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The Russian Demographic Crisis: A Gendered Perspective

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The Russian Demographic Crisis: A Gendered Perspective

"A spectre is haunting Russia today. It is not the spectre of Communism
[…] but rather of depopulation"[1]

The Russian Federation is currently facing a sustained wave of population decline, which has been threatening the country since the collapse of the USSR. Given the serious nature of the matter, national demographics have been extensively discussed by scholars within the last decades, pointing out the magnitude and uniqueness of this downward population trend. As illustrated by official statistics, the Russian population is shrinking due to the combination of high mortality and low fertility. Namely, deaths have been regularly outnumbering births since the end of Communist rule, with only little compensation provided by net migration. Demographic crises compel national governments to acknowledge that such negative trends are expected to initiate a vicious cycle of hindered economic development, diminishing a country's influence within the International System (IS). Hence, Russian policymakers have been forced to recognise the demographic drawbacks to the social and political potential of the nation, thus framing population decline as a fully-fledged security issue. Past attempts to address the crisis mainly focused on the enhancement of the healthcare system and, most importantly, the implementation of policies aimed at encouraging childbearing. Nevertheless, the beneficial impact of such measures on the country's demographics seems to have brought only modest improvements. On top of that, it was also suggested that Russia's invasion of Ukraine might be seen as a means of incorporating new Slavic and Russian-speaking citizens into the Russian population, thus adding a concurrent demographic explanation to the Kremlin's ongoing military endeavours[2].

This research stems from the premise that demographic crises extend beyond mere statistics and rather originate from the complex intersection of socio-political factors. Hence, they can be fully grasped only by conducting a thorough examination of both demographic and socio-political elements. This assumption derives from the acknowledgement that Russia's demographics tend to align with those observed on average in industrialised countries while also exhibiting more pronounced features. For instance, the country is facing not only decreasing growth rates but a fully-fledged population decline; moreover, Russian women are not only slightly more longevous than men but significantly outnumber and outlive their male counterparts. Although such variations have been extensively examined by demographers,

[1] Nicholas Eberstadt. "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", *World Affairs* 171, no. 4 (March 24, 2009): 51-62, p.34

[2] Sasha Talaver. Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis. Jacobin (April 23, 2023); Institut National d'Études Demographiques. In our researchers' own words – Alain Blum. June 2024

crucial societal and cultural factors have been discussed mainly concerning the post-Communist shift in fertility intentions. Hence, this research will present a thorough analysis of the main Russian demographic trends, stressing the connection between demographics and the heightened gender connotation of Russian politics and society. Therefore, the present research aims to answer the following research question: is Russia expected to reverse its unfavourable population trends in the foreseeable future? To answer this interrogative, this study is articulated into 3 Chapters, each devoted to a specific aspect of Russia's ongoing demographic crisis. First, we will conduct a purely demographic analysis of the main demographic indicators responsible for Russia's sustained path toward population decline. Second, we will closely examine fertility trends over time, combining the investigation of data retrieved from databases and secondary sources with a discussion of the evolving legal, social, and political perspectives on marriage and childbearing. In this respect, Russia's historical heritage of collectivism and fierce opposition to the US-led international community will be recalled as a means of understanding its strong pronatalist orientation. Third, we will analyse and evaluate Russian pronatalist policies, advancing a concurring explanation for their modest impact on Russia's demographic framework. The research stemmed from the following preliminary assumptions:

a) Russia's low life expectancy and elevated number of deaths mainly depend on excessive mortality. We suggest that this might, in turn, indicate potential issues inherent in Russian society specifically linked to gender expectations of masculinity.
b) The Russian demographic crisis is primarily framed and addressed as a fertility issue by Russian experts and authorities. This is particularly evident when comparing the relevance devoted to fertility in official speeches and policymaking with the little emphasis placed on mortality and migration. Similarly to a), this might suggest potential issues inherent in Russian society specifically linked to gender expectations of femininity.
c) Russia's confrontational stance towards the West and Western-led institutions also encompasses socio-cultural aspects, as shown by Putin's revival of the cultural war. Both the foreign and demographic policies are deeply rooted in the promotion of the traditional family and upholding of Russia's moral values. This might suggest a two-fold instrumentalisation of the family institution, grounded in the promotion of traditional gender roles.
d) Pronatalist policies, by themselves, are inherently fallacious despite Putin's progressive extension of social assistance programs to families. Once again, this

sustained failure might be related to the heightened gender connotation of Russian society and the Kremlin's refusal to question gender inequality at the systemic level.

The analysis of Russian demographics and subsequent evaluation of policies contrasting population decline will be conducted here from a gender perspective. Before delving into the rationale behind this choice and its expected outcomes, it is then imperative to offer a general definition of the term "gender". The United Nations refer to gender differences as "socially constructed differences in attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to the social interactions and relations between women and men"[3]. Although the terms are generally used as synonyms, gender thus differs from sex since the latter merely consists in the recognition of biological differences between men and women. Conversely, the definition of gender stresses the social component, meaning that gender differences "are shaped by the history of social relations and change over time and across cultures"[4]. Hence, it should be conceived as "an ongoing process, continually created" instead of something already defined and created as a whole[5]. Within domestic walls or in public, societies are organised according to a hierarchical gender stratification systemically favouring men over women[6]. Analysing an issue from a gender perspective thus means investigating power dynamics and recognising the uneven distribution of power among different categories of people. Given that gender permeates every aspect of social life, it is then possible to analyse almost every phenomenon through gender lenses. Accordingly, the investigation of the Russian demographic crisis will be conducted here by adopting gender as a framework for conducting research and interpreting results, following Riley's indications[7].

The evident link between gender and demography, along with their shared focus on reproduction, should make combining these two subjects easy and immediate. However, as pointed out by Nancy E. Riley, demographers usually combine variables and individual preferences to obtain possible explanations of behaviour, privileging the individual over the collective level and so missing the chance to truly understand the extent of the influence exerted by gender over social behaviour[8]. Professor Riley ascribes this unwillingness to accept feminist

[3] "Integrating a Gender Perspective into Statistics", United Nations Secretariat, accessed June 2024, p.2.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Nancy Riley, "Challenging Demography: Contributions from Feminist Theory", *Sociological Forum* 14, no.3 (1999): 369-397, p.377.
[6] Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender and the Politics of History", Columbia University Press (1988) as reported by Nancy Riley, "Research on gender in demography: Limitations and constraints", *Population Research and Policy Review* 17, 521-538.
[7] Riley, "Challenging Demography: Contributions from Feminist Theory", 369-397.
[8] Ibid.

approaches to the reluctance to question themselves common to fields producing facts and objective knowledge. Moreover, she indicates that demography's oversight of context and power dynamics, along with its lack of dialogue with neighbouring disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, hinders scholars from reaching a comprehensive understanding of gender's influence on demographic processes[9]. Hence, the ambitious aim of this research is to combine the quantitative "objectivity" of demography with a qualitative understanding of the historical, political, and social context to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the government's response to population decline.

Following Riley's stance on the necessity for demography to accept some basic concepts of gender theories, the demographic analysis proposed in this research is enriched by these three main ideas: gender is an organising principle of all societies (1), a social construction (2), and necessarily involves inequality (3). Despite its apolitical claims, demographic research is indeed inherently political as it investigates unequal access to power among different categories of people and the interaction between institutions and individuals[10]. As evidenced by the Russian case, the institutionalisation of gender roles in politics and society contributes to perpetuating gender inequalities. Also, this tendency might be further exacerbated by demographic crises, as policymakers may resort to heightened gendered connotations of society as a moral incentive to pronatalism. In other words, evolving challenges force governments to come up with the policies they deem most feasible and effective to contrast the issue. In so doing, the strategy chosen by a country to tackle population decline reveals its core values and prerogatives. For instance, a nation might deploy measures aimed at encouraging immigration, deterring brain drain, or limiting population outflows. Otherwise, it could invest massively in the improvement of living conditions and the development of healthcare and sanitary structures. Alternatively, a country could insist on framing the demographic crisis as a fertility issue, as in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. This reiterated political choice is crucial for our research since it highlights the strong state masculinity embodied by the Russian state, as defined by gender studies in International Relations. Notably, policies aimed at incentivising childbearing disproportionately affect women, making it crucial for the sake of the analysis to assess not only their concrete effects but also the conditions which led to their implementation. Hence, a gender analysis of pronatalist policies should also consider whether women's interests were adequately promoted within policymaking, given

[9] Riley, "Research on gender in demography: Limitations and constraints", 521-538
[10] Riley, "Challenging Demography: Contributions from Feminist Theory", 369-397.

that their impact – whether positive or negative – largely depends on the composition of governing bodies and women's integration within decision-making[11]. As mentioned, the objective of this research is to indicate whether Russian demographics will become more favourable in the foreseeable future. In this respect, this study will confirm the prevailing opinion among scholars, claiming the fallacious nature of the Russian response to population decline and the unlikeliness of significant reprise in the upcoming years. Although aligning with the existing literature, this study brings an original contribution as it is grounded in the examination of the power dynamics inherent in institutionalised gender roles. Therefore, it investigates the ongoing demographic crisis from a broader perspective encompassing both demographic and social aspects, as well as political ones.

Data and Methodology

This research combines both quantitative and qualitative tools of analysis; thus, it follows a mixed methodological approach. Here is a brief overview of the data and methodology used. Chapter 1 consists of a quantitative investigation of the Russian demographics considering the period 1973-2022. In so doing, data were primarily retrieved from the World Bank Databank and the Federal Service for State Statistics (*Federal'naya sluzhba gosudarstvennoy statistiki*, Rosstat). As to World Bank data, they were mostly gathered from World Development Indicators (WDI), the World Bank's major dataset for development indicators. Russian demographics were analysed not only in absolute terms but also in parallel with those registered on average in nations with analogous geographic and socio-economic characteristics to see whether Russia either aligns with similar countries or differs from them. Following the economic and geographical classifications adopted by the World Bank, the Russian Federation is considered part of the Europe and Central Asia region, but its economic label has changed over time, making it imperative to take into account various income groups of countries. First, it went from being a lower-middle-income country (2000-2003) to an upper-middle-income one (2004-2011). Then, between 2012 and 2014, it was placed among high-income countries, being labelled again as an upper-middle-income one in 2015[12]. Although Russia currently figures among upper-middle-income countries, Russian demographics were also compared to those of high-income countries, acknowledging the Kremlin's aspirations towards global leadership. Following this reasoning, Russian mortality data were compared

[11] Ruth Dixon-Mueller and Adrienne Germain, "Population Policy and Feminist Political Action in Three Developing Countries", *Population and Development Review* 20 (1994): 197-219

[12] E. M. Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", Studies on Russian Economic Development 33 no.4 (2022): 409-421

with those of low-income nations due to third-world mortality levels registered in the country. Then, urban population growth rates encompassing global, regional, high-income, and upper-middle-income countries were retrieved from the World Bank Databank[13].

Section 1.1 is dedicated to the examination of key Russian demographics, with a focus on population growth and the composition of the population over time. To contextualise Russia's demographic role within the IS, figures were analysed both in absolute and relative terms. The progressive erosion of the country's share of the global population was indicated through the comparison of total population numbers for the years 1980 and 2020, as retrieved from the World Bank[14]. Looking at the top ten most populous countries for the years 1980 and 2020, the main changes that occurred within these forty years were highlighted. Then, national, regional, and global growth rates were calculated based on World Bank data and compared to those relative to high-income countries[15]. Urbanisation levels and urban population growth were also discussed, taking advantage of the World Bank Databank and, for the Russian urban and rural population, Rosstat data[16]. Thus, data on Russian urbanisation were compared to values registered in high-income and upper-middle-income countries. Subsequently, forecasts of Russia's population growth were assessed by deploying Rosstat minimum, medium, and maximum variant projections[17]. These growth rate estimates were then decomposed to investigate the individual contribution of net migration and natural increase. Therefore, the age and sex composition of the Russian population were examined in light of the intersection of mortality, fertility, and migration. To display whether Russia's age and sex distribution align with those observed on average in developed countries or not, we deployed population pyramids relative to the year 2023. For the purpose of the analysis, developed countries were here exemplified by Europe. Rosstat data were then retrieved to present forecasts of Russia's age distribution for the period 2024-2046, highlighting the expected erosion of its working population[18]. Still making use of Rosstat data, sex imbalances in the distribution of the Russian population were addressed by looking at the share of the female population throughout time[19].

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[13] Urban population growth (annual %), World Bank Data Bank, retrieved March 2024
[14] Population, total, World Bank Data Bank, retrieved March 2024
[15] Population growth (annual %), World Bank Data Bank, retrieved March 2024
[16] *Demografiya - Chislennost' i sostav naseleniya, Chislennost' naseleniya (*Demography - Population size and composition, Population size*)*, Rosstat, retrieved March 2024
[17] *Demografiya - Demograficheskiy prognoz, Izmenenie chislennosti naseleniya po variantam prognoza* (Demography - Demographic forecast, Changes in population size according to forecast scenarios) Rosstat, retrieved March 2024.
[18] *Demografiya - Demograficheskiy prognoz, Chislennost naseleniya po otdelnym vozrastnym gruppam* (Demography - Demographic forecast, Population size by age group), Rosstat, retrieved March 2024.
[19] *Demografiya - Chislennost' i sostav naseleniya, Chislennost' muzhchin i zhenshchin* (Demography - Population size and composition, Number of males and females), Rosstat, retrieved March 2024.

First, the extent of the imbalance was assessed by comparing national figures with those of high-income, upper-middle-income, global, and regional populations. Except for national data, retrieved from Rosstat, such figures were gathered from the World Bank Databank[20]. Second, sex ratios (females per 1000 males) across five-year age groups were presented concerning the years 1979, 1989, and 2002, as well as the timeframe 2004-2020[21]. Notably, data for the years 1980-1988, 1990-2001, and 2003 were not considered as they were unavailable. Third, Rosstat's minimum, medium, and maximum variant projections for the period 2024-2046 were investigated to estimate expected sex imbalances[22].

In Section 1.2, Russian mortality patterns were examined by making use of both pre-existing studies and primary data sources retrieved from the World Bank DataBank and Rosstat. As to primary data, we mostly relied on the World Bank DataBank, while Rosstat figures were mainly used to present urban and rural differentials in life expectancy. Here is a brief overview of the main indicators examined. First, mortality rates disaggregated by sex for the period 1974-2014 were taken from the World Bank DataBank[23]. In so doing, Russian figures were examined along with those registered on average in high-income, upper-middle-income, and low-income countries, as well as globally. Similarly, life expectancy at birth relative to the timeframe 1973-2021 was examined in parallel, comparing Russian data to those of high-income and upper-middle-income nations, as well as globally. These data were then used to calculate yearly variations in life expectancy for the world, Russia, and high-income and upper-middle-income countries. Then, we examined life expectancy at birth disaggregated by sex relative to the investigation period 1974-2021 for Russia, the world, and high-income and upper-middle-income countries[24]. Hence, the Russian life expectancy indicator was decomposed by looking at the average life expectancy for urban and rural populations for the years 2000-2020, as retrieved from Rosstat[25]. Eventually, a qualitative investigation of Russian men's disproportionate mortality burden was conducted in light of contributions provided by existing studies.

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[20] Population, female (% of total population), World Bank DataBank, retrieved March 2024.

[21] *Demografiya - Chislennost' i sostav naseleniya, Chislo zhenshchin na 1000 muzhchin sootvetstvuyushchey vozrastnoy gruppy* (Demography - Population size and composition, Number of females per 1000 males in the corresponding age group), Rosstat, retrieved March 2024.

[22] *Demografiya - Demograficheskiy prognoz, Chislennost muzhchin i zhenshchin* (Demography - Demographic forecast, Number of males and females) Rosstat, retrieved March 2024.

[23] Mortality rate, adult, male (per 1000 male adults); Mortality rate, adult, female (per 1000 female adults), World Bank DataBank, retrieved March 2024.

[24] Life expectancy at birth, female (years); Life expectancy at birth, male (years); Life expectancy at birth, total (years), World Bank DataBank, retrieved March 2024.

[25] *Demografiya - Estestvennoe dvizhenie naseleniya, Ozhidayemaya prodolzhitelnost' zhizni pri rozhdenii* (Demography - Natural population change, Life expectancy at birth), Rosstat, retrieved March 2024.

Similarly, an examination of fertility trends encompassing Soviet and post-Soviet times was carried out throughout Chapter 2. The division of the chapter into two parts mirrors the overall scope of the research to combine quantitative and qualitative tools of analysis. Therefore, Section 2.1 features the investigation of demographic indicators related to fertility, live births, and methods of contraception. First, we conducted a comparison of TFR encompassing Russia, the global average, the Europe and Central-Asia region, and upper-middle-income and high-income countries based on World Bank data. In so doing, our examination covered the timeframe 1973-2021. Subsequently, our focus shifted to the average age of Russian mothers at birth by birth order, still referring to the period 1970-2021. For this purpose, we retrieved data from secondary sources – a table from Sergey Zakharov and a graph from Statista. Similarly, data on abortion procedures and live births relative to the years 1960-2015 were gathered from Vishnevsky, Sakevich, and Denisov. Further data supporting the analysis of fertility trends can be found in Appendix 4. Conversely, Section 2.2 mainly consists of a qualitative investigation of the legal, sociological, and political aspects concurring in the definition of Russia's demographic policy. Finally, Chapter 3 is dedicated to the investigation and discussion of the pronatalist policies implemented by Russian policymakers in Soviet and post-Soviet times. In so doing, Section 3.1 presents the main programs and measures dedicated to improving fertility in the country, thanks to authoritative contributions of the literature such as Sergey Zakharov's and Tomas Frejka's. Lastly, Section 3.2 serves the purpose of analysing and evaluating the Kremlin's response to population decline, still taking advantage of remarkable studies conducted by Russian scholars and experts in Russian population studies.

Chapter 1:

1.1 Presenting Russian Demographics

The main features of the Russian demographics will be examined here by taking advantage of the existing literature. Population decline in the country will thus be discussed by leveraging the theory of demographic transition: developed countries' decline should be considered a natural consequence of development, which allowed advanced nations to go from high to low fertility and mortality rates[26]. This theoretical framework explains high fertility as a reaction to high mortality and low fertility as a response to economic development. That being said, this causal link was nuanced by subsequent reformulations of the theory which identified economic development as a sufficient – yet not necessary – cause of fertility decline and acknowledged the importance played by sociocultural factors in influencing changes in fertility patterns[27]. Russia's decreasing population growth rates and subsequent loss in its share of the total global population are indeed consistent with the general trend observed in other industrialised countries, therefore confirming the demographic transition theory. Nevertheless, it will be suggested that the peculiar dynamics of the Russian population decline might be attributed to additional factors. The combination of unusually high mortality and below-replacement fertility – inadequately counterbalanced by net migration – will be identified as the major contributor to the Russian population crisis[28]. Hence, Rosstat's projections of national growth rates will be presented to illustrate the individual contribution estimated for, respectively, natural increase and net migration, the two variables influencing variations in the number of a population from one year to another.

Total population

According to World Bank data, over 4.4 billion people inhabited our planet in the year 1980. At the time, Russia accounted on its own for 139 million people, representing 53% of the Soviet population, 17,53% of the Europe and Central Asia region, and over 3% of the total global population. As evidenced in **Figure 1**, by the year 1980, most of the world's population came from the East Asia and Pacific region, which was over twice as much as the second most populated area, that of Europe and Central Asia. Looking at the most populous countries, China

[26] John Robert Weeks, *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues* (Cengage, 2015).
[27] Ibid.
[28] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62 & "The Dying Bear: Russia's Demographic Disaster", *Foreign Affairs* 90 no.6 (November/December 2011): 95-108; Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421; The Economist, "Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse" (March 4, 2023).

was already approaching 1 billion people on its own, while Russia ranked 5th, being almost more than twice as populated as Germany, the second European country on the list.

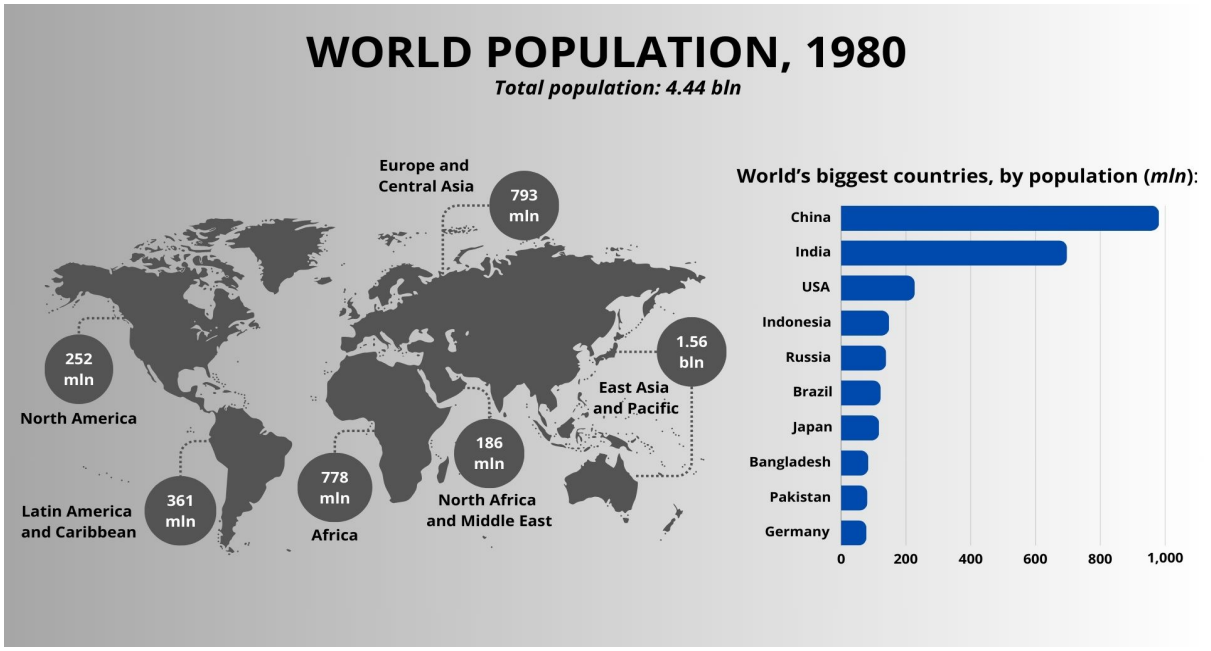

Figure 1 – World population distribution in 1980
Source: author's elaboration from World Bank data

Nevertheless, Russia's share of both the global and regional population appears considerably downsized when looking at data relative to the year 2020. In four decades, the total population worldwide got close to reaching 8 billion, and its distribution considerably altered that of the 1980s. Forty years later, Russia accounted for only 1,84% of the world population, and its regional share went down to 15,62% as well. Although it was still by far the most populous country in the region, it lost four positions in the global ranking, moving down from the fifth to the ninth place. Hence, the distribution of world population had shifted in favour of the global South, as highlighted in **Figure 2**. In 2020, almost 36% of mankind lived in either China or India, while the third most populous country, the USA, lagged far behind them. Furthermore, the demographic size of the African continent – North Africa aside – triplicated in forty years, reaching over 2.3 billion people. The USA, Russia, and Japan are currently the only three developed countries among the top 10 displayed in **Figure 2**; according to projections, the USA could be the only country still featured in this ranking by 2050, while

Russia and Japan will likely be replaced by developing countries[29]. Other things equal, Russia is indeed expected to go down to 15th place in fifty years, according to UN projections[30].

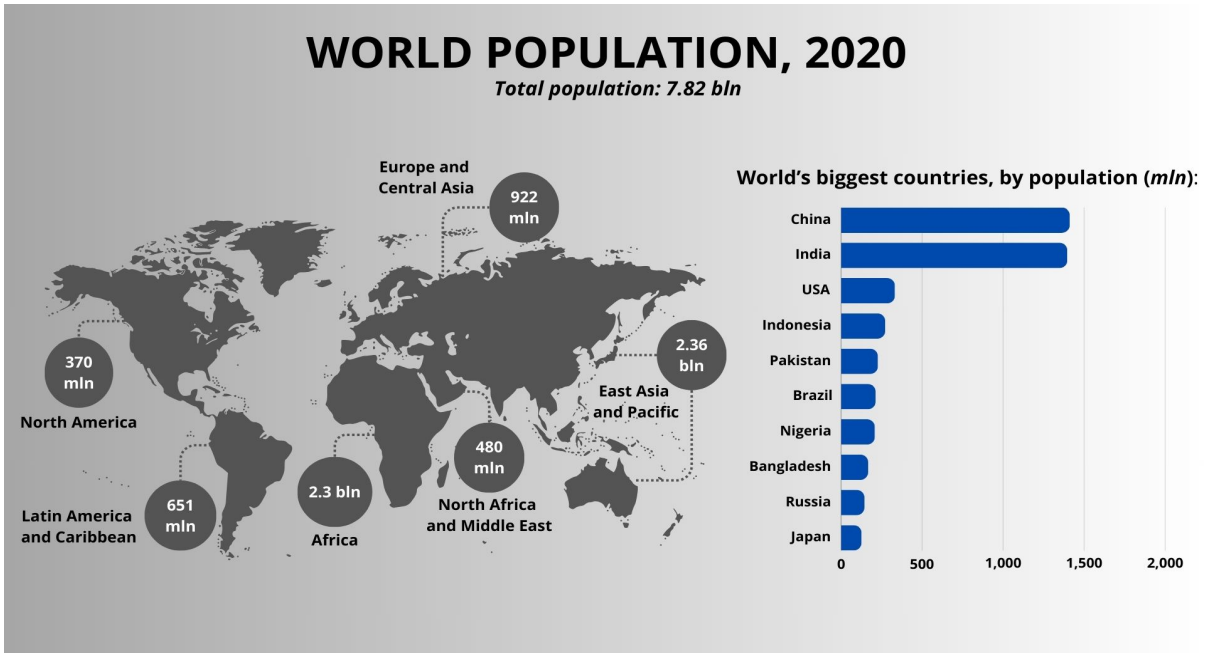

Figure 2 – World population distribution in 2020
Source: author's elaboration from World Bank data

The demographic epicentre has shifted from developed to developing countries, which host over 80% of the global population to the present day. According to scholars, changes in the distribution of the population will drive regional shifts concerning economic activity, reducing the relative influence of countries experiencing depopulation[31]. Within this framework, Russia's relative downsizing showed no significant deviation from the declining trajectory common to most developed countries. Thus, where does the serious concern expressed by demographers and policymakers regarding the future of Russian demographics come from? Emerging countries are growing at an extraordinary pace, thus increasing their share of the global population at the expense of industrialised countries, which are, on their part, decreasing their growth rate. Whether it derives from one part experiencing accelerated growth or the other encountering deceleration, looking at countries' shares inevitably implies that an increase in one's share comes at the expense of one another's. Thus, reasoning in terms of relative distribution means thinking within the framework of a zero-sum game. Nevertheless,

[29] Weeks, *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues.*
[30] The Economist, "Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse".
[31] Ibid.

it is crucial to keep in mind that relative decline does not necessarily imply an absolute drop: while all developed countries are encountering the former, only a few of them – pioneered by Russia – are currently struggling because of the latter.

Our world is currently undergoing a slow but transformative geodemographic revolution in the face of three main elements: population growth, longevity, and birth decline[32]. As to population growth, it is crucial to keep in mind that all above-zero variations in population levels represent an increase in the total number of people. Hence, declining growth rates might not necessarily indicate that a population is decreasing but rather that it is increasing at a slower pace. Contrarily, below-zero growth rates are the ones responsible for a decrease in the absolute numbers of a population. Negative growth rates are the major cause of concern for demographers and policymakers as they are expected to cause a vicious cycle of depopulation, which is extremely difficult to revert. According to the literature, the world population is increasing exponentially, compared to the past: it took over two million years to reach 1 billion people, during the 20th century, but now the global population has been growing by a further billion every 15 years[33]. As observed in **Figure 2**, this led to an increase of over 3 billion people in 40 years. Nevertheless, nowadays, global growth rates are declining, dropping from 1975's 1,86% to 2022's 0,79%. Within this framework, high-income countries grew at an average pace of 0,67%, following analogous patterns of growth. Similarly, the Europe and Central Asia region always maintained positive levels of growth rate, yet lower than high-income countries and significantly lower than the global average. Although Russia's population decline causes major concern, this phenomenon is not a unique prerogative of the country. Indeed, most Eastern European countries have been experiencing sharper negative trends compared with the rest of the continent, especially since the beginning of the 21st century. This trend is particularly concerning in Ukraine, whose indicators were consistently lower than Russia's throughout the last two decades, not even mentioning the devastating impact of the war on the total Ukrainian population. In 2001, Russia and Ukraine registered a population growth rate of, respectively, -0,42% and -1,01%, while the gap only slightly decreased in 2019, when they recorded -0,05% and -0,53%[34]. Although this research repeatedly stressed the peculiarities of the Russian demographic crisis, it is important to acknowledge that fellow Eastern European countries present similar demographic challenges. This element further backs the idea that the ongoing

[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Population growth (annual %), World Bank Data Bank.

Russian demographic crisis is heavily influenced by socio-cultural elements, generally common to post-Soviet countries as part of their historical heritage.

As illustrated in **Figure 3**, Russia's trajectory does not contradict the global tendency toward slower rhythms of growth. Most importantly, the country consistently registered negative levels of population growth from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. Although positive figures were registered since 2009, growth levels remained close to zero and went back to negative percentages in 2018. This partial recovery is generally attributed to the combination of increased immigration from former Soviet countries and the issuing of national policies to incentivise childbearing[35]. Over the last thirty years, the country experienced a sustained decline at an unusually fast pace, occasionally showing temporary signs of recovery. Population decline is far from being the heritage of the defeat of communism. Notably, Russia first experienced depopulation during the period 1917-1923, in concomitance with the political revolution that resulted in the establishment of the USSR[36]. Then, a second wave of population decline happened in 1933-1934 after Stalin's forced collectivisation of agriculture; after that, a third wave took place in the 1940s due to the devastating advent of World War II[37]. Hence, the sustained population decline of the 1990s can be seen as the fourth wave of a phenomenon whose roots trace back to the beginning of the century. Still, Nicholas Eberstadt underlines the peculiar nature of the latter, which followed a sustained path of gradual decline, lasted over twice or even three times longer than the previous ones, and did not happen under conditions of terror, war, or revolutionary upheaval, but rather under "orderly social and political circumstances"[38].

[35] The Economist, "Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse".
[36] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb": 51-62, p.35.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

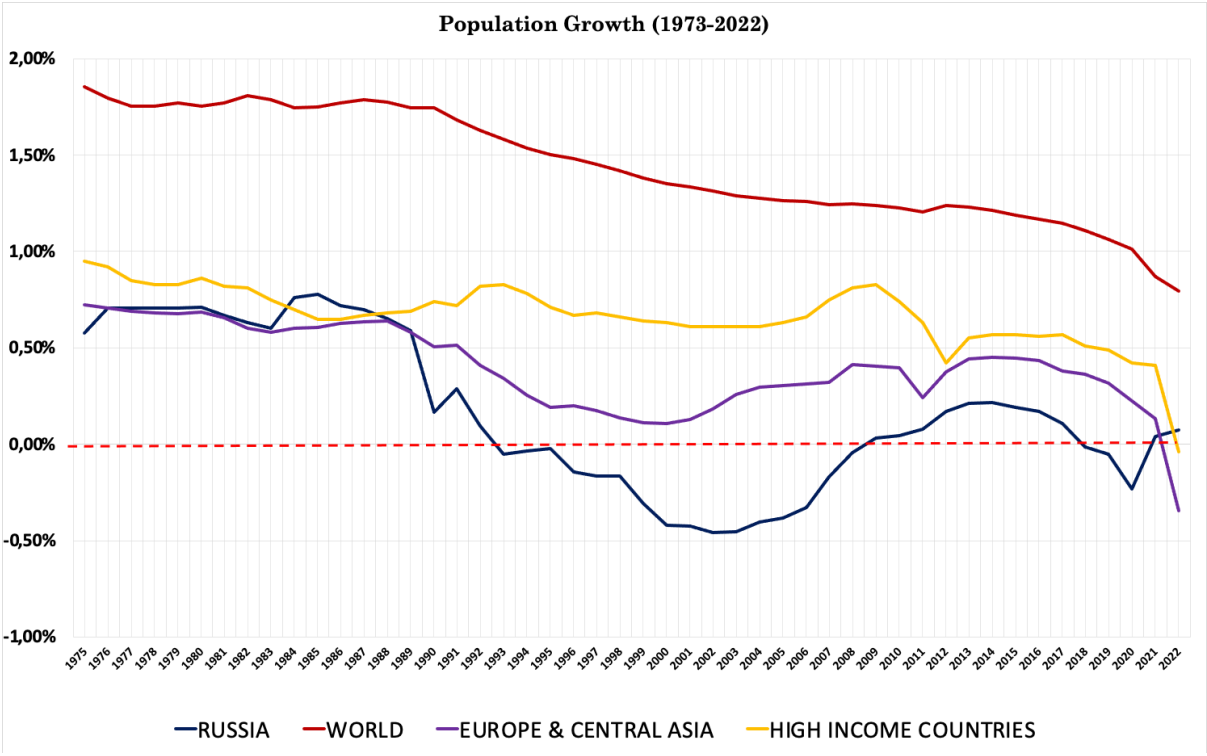

Figure 3 – Comparing population growth rates: world, Russia, Europe & Central Asia, and high-income countries (1973-2022)
Source: author's elaboration from World Bank data

Note: The population growth rate for year t is calculated as the exponential population growth from year t-1 to year t, expressed in percentage (World Bank DataBank).

Over the last twenty years, Russia has been considered a lower-middle-income, upper-middle-income, and high-income country[39]. This irregular pattern of economic development hinders clear classification and the subsequent comparison with similar countries. Taking into consideration the time interval 1973-2022, urbanisation in the country has risen from 64% to 76%. In so doing, its urbanization path mirrored that of developed countries, at least until the beginning of the 21st century, when the country began to follow a much more stagnant pace than that of high-income countries. In those 50 years, the latter registered, on average, a +13% increase in urbanization, going from 1974's 69% to reach almost 82% in 2022. As to Russia, in that same year, its urbanisation rate (76%) placed it somewhere in the middle between upper-middle-income (68%) and high-income countries. This ambivalence clearly indicates Russia's peculiarity within the international arena, as it will also be discussed below in relation to mortality. Namely, Russia's urban population growth appears much lower than that registered in high-income and upper-middle-income countries, as well as the average of European and

[39] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.

Central Asian ones (see **Appendix 1**). Precisely, the Russian indicator even presents negative values during the timeframe 1996-2007. This is explained by the fact that those were indeed the years in which Russia's population decline peaked: when overall population growth rates are declining, urban population growth rates are indeed expected to decline, as well.

To better grasp Russia's inclination toward population decline, an examination of minimum, medium, and maximum forecasts of the Russian population growth will be here presented. **Figure 4** represents the three possible scenarios of growth concerning the period 2025-2046 and is constructed based on Rosstat's projections; as evidenced in the graph, a pronounced tendency toward depopulation can be identified. According to Rosstat's predictions, the Russian population will indeed decrease at an average pace of -0,51% (minimum projection) and -0,23% (medium projection). The maximum projection seems little encouraging, as well, as it presents an average growth rate of merely 0,14% in the upcoming years and predicts a positive trajectory only starting from 2032.

