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OPINION
LETTERS

On Phoenix, Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, global population growth

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Phoenix flying high

SIR – Your article on Phoenix misrepresents the city's situation ("Into the ashes", July 28th). Actually, Phoenix is safe: 60% of the city's budget is devoted to public safety. Although it is the fifth-largest city in America, it ranked nearly last—at 98—on the list of America's 100 most violent cities in 2006, according to the FBI. Violent crimes and property crimes, including vehicle theft, are down sharply since 2002. That is remarkable, considering our increasingly diverse population expands by 35,000 people each year.

Contrary to what you imply, Phoenix embraces its rich diversity. More than a quarter of the 1,005 Phoenix residents who serve on the many boards and commissions that help govern the city are minorities, as are 39% of the city's workers. We constantly strive to increase the opportunities for anyone who wants to succeed, and Phoenix's citizens agree. In a recent survey (conducted by an independent research company) nine out of ten residents were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the overall performance of the city in providing services. And 91% of them say Phoenix is a good place to live.

Regarding the light-rail system that is being constructed, Phoenix began working proactively with businesses located along the light-rail line two years before construction even began, offering loans and marketing programmes to help attract shoppers to their stores. Private investors are already pumping more than a billion dollars into new developments along the line. The federal Environmental Protection Agency recently gave Phoenix and METRO light rail an award that recognises smart-growth planning while protecting public health and the environment.

We realise that the opportunity to create a modern city which meets the complex needs of a dynamic population is very rare. Phoenix's citizens, together with leaders from education, government and business, are seizing that opportunity in every possible way. Phoenix is a city that is proudly on the rise—and it will soon soar.

Phil Gordon
Mayor of Phoenix

Michael Crow
President
Arizona State University, Phoenix

German history lesson

SIR – No one can deny the courage displayed by Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg and his associates in trying to assassinate Hitler in July 1944 ("The good German", August 4th). But the attempt was made 11 years after Hitler came to power. It is worth noting that the officer class of which Stauffenberg was a member pledged their support to Hitler after he became chancellor in 1933. They maintained their support when

Germany appeared to be winning the war. No significant or effective opposition to Hitler developed within the army until it became clear that he was leading Germany to destruction.

By July 1944 Germany was losing in Normandy and on the eastern front. Hitler's military opponents wanted to get rid of him because he was losing them their war, not primarily because they were anti-Nazi. Had it been otherwise they would have tried more often in the previous 11 years and saved the world from an unspeakable tragedy. I hope Tom Cruise's new film will make that clarification.

Francis de Marneffe
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The pattern of tiny footsteps

SIR – I would respectfully ask *The Economist* to reconsider its dismissal of concerns regarding global population growth ("[How to deal with a falling population](#)", July 28th). The world's population is still rapidly increasing by around 78m people a year. This remains a very real concern, with much of the world suffering from increasing water scarcity, land erosion, drought intensity, stalled progress on crop productivity, declining groundwater aquifers, over-grazing of pasturelands, tropical deforestation, massive species extinction, over-fishing, and anthropogenic climate-change. The risks are greatly magnified because all of the projected population increases will occur in less-developed regions that will have great difficulties in absorbing the changes.

The least-developed countries are projected to experience an increase in population from 800m in 2007 to 1.7 billion by 2050, and possibly much higher. With sensible policies and international support, these very poor countries could do themselves a huge favour by reducing fertility rates sharply through voluntary means. The rich countries, on their part, could do themselves and the world a huge favour by putting their efforts into reducing their greenhouse-gas emissions and following through on promised aid, including for universal access to family-planning services, rather than on raising their own fertility rates.

Jeffrey Sachs
Director
The Earth Institute at Columbia University
New York

SIR – Huge numbers of women in the developing world do not have access to the information and means to assert control over if and when they have a child. This is important as rapid population growth is a major factor accounting for failed states.

Consider Pakistan, a country with about 170m people. Some 40% of the population is aged 14 and under. In a generation's time the population will be greater than that of the United States today. There will be almost 25m men aged 15-24 looking for dignified employment and not finding it—prime tinder for extreme politics and religious fundamentalist teachings. As violence increases, perhaps with nuclear weapons, and terrorist cells multiply, maybe someone will leaf through old copies of *The Economist* and smile sadly at phrases such as "Worries about a population explosion have been replaced by fears of decline."

Malcolm Potts
Martha Campbell
School of Public Health
University of California at Berkeley
Berkeley

SIR – You provided an interesting analysis of how specific market factors can indirectly influence population growth. However, your initial assumptions, of undistorted commodity markets and no environmental scarcity, led you to ignore a logical conclusion. The market needs to be directly harnessed towards the goal of stabilising population growth at a sustainable level. This could be achieved through a cap-and-trade system by issuing each adult with 1.05 of a birth permit (ie, 2.1 permits per couple to achieve the replacement fertility rate) and allowing such permits to be tradable.

Adam Drucker
Charles Darwin University
Darwin, Australia

SIR – I am touched that you encouraged governments to leave it up to women in their 20s to make the difficult choice between clubbing and spending “their cash on handbags” on the one hand and child-rearing and buying nappies on the other. The fact that women could be tempted to pursue other choices than the limited ones you gave would normally be considered too superfluous to mention, but judging from the outdated phrasing you used it seems necessary on this occasion.

Eleni Braat
Florence

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