

# **The Politics of Fertility**

**Can the Demographic  
Collapse be Reversed?**

# How we measure fertility

## Total Fertility Rate (TFR):

- To Oversimplify: Total number of children born to a woman in her lifetime.

## Replacement TFR (2.1) 1 for mom, 1 for dad, 0.1 for cohort attrition (much higher in some countries).

- Above 2.1 – population is steadily increasing in each generation.
- Below 2.1 – population will eventually decline, for any mortality rate  $> 0$ .

# Fertility in Modernization Theory



Urbanization



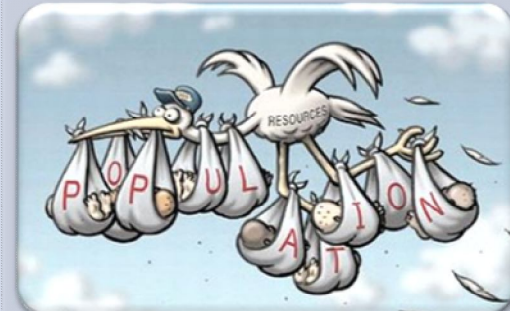
Industrialization



Women's education  
and labor participation



Contraceptive Pill



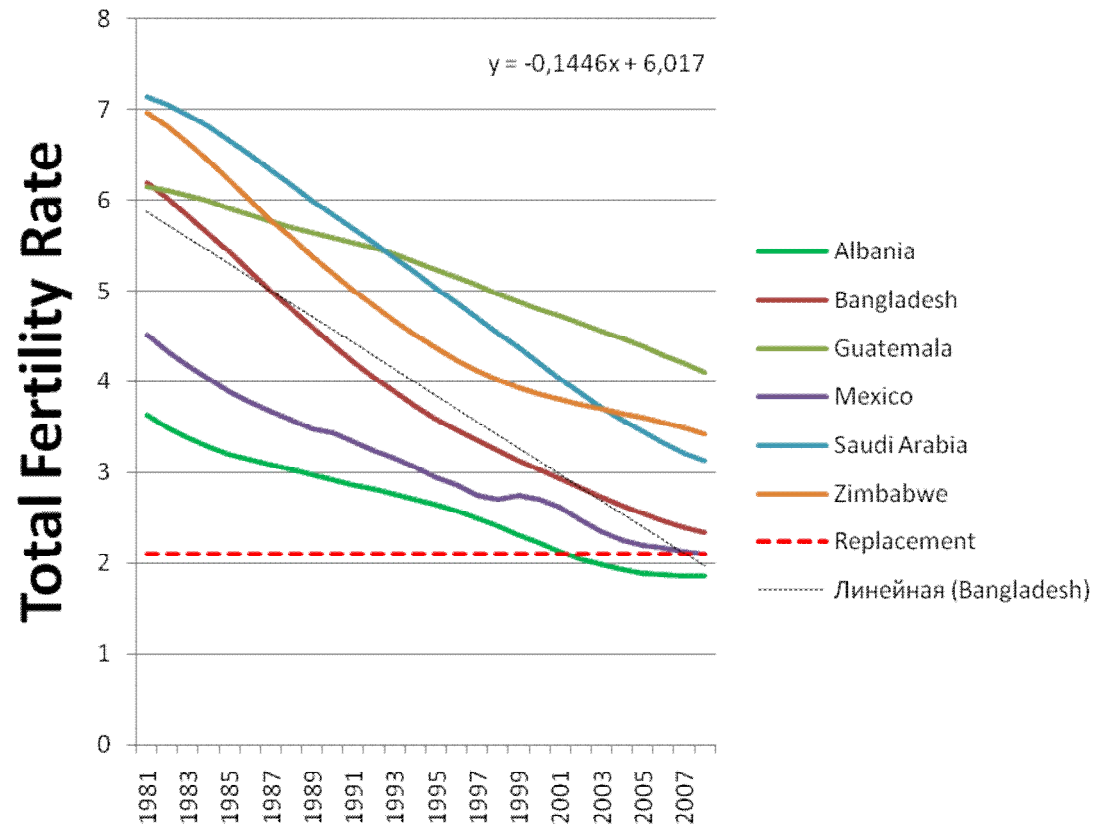
Decline  
in  
Fertility

# But Empirical Anomalies

Fall is faster and deeper than was predicted.

