

# Multipolarity and Demography

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The world's population grew at unprecedented rates in the 20th century due to asynchronous changes in mortality and birth in the course of a global demographic transition. World population growth rates peaked in the 1960s, then gradually declined over the next three decades and this tendency is continuing. Nevertheless, there will be five to seven times more people in the world by the middle of the 21st century than at the beginning of the 20th century. The planet's population has never been evenly distributed, but the global demographic explosion has sharply increased this unevenness.

The main global challenge of the population explosion, which in turn gives rise to other challenges, is economics. This challenge stems from an enormous increase in needs due to the emergence of billions of new consumers and the growth in the average level of needs for each consumer. As a result of this rapid growth in global needs and attempts to respond to this growth with an adequate intensification of production in all its forms, including traditional ones, the imbalance between people's activity and the natural resources they use has acquired global dimensions.

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THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES  
OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC EXPLOSION

Economic and environmental problems can easily change into political or even military-political challenges in the modern world. Inasmuch as these challenges stem from the demographic situation, they may be caused by international or domestic reasons.

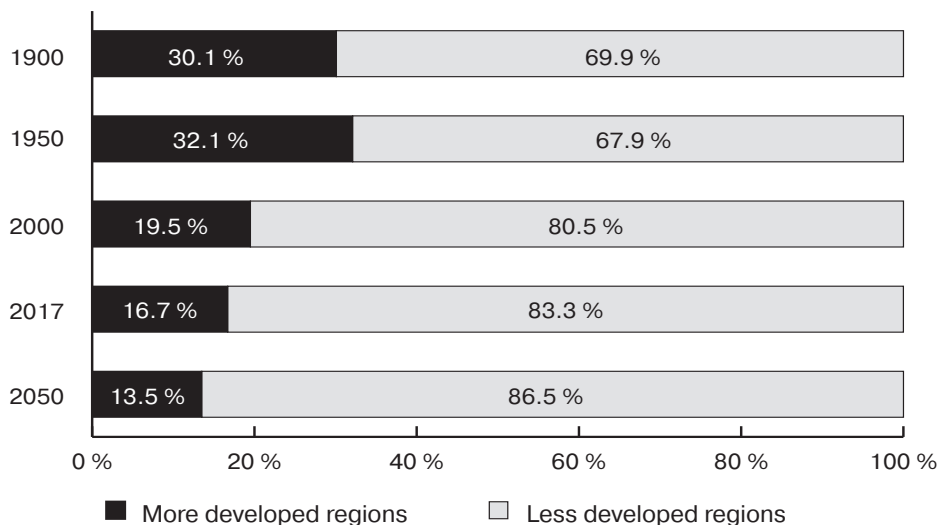
The international reasons are obvious. The world's demographic asymmetry dramatically exacerbates economic disparities, the conflict between poor and rich countries, and competition for resources amidst a growing shortage. At the same time, this course of events encourages modernization in developing countries, which drastically changes the correlation of forces in the world. The idea of redistributing global resources is in the air.

The domestic reasons stem from modernization, which destroys traditional social structures and institutions and the way of life of hundreds of millions of people. Modernization also creates a multitude of formerly unknown channels for economic and social mobility. People then embrace a new way of life and a new system of rules, institutions and values. However, many economic, social and demographic factors impede and slow down modernization. The throughput capacity of social mobility channels is increasing very slowly and does not meet the needs of new social groups. Discontent builds up in society, which increases in the face of an imminent conflict between the old, half-destroyed and the new, half-mature forms of life.

Counter-modernist (usually anti-Western) ideologies and political movements arise the world over. In idealizing the past, they look for support in traditional values, religious fanaticism, nationalist extremism, etc. The paradox of history is that the growth of traditionalism is usually caused by modernist aspirations.

Not even scientists realize how extremely complex this situation is and an analysis is often replaced with superficial reasoning. For example, we can take the 'clash of civilizations' concept put forth by Samuel Huntington, which emphasizes the impenetrability of borders between civilizations.

