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Demography as a security strategy factor in Poland and the Russian Federation

Introduction

The main objective of this article is to discuss the key determinants of the perception of the demographic situation of the state as a factor that impacts on its security in the Russian and Polish narratives in the context of population dynamics in the post-communist period. Demographic policies will also be taken into account as a response to the issues raised.

The relationship between demography and security problems as a theoretical concept has already been noticed in the literature of the subject. Particularly noteworthy is the quite distant collection of *Demography and National Security*, edited by Myron Weiner and Sharon Stanton Russell, the unforgettable specialists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology circle, back in 2001. In their study, they look at the relationship between national security and population dynamics, states' responses to demographic trends, or the relationship of demographic engineering to state security-related goals.¹ The collection of papers from the conference "Auswirkungen demographischer Entwicklungen auf Sicherheitsfragen" from 2007, edited by Robert Naderi, is also worth mentioning.² Some publications deal with more

¹ *Demography and National Security*, eds. M. Weiner, Sh.S. Russell, New York – Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001.

² *Auswirkungen demographischer Entwicklungen auf Sicherheitsfragen Vorträge aus dem gleichnamigen Workshop vom 19./20. November 2007 im Bundesinstitut für*

detailed issues, such as the study by Shweta Mittal and P. Vigneswara Ilavarasan on the relationship between demographic issues and cybersecurity.³

As regards the theory of the issue subjected to scrutiny, it is of fundamental importance to distinguish between two different understandings of demographic security. On the one hand, we are dealing with social security related to the varying intensity of the feeling of insecurity among individual citizens and social groups, or individual categories of society; on the other hand, the principle at stake is the security of the state on the international arena. These understandings are characterised by differently directed vectors of political pressure. In the case of social security, the dominant perspective shifts towards decision-making centres. This movement is referred to in the system analysis as the input system and means pressure or at least the expectation of a more favourable demographic policy, most often referred to as “pro-family policy.” The demographic security of the state, in turn, is determined by the vector directed from the authorities towards society. The use of this concept expresses the expectations that citizens will take to heart the need to strengthen or even save the state in a long-term perspective and will not allow it to weaken its ability to pursue existential interests in an anarchic international environment.

In this article, due to the significant increase in threats to the stability of the international system, caused by Russia’s armed attack on Ukraine in February 2022, more emphasis has been placed on state security than on social security. Of course, it is possible to put forward a hypothesis about the interdependence of both spheres without much risk, as a socially secured state seems to be better prepared to ensure external security as well. However, it cannot be argued without hesitation that state security is a simple function of social security. If this were the case, the level of military security in Taiwan and Finland would significantly exceed the corresponding rate of North Korea or Pakistan.

Of the methodological approaches to the issue of demographic security – irrespective of the above-mentioned divergence of its understanding – at least two tendencies can and should be brought to light. In a significant number of studies, a strictly mathematical and statistical approach is dominant, which is actually an expression of an inductive procedure with synthesising conclusions. For example,

Bevölkerungsforschung, eds. R. Naderi, Wiesbaden: Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung, 2009, https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2009/pdf/Auswirkungen-demographischer-Entwicklungen-auf-Sicherheitsfragen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&cv=5 [accessed: 25 March 2022].

³ S. Mittal, P.V. Ilavarasan, *Demographic Factors in Cyber Security: An Empirical Study*, [in:] *Digital Transformation for a Sustainable Society in the 21st Century: 18th IFIP WG 6.11 Conference on e-Business, e-Services, and e-Society, I3E 2019, Trondheim, Norway, September 18–20, 2019, Proceedings*, eds. I.O. Pappas, P. Mikalef, Y.K. Dwivedi, L. Jaccheri, J. Krogstie, M. Mäntymäki, Berlin – Heidelberg: Springer, 2019, pp. 667–676, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29374-1_54.

Alina Tarasova lists such demographic security factors as the net reproduction rate of the population, depopulation rate, total fertility rate, death rate, life expectancy at birth, population aging rate; balance of migration between urban and rural areas (including by gender, age, education level), number of illegal migrants, marriage and divorce rates.⁴

Some studies highlight the need for a more subject-based demographic risk study framework. For example, Richard P. Cincott distinguishes eight factors of potential demographic instability: “youth bulge,” i.e. a mass influx of young adults into the labour market, a sudden increase in the urban population, reduced access to drinking water, aging and shrinking population, high population mortality at working age, different pace of population growth within individual ethnic and religious groups, migrations, aging and declining population size, significantly higher male population than female population (just as in the case of China). However, taking into account the aforementioned factors, it is impossible to treat demographic trends as either clearly positive or destructive. Moreover, there is also no demographic doom: even fundamentally opposing trends can overlap in the same period.⁵

