

## UNIVERSAL HISTORY AND POPULATION CHANGE

DIRK J. VAN DE KAA\*

**ABSTRACT:** *Prophesying the end of Europe is a popular pastime. The idea that civilizations and nations, just like human beings, go through a cycle of rise, shine and decline is part of the attempt to make sense of, and to seek regularities in the flow of history. The rise and decline approach to universal history no longer has credibility amongst professional historians. However, it still echoes in the halls of learning and is popular among commentators and publicists. This paper discusses various approaches to universal history, some recent views on the future of Europe, and argues that the continent's current demographic situation and outlook can be much better understood if they are considered in the perspective offered by Arland Thornton's developmental paradigm and the concept of the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) or revolution.*

### UNIVERSAL HISTORY

For many, the notion that historical developments are simply a reflection of a succession of essentially accidental events is not easy to accept. It is equally obvious that while faithfully recording chronological events or the life and times of great and important people has its charms, it also has severe intellectual limitations. The basic drive behind the idea of Universal History is the assumption that events do not occur haphazardly, but that they follow meaningful patterns. Thus, attempts to read certain meanings into them have a long history. Their aim is to discover regularities and patterns – even ‘laws’ – that might be hidden in them that govern the development of human societies. For the classical period, reference is usually made to the work of the Greek Thucydides (ca. 460-ca. 399 BC) and the Roman Tacitus (ca. 56-ca. 117 AD). In the medieval period (500–1500 AD) historical interests remained largely restricted to recording of the chronology of events, the life history of saints or kings, and to telling the stories of wars and conflicts. The work of Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), who was born in Tunis and died in Cairo, would appear to be the exception to this rule; he is considered to be an important founder of sociology because he had great interest in the development of cities and the ups and downs of larger geographical entities.

\* Emeritus Fellow, NIDI, The Hague, email: djvandekaa@cs.com

## MODEL OF PROGRESS TOWARDS AN END-STATE

The first Universal Histories carry, one might say, a Christian signature. Francis Fukuyama (1992: 56) specifically mentions the following points as being characteristic: they stress the equality of men in the sight of God, the shared destiny of all people, the redemption of man as man, and the view that history will be finite in time: the end of history will usher in the kingdom of heaven. Such a final end would, in Fukuyama's terms, make particular events potentially intelligible.

Secular versions were developed during the Renaissance of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, following the formulation and adoption of scientific methods. It was felt that an accumulation of knowledge was bound to occur. As time went by, successive generations would build on the foundations laid by their predecessors, thus ensuring continued progress. This principle is reflected well in a quotation borrowed from Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757) from a work dating from 1688. As provided in English by Fukuyama it reads, in part, as follows:

*“A good cultivated mind contains so to speak, all minds of preceding centuries; it is but a single identical mind which has been developing and improving itself all the time”.*

In his famous “Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind” that was published posthumously in the year after his death, Antoine-Nicolas Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794) stresses the prospects of perfecting society through continued progress and through the growth of our insight in its functioning. In his sketch he distinguishes nine great epochs of the past, and a tenth epoch that he sees as heralding the future. He expects to see inequalities in wealth, access to resources and education diminish. Moreover, he sees no limit to the ‘perfection’ of the human species. Interestingly, he argues that improvements in agriculture are likely to make it possible to feed the growing population. He predicts that life expectancy will increase indefinitely and that people will live more of their lives in good health and be more robust than in his own time (de Condorcet 1795). Malthus wrote his famous essay on the principles of population largely as a reaction to this.

An important characteristic of Condorcet's thinking is that he does not see any reason to assume a role for divine providence, for God, or for supernatural powers in steering or enabling progress. In fact, he was reportedly highly antagonistic towards religion, particularly so towards the Christian religion. In his view thinkers and scientists before him had established insight on the true rights of man, which followed from the fact that man was endowed with sensation, capable of reasoning and understanding his interests, and of acquiring

moral ideas. He particularly acknowledged the work of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) and René Descartes (1596–1650) who worked during the ‘eighth epoch’ of his developmental scheme.

