S. policy toward Brazil is unclear.

Questions facing U.S. policymakers include: How should the United States engage Brazil as it works to solidify a seat on the global stage? At what point, if any, might Brazil’s rise threaten U.S. security, which since the nineteenth century has relied on hegemony in the Americas? To what extent should Brazil’s looming demographic challenges, including widespread economic and social inequality, influence U.S. policy?

_Eurasia: Russia, India, China, and the Demographics of the “Rebalance to Asia”_18

Russia has played the most dramatic part in the world’s recent demographic history. Nowhere has demographic decline been as catastrophic; nowhere have demographics figured more prominently in national debates, than in Russia. As the Russian economy contracted by nearly two thirds in the 1990s, life expectancy fell from 69 to 65, while fertility collapsed from 2.1 (the “replacement rate”) to 1.3 births per woman. As a result, in the late 1990s the Russian population began to shrink.20 The Russian population is currently decreasing at a rate of 1.1%

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20 It is clear now that the Russian population peaked in the 1990s. From 100 million in 1950, Russian population climbed to 149 million in the early 1990s, then declined to 144 million as of this writing. The UN predicts that Russia’s population will shrink back to 100 million by 2100.
and according to UN projections, will continue to shrink for the remainder of the twenty-first century— even if Russian fertility revives.\footnote{If UN projections are correct, there will be thirty-seven million fewer Russians in 2100 than there were in 1990.}

The implications of such bleak projections have not been neglected by Russian policymakers. Both in his first (2000-2008) and most recent (2012-present) terms as President, Vladimir Putin has linked Russia’s demographic collapse to its national security. In his 2012 Presidential Address to the National Assembly, for instance, Putin claimed that unless Russia expanded its working age population, “in just a few decades, Russia will become a poor, hopelessly aged (in the literal sense of the word) country, unable to preserve its independence and even its territory.”\footnote{Putin, “Address to the Federal Assembly” (12 December 2012), \url{http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4739}.} The territory most under threat lies in Russia’s east, where depopulation has been particularly rapid, reserves of national resources are particularly robust, and a 2,600-mile border with a rising China worries Russia’s leaders.\footnote{Russian leaders have been quite candid in voicing worries about Chinese immigration to the Russian east. In August of 2012, for instance, Dmitry Medvedev spoke of “objective of defending our Far Eastern territory from an excessive expansion of citizen from neighboring countries”; Putin has spoken in similar terms. See, for instance, Agence France-Press, “Russia Fears Chinese Immigration Threatens Its Far East” (10 August 2012), \url{http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/246995/russia-fears-chinese-immigration-threatens-its-far-east}. For a report on Chinese agricultural migration into Russia, see Andrew Kramer, “Nation Rich in Land Draws Workers From One Rich in People,” \textit{New York Times} (10 September 2012), \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/11/business/global/in-russia-chinese-run-farms-solve-each-sides-needs.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0}. For an argument that both China and Russia have suffered from too little Chinese migration, see Maria Repnikova and Harley Balzer, \textit{Chinese Migration to Russia: Missed Opportunities} (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2009).}

Since the early 2000s the Russian state has developed a number of policy initiatives to address this problem, providing significant subsidies (known as “maternal capital”) to mothers with two or more children, and promoting the “repatriation” of ethnic and cultural Russians in the former Soviet states.\footnote{Putin’s pro-family policy is regionally focused. In the 2012 Presidential Address, Putin describes subsidies to regions whose “demographic situation is worse than the national average,” most of which are concentrated “in the Central, Northwestern, Volga, and Far Eastern federal districts.” In the same speech, Putin defines “compatriots” as “those who are culturally and spiritually close to Russia,” while stressing that “we will not allow the emergence of closed ethnic enclaves in Russia with their informal jurisdiction, existing outside the country’s common legal and cultural norms, and disdainfully disregarding the accepted standards, laws, and regulations.” In an earlier article on the theme, Putin claimed that “the primary criterion for admitting anyone for residence and employment in Russia is the applicant’s ability to embrace our culture and our values.” See “Russia Historically Multinational – Putin}
has credited these policies with stemming Russia’s demographic decline, but whether he is right to do so is a matter of considerable dispute. For example, in 2014 Putin applauded efforts to reverse Russia’s demographic trajectory as “effective” in a speech to Kremlin officials, but a 2015 study by the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA) casts doubt on Putin’s claim.