Other, even more in-depth studies are also possible, in which the problem or motivational factor is taken into account. This approach is exemplified by an important study by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna, whose author, Alexandre Sidorenko, a representative of an older generation of researchers with significant experience in the field of knowledge about the health condition of society, draws attention to many factors that actually shape demographic security that cannot be included only in the framework of statistical research. In themselves, demographic processes are, according to the author, neutral and do not constitute a direct threat to national security, while statistical data are only external indicators of processes experienced by the population. Inference aimed at ascertaining the positive or negative, threatening nature of changes taking place in society can be made on the basis of a complex social analysis, combining the study of economic phenomena with the view of demographic changes. After all, it is socio-economic phenomena – such as poverty, rural extinction, or economic decline of regions – and not the level of births, deaths or net migration that constitute major mechanisms that trigger crises and conflicts.⁶

⁴ А.А. Тарасова, “Демографическая безопасность Российской Федерации”, *NovaInfo*, т. 1, № 56, 2016, с. 165–168, <https://novainfo.ru/article/9085> [accessed: 31 March 2022].

⁵ R.P. Cincotta, “Demographic Security Comes of Age”, *ECSP Report*, issue 10, 2004, pp. 25–27.

⁶ A. Sidorenko, “Demographic transition and ‘demographic security’ in post-Soviet countries”, *Population and Economics*, issue 3(3), 2019, pp. 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.3897/popecon.3.e47236>.

Demographic realities of Poland and Russia

When the fundamental political transformation took place in Eastern Europe at the turn of the 1980s and the 1990s, the fortunes of Poland and Russia took a different course. It is true that the yoke of communism with its ideological baggage was rejected, but the result of this process was different in Poland and in Russia. Ever since the fall of communism, Poland has become a democratic state governed by the principle of the rule of law with an increasingly better-developing free market economy based mainly on the sector of more and more modern services and well-developed processing. Russia, in turn, entered the path of an inefficient oligarchic system, which, from the logic of de facto lawlessness and plutocracy, turned to an aggressive autocracy, based on the power of a new elite, derived from the power structures still rooted in the mindset of the former USSR. Despite these striking differences, the two countries were united by a disastrous tendency characteristic for the vast majority of post-communist countries: a sudden collapse in the dynamics of demographic growth.

In Poland, after 1989, as Zbigniew Strzelecki and Janusz Witkowski note, there was a fatal reversal of the positive dynamics of population growth during the communist period. While in the 1980s, the population of Poland, which was after all epitomised by an economic collapse and a negative migration balance, increased from 35.734 million to 37.340 million, the decades that came after proved that the situation was only worse. There was a significant decrease in the number of births, and since 2005 the overall population growth has been negative: -16.8 in 2005, -31.6 in 2006, -9.8 in 2007, and so on. The negative net migration still had a certain contribution to this regression, although it was not a decisive factor. The main culprit was, of course, a significant drop in the number of births: in 2001–2005 it was twice as low as in the corresponding period two decades earlier.⁷

In the last decade of the period of interest, despite the obvious improvement in the state of the economy and a significant increase in family incomes, the situation tended to deteriorate further rather than improve. In the period from June 2011 to January 2022, the population of Poland dropped from 38,526 to 38,057, the number of live births decreased from 32,800 in the first of the surveyed months up to 25,000 in the last month of the period, and the natural increase from 4,200 up to -23,500 (-7.4 people out of 1000).⁸

⁷ Z. Strzelecki, J. Witkowski, *Ewolucja rozwoju ludności Polski: przeszłość i perspektywy*, Rządowa Rada Ludnościowa, Warszawa 2009, p. 4, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pliki/12544900110.pdf> [accessed: 27 April 2022].

⁸ Tabl. 7. Stan i ruch naturalny ludności / Population and Vital Statistics, *Biuletyn Statystyczny*, no. 2, 2022, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/inne-opracowania/informacje-o-sytuacji-spoleszno-gospodarczej/biuletyn-statystyczny-nr-22022,4,123.html> [accessed: 20 April 2022].

It is possible to notice quite similar trends in Russia. After the collapse of the USSR in December 1991, the population dropped from 148.6 million to 146.3 million by the end of the 2000s. In the next ten years, a decline was again discernible, this time to 142.7 million. After decisive pro-demographic steps were taken by the authorities in the first years of the third decade, the population grew moderately to reach 143.7 million in 2014. After the annexation of Crimea, official Russian sources estimated the number of Russians at 146.3 million, and in the following years a further very moderate increase to 146.9 million in 2017 was recorded. However, starting in 2018, Russia's population went down again, reaching only 146.8 million, and since then this trend has deepened. As a result, in 2019, despite the annexation of Crimea, Russia was inhabited by only half a million more people than in 2000.⁹