Other authors of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Age of Enlightenment, also foresaw progress towards an end-state in the development of societies, but were much less anti-Christian. They predicted the development of civil society, and assumed that strong forces would bring people, even against their will, to a state of harmony and understanding. Leading figures included the German philosophers Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1811). Kant is rightly famous for his essay on the “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (1784) and his booklet on “Perpetual Peace” (Zum ewigen Frieden) (1795). He sees perpetual peace as being ensured by nothing less than

*‘... that great artist nature [] whose mechanical process makes her purposiveness manifest, permitting harmony to emerge among men through their discord, even against their wills’.*

According to Kant we could call that ‘fate’, but

*‘... if we reflect on nature’s purposiveness in the flow of world events, and regard it to be the underlying wisdom of a higher cause that directs the human race toward its objective goal and predetermines the world’s course, we call it providence’* (Quotations taken from a translation by Ted Humphrey, Hackett Publishing, 2003).

In the work of Hegel, who together with authors such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854) is a representative of the movement commonly called ‘German Idealism’, a cyclical element is present. He recognises that a people may during a certain period be ‘das Herrschende’, the dominating power, but will not be able to maintain that position (Hegel (1820:§ 347).

## MODEL OF RISE AND DECLINE

Comparison with a human being’s life makes this particular model of Universal History particularly striking, since it is based on the idea that during their existence all living organisms, institutions, and civilisations pass through a clear cycle of rise, shine, and decline. One might well assume that this model has been with us since times immemorial. But this is not the case. It would appear that, at

least after the classical period, the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) was the first to voice the idea that we are not subject to magic, mysterious and unpredictable forces, nor heading straight towards a better future. If Italy had lent him an ear, so Paul Hazard argues (1963: 25), they would on the contrary,

*“... have known that the peoples of the earth are a prey to constant vicissitudes, now emerging slowly and painfully out of a state of barbarism along the road to civilization, whereto attaining, they relapse once more into barbarism. All their ideas, their whole intellectual attitude would have been fundamentally changed”.*

But in Italy his ideas didn't find a great deal of support. It required the efforts of Charles Montesquieu (1689–1755) as an intermediary to have them more generally accepted by contemporaries. Montesquieu, who was the author of a well-known study on the grandeur and decline of the Roman Empire, was greatly impressed by Vico's concept of 'corsi e recorsi' in history. As Hazard expresses it:

*'In their earliest state, nations are barbarous, they make conquests and become amenable to law and order; they grow greater and at the same time more polished, this weakens them, they are conquered in their turn and relapse into barbarism' (op.cit.: 246).*

In his study Montesquieu adhered to the idea of growth, maturity and decay and so impressed his readers that Hazard observed that: “there was scarcely a single contemporary historian who did not adopt it”. The fate of nations and civilisations is no longer seen to depend on the will of heaven, but to have its roots in changing circumstances and specific causes. Giambattista Vico provided a new philosophy of history and modernised that discipline greatly. His works are considered as marking the beginning of modern historical writing.

Some scholarly works of great repute have an element of that cycle in their title: the seven volumes of Edward Gibbon's “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” (1776–1788) is a prime example. Equally well known are the two volumes of Oswald Spengler's “Der Untergang des Abendlandes” (1918–1922) and his very pessimistic view on the future of that part of Europe, where the evening sun sets. The massive work of Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889–1975) called “A Study of History” published in the period from 1934 to 1961, similarly looks at human history from a very broad perspective. Such approaches have in common that the world is no longer a magic garden where things move as a result of the whims of the mysterious forces of nature and the equally unpredictable influence of deities, God or heaven, but as part of an arena where distinct processes are at work and their effects can be predicted. In fact,

Spengler's contemporary and adversary, German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) has argued that this 'Entzauberung' (de-enchantment) of the world is an integral part of the modernisation of society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which from an ethical point of view created an enormous diversity of interpretations of man's role in the world.

