

The New York Times

Idea of the Day

Must Reads From the Week in Review Staff

JANUARY 27, 2010, 6:35 AM

Third World as Retirement Home

Today's idea: Because of uneven global population trends, old people in the future might be encouraged to move from aging rich countries to high-fertility developing nations with the medical and other workers to support their needs.

Leif Parsons

Demographics | In a pessimistic global forecast called “[The New Population Bomb](#)” in Foreign Affairs, Jack A. Goldstone writes that in the coming years, the total world population will matter less than its distribution and composition. He sees four “megatrends”: a drop in the rich world’s population relative to the developing world’s; aging populations in developed countries; an increase in undereducated, unemployed youth in developing (especially Muslim) countries; and the rise of overcrowded megacities in the developing world.

If those sound familiar, perhaps some of the possible responses will not — including what sounds like an accelerated convergence of medical tourism and overseas retirement. Mr. Goldstone writes:

One somewhat daring approach ... would be to encourage a reverse flow of older immigrants from developed to developing countries. If older residents of developed countries took their retirements along the southern coast of the Mediterranean or in Latin America or Africa, it would greatly reduce the strain on their home countries’ public entitlement systems. The developing countries involved, meanwhile, would benefit because caring for the elderly and providing retirement and leisure services is highly labor intensive. Relocating a portion of these activities to developing countries would provide employment and valuable training to the young, growing populations of the Second and Third Worlds.

This would require developing residential and medical facilities of First World quality in Second and Third World countries. ... Many residents of developed countries who desire cheaper medical procedures already practice medical tourism today, with India, Singapore, and Thailand being the most common destinations.

[[Foreign Affairs](#)]

More Recommended Reading:

- [“We Have Grown Numb to the Televised Presidency”](#) – David Paul Kuhn, *RealClearPolitics*
- [“Obama’s Katrina”: Surgeons Fault Preventable Post-Quake Deaths in Haiti](#) – S. Eachempati, D. Lorch, and D. Helfet, *The Wall Street Journal*
- [The Polygamists](#) — Scott Anderson, *National Geographic*
- [John Paul II, Catholicism and Self-Flagellation](#) — Christopher Beam, *Slate*

- [Can Pop Music Survive Without a Mass Market?](#) – *J. Gabriel Boylan, The Nation*
- [The Death of Fiction Quarterlies](#) - *Ted Genoways, Mother Jones*
- [“Avatar” Anti-Conservative? Not Really: It’s Mostly About Protecting Property Rights](#) – *David Boaz, Los Angeles Times*
- [A Gallery of Expensive Art Accidents](#) – *The Daily Beast*

Copyright 2010 The New York Times Company | [Privacy Policy](#) | [NYTimes.com](#) 620 Eighth Avenue New York, NY 10018