**Graph 1. Share of the more developed and less developed regions in world population in 2020 and 2050 (according to an average forecast by the UN)**



In reality, however, the achievements (and controversies) of an industrial-urban civilization are rapidly mastered by rural communities, which have to move from one historical era to another in a very short period of time. It is the difficulties of this rapid transition that bring about intermediate social states. These states are politically highly unstable and might bring about outbreaks of disorders and violence, coups, bloody ethnic conflicts, reckless military schemes, and the growth of domestic and international terrorism.

The situation is aggravated by an important demographic factor that is often underestimated. Remarkably, the term ‘Third World’ – as opposed to the First (Capitalist) and the Second (Communist) Worlds – was coined by French demographer Alfred Sauvy on the basis of an analysis of the demographic situation in the world.

As a result of the demographic explosion, developing countries have a very young population. One half of the Russian population is younger than 37 years old; the figure for Europe is 39 years, while in such countries as Germany and Italy it is 42, and 43 years in Japan. Children and teenagers under 16 years of age account for

half of the population in Afghanistan, and half of the population is under 15 years old in the Congo, which will overtake Russia in population over time. The average age of the entire African population is 19 years, while in Asia it is 28 years. By 2017, the median age of the Russian population will increase to 39 years, in Europe to 42 years and in North America to 37 years. At the same time, the median age in Africa will reach a mere 20 years and 31 years in Asia. So now and in the foreseeable future, teenagers and young people, the socially immature and largely uneducated, will make up a huge part of the population in developing countries. They do not have clear prospects, are easily manipulated and are inclined toward religious or political fanaticism.

These factors increase political instability, which is pronounced in many densely populated countries. Amidst the globalization processes, it may destabilize the situation in the world and bring about large-scale military conflicts. If conflicting parties possess weapons of mass destruction, such conflicts may pose a threat to all of mankind.

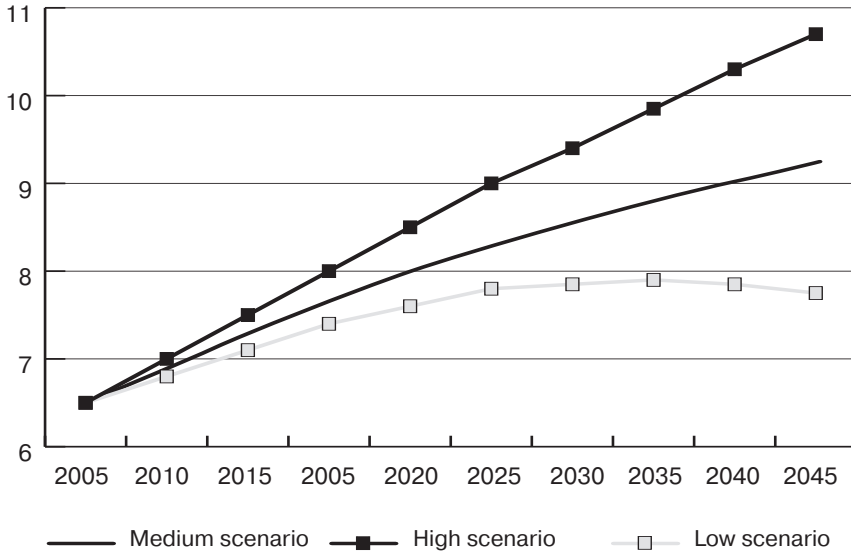
#### THE NEED FOR REDUCED POPULATION GROWTH

It is obvious that the international community must take special efforts to reduce pressure in the global “boiler.” One way is to influence the global situation in order to stop the demographic explosion and gradually reduce the world’s population. The only acceptable way to achieve this is by reducing birth rates in developing countries.