In view of Russia’s recent demographic and economic woes, its bold interventions in Eastern Europe and the Middle East warrant discussion. Some argue that these interventions are part of Putin’s strategy to reverse Russia’s economic downturn while promoting the nation’s security interests. Others argue that Russia’s recent intervention activities are acknowledgments of a deep and abiding weakness, due in no small measure to debilitating and difficult-to-reverse demographic trends. Just as a setting sun can emit a green flash before sinking under the horizon, so can a nation act most boldly as it declines in power relative to its neighbors.

Of the four BRICs, India’s demographic profile most resembles those of the poor countries of Africa and the Middle East. India is by far the most fertile of the BRICs, yet not


In 2012 Putin noted that in 2012 Russia’s birth rate exceeded the death rate “for the first time in our country’s recent history.” Putin’s critics counter that recent upsurges in Russian fertility may simply be echoes of a mini-baby boom in the early-1980s. Critics also note that immigration is unlikely to increase Russia’s population, since ethnic Russians wishing to repatriate may have already done so, while polls indicate far more young Russian would like to emigrate from Russia than ethnic Russians would like to immigrate to Russia. For a summary of these critiques of Putin’s policy, see Fred Weir, “Putin Vows to Halt Russia’s Population Plunge with Babies, Immigrants,” Christian Science Monitor (14 February 2012). Available on-line: http://www.csmonitor.com/World/2012/0214/Putin-vows-to-halt-Russia-s-population-plunge-with-babies-immigrants.


nearly as fertile now as it once was. Since 1950 India’s birthrate has fallen from six to just under three children per woman. Relative to its BRIC peers this decline has been gradual; as a result, India has enjoyed a long-standing demographic dividend with no severe shift on the horizon. While India’s rate of economic growth has not been as impressive as China’s, it enjoys more favorable demographics and considerably more untapped potential. Only twenty-nine percent of India’s population lives in cities, for instance, as compared to China’s forty-seven percent, and only 27% of India’s women are in the labor force, compare to 64% of China’s. The UN predicts that India will overtake China as the world’s most populous country in 2022, and on some accounts it could surpass the United States in GDP by 2050. These considerations make India of increasing strategic relevance to U.S. policymakers as they “pivot” to Asia. The logic for U.S.-Indian cooperation is strong: both are democracies stamped by a shared British heritage; both enjoy quasi-insular geographic positions. Indeed, the

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28 India’s total fertility rate (or number of children that the average woman can expect to have) is 2.5. Brazil’s is 1.8; China’s is 1.7; Russia’s is 1.6. Russia is currently experiencing depopulation, and the UN expects China to do the same soon – in 2030-2035. Brazil’s population, by contrast, is projected to decline relatively late (beginning in 2050-2055). The UN predicts that Indian fertility will not dip below replacement level (2.1) before 2030-2035. For a helpful analysis of Indian demographic data, see K.S. James, “India’s Demographic Change: Opportunities and Challenges,” Science 333 (29 July 2011): 576-80.

29 Since India’s fertility has been declining, the ratio of elderly dependents to the working-age population will grow as well; however, the more gradual the decline in fertility, the easier it is to accommodate this change. To get some sense of how India compares to the other BRICs, consider its “Old-Age Dependency Ratio” (the ratio of population over sixty-five to population 15-64). In 2015, this ratio was 8.6 for India; the UN projects it will be 19 in 2050. This is a significant increase of 219 percent. China, however, will change from 13.1 in 2015 to 39 in 2050 (+298%), and Brazil will change from 11.3 to 36.2 (+320%). Russia will change from 19.1 to 32.8 (+172%); the small magnitude of change has to do with the high starting point.

