

generations before, you'd be lucky if three out of ten children survived. Now they were almost all surviving. However, in the economy of 1900, they could all head out and find work by the time they reached puberty. And that's what most of them did.

Ten children in eighteenth-century France might have been a godsend. Ten children in late-nineteenth-century France might have been a burden. Ten children in late-twentieth-century France would be a catastrophe. It took a while for reality to sink in, but eventually it became clear that most children wouldn't die and that children were extremely expensive to raise. Therefore, people started having a lot fewer children, and had those children more for the pleasure of having them than for economic benefits. Medical advances such as birth control helped achieve this, but the sheer cost of having and raising children drove the decline in birthing rates. Children went from being producers of wealth to the most conspicuous form of consumption. Parents began satisfying their need for nurturing with one child, rather than ten.

Now let's consider life expectancy. After all, the longer people live, the more people there will be at any given time. Life expectancy surged at the same time that infant mortality declined. In 1800, estimated life expectancy in Europe and the United States was about forty years. In 2000 it was close to eighty years. Life expectancy has, in effect, doubled over the last two hundred years.

Continued growth in life expectancy is probable, but very few people anticipate another doubling. In the advanced industrial world, the UN projects a growth from seventy-six years in 2000 to eighty-two years in 2050. In the poorest countries it will increase from fifty-one to sixty-six. While this is growth, it is not geometric growth and it, too, is tapering off. This will also help reduce population growth.

The reduction process that took place decades ago in the advanced industrial world is now under way in the least developed countries. Having ten children in São Paulo is the surest path to economic suicide. It may take several generations to break the habit, but it will be broken. And it won't return while the process of educating a child for the modern workforce continues to become longer and costlier. Between declining birthing rates and slowing increases in life expectancy, population growth has to end.

#### THE POPULATION BUST AND THE WAY WE LIVE

What does all this have to do with international power in the twenty-first century? The population bust affects all nations, as we will see in later chapters. But it also affects the life cycles of people within these nations. Lower populations affect everything from the number of troops that can fight in a war to how many people there are in the workforce to internal political conflicts. The process we are talking about will affect more than just the number of people in a country. It will change how those people live, and therefore how those countries behave.

Let's start with three core facts. Life expectancy is moving toward a high of eighty years in the advanced industrial world; the number of children women have is declining; and it takes longer and longer to become educated. A college education is now considered the minimum for social and economic success in advanced countries. Most people graduate from college at twenty-two. Add in law or graduate school, and people are not entering the workforce until their mid-twenties. Not everyone follows this pattern, of course, but a sizable portion of the population does and that portion includes most of those who will be part of the political and economic leadership of these countries.

As a result, marriage patterns have shifted dramatically. People are putting off marriage longer and are having children even later. Let's consider the effect on women. Two hundred years ago, women started having children in their early teens. Women continued having children, nurturing them, and frequently burying them until they themselves died. This was necessary for the family's well-being and that of society. Having and raising children was what women did for most of their lives.

In the twenty-first century this whole pattern changes. Assuming that a woman reaches puberty at age thirteen and enters menopause at age fifty, she will live twice as long as her ancestors and will for over half her life be incapable of reproduction. Let's assume a woman has two children. She will spend eighteen months being pregnant, which is roughly 2 percent of her life. Now assume a fairly common pattern, which is that the woman will have these two children three years apart, that each child enters school at the