



"Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored."
—Aldous Huxley

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Population Trends in Asia (Part One): Charting Ups and Downs

Three events are taking place in Asia with an intensity never before witnessed in human history—at least not since the Flood. This three-part series will explore these three events. How might they affect us?

Asia stretches from Russia-east-of-the-Urals to Japan, from Siberia to the Philippine Islands. Asia includes hotspots like Pakistan and Taiwan, backwater nations like Afghanistan and Bangladesh, rogue states like Iran and North Korea, and industrial "tigers" like Japan and South Korea.

According to Nicholas Eberstadt ("Power and Population in Asia," *Policy Review*, February/March 2004, pp. 3-27), "As of mid-2000, over 3.6 billion, roughly three-fifths of the total population of the globe, resided in Asia. Seven of the world's 10 most populous countries—China, India, Indonesia, Russia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Japan—are located within the Asian /Eurasian perimeter." In the last century, the area experienced a population explosion which was, in fact, a

"health explosion" . . . fueled almost entirely by declining mortality due to dramatic improvements in life expectancy. . . . Over the past

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half-century, the population of this region has grown on a scale and at a tempo without historical precedent. Between 1950 and 2000, according to the UNPD's [United Nations Population Division's] estimates, the population [of these nations] . . . multiplied by a factor of 2.5—rising by almost 2.2 billion in absolute numbers and at an average annual pace of over 1.8 percent per year.

Predictably, from the 1970s forward, this rapidly expanding population caught the imagination of the popular Western press, where concern verged on hysteria. Many fretted over the prospect of Asian world dominance based on numbers alone.

Eberstadt holds that "the great twentieth-century demographic boom is essentially over in East Asia. . . . Over the past three decades, Asia and Eurasia have witnessed pervasive and typically dramatic declines in local fertility levels." Some countries, he points out, are actually experiencing population contraction: "Russia . . . has been recording *negative* natural increase—more deaths than births—every year over the past decade."

Asia's fertility rates have dropped dramatically—between 40 to 60%. Today,

sub-replacement fertility . . . is increasingly emerging as the norm in Asia and Eurasia. At this juncture, for example, sub-replacement fertility is thought to characterize every country and locale in East Asia save tiny Mongolia. In Southeast Asia, Singapore and Thailand are already sub-replacement societies. . . . As for South and Central Asia, Sri Lanka and Kazakhstan are outposts of sub-replacement fertility within the region. . . . As a consequence of a generation and more of sweeping—and still continuing—fertility decline in Asia and Eurasia, it is no longer accurate to speak of "unprecedented population growth."

When one reads population statistics, one generally reads low percentage figures: 1.2% growth or 1.8% decrease. Do such low numbers mean anything? Yes. Eberstadt points out, among other examples, the Russia-Pakistan reversal in just half a century:

In 1975, Russia's population was nearly twice as large as Pakistan's (134 million vs. 70 million). By 2025, . . . the situation will be virtually reversed: Pakistan will be just over twice as populous as Russia (250 million vs. 124 million).

Population can, and does, change power configurations over the years. Over the next few weeks, we will investigate three demographic phenomena that are bound to make a difference eventually in Asia—and around [the world](#).

- Charles Whitaker

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Authority: Why So Many Resent It](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Some feel that a blanket rejection of authority is romantic, noble, and downright American. Blind disobedience to authority is just as hideous and no more desirable than blind obedience to authority. Pride, the father of all sins or the original sin, is the source of self-exaltation, self-justification and the despising of authority. Pride cloaks rebelliousness in a deceptive, populist "power to the people" appeal. Cain, Korah, and Balaam provide vivid examples of the consequences of questioning or rejecting authority. God will not call anyone He cannot rule. Humility is the antidote to pride, developed by fasting, prayer, and esteeming others more than ourselves. Paradoxically, pride leads to debasement, while humility leads to honor.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Japan: Rising or Setting Sun?](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Japan, among the top three economies of the world, has been in deep

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recession for nearly a decade. Can she recover? What is in store for her in the end time?

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