It would appear that 'Rise and Decline theories' of historical development have lost most of their appeal amongst present day professional historians. But writings from the 1960s, and even later, testify to their considerable elaboration. Carroll Quigley (1910–1977) provides the best example. He taught at Princeton, Harvard and Georgetown and must have influenced numerous American politicians. As Condorcet once did, he worked out a fairly precise scheme of the stages that civilisations go through before their inevitable demise. After a shaky beginning with numerous groups or peoples involved, and a long gestation during which some unity and sense of common purpose is achieved, the civilisation expands. It comes into conflict with others, conquers them and achieves 'empire' status: a stage "of peace and relative prosperity. Peace arises from the absence of competing political units in the area of the civilization itself... Prosperity arises from the ending of internal belligerent destruction, the reduction of internal trade barriers. The vested interests have triumphed and are living off their capital" (1961: 88). Then decay sets in, invasion follows and a new cycle can begin. Thus we have sequentially:

1. Mixture,
2. Gestation,
3. Expansion,
4. Age of conflict,
5. Universal empire,
6. Decay,
7. Invasion.

It runs largely parallel to the common life cycle: rise, shine and decline.

#### CURRENT VIEWS REGARDING THE MODEL OF CONTINUED PROGRESS: THE DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM

Professional historians now shy away from Universal Histories, considering them grandiose, even metaphysical conceptualisations of processes on a world scale affecting all people. However, in a marvellous book published in 2005, American social scientist Arland Thornton shows that "reading history sideways" is quite a common practice. In fact, expectations about the future are frequently based on such a research approach. It is, in words directly borrowed

from Thornton, a conceptual framework composed of “a set of assumptions about individual and social change”, the essential assumption being “that change is uniform, natural, necessary, and directional”. It is assumed that “individuals, organizations, and societies necessarily go through natural and uniform sequences of change”, with irresistible forces moving them to some end state.

The key method is that it compares different societies at one point in time using cross-sectional data, and then ‘pegs’ societies at various stages along a developmental continuum. What is perceived as less advanced is interpreted as being historical, while what is perceived as more advanced is interpreted as showing the way societies considered to be less advanced are likely to go.

Thornton shows that this approach has been around for centuries and discusses examples, such as the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century English ethnographer Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) and the inquiry of Finnish anthropologist Edvard Westermarck (1862–1939) into the history of marriage, which was translated into many languages.

No attempt to defend the developmental paradigm can be found in Thornton’s work. He notes its fallacies, but also its enduring impact. In fact he stresses that as regards modernisation and the family a set of powerful propositions can be formulated, which define what he has called ‘developmental idealism’. Together these propositions seem to drive the modernisation process and changes in the family. As follows:

1. Modern society is good and attainable,
2. The modern family is good and attainable,
3. The modern family is cause as well as effect of modern society,
4. Individuals have the right to be free and equal, with social relationships being based on consent.

It would seem that the views of Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet and Immanuel Kant echo through in the writings of Thornton. Thornton does not endorse the views of Condorcet and Kant, but argues that such views have been incorporated into developmental idealism and have become forces for family change. He also refrains from speaking of ‘progress’ and from suggesting an end-state. He is currently conducting an extensive research programme in a large number of countries spread all over the world, in an attempt to assess the spread and impact of ‘developmental idealism’.

## CURRENT VIEWS REGARDING THE RISE AND DECLINE MODEL

The Rise and Decline model no longer has much credibility in academic circles of historians. In the introduction to his well-known study about the rise and fall of great powers, Paul Kennedy (1986) writes, however, that the history of their rise and fall “has in no way come to a full stop” (XXIII). In his view a causal relationship is detectable between the general economic balances of powers and the position occupied by such powers in the international system. Although some regularities may be formulated, they do not really represent a model. While Kennedy focuses on great powers, political economist Mancur Olson (1932–1998) looks at the post-war development of a large group of nations. In his “The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation and Social Rigidities” (1982) he argues that stable nations tend to start suffering from ‘institutional sclerosis’ with the result that under the influence of the activities of ‘distributive’ interest groups their economic performance falls short of what it could have been. His theory has been both applauded and severely criticised. It would seem that it is currently mainly appreciated in the political sciences as a theory of collective action. In the study of international relations the ‘succession’ theory also plays a role in Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” (1993), and in the study of what is known as evolutionary world politics. “Long Cycles in World Politics” (1987) by George Modelski is written from that perspective.