The situation was for a long time relieved by economic migration from Central Asian countries, but it is difficult to prove to what extent the citizens of Central Asian countries settled permanently in the Russian Federation, and to what extent it was a matter of mere seasonal work. The Covid-19 pandemic and the war initiated by Russia in 2022 significantly contributed to the deepening of the demographic collapse. Understandably, at the time of preparing this text, the war losses in 2022 have not yet been included in official statistics. Another factor that is difficult to study is the population movements such as the forced resettlement of a certain number of Ukrainian civilians to the territory of the Russian Federation as a result of the opening of humanitarian corridors, and the unprecedented flight of a significant number of Russian citizens to Armenia and other neighbouring countries, and then to places that could be treated as more permanent settlement points. It was a kind migration not so much in search of better living conditions as an escape from the land of emerging darkness. The scale of this migration is difficult to estimate unequivocally since leaving Russia was associated with serious financial outlays and the abandonment of the previous lifestyle. The fugitives were therefore rather well off people with significant qualifications; people lost by the Russian state in a difficult moment. The estimations say about dozens of thousands of people, but precise data is missing; and comments on this topic are more of a speculative nature.¹⁰

However, there are some fragmentary comparisons which give a partial picture of the scale of the phenomenon. For example, the Bumaga press portal, citing both press and government sources from the first stage of migration, states that until March 20, 2022, about 14,000 people remained in Turkey three weeks after their departure. Russian citizens, by March 17, in Georgia – 12,600 (previously

⁹ “Численность населения России по данным Росстат и прогноз до 2035 года”, РосИнфоСтат, <https://rosinfostat.ru/chislennost-naseleniya> [accessed: 20 April 2022].

¹⁰ See: M. Gessen, “The Russians Fleeing Putin’s Wartime Crackdown”, *The New Yorker*, 20 March 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/03/28/the-russians-fleeing-putins-wartime-crackdown> [accessed: 20 March 2022].

around 64,000 Russians had arrived in Georgia, but most of them went in an undisclosed direction), and in Armenia from the beginning of the war, only until March 15, 6,500 new bank accounts were opened, the holders of which are mostly Russian citizens.¹¹

Russia barely kept a constant population due to two factors: a positive migration balance (which Poland could not boast of until the Russian invasion in February 2022, which drastically changed for the better the Polish immigration ratio) and a significant increase in life expectancy (which was also most characteristic for Poland, starting from the 1990s). The declining birth rate was the biggest problem of the Russian demography (just like the Polish one). The number of births in the years 2014–2019 was as in Table 1.

Table 1. Births in Russia (2014–2019)

Year	number of births
2014	1 942 683
2015	1 940 579
2016	1 888 729
2017	1 690 307
2018	1 604 344
2019	1 481 074

Source: “Рождаемость по данным Росстат”, Росинфостат, <https://rosinfostat.ru/rozhdaemost> [accessed: 20 April 2022].

The situation described can best be summarised as general ageing of the society with changes in its ethnic and religious structure towards the Asian population professing Islam. It is worth adding that Poland is only affected by the ageing factor, because the role of immigration that helps to save the labour market is played by Ukrainian refugees and immigrants, who fit much better into the fabric of Polish society than Tajiks or Kyrgyz people in Russia. Long-term speculations can be made about the determinants of this state of affairs, but it is certain that they elude hasty judgments. It is not true that rich, individualistic, lazy and devoid of “certain values” societies inevitably fall into a demographic trap, and poorer, hard-working and collectivist societies are characterised by “healthy” development. If that were the case, France, Britain, Germany or the Czech Republic would be plunging into a demographic collapse. However, this is not the case, as the birth rate is generally positive there, and the biggest problems are reported by the countries of the south

¹¹ Сколько россиян покинули страну с конца февраля и куда они отправились, Бумага, 21.03.2022, <https://paperpaper.ru/papernews/2022/3/21/skolko-rossiyan-pokinuli-stranu-s-kon/> [accessed: 22 March 2022].

and east of the Old Continent. This problem can be seen even more clearly on the example of the most important opponents in the modern world: the United States and China (Table 2 and 3).

Table 2. The United States birth rate (2020–2022)

Year	Birth rate / 1000	Growth rate
2022	12.012	0.090%
2021	12.001	0.090%
2020	11.990	0.090%

Source: Macrotrends, U.S. Birth Rate 1950–2022, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/USA/united-states/birth-rate> [accessed: 11 April 2022].

Table 3. China birth rate (2020–2022)

Year	Birth rate / 1000	Growth rate
2022	10.902	-2.3%
2021	11.159	-2.25%
2020	11.416	-2.20%

Source: Macrotrends, China Birth Rate 1950–2022, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CHN/china/birth-rate#:~:text=The%20current%20birth%20rate%20for,a%202.25%25%20decline%20from%202020> [accessed: 11 April 2022].