30 For data on urbanization, see the UN’s World Urbanization Prospects: The 2015 Revision, http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/.

only significant breach in India’s insularity, its low-lying northwestern border with Pakistan, ensures that India senses the threats of terrorism and nuclear proliferation at least as viscerally as the United States does. India’s proximity to and persistent conflicts with China also help to align its foreign policy priorities with those of U.S. policymakers.32

China’s rise to global prominence, beginning with Deng Xiaoping’s 1978 economic reforms, has been dramatic and seemingly inexorable. In the past thirty-five years the Chinese economy has grown at just under ten percent each year, with the result that national GDP is more than fifty times as large as it was then.33 At the turn of the century, China was projected to surpass U.S. GDP by 2050, but China is now estimated to do so before 2026. China’s dramatic economic growth has been aided by one of the strongest demographic tailwinds the world has seen, but this is about to change. Accompanying Deng’s economic reforms were a set of severe demographic policies. China’s “one child policy” accelerated a decline in fertility that had been underway since the early 1960s, when Chinese women had an average of six children. Today, China’s fertility rate stands below the replacement level at 1.55.34 Starting in 1970, the median age of China’s population has risen steadily from nineteen to thirty-six (at present), and it is projected to reach the mid-forties by the middle of the century. In 1970, four percent of China’s population was over sixty-five; in 2015, 8.8% are; in 2050, it is projected that twenty-five

33 For a helpful summary of recent Chinese economic history, see Wayne Morrison, “China’s Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States” (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 4 March 2013), http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33534.pdf. The data quoted is GDP at Purchasing Power Parity, between 1980 and 2012. If one considers GDP in constant 2012 US dollars, the Chinese economy is forty-seven times larger now than it was in 1978. Many economists suggest that using macroeconomic data at PPP is particularly important in the case of China, given the Chinese government’s involvement in setting Yuan-Dollar exchange rates.
34 China’s fertility rate of 1.55 applies to the years 2010-2015.
percent will be. In short, China is entering a demographic headwind as strong as the tailwind that supported its recent growth.\textsuperscript{35}

How well equipped is China to solve its mid-term and long-term demographic problems? While it would seem that Chinese leaders could address most of their nation’s looming demographic challenges simply by eliminating the one-child policy, this is not necessarily the panacea it appears to be.\textsuperscript{36} The generation currently reaching childbearing age have grown up in small families and expecting someday to have small families; it is not yet clear to what degree the one-child \textit{policy} has in fact become a one-child \textit{norm}, which would presumably be more difficult for the Chinese state to alter. Furthermore, some argue that China’s one-child policy has little effect on the changing demographics (i.e., an aging population), because China’s fertility rate is very similar to that in other countries with similar development but without a one-child policy.\textsuperscript{37}

Changes in fertility have accompanied rapid urbanization. Over the past thirty-five years, some 500 million Chinese have left the countryside for the city, and the United Nations projects that China’s cities will add another 270 million individuals by 2100.\textsuperscript{38} The scale of this

\textsuperscript{35} On Chinese demographics, see in particular: Xizhe Peng, “China’s Demographic History and Future Challenges,” \textit{Science} 333 (29 July 2011): 581-7. The potential strategic implications of China’s demographic developments have been widely noted. Feng Wang of the Brookings Institution has written a number of analytical pieces on this theme; see for instance, “Wakeup Call in Beijing, From Census Takers,” Brookings (4 May 2011), \url{http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2011/05/04-beijing-census-wang}. Also see “Demography: China’s Achilles Heel,” \textit{The Economist} (21 April 2012), \url{http://www.economist.com/node/21553056}.

\textsuperscript{36} For the latest (as of this writing) on China’s relaxation of its one-child policy, see “Tales of the Unexpected: China has relaxed its one-child policy. Yet parents are not rushing to have a second.” \textit{The Economist} (July 11, 2015), \url{http://www.economist.com/news/china/21657416-china-has-relaxed-its-one-child-policy-yet-parents-are-not-rushing-have-second-tales}.