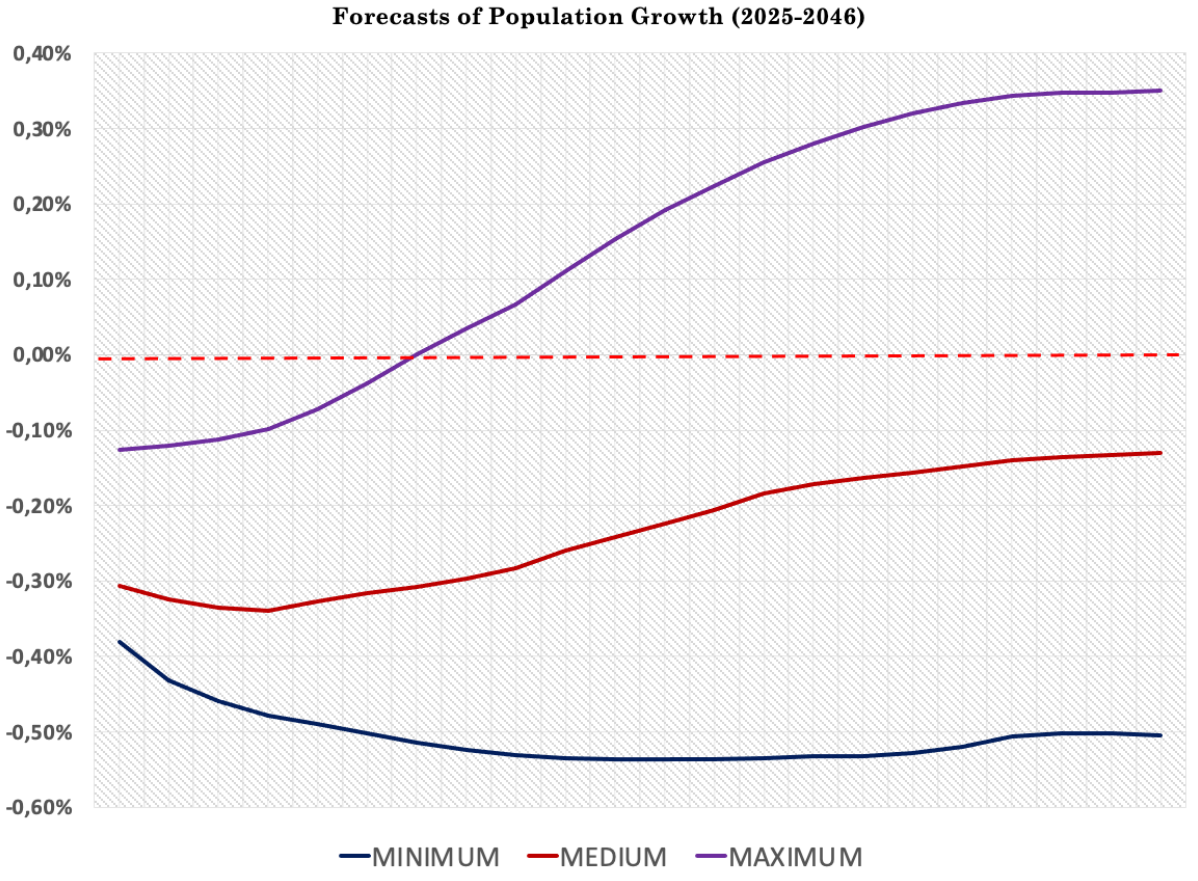

Figure 4 – Projected population growth in Russia (2025-2046): minimum, medium, and maximum variants
Source: author's elaboration from Rosstat data

Changes in the size of a population depend on the intersection of two variables: natural increase and net migration. Given that both variables were projected separately by Rosstat, it is then possible to analyse the role played by each of them in causing annual variations. In other words, the projected growth rate will be here decomposed to investigate the individual role played by net migration and natural increase in determining it. Thus, **Figure 5** shows the estimated population increase solely attributed to net migration for the next 20 years. Minimum forecasts speculate that net migration will contribute to a consistent annual increase of almost 0,11%. Similarly, medium variant projections expect a net migration-led population growth of around 0,15% per year. The positive role played by net migration is more substantial according to maximum projections, which estimate a yearly increase higher than 0,25% starting from 2030.

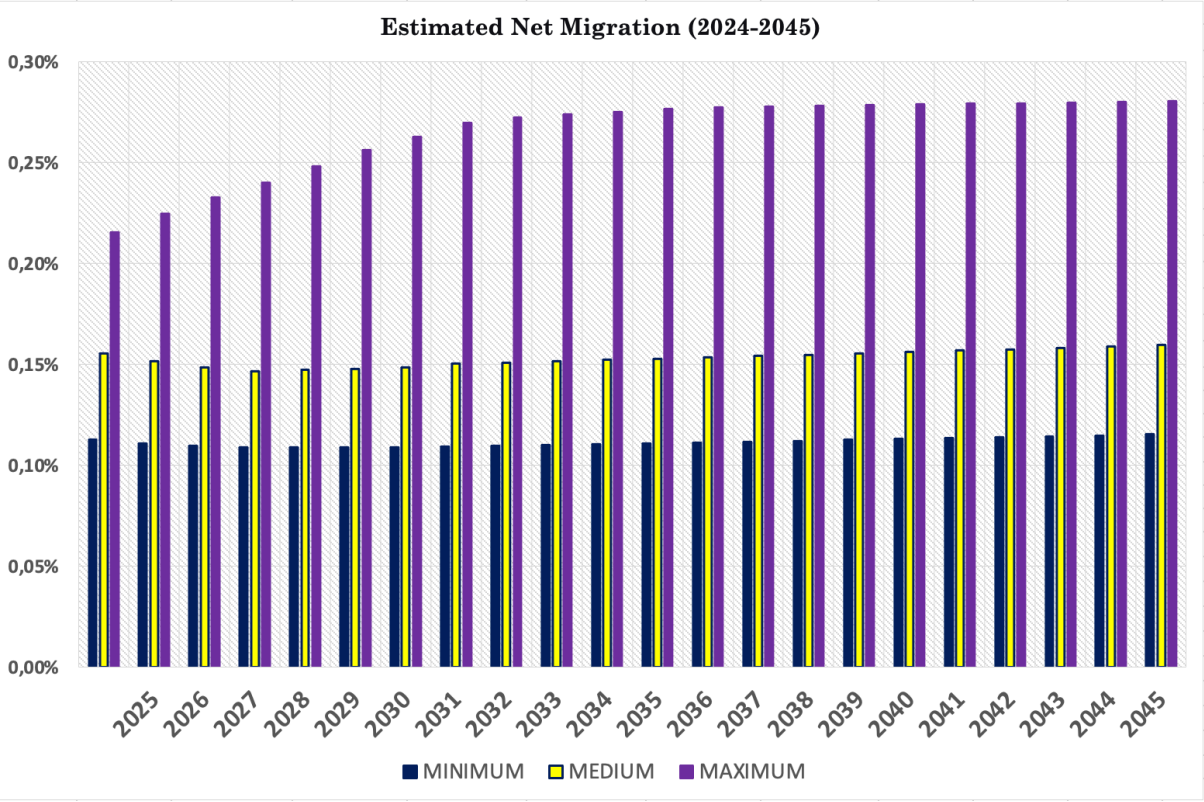

Figure 5 – Net migration's influence on Russia's population growth: minimum, medium, and maximum projections (2025-2046)
Source: author's elaboration from Rosstat data

Nonetheless, the positive role played by net migration appears significantly downsized when compared with the adverse effects of births and deaths on population projections.

Precisely, the negative patterns of growth of the Russian population derive from excessive natural decrease and insufficient levels of net migration, which is unable to adequately cushion it. Even though the country has always benefited from immigration from neighbouring post-Soviet countries, young Russians are leaving the country in search of better life conditions and opportunities. In this respect, 10% of the working population left in 2022: most of them were young men, thus contributing to further skew the Russian sex ratio[40]. As displayed in **Figure 6**, current growth rates would be even more detrimental if not compensated – although partially – by net migration. In recent years, natural decline has indeed taken considerable proportions: in the biennium 2020-2021, deaths outnumbered births by 1.7 million, and the total population growth registered -1.3 million people, meaning that net migration provided only little compensation[41]. The natural decline registered in 2020 (-702 thousand people) was over twice as much as that of the previous year. In 2021, the indicator went up to 1043 thousand people, surpassing the peak value of 959 thousand people that had been registered in 2000[42]. On top of that, the situation appears even more dire when adding statistics relative to the ongoing invasion of Ukraine. To the present day, the Ukraine war was responsible for approximately 60-70 thousand Russian casualties, more than those of all post-WWII wars combined. Alongside deaths, it also caused the massive exodus of up to 1 million young – and educated – males from the country[43]. As to the latest estimates, war-related deaths and migration outflows, alongside pandemic losses, caused over 1.9-2.8 million additional losses during the period 2020-2023[44].

[40] The Economist, "Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse".
[41] Ibid.
[42] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[43] Max Boot, "Russia's population crisis is making Putin more dangerous", The Washington Post (March 14, 2023).
[44] The Economist, "Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse".

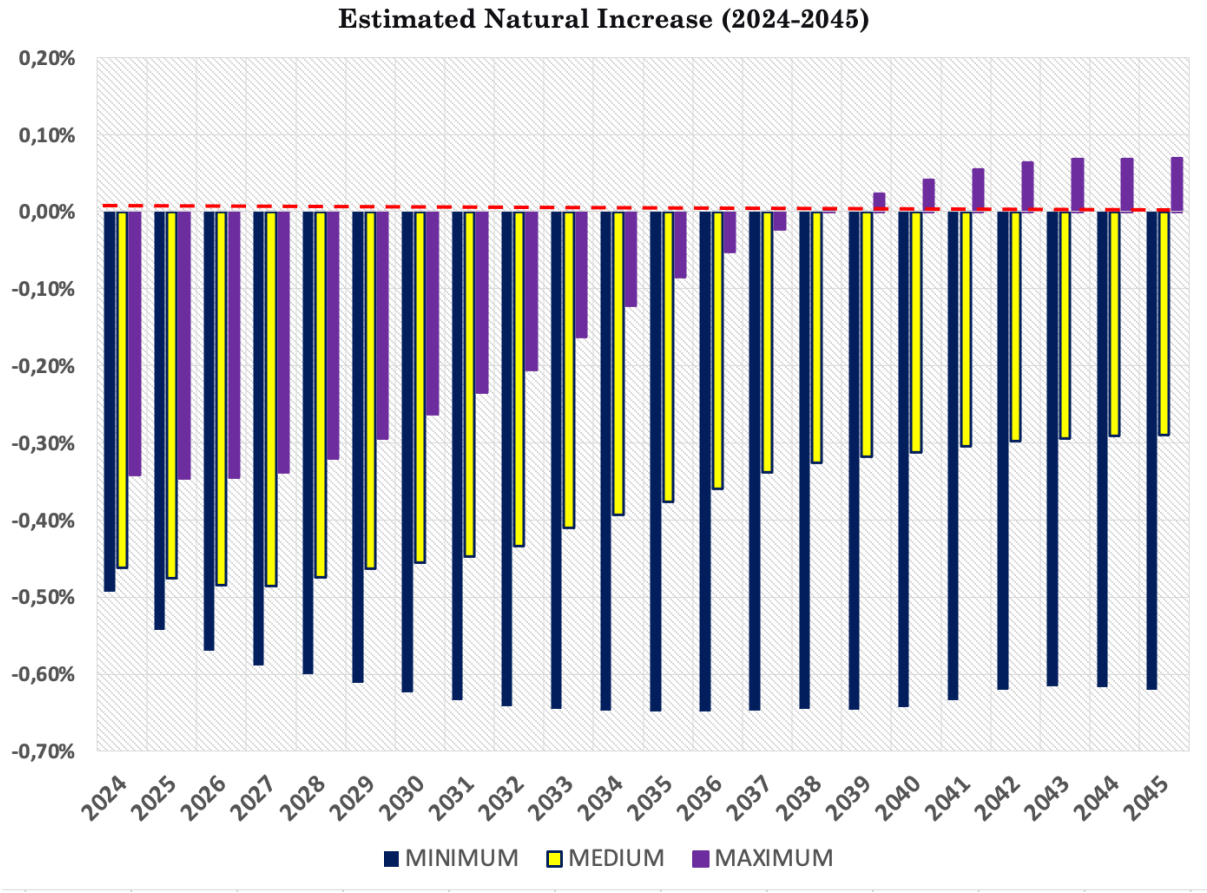

Figure 6 – Natural increase's influence on Russia's population growth: minimum, medium, and maximum projections (2025-2046)
Source: author's elaboration from Rosstat data

Russia is not new to deaths outnumbering births as this has been happening almost every year since the collapse of the USSR, peaking in 1999-2002 with a natural decline of almost a million people per year[45]. Rosstat statistics indeed predict that Russian society will still be characterised by net mortality in the upcoming years, as deaths are expected to increasingly outweigh births[46]. Namely, Eberstadt indicates that there will be over 9.5 million excess deaths to births for the cumulative period comprising the years 2011-2030[47]. Had there not been the migration component, the Russian population would have been expected to decrease at an average pace of -0,62% (minimum variant), -0,39% (medium variant), and -0,12% (maximum variant). Once acknowledged that, one might suggest that higher levels of net migration could indeed compensate for the great negative impact of natural decrease on

[45] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[46] Eberstadt, "The Dying Bear: Russia's Demographic Disaster", 95-108.
[47] Ibid.

population growth. Notably, leaving aside the period 2013-2016, net migration has been the only factor allowing overall population growth in the years 1994 and 2009-2017, or at least cushioning the impact of natural decline[48]. As to Eberstadt, net migration brought an increase of 10 million people to the Russian population – leaving Crimea aside – in the face of a natural decrease of 15.4 million people between 1993 and 2021[49]. Looking at these figures, one might suggest that massive immigration flows could represent the only immediate solution to such a prolonged tendency toward population decline. Nevertheless, over things equal, this scenario seems highly unlikely in today's Russia. Back in 2007, attempts were made to liberalise migration laws, but they were soon mitigated by restrictive measures which imposed higher requirements for foreigners and had greater chances of resulting in corruption[50]. To the present day, migration is complicated by widespread xenophobic sentiment and diffidence, especially regarding non-Slavic or non-European newcomers[51]. Furthermore, the historical flow of Ukrainian immigrants to Russia seems to have halted because of Russia's troubled economy and – most importantly – the invasion of the country[52].

Hence, decomposing population growth rates indeed demonstrated the negligible contribution of net migration, which is projected to remain close to zero for the next two decades. Most importantly, it highlighted the pivotal role played by deaths and births in shaping future patterns of growth. First, sustained below-replacement fertility emerged as a major contributor to past, current, and expected decline in the Russian population[53]. Second, elevated mortality rates and unusually low life expectancy exacerbate the challenges posed by low fertility, worsening the situation. Precisely, a decreasing working-age population, caused by reduced childbearing and ageing population combined, will naturally result in higher death rates and fewer births, thus fueling a vicious cycle of population decline. To better grasp this dynamic, the next section will investigate the age and sex structure of the Russian population, highlighting the main areas of concern.

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[48] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[49] Ibid.
[50] V. Malakhov and M. Simon, *The political economy of Russian migration politics*, Preprints (2016) & Labour migration policy in Russia: Considerations on governmentality. *International Migration*, 56 no. 3: 61–72 as reported by Rza Kazimov and Sergei Zakharov, Combating Low Life Expectancy and Low Fertility in Tumultuous Political Times: A Comparison of the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, in *Global Political Demography* (August 2021): 401-427.
[51] S. Sievert, Sergei Zakharov, & R. Klingholz, *The Waning World Power: The demographic future of Russia and the other Soviet successor States*. Berlin Institute for Population Development (2011), as reported by Kazimov and Zakharov, Combating Low Life Expectancy and Low Fertility in Tumultuous Political Times: A Comparison of the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus: 401-427.
[52] Kazimov and Zakharov, Combating Low Life Expectancy and Low Fertility in Tumultuous Political Times: A Comparison of the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus: 401-427.
[53] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.

Composition of the Russian population

Both the age and sex structure of societies are influenced by the interaction of three democratic variables: fertility, mortality, and migration. Given that migrants tend to be young males, positive net migration could represent significant growth potential, while massive migration outflows from the country would further aggravate age-dependency and sex imbalances. Notably, migration-induced changes produce quicker effects on the demographic composition of societies than those related to mortality and fertility. On its part, increasing life expectancy is likely to result in an ageing population, thus further exacerbating sex imbalance. Most importantly, fertility is considered to have the greatest long-term impact on the age structure of a population since it is believed that a decline in childbearing is the major factor responsible for an increase in the share of elderly people[54]. This section thus aims to present the main features of Russia's age and sex structure, paying special attention to their implications regarding mortality and fertility trends. As widely accepted among demographers, the ageing transition is an inevitable process concerning almost every society worldwide. Arguably, societies tend to shift from having a very young population where females exceed males to an older one where the proportion is inverted. Generally, more boys are born than girls, while women live longer than men[55]. Like every other developed country, today's Russia presents an ageing population, along with population decline and low levels of fertility[56]. Notably, Russia's population pyramid does not differ significantly from that of other European nations: far from having a classic pyramidal shape, typical of countries entering the first stages of the demographic transition, they both show a tendency toward a barrel shape, which is a distinctive feature of ageing societies[57]. Such traits are evident in **Figure 7,** which features a comparison of the two population pyramids for the year 2023.

Older people represent a growing share of the global population due to a general trend of decreased fertility levels and lower mortality, especially in developed countries. Nonetheless, Russia has the peculiarity to present both "long-term preservation of waveform determination of the age structure" and pronounced gender imbalances at the top of the pyramid[58]. Recalling U.S. Census Bureau projections, Eberstadt states that, in 2025, the Russian share of the global working-age population will drop to 1,6%, registering a 0,8%

[54] Weeks, *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues.*
[55] Ibid.
[56] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[57] Weeks, *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues.*
[58] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421, p.411.

decline from 2005 data[59]. Looking at Rosstat's minimum variant projections, in 2045, Russia is expected to lose over 7 million young people (aged 0-15) in comparison to 2025, dropping from 26 to 19 million. In relative terms, this would mean losing 4% of their share of the total population, falling from 18% to 14%. Medium and maximum variant projections show only little divergence from such figures, estimating a more nuanced decline of, respectively, 5 million (3% share loss) and 3 million people (3% share loss). Contrarily, minimum projections predict the number of old people will remain stable at 35 million, still gaining 2.5% of their share of the total population. When considering medium and maximum variant projection, the estimated increase goes up to, respectively, 2 million (2.5% share gain) and 7 million people (4% share gain)[60].

Historically speaking, ageing societies not only raise significant challenges in terms of social reforms and healthcare systems but also suggest potential economic backlash[61]. Besides, the ageing transition inevitably slows the pace of population growth and reduces the share of working-age people, thus increasing the dependency ratio. According to the literature, the country is expected to reach growing levels of dependency in the upcoming years. This situation is typical of countries with either young or old age structure since they both have a relatively high proportion of people either below or above the working age[62]. According to Shcherbakova, the increasing age-dependency ratio implies that the next generation will have to come up with the implementation of adequate healthcare and social policies[63]. Furthermore, there will be only 6.4 million Russian women aged 20-29 in 2025, 45% less than in 2011. Given that women in their 20s account for almost 66% of childbearing in Russia, this steep decline might have extremely harsh consequences on the number of births[64]. Notably, the reduction in the total number of women of reproductive age, alongside their evolving fertility intentions, further hinders any attempt to reverse natural decrease. Due to below-replacement fertility, young cohorts are going to be increasingly smaller and more longevous than their predecessors. The combination of these two aspects is likely to cause higher dependency and subsequent greater economic pressure on the working-age population[65]. As mentioned, depopulation in Russia mainly comes from a combination of below-replacement fertility and excess mortality. On their hand, these two variables are closely linked to the age and sex

[59] Eberstadt, "The Dying Bear: Russia's Demographic Disaster", 95-108.
[60] For further data, see **Appendix 2**.
[61] Weeks, *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues.*
[62] Ibid.
[63] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[64] Eberstadt, "The Dying Bear: Russia's Demographic Disaster", 95-108.
[65] Weeks, *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues.*

structure of the population. This is particularly true for fertility, which is considered the major contributor in terms of long-term changes in the age structure[66]. Hence, population decline inevitably leads to an ageing population, which in turn provokes higher deaths and fewer births, aggravating depopulation. This deadly spiral is further enhanced by Russia's incapacity to increase life expectancy – especially of middle-aged and older males – thus exacerbating natural population decline and the unbalanced sex composition of the population[67]. As to the latter, a general overview of the sex structure of the Russian population will be now presented, while a deeper examination of the intricate relationship between high mortality and skewed sex ratios will be featured in **Section 1.2**.

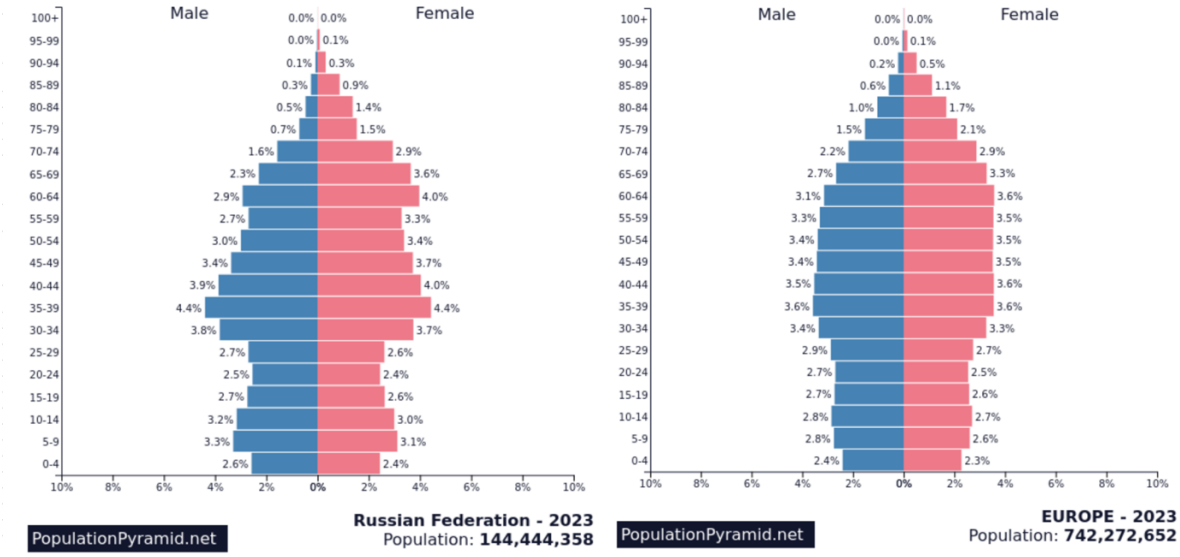

Figure 7 – Population pyramids of Russia and Europe compared (2023)
Source: Population Pyramid[68]

Russia aligns well with developed countries – here exemplified by Europe – as they all show a growing tendency towards an ageing population. Looking at similar patterns of age distribution, one might thus suggest that Russia's demographic path is perfectly consistent with that observed on average in industrialised nations. Still, the Russian pyramid appears much more unbalanced in terms of sex differentials than its counterpart, especially concerning the upper section. Hence, two main facts can be retrieved from the graph in **Figure 7**: Russian women exceed their male counterparts (I), especially at elderly stages of life (II). Both findings

[66] Ibid.
[67] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[68] Population Pyramids of the World from 1950 to 2100, Population Pyramid, retrieved March 2024.

should come as no surprise, given that they mirror consolidated global demographic patterns. Nevertheless, once again, it is the magnitude of the phenomenon rather than the phenomenon itself that makes Russia stand out among other countries. Hence, a more accurate statement would be that sex imbalances due to women outnumbering men are more pronounced in Russia than in similar countries, and the exacerbation of this phenomenon at elderly ages is far higher than in other developed nations. However, similar values are registered throughout Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic Republics. All these countries indeed presented a female share of the population of nearly 54% throughout the last twenty years, perfectly aligning with the trend observed in Russia[69].

During the last five decades, the global population has remained almost perfectly balanced between females and males, and so have upper-middle-income and high-income countries on average[70]. Similarly, between 1970 and 2022, 52% of the population of the Europe and Central Asia region was female. Contrarily, Russian women have regularly accounted for 54% of the national population; in 2021, there were 121 adult females for every 100 men[71]. According to the latest Rosstat data, the Russian population presents an unbalanced proportion of female over male inhabitants of the country[72]. Notably, young boys slightly outnumber girls, which is perfectly consistent with global trends. However, men aged more than 40 are significantly fewer than their female counterparts, especially at elderly stages of life (people aged over 64): over the last two decades, on average, there have been over 240 women for every 100 men. Thus, the relative share of Russian women over men grows substantially through life stages, to the extent that women aged over 64 are more than twice as many as their male counterparts. This phenomenon concerns both urban and rural populations, although slightly nuanced in the latter, where the average falls to 230 women for every 100 men. Rosstat predicts that such sex imbalance will persist at least until 2046, estimating a female proportion of 53,58% (minimum variant), 53,47% (medium variant), and 53,29% (maximum variant) for the next twenty years. This already unbalanced sex ratio is likely to be further worsened by the war in Ukraine as many young males are either dying on the battlefield or fleeing the country. As previously mentioned, this would also aggravate age-dependency issues since it would further enlarge the share of older people at the expense of the working-age population. Hence, the examination of the population structure and general trends leads to the conclusion that the

[69] Population, female (% of total population), World Bank DataBank, retrieved March 2024.
[70] For further data, see **Appendix 2**.
[71] The Economist, "Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse".
[72] *Demografiya - Chislennost' i sostav naseleniya, Chislennost' muzhchin i zhenshchin* (Demography - Population size and composition, Number of males and females), Rosstat, retrieved March 2024.

sharp decline of the Russian population primarily stems from natural decrease. Once acknowledged that, further examination of mortality and fertility trends will be provided below. First, an overview of past and current trends in Russian mortality will be presented in the following section, paying particular attention to the pronounced gender differentials observed in the country. Then, the determinants and implications of Russian fertility trends will be extensively investigated throughout **Chapter 2.**

1.2 "The Dying Bear"

Russia's mortality crisis has been extensively addressed by the existing literature due to its evident misalignment with countries sharing similar socio-economic characteristics[73]. No thorough examination of the impact of COVID-19 and the Ukraine war will be carried out here for two primary reasons. First, the reliability of data regarding these two dramatic events is questionable, especially concerning the ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Moreover, a more comprehensive understanding of these events might likely emerge in the upcoming years. Second, the scope of the present analysis is to provide a concurrent explanation for the sustained population decline which has been affecting Russia for the last thirty years, irrespective of any calamity. Indeed, the present research is concerned with understanding the enduring pattern of orderly circumstances rather than the short-term impact of major catastrophic events. Hence, mortality indicators will be discussed mainly in terms of the pronounced differentials between men and women. Notably, demographers tend to agree on the identification of the major contributors to such low life expectancy compared to other industrialised countries: heavy alcohol consumption and subsequent deaths caused by traumatic accidents or circulatory and ischemic diseases[74]. Such high levels of preventable mortality suggest that unhealthy personal choices such as smoking and drinking habits, as well as an unbalanced diet, are responsible for most of the excess death rates and lower life

[73] Eberstadt, "The Dying Bear: Russia's Demographic Disaster", 95-108 & "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62; Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.

[74] Eberstadt, "Health and Mortality in Central and Eastern Europe: Retrospect and Prospect": 198-225 (1994) in *The Social Legacy of Communism*, Carl Haub, "Population Change in the Former Soviet Republics", Population Bulletin, 49 (1994), Vladimir Shkolnikov and Alexander Nemtsov, "The Anti-Alcohol Campaign and Variations in Russian Mortality" (November 1994), Vladimir Shkolnikov, "Recent Trends in Russian Mortality: 1993-1994" (October 1995), Taie Kaasik, Lars-Gunnar Horte, Ragnar Andersson, *Injury in Estonia: An Estonian-Swedish Comparative Study* (1996), Theodore H. Tulchinsky and Elena A. Varavikova, "Addressing the Epidemiologic Transition in the Former Soviet Union: Strategies for Halth System and Public Health Reform in Russia", *American Journal of Public Health* 86:313-20, as reported by William C. Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, Journal of Health and Social Behaviour 38, no.2 (June 1997): 117-130.

expectancy in the country[75]. Therefore, various studies confirmed that biological differences influence Russia's gender differentials. Nevertheless, the latter are too pronounced to be determined by biology only, implying that social factors might play a significant role in shaping such demographic patterns. William Cockerham highlighted the role played by social factors in restricting or even determining life choices according to actual life chances[76]. Still, in the demographic literature, we did not find any thorough examination of the pronounced reverse gender inequality in Russia's life expectancy. Russian men's outstanding levels of mortality are never really questioned or addressed as a structural issue rooted in the perpetuation of pronounced gender dynamics. Hence, Cockerham's lifestyle explanation for Russia's high mortality will be here discussed considering the sustained institutionalisation of gender roles and expectations in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts.

The Russian mortality crisis

As recalled by Eberstadt, Russia has been celebrating more funerals than baptisms since the aftermath of the Cold War[77]. Precisely, Russia underwent economic transformations during the 1990s while also observing a sharp increase in mortality rates, especially for men of working age with relatively low levels of education[78]. In turn, the economic growth experienced in the 2000s was accompanied by significant mortality decline, especially among the working-age population. As widely accepted among demographers, it is inevitable for developed countries to encounter high mortality due to their ageing population. Nevertheless, Eberstadt asserted the unique nature of the Russian case as it had been long experiencing high, unstable, and even rising mortality levels[79]. Furthermore, he reported that Russia's toll of deaths was nearly three times higher than what would be predicted by its GDP in 2009. Looking at mortality rates by sex, Russia differs from the average registered in high-income and upper-middle-income countries for both females and males; most importantly, figures relative to Russian men are comparable with those observed in low-income countries. Here, a brief overview of data relative to the years 1980 and 2000 will be presented to exemplify the enduring nature of Russia's peculiar positioning within these four macro-groups[80]. In 1980, the

[75] Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, 117-130; Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[76] Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, 117-130.
[77] Eberstadt, "The Dying Bear: Russia's Demographic Disaster", 95-108.
[78] Zlatko Nikoloski, Vladimir Shkolnikov, Elias Mossialos, "Preventable mortality in the Russian Federation: a retrospective, regional level study", The Lancet regional health. Europe vol. 29. (19 Apr. 2023).
[79] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[80] For further data, see **Appendix 3**.

mortality rate observed in Russian women (135 per 1000 women) was lower than the global average and midway between the average of high-income (96) and upper-middle-income (171) countries. Conversely, Russian men's mortality (362 per 1000 men) was lower than that of low-income countries (405) yet much higher than the global average (268) and that of high-income (187) and upper-middle-income (263) countries. Things become even more interesting when examining data retrieved from the year 2000: mortality rates increased in Russia only and for both genders, while all four groups registered a decrease in mortality for both females and males. Notably, a mortality rate of 443 for every 1000 men was registered for Russia, more than three times as high as the average of high-income countries (136) and more than twice that of upper-middle-income nations (198). Most importantly, it was also slightly higher than that registered on average in low-income countries (369). As to Russian women, their mortality rate (158) was slightly higher than the global average (146) but only half that relative to low-income countries (311). Nevertheless, Russia's overall mortality rate has been following a downward path since 2006, falling from 15.2 to 12.3, until the pandemic came[81].

The situation appears considerably more dire when adding COVID-related mortality into this framework, considering that Russia ranked 4th globally in terms of COVID-19 deaths[82]. In 2020, COVID caused the death of almost 145 thousand people in Russia, accounting for 6,8% of total deaths and outnumbering the share of deaths from external causes (6,5%); accordingly, Shcherbakova reported that a significant increase was registered for other major death causes such as not only respiratory diseases (+63%) but also mental disorders (+25%) and maternal mortality (+24%)[83]. Hence, it was demonstrated that the negative impact of the pandemic considerably affected the health and mortality framework both directly and indirectly. Although working-aged people accounted for only 15% of deaths, 73% of them were men[84]. Acknowledging that official statistics might underestimate the pandemic's impact on the Russian population, The Economist estimated approximately 1.2-1.6 million excess deaths for the period 2020-2023[85]. According to them, this would make Russia the second largest country worldwide for COVID deaths – after India – and that with the highest COVID-related mortality rate (850-1100 deaths per 100,000 people). The excess mortality indicator displays the deviation of the number of deaths registered during the pandemic from the average

[81] Statista Research Department, *Death rate in Russia 1950-2022, r*etrieved september 2023.
[82] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] The Economist, "Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse".

number of deaths registered in previous years[86]. Hence, it includes deaths which might be indirectly associated with the disease while also accounting for the absence of deaths derived from collateral variables such as a decrease in car accidents due to restricted circulation[87].

Valuable insights into the wealth and longevity of the Russian population can also be retrieved by looking at the life expectancy indicator. In this respect, Russia presents profound divergences with fellow developed countries, showcasing the ambiguity of having first-world fertility but third-world mortality. In 2009, Russian people's life expectancy at age 15 was lower than that estimated for Madagascar and Yemen, while adult life expectancy was even lower than in Sudan and Rwanda[88]. Although women were generally more longevous, their mortality rate in 2009 was still similar to that registered in Bolivia, the poorest South American country[89]. This phenomenon was found to disproportionately affect men, who die on average 18 years earlier than in Japan and 6 years earlier than in Bangladesh[90]. **Figure 8** graphically represents the geographical configuration of life expectancy among countries for the year 2021, as retrieved from the World Bank DataBank[91]. Comparing figures relative to the total and male population particularly pertains to our analysis as it indicates the pronounced sex discrepancies observed among post-Soviet countries. Once again, it also demonstrates how the Russian case, although emblematic, does not differ much from that of other former members of the USSR.

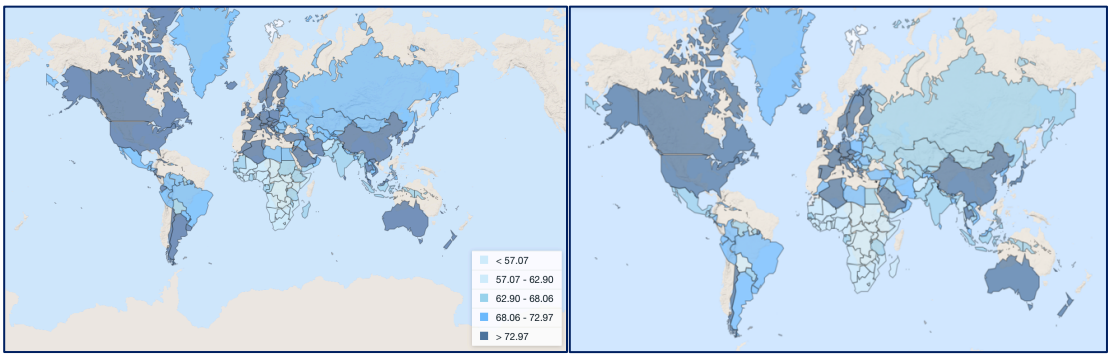

Figure 8 – Life expectancy worldwide (2021): total population (left), male population (right)
Source: World Bank DataBank

[86] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Eberstadt, "The Dying Bear: Russia's Demographic Disaster", 95-108.
[89] Ibid.
[90] The Economist, "Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse".
[91] For further data, see **Appendix 3**.

The sharp decline of life expectancy at birth in Russia peaked after the collapse of the USSR, to the extent that, in 2006, it was 3 years lower than it had been in 1964[92]. Between the mid-1950s and early 1960s, Russian life expectancy was indeed increasing; nonetheless, its sustained growth suddenly halted in 1964, even starting to decrease steadfastly[93]. Slight improvements were then reached under Gorbachev in 1986-1987, while a considerable decline followed the collapse of the USSR between 1991-1994. A rise in life expectancy levels can be attributed to Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign, which significantly boosted male life expectancy during the mid-1980s[94]. Precisely, in 1987, male life expectancy increased to 65 years, reaching 1960s levels and significantly improving compared to early 1980 figures. Furthermore, the dismantling of the campaign coincided with a return to below 65 years – precisely, 64,2 years – of life expectancy on average for Russian males by 1989[95]. Conversely, the early 1990s brought a considerable downward acceleration in life expectancy, interrupting the slow but sustained upward trend registered in the country between 1960 and 1989 and leading to below 1960 levels of life expectancy. According to Cockerham, Russian women's average life expectancy fell from 74.3 (1991) to 71.1 years (1994), while Russian men's dropped from 63.5 (1991) to 57.5 years (1994)[96]. After the collapse of the USSR, life expectancy embarked on an unstable trajectory of ups and downs, deviating not only from those observed on average in high-income and upper-middle-income countries but also from the world average. In this respect, **Figure 9** displays yearly improvements in life expectancy derived from World Bank data. The line graph illustrates that Russian data stand out as they follow an irregular path marked by unpredictable fluctuations, which distinguish them from more uniform patterns observed globally and in high-income and upper-middle-income countries.

[92] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Andreev, Life Expectancy and Causes of Death in the USSR in *Demograficheskiye processi v SSSR*: 90-116 (1990), Ponarin, Adult Mortality and Alcohol Consumption in Russia (March, 1996), Shkolnikov and Nemtsov, "The Anti-Alcohol Campaign and Variations in Russian Mortality" (November 1994), as reported by Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, Journal of Health and Social Behaviour 38, no.2 (June 1997): 117-130.
[95] Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, 117-130.
[96] Ibid.

