

## Research into Global Ageing and Its Consequences

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# Introduction

## Research into Global Ageing and Its Consequences

*Jack A. Goldstone,  
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With the further growth of the world population and the further intensification of the processes of interaction between countries and increasing movements of the masses of people, the role of Political Demography becomes more and more important. Issues of global ageing, migration, low fertility in developed countries (or very high fertility in some African countries), high mortality in many developing states (including deaths from AIDS); rapid change in the ethnic composition in Europe and in several other regions and many other pressing issues are in the focus of this discipline. Some of these problems are analyzed in this yearbook. However, among those issues, the issue of global ageing becomes more and more pressing every year. It is sufficient to take into account the point that within two forthcoming decades a rapid global increase in the number of retirement-age persons will lead to its doubling within this fairly small historical period. The concerns about population ageing apply to both developed and many developing countries and it has turned into a global issue. In the next decades the population ageing is likely to become one of the most important processes determining the future society characteristics and directions of technological development.

The ancient Greeks thought of the ages of mankind as passing through youth (the Golden Age), a vigorous adulthood (the Silver and Bronze Age), then a period of pain and conflict, the 'Iron Age'. As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world's population is entering an era of unprecedented ageing. However, it is unclear whether it will indeed prove to be an 'Iron Age' of pain and conflict.

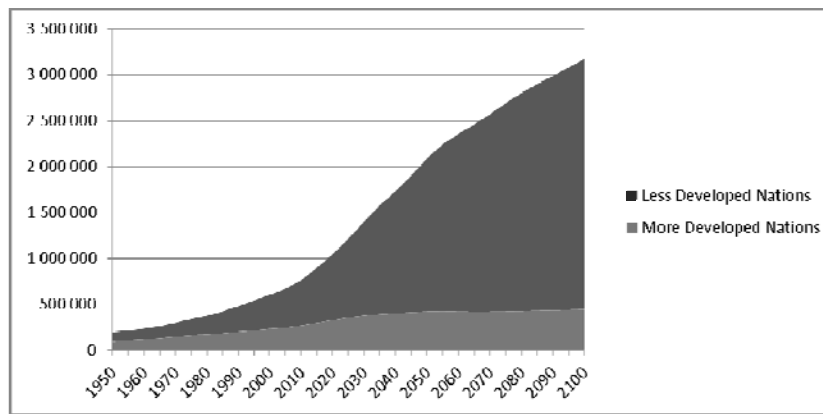
Certainly, the economic condition of ageing nations will be tested, as their economies are likely to slow while the financial burdens of health and pension support for an ageing population will increase. At the same time, the continued rapid growth and youthfulness of societies in the Middle East and

Africa are producing waves of international migrants, both those fleeing regional conflicts and those looking for greater opportunities than can be found in their own countries. The combination of economic pressures and immigration strains could indeed produce an 'Iron Age' of pain and conflict if the world's most developed countries are unable to produce creative responses to these changes.

Yet a brighter future also can be imagined. The stabilization of populations in the rich world could also provide a stabilization of pollution and climate-change inducing emissions. Moreover, ageing populations could well make politicians more inclined to seek peace and avoid war. Properly regulated, an increase in global migration could inject a measure of vigor into the ageing societies and economies of Europe, East Asia, and North America, while serving as a safety valve to release social tensions in the developing world.

This brighter future is what we all hope for. However, it will require a deep understanding of how ageing will affect the global economy and national and global politics to craft the right responses. Richer countries will need to bring health costs under control, and redesign retirement and pension systems for populations where nearly half of the adult population is over 60 years old. Both richer and poorer countries will need to develop plans to regulate international migration that provide fairness and opportunity while restricting exploitation and trafficking of vulnerable people, and that allow the global movement of people to parallel that of capital and information, while still preserving the rich tapestry of the world's cultures and practices.

The data showing how the number of the aged is expected to increase makes clear both the novelty and immensity of the problem we face. Fig. 1 shows the latest UN projection for the population over age 60, showing both the more and less developed nations (UN Population Division 2015). While the immediate surge in ageing is in the more developed countries, where the population over 60 is in the process of doubling from about 200 million in 1990 to 400 million in 2040, the huge uptick in ageing in the less developed countries just began after 2010. There the over-60 population will surge from roughly half a billion people in 2010 to 1.5 billion by 2045, over 2 billion by 2065, and 2.7 billion by 2100. Ageing is about to go global.



