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Russia's Contemporary Pronatalism. The Evolution of Policy Priorities from Demographic 'Crisis' to Housing Needs.

Both the USSR and Russia have, through family policies, sought to refute the adage that 'demography is destiny.' During the Soviet-era, and more recently, politicians have advocated pronatal measures to address the country's demographic challenges. Since 2007, this has included the Maternity Capital programme, a state-funded financial benefit to families that incentivises higher-order births.

Russia's politicians continue to promote pronatalism, while being cognisant it will not achieve its primary stated aim. Advocacy of pronatal policies in contemporary Russia reinforces the political legitimacy of incumbent elites through a constructed demography-related morality, in order to secure a consensus across diverse political, commercial and rent-seeking interests.

This paper presents evidence of widespread pessimism among Russians regarding the economic prospects for childrearing, the domestic impact of the Second Demographic Transition, the ongoing consequences of the 2008 global financial crisis, the consequences of international sanctions and ongoing post-transitional financial illiteracy. Consequentially, the purpose of Russia's contemporary pronatal measures, particularly its flagship Maternity Capital programme, has evolved so as more to support the country's housebuilding sector and domestic mortgage industry than to address its perceived demographic 'crisis.' The presentation includes empirical evidence from each of Russia's federal districts, and a selection of its federal subjects, those with noted high and low birth rates.