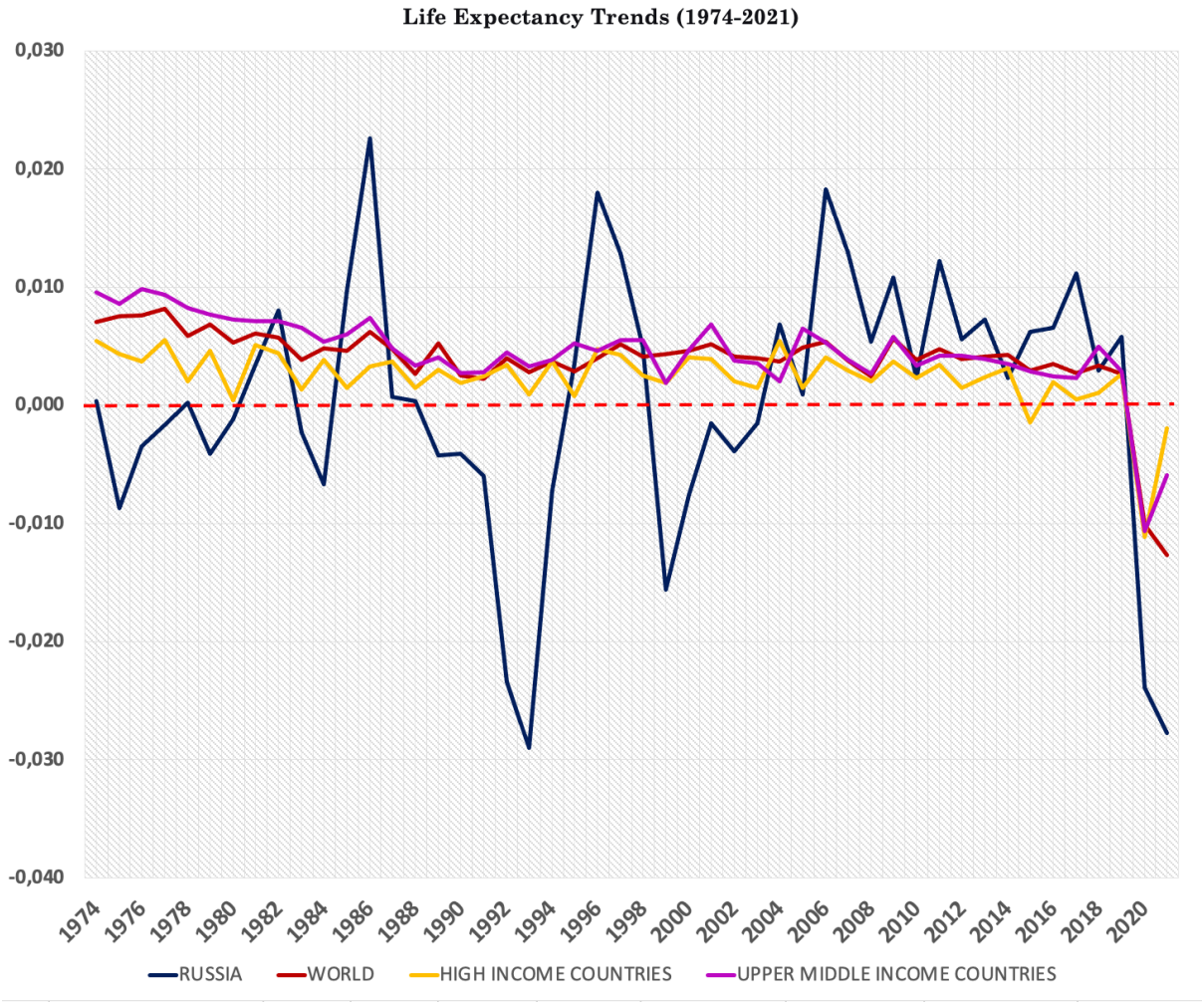

Figure 9 – Life expectancy at birth fluctuations (1974-2021) for Russia, world, high-income, and upper-middle-income countries
Source: author's elaboration from World Bank data

Compared to other developed countries, Russia has been falling behind in terms of life expectancy at birth since the mid-20th century, when its values remained almost still while global figures started experiencing steady growth[97]. Increases were mainly caused by the declining child and infant mortality; according to Shcherbakova, the former decreased from 21‰ to 5.5‰ over the last thirty years. On the other hand, figures relative to life expectancy at age 60 position Russia behind the global average and slightly above the least developed countries[98]. Life expectancy at 60 used to exceed the average of developed countries until the 1970s, when the indicator started stagnating. Then, the indicator went from stagnation to decline in the 1990s to the extent that early 2000s values fell to 16,2 years, slightly below those

[97] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[98] Ibid.

registered almost fifty years before[99]. Since then, the indicator started improving, but it never actually managed to cope with the global average; according to Shcherbakova, in 2015-2020, UN estimates indicate that life expectancy at age 60 in Russia was 19,6 years, below the global average (20,7) and that of developed countries (23,4)[100]. Furthermore, the Russian life expectancy at birth for men and women combined reached 70 years for the first time in history only in 2012[101]. Shcherbakova reported that Russia registered 64,2 years, exceeding of merely 0,5 years the global average but still lagging behind the average of high-income countries (-5,6 years) and upper-middle-income countries (-2,8 years). This lag in healthy life expectancy at birth was even greater for Russian men[102]. As already mentioned with mortality rates, such results thus compel us to assess the historical issue of substantial gender-driven disparities.

Russia's gender gap in life expectancy

Russian data on life expectancy have long been characterised by outstanding sex differentials. Although it is statistically normal for women to outlive men, especially in developed countries, Russian women tend to live almost ten years more than their male counterparts, and similar patterns can be observed in most post-Soviet countries. As shown in **Figure 10,** differentials in the country peaked in 1994, reaching almost 14 years. The graph also displays the peculiar nature of this gap, which has been significantly surpassing those registered worldwide and in high-income and upper-middle-income countries since the mid-20th century. Precisely, in Russia, women have been consistently outliving men by 10 years on average. This gap is much wider than that registered globally and in high-income and upper-middle-income nations, which generally ranges between 4 and 6 years.

[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Sergey Timonin, Inna Danilova, Evgeny Andreev, Vladimir Shkolnikov, "Recent mortality improvements in Russia: are regions following the same tempo? *European Journal of Population*: 733-763 (2017).
[102] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.

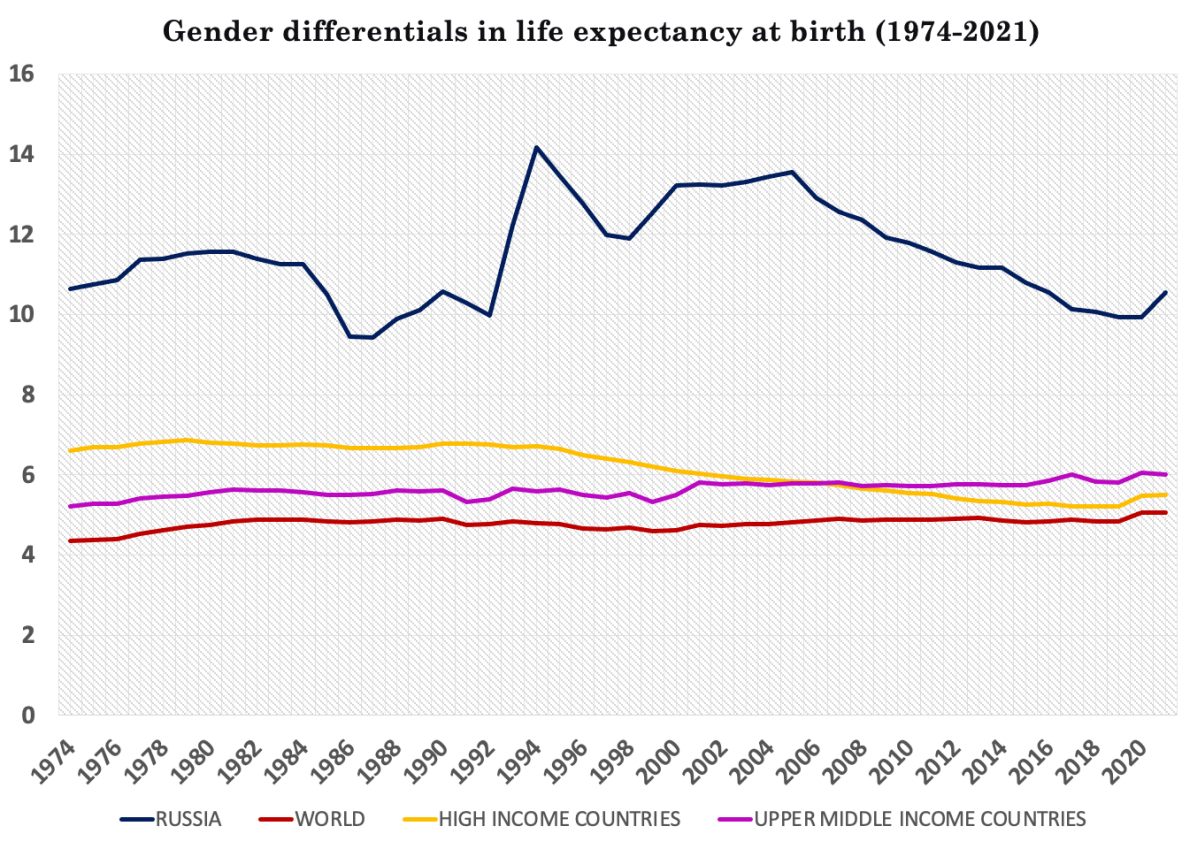

Figure 10 – Gender gap in life expectancy at birth in Russia, world, high-income and upper-middle-income countries
Source: author's elaboration from World Bank Data

Leaving comparisons aside, it is worth noting that great disparities in life expectancy are an endemic characteristic of Russian society. Accordingly, **Figure 11** displays absolute life expectancy values at birth for Russian men and women throughout the last 50 years. As indicated by the histogram, Russian women have been continuously expected to live, on average, 10 years more than their male counterparts. Absolute values (expressed in years) show that female life expectancy has reportedly been surpassing the 70-year threshold, while male life expectancy fell below 60 years in 1993-1996 and again in 1999-2005. Furthermore, in 2019, the indicator peaked for both sexes, registering 78 years for women and 68 for men.

Figure 11 – Life expectancy at birth in Russia by sex (1974-2021)
Source: author's elaboration from World Bank Data

Compared to 1965 figures, in 1984, male life expectancy dropped from 64.4 to 61.7 years – almost 3 years lower – while female life expectancy slightly improved, rising from 73 to 73.8 years[103]. During the late 1980s, allegedly as a result of Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign, life expectancy increased, recovering to 1960s levels for men and even exceeding them for women[104]. Nevertheless, the sudden termination of the campaign, coupled with the political and economic turmoil of the early 1990s, resulted in a sharp decline in life expectancy which heavily impacted men. Life expectancy in the country hit a record low in 1994, at 57,4 years for men and 71,7 years for women, also registering the greatest gap in life expectancy between genders, nearly 14 years (**Figure 10**). Then, slight improvements were registered in 1994-1998, recording an increase of 2,1 years for women and 3,8 years for men[105]. This

[103] Timonin, Danilova, Andreev, Shkolnikov, "Recent mortality improvements in Russia: are regions following the same tempo?: 733-763.
[104] Shkolnikov and Nemtsov, The anti-alcohol campaign and variations in Russian Mortality in "Premature deaths in the new independent states": 120-155 (1997), as reported by Timonin, Danilova, Andreev, Shkolnikov, "Recent mortality improvements in Russia: are regions following the same tempo?: 733-763.
[105] Timonin, Danilova, Andreev, Shkolnikov, "Recent mortality improvements in Russia: are regions following the same tempo?: 733-763.

progress was followed by another downturn from 1998 to 2002, which was reverted since 2003 in a steady upward trend[106]. In the aftermath of the Cold War, Russian men's life expectancy began lagging more and more behind to the extent that, by the early 2000s, Russian men were expected to live more than 6 years less than the global average[107]. Between 1993 and 2005, their life expectancy hardly reached 60 years, going back to figures observed in 1955-1960, while the indicator for women stabilised around 72 years[108]. According to Shcherbakova, in 2015-2020, Russian women were expected to live almost 3 years more than the global average[109]. Conversely, Russian men were expected to die almost 3 years earlier than the global average. As to World Bank data, between 2019 and 2021, life expectancy decreased for both men and women worldwide, in Russia, and upper-middle-income and high-income countries. Nevertheless, the magnitude of this downward trend, which can be considered a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, differs among various groups of countries. While high-income ones experienced only a slight drop, statistics indicate a 2-year decrease both worldwide and in upper-middle-income countries. Contrarily, Russia's drop (-4 years for both men and women) in life expectancy mirrored the extremely high COVID mortality in the country. However, World Bank data indicate that Russia eventually managed to revert life expectancy almost to pre-pandemic levels, re-establishing life expectancy values of 67,57 years for men and 77,77 years for women. Looking at data by area of living, slight discrepancies among rural and urban populations can still be found, as displayed in **Figure 12**. In this respect, Rosstat data indicate that rural populations experience slightly lower life expectancy compared to urban ones. Besides, differences in life expectancy by sex tend to be less pronounced in urban settings, except for the pandemic period (2020-2021). Nevertheless, despite minor variations, official statistics indicate no major discrepancies in the overall life expectancy levels of rural and urban populations in the country.

[106] Ibid.
[107] For further data, see **Appendix 3**.
[108] World Bank Data Bank, Life expectancy at birth, female (years); Life expectancy at birth, male (years); Life expectancy at birth, total (years), retrieved March 2024.
[109] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.

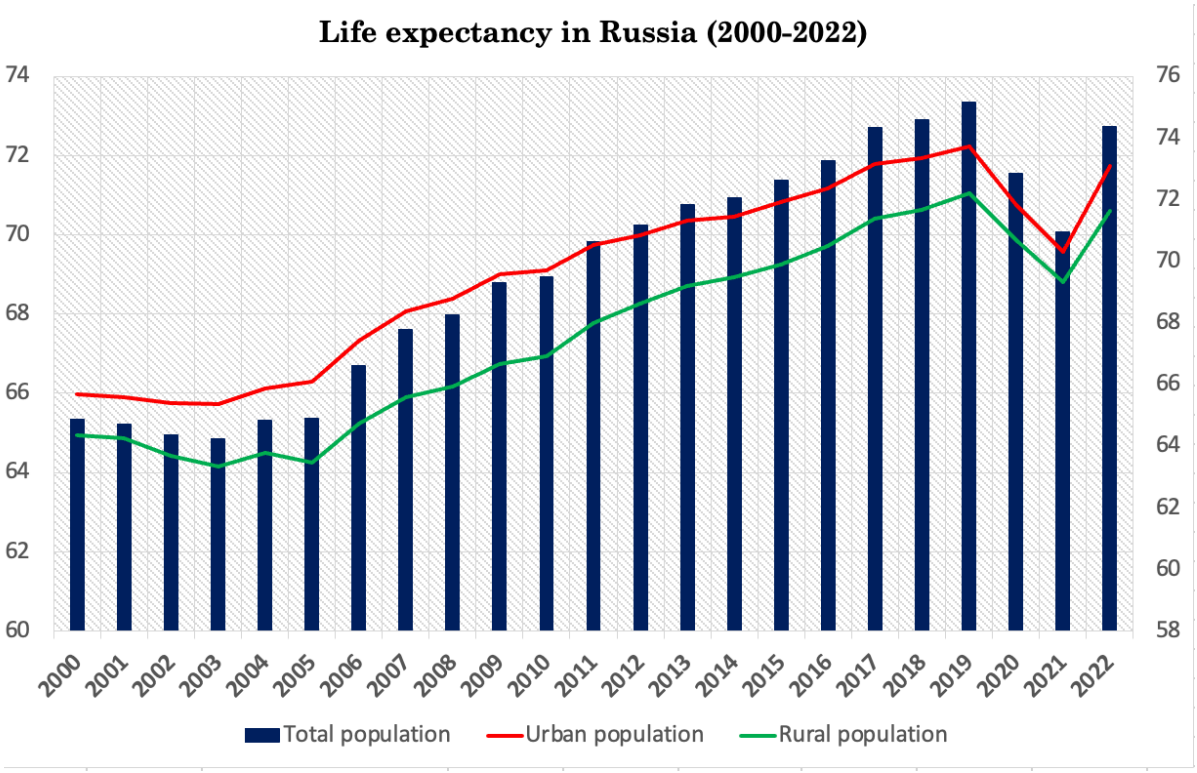

Figure 12 – Life expectancy at birth (years) in Russia for the period 2000-2022: urban and rural populations
Source: author's elaboration from Rosstat data

Given the exceptional and enduring nature of such patterns of mortality, numerous studies investigated the matter, attempting to grasp the underlying motivations which make the Russian case so peculiar. In so doing, primary causes of death should be identified to see if countries sharing similar socio-economic characteristics present significant variations. Developed societies tend to share the same major death causes; hence, their people generally die due to chronic diseases such as cancer, strokes, or even cardiovascular diseases rather than because of infectious illnesses[110]. Still, in Russia, infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV cause serious concerns as well. Besides, Russia is the only developed country struggling to keep mortality relatively stable and achieving progress in enhancing health conditions[111]. Although the causes of death in Russia tend to align with those of other industrialised countries, the explanation for its excess deaths lies in extremely high mortality related to cardiovascular diseases – namely, ischemic heart diseases and strokes –and traumatic external causes –

[110] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[111] Ibid.

homicides, suicides, and accidents[112]. Historically, these two factors have been identified as the major contributors to relatively low life expectancy in Russia and the explanation for mortality discrepancies with Western countries. Notably, a strong correlation between varying mortality, especially of working-aged males, and changing levels of alcohol consumption in the country was suggested[113]. This was especially true for the period 1980-mid 1990s when alcohol consumption – along with inadequate medical facilities – was held accountable for the rapidly increasing mortality rates in the country[114]. Precisely, a correlation was found between decreased alcohol consumption and increased longevity following Gorbachev's mid-1980s anti-alcohol campaign, both for females (+1.3 years) and males (+3.2 years)[115]. Although it was considered the most effective countermeasure to excessive alcohol consumption in the country, this policy's lack of consistency refrained it from producing long-term effects and resulted in the re-establishment of previous levels of consumption after the end of Communist rule[116]. By the early 2000s, Russia's pattern of violent deaths was comparable to that of an impoverished or post-conflict sub-Saharan society such as Angola or Burundi[117]. Although preventable mortality has been declining in Russia for the last 20 years, presenting a decrease of 247 preventable deaths per 100,000 people per year between 2000 and 2018, Russian data is still not comparable to most high-income OECD countries[118]. Deaths caused by diabetes, HIV, and viral infections have been increasing, while those induced by cancer and cardiovascular or alcohol-related diseases were progressively decreasing – although maintaining significant gender differentials[119]. Moreover, various studies found heterogeneity

[112] Eberstadt, "Health and Mortality in Central and Eastern Europe: Retrospect and Prospect", 198-225, Shkolnikov and Nemtsov, "The Anti-Alcohol Campaign and Variations in Russian Mortality" (November 1994), Shkolnikov, "Recent Trends in Russian Mortality: 1993-1994" (October 1995), Kaasik, Horte, Andersson, Injury in Estonia: An Estonian-Swedish Comparative Study (1996), Tulchinsky and Varavikova, "Addressing the Epidemiologic Transition in the Former Soviet Union: Strategies for Halth System and Public Health Reform in Russia" 86:313-20, as reported by Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, Journal of Health and Social Behaviour 38, no.2 (June 1997): 117-130.
[113] Pavel, Grigoriev & Evgeny Andreev, The Huge Reduction in Adult Male Mortality in Belarus and Russia: Is It Attributable to Anti-Alcohol Measures? (2015).
[114] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[115] Shkolnikov & Nemtsov, "The Anti-Alcohol Campaign and Variations in Russian Mortality" (November 1994), as reported by Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, Journal of Health and Social Behaviour 38, no.2 (June 1997): 117-130; Shkolnikov & Nemtsov, The anti-alcohol campaign and variations in Russian Mortality in "Premature deaths in the new independent states": 120-155 (1997), as reported by Timonin, Danilova, Andreev, Shkolnikov, "Recent mortality improvements in Russia: are regions following the same tempo?: 733-763.
[116] Grigoriev & Andreev, The Huge Reduction in Adult Male Mortality in Belarus and Russia: Is It Attributable to Anti-Alcohol Measures?
[117] Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[118] Nikoloski, Shkolnikov, Mossialos, "Preventable mortality in the Russian Federation: a retrospective, regional level study".
[119] Ibid.

among regional subjects as rural and remote oblasts showed less favourable improvements[120]. A similar path of regional heterogeneity had already been registered in the 2000s, when mortality decreased throughout the country thanks to reduced alcohol consumption and smoking, along with improvements in healthcare facilities[121]. Heterogeneity was mainly attributed by scholars to different levels of socioeconomic development and alcohol consumption among regions, as the Northeastern areas of the country performed badly compared to those of the Southwest[122].

However, to fully grasp the reasons behind Russia's high mortality rate and gender differentials in life expectancy, the examination of social and gender factors is also required, alongside that of demographic indicators. During the early 1990s, higher mortality disproportionately affected middle-aged males with manual occupation and living in urban areas[123]. Worsening life expectancy affected men coming from all social and educational groups, although the decline was more pronounced for the least educated ones[124]. The limited timeframe, the absence of a considerable rise in infectious diseases, and the specific increase in chronic illnesses likely linkable to unhealthy behaviour seemed to indicate a social rather than biomedical explanation for this phenomenon[125]. Similarly, pronounced mortality differentials between men and women are likely to stem more from gender – social – rather

[120] Timonin, Danilova, Andreev, Shkolnikov, "Recent mortality improvements in Russia: are regions following the same tempo?: 733-763; ibid.
[121] Nikoloski, Shkolnikov, Mossialos, "Preventable mortality in the Russian Federation: a retrospective, regional level study".
[122] Andreev, Length of life in the USSR: a differential analysis in: Length of life: Analysis and modelling. Moscow: Statistika (1979), Shkolnikov VM. Geographical factors of length of life. Izvestiya. Geographical Series (1987); 3,12:35–44, Shkolnikov and Vassin, Spatial differences in life expectancy in European Russia in the 1980s. In: Demographic trends and patterns in the Soviet Union before 1991. London: Routledge (1994): 379–402, Vassin and Costello, Spatial, age, and cause-of-death patterns of mortality in Russia, 1988–1989. In: Premature death in the new independent states (1997): 66–119, Vallin, Andreev, Meslé, Shkolnikov, Geographical diversity of cause-of-death patterns and trends in Russia. Demographic Research 12, 13 (2005):323–380, Kvasha and Kharkova. Adult life expectancy in Russian regions during the recent decade. Statistical Issues, 8 (2011): 26–41, *as reported by* Timonin, Danilova, Andreev, Shkolnikov, "Recent mortality improvements in Russia: are regions following the same tempo?: 733-763.
[123] William Knaus, Inside Russian Medicine (1981), Elena Mezentseva and Natalia Rimachevskaya, "The Soviet Country Profile: Health of the U.S.S.R. Population in the '70s and '80s – An Approach to a Comprehensive Analysis." Social Science and Medicine 31 (1990):867-7, Carl Haub, Population Change in the Former Soviet Republics." *Population Bulletin*, 49 (1994), Lisa Godek, "The Gender Gap in Ukrainian Mortality." (December, 1995), Shkolnikov, Recent Trends in Russian Mortality: 1993-1994 (October 1995), Theodore Tulchinsky and Elena Varavikova, "Addressing the Epidemiologic Transition in the Former Soviet Union: Strategies for Health System and Public Health Reform in Russia." American Journal of Public Health 86 (1996):313-20, *as reported by* Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, 117-130.
[124] Vladimir Shkolnikov, Sergey Adamets, and Alexander Deev, "Mortality Differentials in the Context of General Mortality Reversal in Russia: The Educational Status (1996), *as reported by* Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, 117-130.
[125] Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, 117-130.

than sex – biological – determinants. This scenario emphasises the role played by external factors in determining life choices, thus questioning the common idea that unhealthy lifestyles merely come from irresponsibility. In so doing, although not neglecting the importance of the latter, this perspective highlights the structural social factors influencing people's lives. Accordingly, a diet lacking in variety, insufficient in fruit and vegetables and excessive in carbohydrates might indeed originate from limited access to quality food[126]. Similarly, scholars claimed that the absence of social stigma associated with drunkenness in post-Soviet culture, coupled with the availability and affordability of alcohol and cigarettes, encourages heavy consumption[127]. In 2014, the WHO's Global Report on Alcohol and Health indicated that Russia was the 4th country in the world for alcohol consumption, awarding it the highest pattern of drinking score (PDS) and estimating that Russian males aged over 15 consumed more than 30 litres of alcohol yearly[128].

Russian men's mortality burden

On average, Russian men die earlier than their female counterparts and with a higher prevalence of violent and alcohol-related fatalities. Although these two elements confirm the global trend, this gender-based disparity is much more pronounced in Russia compared to the world average. This suggests that concurrent social factors might play a considerable role in shaping such pronounced outcomes at the national level. Precisely, this might derive, at least in part, from the perpetuation of traditional gender roles and expectations in Soviet and post-Soviet culture. The Soviet institutionalisation of gender roles assigned women both professional and demographic duties, while men became gradually less integrated into family life[129]. The identification of women as caregivers and domestic angels was left unquestioned by both Soviet and post-Soviet authorities. Conversely, men's role within the family coincided with their role as primary breadwinners, leaving them exposed to having both their public and

[126] Knaus, Inside Russian Medicine (1981), Lesley Chamberlain, The Food and Cooking of Russia (1982), Tulchinsky and Varavikova, "Addressing the Epidemiologic Transition in the Former Soviet Union: Strategies for Health System and Public Health Reform in Russia.", 313-20, John Keep, Last of the Empires. A History of the Soviet Union 1945-1991 (1995), *as reported by* Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, 117-130.

[127] Andrew Nagorski, The Birth of Freedom: Shaping Lives and Societies in the New Eastern Europe (1993), Shkolnikov and Nemtsov, "The Anti-Alcohol Campaign and Variations in Russian Mortality (November 1994), *as reported by* Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation, 117-130.

[128] Grigoriev and Andreev, The Huge Reduction in Adult Male Mortality in Belarus and Russia: Is It Attributable to Anti-Alcohol Measures?

[129] Sarah Ashwin and Tatyana Lytkina, Men in Crisis in Russia: The Role of Domestic Marginalization. Gender and Society (2004), 189-206; Veronica Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood in Intimate Strangers: Commercial Surrogacy in Russia and Ukraine and the Making of Truth (2023*):* 31-55.

private identities undermined in the event of unfavourable job market conditions – declining wages or unemployment[130]. According to Ashwin and Lytkina, this contributes to making men more susceptible to depression and drunkenness, which might, in turn, contribute, among others, to further fueling suicides and violent casualties[131].

The literature indicates that drinking habits vary greatly between Russian men and women, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Precisely, men tend to drink more, at higher frequency, and stronger beverages than women[132]. In this respect, it could be useful to recall the mixed study conducted by Natalia Bobrova in 2010. Indeed, the research came to the conclusion that socioeconomic factors fall short of explaining Russian gender discrepancies in alcohol consumption, which are much heavier than in most countries. Therefore, it suggested a gender explanation for this heightened gap in the country[133]. Alcohol plays a strong social role in post-Soviet countries, and it is common for both men and women in Russia to drink during celebrations and special occasions[134]. Apparently, women's alcohol consumption tends to be limited mostly to social gatherings, while solitary drinking is much more prevalent among men, especially as a means of relaxing after work or to relieve stress. Qualitative interviews conducted in Novosibirsk confirmed that drinking was considered by both male and female respondents as incompatible with femininity and that women experience harsher judgement for drinking as it misaligns with gender expectations. "If you are a woman, you should be a woman", as recalled by a 65-year-old male respondent, and "If people see a drunken man they can smile. But when a woman is drunk it is a terrible scene"[135]. This was mainly justified by women's biological disadvantage in alcohol tolerance and their never-ending domestic duties – and subsequent absence of leisure time. Conversely, according to a 49-year-old female respondent, men have almost no domestic responsibilities, thus they have nothing to do when coming home from work but to stay on the couch and rest[136].

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[130] Ashwin and Lytkina, Men in Crisis in Russia: The Role of Domestic Marginalization. Gender and Society (2004), 189-206.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Bobak et al., Alcohol consumption in a national sample of the Russian population. Addiction, 94 (1999): 857-66, Malyutina et al., Alcohol consumption and bing drinking in Novosibirsk, Russia, 1985-95. Addiction, 96 (2001): 987-95, Pomerleau et al., Hazardous alcohol drinking in the former Soviet Union: a cross-sectional study of eight countries. Alcohol Alcoholism, 43 (2008):351–9, *as reported by* Natalia Bobrova, Robert West, Darya Malyutina, Sofia Malyutina, Martin Bobak, "Gender Differences in Drinking Practices in Middle Aged and Older Russians", Alcohol and Alcoholism 45, 6 (November-December 2010): 573-580.
[133] Bobrova et al., "Gender Differences in Drinking Practices in Middle Aged and Older Russians", 573-580
[134] Bobrova et al., "Gender Differences in Drinking Practices in Middle Aged and Older Russians", 573-580; Grigoriev and Andreev, The Huge Reduction in Adult Male Mortality in Belarus and Russia: Is It Attributable to Anti-Alcohol Measures?
[135] Bobrova et al., "Gender Differences in Drinking Practices in Middle Aged and Older Russians", 573-580, p.577.
[136] Ibid.

Considering the country's strong militarist attitude and propensity to engage in conflict, Russian men's heightened mortality could also be discussed through the lenses of geopolitics and national war propaganda. Since the 1990s, Russian troops have fought in South Ossetia (1991-1992), Abkhazia (1992-1993), Transnistria (1992), Chechnya (1994-1996 and 1999-2009), and Ukraine (2014-ongoing), among others. According to independent observers, the Chechen wars have cumulatively caused over 16.000 casualties among Russian soldiers[137]. The situation becomes even worse when considering the death toll of the Ukraine war: the independent media Meduza estimates that Russia lost over 75.000 soldiers – almost 120 per day – in the special military operation (*Spetsial'naya voyennaya operatsiya)* as of February 2024[138]. Warfare remains a man's world, and this is particularly true in Putin's Russia, a state centred around the exhibition of toughness and the use of force as a means of imposition and coercion[139]. Therefore, it goes without saying that most battlefield casualties are male. Even after the introduction of voluntary military service in the late 1980s, women remain underrepresented in security institutions, especially in leadership positions. Despite the Ukrainian war's heavy demand for soldiers, no large-scale mobilisation was implemented to recruit women, and the limited women's recruitment merely pertained to the roles of snipers and drone operators. Notably, this choice stemmed from the fact that, as evidenced by Jennifer Mathers, these positions required stereotypically feminine traits such as patience and attention to detail. Serving as snipers and drone operators, women also remain distant from the enemy, thus leaving the association of hand-to-hand combat with masculinity unquestioned[140]. Such gender roles were further reinforced by military recruitment campaigns, which explicitly target men and leverage virility. A social media campaign issued in 2023 encourages the (male) potential recruit to join the military using the caption "You are a real man. Be one" (*Ty zhe nastoyashchiy muzhik. Bud' im*)[141]. The video reinforces stereotypes of masculinity by portraying men weightlifting or carrying weapons, then concludes with the message "Serve by contract. Monthly wages from 204.000 rubles" (*Sluzhi po kontraktu! Yezhemesyachnye vyplaty ot 204.000 rub.*). Hence, male targets are encouraged to join the military based on two main drivers: patriotism and economic benefits. These drivers can be further fueled by gender expectations of traditional masculinity given that, since their childhood, men are instilled with

[137] Simon Saradzhyan, Army Learned Few Lessons From Chechnya, The Moscow Times (March 9, 2005).
[138] Meduza, At least 75,000 dead Russian soldiers Meduza calculates that Moscow loses 120 men per day in Ukraine, and the rate isn't slowing after two years of war (February 24, 2024).
[139] Jennifer Mathers, Will Russia Send Women Into Combat In Ukraine? The Moscow Times (November 9, 2023).
[140] Ibid.
[141] NBC News, Russian military encourages 'real men' to step forward in recruitment ad (April 21, 2023). Youtube.

values such as bravery and strength, along with the responsibility to defend their families and their country[142]. In such framing, war represents an opportunity for Russian men to meet these expectations, returning home as heroes and with considerable financial reward. Conversely, women are not expected by the State to risk their lives in combat, being rather ideally relegated to caregiving roles. Arguably, gender inequality shields women from incurring premature battlefield death. Still, it is crucial to keep in mind that this privilege stems from societal limitations.

The social construction of masculinity and femininity can be considered a major contributor to Russia's unique demographic patterns. Men are expected to be the main breadwinners in the family and embody unwavering strength without showing vulnerability of any kind. Societal pressure hence makes them more prone to depression and self-harm, especially in the event of economic hardship[143]. Furthermore, the association of masculinity with heavy drinking has been repeatedly indicated as the main determinant of excess premature deaths via accidents and cardiovascular diseases. Within this framework, a foreign policy heavily leaning on war further contributes, although partially, to fueling higher mortality levels for men, especially considering the strong link between armed forces and masculinity. Women are less exposed to risky behaviour and early mortality patterns seen in men while facing different pressures, such as having children and dedicating themselves to the family. This issue, coupled with the Russian government's promotion of childbearing as the only means to solve population decline, will be extensively discussed throughout **Chapter 2**.

[142] Veronica Neifakh, Toxic waste - How masculine attitudes in Russia affect men, society and warfare. Novaya Gazeta (March 6, 2024).
[143] Ashwin and Lytkina, Men in Crisis in Russia: The Role of Domestic Marginalization. Gender and Society, 189-206.

Chapter 2:

2.1 Fertility in Russia: A Demographic Analysis

Throughout time, the Russian population decline has been extensively framed as a fertility issue by both scholars and policymakers. This section will thus provide an analysis of fertility trends over time, paying particular attention to the passage from Soviet to post-Soviet society. In so doing, we will take advantage of authoritative contributions to the literature, such as Sergey Zakharov's reconstruction of past fertility patterns. First, we will provide a brief examination of the TFR indicator over time, deploying data from both secondary and primary sources – namely, the World Bank Databank and Rosstat databases. Then, the Russian fertility transition of the 1990s will be presented as a turning point for fertility intentions and family formation, as evidenced by declining abortion rates, increased average age at childbearing, and progressively decreasing higher-order parities.

Russia's fertility trends

The TFR (Total Fertility Rate) indicator is an extremely valuable tool for investigating fertility patterns as it represents the average number of children born per woman in a certain year. This indicator is very relevant to demographers and policymakers, who generally auspicate for a TFR equal to or higher than 2.1 (replacement rate TFR) to escape from population decline. In the past, Russian women had extremely high levels of TFR: Russian women born in 1866-1870 had, on average, a TFR of 7.20, while those born 50 years later (the 1916-1920 cohort) had a TFR of 2.46[144]. Looking at data by cohorts, Zakharov indicates two stages of accelerated fertility decline concerning, respectively, women born in 1880-1890 and 1900-1920. While the first can be seen as a result of the radical changes in people's way of life, the second lasted longer and, due to the cumulative impact of WWI and WWII, exacerbated the tendency to limit childbearing as a reaction to uncertain times[145]. Moving towards more recent times, fertility decline started decelerating for parents born between the 1920s and 1950s, eventually stabilising with the establishment of the ideal two-children family model[146]. Afterwards, the collapse of the USSR impacted the already low fertility rates, which started falling precipitously in 1989 and led to a proper population decline. This likely originated from the strong economic and political turmoil of those years, which in turn led to high inflation,

[144] Sergey Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, *Demograficheskoye obozreniye* / Demographic Review 10 no.1 (2023): 4-43.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

considerably decreased production, deterioration of public services, shortage of employment, exacerbated social inequalities, and higher consumption of alcohol and drugs[147]. All those factors combined heavily impacted both mortality and fertility rates to the extent that mortality peaked, especially for men, and births decreased considerably. In 1999, the TFR fell to 1.157, the lowest value recorded in modern Russia and almost half as much as the replacement value (2.1)[148]. Except for 2005, the period 2000-2015 registered a general increase in TFR, reaching 1.777 by 2015; although it was 15% below required replacement levels, it aligned with the values of the early 1990s[149]. Nevertheless, the TFR soon started decreasing, falling in 2019 and 2020 to 1.504, 15% less than in 2015 and 28% lower than replacement levels[150]. These trends can be observed in **Figure 10,** which displays yearly fluctuations of the TFR for the period 1973-2021.