**Fig. 1.** Total global population age 60+, 1950–2100

In this special issue, we present the research discussed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference on Political Demography of the International Research Laboratory on Political Demography and Social Macrodynamics, based at the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA) in Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **Research Laboratory on Political Demography and Social Macrodynamics (PDSM) at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA)** is headed by an American sociologist, demographer, and political scientist, Jack A. Goldstone, Elman Family Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Institute for Public Policy, and brings together Russian, European, American, and Asian scholars and policy experts. With a special attention to Russian demographic situation and challenges PDSM is studying the scale, dynamics, and consequences of global demographic changes and their global impact. Research laboratory also pays attention to issues of social security and political stability, conditions and trajectories of regime development; geo-strategic competition, especially as it affects Europe and BRICS; opportunities for economic growth, crises and transformation in the global economic system; ethnic competition and conflict; international and regional migration and urbanization; changes in the capabilities of the global work force.

**International Conference on Political Demography and Social Macrodynamics** is organized by the Research Laboratory on Political Demography and Social Macrodynamics, RANEPA and Gaidar Institute. The second conference was devoted to ‘Global Aging of the Population and the Future of Russia’ and brought together participants from Russia, Europe, US and Asia. The first day (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014) of the Conference took place at the Gaidar Institute and was focused mainly on Russian demographic situation and policy. During the first day participants discussed demographic projections and demographic policy, regional specifics of fertility and mortality in Russia, ‘conservative shift’ in the Russian Politics, the role of higher fertility levels in political processes in the Russian North Caucasus and also demographic factors of radical ideologies. The second day (December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014) of the Conference took place at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA) and was devoted to issues of global ageing in different parts of the world. During the second day the Conference participants discussed such issues as ‘demographic dividend’, impact of ageing on social security systems, impact of ageing on global economic growth and financial system, process of ageing and global security, as well as the role of migration.

The conference, which was held in December 2014, brought together scholars from Europe, Asia, and America to examine global ageing from a variety of perspectives.

The present Yearbook (which is the fifth in the series<sup>2</sup>) is based on these conference proceedings and is subtitled *Political Demography & Global Ageing*.

The present Yearbook consists of three sections. In the first section, **David A. Coleman** ('Ethnic Transformation of European Societies by Immigration') documents how rapidly immigration is transforming the composition of European societies. **David A. Coleman and Robert Rowthorn** in their article ('Population Decline – Making the Best of Inevitable Destiny?') follow by writing about how to meet the challenges that will accompany the inevitable ageing of all societies. This section also includes the article by **Vasil T. Sakaev** ('The Political Development of Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Challenges of Demographical Factor and Role of Educational System') which shows how demographic change is affecting political development in Russia. Two papers examine the challenges posed by ageing for all countries. **Andrey V. Korotayev, Jack A. Goldstone, Julia V. Zinkina, Sergey G. Shulgin, Daria A. Khaltourina, and Daria A. Folomeyeva** ('Mathematical Modeling and Forecasting of the Demographic Future of Russia: Seven Scenarios') apply the methods of Political Demography to the study of the Russian demographic future and demonstrate how profoundly current changes in the Russian demographic policies can affect the future trajectories of the Russian demographic development (or – under certain circumstances – decline).

The second section looks more closely at ageing in various regions, and its political and economic consequences. **Leonid E. Grinin and Andrey V. Korotayev** ('Global Population Ageing, the Sixth Kondratieff Wave, and the Global Financial System') begin by examining how the population ageing in the West, and the consequent shifts in spending and saving patterns, will affect the global financial system. They also investigate how the new Kondratieff wave and subsequent innovative technological shift can be supported by the global ageing and how the emergent new technologies will affect the global ageing processes. **Donghyun Park and Kwanho Shin** ('Impact of Population Ageing on Asia's Future Growth') analyze the impact of ageing on economic growth of Asia.

**Mark Haas** ('Population Ageing and the Future of the Great Powers') follows with an analysis of how population ageing will affect the military potential of the Great Powers, and their likely strategies. **Jack A. Goldstone** ('Population Ageing and Global Economic Growth') develops a simple model to examine the impact of population ageing – including reduced productivity and

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<sup>2</sup> See: Grinin, de Munck, and Korotayev 2006; Turchin *et al.* 2007; Grinin *et al.* 2010; Grinin and Korotayev 2014.

declining labor forces – on global economic growth. Finally, **Jason L. Powell and Hafiz T. A. Khan**, in a paper (‘Ageing in Post-Industrial Society: Trends and Trajectories’) that was not presented at the conference, look ahead to review ageing in post-industrial societies.

The third section contains a review by **Jack A. Goldstone** of a recent book that studies the interaction of global economic and demographic processes – *Great Divergence and Great Convergence* by Leonid Grinin and Andrey Korotayev (Springer, 2015).

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Research on population ageing and its consequences has become one of the most fertile and fast-growing areas of contemporary social science research, as its implications cut across economics, politics, international relations, public policy, and health. We are glad to offer this special issue to show the results of the international collaborations at RANEPa's International Research Laboratory in this important field.

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