It would seem that against all that, the Rise and Decline model is still warmly embraced in the popular press and by the population at large. The idea of a life-cycle affecting people, civilisations and cultures remains appealing. In fact, it is not particularly difficult to see Europe as having reached the tail end of Quigley’s seven stages. Lowest-low levels of fertility may then be interpreted as reflecting a fatal lack of vitality, while the currently high levels of immigration into the region may be seen as heralding the cycle’s final stage: invasion. As a matter of fact, the metaphor is so powerful that predicting doom for ‘our type of’ civilisation has become a booming industry. Other interpretations would, of course, be possible and could then, conceivably, lead to a rather different view about the future of the continent.

## PROPHESYING THE END OF EUROPE

As it is, the ‘doom’ literature prophesying the end of Europe, commonly described as an ‘old’ continent, seems to take pride of place. And it must be said that North American authors are extremely well represented amongst the announcers of Europe’s impending demise as a force to be reckoned with on the world scene. British student of international relations Timothy Garton Ash sees

the emotional leitmotif of European anti-Americanism as being “resentment mingled with envy” whilst American anti-Europeanism is characterised as “irritation mingled with contempt” (2004: 112–113). Be that as it may, the titles which popular North American writers and journalists Walter Laqueur, Bruce Bawer, Mark Steyn and Christopher Caldwell have within the last five years given to their books leave little to the imagination. Laqueur (2007) speaks of ‘The last days of Europe’ and writes an ‘Epitaph for an old continent’. Bawer (2006) sees the West being destroyed from within by radical Islam and all ‘While Europe slept’. Canadian Mark Steyn (2006) argues that ‘America is alone’ at the ‘end of the world as we know it’ with precious little to expect from the old continent. Finally, Christopher Caldwell (2009) sees a revolutionary Europe in which immigration and the Islam play a prominent role. They are sombre and concerned, as can be shown by selecting some suitable quotations.

The sub-title Mark Steyn gives his book (*The end of the world as we know it*) is no doubt more appropriate than its full title. Societies of Europe are changing with dizzying speed. It is an emotional experience. It creates uncertainty, anxiety, and in many, a feeling of alienation, of no longer belonging to the society to which one is born. Seeing one’s job taken by a cheaper painter or plumber from a country that newly entered the European Union creates anger; riding in a city bus without being able to understand the majority of fellow passengers quickly makes people feel uncomfortable. Indeed, the books of Bawer, Caldwell and Steyn paint the economic, social and cultural situation in Europe in the stark colours of a pamphleteer. In their assessment, European civilisation is in a bad state. Caldwell (*op.cit.*: 15) after noting that in any individual European country with European and non-European immigration the second type is going to predominate, writes:

*“That is because Europeans are not having enough children. Whether due to prosperity, decadence, or some other factor of national morale, the birth rate of native Europeans has been plummeting for years”.*

And a little further on (*op.cit.*: 19):

*“Whether Europe can, for the first time in its history, successfully accommodate non-European minorities will depend on whether natives and newcomers perceive Europe as a thriving civilization or a decadent one”.*

Mark Steyn rides much the same wave. After suggesting that the blue states of the US

*“... ought to apply for honorary membership of the EU”, he casts his diagnosis in the following terms “the salient feature of much of the “progressive*



*agenda” – abortion, gay marriage, endlessly deferred adulthood – is that, whatever the charms of any individual item, cumulatively it’s a literal dead end. As fertility dries up, so do societies. Demography is the most obvious symptom of civilizational exhaustion, and the clearest indicator of where we’re headed” (op.cit.: 12).*

Bruce Bawer, the least demographically oriented of these writers simply states “a single colossal fact: Western Europe desperately needs immigrants. The native population is aging and its numbers are on the wane” (op.cit.: 68). He further notes that Pope Benedict XVI “bemoaned the contrast between the Islam’s vigorous rise and Christian Europe’s tired decline” and states that he could not argue with the Pope’s assertion that Europe is suffering from “a hatred of itself, which... can only be considered pathological”, and displaying a strange lack of desire for the future (op.cit.: 218).