\textsuperscript{38} For these data, see the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, \textit{World Population Prospects: The 2014 Revision} and \textit{World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision}. Note that these data do not distinguish between Chinese who migrate from the countryside to the city and Chinese born in cities. In January 2012 it was widely reported in U.S. media that China’s urban population had surpassed its rural population for the first time in China’s history (see for instance Jaime FlorCruz, “China’s Urban Population Outnumbers Rural Dwellers for First Time,” \textit{CNN.com} (17 January 2012)).
migration has strained Chinese municipal and national governments’ ability to provide adequate social services; it has taxed China’s environment, raising concerns over air, water, and food safety; and it has proven socially disruptive, as the experiences of younger generations living in cities differ radically from the experiences of their parents and grandparents remaining in rural areas. Can the single party that governs China craft innovative policies that sustain economic growth while preserving political and social stability?

**Demographics and U.S. Foreign Policy**

Brazil, Russia, India, and China will be of increasing concern to U.S. policymakers, due partly to demographic shifts among the BRICs. Among the questions U.S. policymakers should consider are: Will slowing economic growth make China any less of a threat to U.S. interests in the region? Do recent increases in Chinese defense spending and international provocations signify weakness or strength? How are demographic trends likely to influence the roles China’s neighbors play in U.S. foreign policy? Russia’s long land borders with China and a number of other nations might well heighten Russia’s insecurity rather than its confidence. Might the “dying bear” (in demographer Nicholas Eberstadt’s words) be one of the United States’ greatest assets in its attempt to contain a rising dragon? Moving from China’s north to its west, U.S. policymakers might consider how to facilitate increased strategic cooperation with India. To what degree can U.S. policymakers assist Indian leaders as they confront rapid urbanization, gross socio-economic inequality, fertility imbalances between India’s Islamic north and its Hindu south, and the need to accommodate to an aging (albeit gradually) population? Will India’s

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39 In addition to the social disruption of urbanization, economic growth itself produces profound disruptions. The doubling of Chinese GDP approximately every seven years (assuming 10% annual growth) leads to each generation growing up in radically different material circumstances.
political elite strengthen and expand the pro-market economic reforms of the early 1990s, or will the aftershocks of the global recession bring a return to the less market-oriented economic policies India adopted in the decades following independence? How should the United States’ desire for stability in Pakistan and a graceful exit from Afghanistan figure in its India policy?

To view U.S. foreign policy through the lens of demography requires that we view the United States itself, as well as its European partners, in the same light. The United States has long been something of a demographic outlier among industrialized nations, largely because of immigration. The Pew Center projects that immigrants to the United States between 2005 and 2011 will account for 82 percent of U.S. population growth by 2050; by that time, the United States will have become a “majority minority” nation. The aging of the U.S. population nevertheless presents a serious challenge to U.S. policymakers. In 1950 only eight percent of the U.S. population was older than 65; in 2015, 14.5% were; in 2050, twenty-four percent are projected to be. This increase in the number of elderly dependents will place considerable strain on Medicare and Social Security, as they are currently designed. And absent far-reaching

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40 U.S. and European fertility rates were similar in the 1970s, but since that time U.S. fertility has risen, while European fertility has continued to fall. Immigrants contribute significantly to fertility in both cases. In the United States, the average Hispanic woman had 2.82 children in 2004, while non-Hispanic whites had only 1.85; in Europe, the average Muslim woman had 2.2 children, while the average non-Muslim had 1.5 children. Hispanics represent a greater percentage of the US population than Muslims do of most European populations. See Nicholas Eberstadt, “Born in the USA: America’s Demographic Exceptionalism,” The American Interest (May/June 2007): 52-8. For data on the fertility of European Muslims, see the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “The Future of the Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030” (27 January 2011), http://www.pewforum.org/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-europe.aspx.


reforms to these domestic programs and to military procurement and personnel, the United States seems likely to enjoy fewer financial resources to support a robust foreign policy.\textsuperscript{43}

By contrast to the United States’ relatively favorable demographic profile, the depopulation of its European allies seems so firmly entrenched that even a radical increase in immigration is not likely to reverse it.\textsuperscript{44} With a median age of forty-five and more individuals over sixty-five than under fifteen, Europe is the world’s oldest region and is aging fast. European fertility has been below replacement since 1975, in 2015 standing at 1.6 children per woman, and is not expected to increase above replacement for the remainder of the century. As a result, the population of Europe is expected to shrink starting in 2020. In a number of European countries depopulation has already begun and is expected to accelerate.\textsuperscript{45} European governments have attempted to repair this yawning demographic deficit in a number of ways. Like Russia, European states have subsidized childbirth and promoted immigration. In a number of cases