A great deal of success has already been achieved in this field. From the middle to the end of the 20th century, birth rates in less developed regions decreased by half. However, birth rates are still much higher than necessary (given the present mortality rates) even for stabilizing the population. Thus, the world’s population is continuing to grow rapidly, although at a slower rate than in the 1950s-1970s.

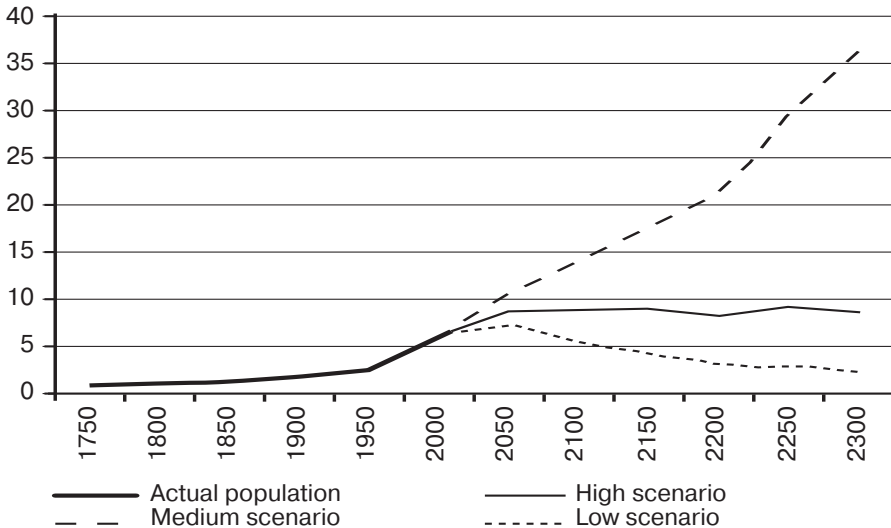
According to a 2006 long-term UN forecast, there are three ways that the world’s population could grow. It would be the high road to disaster if the situation develops according to the high scenario. Yet, even the medium scenario does not inspire much optimism (Graph 2).

**Graph 2. World population until 2050 (according to three scenarios of the 2006 UN forecast), bln people**



Source: United Nations Population Division. World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision and World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision, <http://esa.un.org/unpp>

**Graph 3. World population until 2300 (according to three scenarios of a 2003 long-term UN forecast), bln people**



Source: United Nations Population Division, World Population in 2300 (ESA/P/WP.187)

A “stable” nine billion people, coupled with the growing needs of the average resident of the Earth, add up to total requirements that can hardly be met. The only optimistic way is to develop according to the low scenario, where the population will gradually decrease. In the distant past (more than 200 years ago), the world’s population was nearly the same as in the middle of the 20th century, i.e. before the population explosion (Graph 3). Therefore it is necessary to bring birth rates in the world below the simple reproduction level.

The strategy of slowing down demographic growth is, perhaps, the only way to successfully respond to global challenges without creating additional problems. At the same time, this strategy has not always been effective and sometimes involved tough measures (China).

#### GLOBAL REDISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION

Throughout human history, the migration of people from densely populated regions to lesser populated ones was an important mechanism to regulate global demography. In the 19th and 20th centuries, an accelerated growth in the number of Europeans started this mechanism once again. Until the middle of the last century, people usually moved from economically developed countries of the Old World to colonized regions, mainly to undeveloped or poorly developed territories in the New World and Oceania. More than 60 million people left Europe from 1820-1940.

However, in the second half of the 20th century, the demographic asymmetry and economic polarization of the North and the South changed the direction of intercontinental migration and its scope. Over 30 years alone (1960-1990), about 60 million people moved from southern regions to northern ones, and this flow still continues unabated. Moreover, annual growth rates in the number of migrants increased from 1.4 percent (in 1990-1995) to 1.9 percent (2000-2004). From 1990 to 2005, the number of migrants in the world increased by 36 million, of whom 92 percent (33 million) moved to industrialized countries. The average balance of migration between developed and developing countries in 2000-2005 stood at

2.6 million people a year, or 2.2 percent, in favor of developed nations. These figures were cited by the UN Secretary General at a May 2006 session of the UN General Assembly.