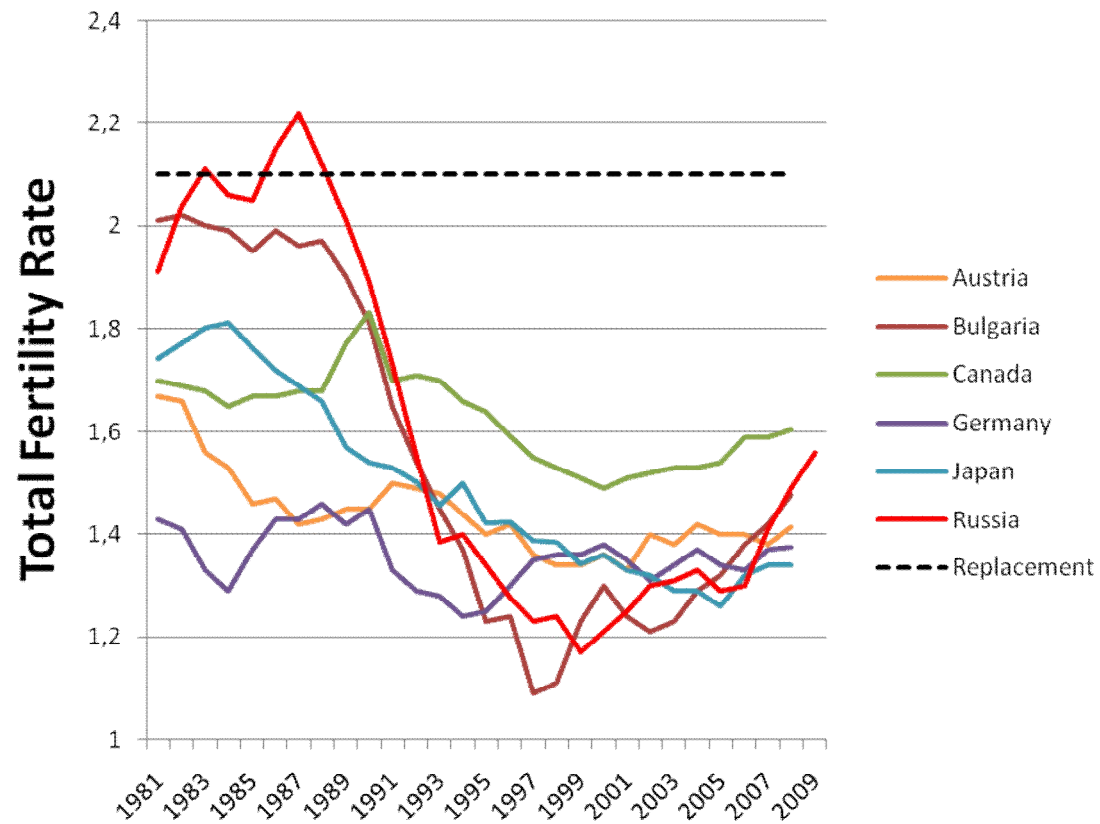
Many industrialized countries dramatically below replacement.

Decline in fertility increasingly is preceding its causal factors: urbanization, industrialization, women's ed or labor participation.



## Developing countries

Most developing countries are witnessing a fertility decline in decades that took centuries in the West. Despite this fall, significant population growth will still occur, because of falling mortality rates.



## Industrialized Countries

Many industrialized countries have fallen to well below replacement fertility levels.



