The impact of various types of societal instability remains an issue deserves special attention. The nowadays world faces instabilities ranging from climate change to the ones related to economic uncertainties; their impact on demographic outcomes is of great importance for the world development and sustainability.

Recent history has provided many examples of the short- and middle-term fluctuations of fertility due to different kinds of societal instability. For instance, there was a marked increase of fertility in US immediately following the terrorist attack of September, 2001. Likewise, there was as steep rise of fertility in Iceland after the advance of the crisis of 2008. On the contrary, all countries of Eastern Europe that underwent the rapid and painful transition from the so-called "command administrative" to the market economy had experienced substantial decline in fertility for several years in a row. Given the opposite and sometimes paradoxical effect of various types of instabilities on fertility, it is worth researching this phenomenon in whole length, in order to predict possible demographic responses to the uncertainties that world faces, from climate changes to the creation of a non-polar geopolitical world order.

Previous work addressing changes in fertility related to societal instability are in relatively short supply. Vast majority of the studies has focused on either the impact of instabilities related to natural disasters, wars and famines, or on the effect of economic instability, in particular, unstable employment and other types of market insecurities such as term-limited working. The impact of more moderate political instabilities such as cycles of empowered political elites, as well as impact of socio-political instability in civil society (not directly or fully related to economic uncertainties) on fertility has received little attention.

The former USSR and nowadays Russia provides a unique opportunity to examine the relationship between fertility rates and various types of instabilities. USSR and its successor, Russia, had both minor political instabilities and major ones such as the breakdown of the state and the very social system. It also had in-built crisis, like the permanent shortages, the collapse of command-administrative economy, and the painful transformation to the market-type economy. Some periods are typified with only one type of instability while others have several. The variety of different types of instabilities in recent history of the country allows for an examination of their impact on short-term fluctuations of fertility.

The paper addresses two fundamental questions:

1. Are fertility rates affected by socio-political and economic instability?

2. Are fertility rates affected differently, both in magnitude and direction, by different types of instabilities?

As a basis for the first set of hypothesis for my research I use and reformulate core assumptions of the uncertainty reduction theory. This theory assumes existence of both immanent value and instrumental ones. Immanent value is the reduction of uncertainty. According to this theory, actors prefer decision-making under risk (where probabilities are known) to the decision-making under uncertainty (where probabilities are unknown). Thus actors try to reduce uncertainty by converting it to situations under risk. Actors can do this in two ways. First, they can gather information that transforms uncertainty to risk. Second, they can adopt global strategies designed to reduce uncertainty regarding set of future courses of action

Proponents of uncertainty reduction theory have applied this approach to the explanation of fertility variation, manifested in decision-making of having at least one child vs. having no children being explained from the uncertainty reduction perspective. There are following reason for that. Having a child means decent level of "certainty" in being involved in a stream of expenditures and imbedded in a social interaction for the years ahead after child's birth Several assumptions and hypothesis have being derived from this assumption, including the ones of decision on having at least one child as a reduction of uncertainty related to constrained career opportunity and a reaction of uncertainty related to duration of marriage.

To examine the effects of instability on short-term fluctuations of fertility, I advance assumptions based on uncertainty reduction theory:

(1) Instability on the macro-societal level translates as uncertainty on the individual level or at the level of a family unit.

(2) The greater the extent of instability, the greater the level of associated uncertainty the individual or a family unit would like to reduce.

(3) The greater the level of uncertainty on a micro - level, the greater the number of births is per individual or a family. This increase could result from:

a) The decision to have at least one child rather than not having children

b) Having more children

c) Narrowing intervals between births

These assumptions further suggest formulation of a general hypothesis:

H1. Periods of sociopolitical instability not coupled with economic crisis are typified with increased fertility

Other general hypothesis concerns periods that are marked with both sociopolitical and severe economic instabilities and crises. Its basic assumption is that severe deterioration of the standard of living leads to reduction to fertility levels according to microeconomic theory even if there is an overlap with the sociopolitical instabilities. Accordingly, the second hypothesis could be formulated in a flowing way:

H2. At periods characterized by both a profound economic and sociopolitical instability fertility rates would be mostly affected by the former and, according to the premises of microeonomic theory, will go down.

In order to test hypotheses it is needed to compare fertility levels at different periods marked with various types of societal instability with each other as well as to view the dynamics of the process within each period. While comparing fertility at different periods it is crucial to control for age and cohort effects in order to single out the period effect. The latter is the one essential for the goal of testing hypotheses since level and scope of societal instability is actually a period effect.

After that the t-test was performed on testing the statistical significance of the difference of period fertility at the end of each compared period and the year that has preceded it. In both cases – the years that marked the end of a stable "social contract" period (1986-1987) and the year 1998 were significantly different from the years that preceded, correspondingly, the deterioration of a "social contract" and the start of economic crisis and instability. (Though "social contract" has actually ended up in the 1991, with the breakdown of the USSR, starting 1998 it started overlapping the economic downturn, thus this segment was not included in testing the first hypothesis). The increase of fertility at the time of a sociopolitical instability, the deterioration and erosion of a "social contract" thus is statistically confirmed.

However, the severe deterioration of living conditions in the very late 1980s has led to a steep decline of fertility that lasted throughout the 1990's. Sociopolitical instabilities that happened during that time like the shooting of the Parliament in 1993 or the presidential elections of the 1996 with the real threat of Communists coming back to power, did not have a pronounced impact on that trend.