Walter Laqueur, obviously familiar with both Gibbon and Spengler, counsels that Europe has been declared dead or dying countless times during the last two hundred years, but that it has “always surprised the doomsayers by its vigor” (op.cit.: 124). Even so, he writes that if current fertility trends continue, “and it is difficult to think why there should be a lasting reversal”, in a hundred years the size of the population of Europe will only be a fraction of what it is today and “in two hundred years some countries may have disappeared” (op.cit.: 22). Clearly he has been influenced by demographers that let their computers run too many cycles. He can see Europe, in any case considerable parts of it, “turn into a cultural theme park” with the guides saying: “Ladies and gentlemen, you are visiting the scenes of a highly developed civilization that once led the world” (op.cit.: 10).

The gist of such statements and conclusions is clear: European civilisation is in retreat. It is decadent and exhausted. In large measure this is due to the fact that the rate of reproduction of the native population is, in most countries, way too low to ensure the replacement of generations. Immigration of non-Europeans, necessary though it may be, further erodes the civilisation from within as these immigrants, especially those adhering to Islam, cannot or will not identify with, or blend into, the host society.

#### FEAR OF POPULATION DECLINE

Demographers have a long history of contributing to doomsday scenarios. Populations were successively seen to implode, explode and in Europe are now ‘imploding’ again. When analysing the period that elapsed after 1870, Michael Teitelbaum and Jay Winter concluded in 1985 that the fears expressed about possible population decline resulted largely from the following:

- Perceptual distortions based on historical experience,
- Misinterpretations of population projections,
- Ideological considerations: political, nationalist, religious, or value oriented,
- Economic or social welfare considerations,
- Keynesian economics and its relation to population growth,
- International politics or geopolitical considerations.

Now, a quarter of a century later, the same factors appear to play a role even though the issues coming to the fore strongest have changed under the influence of the altered circumstances. Immigration, integration, and assimilation of migrants – and their religious orientation – are important while in the 1930s this was not the case. Even so, the view that Europe is past its peak again is strong. One might argue that, on the contrary and more objectively, Europe is closer than ever before to Kant's 'Ewigen Frieden', but that view is not shared widely. This is partly – no doubt – because while the new common currency of a large number of European states requires greater political unity, support for such further political integration meets with strong resistance in the population at large. The interpretation of demographic information by journalists, authors and the broader public clearly remains difficult. This is particularly true of long-term projections of fertility held constant at the lowest-low level. Similarly, illustrative calculations meant to show what might happen if period data remains the same only yield conditional results that cannot be interpreted in a straightforward fashion. Other complex issues such as of the processes of postponement and recuperation of births are difficult to grasp. And what to say about the value of studies dealing with the demographic impact of immigration, if it is assumed that settlers never return and their demographic behaviour does not change as generations succeed one another?

#### NATURE OF THE BOOKS AND DEMOGRAPHIC SOURCES CONSULTED

The four books prophesying the end of Europe referred to above have been written by journalists and opinion makers. Thus, on the whole they are much better written and the reasoning much more forthright than is common in demographic books or papers. Still, there is a great deal of difference between the four, and there is a fair amount of variation in the demographic information they use as well. They also differ widely in the authors they have relied upon for their demographic data and knowledge. From the materials they have consulted, the news items they have collected, the interviews they have conducted,

and their personal observations, they conclude that Europe is, in Mark Steyn's terms, at a literal dead end. The Rise and Decline model still has wide appeal.

Their conclusion does not seem farfetched if one carefully examines the references to demographic literature provided in their books. Evidently, their bibliographies are a bit one-sided. Colleagues whose views about Europe's demographic future highlight risks, drawbacks and 'unwelcome' changes, are better represented than those intent on stressing the advantages of smaller populations and the benefits accruing to individuals and couples from the expansion of human rights in population matters. People no longer have to live in fear of an unwanted pregnancy and, partly as a consequence of better birth control measures there have been significant improvements in the status and educational opportunities of women.