According to the UN medium scenario (which seems to be overly optimistic as it presupposes a drop in the flow of immigrants to developed countries after 2010), another 120 million people will move to these countries in the first half of the 21st century.

Migration from the South to the North has become a new global reality, bringing about essential changes in the ethnic composition of developed countries. Already by the middle of the century, the white non-Hispanic population may cease to be a majority in the United States. In many European countries, the share of immigrants and their descendants will approach 30 percent of the local population and will continue to increase.

Having created an effective mechanism for redistributing financial resources between the South and the North, migration has become an important economic component of modern international relations. According to World Bank estimates, money transfers by migrants to their relatives in the late 1980s totaled \$65 billion a year. (This amount was second only to overall revenue from crude oil sales at the time.) In the early 1990s, the share of migrants' incomes sent to Third World countries stood at 31 percent of profits from the foreign-economic activities of Egypt, 26 percent of Bangladesh and Jordan, 25 percent of Sudan, and 23 percent of Morocco and Mali. Since then, the role of international money transfers by migrant workers has increased significantly. Between 1995 and 2005, the total amount of money transfers to developing countries increased from \$58 billion to \$167 billion (these figures may be understated), by far exceeding all international aid to the Third World. According to UN estimates, money transfers to developing countries in 2004 made up 1.7 percent of their GDP. China, India and Mexico were the largest recipients of those incomes. But of the 20 countries where money transfers account for at least 10 percent of GDP, small developing countries make up a majority.

Although much of this money is used for consumption, it is not spent on food alone. Money transfers by migrants are often the

main source for covering spending on education and health services, thus contributing to the accumulation of human capital.

However, the significance of migrant workers is not only measured in money terms. The professional knowledge and social experience gained by these workers turn them into agents of modernization, carriers of new technological and institutional ideas, and conductors of new social and political thinking.

## LIMITATIONS

### OF THE NORTH'S MIGRATION CAPACITY

The migration from the poor South to the rich North seems quite logical. It is only natural that the migration flows, established in the second half of the 20th century, are not slowing down, but are continuing to grow. However, migrants are facing serious obstacles more and more often as the capacity of developed nations to absorb migration flows is limited.

These countries began to encourage immigration in the post-war years when they were experiencing a shortage of manpower, especially unskilled labor. Immigration contributed to their economic growth. The Third World also gained economically as well as culturally. Initially, the parties' interests coincided (at least partially), but conflicts have now arisen.

First of all, there is a numerical disproportion. The need of developed nations for imported labor, especially if it serves as a structural supplement to the existing workforce, is limited, while the potential labor supply for developing countries is virtually unlimited.

According to the latest estimates, the developed world will need 513 million jobs in 2050 – 84 million fewer jobs than in 1995. At the same time, the developing world will need 3,928 million jobs – 1,806 million jobs more than in 1995. Even if we consider that these estimates are approximate, the dramatic discrepancy in these figures, which attests to the North's inability to meet the developing world's demand, is evident.

But the capacity of the labor market is not the only problem. Serious problems arise from the limited ability of immigrants to adapt to a new environment both socially and culturally. When the

number of immigrants with different social, cultural, legal and political traditions and stereotypes is relatively small, they manage to assimilate fairly quickly in their new country. But when the absolute and relative number of immigrants becomes significant and keeps increasing rapidly, they form more or less compact enclaves. Integration processes slow down and cross-cultural tensions emerge, increased by economic and social inequality between the local and immigrant population. These factors inevitably bring about the marginalization of immigrants (at least temporarily) and a crisis of their cultural identity. As a result, broad masses become receptive to simplified “fundamentalist” ideas which they believe help them to overcome their cultural duality and “find themselves” once again. The integration process thus becomes blocked and many (although certainly not all) immigrants find themselves in opposition to their host societies. This confrontation can sometimes take very aggressive forms.

