

BOOK REVIEW

Kazuhiro Kumo, *Roshia Jinko no rekishi to genzai*
(Population of Russia: From Past to Present), Tokyo,
 Iwanami Shoten, 2014, 173 + xv pp.

The dramatic decline of the total fertility rate (TFR) is a serious problem not only for advanced economies but also for developing and emerging economies. According to the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population (2013), nearly half of the world's population currently lives in countries or areas with below replacement-level fertility. Russia is a vibrant country to discuss such population and migration issues. In the 1990s, she experienced a serious drop in her birth rate and continues to suffer from a declining and aging population as well as some country-specific problems: a high mortality rate and a dramatic increase of immigrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus countries.

Twenty years ago in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, Paul Krugman wrote a well-known article called "The Myth of Asia's Miracle" and argued that the rapid economic development of the Asian "tigers" was input-driven and an inherently limited process. Krugman used Soviet rapid growth experience and its limits to explain how Soviet experience is analogically relevant to Asian "tigers" future. This idea suggests that Russian power was (and remains) the input of well-educated labor and the mobility of resources in her vast territory. Therefore it is still critical to understand how Russia maintains her population and how she efficiently moves her people. Kazuhiro Kumo's new book is a welcome guide to understand how Russia is tackling her population decline and mobilizing her population and territory from the Imperial era to the present Russian Federation.

Kazuhiro Kumo is a distinguished demographer who focuses on the former Soviet region. In 2003, he published *Migration and Regional Development in the Soviet Union and Russia: A Geographical Approach*, which focused on Soviet regional development policy and examined population mobilization during its economic development. His research interests have consistently focused on Russian population and mobilization. Books that argue for

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Russian population dynamics from a historical perspective and a sophisticated scientific approach are rare in Japan. This book is a valuable achievement in Russian studies in Japan.

Kumo's book is organized into four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter focuses on the institutional background of the maintenance of population statistics in the Russian Empire and examines the population statistics systems after the establishment of the Soviet government. Then he addresses the restoration of Russia's long-term population statistics caused by two-system transformations by estimating population with archival data. This approach harvested fundamentally critical information for investigating historical development processes in Russia.

Chapter 2 focuses on the determinants of fertility in Russia. With micro-data from the Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS) that focused on women aged 14 to 49 for each round from 1994 (Round 5) to 2004 (Round 13), he examines the following birthrate effects: household income, educational level, employment, and life satisfaction. He concludes that household income is not a direct determinant of the probability of childbirth and that women with more education are also more likely to have children. The latter finding does not agree with the tendency identified in many other countries. His explanation is founded on the social context of the turmoil and the sharp decline in income experienced during the 1990s, where educational attainment was a proxy for permanent income in Russia.

Chapter 3 focuses on the determinants of mortality rates in Russia. In this chapter, Kumo's unique approach is a meta-analysis of medical literature to capture the relationship between alcohol consumption and mortality rate. He clearly identifies the significance of the former as a factor that decisively influences long-term changes in the latter (macro-level) and the probability of death (micro-level) in Russia since the transition to capitalism.

Chapter 4 examines Russia's regional economic conditions and their effects on inter-regional population redistribution patterns. In this examination, he applies a gravity model to population migration in Russia in 2003 with data from an inter-regional in- and out-migration flow matrix supplied by Rosstat, obtained through its official statistics publication. Kumo's analysis argues that general methods like O-D tables can adequately be applicable in studying population migration patterns in Russia. He also

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demonstrates two new findings. First, densely populated regions experience a relatively high volume of inward migration, and this cumulative effect is likely to continue into the future. Second, such strategic natural resources as gas and oil are a major factor in the determination of inter-regional population migration patterns in Russia.

The final chapter concludes the book and includes additional insights on the international migration effect on Russia's future population trends. Kumo insists that accepting immigrants would increase social problems and Russia has no "quick fix" to change her long-term population dynamics.

The following three points illustrate Kumo's valuable contributions. First, this book is the first Japanese book on Russia's population dynamics that covers the Russian Imperial era to the present Russian Federation. The trends followed by most demographers commonly rely on universally-recognized econometric frameworks to explore the determinants of decreasing fertility rates and increasing mortality rates. Under an assumption that statistical resources are limited, this book captures the determinants of Russia's long-term population dynamics in original and creative ways. Second, it comprehensively surveys the literatures in Russian English, and Japanese. His wide literature survey is one of the most instructive points for young researchers who will tackle Russia's future population dynamics. His survey ranges from economics to sociology to medicine and captures the determinants of Russia's high mortality rate. Third, his long-term perspective of Russia's population imbues this book with novelty in this academic field.

This book clearly explains the reasons for Russia's dramatic population dynamics and captures the determinants of both fertility and mortality. It identifies new trends of internal and external migration effects on Russia's population and presents a well-balanced research panorama of her population issues.

This book does not outline a clear path for reversing population decline and confronting the problems of aging in Russia. His conclusion is negative and pessimistic about Russia's future. When we face a dark future without any light, we hope to find any ray of light, regardless how feeble. This book bravely rejects such naïve wishes to avoid the trap of happy ending about Russia's future. Kumo understandably did not highlight any quick fixes to reverse Russia's birthrate declines and her aging population.

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After accepting that we cannot prevent future population decline, what society can they envisage in the future? Kumo consistently focuses on the hidden determinants of population dynamics in society. He doesn't describe the opposite effects of population changes on society. Russia is now standing on a new stage that includes higher economic development and rapid resource mobilization that will inevitably greatly impact labor markets, family values, and family systems. Many readers will welcome the opportunity to learn how they can live in the aging societies of Russia. This book does not exaggerate or engage in hyperbole. It is a careful, scholarly, and well-organized book that can be enthusiastically recommended to anyone interested in Russian society. It provides valuable sources of new ideas in Russian studies.

References

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