Walter Laqueur, who has many books to his name and really is an authority on the history of Europe, has provided an impressive list of literature for each main topic treated in his book. For 'demography' the literature comprises work by the well-known demographers Herwig Birg, Jean-Claude Chesnais, Robin Cohen, David Coleman and Paul Demeny as authors or editors. And, under the heading 'Reflections on the Future of Europe' Birg's book "Die Weltbevölkerung" is mentioned, while under 'France' he refers to a work on immigration and assimilation by Michèle Tribalat of the French National Demographic Institute (INED). Laqueur has further consulted the largely statistical publications of the Council of Europe and the United Nations. In the two and a half page bibliography provided by Caldwell the only demographic name that appears is that of Michèle Tribalat, while the UN publication on replacement migration also features. In the Index one further finds the names of David Coleman, Wolfgang Lutz, Sergei Scherbov and Michèle Tribalat and the book contains nearly 50 pages of notes. When one takes the trouble of checking these it becomes evident that Caldwell has used a much wider range of demographic documents. As immigration is one of his central topics and there are many historians, economists, sociologists and other social scientists dealing with this important societal issue, selecting the demographers amongst these is not particularly straightforward. However, in addition to those mentioned above, one can list the names of Anne Coujon, Katrin Fliegenschnee, Françoise Legros, Poul Chr. Matthiessen, Vegard Skirbekk, Pawel Strzelecki, and Maria Rita Testa at least as a co-author. Caldwell's demographic data are mainly taken from the Data Sheet published yearly by the Vienna Demographic Institute, with which in fact, quite a few of the authors encountered and named above have been or are associated. He also made use of information collected by the OECD and the international migration organisation (MPI).

In the notes and indices that form part of the books of Bawer and Steyn, one may find a very large number of widely known names of politicians, publicists, columnists and commentators though I have not been able to identify any de-

mographers amongst them. In part this reflects a difference in orientation and, more likely, a difference in the level of scholarly ambition.

#### CONSIDERATIONS OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY IN CONTEMPORARY DEMOGRAPHIC THINKING AND LITERATURE

It would require an extensive survey and study of recent demographic literature to be able to state categorically to what extent different Universal History considerations influence the thinking of contemporary demographers. As yet, no such an investigation has been undertaken. From simply observing what is being published one may gain an impression. It would seem that in current demographic literature, opinions on the way observed demographic changes might fit into a larger scheme of historical development are hardly, if at all, expressed. Explicit discussion about how observations can be appreciated against a backdrop of historical processes of change in the developed world is commonly absent. Nevertheless, it is probably fair to say that the two distinct approaches sketched out earlier can still be recognised.

Authors describing recent developments in somewhat alarmist terms, stressing the potentially negative impact of declining population numbers on the power and influence of the developed region, and on Europe in particular, probably lean toward the Rise and Decline model. Laqueur, Bawer, Caldwell and Steyn would have had no quarrel with such writings. They may have seen them as confirming their point of view that Europe is in a bad state and that its demographic prospects, and hence its future, are quite simply dismal. The recently published illustrative calculations by a group of reputable demographers, stating that through a set of self-reinforcing mechanisms the populations of low fertility countries could be moving along a path leading to a difficult to reverse downward spiral in the number of births, could quite possibly be interpreted as a new warning that the end of the continent as a world power is in sight (Lutz et al. 2006). It is, no doubt, more spectacular than the finding by Tomáš Sobotka that a rise in fertility appears more likely than a further decline if one carefully lists all factors influencing future childbearing. Such a finding is probably a bit too nuanced if one wants to make strong statements about Europe's demographic and political future.

Studying the Rise and Decline model of demographic change and contrasting this with demographic trends in Western Europe during the last half century or so does not necessarily imply a strong belief in it. One may be more intent on sketching a possible sequence of demographic developments and a scenario of its conceivable geo-political repercussions and social economic consequences, than attempting to predict the future.

Another approach advanced after the mid 1980's aims to be more predictive. It fits the developmental paradigm concept described by Thornton like a glove fits onto a hand. It does not predict an end-state but assumes the continued development of Western societies, indeed the continuing development of all societies. The basic idea is that from the mid 1960's onward a new demographic regime came to be established, first in Northern and then in Western Europe. The proposition was that a 'second demographic transition' was spreading over Europe and, presumably, would affect Southern, Central and Eastern Europe at a later stage. The finding that fundamental changes were underway was first presented by Lesthaeghe and Van de Kaa (1986) and elaborated repeatedly thereafter (Van de Kaa 2008; Lesthaeghe 2010).