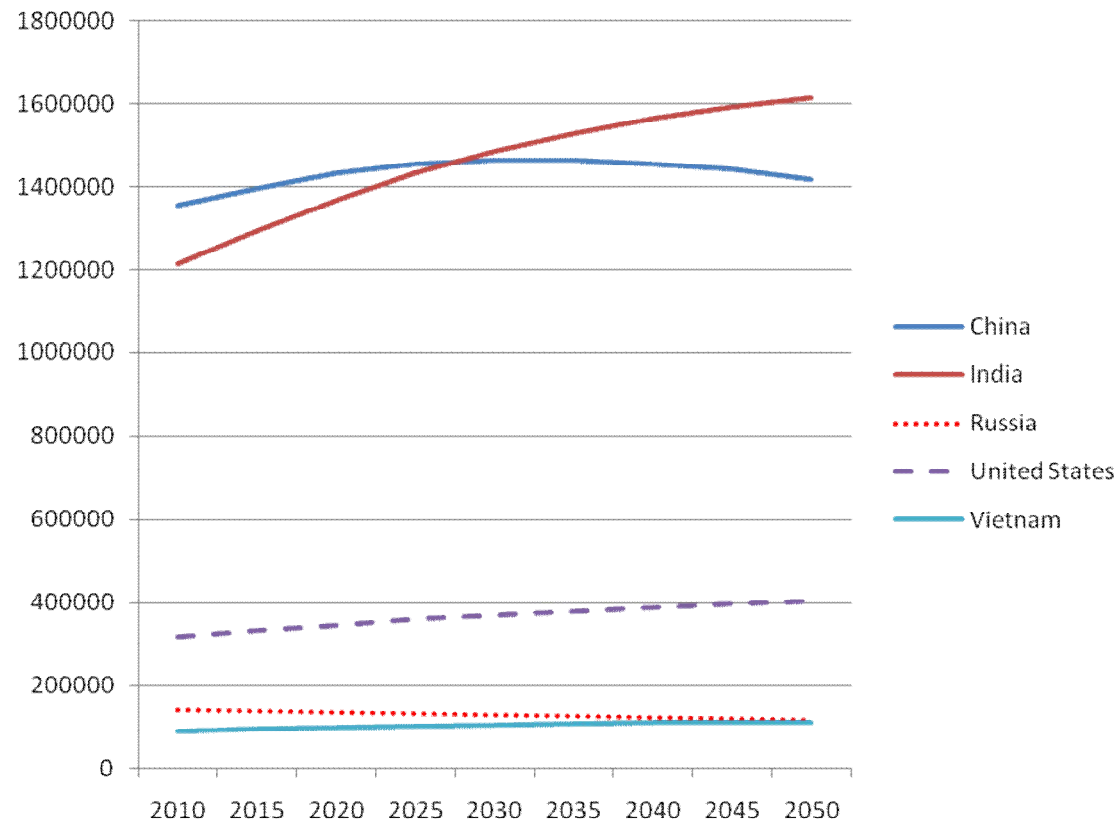
## Russia

A notable increase since the nadir in 1999, but still far below replacement level, and natural population growth is still negative. Population growth in 2009 was due to immigration.

# Vast Political Implications

- Lower population can mean lower GDP, Industrial might, Military manpower
- Likely Collapse/Reduction of Pyramidal Pay-as-you-go Pension Schemes.
- Infrastructure Maintenance?
- Saving Patterns in Aging Economy?
- Inter-generational conflicts? (Imagine 50% of voting population is retired)
- Rearrangement of intl. hierarchy?





## UN Population Projections 2010-2050

Caveat: Making predictions is hard, especially about the future. The above figures may be way off for 2050.



## **Ruins of Detroit**

A sign of things to come elsewhere?

# Will this population trend fix itself?

- Nothing is impossible, but note that countries like Germany have remained at TFRs below 1.6 for three decades.
- If we assume this trend will not go away on its own, what can be done?

# State Action

- Coercion
  - Communist Romania - tried to force up fertility, worked only temporarily, huge increase in black market abortions
  - China - One child policy worked, although Taiwan and Hong-Kong also reached very low birth-rates without coercion.
- Direct Cash Transfers and Subsidized Services
  - Record is mixed on amplitude of result. Singapore's policy failed, Norway's succeeded, Russia and Baltics too early to tell
- Regulatory environment
  - Labor market flexibility
  - Sweden's mandatory fatherly parental leave.

# A Magical Solution?

- State action can be very expensive
  - Norway spends close to 1% of GDP on daycare and other pre-primary programs alone
- Religion to the rescue?
  - the WVS and other surveys show that Religious people have more children on average.