[147] Susan Gal & Gail Kligman, The Politics of Gender after Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay. Princeton University Press, (2000), Michele Rivkin-Fish, Anthropology, Demography, and the Search for a Critical Analysis of Fertility: Insights from Russia in American Anthropologist 105, 2 (June 2003): 289-301, *as reported by* Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55.
[148] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.

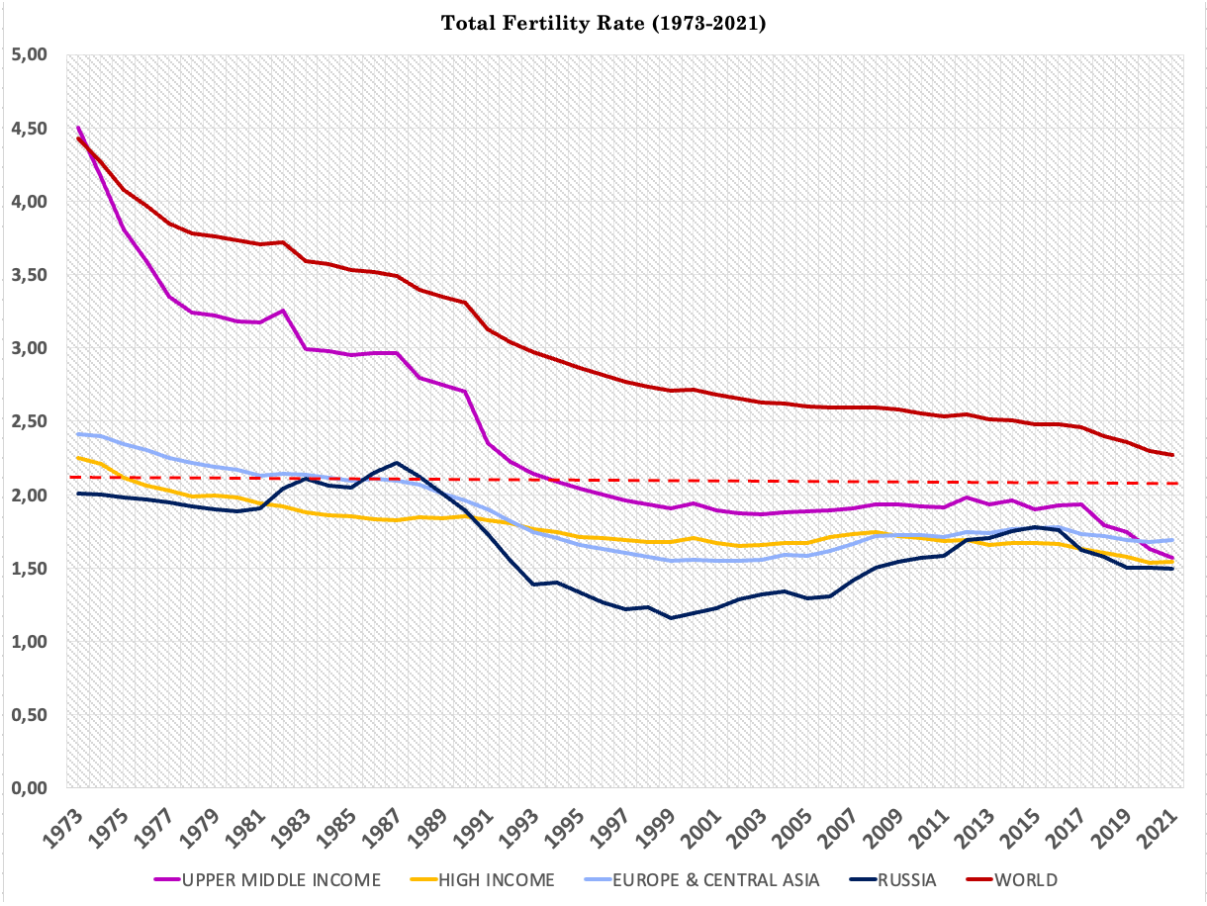

Figure 10 – Comparing TFR: world, Russia, Europe & Central Asia, upper-middle-income, and high-income countries (1973-2021)
Source: author's elaboration from World Bank data

Note: Total Fertility Rate represents the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and bear children by age-specific fertility rates of the specified year (World Bank Databank definition).

The line graph shows Russian TFR's sustained downward path throughout almost the entire period of observation, underlining a particularly pronounced decline in the 1980s-early 2000s. Most importantly, the indicator has never been close to replacement levels after 1989, and the 2013-2015 period is the only timeframe in which slight, yet short-lived, improvements were registered. Furthermore, the graph shows Russian data in comparison with global figures and data registered on average in Europe and Central Asia, as well as in upper-middle-income and high-income countries. The comparison shows that the Russian TFR has been falling behind those of the rest of the world for the period 1990s-2000s, and that is now closer to the average observed in the Europe and Central Asia region and high-income countries. The significant fertility decline of the late 1980s-early 2000s, evident in **Figure 10**, is indeed the result of a fully-fledged revolution concerning Russians' reproductive and sexual lives. This

so-called fertility transition should then be thoroughly addressed as it brought transformative consequences on current and, presumably, future fertility behaviour among Russians.

The fertility transition is a necessary intermediate stage of the demographic transition and represents a crucial passage towards modernisation for post-industrial societies[151]. In this phase, birth decline is generally attributed by demographers to the widespread availability of effective tools of contraception, which enable individuals to shape family planning according to their personal preferences. This stage, the so-called second demographic transition, is characterised by delayed marriage and childbearing and an increase in mothers' mean age at birth and out-of-wedlock births, as well as an increase in people not marrying or having children[152]. Russia and other post-Soviet states experienced the second demographic transition with almost 30 years of delay (late 1980s - early 1990s) compared to Western societies (late 1960s - early1970s)[153]. Nevertheless, Russia has gradually reached Western countries' fertility levels, as evidenced by the progressive shift towards 25-30 years at childbearing for Russian mothers and delayed family formation[154]. In recent years, births have been following an irregular trajectory, although generally propending for a downward path[155]. As mentioned, fluctuations can be attributed to deformations in the age structure – namely, changes in the number of women of reproductive age – but also to changes in the intensity and age profile of fertility[156]. Notably, the average age at childbearing went up to almost 29 years in 2020, while that of first births increased to almost 26 years in the 2018-2020 biennium[157]. Almost all Eastern European countries presented similar variations –increased mean age of mothers at childbearing, especially at first birth[158]. Given the country's delayed demographic transition and the structural challenges posed by the dissolution of the USSR, the Russian fertility crisis differs from that of Western countries[159]. As reported by Eberstadt, demographers have been advancing two main concurring motivations for Russia's declining births post-1990: a

[151] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.
[152] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43; Tomas Frejka & Sergey Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies. Population and Development Review: *39*(4), 635-647 (December 2013), Dimiter Philipov & Hans-Peter Kohler. Tempo Effects in the Fertility Decline in Eastern Europe: Evidence from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Russia. European Journal of Population 17, 37–60 (2001), *as reported by* Asiya Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects. Comparative Population Studies, 46 (October 2021)
[153] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects; Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.
[154] Frejka & Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies; Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.
[155] Shcherbakova, "Population Dynamics in Russia in the Context of Global Trends", 409-421.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects

demographic shock and a "quiet revolution" in fertility intentions[160]. During the late 1980s-early 1990s, living conditions of Russian families worsened, as the economic and political turmoil of the 1990s led to job insecurity, as well as higher housing and childcare expenses[161]. Furthermore, the post-Soviet transition resulted in increased personal freedom and opportunities for individuals, as shown by the widespread diffusion of higher education and birth control methods[162]. Therefore, the two-children family model started to be questioned, and one-child families became prevalent throughout the country[163]. According to scholars, changes in family size deriving from the growing tendency to have no more than one child are indeed the main reason for Russian women's low fertility levels[164]. Precisely, the investigation of total cohort fertility rates indicated that fertility declines concerning 1960s-1970s cohorts mainly derived from a sharp decline in second and higher-order births. Therefore, the share of first-order births increased by 5%, going up from 52 to 57% of all births[165]. As will be mentioned in Chapter 3, the tendency to establish one-child families was specifically targeted by Putin's pronatalist policies in the 2000s, aiming to revert this trend. In this respect, **Figure 11** displays the number of live births in the country retrieved by the age of the mother and birth order computed by Statista according to the latest Rosstat data.

[160] Eberstadt. "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[161] Frejka & Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies
[162] Frejka & Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies; Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[163] Tomas Frejka. Parity distribution and completed family size in Europe. Incipient decline of the two-child family model. In: Demographic Research Special collection 7: Childbearing Trends and Policies in Europe 19,2: 47-72 (2008), Tomas Sobotka. Fertility in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989: collapse and gradual recovery. In: Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung 36,2: 246-296 (2011) *as reported by* Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects.
[164] Eberstadt. "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62; Valeriy Elizarov & Victoria Levin. Family policies in Russia: could efforts to raise fertility rates slow population aging? Russian Federation aging project. World Bank, Washington, D.C (2015) *as reported by* Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects.
[165] Frejka & Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies

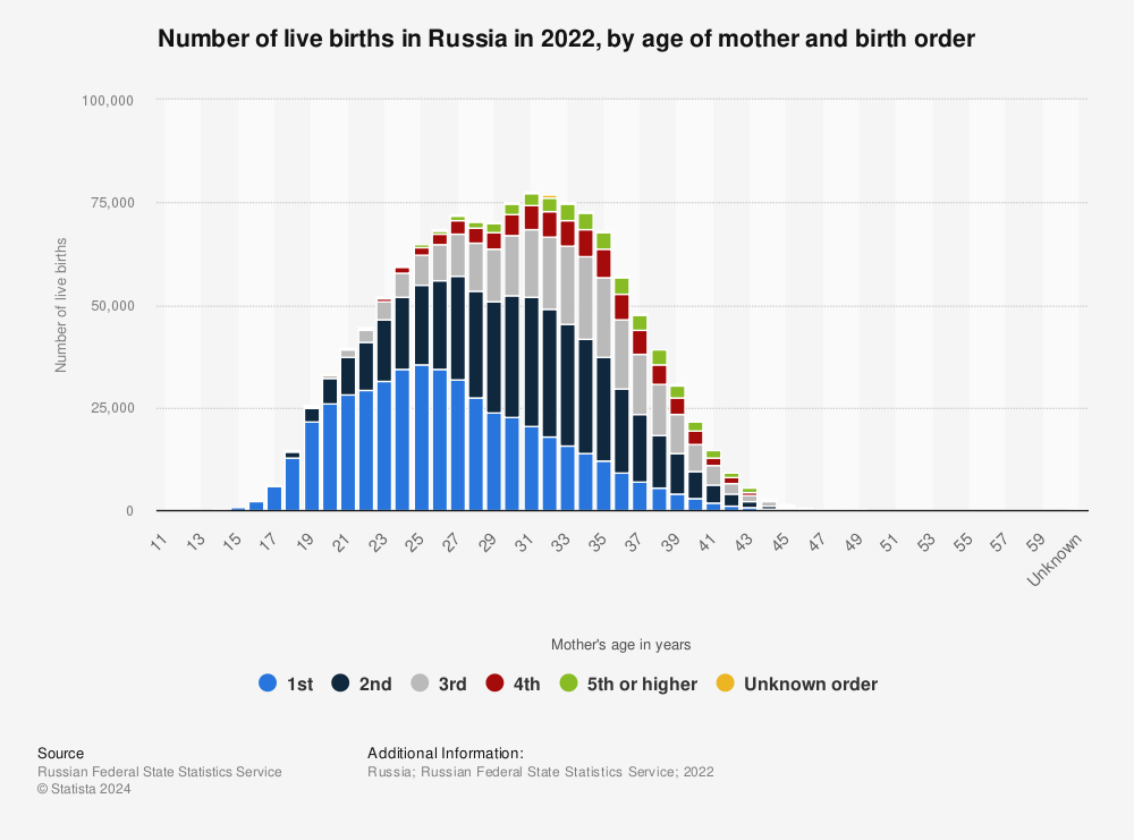

Figure 11 – Births by age of mother and birth order in Russia (2022)

Statista. Number of live births in Russia in 2022, by age of mother and birth order (2023)

As to the graph, third- or higher-order births are much rarer than first- and second-order ones, confirming the growing tendency toward family planning of a maximum of two children[166]. Notably, nearly 19% of total live births were third-order ones, while first- and second-order births accounted for, respectively, 37% and 33% of all deliveries. In 2022, most first parities were delivered by women aged 24-26, with over 35 thousand births from 25-year-old primiparas. On their part, second-order births were most frequent for mothers aged 30-33, with a peak of over 31 thousand births from 31-year-old women[167]. **Table 1** displays the average age at childbearing for Russian mothers for the years 1970, 1975, 1980, 1990, 1995, and 1999-2021[168]. As recalled by Validova, mothers' mean age at childbearing is an extremely useful tool to assess progressive birth postponement[169]. Although mothers' higher age at childbearing might also stem from the introduction of pronatalist policies, this rarely happens as younger

[166] Eberstadt. "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[167] For further data, see **Appendix 4**.
[168] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.
[169] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects

cohorts are reportedly much more responsive to financial incentives than older ones[170]. Hence, government intervention hardly ever results in increased age at birth. Contrarily, the postponement of childbearing causes an increase in the mean age at childbearing and a decrease in both age-specific and total fertility rates[171].

	Average age	Average age at birth order				
		first	second	third	fourth	fifth and more
1970	26,88	23,64	28,25	30,78	32,61	35,92
1975	26,38	23,29	27,77	30,78	32,70	36,00
1980	25,67	22,99	27,33	30,07	31,81	35,49
1985	25,78	22,92	27,13	30,03	31,56	34,71
1990	25,24	22,65	26,86	29,95	31,64	34,38
1995	24,79	22,67	26,91	29,85	31,55	34,29
1999	25,57	23,29	27,70	30,68	32,30	34,53
2000	25,76	23,54	27,88	30,88	32,49	34,57
2001	25,93	23,66	28,21	31,13	32,60	34,53
2002	26,12	23,75	28,41	31,26	32,75	34,74
2003	26,27	23,85	28,61	31,41	32,77	34,78
2004	26,39	23,96	28,77	31,51	32,99	34,85
2005	26,53	24,10	28,92	31,60	33,01	34,97
2006	26,61	24,20	29,04	31,69	33,11	34,99
2007	26,96	24,33	29,14	31,76	33,18	35,01
2008	27,18	24,44	29,30	31,94	33,34	35,16
2009	27,38	24,67	29,44	32,02	33,34	35,07
2010	27,65	24,90	29,55	32,19	33,41	35,09
2011	27,69	24,91	29,49	32,16	33,42	35,06
2012	27,85	25,01	29,52	32,21	33,38	34,99
2013	27,98	25,19	29,54	32,22	33,38	34,93
2014	28,12	25,30	29,53	32,21	33,38	34,86
2015	28,24	25,46	29,52	32,15	33,23	34,70
2016	28,42	25,63	29,63	32,15	33,25	34,75
2017	28,51	25,78	29,60	32,08	33,19	34,67
2018	28,65	25,91	29,63	31,96	32,79	34,27
2019	28,7	25,93	29,66	31,96	32,94	34,45
2020	28,76	25,94	29,59	31,97	32,97	34,44
2021	28,88	26,02	29,63	32,02	33,07	34,43

Table 1 – Average age at childbearing for Russian mothers by birth order (1970-2021)

Data retrieved from Sergey Zakharov. Demographic Review 10 no. 1 (2023): 4-43 (Table 4)

The 1990s marked the start of a sustained shift in the age of fertility patterns as parents started privileging later childbearing, particularly in reaction to economic and political instability[172]. Since then, mothers' mean age at birth has been increasing to the extent that peak

[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

fertility rates were not observed anymore in the 20-24 age group, as in Soviet times, but rather in the 25-29 group[173]. **Table 1** thus shows the sustained nature of birth postponement, evidenced precisely by mothers' age at first birth. Compared to 1990 (25,24 years), the average age at birth has increased by 3 years in 2021 (28,88). This increase was mainly due to delayed first and second pregnancies as the average age went, respectively, from 22,65 (1990) to 26,02 (2021) and from 26,86 (1990) to 29,63 (2021). Therefore, mothers aged less than 20 are now ¼ of 1990s levels while mothers aged over 30 are two times those of the 1990s[174]. Contrarily, no significant development was registered for five or higher-order births, which remained unchanged throughout the 30-year investigation period.

Contraception and abortion in Russia: a statistical overview

Fertility has been studied by demographers as generally influenced by five main factors: marriage, abortion, contraception, breastfeeding, and sterility[175]. Other factors, generally socio-economic ones such as education or urbanisation, concur in affecting fertility by influencing these so-called proximate determinants[176]. Additionally, fertility tends to be affected by major external shocks, which are expected to produce a delay or even an abandonment of childbearing plans in their immediate aftermath[177]. This tendency is expected to increase in the future as the additional availability of effective family planning and reproduction tools makes individuals more responsive to evolving life circumstances[178]. Catastrophic events such as severe economic crises, political turmoil, or natural disasters negatively affect not only deaths and migration flows but also birth rates, although, in that case, its effects are less immediate[179]. Accordingly, early studies found evidence of dropping birth rates in the country as a response to COVID-19. Nonetheless, the pandemic's impact on fertility behaviour was downsized by subsequent research; for the period 2020-2022, Russia showed only slight variations compared to expected fertility trends, experiencing neither a considerable baby boom nor a baby burst[180]. These findings align with an underlying assumption of the present research, namely that

[173] Ibid.
[174] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.
[175] John Bongaarts. A framework for analyzing the proximate determinants of fertility. Population and Development Review, 4: 105 - 132 (1978) & The Proximate Determinants of Fertility in sub-Saharan Africa. Population and Development Review, 10: 511 – 537 (1984) *as reported by* Victoria Sakevich & Boris Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance. Higher School of Economics (June 2, 2014).
[176] Ibid.
[177] Tomas Sobotka et al. Pandemic Roller-Coaster? Birth Trends in Higher-Income Countries During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Population And Development Review, early view, 1-36 (2023).
[178] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.
[179] Sobotka et al. Pandemic Roller-Coaster? Birth Trends in Higher-Income Countries During the COVID-19 Pandemic.
[180] Ibid.

COVID-19 was not a crucial determinant for current low fertility levels, which indeed are the result of an enduring trend taking place in orderly times. As mentioned regarding high mortality, the pandemics can hence be seen as a concurrent factor further exacerbating already compromised demographic conditions. Most importantly, in uncertain times, people tend to postpone or give up on their childbearing plans, especially when the state is deemed unable to adequately cushion the adverse impact of external shocks. This response is more rapid in high-income countries, where it is easier for people to use effective contraception or intervene in the event of unwanted pregnancies[181]. Conversely, abortion and contraception have been highly sensitive matters in Russia since Soviet times, as national authorities have long struggled with their diffusion. This section will specifically investigate the first three determinants outlined by Bongaarts, starting from abortion and contraception to eventually discussing marriage. In so doing, particular attention will be paid to the social perception of marriage while the restriction of the right to abortion will be presented as a consolidated, yet disputably successful, means to incentivise childbearing.

Modern birth control differs from traditional contraception, which ranges from abstinence to prolonged breastfeeding and is much more effective. Furthermore, its advent allows women to exert control over the timing of childbearing and avoid unwanted pregnancies[182]. Since the 1960s, modern methods of contraception have been introduced in Western countries, significantly altering previous fertility patterns. Effective birth control produced such transformative effects that US demographers Westoff and Ryder labelled it as the "contraceptive revolution"[183]. Its considerable social and demographic consequences were initially precluded to Russia, which got acquainted with hormonal contraceptives only after the collapse of the USSR[184]. Namely, the Russian fertility transition was delayed compared to European countries since technological innovations were initially hindered by the absence of interactions with the West and the unwillingness of Soviet authorities. Until the 1990s, abortion was the main contraceptive method for families in Russia, especially for married women who had already had children[185]. Conversely, only 40% of them used modern methods of contraception, whose use was not promoted among young or childless women; hence,

[181] Ibid.
[182] Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance
[183] A. Vishnevsky, Victoria Sakevich, Boris Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia. *Demograficheskoe obozrenie* (Demographic review) (2018). Vol. English selection 2017. 86-108.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance; Andreev, E. Churilova, A. Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage

conceptions were not rare and usually ended in shotgun marriages[186]. According to Sakevich and Denisov, the country was also relatively homogeneous in terms of abortion rates, showing similar patterns across societal groups with various levels of education[187]. Especially since the mid-2000s, the frequency of abortions decreased and started following a sustained downward path, thus making Russia lose its position as the leading country in abortion rates[188]. In this respect, the total abortions performed in 2019 were only 622.000, much less the 3.5 million registered in 1992; similarly, the abortion rate, calculated per 1000 women of reproductive age, fell from 89 to 11,3 during that period[189]. In this respect, **Figure 12** features an overview of the births and abortions occurring in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia for the period 1960-2015. Abortions have been greatly outnumbering births throughout the entire Soviet rule, remaining almost three times as high as deliveries until the end of the 1980s. Historically, two-thirds of births in Russia used to end up in abortion; this trend was reverted during the early 2000s thanks to the combination of increased births and sustained abortion decline[190]. Then, abortions underwent considerable downsizing both in absolute terms and relative terms – compared with births. Still, it is worth noting that an increase in the number of births might not necessarily derive from a corresponding decline in abortions; thus, a deterministic causal relation between the two should be avoided[191]. The steep decline in the share of conceptions ending up in abortions coincides with the mid-1990s, aligning with the correlation between the openness to the West and subsequent availability of birth control and a considerable decrease in unwanted pregnancies. In 2007, the yearly number of births exceeded that of terminated pregnancies in the country, marking the beginning of a favourable trend mainly caused by a considerable rise in the number of births[192]. By that year, the abortion ratio had dropped to 92 per 100 live births; in five years (2012), it fell to 56, while the share of interrupted pregnancies fell to one-third of all conceptions[193].

[186] Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage
[187] Sakevich & Denisov. Abortion in post-soviet Russia: is there any reason for optimism? *Demograficheskoe obozrenie* (Demographic review), 50-68 (2015).
[188] Sakevich, Denisov, Nikitina. Pregnancy terminations in Russia according to official statistics. Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia (2021) No 9: 43–53.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Sakevich & Denisov. Abortion in post-soviet Russia: is there any reason for optimism?
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.

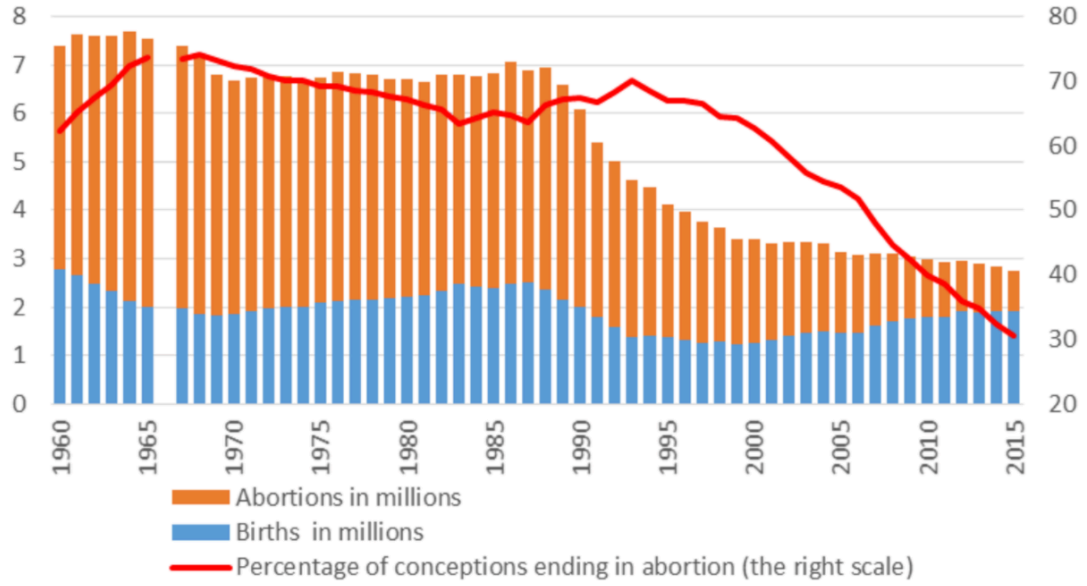

Figure 12 – Share of live births and abortions in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia (1960-2015)

Source: Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia, 86-108.

According to the Russian Reproductive Health Survey conducted in 2011, 8 out of 10 nubile women used modern contraception, while 1 out of 10 did not use any[194]. On their part, married and cohabiting women displayed almost identical contraceptive behaviour; respectively, 57% and 56% used modern contraception, while almost 29% did not use any birth control method[195]. The introduction of modern contraception led to such a considerable increase in the effectiveness of birth control that the number of pregnancies and births soon started converging[196]. Furthermore, the primary aim of abortion shifted from being a regular contraceptive tool to a measure of last resort in the event of failed contraception[197]. Although delayed, the contraceptive revolution eventually marked the beginning of the Russian fertility transition and questioned national authorities' enduring control over women's bodies. Thanks to the second demographic transition, people were empowered to align family formation plans to many life aspects ranging from educational to professional goals. Nowadays, due to evolving priorities and socio-economic circumstances, it is more common for people to perceive family formation as a personal choice rather than a pre-determined life path. Nevertheless, Russia's

[194] Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia *as reported by* Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage, 43-53

[195] Ibid.

[196]Sergei Zakharov. Age patterns of marriage in Russia. (in Russian), Otechestvennyie Zapiski No. 4: 271-300 (2006) *as reported by* Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century (2012). Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research; Sakevich, Denisov, Nikitina. Pregnancy terminations in Russia according to official statistics.

[197] Sakevich, Denisov, Nikitina. Pregnancy terminations in Russia according to official statistics, 43-53

long history of sociological collectivism inherently misaligns with modern family planning. Keeping that in mind, the next section is dedicated to the discussion of the legal and political aspects of family formation and reproductive choices in Russia, highlighting their heightened importance within the Kremlin's agenda and ideological discourse.

2.2 The Russian Biopolitics of Motherhood

"We need people. Abortions that destroy life are unacceptable in our country. A Soviet woman has equal rights with a man, but she is not relieved of the great and honourable natural duty: she is a mother, she gives life. And it is definitely not a private matter, but a matter of great social importance."[198]

Once examined the evolution of fertility indicators over time, we will now delve into the political and sociological aspects of maternity, underlining the magnitude of state intervention over individuals' marital and reproductive choices. First, an overview of the legislation regulating contraception and abortion will be presented in relation to both Soviet and post-Soviet times, particularly highlighting authorities' tendency to discourage the use of contraception tools as a means to increase births. Then, the traditional link between marriage and childbearing will be presented, showcasing their enduring social relevance in contemporary Russian society. Eventually, the profoundly gendered connotation of Putin's Russia will be analysed as a pillar of the President's anti-Western agenda, thus indicating that the demographic crisis is deeply political.

Contraception and abortion in Russia: social perceptions and cultural significance

The Soviet society was overtly pronatalist and actively incentivised childbearing. Furthermore, it placed high relevance on the marriage institution, which was the only legal arrangement ensuring spouses' respective rights and duties[199]. Hence, a strong correlation between marriage and childbearing can be found in Soviet times, often strengthened by legal regulation. Being married and having children were the only ways to comply with the Soviet prescript conduct; everything else was deemed as "undesirable forms of family behaviour" and was not only discouraged but also sanctioned[200]. For instance, incompliance could lead to the

[198] A.A. Solts. *Abort i alimenty // Trud, 27 aprelya* №97 (1937) *as reported by* Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance, p.9
[199] Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage
[200] Ibid., p.41

deprivation of certain social benefits guaranteed by the Soviet welfare system or the restriction of career opportunities. Furthermore, additional income taxes were imposed on childless citizens while children born outside of marriage were deemed illegitimate until 1968[201]. Hence, the Soviet's strict regulation of family life highly incentivised shotgun marriages in the event of an unplanned pregnancy. Precisely, couples typically entered marriage at an average stage of pregnancy of three months, meaning that marriages were often celebrated as soon as the pregnancy was medically confirmed[202]. Nevertheless, during the 1960s-1980s, Russia was one of the European countries with the highest proportions of non-marital births despite all disincentives deployed by Soviet authorities[203]. That being said, no examination of fertility in Russia can neglect an examination of the strategic restriction of contraception and abortion deployed by governing bodies as a means to incentivise childbearing.

Russia was the first country to legalise abortion by request in 1920 through the People's Commissariats of Health and Justice's decree "On artificial pregnancy termination"[204]. Although access to abortion was considered by Lenin himself "a protection of the elementary rights of a female citizen", it was soon restricted due to the structural inability to meet the high demand[205]. Hence, in 1924, the government instituted a special commission in charge of establishing who had priority to undergo abortion, starting from single and unemployed women to those with many children or married to workers[206]. In case of not being granted free abortion, pregnant women had to resort to paying for procedures or undergoing clandestine ones[207]. Then, abortion was entirely curtailed in 1936 under the Stalin administration while promoting no alternative methods of contraception[208]. Precisely, Soviet institutions jointly issued the so-called "*Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions, the Improvement of Material Aid to Women in Childbirth, the Establishment of State Assistance to Parents of Large Families, and the Extension of the Network of Lying-in Homes, Nursery schools and Kindergartens, the Tightening-up of Criminal Punishment for the Non-payment of Alimony, and on Certain Modifications in Divorce Legislation*"[209]. This U-turn coincided with the establishment of pronatalism as state ideology, which led to heavy condemnation of birth control and a cease in

[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance
[205] Ibid., p.6-7
[206] A. B. Gens. *Problema aborta v SSSR* [Abortion problem in the USSR]. Moscow: Gosmedizdat (1929) *as reported by* Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance
[207] Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance
[208] Ibid.; Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia.
[209] Sakevich & Denisov, Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance

studies and data collection concerning abortion. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, although it was never heavily promoted, contraception has never been banned in Russia, unlike abortion. As Soviet authorities established a causal link between diffused abortion and decreasing births, procedures became more and more expensive while all people performing or assisting in carrying out procedures were legally persecuted[210]. In so doing, state authorities refrained individuals from making decisions concerning their personal lives, thus forcing them to comply with the national directives on family formation to reverse unfavourable fertility trends. Although the Decree "On the abolition of the prohibition of abortion" (1955) re-introduced the right to abortion, governing elites remained hostile towards birth control. Accordingly, Soviet governments displayed enduring reluctance to promote modern contraceptives, labelling them as potentially harmful to women's health. Indeed, the Soviet Ministry of Health always perceived hormonal contraception with suspicion, expressing profound concern about the possibility of medical complications outweighing benefits[211]. Namely, an instructive letter issued in 1974 by the Ministry highlighted the negative effects of hormonal contraceptives – facial hair, weight gain– to discourage their use among Russian women[212]. Similarly, in 1981, it issued an information letter stating that "it is hard to agree with the opinion […] that the positive medical and social consequences of using oral contraceptives exceed their risk"[213]. Furthermore, it was not unusual for Soviet authorities to spread the idea of induced abortion as exposing women to a higher risk of cancer and gynaecological diseases[214]. Unsurprisingly, these efforts to undermine modern contraception fueled the Soviet society's mistrust of technological innovations in birth control[215]. Hence, the government's response to massive abortions mainly consisted of undermining their credibility, deeming them dangerous for women's health and strenuously promoting parenthood[216]. Although it progressively nuanced, Soviet authorities' hostility towards family planning tools persisted due to the fear that their proliferation would worsen the ongoing decline in fertility rates[217].

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[210] Ibid.
[211] Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov, The contraceptive revolution in Russia.
[212] Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance
[213] Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov, The contraceptive revolution in Russia, p.94.
[214] Ibid.
[215] I.S. Kohn. *Klubnichka na berezke: Seksual'naya kul'tura v Rossii* [Strawberry on a birch tree. Russian sexual culture]. Moscow: Vremya (2010) as reported by Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia.
[216] S.L. Polchanova. *Analiz metodicheskikh oshibok protivoabortnoy propagandy* [Analysis of methodological errors of anti-abortion propaganda]. *Trudy Tsentral'nogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta sanitarnogo prosveshcheniya* [Proceedings of the Central scientific research institute of health education]. IV. Moscow: *Ministerstvo zdravookhraneniya*: 36-41 (1973) *as reported by* Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia.
[217] Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia.

The end of Soviet rule was marked by a considerable shift in official bodies' attitudes towards sexual behaviour, as shown by the adoption of the "Family Planning" federal program in the early 1990s. Given that abortion was still the main tool to avoid unwanted pregnancies, the program aimed to raise awareness regarding sexual education; in this respect, 40% of funds were destined for the purchase of hormonal contraceptives[218]. The project was part of a broader system of initiatives patrocinated by the homonymous association and was supported by various public bodies and private foreign foundations, along with international organisations[219]. The primary objective of the initiative was the reduction of unwanted pregnancies, abortions, and maternal mortality thanks to the promotion of modern contraceptives[220]. A sustained drop in abortion rates was registered shortly after the implementation of the 1994 program. Nevertheless, since then, the Russian government seems to have made only modest endeavours in the promotion of sexual education[221]. Furthermore, suspicion and reluctance somehow remained as a means of discouraging practices which could further aggravate the already compromised demographic situation. Still, as recalled by Eberstadt, whatever restraint the government puts on, it is unlikely for fertility trends to revert to pre-transition levels[222].

A resurfacing hostile attitude can be particularly observed with abortion as Russian authorities nowadays persist in emphasising the alleged risks associated with the procedure. In 2007, the Ministry of Health and Social Development warned against the possible long-term consequences of abortion, regardless of the consensus within the international community that the latter – when practised under adequate conditions – is a safe medical procedure[223]. Accordingly, social indications allowing abortion on request have been progressively limited, restricting women's access to the procedure for non-medical reasons. In 1996, Decree No. 567, listing thirteen social indications, was approved as a means to prevent people from turning to illegal operations; in 2003, these indications were reduced to four by Decree No. 485[224]. To the present day, abortion for non-medical reasons is permitted only in the event of a crime envisaged by Art.131 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, such as rape. According to Sakevich and Denisov, the reduction of the indications allowing abortion on request led to a

[218] O.V. Sharapova & N.G. Baklaenko. *Mediko-sotsial'nye i pravovye aspekty abortov v Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Medico-social and legal aspects of abortions in the Russian Federation] // *Planirovanie sem'i* [Family planning]. 3: 2-7 (2003) *as reported by* Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia.
[219] Vishnevsky, Sakevich, Denisov. The contraceptive revolution in Russia.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Eberstadt. "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb", 51-62.
[223] Sakevich & Denisov. Abortion in post-soviet Russia: is there any reason for optimism?
[224] Ibid.

considerable drop in the number of operations performed for non-medical reasons, falling from 46.5 thousand (1999) to 123 (2012)[225]. Most importantly, it is not unusual for Russian policymakers to consider restricting the right to abort or even completely banning it – except in the event of pregnancies putting the mother at risk[226]. In this respect, creative proposals have been advanced, for instance, suggesting that women willing to abort could be convinced to give birth to their child and then "give it to the state"[227]. In other words, it was suggested to pay women to carry on the pregnancy and eventually give the child to adoption. As will be extensively discussed in Chapter 3, such proposals stem from the idea that financial means alone might adequately solve the fertility crisis. Although never implemented, such measures really give us an idea of the extent to which the instrumentalisation of women's bodies has been normalised, considering that they were actually proposed[228].

Marriage and childbearing in Russia: social perceptions and cultural significance

"The traditional fusion of three types of behaviour -sexual, matrimonial and reproductive -is finally becoming a thing of the past."[229]

The end of the Communist rule significantly altered Russian traditional marriage and fertility patterns, fading away most advantages of the marriage institution and the traditional relationship between conception and marriage in Russia[230]. Namely, the idea that sexual behaviour had to be legitimised by the institution of marriage was nuanced[231]. Alongside that, people started having greater expectations of their future, and this coincided with a widespread increase in education. According to the 2007 Gender and Generations Survey, young women were much more educated than older cohorts, as demonstrated by the 21% increase in highly educated women born in 1975-1979 compared to those born in 1955-1964[232]. Post-Communist variations in family formation and fertility intentions, which took place from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, were reported to be even more pronounced than those that occurred within the

[225] Ibid.
[226] Sakevich. *Obshchestvennaya diskussiya o legitimnosti aborta v Rossii prodolzhayetsya* [Public discussion about the legitimacy of abortion continues in Russia] (2013) Demoscope Weekly, 577-578 *as reported by* Sakevich & Denisov. Abortion in post-soviet Russia: is there any reason for optimism?
[227] Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55, p.40.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43, p.3.
[230] Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage. European Journal of Population (2022) 38:37–58
[231] Frejka & Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies
[232] Ibid.

preceding 50 years[233]. Cohorts born after 1970 adapted to the evolving economic and political circumstances by increasing the age of fertility and delaying childbearing, as well as postponing cohabitation and marriage[234]. Increased cohabitation and a longer average interval between conception and marriage were observed, as well as higher levels of premarital first conceptions compared to marital ones [235]. Additionally, evidence of delayed marriage and childbearing was found in the considerable rise in the mean age at marriage and childbearing[236]. Out-of-wedlock childbearing has also been rising since the 1990s to the extent that it peaked in 2005 (30%). However, it soon started falling to 20% due to rising fertility levels caused by increasing second and third births, which generally happen within marriage[237].