The situation is aggravated further by the simultaneous exacerbation of the cultural identity crisis in an immigrant’s country of origin. As they gradually move toward modernization, Third World countries enter an extremely painful period of internal conflict and rigid confrontation between the values of traditional and modern societies.

At the same time, states that use foreign labor start realizing the limited nature of their immigration capacity. Heated debates are held over the immigration problem that becomes a political card. Anti-immigrant sentiments then arise and tough measures are taken to curb the inflow of foreigners. Yet a real drop in the exodus of people from developing to developed countries is unlikely, and the migration pressure of the South on the North is turning into another global challenge.

#### RUSSIA AND THE NEW DEMOGRAPHIC ORDER

Russia belongs to the world’s demographic minority and the Golden Billion club of countries. This factor brings it closer to other countries of the North and, at the same time, requires a

rethinking of the situation inside the Golden Billion and its attitude toward the rest of the world.

Recent developments have put the idea of a bipolar world, which allegedly existed until recently, to a serious test. Actually, it was the bipolarity not of the world, but of the North, where most of the population of the Golden Billion countries lives. This idea came into doubt through changes in the correlation of forces within the North and by the gradual loss of the role of the world's only decision-making center. For the first time in its history, Europe, enlarged to the "Atlantic North" and even farther if we count Japan, has ceased being the only center of global politics.

The development of the international situation prompts a search for an optimal inner configuration of the Golden Billion countries. Will it be monocentric, bicentric or polycentric? What better meets the interests of the "world demographic minority"?

A monocentric North, which presupposes certain inequality and the existence of one decision-making center seeking to assume full responsibility, is hardly feasible.

Countries with a European culture, which have a more or less common historical past and a common values system, are richer and, most importantly, are at the stage of industrial-urban civilization, are countered by the densely populated, but poor, developing world. To protect their common interests, the Golden Billion countries need to pool their efforts and resources. However, it is difficult to imagine developed countries, formerly separated by the ideologies of Capitalism and Communism, as something completely homogeneous. The nature of complex systems requires their inner differentiation and the structuring of the growing internal diversity.

The search for a new structure that would meet the conditions of a changing world has been underway for decades. Northern countries are increasingly aware of being economic, political and military entities that are not large enough to act on the international stage separately. This consideration was taken into account, for example, in creating, strengthening and enlarging the European Union. Not one European country can act as a center of economic or political power that would be commensurate with the United States, where-

as the EU can. (Germany, the largest EU country, had a population of 82 million people in 2007, while the EU's total population stood at 497 million.) At the same time, relations between the European Union and the United States are not changing from competition to confrontation, which is largely due to an understanding of their common vital interests in the face of global challenges.

Has Russia fully realized the requirements of the new global structuring? Most likely not. Moscow has expressed its ambitions weakly and vaguely to create a "third Northern center of power" (in addition to the United States and the EU) and has made no serious practical steps in this direction. But when Russia tries to play the role of such a center in global dimensions, this attests to an obvious over-estimation by Moscow of its economic and demographic weight.

Even if we remain within the logic of demography, Moscow's present policy cannot but cause concern. Russia is the most populated country in Europe, but its demographic ranking in the global demographic hierarchy is steadily decreasing. Russia's population reached a record high of 148 million people in 1993; since then it has dropped by more than six million and is still falling. But even the 148 million people of today is not the same as the 130 million citizens of the Russian empire at the end of the 19th century, when they accounted for eight percent of the world's population. For comparison, the population of the United States now stands at 306 million and that of the EU at 497 million.