The second transition concept was developed far earlier and is thus entirely separate from Thornton's work. Upon sober reflection, however, it appears to stand in the developmental paradigm tradition. It shares observation of demographic trends in a global developmental context. Important changes in demographic trends and behaviour observed in the 'most advanced' parts of Europe during the last 45 years or so are interpreted as signifying the advent of a new demographic regime. This new regime is bound to affect the demographic future of developed societies profoundly. It is very difficult to fully appreciate the current demographic situation in Europe without recognition that in the decades since the mid 1960's the demographic constellation in the different countries of Europe has changed quite fundamentally. The demographic shifts can be summed up in very few points. The strong bonds between sexuality, marriage and procreation have been disrupted; cohabitation and childbirth are no longer the prerogative of the married. Conception requires the conscious choice not to practice contraception, not to use a 'morning after pill', and not to resort to abortion when pregnant. Consequently the number of children now born commonly remains below what people as adolescents or at any other point in their lives may have desired or considered ideal. Mortality levels are now largely determined by biological and individually controllable factors, instead of economic or social factors and exposure to infections. And, finally, immigration while not commonly encouraged, replaces the long tradition of emigration that existed in the most open societies of the continent. In sum, Europe's period of population growth has most probably come to an end.

Caldwell (see his note 242) apparently became aware of the discussion session on the second transition that took place at the European Population Conference held in Warsaw in 2003. But he must have seen no reason to incorporate the concept in the European 'revolution' he has sketched in such stark terms. If he had, he would have seen that all other parts of Europe had indeed followed the trendsetters in the North and West. And, further, that there is ample evidence that other developed regions, the 'blue' states of the US, for example, have started to exhibit the same pattern. He could have grasped that

regions as they are developing appear to reduce their population growth and experience a shift in demographic regime. Fuelled by ‘developmental idealism’ as defined by Thornton, ultimately, all parts of the world will experience this new demographic regime so that, in due course, humankind will live without fear for the dire consequences of an ever-expanding world population.

It really is a pity that the authors writing about the ‘end of Europe’ have not learnt from the demographers they consulted, that in their broadest context the shifts in population and demographic behaviour they so lament reflect the fact the populations in different parts of the world are subject to different demographic regimes. Moreover, they might then have understood that the situation is far from settled. The developed world, and Europe in particular, has a period of immense expansion behind it. Mortality declined and fertility was slow to follow. Consequently, natural population growth was unusually rapid and excess population was siphoned off to other parts of the world. As stressed before, this expansionist regime came to an end by the mid-1960s. Now Europe and developed countries more generally have entered a new regime. Here and there in the developed world it has not, as yet, fully played itself out. But where it is most advanced it appears to be cognisant of the limits to growth and to be highly responsive to individual rights and decision making. People voluntarily limit the size of their family to such an extent that (illegal) immigrants readily find a place on the labour market. The basic dimension of the current demographic situation in the world is that while the developed world has left its expansionist phase behind, parts of the developing world are still experiencing its effects. Even though many are at the tail end of the first demographic transition, they are still growing and have population to spare. As against that, in the developed world a new regime has been – or is being – established that takes control of reproduction very seriously. And, fertility can now be controlled close to perfection. Couples and individuals weigh the pros and cons of having a(nother) child, and the way it will affect their lives, quite carefully. At least for the moment they have little regard for the way this works out on the aggregate level.

#### ‘THE END OF EUROPE AS WE KNOW IT’, ‘THE LAST DAYS OF EUROPE’, AND DEMOGRAPHY: A PERSONAL VIEW

It must have been in the late 1960s that I picked up a thin pocketbook entitled (in Dutch) “24 July to 4 August. The last 12 days of the Old Europe”. The author was a British journalist called George Malcolm Thomson. The dates mentioned concern the summer of the year 1914. The author describes in detail, and day by day, how through a series of erroneous decisions and false assumptions about the intentions and reactions of others the murder of Franz-