Expert level

Due to the rising awareness of the growing problem of demographic security, it has become an important topic in the academic discourse both in Poland and in Russia.

There is a significant institutional base in Poland that carries out research in demographic issues. One of them is the Institute of Statistics and Demography, a unit of the Warsaw School of Economics, whose first director was prof. Jerzy Holzer. At the University of Lodz, there is the Department of Demography, specialising in old-age issues; its first head was prof. Edward Rosset. In turn, the University of Economics in Katowice has the Department of Demography and Economic Statistics. A similar unit, the Department of Demography, operates within the Cracow University of Economics. The Department of Population Economics and Demography plays a similar role within the University of Warsaw. The Department of Statistics and Demographics is a successfully operating academic centre at the University of Economics in Poznań. Perhaps the most important role in demographic research is played by the Committee on Demographic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, whose studies in each year of its activity highlight the important processes that have been taking place within Polish society over the last couple of years.

Clearly, one can speak of a certain institutional development of research on demography in Poland. Nevertheless, for a long time the academic community did not emphasise the relationship between demographic processes and security aspects. The research focused, for example, on mathematical modelling, adapting to new social realities, and other factors. As time passed, however, statements began to appear: if not alarmist, then at least warning. In 2011, Krzysztof Drabik, affiliated with the National Defence College, drew attention to the need to take into account the threats resulting from demographic changes and related phenomena. After all, problems such as the ageing of the society, social welfare, the changing family model, social isolation or migration affect the general perception of the modern model of life and human development. Monitoring and researching these phenomena is, therefore, an important dimension of security research.¹² Another article by Piotr Baranowski, in which the author focuses on specific aspects of demographic security related mainly to the requirements of the market and economic migration from poorer countries, deserves attention. It is right to emphasise that the immigration of low-skilled workers only in the short term solves the problems of employment levels and labour market deficits. The article places some hope in international cooperation; however, on the other hand, some of the proposed solutions, such as the promotion of outsourcing, raise doubts in the light of contemporary threats to disrupt the supply chain of goods and services.¹³

The report prepared in 2014 for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on the problem of low fertility in Poland, edited by Irena Kotowska, was also of great importance. In this study, a detailed analysis of the determinants of resignation from the decision to parentage was made, in particular based on the perceptions of Poles characterised by various independent variables. This publication, as in the overwhelming majority of Polish studies, discusses mainly social security as a fertility condition, ignoring the external dimension of state security.¹⁴

The growing awareness of the need to refer to a professional expert community in order to develop an effective policy to counteract demographic threats is evidenced, for example, by the parliamentary project on the establishment of the Polish Institute of Family and Demography. The Institute was devised as a public think tank, i.e. a place for research to diagnose and forecast demographic processes, where specific solutions for pro-family and demographic policy would be put forward. The project assumed that the institution, financed from the state budget,

¹² K. Drabik, "Bezpieczeństwo demograficzne – wybrane zagadnienia", *Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Sztuki Wojennej*, vol. 2011, no. 2, 2011, pp. 457–465.

¹³ P. Baranowski, "Współczesne wyzwania demograficzne jako determinanty bezpieczeństwa", *Teologia i Moralność*, vol. 12, no. 1(21), 2017, pp. 135–150, <https://doi.org/10.14746/tim.2017.21.1.8>.

¹⁴ *Niska dzietność w Polsce w kontekście percepcji Polaków. Diagnoza społeczna 2013*, ed. I.E. Kotowska, Warszawa: Centrum Rozwoju Zasobów Ludzkich, 2014.

would gather, develop and provide public authorities with information on demographic, social and cultural phenomena and processes in Poland, but also – and this was probably the real intention of the originator – with more creative functions: solution building, monitoring and evaluation, as well as formulating conclusions on family and demographic policies.¹⁵

However, the idea of establishing the Institute faced criticism from the Polish academic community. It is politicisation of the proposed institution, whose president would be nominated by the Sejm that was emphasised, as well as the failure to use the existing academic resources available in this area. One of the most critical circles towards the prospective Institute was the Committee on Demographic Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, whose members excoriated the entire scheme.¹⁶ There were also defenders of the idea of the Institute who lamented the ideological attack on such an important pro-family initiative.¹⁷

In Russia, the institutional base of demographic research is by no means a blanket; however, taking into account the scale of the country, it seems proportionally slightly more modest than in Poland. Among the various research institutions, special attention should be paid to the Vishnevsky Institute of Demography (VID) as part of the Higher School of Economics in Moscow (Институт демографии имени А.Г. Вишневецкого, Высшая Школа Экономики in February 2007). Its history as a research centre began almost 20 years earlier. VID is considered to be the ideological successor of the Centre for Human Demography and Ecology, established in 1988 within the walls of the USSR Academy of Sciences on the initiative of Anatoly G. Vishnevski (1935–1921), supported by a large group of employees of the Department of Demography of the Institute of Sociological Research of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