The interconnection between marriage and childbearing has been significantly nuanced during the last three decades but persists somehow in contemporary Russia as a cultural heritage of Soviet times. Unlike the European trend, characterised by later marriage and a high proportion of unmarried women, Russian women tend to get into marriage at a young age and rarely opt for remaining unmarried[238]. Pre-marital conceptions – often associated with unwanted pregnancies – remained stable and relatively high despite the introduction of modern contraception in the country[239]. Still, they found enduring evidence of shotgun celebrations in response to out-of-wedlock conceptions, suggesting that the socio-cultural relevance of marriage as the only adequate setting for raising children persists in the Russian context[240]. Observations of the average interval between contraception and wedding celebrations seem to confirm the persistent tendency to resort to marriage after discovering pregnancies. However, reduced urgency to get married shortly after receiving medical confirmation was found as societal views of pre-marital conceptions evolved[241]. In other words, although the stigma associated with out-of-wedlock childbearing has been considerably nuanced, marriage remains

[233] Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage
[234] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation; Frejka & Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies
[235] Zakharov, Age patterns of marriage in Russia *as reported by* Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century; Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage.
[236] Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage; Frejka & Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies
[237] Frejka & Zakharov, The Apparent Failure of Russia's Pronatalist Family Policies *as reported by* Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage
[238] John Hajnal, European marriage pattern in historical perspective. Population in History (1965), *as reported by* Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance
[239] Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.

the prevailing norm for most Russian couples[242]. Nevertheless, contemporary Russian society appears torn between conflicting values and norms of social behaviour. On the one hand, cohabitation is increasingly common and non-marital childbearing is no longer considered a disgrace to hide from the public. Being exposed to Western values and market economy, the post-Soviet society was indeed exposed to a less rigid conception of societal structures and norms. On the other hand, public opinion polls showcase that Russian society's deep-rooted attachment to traditional family values persists. Indeed, Rosstat national surveys on family, fertility, and reproductive plans indicated marriage as the preferred first union for two-thirds of women in the years 2009, 2012, and 2017[243]. Moreover, the Levada Center reported that the share of public opinion considering marriage as the ideal setting for having children increased in the last fifteen years; in 2018, 63% of the Russian population supported this idea, 9% more than in 2002. This idea is reinforced on the normative level by the latest Russian Family Code (1995), which recognises legal marriages only, leaving cohabitation legally undefined[244].

Childbearing and family planning have always been labelled as deeply sensitive matters in Russia, thus encountering high levels of politicisation and securitisation since Soviet times. Soviet society was permeated by gendered roles, which generally entailed women of the threefold function of workers, housekeepers, and mothers of future offspring. On the other hand, men were deprived of their parental function, which was assumed by the state[245]. Moreover, Soviet gender dynamics were shaped as a "triangular set of relations" where men and women were structurally dependent on the state instead of being reliant on each other[246]. Although this loosened Soviet women's dependence on men, the latter were still the ones assuming key public roles and decision-making positions, while women were mainly glorified as mothers; hence, their emancipation did not truly challenge traditional gender norms[247]. Nevertheless, the Soviet woman was not only a mother but a working mother. In the 1980s, this double burden was deemed responsible for low birth rates, leading people to advocate for

[242] Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance
[243] Andreev, Churilova, Jasilioniene, Partnership Context of First Births in Russia: The Enduring Significance of Marriage
[244] Ibid.
[245] Sarah Ashwin. Introduction: Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post- Soviet Russia. In: Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia, 1–29. London: Routledge (2000) *as reported by* Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55.
[246] Ibid., p.37.
[247] Ashwin, Introduction: Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post- Soviet Russia & The Influence of the Soviet Gender Order on Employment Behavior in Contemporary Russia (2002). Sociological Research 41 (1): 21–37, Beth Holmgren. Toward an Understanding of Gendered Agency in Contemporary Russia (2013). Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 38 (3): 535–42, Jennifer Utrata. Women without Men: Single Mothers and Family Change in the New Russia (2015). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press *as reported by* Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55.

differences between men and women rather than equality and for the return to more traditional gender roles[248]. Hence, under Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet women were asked to come back to the household and dedicate themselves entirely to their "purely womanly mission"[249]. This concept was further deployed in the aftermath of the Cold War when governing bodies explicitly aimed to free women from the "oppressive and unnatural over-emancipation" of Soviet times[250]. This resurgence of moral conservatism can be explained as a delayed reaction to the social revolution of the 1960s, which reached the country only in the 1980s-1990s. In this situation, the attachment to traditional values seemed a natural response to the moral upheaval triggered by the 1960s[251].

Although the defeat of Communism considerably altered Russian society, the pronounced identification of women as mothers remains a pillar of gender power dynamics in the country. To the present day, it is not unusual for childless Russian women to be regarded as incomplete or useless, thus reinforcing the idea of motherhood as essential for defining a woman's identity and role in society[252]. Women are supposed to privilege their identity as mothers over their own individuality and personal interests to fulfil social expectations and give birth, preferably before reaching their mid-20s[253]. A crucial insight from Siegl's interviews was that women defined maternity more as a duty or necessity (*Mne nuzhen rebyonok,* "I need a child") rather than in terms of personal desires (*Ya khochu rebyonka*, "I want a child")[254]. Hence, the family institution is crucial for defining national identity, as well as that of individuals, as it represents a pillar of the Russian state[255]. In this respect, it is crucial to recognise the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)'s role as an epitome of moral governance in shaping post-Soviet family and pronatalist ideology[256]. In the Russian framework, pronounced gender roles are institutionalised through so-called gender citizenship, conceptualised by

[248] Ashwin, Introduction: Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post- Soviet Russia, Holmgren, Toward an Understanding of Gendered Agency in Contemporary Russia, Susan Gal & Gail Kligman. The Politics of Gender after Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay (2000). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press *as reported by* Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55.
[249] Rebecca Kay. "A Liberation from Emancipation? Changing Discourses on Women's Employment in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia (2002). Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics 18 (1): 51–72 *as reported by* Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55, p.38.
[250] Ibid., p.39.
[251] Stoeckl & Uzlaner. History: The Sources of Russia's Traditional-Values Conservatisms. In The Moralist International: Russia in the Global Culture Wars, pp. 29–49. Fordham University Press (2022).
[252] Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55; Sasha Talaver. Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis. Jacobin (April 23, 2023)
[253] Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55.
[254] Ibid., p.34.
[255] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.
[256] Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55; B. Knorre. Religion and the Russian Orthodox Church. In I. Studin (2018), Russia: Strategy, Policy, Administration, Chapter 10, pp. 105-112. Palgrave Macmillan *as reported by* Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.

Zdravomyslova and Temkina as "a collection of structural conditions and everyday actions determining the relationship between the state and individuals categorised by sex"[257]. The following section will delve into how governmental bodies perpetuate the gendered narrative of traditional values as a means of addressing three key objectives: cushioning the demographic crisis while exercising population control domestically and discouraging alignment with Western values at the international level.

The gender politics of demography in Russia

As mentioned, Russia has been experiencing various waves of population decline since the beginning of the 20th century. In response to the demographic crisis, Soviet authorities started implementing pronatalist measures, imposing massive regulation over family formation and citizens' sexual and reproductive lives. The Russian biopolitics of pronatalism stems from the acknowledgement that a childless society is doomed to collapse. Hence, policymakers upheld the incentivisation of parenthood as a crucial priority for the government, insisting on framing the demographic crisis as a fertility issue. Being held responsible for the continuity of the nation, women are asked to serve their country by giving birth to strong Russian offspring, so fulfilling their duties as female citizens[258]. This collectivist rationale places a substantial burden on individuals, demanding the subordination of personal objectives to the pursuit of the national interest. However, women are disproportionately affected by those policies since their bodies are disposed of by public authorities as "a useful biological-demographic tool for pursuing state needs"[259]. This instrumentalisation of the female body has gained heightened attention in recent years as the resurgence of the pronatalist sentiment has resurfaced shortly after Vladimir Putin's rise to power[260]. Arguably, almost every human coalition presents gender dynamics and inequalities to various extents. Within this framework, the Russian Federation, especially within the last decade, has often been presented as the epitome of state masculinity[261]. Notably, commentators agreed on labelling it as an authoritarian regime rooted in "traditional, unequal gender roles, heteronormativity, and, especially, the cult of masculinity"[262]. To be fair, most elements concurring to indicating Russia as the

[257] E. Zdravomyslova & A. Temkina. Gendered citizenship in Soviet and post-Soviet societies (2005), p.96.
[258] Nira Yuval-Davis. Gender and Nation (1997). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing *as reported by* Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55.
[259] Michele Rivkin-Fish & Cassandra Hartblay. When Global LGBTQ Advocacy Became Entangled with New Cold War Sentiment: A Call for Examining Russian Queer Experience (2014) Brown Journal of World Affairs 21 (1): 95–111 *as reported by* Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55, p.39.
[260] Siegl, The Biopolitics of Motherhood*:* 31-55.
[261] Talaver. Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis.
[262] Ibid.

personification of masculinity can be traced back to Soviet times. However, they have gained heightened political relevance in recent years due to Vladimir Putin's resort to morals and so-called traditional values. Russian state masculinity will be here identified as a combination of the following elements: the strong state (I), the glorification of the war, strive for conquest, and incapability to accept defeat (II), and the imposition of gender roles and traditional sexual behaviour (III). For the sake of clarity, these elements will be here discussed individually. Nevertheless, it is crucial to keep in mind that they are closely interconnected and concur in defining the Kremlin's demographic policy in light of current geopolitical challenges.

The idea of a strong and independent Russia is extensively reiterated by Vladimir Putin, as evidenced by his Annual Addresses. In this respect, it is interesting to note that his words reflect Russia's evolving position in the IS and attitude towards the international community while maintaining the core idea that the independence and self-reliance of the state are not negotiable. During the early 2000s, the country was undergoing fundamental political, economic, and social changes under the guidance of the Western community, which was trying to support Russia throughout its passage to liberal democracy. As we all know, those efforts did not bear any fruits and eventually resulted in a U-turn in the Kremlin's attitude toward the West. However, even before that, Russia needed the support of the international community, yet it expressed its proud commitment to self-reliance. Hence, in 2000, President Putin condemned the idea of relying on foreign aid and loans, deeming it as a clear sign of weakness for a state. Contrarily, he advocated for a strong Russia, "a country that is strong and confident of itself"[263]. This concept was even more evident during the 2010s as the Russian economy had progressively benefited from the post-Soviet transition. Those were indeed the years when the Kremlin started assuming a much more hostile and confrontational stance towards the West, stressing its uniqueness and independence. This specifically entailed a stronger moral connotation of Russian politics and society in reaction to the perceived Western threat to Russia's identity and position within the IS. Moral sovereignty is a crucial aspect of state independence for the Kremlin: the Russian people must resist Western ideological colonialism as it represents a geopolitical strategy to weaken the Russian state[264]. Notably, the harsh trial against the Pussy Riot feminist collective was justified by the fact that their challenge to moral values was perceived as part of a broader strategy introducing corrupt Western values among

[263] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (2000)
[264] Alexandra V. Orlova. Russian Politics of Masculinity and the Decay of Feminism: The Role of Dissent in Creating New "Local Norms". William & Mary Journal of Race, Gender, and Social Justice, 59 (2018).

Russians[265]. According to Putin, "We should not just develop with confidence, but also preserve our national and spiritual identity, not lose our sense of national unity. We must be and remain Russia."[266] Indeed, "Russians have always vacillated between wanting to be included and fearing contamination or corruption, from harbouring an inferiority complex to delusions of grandeur"[267]. The Kremlin's ongoing tendency to stress Russia's sovereignty and independence has been developed to defend the Russian world – thus, also Russia's former Soviet satellites – from the West both militarily and culturally. Therefore, "Russia has been and always will be a sovereign and independent state. This is a given. It will either be that or will simply cease to exist. We must clearly understand this. Without sovereignty, Russia cannot be a state. Some countries can do this, but not Russia"[268]. This conception of the state reflects both national and external affairs, taking the form of, respectively, control of the population and challenge of the pre-existing international order[269]. As to the latter, Putin's Russia has steadfastly presented itself as a contender, refusing to comply with a US-led IS. As mentioned below, this is particularly evident in the outset and development of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. As to the former, the Kremlin tends to limit individual freedoms and subordinate them to the national interest. In so doing, the Russian patriarchal state strenuously attempts to impose prescript patterns of behaviour from above, often recalling Russia's glorious past and traditions. This tendency is particularly evident in the government's response to population decline, starting from the early 2000s. Namely, Russian policymakers decided to tackle the demographic crisis by restoring the Soviet idea of the State as regulating every social aspect of their citizens' lives. In so doing, they restored a paternalistic conception of the State, entailing that the state knows best, even concerning people's private lives[270]. Thus, it prescribes desired patterns of behaviour for its citizens as it is its moral duty to do so.

Soviet Russia is generally considered a pioneer in women's rights and gender equality, especially thanks to its early introduction of women's suffrage (1917) and decriminalisation of abortion (1920)[271]. Nevertheless, Soviet women were invested in working duties on top of maternal ones. Improvements in women's conditions were never accompanied by a deconstruction of gender roles and expectations, which had never been questioned. Therefore,

[265] Ibid.
[266] Putin, Address to the Federal Assembly (2012)
[267] Marzio G. Mian. Behind the New Iron Curtain. Caviar, counterculture, and the cult of Stalin reborn. Harper's magazine (2024).
[268] Putin, Presidential Address to Federal Assembly (2019)
[269] Carolina De Stefano, Towards Putin's last presidency? Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), 2018
[270] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.
[271] Sakevich & Denisov. Birth Control in Russia: Overcoming the State System Resistance

"constitutionally prescribed gender equality did not translate into popular cultural norms, and women were kept out of political decision-making"[272]. To the present day, gendered narratives consist of a great part of a Russian citizen's duties towards the motherland and the whole Russian community. Upholding Soviet prescriptions of conduct, non-traditional sexual behaviour remains highly discouraged, even from a legal perspective. The Kremlin strenuously opposes same-sex marriage and feminist theories challenging gender stereotypes, which are indeed heavily promoted by the state propaganda. Stereotypical femininity is not only the social norm – as previously evidenced by opinion polls on women's alcohol consumption habits – but is overtly promoted by the national political discourse. The same goes for masculinity, as evidenced by President Putin's stereotypically masculine public image. This rigid division of society into gender categories has long been used by the Kremlin for various purposes, ranging from exacerbating its confrontational foreign policy against the West to avoiding depopulation through incentivised childbearing. This reinforcement of women's relegation to the household and dependence on the male breadwinner is sought to be reinforced by policymakers, who are actively trying to re-establish marriage as "a necessary part of women's public legal identities"[273]. Gender roles not only remain unquestioned but are also deliberately promoted by political and judiciary organs as a justification for Russia's aggressive foreign policy and the repression of civil society movements. Feminists challenging gender stereotypes are perceived as a threat because spreading such ideas would undermine power structures grounded in the perpetuation of women's subordinate role in society[274]. Women politicians hardly ever reach apical positions, and those who manage to do so end up promoting anti-feminist initiatives. Notably, in 2017, Duma representative Yelena Mizulina was behind the adoption of amendments relegating domestic violence not resulting in physical injuries to a mere administrative offence[275]. In this view, feminism is a Western creature and cannot but be inherently incompatible with a civilisation built upon traditional moral and social values, as well as religious conservatism. From the Kremlin's perspective, the family institution finds its scope in reproduction and childrearing. Therefore, any sexual and reproductive behaviour not aimed at childbearing – ranging from homosexuality to childlessness – cannot but be strongly discouraged[276].

[272] Orlova, Russian Politics of Masculinity and the Decay of Feminism: The Role of Dissent in Creating New Local Norms, p.63.
[273] Ibid., p.64.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid.

Another stereotypically "masculine" feature of Russian society is to be found in the strong emphasis placed on militarism and glorification of war. Indeed, it is common for states to celebrate armed forces and veterans, as exemplified, among others, by the USA. Nevertheless, Russia is particularly drawn to the symbolism and rhetoric of militarism. In this respect, strong relevance is given to the preservation of the "historical military memory of the Fatherland" and the commemoration of the many soldiers who lost their lives for the country[277]. Most importantly, its celebration of the military is closely interconnected with the cult of masculinity, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Soldiers and veterans are fully-fledged heroes, "examples of bravery and selflessness" motivated by history, patriotism, and tradition[278]. The Kremlin often recalls the myth of the Russian army, which remains undefeated on its soil to the present day. Furthermore, it refuses to acknowledge defeat, rather advancing alternative interpretations of historical events. Namely, it refuses to consider the end of the Cold War as the defeat of the Soviet superpower and the beginning of a US-dominated era. Here, rejecting or confirming these positions goes beyond our interest and the scope of our research. Yet, they highlight Russia's commitment to presenting itself as strong and undefeatable, firmly rejecting even the idea of showing its shortcomings or vulnerability. On top of that, the country has manifested clear expansionist intentions, redirecting towards a neo-imperialist path in recent years. After all, "Russia's claim to be a world power has traditionally rested on military prowess, and the temptation is to resort to this expedient once again"[279].

Recalling Russia's glorious past, President Putin is currently pursuing an overtly aggressive foreign policy driven by aggression and fear[280]. Russia is convinced of its great power status (*derzhavnost*) and wants it to be recognised by the other great powers. As also recalled in Primakov's doctrine, cooperation with the West, although indispensable, is conditional to its acknowledgement of the Russian national interest[281]. Since it had to defend its *derzhavnost* in conditions of objective decline, post-Soviet Russia was prompted to resort to its uniqueness (*spetsifika*) to preserve its great power status. Unlike other great powers claiming their exceptionalism, Russia had to deal with the expansion of the European Union close to its area of influence. Therefore, it refused to get closer to the West as a means of

[277] Putin, Address to the Federal Assembly (2012)
[278] Ibid.
[279] Pipes, Richard. "Is Russia Still an Enemy?" Foreign Affairs 76, no. 5 (1997): 65–78 as reported by Maurizio Massari, Russia: democrazia europea o potenza globale? Guerini e associati (2009). ISBN: 9788862500807 (Italian text)
[280] Massari, Russia: democrazia europea o potenza globale?
[281] Ibid.

avoiding being, or being perceived as, a taker rather than a maker of the new world order[282]. Should it be perceived as such, Russia feared it would lose its *derzhavnost*, thus being relegated to play a side role in contemporary world politics. The need to maintain and defend its great power status resulted in the definition of three main concepts of IR for Russia, indications of Russia's uniqueness and independence: the sovereignty of the nation (I), the post-Soviet space as Russia's special area of influence (II), and the promotion of multipolarity (III). These three concepts describe Russia's peculiarity at, respectively, the national, regional, and international level[283]. For the purpose of this research, special attention should be here devoted to the last concept, that of multipolarity. According to Amb. Maurizio Massari, Russia's concept of multipolarity has a twofold nature: it is critical of the US hegemony but also proactive about the creation of a new international system grounded in the shared participation of the world powers within multipolar structures such as the UN[284].

Putin's rule marked the beginning of a visible resurgence in nationalism. Within the last decade, Russia has been acting as a challenger to the international community and the Western-led international system, strenuously opposing the post-Cold War international order. In so doing, it positioned itself as a conservative power in terms of individual rights and freedom, presenting itself as the fierce protector of Christian and traditional values[285]. The ROC was a great ally to this strategic positioning as it heavily promoted a global ideological campaign aimed at underlining Russia's exceptionalism and exacerbating a fully-fledged clash of civilisations with the West[286]. Religion was indeed recalled as a means of leveraging the connection to the past, thus unifying the country around one common historical and cultural heritage. Although it gained heightened relevance within the last decade, this has always been a pillar of President Putin's foreign and domestic policy, as shown by Putin's words back in 2000: "The unity of Russia is strengthened by the patriotism inherent in our people, by cultural traditions and common historic memory"[287]. Nevertheless, history shows that countries were the most powerful when national ideologues gave people not only a reason to fight for – even only metaphorically – but also an enemy to confront. Among others, Stoeckl and Uzlaner underlined the intrinsically anti-Western nature of Russian conservatism, which seeks to

[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Carolina De Stefano, Towards Putin's Last Presidency? Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) (2018)
[286] Robert C. Blitt. Russia's Constitutionalized Civilizational Identity and the Moscow Patriarchate's War on Ukraine (September 22, 2023)
[287] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (2000)

restore its glorious past while demonising the corruptive influence brought by the West[288]. Far from being only a matter of tanks and weapons, Putin's war on the West indeed encompasses also various social and cultural aspects. In this respect, the "westernisation" of society is unacceptable since it is perceived as a clear threat to Russia's state sovereignty[289]. Although it shall not be regarded as the real cause of the invasion, the need to shield the country from Western interference and external intervention has been repeatedly used by Putin as a justification for the Ukraine war. Indeed, he claimed that *"[T]hey sought to destroy our traditional values and force on us their false values that would erode us, our people from within, the attitudes they have been aggressively imposing on their countries, attitudes that are directly leading to degradation and degeneration, because they are contrary to human nature. This is not going to happen. No one has ever succeeded in doing this, nor will they succeed now*"[290]. This aspect assumes even greater relevance in Patriarch Kirill's words, stating that: "[T]he most terrible thing is not the [Western] weapons, but the attempt to 're-educate,' to mentally remake Ukrainians and Russians living in Ukraine into enemies of Russia (…) This tragic conflict has become a part of the large-scale geopolitical strategy aimed, first and foremost, at weakening Russia."[291]. In such terms, the war thus seems instrumental to the Russian people's resistance in the civilisational war against Western liberalism[292]. In so doing, Russia's ideological rivalry with the West resurfaced, recalling the Cold War's historic confrontation between the two. On top of that, the Kremlin's instrumentalization of issues for geopolitical purposes is not limited to cultural aspects only. Namely, Russia's imposition of embargo on agri-food products and adoption of restrictive economic policies within the framework of the Ukraine war clearly confirms the country's enduring reliance on using various collateral issues such as food, demography, and traditions as a geopolitical tool in its anti-Western foreign policy of aggression[293].

The politicisation of tradition is evidenced by the growing relevance of spiritual moral values in the Russian security discourse, with the rise of the term "spiritual security" (*dukhovnaya bezopasnost*) in speeches and commentaries, although not in official

[288] Stoeckl & Uzlaner. Russia believed the West was weak and decadent. So it invaded. The Washington Post (April 15, 2022).
[289] Julian Cooper. "Russia's Updated National Security Strategy." Nato Defense College—Russian Studies Series 2 (2021) *as reported by* Kristina Stoeckl. Russia's Spiritual Security Doctrine as a Challenge to European Comprehensive Security Approaches, The Review of Faith & International Affairs, 20:4 (2022), 37-44
[290] Blitt, Russia's Constitutionalized Civilizational Identity and the Moscow Patriarchate's War on Ukraine
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.; Stoeckl, Russia's Spiritual Security Doctrine as a Challenge to European Comprehensive Security Approaches
[293] Alfonso Giordano & Flavia Lucenti. Il cibo come strumento di pressione geopolitica: il caso russo-ucraino. Bollettino della società geografica italiana serie 14, 1 (1): 169-180 (2018)

documents[294]. As to the spiritual security doctrine, the security and stability of the Russian state depends on the upholding of traditional religious, cultural, and moral values against the corruptive influence exerted by the West[295]. As explicitly recalled in the Declaration on the Values of the Union of the States of Russia and Belarus, those values generally encompass "faith, life, love, justice, solidarity, mercy, dignity, power, nation, patriotism, freedom, responsibility, moderation, unity, service, loyalty, and family"[296]. From the Russian perspective, the Russian state and identity are under siege, and this requires policymakers to resort to repression, domestically, and war, internationally. Values and security were first related in 2000 in President Putin's National Security Concept, stating that: "*Assurance of the Russian Federation's national security also includes protecting the cultural and spiritual-moral legacy and the historical traditions and standards of public life and preserving the cultural heritage of all Russia's peoples. There must be a state policy to maintain the population's spiritual and moral welfare (...) and counter the adverse impact of foreign religious organisations and missionaries*"[297]. Since then, spiritual and moral values have been repeatedly featured in subsequent national security documents, and their role within the national security agenda was progressively enhanced as Russia's hostile relations with the West worsened. Accordingly, Stoeckl indicates that the 2021 National Security Concept repeatedly mentions the term "spiritual" much more often than in previous years and explicitly in relation to corruptors such as Western NGOs[298].

As mentioned, demographic issues have always been highly politicised, leading to the rise of demography as a key priority in Russian domestic affairs and the subsequent implementation of massive federal policies aimed at limiting the adverse consequences of population decline. It is indeed perfectly common among countries affected by unfavourable demographic trends to deploy measures in response to population decline. Nevertheless, demographic concerns were addressed not only as such in Putin's Russia but also as the pretext for defining Russia's anti-Western foreign policy, as evidenced by the politicisation of the family institution. This is particularly true in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and increasing tension with the international community, as traditional family values became a key pillar of the Russian identity. Precisely, the Kremlin indicated Western corruption of traditional morals as a deadly threat to the nation, both spiritually and materially, thus leading to the securitization of family values. Accordingly, in 2024, President Putin launched the so-called

[294] Stoeckl, Russia's Spiritual Security Doctrine as a Challenge to European Comprehensive Security Approaches
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid., p.39.
[297] Ibid., p.38.
[298] Ibid.

Year of the Family, stating that "the values of love, mutual support and trust are handed down from generation to generation, just like our culture, traditions, history, and moral principles"[299]. In so doing, he explicitly presented Russia as a country that "has been and remains a stronghold of the traditional values on which human civilisation stands"[300]. As part of its strong anti-Western stance, Russia thus aims to be perceived as "being at the forefront of the global culture wars, leading the resistance to liberal values"[301]. According to Putin, Western countries and institutions are "*denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan (...) This opens a direct path to degradation and primitivism, resulting in a profound demographic and moral crisis (...) Without the values embedded in Christianity and other world religions (...) that have taken shape over millennia, people will inevitably lose their human dignity. We consider it natural and right to defend these values*"[302]. Domestic unity is crucial to this purpose, and so the Russian people are required to act to "protect our common historical Motherland against every outside action that can destroy this unity"[303].

This official framing is heavily centred around the dichotomy of us versus them, resistance versus corruption, good versus evil. While, in the West, "moral standards and the family are being deliberately destroyed and entire nations are pushed to extinction and decadence", the Russian people "have chosen life"[304]. This cultural confrontation against the West has become a crucial element of Russian foreign policy but has also effects at the domestic level as it represents a justification for political repression of dissent[305]. Hence, this resulted in strengthening control over civil society and repressing individual liberties such as freedom of expression and information, especially after the invasion of Ukraine[306]. Russian people are required to embrace their traditional heritage, making adherence to such prescript values and social norms a sign of patriotism and defence of the national interest. This is a crucial component of the abovementioned National Security Concept, whose 2015 version recalled the importance of consolidating "civil society around common values that form the foundation of statehood, such as the freedom and independence of Russia, humanism, international peace and harmony, the unity of cultures of the multinational people of the

[299] Putin, Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (2024)
[300] Ibid.
[301] Stoeckl & Uzlaner, Russia believed the West was weak and decadent. So it invaded
[302] Blitt, Russia's Constitutionalized Civilizational Identity and the Moscow Patriarchate's War on Ukraine
[303] Ibid.
[304] Putin, Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (2024)
[305] Stoeckl & Uzlaner, Russia believed the West was weak and decadent. So it invaded
[306] Stoeckl, Russia's Spiritual Security Doctrine as a Challenge to European Comprehensive Security Approaches; De Stefano, Towards Putin's Last Presidency?

Russian Federation, respect for family and confessional traditions, patriotism"[307]. Therefore, the promotion of traditional values has been instrumentally deployed by the Russian government to serve a twofold purpose. At the international level, the country presented itself as a fierce contender to the West, aiming to shape a more favourable world order for Russian interests. Domestically, this was meant to unify the Russian population against a common enemy, increasing authoritarianism and solving the demographic crisis by promoting sexual and reproductive patterns of behaviour of a glorious past. Throughout Chapter 3, we will carry out an evaluation of such attempts to ameliorate the ongoing demographic crisis.

[307] Stoeckl, Russia's Spiritual Security Doctrine as a Challenge to European Comprehensive Security Approaches, p.39.

Chapter 3:

3.1 Presenting Russian Pronatalist Policies

The broad social policies implemented since Soviet times to incentivise childbearing and cushion population decline represent an unprecedented social reform for post-imperial Russia[308]. Notably, concrete state support – parental leaves and housing or childcare assistance – enabled Soviet citizens to result in early marriages and childbearing while keeping both fertility and female occupation high. Historically speaking, Soviet authorities' primary means to incentivise births were financial allowances, as evidenced by the 1944 and 1980s waves of pronatalist policies[309]. This conclusive chapter will discuss the main measures designed and implemented by Russian policymakers in Soviet and post-Soviet times. Two main findings will result from the examination: first, little has changed in how the Kremlin frames and tackles the demographic crisis compared to Soviet times. Second, these policies produced only slight improvements in the Russian demographics. In other words, the Kremlin persists in addressing the crisis as a fertility issue, thus specifically targeting the female body. Nevertheless, Russian policymakers' "excessive focus on women's biological capacity" has never proven beneficial in the long run[310].

Pronatalist Policies in Soviet times (1936-1989)

The introduction of the Decree banning abortion in 1936 can be seen as the first measure adopted by Soviet authorities to counteract population decline. According to Zakharov's estimates, one year after its introduction, the Decree had contributed by a mere 8% in raising period total fertility rate while leaving the completed fertility of real generations unchanged[311]. Then, in 1944, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR issued a Decree aimed at "increasing State assistance to pregnant women, mothers with many children and single mothers, strengthening the protection of mothers and children"[312]. Hence, this system was meant to increase fertility while keeping female labour occupation high[313]. The objective of the Decree was to both incentivise births through the adoption of a system of social support to families and disincentivise the disruption of the family – for instance, through divorce. As to

[308] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[309] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[310] Orlova, Russian Politics of Masculinity and the Decay of Feminism: The Role of Dissent in Creating New "Local Norms", p.79.
[311] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[312] Elizarov, The 75th anniversary of Russia's pro-natalist policy and other memorable dates, 101-120, p.103.
[313] Ibid.

the former, Soviet authorities introduced allowances whose amount varied depending on the number of children. Both one-time and monthly allowances were issued by the government for mothers giving birth to their third or higher-order child. One-time payments were issued in concomitance with the child's birth and reached up to 5000 rubles for each ten- or higher-order child[314]. While families with three children were entitled only to a one-time allowance in the event of the third child's birth, the birth of the fourth child granted families both one-time and monthly allowances. Those monthly payments were issued from a child's second to fifth birthday, thus covering a four-year period, and varied according to the birth order. Notably, they consisted of 80 rubles (fourth child), 120 rubles (fifth child), 140 rubles (sixth child), 200 rubles (seventh and eighth child), 250 rubles (ninth and tenth child), 300 rubles (from the eleventh child)[315]. Accordingly, single mothers were entitled to receive monthly allowances of 200 rubles from the third child to be added to those given to mothers having more than one child. They also received financial support for their first and second child in the measure of, respectively, 100 and 150 rubles per month. As an additional safeguard, single mothers' monthly allowances were paid until the 12th year of their children and could be maintained even in the event of the woman's marriage. Those women could also put their children in institutions, which were obliged to accept them and raise them fully at the expense of the state while keeping the right to take them back at their will. Nonetheless, mothers would not be entitled to receive state allowances during the child's permanence in the institution[316]. Furthermore, access to childcare facilities such as kindergartens and nurseries was facilitated by introducing a 50% off for parents having three children and earning less than 400 rubles per month, for those with four children and less than 600 rubles monthly earnings, and for those having at least five children irrespective of their income[317].

Moreover, the 1941 Decree "on the tax on bachelors, single and childless citizens of the USSR" was amended to extend taxation to women aged 20-45 and men aged 20-50 having less than two children. Under the 1944 amendments, childless people ought to pay an additional 6% income tax while the amount was lower for those having one (+1% of income) or two (+0,5% of income) children[318]. Simultaneously, divorce procedures were further complicated and had to go through courts. The public aspect of divorce was introduced, forcing spouses to publish the notice of initiation of divorce practices in local newspapers at the expense of the

[314] Ibid.
[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.

spouse initiating the legal proceeding. During the latter, judges were required to indicate the reasons for the divorce and to make attempts to revert the spouses' decision to resort to divorce. Once the proceeding was concluded, spouses were charged with a fine ranging from 500 to 2000 rubles and a divorce note was written in their passports[319]. On top of financial incentives, the 1944 Decree introduced honorary titles and medals as a means to boost childbearing through moral encouragement. Such titles, differing depending on the number of proles, included the Maternity Medal (*«Medal' materinstva»)*, the Maternal Glory Order (*Orden materinskaya slava»)*, and the Heroine Mother honorary award *(«Mat'-geroinya»*)[320]. Women were awarded the Maternity Medal of the 2nd class for their fifth child and that of the 1st class for their sixth child. As to the Maternal Glory Order, it pertained to women giving birth to their seventh (3rd class), eighth (2nd class), and ninth (3rd class) child. Thus, being awarded the Mother Heroine title, the highest recognition for Soviet mothers, pertained to those giving birth to their tenth child and was coupled with a letter from the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR[321]. Women were awarded the prize when their youngest children reached one year of age if all siblings were still alive – this rule did not apply during WW2, as children missed or killed in war were still taken into account[322]. Even though these awards were created to incentivise childbearing, the overall boost in birth rates produced by their introduction was modest. Nevertheless, President Putin recently decided to reintroduce the title of Mother Heroine, along with a one-time payment of one million rubles, as a reward for women giving birth to their tenth children[323].

In the 1980s, widespread concerns over unfavourable fertility trends led to the introduction of a social system providing benefits and allowances to families with children[324]. In 1981, a wide program of social support for families was introduced. Among others, Zakharov indicates the introduction of parental leave allowing mothers to temporarily abstain from working while maintaining their jobs as the most impactful innovation[325]. Notably, in 1981-1983, mothers were entitled to a partially paid leave up to their children's first year of

[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid; Tatiana Zhurzhenko. "Mothering the Nation: Demographic Politics, Gender and Parenting in Ukraine." In Gendering Post-Socialist Transition: Studies of Changing Gender Perspectives, edited by Krassimira Daskalova, Caroline Hornstein Tomic´, Karl Kaser, and Filip Radunovic´, 285–302 (2012). Vienna: LIT Verlag *as reported by Sieg*l, "THE BIOPOLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD."
[321] Elizarov, The 75th anniversary of Russia's pro-natalist policy and other memorable dates, 101-120
[322] Ibid.
[323] Talaver, Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis
[324] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century; Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[325] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43

age. Prior to that, the maternity leave had been extended from 63 to 77 days by the 1944 Decree – 35 pre-partum and 42 post-partum – and an allowance to mothers was provided[326]. The period was extended up to 1.5 years in 1989-1990 while also entailing the possibility to extend the parental leave up to the child's third year, although the additional 1.5 years leave would be unpaid[327]. Confirming common patterns of fertility behaviour, the response to those incentives was considerable but short-lived and preeminently caused an anticipation rather than an increase in births[328]. Precisely, the total period fertility rate went up from 1.86 to 2.23 births per woman between 1980 and 1987, registering a 20% increase. This sudden baby boom was soon followed by a steep decline in birth rates[329]. In other words, they affected the timing thus leaving the number of births unquestioned[330]. Notably, they failed to modify people's fertility intentions, which proved to be basically unaffected. Indeed, the two-child family model became the preferred and most common family model, becoming the social and statistical norm. As evidenced by scholars, grown-up children are likely to replicate their family when forming their own, thus showing the tendency to have the same number of children their parents had[331]. Various studies indicated that positive effects on the birth rate were only observed among parents whose mothers had had two or more children, while women with no siblings did not increase their birth rate[332]. Precisely, those studies analysed the effect on birth rates of the first set of social norms implemented in Soviet Russia to support families with children during the 1980s[333].

