

Harry S Dent Jr.'s Demographic Cliff and Global Economic Collapse

Mod: Sang-Hyup Kim, Visiting Prof of KAIST, Chairmain of Caalition for our Common Future

Speakers:

Harry S. Dent, Jr. – Dent Research, Senior Editor, Author of the Demographic Cliff

Eugenia Kalnay – University of Maryland, Distinguished University Professor
-atmospheric and oceanic science, environmental protection

Joon Han – Yonsei University Professor
-sociology

The world is racing toward a demographic cliff, and the result will be economic and environmental collapse. “We are in front of the emergency room,” explained Han Joon, a professor at Yonsei University, at the second day of the 16th annual World Knowledge Forum in Seoul. Professor Han was joined in his pessimism by Professor Eugenia Kalnay of the University of Maryland, and demographics expert Harry S. Dent Jr.

Together, they discussed the causes of the impending disaster and possible solutions.

Mr. Dent began the forum by discussing the importance of demographics in predicting the economy.

“What’s important in the economy is people. And what people do is incredibly predictable,” he said.

Based on this data, Mr. Dent has determined that the developed countries of the world are following a simple pattern. Japan, once an economic powerhouse, rose swiftly and then collapsed just as quickly. The problem is its rapidly aging population and incredibly low birth rate.

“Japan is a dying nation. Demographically, it is going to continue to decline, and they have no policy for encouraging immigration, and they have...very little policy for encouraging women to have more kids,” he noted.

Japan is not alone, however. Mr. Dent predicts that Korea will face the same exact crisis in 2018 because, while not quite as bad as Japan, Korea also suffers from a low birth rate.

“Countries that don’t have kids don’t have a future,” he declared.

Professor Joon echoed Mr. Dent, explaining how Korea can avoid falling off the cliff.

“More kids will not solve the problem. They will only enter the labor market 20 years later...that will be too late,” said Prof. Joon.

While Mr. Dent’s demographic cliff is exclusively concerned with developed nations, Professor Kalnay explained a completely different sort of demographic cliff. Overall, the world population continues to grow exponentially. As the population increases, so does humanity’s thirst for energy and its consumption of our natural resources.

“The earth is finite. It does not grow with us. This is the real demographic cliff that is facing us,” he said.

The question, then, is how nations can save themselves. The panelists, while not encouraging, did offer a few solutions. Professor Kalnay, ever concerned with the environment, pointed toward the need for reduced consumption of fossil fuels and viable family planning in every country.

Mr. Dent disagreed, stressing that developed countries need to increase their birth rates through subsidized childcare.

“Women need to feel like they can work and have two or three kids instead of maybe just one,” he said.

In addition, Korea needs a more aggressive immigration policy in order to keep the economy at its current level of production. Professor Joon agreed, but stressed that none of these suggestions, environmental or otherwise, will become a reality without firm and clear management from a more powerful central government. Even reunification with North Korea, which would provide a temporary boost in the work force, would only be a band-aid on the gaping wound of a collapsing population.

Theresa Arico, Reporter