There were hopes associated with the establishment of the Centre that the tradition of the Demographic Institute of the Academy of Sciences, closed in 1934, would revive. Initially, the Human Demography and Ecology Centre acted as a branch of the Institute of Social and Economic Problems of the Population of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the State Labour Committee of the USSR (1988–1991), then – as the Institute of Employment Problems of the Russian Academy

¹⁵ Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Poselski projekt ustawy o Polskim Instytucie Rodziny i Demografii, no. 1767, 4 November 2021, <https://sejm.gov.pl/Sejm9.nsf/PrzebiegProc.xsp?id=F75F3BC7800548E3C125878F003D75C3> [accessed: 31 March 2022].

¹⁶ *Opinia Prezydium Komitetu Nauk Demograficznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk o Poselskim projekcie ustawy o Polskim Instytucie Rodziny i Demografii przygotowanym przez Grupę Posłów Klubu Parlamentarnego Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, Komitet Nauk Demograficznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 26 November 2021, https://knd.pan.pl/images/IRiD-Opinia_Prezidium_KND_PAN-sig.pdf [accessed: 21 April 2022].

¹⁷ See: B. Łoziński, “Kogo uwiera Instytut Rodziny?”, *Gość Niedzielny*, no. 11, 2022, pp. 44–45.

of Sciences (RAS) (1991–1993) and the Institute of Economic Forecasting of the RAS (1993–2006).

The Scientific Council “Problems of Demography and Migration of Labour Resources” operates at the RAS. However, among the universities, it is worth paying attention to Lomonosov Moscow State University, where the Department of Population is located at the Faculty of Economics, as well as the Laboratory for Demographic Development Problems, which also devotes didactic efforts to the problems of interest to us.

Of the key Russian publications on the country’s demographic security, it is worth mentioning the 2014 article by Vera Glushkova and Olga Khoreva, which highlights important aspects of security and its threats due to demographic factors. In their conclusions, the authors suggest taking urgent measures to raise the insufficient level of education of the main titular population of Russia’s ethnicity – ethnic Russians, and the very low level of education of the national Muslim contingent, strengthening, along with the religious denominations traditional for Russia, work to create a positive demographic image of the country and developing standards of self-behaviour among Russians; and, which may arouse particular controversy, the combination of professional advancement and high social status in Russia with “obligatory observance of Russian standards of behaviour in the family and society.”¹⁸

More importantly, however, this study shows some characteristic features of the evolution of Russian thinking about society. It departs from perceiving the nation as a set of independent entities, constituting the proper subject of state actions aimed at totalitarian perception. Demographic security is understood as the functioning and development of the population as such in its age, gender and ethnic parameters, its “correlation with the national interests of the state, which consist in ensuring its integrity, independence, sovereignty and maintaining the current geopolitical status.” The concept of “demographic security” can therefore be linked to the concepts of “demographic balance” and “optimal population.”¹⁹ Thus, there has been a noticeable shift towards emphasising the second meaning of demographic security, i.e. a security not so much of citizens, but of states.

Policy: declarative level

Understandably, the awareness of demographic threats had to be reflected in political rhetoric both in terms of political rivalry and specific strategies aimed at removing possible threats faced by the state and society.

¹⁸ В.Г. Глушкова, О.Б. Хорева, “Демографическая безопасность России и ее регионов: проблемы и пути их решения”, *Вестник Финансового университета*, № 3, 2014, с. 25.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

In Poland, in the post-1989 era, most of the attention to demographic issues was paid to the broadly understood right wing, especially in the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS, Law and Justice) party. Its 2019 election program expresses the conviction that it is impossible to achieve the state's development goals without overcoming the demographic crisis. This, in turn, is caused not only by strictly economic but also cultural factors, by "the lack of self-esteem, own culture [...]"; therefore, the pro-demographic policy "[...] mhas to be multilateral and take into account the cultural and political factor."²⁰

Two years later, the draft *Strategia demograficzna 2040* [Demographic Strategy 2040] was formulated in a similar vein, which was to define the assumptions of the country's demographic policy for two decades. The text of the draft Strategy clearly refers to the issue of security, often drawing attention to the existence of "long-term threats to the Republic of Poland resulting from low fertility [...]"²¹ Actually, however, also in this case, we are talking about threats in terms of social security – such as e.g. major problems of retired people with the depletion of the theoretical replacement group, the threat of a decline in labour supply – rather than geopolitical ones.