In the middle of the 20th century, Russia – within its present borders – had the world's fourth largest population after China, India and the United States. It had dropped two places, putting it behind Indonesia and Brazil by 2000. After 2000, Russia fell behind Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria and moved to ninth place. According to the UN medium scenario (revised in 2006), Russia will retain ninth place in 2017 and even in 2025, but by the middle of the century it will drop to 15th place. (When the UN revises its forecasts every two years, they change somewhat. For example, the 2000 forecast put Russia 17th in population in 2050; the 2002 forecast changed this figure to 18th; and the 2004 forecast put it at 17th again; see Table 1.)

Table 1. Russia's place in the world demographic hierarchy

1950			2000			2007			2025			2050		
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
1	China	554.7	1	China	1275.2	1	China	1328.6	1	China	1445.8	1	India	1658.3
2	India	357.6	2	India	1016.9	2	India	1169.0	2	India	1447.5	2	China	1408.8
3	USSR	178.5	3	U.S.	285	3	U.S.	305.8	3	U.S.	354.9	3	U.S.	402.4
4	U.S.	157.8	4	Indonesia	211.6	4	Indonesia	231.6	4	Indonesia	271.2	4	Indonesia	296.9
5	<b>Russia</b>	<b>102.7</b>	5	Brazil	171.8	5	Brazil	191.8	5	Brazil	228.8	5	Pakistan	292.2
			6	<b>Russia</b>	<b>145.6</b>	6	Pakistan	163.9	6	Pakistan	225.0	6	Nigeria	288.7
						7	Bangladesh	158.7	7	Nigeria	210.1	7	Brazil	254.1
						8	Nigeria	148.1	8	Bangladesh	206.0	8	Bangladesh	254.1
						9	<b>Russia</b>	<b>142.5</b>	9	<b>Russia</b>	<b>128.2</b>	9	Congo	186.8
									10	Ethiopia	183.4	10	Ethiopia	183.4
									11	The Philippines	140.5	11	The Philippines	140.5
									12	Mexico	132.3	12	Mexico	132.3
									13	Egypt	121.2	13	Egypt	121.2
									14	Vietnam	120.0	14	Vietnam	120.0
									15	<b>Russia</b>	<b>107.8</b>	15	<b>Russia</b>	<b>107.8</b>

A – Ranking; B – Country; C – Population, mln

Whatever the economic or military capabilities of the “third Northern center” might be, it cannot be viable and competitive without boosting its demographic weight.

If Russia is interested in the emergence of a “third Northern center,” it must try to establish a larger supranational interstate community, something like the European Union. The only way to do this now is to restore, at least partially, the geopolitical unity of the former Soviet territory, but on an entirely different, non-imperial basis, without any attempts to restore the Soviet Union.

The potential of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which has been steadily weakening, could be used to help move along this path. Considering the demographic and economic situation, the most natural and advantageous way would be to start with the creation of a common labor market in the CIS. This would remove the threat of a manpower shortage, which is looming large over Russia, and help create an interim mechanism for preparing part of the migrants for naturalization in Russia. Thanks to its current economic advantages, Moscow would then automatically take the place of the universally recognized non-confrontational leader of the Commonwealth.

In the future, a unified labor market could play the role of the European Coal and Steel Community (an organization founded in 1951 with the active participation of recent mortal enemies – Germany and France, and later reorganized into the European Economic Community). Today, however, things are developing in the opposite direction.

Yet even the total demographic potential of all CIS countries is not large enough. The population of many of them will keep decreasing – apart from Russia, these countries include Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The overall number of people in the region will decrease and the gap in population between the CIS, on the one hand, and the European Union and the United States, on the other, will increase (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Population of CIS countries, the U.S. and the EU in 1950, 2007, 2017 and 2050 (according to the UN 2006 medium forecast), thousands of people**