\textsuperscript{43} U.S. policymakers could mitigate this increase (as Russia and European governments have attempted) by supporting childbirth or by increasing immigration. There is room for policy innovation in both areas. Compared to its industrialized peers, the United States has been remarkably unconcerned with promoting childbirth; aside from a modest tax credit U.S. parents receive little direct state subsidization. For comparative studies of national fertility policies, see Filip Mazurczak, “Averting a Demographic Nightmare in Russia and Eastern Europe” (2 June 2013), \textit{New Eastern Europe} (2 June 2013), http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/node/834; and Rachel Henneck, “Family Policy in the US, Japan, Germany, Italy and France: Parental Leave, Child Benefits/Family Allowances, Child Care, Marriage/Cohabitation, and Divorce,” \textit{Council on Contemporary Families} (May 2003), http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org/work-family/fampolicy.html. Robert Stein argues that the U.S. tax code can be made considerably more favorable towards childbirth than it is at present; see Stein, “Taxes and the Family,” \textit{National Affairs} (Winter 2010): 35-48, http://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/taxes-and-the-family.

\textsuperscript{44} Whether the ongoing (as of this writing) influx of migrants from the Middle East into Europe amounts to a radical change in immigration policy remains to be seen. It is worth noting, however, that although (as is commonly noted) refugee flows into Europe of the scale seen in 2014-2015 have not occurred since World War II, the number of accepted asylum applications does not amount to a large portion of host nation populations. An \textit{Economist} analysis notes that “the EU’s entire 2014 asylum influx accounted for just 0.03% of its population as a whole” (“Europe’s Migrant Acceptance Rates,” \textit{The Economist} (September 1, 2015), http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/09/daily-chart.

these policies seem to have succeeded. In France, for instance, generous state support of mothers through direct payments, mandatory maternity leaves, and public childcare, have generated what some call *le baby boom*: France’s highest fertility rates since the early 1970s.\(^\text{46}\) Meanwhile, immigration has reduced European population loss considerably, while providing opportunities to workers from Eastern Europe and North Africa. But these policies have also fallen short in important respects. As it did in the rest of Europe, the fertility level in France dipped below replacement level in 1975, but in the past five years (2010-2015) French fertility has neared replacement level of 2.1 at 2.00. And the benefits of immigration have been questioned. Critics point out that immigration of workers from Eastern Europe, eased considerably by these countries’ entry into the EU, has impeded these nations’ development. As young workers went west, fertility across Eastern Europe declined to a shocking 1.3 children per woman from 1995 to 2005, and it has hardly risen since that time.\(^\text{47}\) Immigration from North Africa and the Middle East, meanwhile, has generated a contentious debate over the cultural foundations of European states and whether Muslim immigrants in particular can (or should) become “European”; the refugee crisis of 2015 has already shown signs of heightening these tensions.\(^\text{48}\) Floating above all of these concerns is the still-uncertain fate of the European Union and the Euro. The

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\(^\text{47}\) Total fertility in Eastern Europe rose to 1.55 in 2010-2015.

European debt crisis of 2009 stemmed in part from member nations’ support for their aging populations. These populations are not getting any younger.\footnote{Future demographic developments are likely to strain the unity of Europe as the current power relations of member nations change significantly. If Eastern Europe continues to bleed workers to the West, for instance, these nations might replace the PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain) as the instigators of the next crisis – if, that is, the European Union survives the current crisis. And the disparate demographics of France and Germany portend a shift at the heart of the EU as well as its periphery. If current trends continue, France’s population will pass Germany’s in 2050; the demographic headwinds against German growth are stronger than those against France.}

The United States enjoys (relative) demographic vitality; nevertheless, the aging of its population will constrain its ability to project power. Meanwhile, demographic pressures, among other factors, limit the capacity of the United States’ partners in Europe, and they have sapped the strength of Japan just as the rise of China tempts the island nation to reconsider its postwar insulation. On the Eurasian continent, demographic developments shift the strategic landscape: weakening Russia, strengthening India, and making China’s future more uncertain than decades of steady economic growth would suggest.