The Russian narrative on demographic security has been even more expressive, especially in the Putin era. The president himself has discussed the threats resulting from the extinction of the Russian nation on many occasions. This note was perhaps the most emphatic in his address to the Federal Assembly in 2006, when Putin not only drew attention to the fact that Russia was "losing" 700,000 inhabitants every year, and that it was necessary to combine three elements of demographic policy: lowering mortality, an effective migration policy and an increase in fertility. The details of these ideas are a lot more interesting. The president said: "Now about the most important thing. And what is most important to us? [...] The Ministry of Defence knows what is most important to us. It's really about love ... about women ... about children. It's all about the family. And about the most acute problem of contemporary Russia – demography."²² In this way, he unintentionally made it clear that the demographic issue in fact belonged to the domain of defence, and that demographic problems were, in consequence, part of the problems of the state's military potential.

The much later Putin's speech in January 2020 was echoed in a similar vein. He once again highlighted the fact that demography should be considered a field in which there is no universal, let alone narrow "departmental" solution. Each step, each new law, and each new state scheme should, therefore, be assessed primarily

²⁰ *Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości 2019*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 16–17.

²¹ *Strategia demograficzna 2040. Projekt*, Pełnomocnik Rządu ds. Polityki Demograficznej, Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej, Warszawa 2021, p. 7.

²² Президент Российской Федерации, Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации, 10.05.2006, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/23819> [accessed: 22 April 2022].

from the point of view of the highest national priority – “saving and multiplying” the Russian people.²³

The importance of the demographic factor was also emphasised by various other high-level officials, including prime ministers. It is enough to mention the declaration of Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on the occasion of the inauguration of his government in early 2022, when he unequivocally mentioned the demographic problem as the first one on the list, while outlining the government’s tasks for the coming months.²⁴

Policy: Action Level

The deteriorating situation of Poland’s population was conducive to the implementation of pro-demographic assumptions, especially when they were associated with the implementation of electoral promises. While the demographic alarmist tone came closer to PiS, the first important step was taken by the liberal camp. It was an initiative of the Large Family Card. Generally, it supports families with more children (three or more) through a system of discounts and rebates. Local programs of this type were already in place in the mid 2000s; the first local card was introduced in Wrocław in 2005. The most important, however, is the nationwide Large Family Card, introduced by the government ordinance of May 2014, and then by the relevant act passed a few months later.²⁵ Cardholders are entitled to various discounts, which various entities have committed to honouring. The most important, however, are serious, statutorily guaranteed discounts on rail travel throughout the country and significant (up to 75%) discounts on the passport fee.

The Large Family Card was a step in the right direction, but it was hard to expect it to be an effective solution to the declining fertility problem. Therefore, the new government team, i.e. the alt-right bloc known as the *Zjednoczona Prawica* (United Right) (which brings together the most important political force – PiS party, the nationalist-populist *Solidarna Polska* [Solidarity Poland or: Supportive Poland] and the conservative-liberal *Polska Razem* [Poland Together] group) introduced a much more radical and more attractive solution for the electorate in form of the Family 500 Plus scheme. It provides for a benefit of PLN 500 per month for each

²³ *Idem*, Послание Федеральному Собранию, 15.01.2020, http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_342959/ [accessed: 31 March 2022].

²⁴ “Мишустин назвал задачами нового кабинета демографию, повышение уровня жизни и рост экономики”, Интерфакс, 21.01.2020, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/692121> [accessed: 22 April 2022].

²⁵ Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 27 maja 2014 r. w sprawie szczegółowych warunków realizacji rządowego programu dla rodzin wielodzietnych, Dz.U. [Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland] 2014, item 755; Ustawa z dnia 5 grudnia 2014 r. o Karcie Dużej Rodziny, Dz.U. 2014, item 1863.

child up to the age of 18. Initially, the scheme covered only the second and each subsequent child, but over time, the first child was also included.²⁶ The program began operating on 1 April 2015, after which modifications were made to it that were even more favourable for families. A number of other activities were also undertaken to improve the situation of families with children, such as, for example, the Good Start program, which offered an annual school kit for a child in the amount of PLN 300. Understandably, due to the significant increase in inflation during the rule of PiS, the real value of benefits gradually declined.

However, the implementation of these programs did not bring the expected improvement in terms of fertility growth. On the contrary, a glance at the birth rate per 1000 people shows a moderate but noticeable drop in the rate; 1950: 30.7, 1980: 19.5, 2000: 9.9, 2010: 10.7, 2014: 9.7, 2015: 9.6, 2016: 9.9, 2017: 10.5, 2018: 10.10, 2019: 9.8, 2020: 9.3, 2021: 8.7.²⁷ Yet from a purely objective perspective, it should be remembered that this decline does not have to mean that the actions taken are completely ineffective, or even less effective. Indeed, the low values of the birth rate begin in the 1990s, when the generation of the mid-1960s, following the baby boomers of the post-war era, reached the peak of reproductive age (about 25–40 years). It is even easier to understand the drop in the number of births since the end of 2010, when the group of potential parents was dominated by a generation of an unusually expressive low in the 1990s: in 2010, about 695,000 people in the age of 30 lived in Poland, while in 2020 approx. 547,000 only. Thus, the “parental base” shrank by over 22%, while the number of births in the same period dropped by not more than 14%.²⁸

