

UPF International Commemorates United Nations International Day of Families

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United Nations News HQ -- UPFI held a virtual program commemorating the UN International Day of Families titled, "Are Family and Demographics Relevant to Peace?" on May 16, 2022. The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Representative of Albania to the UN, but unfortunately the ambassador was not able to attend at the last minute. UPF then partnered with United Families International (UFI) as co-organizers for this program.



Mr. **Lyman Stone**, adjunct fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, research fellow at the Institute for Family Studies, former international economist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Chief Information Officer for Demographic Intelligence, was our first speaker. Mr. Stone explained that demography has a different impact on domestic conflict compared to international conflict or war. For instance, during a high fertility period when there is a large population of young men or a "youth bubble" and high unemployment, domestic violence and unrest increases. This is especially true in polygamous cultures where men have to compete more to find a mate. This was the case during the Arab Spring.

However, looking at Russia and Ukraine, Mr. Stone pointed out that declining fertility rates actually increase the risk of international conflict. Mr. Stone's careful demographic studies showed that although Russia and Ukraine have both had declining birthrates and therefore a decline in men within the "fighting" age, Russia's prenatal policies had some positive impact, improving their birthrate. Because Ukraine's population of fighting-age men was on a sharper decline and data showed they were less willing to go to war, in 2014 Russia saw an opportunity to expand its territory by invading Crimea. In fact, Russia was met with little resistance then. Mr. Stone said that early in 2022, as Russia knew Ukrainian fertility had plummeted even further and assumed there still was little Ukrainian desire to fight, Putin thought the

time was right for again invading Ukraine. However, after the loss of Crimea, acknowledging its demographic and military weakness, Ukraine strategically developed important military alliances with other countries and instilled greater nationalism, boosting the will of the people to fight and defend Ukraine. In response, there was a dramatic increase in military recruitment, including older Ukrainian men. So, these demographic issues resulted in strategic changes which are relevant to the "surprising" strength of Ukraine's fight against Russia which we watch in the news today.



Mr. Stone then discussed the impact of demographics on the strategies of China. He stated that China clearly has imperialist intent. In the early 2000's China had its greatest rate of manpower motivated to go to war against the U.S.; however, they did not have the required military equipment. Since then, the birthrate of China has been on a sharp decline. In comparison, the U.S. rate of "fighting" manpower has remained fairly steady. In order to compensate for the rapid erosion of Chinese manpower, China has intensively fortified its military hardware. For the same purpose, China has expanded international alliances through their Belt and Road development and expanding economic investments in other countries. China's other concerted strategy has been to amplify sentiments of nationalism and the willingness to fight in order to expand China's territory.