	1950	2007	2025	2050
Azerbaijan	2,896	8,467	9,508	9,404
Armenia	1,354	3,002	2,908	2,458
Belarus	7,745	9,689	8,668	6,960
Georgia	3,527	4,395	3,945	3,134
Kazakhstan	6,703	15,422	16,987	17,312
Kyrgyzstan	1,740	5,317	6,208	6,566
Moldova	2,341	3,794	3,496	2,883
Russia	102,702	142,499	128,193	107,832
Tajikistan	1,532	6,736	8,929	10,760
Turkmenistan	1,211	4,965	6,068	6,780
Uzbekistan	6,314	27,372	33,963	38,386
Ukraine	37,298	46,205	39,879	30,937
<b>CIS</b>	<b>175,363</b>	<b>281,718</b>	<b>268,752</b>	<b>243,412</b>
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>157,813</b>	<b>305,826</b>	<b>354,930</b>	<b>402,415</b>
<b>EU-27</b>	<b>377,103</b>	<b>497,105</b>	<b>502,674</b>	<b>484,768</b>

*Source:* Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision

Therefore, even if the rapprochement of the former Soviet republics does result in the establishment of a “third Northern center,” Russia will have to take measures in three major fields to build up its demographic potential: increase birth rates, reduce death rates and attract immigrants.

We should not entertain utopian hopes that success in the first two fields would eliminate the need for Russia to seek large-scale immigration. All available forecasts show that this is not so and that a strong demographic growth is possible only through immigration, largely from outside the CIS. This is why Russia should vigorously build up possibilities to integrate immigrants into Russian society, but this is not going to be a likely probability in the near future, at least not until 2020.

Russia is not ready today to receive large numbers of foreigners. Public opinion in the country is very negative toward immigration, which has an impact on the position of the authorities as

well. This situation does not meet the imperatives of the global demographic evolution, nor Russia's interests, but it will hardly change any time soon.

#### RUSSIA AND THE THIRD WORLD

In building its relations with the Golden Billion countries, Russia should also address issues of its cooperation with the rest of the world, above all with its Asian neighbors.

In Asia, internal economic, social, political and cultural tensions will be stronger and will continue longer than in other parts of the world (perhaps with the exception of Africa, but this is a case of a more distant future) – largely because of an unprecedented population growth. This is why Asia will continue to be a troubled region. Building stable relations with Asian powers is one of Russia's foreign-policy priorities. Yet the logic of demography requires a carefully weighed approach to interaction with these states.

Despite all the above reservations, Russia's current positions in the "Northern Club" can still largely rely on its demographic weight and on the fact that in terms of population it is the world's second largest country after the U.S. and the first country in Europe. However, this factor loses its importance if Russia is compared with China or India. The population of these two countries will reach 1.4 billion and 1.3 billion people respectively in 2017, and by the middle of the century their total population will exceed 3 billion. Too close alliances with such giants can fully deny Russia an independent role or, at best, can turn it into an appendage country.

Russia, especially its scarcely populated Asian part, has enormous natural wealth. This does not only include hydrocarbons, but also its invaluable freshwater resources, as well as boundless expanses of land. By 2050, the per capita area of arable land in the world will decrease to 0.08 hectares, whereas Russia by that time will have 1.14 hectares of arable land per capita. An excessive rapprochement with, say, a growing China, which lacks resources of its own, may impose "allied obligations" on Russia,

which can ultimately result in the limitation of its rights to its own resources and to territories where they are located. Moscow will be able to successfully defend its interests only by relying on the solidarity of countries of the North, which are in the same demographic boat with it.

Russia, like the Soviet Union in the past, has taken an equivocal position on the issue of the drop in birth rates in developing countries. The “anti-Malthusianism” of the Soviet era is popular again in Russia. Criticism is leveled at international organizations advocating family planning and at the decisions made at the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 in Cairo, Egypt, which were aimed at slowing down growth rates in the world’s population. These developments are in line with traditionalist sentiments widespread in developing countries, but which are different from Russia’s interests. Like other states of the North, Russia is objectively interested in an early end to the demographic explosion in the Third World. The reduction of birth rates in developing countries is probably the only non-contradictory response to many global challenges.