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## **Russia's population policies: gains and prospects**

*MIREES' open lecture*

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In One of the first Open lectures within the MIREES program held in October 2014 was given by professor Jack A. Goldstone on “Russia’s population policies: gains and prospects”. He discussed the policies of the Russian federation and the challenges to the Russian population growth since the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991. Goldstone reflected on the recent growth of the Russian population in 2013, the first instance of the population growth since 1991.

For almost 25 years, Russia faced one of the worst demographic crises with a substantial decrease of population in terms of mortality. The mortality of middle aged men was on the rise and the causes of death were related mostly to cancer, alcoholism, car accidents etc.

After the collapse of the USSR, Russian women seemed to have stopped to procreate; if we look at the demographic levels during 2000s, the fertility reached levels as low as a maximum of 1 child per woman.

It is important to associate the Russian demographic problems to Russian government’s policies in this period. Goldstone explained that the Russian government has invested considerably in the field of oil and energy. However, the fertility rate is still considered as the indicator of prosperity – there is a common held belief that having more children will solve Russia’s economic problems. This way of thinking was very common during the Soviet times. For example, it could be claimed that during the war in Afghanistan, the government held the belief that the country’s security is linked directly with an increment of population. According to Goldstone, this is why the USSR government used to support the “fertility campaign”.

Since 2013, when the Russian population started to increase again, the Western countries were seriously worried. In 2006 the Russian government, in order to support women who wanted to have more than one child, announced particular policies. These policies, carried out in 2007, included the so-called “maternal capital policies”; provided an “amount of 13.500 \$ in educational, housing, and pension benefits” after the birth of the second child, as well as additional financial support.

These policies did not have the expected results in the biggest cities such as Saint Petersburg and Moscow. However, the fertility rate in all of the Russian territory increased from 1.3 in 2006 to 1.7 in 2012, while the abortions dropped considerably in 2007. This workshop was very interesting in sociological and statistical terms and brought us closer to the current research on world demography.

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