**Conclusion: Demography and Decline**

Some demographic challenges solve themselves. To those anxious over the aging of the American population, for instance, a philosophical demographer might observe that someday baby boomers too shall pass. But not all demographic problems are so easily solved. Though Hobbes may have been right that the individual’s desire to preserve life is a passion to be reckoned on, his insight does not apply as neatly to groups of individuals. Linguists predict that nearly half the world’s languages will fall out of use over the course of the twenty-first century, a staggering rate of cultural loss in the face of which conventional modes of political analysis fall mute.\footnote{For a review of current thought on endangered languages, see John Noble Wilford, “World’s Language Dying Off Rapidly,” *New York Times* (18 September 2007), [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/18/world/18cnd-language.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/18/world/18cnd-language.html). National Geographic maintains a valuable website devoted to this theme. See “Disappearing Languages: Enduring...}
motion self-eradication of a culture? And how does cultural self-eradication relate to the national decline brought on by falling fertility? As we have seen, deaths exceeded births in Russia for much of the past decade, but this might plausibly be attributed to the passing trauma of regime change. In Japan, deaths first surpassed births in 2006 and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The UN projects that there will be 44 million fewer Japanese in 2100 than there are today — and this figure assumes that Japanese fertility will slowly ascend towards the replacement rate. Is this a sound assumption? Might nations resist their own mortality — by “natural causes,” at least — less strenuously than individuals do?

The philosophical demographer knows that nations and civilizations do not always die with a bang. Perhaps as individuals rise from childhood to vigorous self-sufficiency before declining into “second childishness,” so do nations rise, decline, and fall. Will the BRICs

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52 In 2015 Japan’s population was 127 million. For the first time since 1950, the population in Japan stopped increasing and started to decrease between 2010 and 2015, at a rate of 0.12%, and this decrease in population is expected to get faster. The UN lists Japan as one of eleven countries that are project to experience population decline between 2015 and 2050 of over 15%. Japan’s population is expected to go from 82 million in 1950, to 127 million in 2015, to 107 million in 2050, to 83 million in 2100. For these data, see U.N. World Population Prospects 2015 Revision (http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/Key_Findings_WPP_2015.pdf). For the “total fertility rate” assumptions driving these population projections, see U.N. World Population Prospects 2015 Revision, http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DVD/.

53 At present, so many nations have been caught up in economic globalization that it is no longer accurate to speak only of national transitions. The world is experiencing a demographic transition of its own. The global demographic transition began around 1900, when the world’s life expectancy started to increase — from thirty to forty-six in the first half of the twentieth century, to seventy-one in 2015. During the same period, infant mortality plummeted while global fertility hovered far above replacement, at about five children per woman. By the late 1960s global population was growing at over two percent each year, a pace which would lead it to double every thirty-five years. And then fertility fell. It has continued to fall from five children per woman in the 1950s to today’s global rate of 2.51 children per woman. If UN predictions hold true global fertility will decline further still, reaching the replacement rate sometime in the 2070s. Consider too the world’s old-age dependency ratio, a measure of the ratio of the old (over 65) to the working age (15-64). In 1965 the global old-age dependency ratio was 9; in 2015, it was 12.6; by 2050 it is projected to reach 25.2. For a present day analogy, 10 is approximately the old age dependency ratio of Central America (9.7); 26 is approximately the old age dependency ratio of present day Europe.
continue to rise? Which nations, powerful in the present, will decline and fall? The answers to these question depend in no small part on how well their leaders navigate the strong tides of demography.

(26.4); and 6 is approximately the old age dependency ratio of present day Africa (6.3). As the world enjoyed its “demographic dividend” the size of the global economy grew rapidly. In demographics, however, every dividend is followed by a deficit. And this prospect raises an important question: Will global growth continue as humanity enters into its dotage?
Recommended Readings

Berman, Ilan. 2015. “Moscow’s Baby Bust?” *Foreign Affairs* (July 8, 2015),


“Tales of the Unexpected: China has relaxed its one-child policy. Yet parents are not rushing to have a second.” *The Economist* (July 11, 2015),