Putin's war on depopulation

Following the turmoil brought by the collapse of the USSR, pre-existing high mortality and low fertility levels peaked during the 1990s. Within this framework, governmental allowances went from representing 5.6% (1991) to 5.2% (2004) of the average family

[326] Elizarov, The 75th anniversary of Russia's pro-natalist policy and other memorable dates, 101-120
[327] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[328] Ibid; Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century
[329] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century
[330] Frejka & Zakharov, The apparent failure of Russia's pronatalist family policy as reported by Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[331] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[332] Grishina. Reproductive behavior of parents and their children in Russia. Bulletin of Moscow University. Series 6. Economics, 6, 29-41 (2008) & Demographic behavior of generations in Russia in the post-war period. (Author's abstract of PhD dissertation in economic sciences). M.: Faculty of Economics, Moscow State University (2009) *as reported by* Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[333] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43

income[334]. The profound societal changes and lack of thorough family policies brought many commentators to label Russia's situation as a "demographic catastrophe" and ask for the immediate intervention of the government[335]. Among others, it was even proposed to adopt an emergency law prohibiting abortion and imposing the birth of at least one child[336]. Eventually, Russian policymakers opted for the same strategy that had been implemented by their Soviet predecessors, thus relying on a pro-natalist public policy model to increase fertility through financial means[337]. Simultaneously, the Kremlin explicitly framed the demographic crisis as a fertility issue, strengthening the official narrative on traditional values and insisting on the glorification of parenthood. In so doing, they heavily relied on the contribution of the Russian Orthodox Church, whose primary role in shaping family ideology represents the main difference between Soviet and post-Soviet times[338]. Therefore, the Russian approach to the demographic crisis entails both quantitative (financial) – and qualitative (moral) means.

Since the beginning of his rule, President Putin has been paying particular attention to the demographic crisis, framing it as a fully-fledged security issue capable of threatening the very existence of the nation[339]. Notably, he stated that, without timely intervention, "in just a few decades, Russia will become a poor, hopelessly aged country, unable to preserve its independence and even its territory"[340]. Demographic concerns have become progressively more relevant for the Kremlin, as evidenced by President Putin's official Annual Addresses to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. Since 2000, Putin has labelled the demographic situation as "one of the most alarming our country faces" and stated that "if the

[334] Zakharov, "Russian Federation: From the first to the second demographic transition." In: Frejka, T., J. Hoem, T. Sobotka and L. Toulemon (eds.), Childbearing Trends and Policies in Europe, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research: 907-972 (2008) *as reported by* Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century

[335] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century; Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43, p.18

[336] B.S. Khorev. What is the acuteness of the demographic problem in Russia? Moscow: Dialogue-MSU (1997) *as reported by* Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43

[337] Kazimov & Zakharov. Combating Low Life Expectancy and Low Fertility in Tumultuous Political Times: A Comparison of the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. In book: Global Political Demography, pp.401-427 (2021); Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43

[338] A. Vichnievski. Évolution du nombre des naissances dans la Russie prérévolionnaire (1840-1913). In A. Blum, N. Bonneuil, D. Blanchet (Eds.), Modèles de la démographie historique. INED Congrès et Colloques, No. 11, pp. 61-74 (1992). Paris: Press Universitaires de France, Ivanov, Vishnevsky, Zakharov Population Policy in Russia. In G. Caselli, J. Vallin, G. Wunsch (Eds.). Demography: Analysis and Synthesis. Chapter 118, pp. 407-43 (2006). Elsevier Inc. Academic Press, Chernova. New Pronatalism? Family Policy in Post-Soviet Russia. Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, 1(1), 75-92 (2012), Selezneva. Population Policies in Soviet and Modern Russia. In T. Karabchuk, K. Kumo, E. Selezneva, Demography of Russia. From the Past to the Present. Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 3, 63-113 (2018), *as reported by* Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43

[339] Talaver. Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis.

[340] Vladimir Putin, Address to the Federal Assembly (2012)

current tendency continues, the survival of the nation will be threatened"[341]. However, the 2006 Annual Address marks the turning point for Russia's efforts against population decline. On that occasion, Putin indicated the latter as the highest national priority and announced his ambitious pronatalist program, asking the State Duma to prioritise the initiative when allocating the 2007 federal budget[342]. This speech clearly exemplifies that the Kremlin chose to centre its response and framing of the demographic crisis on fertility matters, comparatively paying much less attention to mortality and migration. Indeed, while stating that "First, we need to lower the death rate. Second, we need an effective migration policy. And third, we need to increase the birth rate", the share of the speech dedicated to fertility clearly indicates that this aspect was much prioritised[343]. Later on, he indicated three children-families as the ideal standard for Russian families[344] and praised the over two million large families in the country[345]. Then, he strengthened the link between financial hardships and the demographic crisis, claiming that the latter could only be solved by overcoming poverty[346]. By the end of 2018, over 19 million Russians were still below the poverty line, although they were half as many as in 2000[347]. In 2023, that number was further downsized to 13.5 million people, which represented 9% of the total population and 30% of large families. Then, Putin indicated the goal of downsizing those percentages to below 7% (-2%) of the total population and no more than 12% (-18%) of large families[348]. It is important to note that such figures do not account for all people in financial difficulties yet slightly above the poverty line, suggesting that the poverty issue is much more compelling than what is indicated by official data. Furthermore, as acknowledged by Putin, large families need heightened financial support since they are much more likely to incur financial struggles. Thus, "it is important that the birth and upbringing of children would not mean risk of poverty or a sharp decline in the level of well-being for the family"[349]. The strong emphasis on large families is evident in another (long) passage retrieved from Putin's 2024 Annual Address. On that occasion, the President reiterated that "the main purpose of the family is to have children, to procreate, to bring up children and hence to ensure the survival of our multi-ethnic nation" and that "a multi-child family must become a norm, the underlying social

[341] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (2000)
[342] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly (2006)
[343] Ibid.
[344] Vladimir Putin. Address to the Federal Assembly (2012)
[345] Putin, Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (2024)
[346] V. Elizarov. The 75th anniversary of Russia's pro-natalist policy and other memorable dates. Demographic calendar 2019. Population and Economics 3(4): 101-120 (2019).
[347] Putin, Presidential Address to Federal Assembly (2019)
[348] Putin, Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (2024)
[349] Elizarov. The 75th anniversary of Russia's pro-natalist policy and other memorable dates, p.102.

philosophy, and the focus of state strategy"[350]. In this respect, President Putin presents the federal program of support to families as a "fundamental moral choice"[351].

Scholars mainly attributed Russia's fertility decline to the increased tendency towards smaller families with only children[352]. Hence, President Putin's war on depopulation, which began in 2006 with the implementation of the so-called "fertility stimulus policy", was especially tailored at incentivising second or higher-order births[353]. In 2007, President Putin issued the "Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2025" (*Demograficheskaya politika Rossiyskoy Federatsii na period do 2025 goda*), aiming to reach a replacement-level TFR in 18 years[354]. Precisely, the program was ratified on December 30th, 2006, and went into force on January 1st, 2007[355]. As soon as the country benefited from economic development and stabilisation, public funds were destined for the implementation of pronatalist measures aimed at increasing birth rates[356]. In this regard, in 2006, the government issued the Maternity Capital (MC, *Materinskiy kapital*), the pillar of Putin's war on depopulation. The MC aimed to provide financial support to families having their second or third and higher-order child, if the second was born before 2007. Initially, it consisted of 250.000 rubles to be deployed in fields ranging from housing to education, as well as the purchase of items and services indispensable for a disabled child[357]. The allowance was then indexed to account for inflation, reaching up to 387.640 rubles (9.300 euros at 2012 exchange rates) in 2012[358]. Alongside the MC, other provisions envisioned the establishment of a childcare allowance of 1500 rubles (first child) and 3000 rubles (second child) for unemployed

[350] Putin, Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (2024)
[351] Ibid.
[352] Elizarov & Levin. Family policies in Russia: could efforts to raise fertility rates slow population aging? Russian Federation aging project (2015). World Bank, Washington, D.C *as reported by* Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[353] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43, p.19; Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[354] Kazimov & Zakharov. Combating Low Life Expectancy and Low Fertility in Tumultuous Political Times: A Comparison of the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus
[355] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century
[356]Rivkin-Fish. "Learning the Moral Economy of Commodified Health Care: 'Community Education,' Failed Consumers, and the Shaping of Ethical Clinician-Citizens." Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry 35 (2): 183–208 (2011), Zhurzhenko. "Mothering the Nation: Demographic Politics, Gender and Parenting in Ukraine." *as reported by* Siegl, "THE BIOPOLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD."
[357] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century; Kazimov & Zakharov. Combating Low Life Expectancy and Low Fertility in Tumultuous Political Times: A Comparison of the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus; Zakharov, Evaluating the contemporary Russia's pronatalist family policy: evidence from demographic data and surveys. European Population Conference. Budapest, Hungary (June 25-28, 2014).
[358] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century

mothers and increased sums for one-time allowances at childbirth. Also, the monthly allowance for parental leave (for up to 1.5 years) was doubled, going from 700 to 1500-6000 rubles per child, while kindergarten fees were reduced by 20-70%[359].

Further measures were then adopted in the following years, leading to a progressive extension of the social system instituted by the 2000s wave of pronatalist policies. In 2008, the monthly maternity leave was raised from 16.125 to 23.400 rubles (+45%), and, in the following year, tax deductions per child were increased from 600 to 1000 rubles per month (+60%). In 2009, the MC's scope was extended to partially cover mortgage payments while it was also possible to use a one-time allowance of 12.000 rubles for current expenses. In 2010, maternity leave was raised from 25,390 to 34.583 rubles per month (+36%), while monthly parental leave (for up to 1.5 years) was raised from 7.492 (2009) to 13.833 rubles per child[360]. In 2011, tax deductions were increased to 1400 (first and second child) and 3000 (third and higher order child) rubles per month. Also, the allocation of land properties without any fees was envisioned for families having a minimum of three children and living in rural areas[361]. In 2012, the 50 administrative units having a lower TFR than the national average were granted additional funds under the 2013 federal budget, particularly enforcing the MC system for mothers having their third child. In 2013, the increase of the MC (408.960 rubles) and the one-time allowance issued at childbirth (up to 13.088 rubles) represented an indexation of over 63% compared to the initial 2007 sums. Also, the parental leave (for up to 1.5 years) reached 16.124 rubles per month per child[362]. In August 2014, the so-called Concept of State Family Policy in Russia was adopted through the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation n.1618[363]. The Concept officially aimed at enhancing national support for families through multiple channels ranging from assistance to childbearing and children's upbringing to housing allowances and improved healthcare. Through its two phases of implementation, 2015-2018 and 2019-2025, the Concept aims to reach tangible results like the reduction of the share of families with children aged under 16 and having a per capita income lower than the subsistence minimum per each administrative unit of the country. Simultaneously, the initiative aims to decrease the number of divorces and increase that of employed citizens with family responsibilities[364]. Once again, among areas of intervention, practical needs were listed alongside moral intervention,

[359] Zakharov, Evaluating the contemporary Russia's pronatalist family policy: evidence from demographic data and surveys
[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Elizarov, The 75th anniversary of Russia's pro-natalist policy and other memorable dates, 101-120
[364] Ibid.

as shown by one of the Concept's declared primary objectives: the increase of the value of family lifestyle and the encouragement of moral traditions[365].

In 2017, a second wave of post-Soviet pronatalist policies was launched via four monetary measures: income-based support to first- and second-order births (I), extended MC program (II), regional expansion (III), and mortgage subsidies (IV)[366]. First, families having their first and second child became entitled to receive monthly subsidies if their income did not reach 1.5 times the subsistence level for their region. Hence, this measure aimed at anticipating parents' age at childbearing, although risking increases in child poverty[367]. Second, support for higher-order births through the MC was prolonged to last until 2021. Third, ten more regions were included among those receiving federal financial aid for payments to families with three or more children, encompassing all 60 regional subjects having a below-replacement TFR[368]. Fourth, families having a second or third child in the period 2018-2022 became eligible for mortgage interest rate subsidies. All these monetary measures have been thoroughly questioned by demographers, as, despite their implementation since 2006, the TFR remained fairly below the goals. Furthermore, Kazimov and Zakharov criticised pronatalist measures, suggesting that their short-sighted nature mirrored more the goal of gaining electoral support than actually producing meaningful effects in the long run[369]. Along with monetary measures, the 2017 guidelines also prescribed two qualitative goals: improving kindergarten accessibility and pediatric healthcare. Nevertheless, they were both destined to be featured in the 2024 strategy planning, while the other measures were immediately concretised in legislation and specific measures[370].

In 2019, the government launched the Demography Project, intending to raise the birth rate to 1.7 children per woman by 2024, while the MC was extended also to first-order births[371]. Social benefits aimed at encouraging childbearing are likely to increase in the upcoming years, as shown by the latest measures implemented under the federal budget. Additionally, as announced by President Putin, the MC will be extended to all women from occupied territories who gave birth or adopted children after 2007[372]. As stressed by Talaver, this measure is far from being a mere welfare policy and rather aims at increasing the country's political

[365] Ibid.
[366] Kazimov & Zakharov. Combating Low Life Expectancy and Low Fertility in Tumultuous Political Times: A Comparison of the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus
[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Siegl, "THE BIOPOLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD."
[372] Talaver, Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis

influence[373]. Precisely, it is implied that such aid would be subject to interested women's acquisition of Russian citizenship, thus fulfilling one of President Putin's key geopolitical goals. In 2022, in the Siberian city of Tyumen, the organisation "Family Academy" started teaching psychologists and medical professionals how to handle pre-abortion consultancies according to traditional moral values. This newly established initiative indeed represents one of the multiple attempts to limit voluntary abortion procedures in the country by either restricting access to it or resorting to moral discouragement[374]. Notably, attempts to refrain pregnant women from resorting to abortion often consist of the latter case. Recalling the words of psychologist Elena Shabalina, the woman behind the Tyumen project, voluntary abortions must be impeded as part of citizens' duties towards their country, which is experiencing considerable human losses on the battlefield[375]. The fact that this project is directly funded by the regional department for social development further demonstrates the political organs' active involvement in initiatives aimed at upholding traditional values as a means to mitigate the demographic crisis. Similarly, in 2019, Shabalina received loans from the regional administration to organise the series of seminars "Save Life" on pre-abortion consultancies to physicians[376].

The latest measures announced by President Putin on the occasion of his 2024 Annual Address to the Federal Assembly consist of further broadening and extending the pre-existing social programs while launching a new national project aimed at "ensuring that children are born healthy and grow up to be healthy adults and produce healthy children in the future"[377]. To this purpose, the Kremlin plans to allocate over a trillion rubles for the construction and maintenance of healthcare facilities such as children's and women's hospitals and health centres. The MC, which nowadays consists of 630,000 rubles for the first and an additional 202,000 for the second child, will likely be renovated until at least 2030. Alongside that, the Kremlin plans to provide 75 billion rubles in five years – starting from 2025 – to regions having a TFR below the national average. The family mortgage program, supposed to expire in 2024, is prolonged until 2030 and will soon benefit also one-child families[378]. President Putin also proposed to double tax deductions for parents having their second child, reaching up to 2,800 rubles per month, and increase that of parents having their third child and subsequent child to

[373] Ibid.
[374] Yuliya Akhmedova. "*Nel'zya v takoy mir privoditi rebenka*". Verstka (June 29, 2022)
[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Putin, Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (2024)
[378] Ibid.

6,000 rubles per month. Furthermore, this discount is set to become automatic, making it easier for people to benefit from tax deductions without having to register for it[379].

3.2 Evaluating Russian Pronatalist Policies

Propaganda vs Reality: how is Putin's war on depopulation going so far?

"The State asks us to have more children and then abandons us in poverty or sacrifices our children to its own ambitions" (*Gosudarstvo pooshchryaet nas rozhat' bol'she, a potom brosayet nas v bednosti ili prinesit nashikh detey v zhertvu svoim ambitsiyam*)[380].

According to President Putin, the demographic policies implemented by the Kremlin throughout the last two decades have shown their effectiveness. In 2012, he proudly stressed that the demographic situation had stabilised, and the unfavourable trends of population decline had been reverted[381]. However, this demographic miracle did not last long. Starting from the 2010s, scholars have been attempting to assess whether pronatalist policies increased the number of births (quantum effect) or merely influenced their timing (tempo effect). On the one hand, the tempo effect changes period fertility rates only, leaving real fertility rates unchanged. On the other hand, a change in the latter (quantum effect) implies a change in the total amount of births per woman throughout her reproductive age[382]. The effect produced by pronatalist policies on cohort fertility rates should be assessed at least ten or even fifteen years after their implementation[383]. Nevertheless, preliminary studies have been questioning the effect of Putin's 2007 policies since the mid-2010s, indicating that the MC produced a mere tempo effect on birth rates while the overall number of births remained almost unaffected[384]. Between 2006 and 2010, total period fertility rates went up from 1.3 to 1.57 births per woman, registering a

[379] Ibid.
[380] Feministskoe Antivoennoe Soprotivlenie, *Trebuem vyvesti voyiska iz Ukrainy i vernut' soldatov domoy*. (We demand the withdrawal of troops from Ukraine and the return of soldiers home) Change.org (November 26, 2022)
[381] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly (2012)
[382] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[383] Zakharov, Evaluating the contemporary Russia's pronatalist family policy: evidence from demographic data and surveys
[384] Ibid; Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century; Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects; Ekaterina Borozdina, Anna Rotkirch, Anna Temkina, and Elena Zdravomyslova. "Using Maternity Capital: Citizen Distrust of Russian Family Policy." European Journal of Women's Studies 23 (1): 60–75 (2016) *as reported by* Siegl, "THE BIOPOLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD."

21% increase, presumably thanks to the anticipation of births[385]. In 2007, the year of implementation, total period fertility rates increased by 8.5% (+0.11 births per woman) compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, preliminary studies found that the beneficial effect of the policy soon started to fade from year to year, leading to progressively smaller total period fertility rate yearly differentials. Notably, the indicator's rise progressively slowed down, registering a 2.1% increase between 2009 and 2010 (+0.03 births per woman)[386]. The examination of period fertility rates thus indicated the prevalence of a tempo effect while still detecting a modest contribution to the number of births[387]. Notably, different birth orders were impacted differently by pronatalist policies, registering a prevalence of tempo effect for second-order births and a prevailing quantum effect for third-order ones. Such outcomes show the reason why assessing a policy by looking at period fertility rates only might be misleading as prospective parents might react to pronatalist policies by lowering the age at childbearing or shortening intervals between births while still leaving the number of births per woman unchanged[388]. Arguably, older women of all birth orders were the most responsive to the policy as their birth rates increased by 40% between 2006 (0.65 births per woman) and 2010 (0.90 births per woman)[389]. According to Zakharov, it is true that fertility increase was registered after the promulgation of pronatalist policies in 2006[390]. This short-term increase in fertility was indeed mainly attributed to the 1980s cohorts – particularly, women born in 1983-1986 – reaching their peak reproductive age[391]. Borrowing Putin's words, "It is good to see this improvement, but it is not enough"[392]. Zakharov indicates that these policies more likely strengthened or accelerated a pre-existing positive fertility trend, considering that positive trends could be observed also before the introduction or even the announcement of the policy. Notably, he estimated that pronatalist policies produced an impact of 0.07 - 0.08 births per

[385] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century
[386] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century
[387] Zakharov, Evaluating the contemporary Russia's pronatalist family policy: evidence from demographic data and surveys; Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects;
[388] Ibid.
[389] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century
[390] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[391] Frejka & Zakharov, The apparent failure of Russia's pronatalist family policy; Elizarov & Levin, Family policies in Russia: could efforts to raise fertility rates slow population aging? Russian Federation aging project (2015). World Bank, Washington, D.C, Arhangel'skij, Ivanova, Rybakovskij, *Rezul'tativnost' demograficheskoj politiki Rossii* (2016) Moscow: Jekon-Inform, *as reported by* Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[392] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly (2006)

woman on the fertility of real generations in the early 2000s[393]. The implementation of a broader system of assistance to families left reproductive intentions basically unchanged, as also shown by the analogous results of Russia's Generations and Gender Surveys for the years 2004, 2007, and 2011[394]. Hence, the modest effect of 2007's pronatalist policies on fertility intentions can be assessed through both quantitative and qualitative means by looking at, respectively, variations in fertility rates and births per woman and respondents' answers to public opinion polls.

Russian policymakers basically resorted to the same policies which had been designed and deployed throughout the 20th century by their Soviet predecessors. This should come as no surprise as monetary incentives and penalties, as well as status-enhancing benefits, have been the most preferred area of policy intervention for governments and rulers since the dawn of mankind[395]. Similarly, those policies hardly ever resulted in outstanding success, showing paternalistic measures' inadequacy to effectively influence fertility intentions. Worldwide, upholding women's social role as mothers and emphasising their maternal duties rarely proved to be beneficial[396]. Most researchers thus agreed on the relatively modest improvement produced by the "fertility stimulus policy" on births, arguing that financial support to families led to merely anticipated childbearing rather than increasing the overall number of newborns[397]. Notably, their similarity to Soviet pronatalist policies was also seen as a potential anticipation of similar outcomes – a decrease in both the age at childbearing and the interval from one child to the other. Hence, they pointed out the short-sighted nature of the measure, asserting that it failed to adequately tackle the low fertility issue and revert the smaller family size trend[398]. Indeed, the mild positive effect observed after 2007 was followed, starting from 2015, by a steep fertility decline. According to Validova, the 2007 wave of pronatalist measures failed, as all its predecessors, since it failed to counteract the negative influence produced by unfavourable economic conditions, widespread poverty, and stagnation[399]. The government

[393] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[394] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century; Zakharov, Evaluating the contemporary Russia's pronatalist family policy: evidence from demographic data and surveys
[395] Neil Howe & Richard Jackson, Demography and Geopolitics: Understanding Today's Debate in Its Historical and Intellectual Context In: Jack A. Goldstone, Eric P. Kaufmann, Monica Duffy Toft. Political Demography: How Population Changes Are Reshaping International Security and National Politics. Chapter 3, pp. 31-48 (August 16, 2012)
[396] Ibid.
[397] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43; Talaver, Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis; Siegl, "THE BIOPOLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD."
[398] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[399] Ibid.

keeps insisting on the promotion of maternity and the limitation of abortion while devoting huge amounts of money to military operations instead of redirecting them towards social assistance programs[400]. Orienting the public discourse towards the massive promotion of parenthood and traditional values has proven unsuccessful, and so has the conferral of one-time allowances as a financial reward for giving birth. Whether national propaganda and state ideology could succeed in influencing individual reproductive choice appears unlikely to the present day. Notably, both public opinion polls[401] and qualitative studies[402] suggest that there is no such tendency as a significant shift toward large families or childlessness.

Indeed, re-establishing traditional family and fertility behaviour seems to be unachievable for the government but also probably undesirable for the population[403]. In his 2012 annual address, President Putin indicated three children as the desirable number of children for Russian families. This statement raises two essential considerations for the purpose of this analysis. First, it assumes the coincidence of national interest and individual choices – or even the subordination of the latter to the former. Second, according to Talaver's analysis of Rosstata data, having three children would entail falling below the poverty line for almost half of the population[404]. In other words, attempts to influence reproductive choices encounter two major obstacles: the population could be unwilling to comply with the state's aspirations or, even if willing, it might be unable to do so. Hence, the Russian elite's attempts to revert to pre-transition fertility behaviour by leveraging traditional values have raised scepticism among

[400] Meduza. *8 Marta vozniklo kak den' bor'by zhenshchin za svoi prava. Vot devyat' problem, s kotorymi zhenshchinam do sikh por prikhoditsia stalkivat'sya. Kollektivnoe obrashchenie aktivistok iz Rossii i Belarusi.* (March 8th originated as a day of women's struggle for their rights. Here are nine problems that women still face today. A collective appeal from activists in Russia and Belarus) (March, 8 2023)

[401] Churilova & Zakharov Russia's populace's notions on reproduction: is there basis for optimism? The Russian Public Opinion Herald. Data. Analysis. Discussions, 3-4, 69-89 (2019), Vinogradova. How the desire of Russian women to have children has changed over five years. RBK, March 23, 2023, *as reported by* Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43

[402] Yarskaya-Smirnova. "Yes, yes, I remember you, you're a dysfunctional family!" The discursive design of modern Russian family policy. Woman in Russian society, 2, 14-25 (2010), Chernova. Family Policy in Modern Russia: gender analysis and evaluation of effectiveness. Woman in Russian society, 3, 44-51.8 (2011), Borodzina, Zdravomyslova, Temkina. "To tear out a clump, you need to make every effort". Family policy of support of motherhood: how to use it? In M. Pugacheva, V. Zharkova (Eds.), Ways of Russia. New Languages of Social Description, pp. 280-294 (2014). Moscow: NLO *as reported by* Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43

[403] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43; Talaver, Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis

[404] Talaver, Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis

demographers[405]. Recalling the words of former UNPD director Joseph Chamie, "Once a nation's fertility rate falls below the replacement level, it tends to stay there"[406].

Assuming the ineffectiveness of appealing to ideology might suggest that a state's tools to influence the numbers of fertility only rely on monetary incentives[407]. Nevertheless, scholars generally agree in stating that financial means fall short of causing a significant increase in real fertility rates[408]. The enduring demographic crisis has always been framed in terms of individual behaviour and treated as if monetary incentives were enough to shift individual reproductive choices, completely neglecting root structural problems[409]. Framing fertility behaviour in terms of rational economic choice thus entails a causal relationship between (the absence of) money and fertility intentions. Hence, alleviating the costs of raising a child through public financial incentives should result in increased or anticipated fertility. In demographic terms, this means lowering the mean age at childbearing and increasing age-specific fertility rates, thus reverting the adverse effect produced by postponed childbearing[410]. In Chapter 1, we explained how a shrinking population represents a serious concern for a country's policymakers as it might put at risk not only its geopolitical relevance within the IS but also the survival of the nation. Hence, it goes without saying that pronatalist policies represent a natural and valid countermeasure to population decline, especially considering the modern trends in fertility behaviour and family planning. Indeed, a larger number of live births would be more than welcome in countries with below-replacement fertility levels. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that reduced fertility is inevitable as countries enter the fertility transition, which is characterised by a general tendency towards delayed childbearing and a reduction in the number of children. The profound changes produced by the contraceptive revolution thus consisted of a long-term transformation of family formation and age profiles of fertility[411]. For the first time, the widespread availability of effective contraceptives, coupled

[405] Eberstadt, Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb; Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43; Paul Constance. The Heresy of Decline. Are we ready to normalize depopulation? Longnow (March 6, 2023)
[406] Constance, The Heresy of Decline. Are we ready to normalize depopulation?
[407] Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43
[408] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[409] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects; Inna Leykin. "The History and Afterlife of Soviet Demography: The Socialist Roots of Post-Soviet Neoliberalism." Slavic Review 78 (1): 149–72 (2019) *as reported by* Siegl, "THE BIOPOLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD."
[410] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[411] Zakharov. Fertility prospects in Russia: the second demographic transition. Otechestvennye Zapiski, 24(3), 124-140 (2005) & Russian Federation: From the first to second demographic transition. Demographic Research, 19 (Article 24), 907-972 (2008), R. Lesthaeghe. The second demographic transition in Western countries – an interpretation. Interuniversity Programme in Demography. Brussels: Vrije Universiteit (1991) & The second demographic transition, 1986–2020: sub-replacement fertility and rising cohabitation—a global update (2020)

with higher standards of living and opportunities, questioned pre-existing sexual and reproductive conduct. This gradual shift did not happen in response to arbitrary or externally imposed decisions but rather stemmed from analogous patterns of behaviour adopted from a plethora of individual actors. In other words, a societal outcome was shaped by the actions of multiple individual actors driven by self-interest, as in Mandeville's Fable of the Bees. Therefore, it is evident that this idea of sexual and reproductive behaviour is deeply rooted in individualism and centred around the belief that personal interests shall come first, compared to national ones. This idea is inherently incompatible with Russia's state ideology, which is heavily grounded in collectivism and in privileging the national greater good over individual freedoms. As evidenced throughout Chapter 2, Soviet authorities' war on depopulation was indeed a war on childlessness: those incapable or unwilling to procreate encountered social stigma as they were failing their citizen duties. In so doing, childbearing was incentivised through coercive means such as the gradual restriction of the right to abortion or the subtle discouragement against hormonal contraceptives. After the end of Communist rule and the dissolution of the USSR, the Kremlin maintained demographic concerns on top of the agenda. Once again, Russia's war on depopulation was deliberately framed as a war on childlessness, although, this time, it also became a pretext to further strengthen Russia's confrontational stance against Western countries and Western-led institutions. As in Soviet times, the restriction of reproductive rights and individual freedoms presented childbearing in a way similar to an imposition. Whether subtly – with the reiteration of pro-family messages and the perpetuation of gender roles and expectations – or directly – with the gradual restriction of the right or access to abortion – the Kremlin thus assumed a patronising attitude towards its citizens.

Is Russia going in the right direction?

"Russian diplomacy has always been successful when guided by realistic and pragmatic considerations while it has failed when driven by imperial ideology and messianic ambitions"[412]

Genus, 76 (Article 10) *as reported by* Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation, 4-43.

[412] Igor Ivanov, The new Russian identity, The Washington Quarterly (2001) as reported by Massari, Russia: democrazia europea o potenza globale?

Section 3.1 showcased the Kremlin's strong reliance on moral suasion and financial incentives as the primary means to counteract population decline in the country. As recalled in Chapter 2, scholars have attributed most of Russia's declining birth rates to the progressive shift from larger to one-child families. The Russian government came to a similar conclusion during the early 2000s and adopted pronatalist policies specifically targeted at incentivising second or higher-order births. First parities differ from the rest as they generally stem from "the natural desire of parents to continue the race"[413]. Hence, birth rates of first children are alternatively referred to as biological birth rates, while second and subsequent children's birth rates are labelled as social birth rates. Indeed, the latter are more likely to be influenced by socio-economic factors and hence should be more responsive to governmental policies[414]. Keeping that in mind, it is important to remember that starting a family makes it more likely for people to incur poverty: the higher the number of children, the higher the chances of experiencing financial struggles. As recalled in 2022 by the group "Feminist resistance against the war" (*Feministskoe Antivoennoe Soprotivlenie*), in Russia, almost 1 child out of 5 lives in poverty and women with children are much more at risk of living below the poverty line[415]. Russians' urgency to escape poverty remains a timely matter in contemporary Russia as a result of sanctions, the devaluation of the ruble, and the collateral decrease of funds allocated to enterprises, as well as the increase in imported goods. Indeed, these elements combined resulted in the progressive erosion of Russian people's purchasing power and, most importantly, in having many Russians fall beyond the poverty line, thus reverting the favourable trend registered in previous years[416]. The Kremlin, acknowledging the urgency to make the wars on poverty and depopulation compatible, opted for the deployment of a set of financial incentives for families[417]. Hence, the considerable investment carried out by the federal government indisputably represented a valuable step towards higher social assistance to families. Still, overcoming this challenge requires the government to raise and extend subsidies to tackle the increase in the risk of poverty adequately, and this does not seem to be

[413] Ludmila Kormishkina & Lyudmila Koroleva. Maternity Capital as a Tool For Reducing Child Poverty In Russia. In E. Popov, V. Barkhatov, V. D. Pham, & D. Pletnev (Eds.), Competitiveness and the Development of Socio-Economic Systems, vol 105. European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences, 561-572, p.562 (2021). European Publisher.
[414] Ibid.
[415] Feministskoe Antivoennoe Soprotivlenie, *Trebuem vyvesti voyiska iz Ukrainy i vernut' soldatov domoy* (We demand the withdrawal of troops from Ukraine and the return of soldiers home).
[416] Giordano & Lucenti. La geopolitica russa del cibo, limiti e prospettive. La produzione alimentare russa nel passaggio dall'economia pianificata a quella di mercato. *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana* serie 14, 4(2): 19-32 (2021).
[417] Elizarov, The 75th anniversary of Russia's pro-natalist policy and other memorable dates, 101-120

Russia's case due to budget constraints[418]. For instance, the regional MC, which had been deployed among most regional subjects starting from 2011-2012, soon redirected to being a (low) one-time allowance maintaining pre-existing family income rather than actually stimulating higher-order births. Accordingly, the amount of money per child granted by the MC progressively decreases as the number of siblings increases. Furthermore, the lack of indexation for the period 2015-2019 limited the attractiveness of the MC to low-income families only[419]. The MC's inadequacy to really support families in escaping the poverty trap is further evidenced by opinion polls. Hence, people in Russia still cannot afford to have children, resulting in delayed childbearing and a reduction in the number of offspring, regardless of parents' preferences but merely due to their financial situation.

In 2000, President Putin himself acknowledged the issue, stating that the low number of births registered in the nation stemmed from "low incomes, inadequate housing conditions, doubts as to their own ability to ensure the child a decent level of healthcare and education, and – let's be honest – sometimes doubts as to whether they will even be able to feed the child"[420]. Similarly, in 2024, he announced further shares of the federal budget to be allocated to pronatalist programs. On both occasions, he did not even take into consideration that parents could be not interested in childbearing, whatever their reasons might be. Considering individuals' lack of finances as the only reason refraining them from procreating inevitably led Russian policymakers to believe that increasing loans and benefits to families would result in an increase in live births. In mathematic terms, if the dependent variable y is only dependent on the independent variable x, a variation in x will automatically cause a corresponding variation in x. So, were births only dependent on Russian citizens' financial capabilities, the more money in possession of individuals, the more their offspring. Nevertheless, this scenario would be far too simplistic to explain Russia's demographics. Indeed, the exquisitely financial nature of the policy might be its biggest flaw and the motivation lying under its long-term shortcomings[421]. Scholars tend to agree on indicating the emphasis on material allowances and the lack of broader provisions targeting the improvement of living conditions and gender equality as the real shortcoming of Russia's demographic policies[422]. This problem has also been encountered in South Korea, which features a perilous combination of hustle culture, high

[418] Kormishkina & Koroleva, Maternity Capital as a Tool For Reducing Child Poverty In Russia
[419] Ibid.
[420] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (2000)
[421] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century; Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[422] Ibid.; Constance, The Heresy of Decline. Are we ready to normalize depopulation?

education levels and pronounced gender norms and inequalities. According to demographers, the combination of these factors is likely to decrease the chances of marriage and family formation for young adults, thus worsening national demographics[423]. Hereby, "the most effective family policy model is one which not only offers financial benefits to families, but where there is also comprehensive support through social changes towards gender equity and family-friendly policies that help women combine work and childrearing, as well as accessible institutional childcare"[424]. President Putin was not wrong when stating that "first of all, we must create a favourable environment for women so that they do not fear that the birth of the second and subsequent children will limit their career opportunities, their chances to find a good job and will force them to become housewives"[425]. However, such a declaration of intent must be followed by concrete advancements in ensuring equitable living and working conditions for Russian women, instead of policies, laws, and social obstacles which further reinforce gender inequalities. Thanks to the combination of effective family policies and, most importantly, a shared culture of equal parental burden for mothers and fathers, states like Norway succeeded in even increasing fertility rates during COVID-19, serving as a virtuous example for all countries aiming to reach the same result[426]. Similar improvements have been observed in European countries like France and Sweden thanks to a coherent and stable ecosystem of policies. Stability is indeed crucial for prospective parents when considering the idea of having kids as their perceptions in this sense might positively or negatively impact family planning[427].