Ferdinand of Habsburg-Este and his morganatic wife in Sarajevo led to the First World War. It is the sort of book Walter Laqueur might well have read and enjoyed. I found it fascinating. The First World War did indeed change the face of Europe. It probably had been at the peak of its powers at the time of the Boxer rebellion, precisely at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when foreign troops entered Beijing. It has been in proportional decline ever since, in a long drawn out global process that is likely to continue for decades. But, while successive generations will see the 'Europe as they knew it' disappear, that does not imply the end of European or Western civilisation and neither does it mean the end of the continent. European civilisation has penetrated everywhere and appears attractive to many different peoples. The population composition of the continent will change; it may well become multi-ethnic and will certainly no longer be exclusively white. Religions, some new, some less new to the continent may thrive. In certain areas and countries the population may, as we have seen, also decline somewhat but at this time further growth is widely regarded as being quite unattractive. Thus, developments go at least in the right direction and Europe may well benefit from them. Conceivably it might increase material wealth, help protect the environment, and increase the educational and other investments in the children who are born. Europe should again set an example for other continents to consider.

## REFERENCES

- Bawer, B. 2006. *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within*, New York etc., Doubleday.
- Caldwell, C. 2009. *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam, and the West*. London, Allen Lane.
- Condorcet, M. de (1795, posthumously), *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, Translated in Dutch 1802 by H.E. as 'Schets van een Historiesch Tafereel der Vorderingen van 's Menschen Geest'. Haarlem, François Bohn.
- Council of Europe 2006. *Recent Demographic Developments in Europe 2005*. Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing.
- Fukuyama, F. 1993. *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, Free Press Edition, Avon Books.
- Garton Ash, T. 2004. *Free World: America, Europe, and the Surprising Future of the West*, New York, Vintage Books, Random House.
- Hazard, p. 1963. *European Thought in the Eighteenth Century: from Montesquieu to Lessing*. Cleveland etc. The World Publishing Company.
- Hegel, G. W. F. 1820. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, herausgegeben von Klaus Grotzsch und Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag.
- Kaa, D. J. van de 2008. 'Demographic Transitions.' In: Zeng Yi (ed.): *Demography, Encyclopedia of life support systems (EOLSS)*, Developed under the auspices of the UNESCO, Oxford: EOLSS Publishers. [web]

- Kant, I. 1795. *To Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch, Translated with Introduction by Ted Humphrey*, 2003, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company.
- Kennedy, P. 1987. *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, New York, Vintage Books
- Laqueur, W. 2007. *The Last Days of Europe: Epitaph for an Old Continent*, New York, Thomas Dunne Books.
- Lesthaeghe, R. and Kaa, D. J. van de 1986. 'Twee Demografische Transitities?' In D.J. van de Kaa and R. Lesthaeghe (eds.): *Bevolking: Groei en Krimp*, Deventer, Van Loghum Slaterus, 9–25.
- Lesthaeghe, R. J. 2010. *The Unfolding Story of the Second Demographic Transition*. University of Michigan, PSC Research Report No. 10–696.
- Lutz, W., Skirbekk, V., and Testa, M. R. 2006. 'The low fertility trap hypothesis: Forces that may lead to further postponement and fewer births in Europe' In D. Philipov, A.C. Liefbroer, and F.C. Billari (Guest eds.): *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research 2006*. Vienna, Austria: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 167–192.
- Sobotka, T. 2008. 'The diverse faces of the Second Demographic Transition in Europe' In Tomas Frejka, Tomáš Sobotka, Jan M. Hoem, Laurent Toulemon (eds.): *Child-bearing Trends and Policies in Europe, An Overview*, Demographic Research, Vol. 19. 171–225.
- Steyn, M. 2006. *America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It*. Washington, Regnery Publishing Inc.
- Teitelbaum, M. S. and Winter, J. M. 1985. *The Fear of Population Decline*, Orlando etc., Academic Press.
- Thomson, G. M. 1965. *24 JULI tot 4 AUGUSTUS. De Laatste 12 dagen van het Oude Europa*, Utrecht, A.W. Bruna & Zoon
- Thornton, A. 2005. *Reading History Sideways: The Fallacy and Enduring Impact of the Developmental Paradigm on Family Life*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.
- Quigley, C. 1961. *The Evolution of Civilizations: An Introduction to Historical Analysis*, New York, Macmillan.