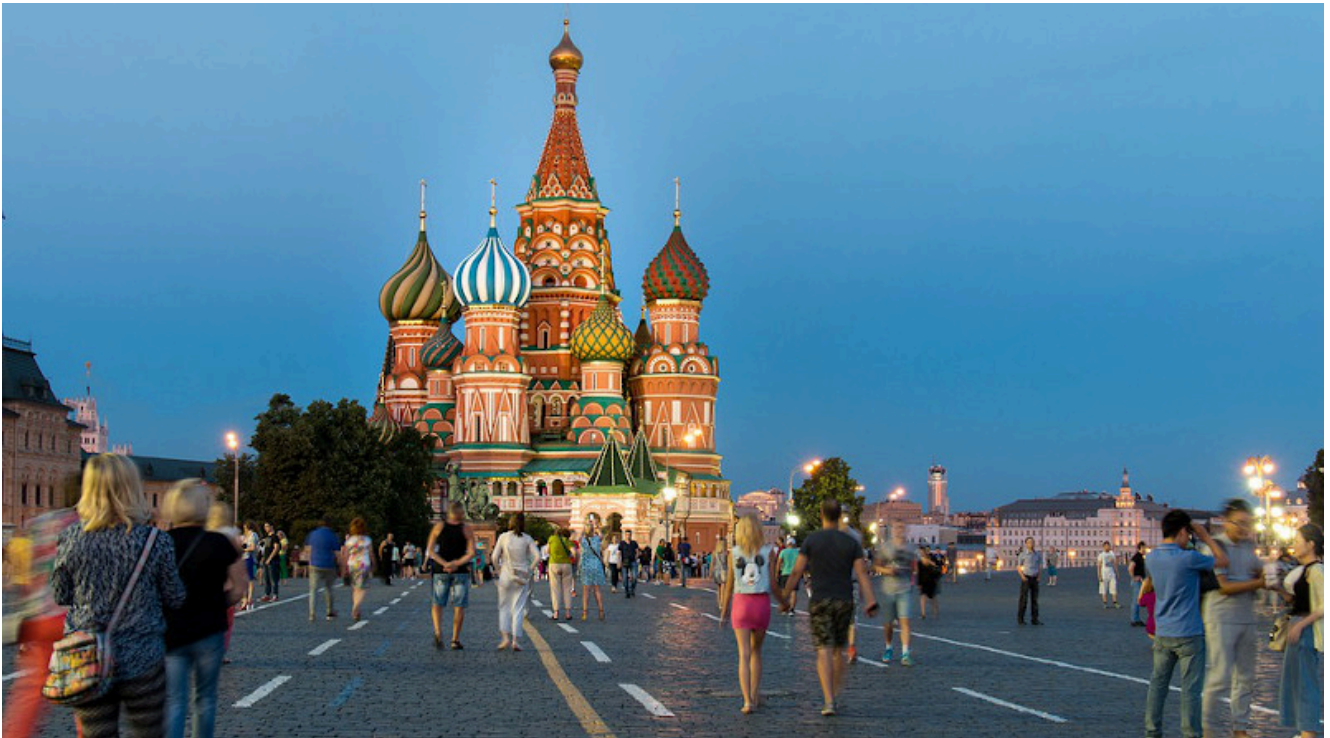


Russia's Size And Economic Model Mean It Will Collapse In A Generation Unless Depopulation Slows - OpEd



Russia is the largest country in the world, has few people in many of its regions, and has adopted an extensive approach to economic development, Oleg Apolikhin says. As a result, if it is unable to slow or stop the current trend toward depopulation, it will face collapse in 20 to 30 years.

The chief specialist on reproductive health at the Russian health ministry says that that makes demographic change not only a problem for the society but also a very powerful challenge to the national security of the country (profile.ru/society/health/oleg-apolihin-esli-my-ne-ostanovim-depopulyaciju-strany-cherez-20-30-let-nas-zhdet-kollaps-871866/).

The population is declining because deaths exceed births and older people form the first time ever in Russia form roughly the same share of the population as younger ones. Because the older ones don't work and because the Russian

economy depends on new inputs rather than greater efficiency, that puts a burden on the young and depresses the economy.

And young people are ever less inclined to have children because they are increasingly shaped by consumer psychology which leads them to ask what benefits them directly rather than indirectly via helping the country as a whole, Apolikhin says. Russian men are exercising an even more depressive effect in this area than women.

In recent decades, the gap between sexual debut and marriage has widened and is now almost ten years. For that decade, young Russians have sex but without any intention or desire to have children. The attitudes formed during that period also extend into married life and people put off or even decide not to have children ever.

Russians are beginning to become sexually active ever earlier, and they are marrying later. Consequently, even pairs who want children are having them much later. In the 1995-1999 period, the average age of mothers at the time of the appearance of a first child was 20.9 years. In 2015-2017, it had risen by more than five years to 26.1.

Among other things, that means there are fewer years left for people to have more children; and the likelihood that women or men will suffer from problems affecting their fertility only increases. Women over 35, for example, are not only less fertile overall but likely to suffer from more diseases that make pregnancy problematic.

Paul Goble

Paul Goble is a longtime specialist on ethnic and religious questions in Eurasia. Most recently, he was director of research and publications at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy. Earlier, he served as vice dean for the social sciences and humanities at Audentes University in Tallinn and a senior research associate at the EuroCollege of the University of Tartu in Estonia. He has served in various capacities in the U.S. State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency and the International Broadcasting Bureau as well as at the Voice of America and Radio

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