The alarmist tone of the narrative around demographic issues also brought a series of actions in the Russian Federation. Since 1993, a number of legal acts have appeared that regulate the policy in this area in various ways. Presidential decrees have played a special role in this respect.²⁹ It must be admitted, however, that the legisla-

²⁶ Ustawa z dnia 11 lutego 2016 r. o pomocy państwa w wychowywaniu dzieci, Dz.U. 2016, item. 195.

²⁷ Statista, Number of live births in Poland from 1950 to 2021 (per 1,000 population), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/429152/birth-rate-in-poland> [accessed: 27 April 2022].

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Президент Российской Федерации, Указ от 15 ноября 1993 г. № 1908 О Комиссии по вопросам женщин, семьи и демографии при Президенте Российской Федерации, <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=EXP;n=227012;dst=100101#VjuG PnSGIIyp07sb> [accessed: 22 April 2022]; *idem*, Указ от 9 октября 2007 года № 1351 Об утверждении Концепции демографической политики Российской Федерации на период до 2025 года, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/26299>; *idem*, Указ от 07 мая 2012 г. № 606 О мерах по реализации демографической политики Российской Федерации, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/35270> [accessed: 29 March 2022]; *idem*, Указ от 07 мая 2018 г. № 204 О национальных целях и стратегических задачах развития Российской Федерации на период до 2024 года, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/43027> [accessed: 14 March 2022]; *idem*, Указ О внесении изменений в перечень федеральных округов, утвержденный

tive actions of the state were not limited to propaganda, as they took very specific financial forms. The most expressive element of the demographic policy after 2000 was the Maternity Capital initiative, which generally consisted in providing parents with financial resources to be used during the child's adolescence and development. The main goals of the program are the improvement of living conditions, education for children, the creation of a capital pension for women and the purchase of goods and services intended for the social adaptation and integration of children with disabilities into society.³⁰

The program was launched on 1 January 2007. Payments at that time were made only for the second and subsequent children and amounted to 250,000 roubles per child. However, with each passing year, the value of maternal capital declined. From 2020, the program also helps the first child. In the case of families with a second child from 2020, the maternity capital is additionally increased by 155,550 roubles. For families in which a third child or other children were born after 1 January 2020, the maternity (family) capital was set at 639,431.83 roubles if the right to additional state support measures for families with children did not arise earlier.³¹

The limited nature of the programme's success intensified the work, which resulted in the presidential decree issued in May 2018, which paved the way for a broader and also more blurred National Project by the name of "Demographics." It assumes, *inter alia*, extending the life expectancy of Russians in good health, reducing the death rate of retirees in the country from 38,100 in 2017, up to 36,100 in 2024, an increase in the fertility rate from 1.62 (2017) to 1.7 by 2024, an increase in the number of citizens leading a healthy lifestyle and practicing sports from 36.8% in 2017 to 55% in 2024.³²

The effectiveness of these pro-demographic activities, as in the case of Poland, was also limited. In fact, while the birth rate per 1,000 people increased from 8.9 to 13.0 in 2000–2015, then we note another decline to 12.8 in 2020.³³ This is also illustrated by the absolute numbers (expressed in thousands): while in 2014 the population increased by 38,780 of citizens, since 2017 there has been a downward

указом Президента Российской Федерации от 13 мая 2000 года, № 849, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201811040002> [accessed: 30 March 2022].

³⁰ Федеральный закон от 29.12.2006 г. № 256-ФЗ О дополнительных мерах государственной поддержки семей, имеющих детей, статья 7, п. 3, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/24820/page/1> [accessed: 30 March 2022].

³¹ „Материнский (семейный) капитал”, Пенсионный фонд Российской Федерации, 15.01.2021, <https://pfr.gov.ru/grazhdanam/msk/> [accessed: 22 April 2022].

³² Правительство Российской Федерации, Паспорт национального проекта «Демография», 24.12.2018, <http://static.government.ru/media/files/Z4OMjDgCacohKWaA0psu6lCekd3hwx2m.pdf> [accessed: 25 April 2022].

³³ Statista, Crude birth rate in Russia from 1840 to 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1038013/crude-birth-rate-russia-1840-2020/> [accessed: 25 April 2022].

trend again, and in 2020 (mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic) the population of Russia lost 668,730 citizens.³⁴ Therefore, there is a trend similar to the Polish one: after taking actions supporting the demographic development of the state, a relative regression kicks in. However, it is not caused directly by demographic policy errors, but by objective factors, including conditions that are rooted in several past stages of social development.