Russian policies' failure to counteract population decline is indeed consistent with the general trend observed worldwide, showing no causal link between government intervention and subsequent heightened fertility in the long run[428]. Therefore, the Russian case confirms most demographers' view that pronatalist policies are only beneficial in the short run[429]. So,

[423] Constance, The Heresy of Decline. Are we ready to normalize depopulation?
[424] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects, p.446.
[425] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly (2012)
[426] Trude Lappegård, Tom Kornstad, Lars Dommermuth, Axel P. Kristensen. "Understanding the Positive Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women's Fertility in Norway." Population and Development Review (2023) *as reported by* Tomáš Sobotka, Kryštof Zeman, Aiva Jasilioniene, Maria Winkler-Dworak, Zuzanna Brzozowska, Ainhoa Alustiza-Galarza, László Németh, Dmitri Jdanov. Pandemic Roller-Coaster? Birth Trends in Higher-Income Countries During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Population and development review (April, 23 2023) In: Pandemic Babies: The Covid-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on Fertility and Family Dynamics 50, S1: pp.23-58 (July 2024)
[427] Francesco Billari. Domani è oggi: costruire il futuro con le lenti della demografia (2023). Egea editore. ISBN/EAN: 9788823887084
[428] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects
[429] Anne Gauthier, The impact of family policies on fertility in industrialized countries: a review of the literature. In: Population Research and Policy Review 26,3: 323 - 34 (2007) *as reported by* Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects

why did the Kremlin insist on implementing such policies, especially after the evident unsuccess obtained in the 1980s? What did make them think that, almost thirty years later, similar policies would have proven successful this time? All policies implemented in the last two decades indeed proved to be beneficial but were not the game changers auspicated by policymakers[430]. First, it is important to keep in mind that pronatalist policies are not unbeneficial as such but cannot solve the demographic crisis on their own as they are incapable of solving underlying structural problems. In other words, we suggest that the Kremlin's strategic failure does not stem from the implementation of loans and federal programs assisting Russian families but rather from its refusal to question traditional family planning and gender roles. As reported by Cockerham, policy implementation is always an act of political philosophy and is thus grounded in the social and political values identifying a specific community[431]. Accordingly, Soviet and Russian policymakers' enduring response to population decline mirrors not only the state's long history of methodological collectivism and conservatism but also its backwardness and institutionalised opposition to feminism. Insisting on framing the demographic crisis as a fertility issue and instrumentalising it as a means of differentiating Russia's solid moral tradition from the perverseness of the West did not result in any considerable improvement in the long run. On top of that, Russia perpetuates a philosophy of military overfunding compared to the share of the federal budget destined for healthcare, environment, and education. In Soviet times, healthcare used to be largely financed through residual funds after prioritising other sectors of the economy, such as the military and heavy industry[432]. Namely, only a mere 3.4% of the national GDP was destined for healthcare in 1989, a significantly smaller share compared with all other industrialised nations[433]. Despite significant sanitary improvements, post-Soviet Russia's federal budget remains highly centred on defence, confirming the pronounced masculinity of the Russian Federation[434]. A glance at Russia's shares of the federal budget is all it takes to further confirm the Kremlin's

[430] Ilan Berman, Putin's Demographic Revival is a Pipe Dream. The Moscow Times (January 23, 2020)
[431] Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation
[432] Elena Mezentseva & Natalia Rimachevskaya. The Soviet Country Profile: Health of the USSR Population in the '70s and 80s – An Approach to a Comprehensive Analysis. Social Science and Medicine 31: 867-77 (1990) *as reported by* Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation
[433] Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation
[434] Russian State Duma, Draft Federal Law no. 448554-8 *O federal'nom byudzhete na 2024 god i na planovyj period 2025 i 2026 godov* [On the federal budget for 2024 and the planning period 2025 and 2026], 30 Sep. 2023, explanatory note, pp. 443–44 *as reported by* Julian Cooper, Another budget for a state at war: military expenditure in Russia's federal budget for 2024 and beyond. SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security No. 2023/11 (December 2023)

stereotypically masculine model of governance and policymaking. Leaving ideological considerations aside, Russia's desperate efforts to portray a muscular version of itself and replicate traditional patterns of governance did not result in significant improvements in the country's demographics.

Commentators and demographers remain highly sceptical regarding improvements in Russian fertility in the foreseeable future. This vision is further backed by President Putin's fertility rate goals (1.7), which are still much lower than the replacement level (2.1)[435]. Thus, the general agreement seems that Russian fertility rates are expected to remain on a downward path, although, at best, at a slower pace[436]. As widely acknowledged among scholars, Soviet and post-Soviet pronatalist policies mainly influenced the timing of childbearing, raising period fertility rates while failing to increase cohort fertility[437]. As to the 2007 wave of policies, the prevalence of a timing over a quantum effect was thus found in both preliminary[438] and subsequent investigations[439]. Therefore, the existing literature has thoroughly pointed out Kremlin policies' shortcomings. So, what should be done in order to reverse the fertility crisis? Although short-term solutions might seem tempting, long-term goals require "a broad based comprehensive long-term approach"[440]. This entails joint cooperation between families and the government to allow a "radical restructuring of the economy in favour of reproduction"[441]. In so doing, financial means should be part of a broader action plan stemming from more flexible shifts for working parents and, most importantly, a societal transformation advancing gender equality at both home and work[442]. The new action plan should thus be grounded in the promotion of shared caring roles within the household and increased female occupation, considering that two salaries are becoming a common precondition for having children. To the present day, the positive correlation between female occupation, gender equality, and fertility has been repeatedly demonstrated in industrialised countries[443]. Although indisputably

[435] Berman, Putin's Demographic Revival is a Pipe Dream
[436] Ibid.; Constance, The Heresy of Decline. Are we ready to normalize depopulation?
[437] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century; Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects; Zakharov, S. The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation
[438] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century
[439] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects; Zakharov, The history of fertility in Russia: from generation to generation
[440] Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century, p.24.
[441] Talaver, Russia's War Is a Failed Answer to Its Demographic Crisis
[442] Peter McDonald. "Sustaining fertility through public policy: The range of options," Population (English version) 57(3): 417-446 (2002) *as reported by* Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century
[443] Billari, Domani è oggi: costruire il futuro con le lenti della demografia

beneficial, material allowances on their own are not likely to succeed in reverting fertility towards an upward path as "they must be embedded in a family-friendly culture deliberately nurtured by the state"[444]. Russian feminist groups propose not only to reduce military spending to redirect funds onto healthcare and social assistance but also to downsize ROC's role and influence on reproductive rights and family policy[445]. According to Alexandra Orlova, "In order to advance gender equality, the Russian state will need to deliberately cede some of its power and account for dissent"[446]. Hence, Russia's fate depends on whether the Kremlin will embark on such a transformative shift in priorities and agree to give up part of its control over the population.

[444] Jan M. Hoem. "The impact of public policies on European fertility." In: Frejka, T., J. Hoem, T. Sobotka and L. Toulemon (eds.), Childbearing Trends and Policies in Europe, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research: 249-259 (2008) *as reported by* Frejka & Zakharov, Comprehensive Analyses of Fertility Trends in the Russian Federation during the Past Half Century, p.24

[445] Feministskoe Antivoennoe Soprotivlenie. *PETITSIYA ZA PRAVO NA ABORT*. Change.org (February 3, 2023)

[446] Orlova, Russian Politics of Masculinity and the Decay of Feminism: The Role of Dissent in Creating New "Local Norms", p.86.

Conclusion

Main findings

The aim of the present study was discussing whether Russia's unfavourable demographics could be reverted in the upcoming years. In so doing, we first analysed demographic indicators and then shifted the focus towards a qualitative examination of the strong gender connotation of Russian society and governance. The decision to analyse the Russian demographic crisis from a gender perspective originated from three main assumptions, all implicating a profound influence exerted by gender roles and expectations on the Russian socio-political framework. Assuming that policy implementation is always an act of political philosophy grounded in the social and political values identifying a specific community[447], the enduring traditional gender roles and expectations could be brought as a potential explanation for Russia's failure to revert population decline. The examination of Russian demographic trends and the Kremlin's response to the crisis led us to confirm our preliminary assumptions. Therefore, the main findings of this research are listed as follows:

- Excessive Russian mortality, compared to other industrialised and European countries, primarily derives from Russian men's low life expectancy. Generally speaking, it is normal for women to outlive and outnumber men. Nevertheless, Russia's sex ratio and gender mortality differentials stand out compared to similar countries, thus requiring specific examination. As evidenced by official statistics, Russian men tend to die prematurely due to alcohol-related problems, generally resulting in violent deaths or fatal cardiovascular conditions. The investigation of drinking patterns led us to conclude that Russian men are subject to strong behavioural conditioning, which leads them to heavy alcohol consumption. In other words, they are expected and encouraged to drink as this is exactly how a man should behave to be considered man enough. Conversely, unwritten social norms strongly discourage Russian women from drinking, as drunkenness is considered incompatible with femininity. Similarly, men are pushed to adopt much riskier behaviour and show their courage and bravery. They are required to defend their motherland and families, and many of them have died and will die trying, as clearly evidenced by the (male) war casualties of the Ukraine war. Therefore, it is possible to establish a link between gender expectations and high mortality in the

[447] Cockerham, The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation

country, stressing the extent to which Russian men are disproportionately affected by social conditioning associated with gender.

- A country experiences population growth when the combination of births and net migration (immigration *minus* emigration) outweighs deaths. Hence, for population decline to be reverted, policymakers should either incentivise childbearing, encourage immigration (or disincentivise emigration), or tackle mortality. In the Russian case, demographic policies have changed little since Soviet times and primarily rely on pronatalism. Conversely, the country has repeatedly shown hostility towards the arrival of immigrants and even the rise of xenophobia. As to mortality, considerable investments in improving healthcare structures' conditions have indisputably ameliorated Russia's low life expectancy. Nevertheless, such measures, although beneficial, are incapable of tackling the root causes of Russia's heightened mortality. As discussed in a), the country will keep registering extremely high mortality unless it impedes Russian men from putting their lives at risk. However, this U-turn is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future, especially considering the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Similarly, the Kremlin's choice to frame the demographic crisis as a fertility issue is grounded in the country's strong adherence to traditional gender roles.
- The securitisation of traditional spiritual and moral values has become a pillar of the Kremlin's foreign policy as part of Russia's attempt to establish itself as an independent pole within a multipolar world. Putin's revival of the cultural war against the West is instrumental to the country's aspirations of multipolarity and represents a strategic element of aggregation of the population against a common enemy. In turn, Putin's strategic upholding of traditional values shapes the Kremlin's framing and response to the demographic crisis. In Putin's holistic view of state ideology and propaganda, the incentivisation of childbearing and the promotion of the family institution serve the twofold purpose of cushioning population decline while opposing Russia's strong morals to the perverseness of its antagonists.
- Russia's pronatalist policies have been proving their inefficacy and short-sightedness since Soviet times. As agreed upon by scholars, they produced tempo rather than quantum effects, explaining why they seemed to be working immediately after but were incapable of producing stability in the long run. Precisely, the implementation of pronatalist policies resulted in a mere anticipation of births while leaving the total number of births unaltered. Furthermore, demographers criticise Russia's exclusive reliance on financial pronatalist tools, pointing out the absence of a comprehensive

system supporting parenthood. As suggested by scholars, a transition towards a more equitable society is needed to reverse Russia's unfavourable fertility trends. Nevertheless, for the reasons listed in c), it is highly unlikely that Russia will dismantle its reliance on traditional gender roles in the foreseeable future.

Final remarks

"There are no hopes of solving the fertility problem in Russia"[448].

The magnitude of the Russian demographic crisis is concerning: notwithstanding war casualties in Ukraine, recent estimates indicate that the Russian population loses over 86.000 people each month[449]. On top of that, the endurance of downward population trends makes Russia's potential recovery less likely and further reduces the country's chances to defeat population decline in the long run. Still, the Russian Federation is far from being the only country struggling with demographics at the global or regional level and resorting to boosting fertility as its preferred solution to population decline. Since the dawn of mankind, all social groups – from families to countries – have been resorting to procreation to escape from the natural fear of extinction. Being inherently driven to ensure their own safety, prosperity, and multiplication, groups and peoples have sought to incentivise childbearing given that multitude has always been associated with wealth, power, and glory[450]. A largely populated country can generally count on greater cultural and political influence, as well as greater financial and military leverage. In so doing, women's role as mothers has long been glorified and celebrated by all forms of human coalitions[451]. Inevitably, this self-perpetuating identification of women with mothers leads to the gendered connotation of citizenship that persists to the present day. This is even more evident in collectivist societies such as Russia, where the official ideology requires women to ensure the survival and glory of the nation by giving birth as part of their duties towards the country. To promote that, national propaganda often resorted to the promotion of traditional family and religious values, whose upholding was considered both a form of resistance against the external oppressor and commitment to the greater good represented by national interest. The entity of the phenomenon and the persistence of strong gender connotations in society make the Russian case stand out among other industrialised

[448] Berman, Putin's Demographic Revival is a Pipe Dream
[449] Constance, The Heresy of Decline. Are we ready to normalize depopulation?
[450] Howe & Jackson, Demography and Geopolitics: Understanding Today's Debate in Its Historical and Intellectual Context
[451] Ibid.

countries. Nevertheless, pro-life and anti-gender ideology has become increasingly popular worldwide, as shown by the far-right Italian government led by Giorgia Meloni. Therefore, it is crucial to take into account that natural decline-induced population crises and pronounced gender dynamics are global phenomena and should also be addressed as such. The examination of the Russian demographic crisis from a gender perspective highlighted the extent to which rigid gender roles are hurtful to both men and women, although the latter undoubtedly bear a much heavier burden. Societal pressure can thus be considered a major determinant of Russia's demographic patterns, characterised by extremely high male mortality and heightened expectations from women regarding childbearing. That being said, our suggestion here is that dismantling them might significantly improve physical and mental health for both men and women while also beneficially impacting Russian demographics. But is Russia ready to make this leap forward?

To do so, two conditions must be met. First, the Kremlin's sustained instrumentalisation and politicisation of women's bodies for geopolitical and demographic purposes must be dismantled. Second, all the legal and collateral initiatives aimed at restricting access to abortion in the country must be reverted. As recalled in Chapter 2, such initiatives proved to be totally inadequate to refrain women from terminating unwanted pregnancies, thus only resulting in damaging women and putting their lives at risk[452]. However, neither of the conditions will likely be met under Putin's mandate since the Kremlin seems unwilling to facilitate the transition to a society less embedded in rigid gendered roles and expectations. Conversely, the Russian state has been moving in the opposite direction, actively pursuing foreign and domestic policies grounded in the upholding of traditional values and strongly discouraging concrete advancements in gender equality. Russia's cultural war against the West has increased the relevance of traditional norms and morals, including the family and marriage institutions, in the Kremlin's agenda. The instrumentalisation of these topics is evident, as showcased by Russian authorities' and the ROC's hostility against feminist movements and civil rights organisations. Russia's strenuous defence of the traditional family goes far beyond morals and becomes a crucial element of its foreign policy agenda. This is particularly true considering the present geopolitical framework and Putin's open disregard of Western-led institutions and challenge to the West. These elements make a long-term improvement of national

[452] Meduza. *8 Marta vozniklo kak den' bor'by zhenshchin za svoi prava. Vot devyat' problem, s kotorymi zhenshchinam do sikh por prikhoditsia stalkivat'sya. Kollektivnoe obrashchenie aktivistok iz Rossii i Belarusi.* (March 8th originated as a day of women's struggle for their rights. Here are nine problems that women still face today. A collective appeal from activists in Russia and Belarus)

demographics unlikely in the foreseeable future, further confirming scholars' and commentators' scepticism.

Positioning in the literature

Given the magnitude and sustained nature of the Russian population decline, Russia's unfavourable demographic trends have been thoroughly examined by scholars, who attempted to investigate the causes, implications, and prospects of the country's peculiar demographic path. Still, we firmly believe that relying entirely on the observation of variables and indicators refrains us from adequately capturing the intricate nature of the Russian demographic crisis, potentially leading to the implementation of ineffective policy countermeasures. Hence, this study originated from the following premise, that quantitative analysis is necessary yet insufficient to fully grasp complex demographic patterns; thus, it aimed to broaden the scope of the research. In so doing, it was grounded in the empirical examination of demographic trends while also advancing political and sociological explanations for sustained population decline in the country. Therefore, the present research aims to advance a concurrent explanation for the Russian demographic crisis by establishing a connection between its remarkable and prolonged population decline and the pronounced gender dynamics inherent in Russian society. That being said, here is a brief overview of the literature analysed and deployed for the purpose of this dissertation. We strongly relied on authoritative literature on population studies, mainly gathering Russian scholars' research and contributions to the field. To begin with, the research investigated purely demographic aspects, integrating pre-existing studies and original computations derived from online databases – Rosstat and the World Bank databank. To do so, we focused on academic sources published after 2020, especially those relative to the last two years; additionally, selected papers from the mid-2010s were also examined in order to highlight the enduring relevance of the crisis among scholars of Russian population studies. Once analysed the main demographic indicators, we broadened the scope of the research by also discussing the socio-political dimension, particularly focusing on the societal aspects exacerbating gender differentials in life expectancy and influencing changes in fertility intentions. Lastly, we assessed the national government's response to the prolonged demographic crisis by combining both demographic and sociological elements.

The vast majority of the literature on Russian demographics mainly focuses on fertility indicators, contributing to the official framing of population decline as a fertility crisis. While migration seems very little explored in Russian population studies, more attention is dedicated to mortality. Nevertheless, we were unable to find any study investigating Russian men's

disproportionate mortality burden from both a gender and demographic perspective. Following the blueprint set by pre-existing studies on Russia's population, this research primarily focused on fertility. On top of that, we added the political element to the picture, suggesting a link between Russia's politics of masculinity, the sustained demographic crisis, and the fallacious pronatalist policies. Once again, we were unable to find any study suggesting a gender explanation for Russia's unsuccessful demographic strategy. That being said, so many more are the factors we should take into account to fully grasp the complexities of Russia's demographic crisis. Notably, we deliberately decided to keep the ethnonational element out of this research, deeming it imperative for it to be examined in a stand-alone study. Indeed, the ethnofederalist composition of the Russian Federation significantly influences population dynamics: ethnic Russians have the second lowest TFR in the country, while ethnic groups with higher fertility rates are becoming more indigenised[453]. This means that regions are slightly becoming ethnically homogeneous, as evidenced by the case of Chechnya and Kalmykia. Fertility differentials and indigenisation have heightened political relevance, considering that they might eventually trigger ethnonationalist mobilisation in the upcoming years, especially given the phenomenon of youth bulges[454]. Back in 2012, President Putin claimed that "We treat and will continue to treat with great care and respect every ethnic group, every nation in the Russian Federation. Our diversity has always been and remains the source of our beauty and our strength"[455]. Still, ethnic Russians have long been disproportionately affected by population decline as their population is shrinking at a much faster pace than that of ethnic minorities. Conversely, ethnic groups such as Chechens have been maintaining higher growth rates compared to the national average, mostly due to high fertility. Ethnic competition has always played a key role in the definition of population policies, and it is likely to further increase its relevance at the subnational level in the upcoming years[456]. This is particularly true when recalling the securitisation of migration and the hostile attitude of the country towards migrants. As mentioned in Chapter 1, ageing population and low levels of fertility did not revert Russia's diffidence towards this category, and the ethnonationalist tone got increasingly popular in the public discourse. In a country where the official framing presents the nation as

[453] Kazimov & Zakharov. Combating Low Life Expectancy and Low Fertility in Tumultuous Political Times: A Comparison of the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus
[454] Ibid.
[455] Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly (2012)
[456] Howe & Jackson, Demography and Geopolitics: Understanding Today's Debate in Its Historical and Intellectual Context

threatened by the invasion by ethnic others who reproduce much faster, the ethnic factor shall not be disregarded[457].

Throughout this study, Russian demographics have been investigated at the national level without taking into account the progressive tendency towards ethnic homogeneity in ethnic regions. Accordingly, our examination of pronatalist policies has been carried out at the national level, although fertility decline has been addressed differently – and with different budgets – among regional subjects. As to Validova, "regional family policies varied substantially across the Russian regions in terms of timing, remuneration and eligibility requirements"[458]. Due to the difficulties of taking into consideration such differences, the evaluation of Russian pronatalist policies has been here conducted only in relation to the federal program, hardly considering the specificities of the various regional policies[459]. Nonetheless, we strongly encourage the publication of further studies accounting for variations among federal subjects and auspicate that more research specifically addressing regional and ethnic differentials will be carried out. On top of that, the implications of diverging growth rates among ethnic groups have been thoroughly investigated by demographers throughout the last two decades[460]. Nevertheless, we were unable to find any study investigating the social, cultural, and political changes brought by shifting ethnic proportions and distributions among the Russian subjects. In the United States, immigration and uneven fertility rates among ethnic groups have been and will be reshaping states' social and political orientation, producing huge electoral consequences. Although the idea of observing similar changes in voting intentions seems rather remote in an authoritarian country like Putin's Russia, the revolutionary potential of evolving ethnic compositions should not be underestimated.

[457] Rivkin-Fish. "Learning the Moral Economy of Commodified Health Care: 'Community Education,' Failed Consumers, and the Shaping of Ethical Clinician-Citizens.", Zhurzhenko. "Mothering the Nation: Demographic Politics, Gender and Parenting in Ukraine." *as reported by* Siegl, "THE BIOPOLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD."
[458] Validova, Pronatalist Policies and Fertility in Russia: Estimating Tempo and Quantum Effects, p.431.
[459] Ibid.
[460]Howe & Jackson, Demography and Geopolitics: Understanding Today's Debate in Its Historical and Intellectual Context

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APPENDIX 1:
RUSSIA'S POPULATION SIZE AND GROWTH PATTERNS[461]

Table A1.1 – Russia's Population Relative to Global and Regional Figures (1973-2022)

	Total Population *			Share of global and regional population	
year	RUSSIA	WORLD	EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA	% Russia/World	% Russia/Region
1973	132669000	3920017410	755000965	3,38%	17,57%
1974	133432000	3995888368	760680926	3,34%	17,54%
1975	134200000	4070022249	766169722	3,30%	17,52%
1976	135147000	4143091942	771592697	3,26%	17,52%
1977	136100000	4215826364	776918691	3,23%	17,52%
1978	137060000	4289795862	782220413	3,20%	17,52%
1979	138027000	4365742277	787502492	3,16%	17,53%
1980	139010000	4442348279	792890531	3,13%	17,53%
1981	139941000	4520917350	798088129	3,10%	17,53%
1982	140823000	4602701335	802876253	3,06%	17,54%
1983	141668000	4684875627	807523838	3,02%	17,54%
1984	142745000	4766640881	812373901	2,99%	17,57%
1985	143858000	4850076923	817313920	2,97%	17,60%
1986	144894000	4936006502	822429830	2,94%	17,62%
1987	145908000	5024289346	827666924	2,90%	17,63%
1988	146857000	5113387878	832965846	2,87%	17,63%
1989	147721000	5202582534	837807042	2,84%	17,63%
1990	147969407	5293395467	842030509	2,80%	17,57%
1991	148394216	5382536929	846364518	2,76%	17,53%
1992	148538197	5470164577	849816712	2,72%	17,48%
1993	148458777	5556623321	852735458	2,67%	17,41%
1994	148407912	5642046034	854892657	2,63%	17,36%
1995	148375787	5726736488	856511549	2,59%	17,32%
1996	148160129	5811580202	858209225	2,55%	17,26%
1997	147915361	5896055962	859711482	2,51%	17,21%
1998	147670784	5979726559	860876126	2,47%	17,15%
1999	147214776	6062288850	861848594	2,43%	17,08%
2000	146596869	6144321462	862786211	2,39%	16,99%
2001	145976482	6226348086	863909133	2,34%	16,90%
2002	145306497	6308140970	865474170	2,30%	16,79%
2003	144648618	6389462496	867701442	2,26%	16,67%
2004	144067316	6470924346	870270838	2,23%	16,55%
2005	143518814	6552700448	872913705	2,19%	16,44%
2006	143049637	6635110367	875627934	2,16%	16,34%
2007	142805114	6717567584	878456268	2,13%	16,26%
2008	142742366	6801440971	882088404	2,10%	16,18%
2009	142785349	6885663352	885659803	2,07%	16,12%
2010	142849468	6969985525	889169629	2,05%	16,07%
2011	142960908	7054044372	891329416	2,03%	16,04%
2012	143201721	7141386257	894660467	2,01%	16,01%
2013	143506995	7229303088	898607432	1,99%	15,97%
2014	143819667	7317040295	902670860	1,97%	15,93%
2015	144096870	7403850164	906695444	1,95%	15,89%
2016	144342397	7490415449	910633273	1,93%	15,85%
2017	144496739	7576441961	914078289	1,91%	15,81%
2018	144477859	7660371127	917380453	1,89%	15,75%
2019	144406261	7741774583	920277481	1,87%	15,69%
2020	144073139	7820205606	922353365	1,84%	15,62%
2021	144130482	7888305693	923564027	1,83%	15,61%
2022	144236933	7950946801	920375568	1,81%	15,67%

[461] Data labeled by * were retrieved from the World Bank Databank, while those labeled by ** were gathered from Rosstat. When not specified, figures represent author's calculations.

Table A1.2 – Top 10 Most Populous Countries: 1980 vs. 2020 (World)

Most populous countries worldwide*					
1980			2020		
China	981235000	22,09%	China	1411100000	18,04%
India	696828385	15,41%	India	1396387127	17,70%
United States	227225000	4,94%	United States	331511512	4,17%
Indonesia	148177096	3,16%	Indonesia	271857970	3,42%
Russian Federation	139010000	2,92%	Pakistan	227196741	2,91%
Brazil	122288383	2,52%	Brazil	213196304	2,73%
Japan	116807000	2,37%	Nigeria	208327405	2,66%
Bangladesh	83929765	1,67%	Bangladesh	167420951	2,14%
Pakistan	80624057	1,58%	Russian Federation	144073139	1,84%
Germany	78288576	1,50%	Japan	126261000	1,61%

Table A1.3 – Top 10 Most Populous Countries: 1980 vs. 2020 (Europe and Central Asia)

Most populous countries in Europe and Central Asia*					
1980			2020		
Russian Federation	139010000	18%	Russian Federation	144073139	16%
Germany	78288576	10%	Turkiye	83384680	9%
Italy	56433883	7%	Germany	83160871	9%
United Kingdom	56314216	7%	France	67571107	7%
France	55052582	7%	United Kingdom	67081234	7%
Ukraine	49973920	6%	Italy	59438851	6%
Turkiye	44089069	6%	Spain	47365655	5%
Spain	37491165	5%	Ukraine	44132049	5%
Poland	35574150	4%	Poland	37899070	4%
Romania	22207282	3%	Uzbekistan	34232050	4%

Table A1.4 – Population Growth Rates (1975-2022): Russia, World, Europe and Central Asia, High-Income Countries[462]

	Population Growth			Population Growth*
year	RUSSIA	WORLD	EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA	HIGH INCOME COUNTRIES
1975	0,58%	1,86%	0,72%	0,95%
1976	0,71%	1,80%	0,71%	0,92%
1977	0,71%	1,76%	0,69%	0,85%
1978	0,71%	1,75%	0,68%	0,83%
1979	0,71%	1,77%	0,68%	0,83%
1980	0,71%	1,75%	0,68%	0,86%
1981	0,67%	1,77%	0,66%	0,82%
1982	0,63%	1,81%	0,60%	0,81%
1983	0,60%	1,79%	0,58%	0,75%
1984	0,76%	1,75%	0,60%	0,70%
1985	0,78%	1,75%	0,61%	0,65%
1986	0,72%	1,77%	0,63%	0,65%
1987	0,70%	1,79%	0,64%	0,67%
1988	0,65%	1,77%	0,64%	0,68%
1989	0,59%	1,74%	0,58%	0,69%
1990	0,17%	1,75%	0,50%	0,74%
1991	0,29%	1,68%	0,51%	0,72%
1992	0,10%	1,63%	0,41%	0,82%
1993	-0,05%	1,58%	0,34%	0,83%
1994	-0,03%	1,54%	0,25%	0,78%
1995	-0,02%	1,50%	0,19%	0,71%
1996	-0,15%	1,48%	0,20%	0,67%
1997	-0,17%	1,45%	0,18%	0,68%
1998	-0,17%	1,42%	0,14%	0,66%
1999	-0,31%	1,38%	0,11%	0,64%
2000	-0,42%	1,35%	0,11%	0,63%
2001	-0,42%	1,33%	0,13%	0,61%
2002	-0,46%	1,31%	0,18%	0,61%
2003	-0,45%	1,29%	0,26%	0,61%
2004	-0,40%	1,27%	0,30%	0,61%
2005	-0,38%	1,26%	0,30%	0,63%
2006	-0,33%	1,26%	0,31%	0,66%
2007	-0,17%	1,24%	0,32%	0,75%
2008	-0,04%	1,25%	0,41%	0,81%
2009	0,03%	1,24%	0,40%	0,83%
2010	0,04%	1,22%	0,40%	0,74%
2011	0,08%	1,21%	0,24%	0,63%
2012	0,17%	1,24%	0,37%	0,42%
2013	0,21%	1,23%	0,44%	0,55%
2014	0,22%	1,21%	0,45%	0,57%
2015	0,19%	1,19%	0,45%	0,57%
2016	0,17%	1,17%	0,43%	0,56%
2017	0,11%	1,15%	0,38%	0,57%
2018	-0,01%	1,11%	0,36%	0,51%
2019	-0,05%	1,06%	0,32%	0,49%
2020	-0,23%	1,01%	0,23%	0,42%
2021	0,04%	0,87%	0,13%	0,41%
2022	0,07%	0,79%	-0,35%	-0,04%

[462] Negative values, shown in red, indicate population decrease.

Table A1.5 – Urbanization in Russia (1973-2022)[463]

	Urban and Rural Population in Russia (*mln people*)			Urbanization		
year	**Total***	**Urban****	**Rural****	**Russia**	**Upper middle income countries***	**High income countries***
1973	132,7	85,4	46,7	64%	31,00%	68,90%
1974	133,4	87,1	45,7	65%	31,36%	69,27%
1975	134,2	88,9	44,7	66%	31,71%	69,61%
1976	135,1	90,6	43,9	67%	32,06%	69,90%
1977	136,1	92,1	43,4	68%	32,42%	70,18%
1978	137,1	93,5	43,0	68%	32,96%	70,47%
1979	138	94,9	42,5	69%	33,66%	70,76%
1980	139	96,1	42,0	69%	34,37%	71,06%
1981	139,9	97,3	41,5	70%	35,10%	71,38%
1982	140,8	98,5	41,1	70%	35,84%	71,65%
1983	141,7	99,9	40,6	71%	36,50%	71,91%
1984	142,7	101,2	40,4	71%	37,18%	72,15%
1985	143,9	102,4	40,1	71%	37,86%	72,39%
1986	144,9	103,7	39,9	72%	38,54%	72,66%
1987	145,9	105,2	39,6	72%	39,20%	72,95%
1988	146,9	106,7	39,3	73%	39,87%	73,23%
1989	147,7	108,0	39,0	73%	40,51%	73,49%
1990	148	108,8	38,9	74%	41,17%	73,74%
1991	148,4	109,4	38,9	74%	41,86%	74,03%
1992	148,5				42,57%	74,30%
1993	148,5				43,30%	74,54%
1994	148,4				44,04%	74,79%
1995	148,4				44,78%	75,04%
1996	148,2	108,3	40,0	73%	45,54%	75,28%
1997	147,9				46,30%	75,50%
1998	147,7				47,08%	75,72%
1999	147,2				47,86%	75,94%
2000	146,6				48,67%	76,16%
2001	146	107,1	39,2	73%	49,55%	76,50%
2002	145,3	106,4	38,8	73%	50,49%	76,89%
2003	144,6	106,3	38,7	74%	51,44%	77,26%
2004	144,1	106,0	38,3	74%	52,41%	77,61%
2005	143,5	105,2	38,6	73%	53,38%	77,95%
2006	143	104,8	38,4	73%	54,32%	78,27%
2007	142,8	104,7	38,1	73%	55,26%	78,58%
2008	142,7	104,9	37,9	74%	56,20%	78,88%
2009	142,8	104,9	37,8	73%	57,15%	79,16%
2010	142,8	105,3	37,6	74%	58,09%	79,43%
2011	143	105,4	37,5	74%	58,97%	79,64%
2012	143,2	105,7	37,3	74%	59,83%	79,81%
2013	143,5	106,1	37,2	74%	60,68%	79,98%
2014	143,8	106,6	37,1	74%	61,54%	80,15%
2015	144,1	108,3	38,0	75%	62,38%	80,33%
2016	144,3	108,6	37,9	75%	63,23%	80,50%
2017	144,5	109,0	37,8	75%	64,06%	80,69%
2018	144,5	109,3	37,6	76%	64,88%	80,87%
2019	144,4	109,5	37,3	76%	65,69%	81,06%
2020	144,1	109,5	37,2	76%	66,47%	81,25%
2021	144,1	109,3	36,9	76%	67,23%	81,43%
2022	144,2	110,0	37,0	76%	67,97%	81,64%

[463] Data for the years 1992-1995 and 1997-2000 are missing due to unavailability in Rosstat databases.

Table A1.6 – Urban Population's Growth Rate (1975-2022): Russia, World, Europe and Central Asia, Upper-middle-income and High-income Countries[464]

	Urban Population Growth				
year	Russia	World*	Europe and Central Asia*	Upper middle income*	High income*
1975	2,07%	2,66%	1,38%	1,42%	3,03%
1976	1,91%	2,49%	1,32%	1,27%	2,86%
1977	1,66%	2,50%	1,30%	1,24%	2,79%
1978	1,52%	2,47%	1,29%	1,25%	3,33%
1979	1,50%	2,65%	1,23%	1,27%	3,82%
1980	1,26%	2,84%	1,16%	1,24%	3,72%
1981	1,25%	2,87%	1,18%	1,26%	3,73%
1982	1,23%	2,78%	1,06%	1,14%	3,79%
1983	1,42%	2,65%	1,01%	1,06%	3,52%
1984	1,30%	2,64%	1,01%	0,99%	3,49%
1985	1,19%	2,64%	1,01%	0,99%	3,45%
1986	1,27%	2,67%	1,01%	1,04%	3,44%
1987	1,45%	2,69%	1,05%	1,09%	3,45%
1988	1,43%	2,66%	1,05%	1,08%	3,40%
1989	1,22%	2,60%	0,88%	1,09%	3,24%
1990	0,74%	2,60%	0,72%	1,07%	3,25%
1991	0,55%	2,55%	0,70%	1,20%	3,15%
1992				1,20%	3,04%
1993				1,11%	2,99%
1994				1,05%	2,97%
1995				1,01%	2,90%
1996	-1,01%	2,29%	0,34%	1,00%	2,86%
1997				0,96%	2,83%
1998				0,94%	2,78%
1999				0,92%	2,70%
2000				0,90%	2,65%
2001	-1,11%	2,30%	0,36%	1,06%	2,71%
2002	-0,65%	2,37%	0,47%	1,13%	2,76%
2003	-0,09%	2,34%	0,56%	1,09%	2,72%
2004	-0,28%	2,33%	0,60%	1,09%	2,68%
2005	-0,75%	2,32%	0,62%	1,10%	2,65%
2006	-0,38%	2,29%	0,62%	1,16%	2,53%
2007	-0,10%	2,25%	0,63%	1,21%	2,43%
2008	0,19%	2,27%	0,72%	1,22%	2,47%
2009	0,00%	2,24%	0,70%	1,11%	2,46%
2010	0,38%	2,19%	0,67%	0,98%	2,40%
2011	0,09%	2,08%	0,49%	0,68%	2,31%
2012	0,28%	2,09%	0,62%	0,77%	2,33%
2013	0,38%	2,09%	0,68%	0,78%	2,31%
2014	0,47%	2,09%	0,70%	0,78%	2,25%
2015	1,59%	2,06%	0,70%	0,78%	2,18%
2016	0,28%	2,03%	0,69%	0,79%	2,12%
2017	0,37%	1,99%	0,64%	0,73%	2,08%
2018	0,28%	1,94%	0,63%	0,72%	1,98%
2019	0,18%	1,87%	0,60%	0,66%	1,87%
2020	0,00%	1,80%	0,51%	0,64%	1,69%
2021	-0,18%	1,62%	0,42%	0,19%	1,53%
2022	0,64%	1,55%	-0,01%	0,50%	1,40%

[464] Negative values, shown in red, indicate urban population decrease.