# Quiverful and Hassidic movements in the US



- High tension w. environment (material goods deprecated)
- “Fruitfly Principle”
  - Strong valuation of children.
  - Divinely-appointed duty to reproduce.
  - Strong aversion to birth control tech.

# WVS – a useful lens

Women at the end of their reproductive ages: Worldwide			
How many children do you have * How important is God in your life			
How many children do you have			
How important is God in your life	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Not at all important	1.52	16115	1.288
2	1.42	6342	1.248
3	1.51	7191	1.283
4	1.58	5752	1.305
5	1.68	15246	1.340
6	1.68	10670	1.390
7	1.74	12876	1.450
8	1.84	17434	1.493
9	2.01	14984	1.659
Very important	2.27	84346	1.899
Total	1.95	190956	1.675

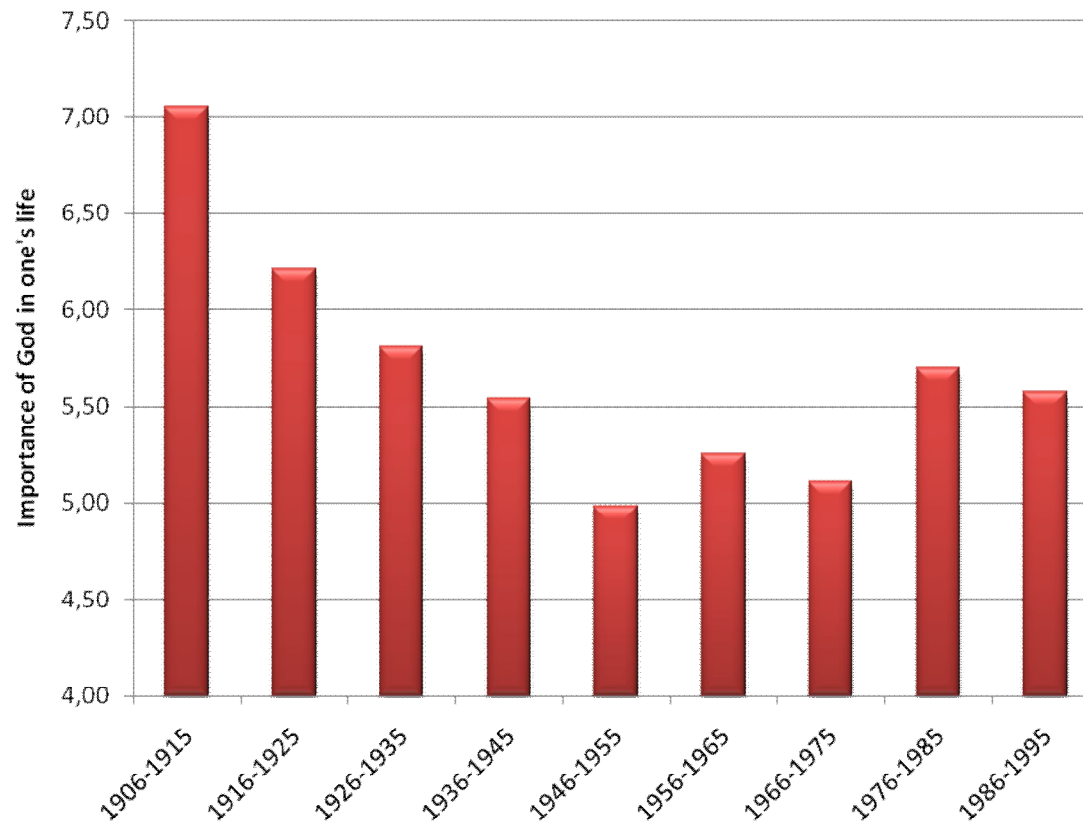
Women at the end of their reproductive ages: Russia			
How many children do you have * How important is God in your life			
How many children do you have			
How important is God in your life	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Not at all important	1.80	309	1.018
2	1.68	161	.899
3	1.81	149	.947
4	1.72	123	.890
5	1.86	394	1.016
6	1.80	150	.976
7	1.73	177	.949
8	1.85	283	1.038
9	1.93	192	1.076
Very important	2.02	681	1.261
Total	1.87	2619	1.074