Conclusions

Summing up the observations of the attitudes of the states towards demographic security in Poland and Russia, two countries that are culturally different and to some extent conflicted, but connected by a common past in the socialist camp, one can list the most important determinants of perceiving the demographic situation of a state as a factor influencing its security. It is, first of all, the creation and academic activity of expert centres focused on various aspects of demographic security. Second, it is clear to see a significant increase in the interest in the political world and the emergence of intense and engaged narratives on demographic security. Third, there has been some legislative effort and, more importantly, a rather consistent implementation of demographic policies over a longer period of time, relying mostly on money transfers.

On the other hand, despite this multilateral commitment, it does not ultimately bring the desired results in terms of an increase in the population or at least such an increase in fertility as to contain a far-reaching demographic crisis. This is because neither the radical democratisation and liberalisation of the state (in the case of Poland), nor the increase in political stability, nor, finally, the economic growth translating in real terms into the wealth of the vast majority of citizens, significantly translated into an improvement in demographic indicators, except for an increase in life expectancy in both countries.

The determinants of this failure do not seem to be easy to define, which is why we are most likely dealing with a complex set of heterogeneous factors. Among the various possible options, it is worth noting, first of all, the lack of connection between ideology resulting in demographic policies and the individual interests of the citizen. In other words, demographic policies offer help related to bringing up children, but they do not give a sense of long-term security, that is, one that will not cease after the children reach the age of majority. Secondly, the lack of faith in the personal success of citizens and the success of the state triggered by a process probably perceived as inevitable may also be significant.

³⁴ *Idem*, Natural population increase in Russia from 1990 to 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1010200/natural-increase-in-russian-population/> [accessed: 25 April 2022].

In other words, it cannot be ruled out that we are dealing with a subconscious fear of achieving a point of no return. It is not only about the feeling of negligible agency or the lack of faith in the efficiency of the state. In a democratic situation, the point is not only that, after the demographic crisis, the number of children is too small to ensure sustainable development, a return to normalcy. In fact, the problem lies in the imbalance between the working-age community and older voters who are above this limit. In some countries, such as Japan, Korea or Italy, the percentage of elderly people is so significant today that it can cause the phenomenon of a kind of black hole, which absorbs objects with increasing speed as they approach the gravitational centre and gain mass by it. A significant percentage of retirees makes it necessary to provide them with a living that would be relatively acceptable to them. If this does not happen, it can be expected with a high degree of probability that the political system will be input in the form of demands for a policy more favourable to the older generation. However, because it is expensive, the state is forced to increasingly cut back on spending on behalf of the rest of society.³⁵ This younger and working part of it, due to the fact that it is too small in relation to the older generation, may interpret the existing conditions as unacceptable in the long run. Understanding the impossibility of democratic inhibition of a policy oriented mainly at voters from the group of retired people, the younger part of society is inclined to emigrate.³⁶ This causes increasing financial problems of the state, and a rapid deepening of the demographic crisis. Thus, a state determined to maintain a democratic political system must sacrifice social development for it, which is becoming a de facto regression aimed at total marginalisation of the state.

Although such a scenario is not yet discussed in Poland or in Russia, the model of politics in many areas seems to bear the features of actions oriented towards a conservative citizen, and at the same time not necessarily focused on building a personal, perspective and long-term individual existence. Finally, major differences in the processes taking place in both countries ought to be highlighted as a key point of reference for prospective studies: the Polish political narrative and the declared set of goals focus more on the social sphere, while Russian rhetoric and politics are definitely more focused on functionality, including, in particular, security, of the state, also in the military sense.

³⁵ See: S. Harper, "Economic and social implications of aging societies", *Science*, vol. 346, no. 6209, pp. 587–591.

³⁶ Comp. J. Rosłon-Żmuda, "Bezpieczeństwo społeczno-ekonomiczne Polski z perspektywy czynnika demograficznego", *Przegląd Strategiczny*, no. 1, 2013, p. 183, <https://doi.org/10.14746/ps.2013.1.12>.

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Demography as a security strategy factor in Poland and the Russian Federation

Abstract

The study focuses on the major perceptions of demographic security in Poland and Russia, regarded as an aspect of both social and state security. Demographics as a political topic has been increasingly more often exploited as a key theme in official narratives and practical policies. The similarities in the demographic dynamics in both countries, as well as conditional failures of demographic policies, may not necessarily result from evident mistakes, but are probably a result of a complex set of social factors, including the regularities of demographic development in the past. It is quite clear, however, that the Polish political narratives and declared set of state objectives concentrate rather on the social sphere, whereas the Russian rhetoric and policy are clearly more state oriented.

Key words: Russia, Poland, security, demography, demographics