Table A1.7 – Population Growth Projections for Russia (2024-2045): Minimum, Medium, and Maximum Variants[465]

	Total Population (*thousand people*)**			Growth Rate		
year	**MINIMUM**	**MEDIUM**	**MAXIMUM**	**MINIMUM**	**MEDIUM**	**MAXIMUM**
2024	145996,7	146079,7	146284,5			
2025	145441,7	145631,8	146099,9	-0,38%	-0,31%	-0,13%
2026	144813,9	145159,3	145923,2	-0,43%	-0,32%	-0,12%
2027	144148,9	144672,2	145758,9	-0,46%	-0,34%	-0,11%
2028	143458,6	144181,3	145616,1	-0,48%	-0,34%	-0,10%
2029	142755,4	143709,1	145511,1	-0,49%	-0,33%	-0,07%
2030	142038,8	143255,2	145455,3	-0,50%	-0,32%	-0,04%
2031	141307,9	142815,3	145455,4	-0,51%	-0,31%	0,00%
2032	140567,7	142391,5	145506,3	-0,52%	-0,30%	0,03%
2033	139820,9	141989,2	145604,2	-0,53%	-0,28%	0,07%
2034	139073,3	141621,3	145766,4	-0,53%	-0,26%	0,11%
2035	138326,9	141279,3	145989,6	-0,54%	-0,24%	0,15%
2036	137584,4	140963,0	146269,4	-0,54%	-0,22%	0,19%
2037	136845,8	140672,4	146597,6	-0,54%	-0,21%	0,22%
2038	136113,8	140413,2	146971,5	-0,53%	-0,18%	0,26%
2039	135389,2	140173,2	147383,0	-0,53%	-0,17%	0,28%
2040	134668,3	139945,2	147827,4	-0,53%	-0,16%	0,30%
2041	133956,3	139726,7	148300,2	-0,53%	-0,16%	0,32%
2042	133259,3	139520,5	148795,1	-0,52%	-0,15%	0,33%
2043	132584,7	139325,6	149305,7	-0,51%	-0,14%	0,34%
2044	131920,0	139135,9	149824,9	-0,50%	-0,14%	0,35%
2045	131257,9	138951,9	150346,5	-0,50%	-0,13%	0,35%
2046	130596,2	138771,3	150872,4	-0,50%	-0,13%	0,35%

Table A1.8 – Decomposing Population Growth in Russia (2024-2045): Natural Increase and Net Migration Contributions under Minimum, Medium, and Maximum Projections

	Natural Increase			Net Migration		
year	**MINIMUM**	**MEDIUM**	**MAXIMUM**	**MINIMUM**	**MEDIUM**	**MAXIMUM**
2024	-0,49%	-0,46%	-0,34%	0,11%	0,16%	0,22%
2025	-0,54%	-0,48%	-0,35%	0,11%	0,15%	0,22%
2026	-0,57%	-0,48%	-0,35%	0,11%	0,15%	0,23%
2027	-0,59%	-0,49%	-0,34%	0,11%	0,15%	0,24%
2028	-0,60%	-0,47%	-0,32%	0,11%	0,15%	0,25%
2029	-0,61%	-0,46%	-0,29%	0,11%	0,15%	0,26%
2030	-0,62%	-0,46%	-0,26%	0,11%	0,15%	0,26%
2031	-0,63%	-0,45%	-0,23%	0,11%	0,15%	0,27%
2032	-0,64%	-0,43%	-0,20%	0,11%	0,15%	0,27%
2033	-0,64%	-0,41%	-0,16%	0,11%	0,15%	0,27%
2034	-0,65%	-0,39%	-0,12%	0,11%	0,15%	0,28%
2035	-0,65%	-0,38%	-0,08%	0,11%	0,15%	0,28%
2036	-0,65%	-0,36%	-0,05%	0,11%	0,15%	0,28%
2037	-0,65%	-0,34%	-0,02%	0,11%	0,15%	0,28%
2038	-0,64%	-0,33%	0,00%	0,11%	0,15%	0,28%
2039	-0,65%	-0,32%	0,02%	0,11%	0,16%	0,28%
2040	-0,64%	-0,31%	0,04%	0,11%	0,16%	0,28%
2041	-0,63%	-0,30%	0,05%	0,11%	0,16%	0,28%
2042	-0,62%	-0,30%	0,06%	0,11%	0,16%	0,28%
2043	-0,62%	-0,29%	0,07%	0,11%	0,16%	0,28%
2044	-0,62%	-0,29%	0,07%	0,11%	0,16%	0,28%
2045	-0,62%	-0,29%	0,07%	0,12%	0,16%	0,28%

[465] Positive values are shown in green and indicate population growth.

Table A1.9 – Net Migration's Impact on Russia's Population Growth: Absolute Values and Induced Growth (1991-2021)

year	Net migration*	Total Population*	Net migration-induced growth
1991	124261	148394216	0,08%
1992	443129	148538197	0,30%
1993	731233	148458777	0,49%
1994	658544	148407912	0,44%
1995	544803	148375787	0,37%
1996	463685	148160129	0,31%
1997	463215	147915361	0,31%
1998	464127	147670784	0,31%
1999	518140	147214776	0,35%
2000	404928	146596869	0,28%
2001	287206	145976482	0,20%
2002	289174	145306497	0,20%
2003	241147	144648618	0,17%
2004	239753	144067316	0,17%
2005	244437	143518814	0,17%
2006	282022	143049637	0,20%
2007	372974	142805114	0,26%
2008	385471	142742366	0,27%
2009	374958	142785349	0,26%
2010	253479	142849468	0,18%
2011	295952	142960908	0,21%
2012	304059	143201721	0,21%
2013	291552	143506995	0,20%
2014	260843	143819667	0,18%
2015	384942	144096870	0,27%
2016	373316	144342397	0,26%
2017	350105	144496739	0,24%
2018	336527	144477859	0,23%
2019	333509	144406261	0,23%
2020	340711	144073139	0,24%
2021	320617	144130482	0,22%

APPENDIX 2:
RUSSIA'S AGE AND STRUCTURE COMPOSITION[466]

*Table A2.1 – Distribution of Russia's Population by Age Groups under Minimum, Medium, and Maximum Variants (2024-2046)***

Legend:

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028-2046
	Working-age population				
Male	16-62 years	16-62 years	16-63 years	16-63 years	16-64 years
Female	16-57 years	16-57 years	16-58 years	16-58 years	16-59 years
	Old population				
Male	63 +	63 +	64 +	64 +	65 +
Female	58 +	58 +	59 +	59 +	60 +

	Young population (0-15)		Working population		Old population	
year	*Thousand people*	% of total population	*Thousand people*	% of total population	*Thousand people*	% of total population
MINIMUM VARIANT						
2024	26806,9	18,4	84693,2	58,0	34496,6	23,6
2025	26272,0	18,1	84272,2	57,9	34897,5	24,0
2026	25680,7	17,8	85628,6	59,1	33504,6	23,1
2027	25023,7	17,4	85372,5	59,2	33752,7	23,4
2028	24307,8	17,0	86823,5	60,5	32327,3	22,5
2029	23488,6	16,5	86713,4	60,7	32553,4	22,8
2030	22681,2	16,0	86683,0	61,0	32674,6	23,0
2031	21857,1	15,5	86578,6	61,3	32872,2	23,2
2032	21018,0	15,0	86611,2	61,6	32938,5	23,4
2033	20249,2	14,5	86582,5	61,9	32989,2	23,6
2034	19689,0	14,1	86337,0	62,1	33047,3	23,8
2035	19227,7	13,9	85978,3	62,2	33120,9	23,9
2036	18901,3	13,7	85366,8	62,1	33316,3	24,2
2037	18641,9	13,6	84777,7	62,0	33426,2	24,4
2038	18430,5	13,5	84187,0	61,9	33496,3	24,6
2039	18320,9	13,5	83480,9	61,7	33587,4	24,8
2040	18292,3	13,6	82670,1	61,4	33705,9	25,0
2041	18350,2	13,7	81656,2	61,0	33949,9	25,3
2042	18463,5	13,8	80704,3	60,6	34091,5	25,6
2043	18597,3	14,0	79725,3	60,1	34262,1	25,9
2044	18732,9	14,2	78641,3	59,6	34545,8	26,2
2045	18856,7	14,4	77592,3	59,1	34808,9	26,5
2046	18967,1	14,5	76390,6	58,5	35238,5	27,0

[466] Data labelled by * were retrieved from the World Bank Databank, while those labelled by ** were gathered from Rosstat. When not specified, figures represent the author's calculations.

MEDIUM VARIANT						
2024	26823,3	18,4	84747,0	58,0	34509,4	23,6
2025	26310,3	18,1	84389,2	57,9	34932,3	24,0
2026	25770,7	17,8	85821,3	59,1	33567,3	23,1
2027	25172,3	17,4	85646,0	59,2	33853,9	23,4
2028	24518,4	17,0	87196,3	60,5	32466,6	22,5
2029	23774,4	16,5	87186,7	60,7	32748,0	22,8
2030	23056,1	16,1	87266,4	60,9	32932,7	23,0
2031	22330,8	15,6	87281,5	61,1	33203,0	23,3
2032	21600,1	15,2	87443,5	61,4	33347,9	23,4
2033	20953,7	14,7	87553,0	61,7	33482,5	23,6
2034	20530,7	14,5	87454,6	61,8	33636,0	23,7
2035	20210,4	14,3	87251,2	61,8	33817,7	23,9
2036	20032,9	14,2	86801,0	61,6	34129,1	24,2
2037	19933,2	14,2	86379,1	61,4	34360,1	24,4
2038	19897,1	14,2	85955,7	61,2	34560,4	24,6
2039	19968,9	14,3	85419,7	60,9	34784,6	24,8
2040	20116,1	14,4	84790,8	60,6	35038,3	25,0
2041	20348,5	14,6	83966,1	60,1	35412,1	25,3
2042	20610,1	14,8	83222,8	59,6	35687,6	25,6
2043	20887,2	15,0	82450,8	59,2	35987,6	25,8
2044	21167,3	15,2	81574,8	58,6	36393,8	26,2
2045	21434,4	15,4	80742,7	58,1	36774,8	26,5
2046	21684,5	15,6	79771,9	57,5	37314,9	26,9
MAXIMUM VARIANT						
2024	26872,2	18,4	84840,5	58,0	34571,8	23,6
2025	26461,5	18,1	84582,5	57,9	35055,9	24,0
2026	26023,3	17,8	86146,8	59,1	33753,1	23,1
2027	25516,2	17,5	86120,6	59,1	34122,1	23,4
2028	24944,1	17,1	87856,7	60,4	32815,3	22,5
2029	24263,1	16,7	88033,4	60,5	33214,6	22,8
2030	23596,5	16,2	88312,1	60,7	33546,7	23,1
2031	22928,0	15,7	88533,5	60,9	33993,9	23,4
2032	22259,1	15,3	88912,4	61,1	34334,8	23,6
2033	21675,1	14,9	89245,5	61,3	34683,6	23,8
2034	21314,1	14,6	89364,9	61,3	35087,4	24,1
2035	21068,0	14,4	89372,9	61,2	35548,7	24,4
2036	20974,3	14,3	89122,6	61,0	36172,5	24,7
2037	20965,5	14,3	88896,5	60,6	36735,6	25,1
2038	21019,4	14,3	88661,8	60,3	37290,3	25,4
2039	21188,9	14,4	88306,9	59,9	37887,2	25,7
2040	21406,7	14,5	87888,9	59,4	38531,8	26,1
2041	21671,7	14,6	87313,2	58,9	39315,3	26,5
2042	21977,5	14,8	86809,6	58,3	40008,0	26,9
2043	22322,0	14,9	86266,4	57,8	40717,3	27,3
2044	22689,7	15,2	85601,1	57,1	41534,1	27,7
2045	23069,2	15,3	84958,0	56,5	42319,3	28,2
2046	23452,0	15,5	84151,1	55,8	43269,3	28,7

Table A2.2 – Female share of the population (1973-2022): Russia, World, Europe and Central Asia, High-income and Upper-middle-income Countries

	Share of Female Population				
year	HIGH INCOME*	EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA*	UPPER MIDDLE INCOME*	WORLD*	RUSSIA**
1973	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1974	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1975	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1976	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1977	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1978	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1979	51%	52%	50%	50%	54%
1980	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1981	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1982	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1983	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1984	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1985	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1986	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1987	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1988	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1989	51%	52%	50%	50%	53%
1990	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1991	51%	52%	50%	50%	53%
1992	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1993	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1994	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1995	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1996	51%	52%	50%	50%	53%
1997	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1998	51%	52%	50%	50%	
1999	51%	52%	50%	50%	
2000	51%	52%	50%	50%	
2001	51%	52%	50%	50%	53%
2002	51%	52%	50%	50%	53%
2003	51%	52%	50%	50%	53%
2004	51%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2005	51%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2006	51%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2007	51%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2008	51%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2009	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2010	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2011	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2012	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2013	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2014	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2015	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2016	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2017	50%	52%	50%	50%	54%
2018	50%	51%	50%	50%	54%
2019	50%	51%	50%	50%	54%
2020	50%	51%	50%	50%	54%
2021	50%	51%	50%	50%	54%
2022	50%	51%	50%	50%	54%

Table A2.3 – Russia's Projected Sex Composition (2025-2046): Absolute Population and Sex Ratio under Minimum, Medium, and Maximum Variants

	Forecasts of sex ratio (2024-2046)**								
	MINIMUM VARIANT			MEDIUM VARIANT			MAXIMUM VARIANT		
year	Males (*mln people*)	Females (*mln people*)	Females every 1000 males	Males (*mln people*)	Females (*mln people*)	Females every 1000 males	Males (*mln people*)	Females (*mln people*)	Females every 1000 males
2024	67,9	78,1	1152	67,9	78,2	1151	68,0	78,3	1151
2025	67,6	77,9	1152	67,7	78,0	1152	67,9	78,2	1151
2026	67,3	77,6	1153	67,4	77,7	1152	67,8	78,1	1151
2027	66,9	77,2	1154	67,2	77,5	1153	67,8	78,0	1151
2028	66,6	76,9	1155	67,0	77,2	1153	67,7	77,9	1150
2029	66,2	76,5	1155	66,8	77,0	1153	67,7	77,8	1150
2030	65,9	76,1	1156	66,5	76,7	1153	67,7	77,8	1149
2031	65,5	75,8	1156	66,3	76,5	1152	67,7	77,8	1149
2032	65,2	75,4	1156	66,2	76,2	1152	67,7	77,8	1148
2033	64,8	75,0	1157	66,0	76,0	1152	67,8	77,8	1148
2034	64,5	74,6	1157	65,8	75,8	1151	67,9	77,9	1147
2035	64,1	74,2	1157	65,7	75,6	1151	68,0	78,0	1146
2036	63,8	73,8	1157	65,6	75,4	1150	68,2	78,1	1144
2037	63,5	73,4	1156	65,4	75,2	1150	68,4	78,2	1143
2038	63,1	73,0	1156	65,3	75,1	1149	68,7	78,3	1141
2039	62,8	72,6	1156	65,2	74,9	1148	68,9	78,5	1138
2040	62,5	72,2	1155	65,2	74,8	1148	69,2	78,6	1136
2041	62,2	71,8	1154	65,1	74,6	1147	69,5	78,8	1133
2042	61,9	71,4	1153	65,0	74,5	1145	69,9	78,9	1130
2043	61,6	71,0	1152	65,0	74,3	1144	70,2	79,1	1127
2044	61,3	70,6	1152	65,0	74,2	1142	70,6	79,3	1124
2045	61,0	70,2	1151	64,9	74,0	1140	70,9	79,4	1120
2046	60,7	69,9	1150	64,9	73,9	1138	71,3	79,6	1117

APPENDIX 3:
RUSSIA'S MORTALITY AND LIFE EXPECTANCY[467]

Table A3.1 – Mortality Rate by Sex (1974-2021): Russia, World, High-income, Upper-middle-income and Low-middle-income Countries

	Mortality rate by sex (per 1000 people)*									
	RUSSIA		WORLD		HIGH INCOME		UPPER MIDDLE INCOME		LOW INCOME	
year	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
1974	317	123	289	216	198	107	290	200	425	359
1975	330	127	284	212	196	105	286	195	421	357
1976	336	130	280	208	194	103	280	190	416	349
1977	346	130	276	202	192	101	275	184	412	345
1978	350	132	274	198	190	99	271	179	413	341
1979	358	134	270	193	187	96	266	175	408	336
1980	362	135	268	189	187	96	263	171	405	331
1981	357	132	264	184	182	92	258	166	403	329
1982	348	128	261	180	178	91	253	162	408	327
1983	351	131	258	177	178	90	248	157	422	340
1984	360	134	254	174	175	88	244	154	436	342
1985	332	127	249	172	174	87	237	150	430	341
1986	284	112	244	168	171	86	229	145	424	333
1987	283	110	241	165	168	85	225	141	423	331
1988	288	110	240	164	167	83	223	138	428	335
1989	304	114	237	161	166	82	221	136	402	323
1990	316	116	235	159	163	80	219	134	408	323
1991	323	119	233	159	162	79	216	134	402	325
1992	364	131	232	157	159	78	215	130	407	330
1993	443	161	232	156	158	77	217	128	398	325
1994	486	178	231	156	156	76	216	128	384	321
1995	466	169	229	154	154	76	211	124	392	323
1996	427	154	226	154	149	74	206	123	395	325
1997	392	142	223	151	144	73	201	120	390	322
1998	383	139	221	149	141	71	198	117	410	327
1999	416	150	219	148	139	71	198	118	393	316
2000	443	158	217	146	136	69	198	116	369	311
2001	451	164	216	144	133	69	196	111	364	309
2002	462	171	214	142	132	68	194	111	361	306
2003	471	177	212	140	131	68	194	110	350	298
2004	464	172	210	139	127	66	193	111	346	294
2005	465	173	207	136	126	65	189	107	341	288
2006	427	157	204	132	124	64	185	104	330	278
2007	400	147	202	130	121	63	182	102	324	270
2008	394	146	200	129	118	62	180	101	319	265
2009	370	138	197	126	116	61	175	97	312	255
2010	365	136	194	124	112	59	173	96	307	250
2011	347	130	191	121	110	59	170	94	302	243
2012	332	124	189	120	108	58	166	91	304	238
2013	322	120	186	118	105	57	163	89	303	232
2014	322	120	182	117	103	57	160	87	300	227
2015	..	..	177	116	104	57	150	84	298	223
2016	..	..	176	115	103	57	149	83	293	216
2017	..	..	175	114	102	56	149	81	291	212
2018	..	..	172	112	101	56	144	79	289	206
2019	..	..	170	111	99	55	141	78	282	201
2020	..	..	182	119	111	62	153	86	291	208
2021	..	..	206	138	..	..	160	91	305	215

[467] Data labelled by * were retrieved from the World Bank Databank, while those labelled by ** were gathered from Rosstat. When not specified, figures represent the author's calculations.

Table A3.2 – Life Expectancy at Birth (1973-2021): Russia, World, High-income and Upper-middle-income Countries

	Life Expectancy at birth*			
year	RUSSIA	WORLD	HIGH INCOME	UPPER MIDDLE INCOME
1973	68,29	59,29	71,19	60,26
1974	68,32	59,71	71,58	60,84
1975	67,72	60,17	71,89	61,36
1976	67,49	60,63	72,16	61,96
1977	67,38	61,12	72,56	62,54
1978	67,39	61,48	72,70	63,06
1979	67,11	61,90	73,04	63,54
1980	67,03	62,23	73,07	64,00
1981	67,26	62,61	73,45	64,46
1982	67,81	62,97	73,77	64,92
1983	67,65	63,22	73,87	65,34
1984	67,20	63,52	74,15	65,69
1985	67,86	63,81	74,26	66,09
1986	69,39	64,21	74,51	66,58
1987	69,44	64,51	74,78	66,90
1988	69,46	64,68	74,89	67,12
1989	69,17	65,02	75,12	67,39
1990	68,89	65,19	75,26	67,58
1991	68,47	65,34	75,45	67,77
1992	66,87	65,60	75,71	68,07
1993	64,94	65,78	75,78	68,30
1994	64,47	66,03	76,06	68,56
1995	64,69	66,22	76,12	68,92
1996	65,85	66,48	76,48	69,24
1997	66,70	66,82	76,80	69,62
1998	67,03	67,10	77,00	70,00
1999	65,98	67,39	77,14	70,14
2000	65,48	67,70	77,45	70,47
2001	65,38	68,05	77,75	70,95
2002	65,13	68,33	77,91	71,22
2003	65,03	68,61	78,03	71,47
2004	65,47	68,86	78,46	71,62
2005	65,53	69,20	78,57	72,08
2006	66,73	69,57	78,89	72,47
2007	67,59	69,84	79,12	72,75
2008	67,95	70,01	79,28	72,94
2009	68,68	70,40	79,58	73,36
2010	68,84	70,67	79,76	73,61
2011	69,68	71,01	80,03	73,91
2012	70,07	71,28	80,15	74,22
2013	70,58	71,58	80,34	74,52
2014	70,74	71,88	80,60	74,78
2015	71,18	72,09	80,48	74,99
2016	71,65	72,34	80,64	75,18
2017	72,45	72,54	80,68	75,35
2018	72,66	72,78	80,77	75,73
2019	73,08	72,98	80,98	75,95
2020	71,34	72,24	80,08	75,14
2021	69,36	71,33	79,92	74,69

Table A3.3 – Yearly Changes in Life Expectancy at Birth (1974-2021): Russia, World, High-income and Upper-middle-income Countries[468]

Improvements in life expectancy at birth*				
year	**RUSSIA**	**WORLD**	**HIGH INCOME**	**UPPER MIDDLE INCOME**
1974	0,000	0,007	0,005	0,010
1975	-0,009	0,008	0,004	0,009
1976	-0,003	0,008	0,004	0,010
1977	-0,002	0,008	0,006	0,009
1978	0,000	0,006	0,002	0,008
1979	-0,004	0,007	0,005	0,008
1980	-0,001	0,005	0,000	0,007
1981	0,003	0,006	0,005	0,007
1982	0,008	0,006	0,004	0,007
1983	-0,002	0,004	0,001	0,007
1984	-0,007	0,005	0,004	0,005
1985	0,010	0,005	0,001	0,006
1986	0,023	0,006	0,003	0,007
1987	0,001	0,005	0,004	0,005
1988	0,000	0,003	0,001	0,003
1989	-0,004	0,005	0,003	0,004
1990	-0,004	0,003	0,002	0,003
1991	-0,006	0,002	0,002	0,003
1992	-0,023	0,004	0,003	0,005
1993	-0,029	0,003	0,001	0,003
1994	-0,007	0,004	0,004	0,004
1995	0,003	0,003	0,001	0,005
1996	0,018	0,004	0,005	0,005
1997	0,013	0,005	0,004	0,006
1998	0,005	0,004	0,003	0,006
1999	-0,016	0,004	0,002	0,002
2000	-0,008	0,005	0,004	0,005
2001	-0,002	0,005	0,004	0,007
2002	-0,004	0,004	0,002	0,004
2003	-0,002	0,004	0,002	0,004
2004	0,007	0,004	0,005	0,002
2005	0,001	0,005	0,001	0,006
2006	0,018	0,005	0,004	0,005
2007	0,013	0,004	0,003	0,004
2008	0,005	0,002	0,002	0,003
2009	0,011	0,006	0,004	0,006
2010	0,002	0,004	0,002	0,003
2011	0,012	0,005	0,003	0,004
2012	0,006	0,004	0,001	0,004
2013	0,007	0,004	0,002	0,004
2014	0,002	0,004	0,003	0,004
2015	0,006	0,003	-0,001	0,003
2016	0,007	0,003	0,002	0,002
2017	0,011	0,003	0,000	0,002
2018	0,003	0,003	0,001	0,005
2019	0,006	0,003	0,003	0,003
2020	-0,024	-0,010	-0,011	-0,011
2021	-0,028	-0,013	-0,002	-0,006

[468] Negative values, shown in red, indicate a decrease in life expectancy.

Table A3.4 – Life Expectancy at Birth by Sex (1974-2021): Russia, World, High-income and Upper-middle-income Countries

	Life expectancy at birth by sex*							
	RUSSIA		WORLD		HIGH INCOME		UPPER MIDDLE INCOME	
year	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1974	63,13	73,77	57,63	61,98	68,37	74,97	58,32	63,52
1975	62,48	73,23	58,06	62,45	68,63	75,32	58,81	64,08
1976	62,19	73,05	58,52	62,91	68,90	75,59	59,41	64,69
1977	61,83	73,2	58,95	63,47	69,25	76,04	59,93	65,34
1978	61,83	73,23	59,26	63,89	69,38	76,21	60,43	65,88
1979	61,49	73,02	59,65	64,35	69,69	76,57	60,89	66,38
1980	61,39	72,96	59,95	64,71	69,77	76,56	61,32	66,89
1981	61,62	73,19	60,29	65,13	70,15	76,92	61,75	67,38
1982	62,25	73,64	60,63	65,51	70,49	77,23	62,22	67,82
1983	62,16	73,42	60,87	65,76	70,59	77,32	62,63	68,25
1984	61,71	72,97	61,17	66,06	70,86	77,62	63,00	68,58
1985	62,73	73,24	61,48	66,32	70,99	77,72	63,42	68,93
1986	64,78	74,23	61,89	66,71	71,26	77,93	63,91	69,41
1987	64,84	74,27	62,18	67,03	71,54	78,21	64,22	69,75
1988	64,64	74,53	62,33	67,22	71,65	78,32	64,41	70,01
1989	64,24	74,35	62,68	67,54	71,86	78,56	64,68	70,28
1990	63,73	74,3	62,83	67,73	71,96	78,75	64,86	70,47
1991	63,45	73,75	63,04	67,80	72,15	78,94	65,18	70,50
1992	62	71,99	63,29	68,07	72,42	79,19	65,46	70,85
1993	58,97	71,2	63,45	68,29	72,53	79,22	65,56	71,22
1994	57,55	71,73	63,72	68,50	72,80	79,51	65,86	71,44
1995	58,12	71,59	63,92	68,69	72,89	79,54	66,19	71,83
1996	59,62	72,4	64,23	68,90	73,32	79,82	66,58	72,07
1997	60,85	72,84	64,58	69,22	73,70	80,09	66,99	72,43
1998	61,22	73,13	64,83	69,53	73,93	80,25	67,33	72,86
1999	59,87	72,4	65,17	69,76	74,12	80,34	67,56	72,89
2000	59,03	72,26	65,47	70,09	74,50	80,58	67,81	73,31
2001	58,92	72,17	65,76	70,51	74,83	80,85	68,14	73,97
2002	58,68	71,9	66,05	70,78	75,02	80,98	68,44	74,20
2003	58,53	71,85	66,31	71,07	75,17	81,06	68,68	74,48
2004	58,91	72,36	66,56	71,33	75,60	81,49	68,85	74,59
2005	58,92	72,47	66,87	71,69	75,74	81,57	69,29	75,08
2006	60,43	73,34	67,22	72,09	76,07	81,88	69,67	75,46
2007	61,46	74,02	67,47	72,37	76,33	82,08	69,94	75,75
2008	61,92	74,28	67,66	72,52	76,54	82,20	70,17	75,89
2009	62,87	74,79	68,03	72,93	76,86	82,47	70,58	76,32
2010	63,09	74,88	68,31	73,19	77,07	82,62	70,84	76,55
2011	64,04	75,61	68,64	73,53	77,36	82,88	71,14	76,86
2012	64,56	75,86	68,90	73,82	77,53	82,94	71,43	77,19
2013	65,13	76,3	69,19	74,12	77,75	83,10	71,72	77,48
2014	65,29	76,47	69,52	74,39	78,02	83,35	71,99	77,72
2015	65,92	76,71	69,76	74,57	77,94	83,20	72,20	77,94
2016	66,5	77,06	70,00	74,84	78,08	83,37	72,33	78,19
2017	67,51	77,64	70,17	75,06	78,16	83,37	72,44	78,45
2018	67,75	77,82	70,43	75,27	78,25	83,46	72,88	78,72
2019	68,24	78,17	70,62	75,47	78,47	83,67	73,11	78,92
2020	66,49	76,43	69,80	74,86	77,44	82,91	72,21	78,27
2021	64,21	74,77	68,89	73,95	77,27	82,76	71,79	77,80

Table A3.5 – Sex differentials in Life Expectancy at Birth (1974-2021): yearly fluctuations for Russia, World, High-income and Upper-middle-income Countries

	Sex differentials in life expectancy at birth*			
year	RUSSIA	WORLD	HIGH INCOME	UPPER MIDDLE
1974	10,64	4,36	6,60	5,21
1975	10,75	4,38	6,69	5,28
1976	10,86	4,40	6,69	5,28
1977	11,37	4,53	6,78	5,41
1978	11,4	4,63	6,83	5,45
1979	11,53	4,70	6,88	5,49
1980	11,57	4,76	6,80	5,58
1981	11,57	4,84	6,77	5,63
1982	11,39	4,88	6,75	5,61
1983	11,26	4,89	6,73	5,62
1984	11,26	4,89	6,76	5,58
1985	10,51	4,84	6,73	5,51
1986	9,45	4,82	6,67	5,50
1987	9,43	4,85	6,67	5,53
1988	9,89	4,89	6,66	5,60
1989	10,11	4,86	6,70	5,60
1990	10,57	4,90	6,79	5,61
1991	10,3	4,76	6,79	5,32
1992	9,99	4,78	6,77	5,38
1993	12,23	4,85	6,69	5,66
1994	14,18	4,79	6,71	5,59
1995	13,47	4,77	6,65	5,64
1996	12,78	4,67	6,49	5,50
1997	11,99	4,65	6,40	5,44
1998	11,91	4,70	6,32	5,54
1999	12,53	4,60	6,22	5,33
2000	13,23	4,61	6,09	5,49
2001	13,25	4,74	6,02	5,82
2002	13,22	4,73	5,96	5,76
2003	13,32	4,77	5,90	5,80
2004	13,45	4,77	5,89	5,74
2005	13,55	4,82	5,83	5,79
2006	12,91	4,86	5,80	5,79
2007	12,56	4,90	5,75	5,81
2008	12,36	4,86	5,66	5,72
2009	11,92	4,89	5,61	5,74
2010	11,79	4,88	5,55	5,72
2011	11,57	4,90	5,52	5,72
2012	11,3	4,92	5,41	5,76
2013	11,17	4,93	5,35	5,76
2014	11,18	4,86	5,33	5,74
2015	10,79	4,81	5,26	5,74
2016	10,56	4,84	5,29	5,87
2017	10,13	4,89	5,21	6,01
2018	10,07	4,84	5,21	5,84
2019	9,93	4,85	5,21	5,80
2020	9,94	5,06	5,47	6,06
2021	10,56	5,06	5,49	6,00

Table A3.6 – Urban and Rural Differentials in Russia's Life Expectancy by Sex (2000-2022)

	Total Population**			Urban Population**			Rural Population**		
year	overall	male	female	overall	male	female	overall	male	female
2000	65,34	59,03	72,26	65,69	59,35	72,46	64,34	58,14	71,66
2001	65,23	58,92	72,17	65,57	59,23	72,37	64,25	58,07	71,57
2002	64,95	58,68	71,90	65,40	59,09	72,18	63,68	57,54	71,09
2003	64,84	58,53	71,85	65,36	59,01	72,20	63,34	57,20	70,81
2004	65,31	58,91	72,36	65,87	59,42	72,73	63,77	57,56	71,27
2005	65,37	58,92	72,47	66,10	59,58	72,99	63,45	57,22	71,06
2006	66,69	60,43	73,34	67,43	61,12	73,88	64,74	58,69	71,86
2007	67,61	61,46	74,02	68,37	62,20	74,54	65,59	59,57	72,56
2008	67,99	61,92	74,28	68,77	62,67	74,83	65,93	60,00	72,77
2009	68,78	62,87	74,79	69,57	63,65	75,34	66,67	60,86	73,27
2010	68,94	63,09	74,88	69,69	63,82	75,39	66,92	61,19	73,42
2011	69,83	64,04	75,61	70,51	64,67	76,10	67,99	62,40	74,21
2012	70,24	64,56	75,86	70,83	65,10	76,27	68,61	63,12	74,66
2013	70,76	65,13	76,30	71,33	65,64	76,70	69,18	63,75	75,13
2014	70,93	65,29	76,47	71,44	65,75	76,83	69,49	64,07	75,43
2015	71,39	65,92	76,71	71,91	66,38	77,09	69,90	64,67	75,59
2016	71,87	66,50	77,06	72,35	66,91	77,38	70,50	65,36	76,07
2017	72,70	67,51	77,64	73,16	67,90	77,96	71,38	66,43	76,66
2018	72,91	67,75	77,82	73,34	68,11	78,09	71,67	66,75	76,93
2019	73,34	68,24	78,17	73,72	68,56	78,41	72,21	67,36	77,39
2020	71,54	66,49	76,43	71,81	66,67	76,61	70,69	65,97	75,82
2021	70,06	65,51	74,51	70,30	65,63	74,69	69,31	65,12	73,88
2022	72,73	67,57	77,77	73,09	67,89	77,98	71,62	66,63	77,07

APPENDIX 4:
RUSSIA'S FERTILITY[469]

Table A4.1 – Urban and Rural TFR for Russia (1960-2022)

TFR in Russia over time**			
year	Total population	Urban population	Rural population
1960 – 1961	2,54	2,04	3,32
1970 – 1971	2,01	1,77	2,59
1980 – 1981	1,90	1,7	2,56
1990	1,89	1,70	2,6
1995	1,34	1,19	1,81
2000	1,20	1,09	1,55
2001	1,22	1,12	1,56
2002	1,29	1,19	1,63
2003	1,32	1,22	1,67
2004	1,34	1,25	1,65
2005	1,29	1,21	1,58
2006	1,31	1,21	1,60
2007	1,42	1,29	1,80
2008	1,50	1,37	1,91
2009	1,54	1,42	1,94
2010	1,57	1,44	1,98
2011	1,58	1,44	2,06
2012	1,69	1,54	2,22
2013	1,71	1,55	2,26
2014	1,75	1,59	2,32
2015	1,78	1,68	2,11
2016	1,76	1,67	2,06
2017	1,62	1,53	1,92
2018	1,58	1,49	1,87
2019	1,50	1,43	1,75
2020	1,51	1,43	1,74
2021	1,51	1,44	1,73
2022	1,42	1,36	1,59

[469] Data labelled by * were retrieved from the World Bank Databank, while those labelled by ** were gathered from Rosstat. When not specified, figures represent the author's calculations.

Table A4.2 – TFR (1973-2021): Russia, World, High-income and Upper-middle-income Countries

Fertility rates, total (births per woman)*					
year	Upper middle income	High income	Europe & Central Asia	Russia	World
1973	4,50	2,25	2,41	2,01	4,42
1974	4,16	2,21	2,40	2	4,26
1975	3,81	2,12	2,34	1,98	4,08
1976	3,59	2,06	2,31	1,97	3,97
1977	3,35	2,03	2,25	1,95	3,85
1978	3,24	1,99	2,22	1,92	3,78
1979	3,22	2,00	2,19	1,9	3,76
1980	3,18	1,98	2,17	1,89	3,73
1981	3,17	1,94	2,13	1,91	3,71
1982	3,25	1,92	2,14	2,04	3,72
1983	2,99	1,88	2,13	2,11	3,59
1984	2,98	1,86	2,11	2,06	3,57
1985	2,95	1,85	2,10	2,05	3,53
1986	2,97	1,83	2,11	2,15	3,52
1987	2,96	1,83	2,10	2,22	3,49
1988	2,80	1,85	2,07	2,12	3,40
1989	2,75	1,84	2,01	2,01	3,35
1990	2,71	1,85	1,96	1,89	3,31
1991	2,35	1,82	1,90	1,73	3,12
1992	2,22	1,80	1,82	1,55	3,04
1993	2,14	1,77	1,75	1,39	2,97
1994	2,09	1,75	1,70	1,4	2,92
1995	2,04	1,71	1,66	1,34	2,86
1996	2,00	1,70	1,63	1,27	2,81
1997	1,96	1,69	1,60	1,22	2,77
1998	1,93	1,68	1,58	1,23	2,74
1999	1,91	1,68	1,55	1,16	2,71
2000	1,94	1,71	1,56	1,20	2,72
2001	1,89	1,67	1,55	1,22	2,68
2002	1,88	1,65	1,55	1,29	2,65
2003	1,87	1,66	1,56	1,32	2,63
2004	1,88	1,67	1,59	1,34	2,62
2005	1,89	1,67	1,59	1,29	2,60
2006	1,89	1,71	1,62	1,31	2,60
2007	1,91	1,73	1,66	1,42	2,59
2008	1,93	1,74	1,72	1,50	2,59
2009	1,93	1,72	1,72	1,54	2,58
2010	1,92	1,70	1,73	1,57	2,55
2011	1,91	1,69	1,71	1,58	2,53
2012	1,98	1,69	1,74	1,69	2,55
2013	1,93	1,66	1,74	1,71	2,51
2014	1,96	1,67	1,77	1,75	2,51
2015	1,90	1,67	1,78	1,78	2,48
2016	1,93	1,67	1,78	1,76	2,48
2017	1,93	1,63	1,73	1,62	2,46
2018	1,79	1,61	1,72	1,58	2,40
2019	1,75	1,58	1,69	1,50	2,36
2020	1,63	1,53	1,68	1,51	2,30
2021	1,57	1,55	1,69	1,49	2,27