# Young Russians are Different

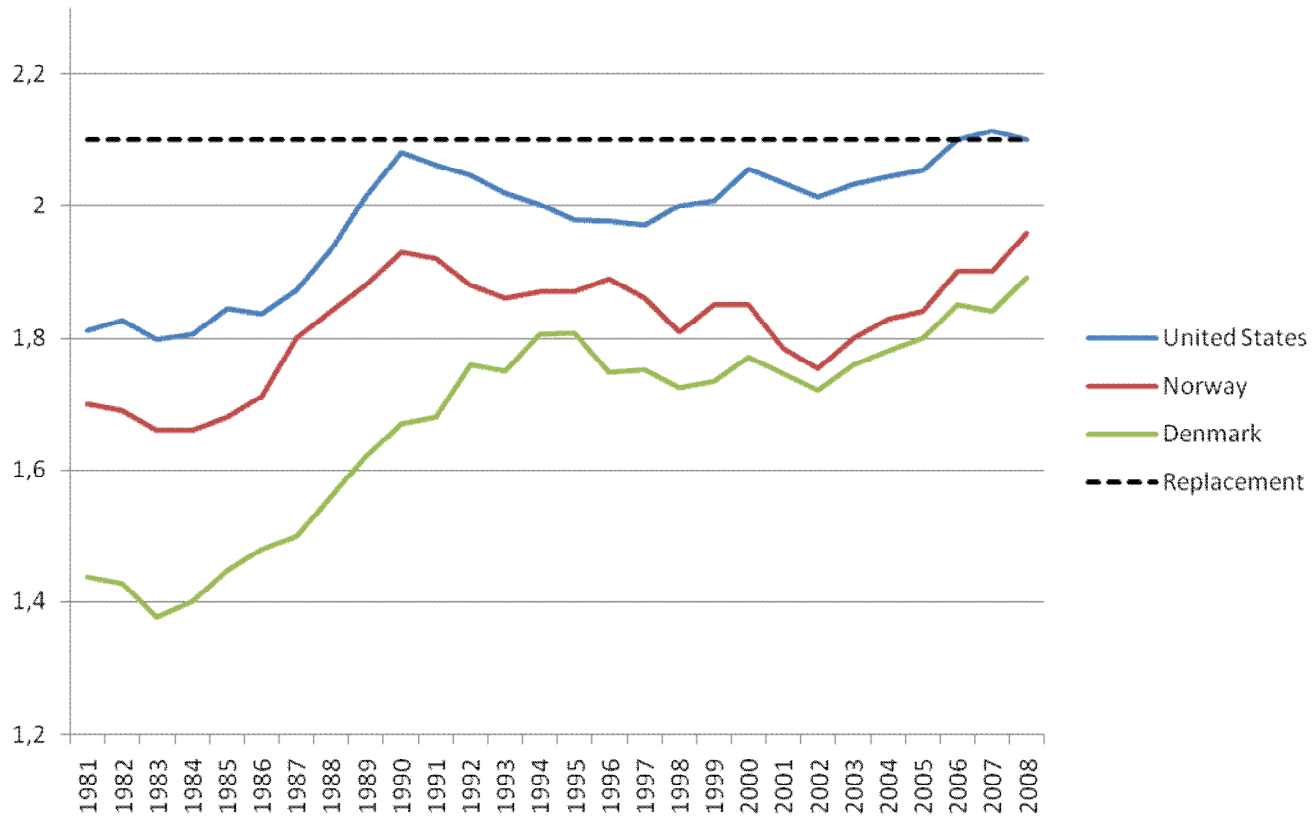
Younger Russian Women			
How many children do you have * How important is God in your life			
How many children do you have			
How important is God in your life	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Not at all important	1.38	269	.913
2	1.23	137	.822
3	1.26	164	.835
4	1.22	104	.881
5	1.21	294	.903
6	1.24	136	.915
7	1.09	138	.827
8	1.15	182	.846
9	.98	19	.974
Very important	1.39	250	1.009
Total	1.24	1793	.907