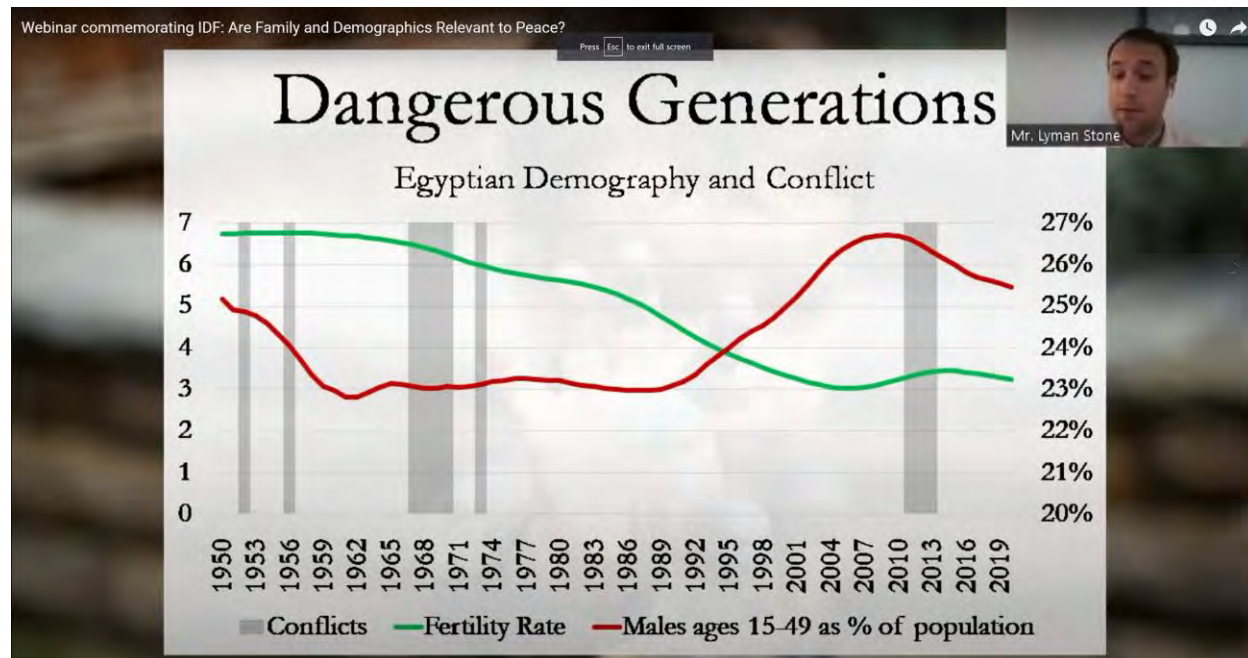


After explaining all of this, Mr. Stone may have raised a few eyebrows in saying that the biggest security issue in Asia today is the lack of manpower willing to fight in other Asian countries. This is true on the Korean peninsula, in Taiwan, and for instance, in Japan where less than 20% of "fighting age" men are willing to join the military to defend their country.

With the next speaker, Mrs. **Cheryl Wetzstein**, our program transitioned from a focus on war, nationalism and demography to a very different look at the intimate relations within a family. Mrs. Wetzstein, a 40-year veteran of print journalism, was a national reporter investigating and writing on family issues and policy for *The Washington Times* and serves as senior advisor to the UPF's International Media Association for Peace (IMAP). She quoted Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in saying, "Sooner or later, all the peoples of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace... If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."

She followed with Rev. Moon's description of the family as "the school of love" where we learn to grow the abilities to understand and manage our emotions, forgive, persevere, and ultimately love other human beings. But the hard -- and heartbreaking -- reality today is rampant family breakdown, child abuse,

sexual abuse and addictions, to name a few of family-related difficulties we see. Mrs. Wetzstein explained that one reason for some inhumane behavior we witness and recurring dysfunction in many of our families is the once very popular rigid and unaffectionate parenting style promoted by Dr. John Watson in the 1920's. Eventually it was recognized that the impact of such parenting led to poor parent-child relationships and less than optimal or deficient child development.



Today, because of the work of psychologists such as Harlow, Bowlby and Ainsworth, we have a clearer understanding that children need sensitive, warm and responsive parenting, in contrast to Watson's theory. It has become evident that we are hardwired to connect emotionally and that those first years with primary caretakers are determinative of our ability or inability to relate to others. When parents provide the quality of care that is needed, children naturally develop a secure attachment to their parents and a loving mutual responsiveness with them. On the foundation of secure attachment, a child can form capacities for trust, interdependence, empathy, responsibility and self-discipline. These competencies are essential for healthy human interaction and relationships throughout life. These skills and sensitivities are exactly what Rev. Dr. King was referring to, that is, the abilities to resolve conflict with others constructively, to love those different than you, and to build peace.



The question-and-answer period was moderated by Ms. **Wendy Wixom**, president of UFI. During this final section, concern was aired that the parenting-method pendulum has swung to now include the problematic "free range" or "helicopter" approaches. Mrs. Wetzstein ended encouragingly in pointing out that there is a plethora of supportive research and excellent educational programs for teaching youth to make good relationship choices, preparing young couples to create a happy marriage, and guiding parents to implement effective parenting methods. She said we have much reason to be hopeful because we can help parents and families become "true schools of love," and with that, we certainly have a better chance to build a more peaceful world.