Younger Women Worldwide			
How many children do you have * How important is God in your life			
How many children do you have			
How important is God in your life	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Not at all important	1.15	6780	1.136
2	1.05	2912	1.105
3	1.10	3103	1.140
4	1.20	2515	1.200
5	1.28	6112	1.217
6	1.23	4309	1.239
7	1.28	5082	1.304
8	1.31	6507	1.310
9	1.49	6099	1.481
Very important	1.66	39646	1.648
Total	1.45	83065	1.475



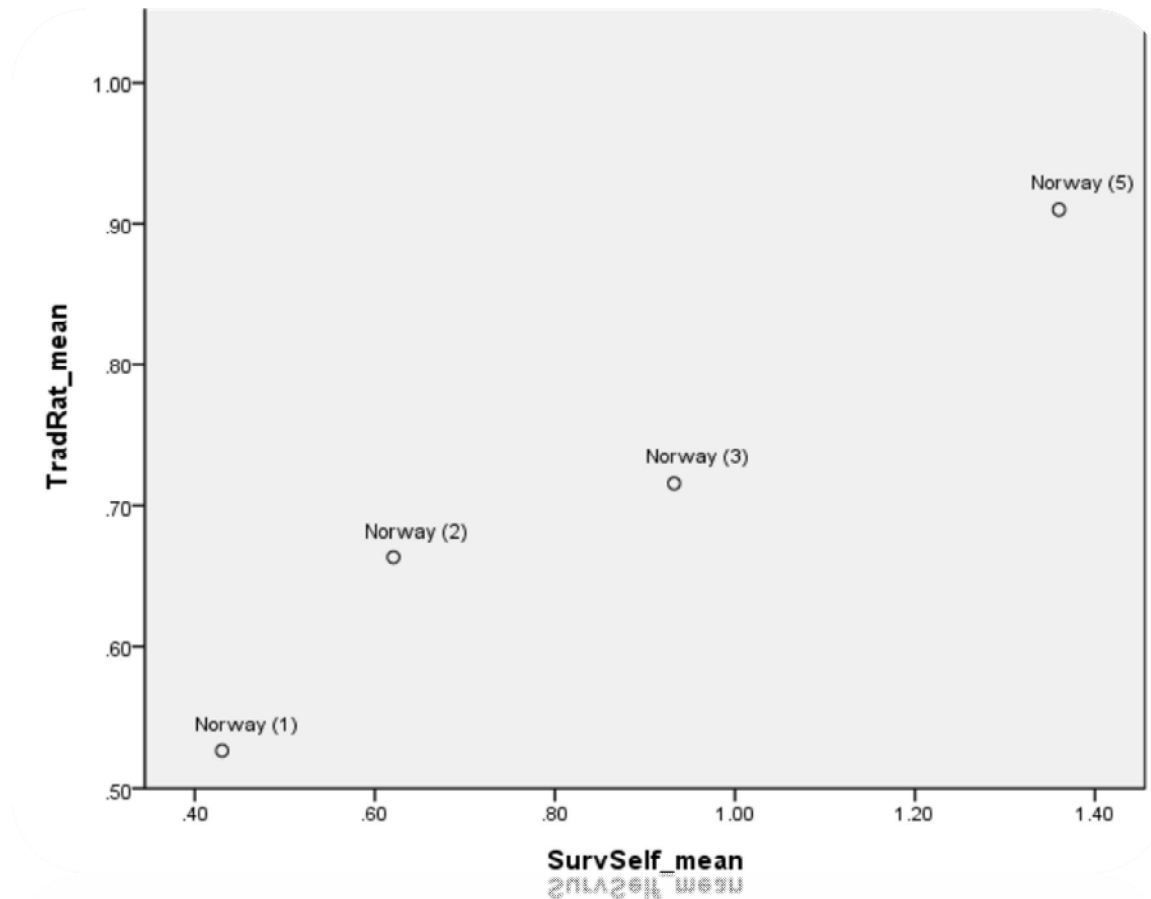


## Young Russians are less secular than their parents



## Is Russia part of a birth “renaissance”?

Fertility Upswing, especially among secular northern countries



## Are value changes driving policy?

Value changes in self-expression and rationalism precede pro-natalist policy changes.

# Future Research



- 2010 World Values Survey Wave data should provide valuable additional data.
- Impact of economic recession will become known.
- More research needed on effective state intervention.