



China's 1 child policy



In 1979, three years after Chairman Mao's death, China introduced what would become one of the most controversial policies ever to pass through a modern government: the 1 child policy. This was a policy designed to help control China's rapidly increasing population. It encouraged families to have only 1 child and gave benefits for those who abided by this and imposed penalties for those who did not.



During the 1940s all residents of China were encouraged to have large families which would be used to fuel the army and for use in agriculture and food production. When Mao took power in 1949 he too was for a large population within China and shortly after taking power he declared: "of all things in the world, people are the most important". He would then go on to condemn the use of birth control, eventually banning it, as he said it was a capitalist plot being used to weaken the country leaving it vulnerable to attack. He used this growing population to support his "human wave" defence policy as he was currently fearing attack from the US and Soviet Union. He is noted to have frequently stated "with every mouth comes two hands attached". Mao urged the population to grow to such an extent that by the end of his reign China's population would have doubled in size.

However, in the early 1960s Mao and the Chinese government began see that rapid population growth (particularly in the cities) was unfavourable for economic and

social development. The population was now increasing by 55million every 3 years!

They began to reintroduce contraceptives and start to carry out family planning (restraining and encouraging families to have fewer children) in rural and urban areas. This had a significant success as during the 60s the average children per family fell from 5 to 3. Following on from this success Chairman Mao, in 1976, passed the 'later, longer, fewer' policy. The policy encouraged couples to get married later, wait longer to have children, and have fewer children, preferably one. The program would also force married couples to sign statements that would allow them only one child. Women who had abortions or were sterilized were also given free vacations under the scheme. When the policy was introduced Mao also adopted the slogan 'one is good, two is fine, three is too many'. Mao died shortly after the policy was brought into effect but he had still paved the way for a stricter, more extensive and effective strategy.

Nevertheless, there was still a lack of a deep understanding of the seriousness of the population problem and the government had not yet worked out a clear population policy. Family planning was not being effectively carried out throughout the country. Population was now starting to appear as if it could become a serious issue with prospects of crippling China's resources. So in light of the situation Deng Xiaoping (the newly appointed leader) in 1979 introduced The One Child Policy. The policy originally

stated that 1 child was allowed per family but if that child was a girl then the family was allowed another; after that no more were allowed. Yet, in many urban areas families were allowed just one child regardless of sex. Posters were placed around urban areas bearing pro one child policy slogans such as: one that reads the "China Needs Family Planning" and showing a Communist official praising the proud parents of one baby girl.



Since the introduction, parents in China who wish to have a baby must first of all obtain a permit. To be eligible for a permit the parents must have a marriage certificate and residency permits. Women must also be at least 20 and men 24 years of age. Parents who qualify and have just the one baby receive a 'one child glory certificate' this entitles them to numerous economic benefits. These benefits include: one month's extra salary per year until the child is 14, higher wages, interest-free loans, retirement funds, cheap fertiliser, better housing, better health care, and priority school enrolment for their child. If women delay having children until they are 25 then they get yet more benefits such as longer maternity leave. All these benefits however, are immediately removed if the family decides to have another baby.



Despite the fact that the one child policy is supposedly voluntary, the government enforces punishments for families that do not comply. Depending on the area, the punishment can be simply a fine from

\$370 to \$12,800 (many times the average wage in China) but if this fine is not paid then, depending on the prosecuting force, recurring punishments can be administered which are much more severe. These punishments include the couple's land being taken away, their house being destroyed, loss of their jobs or their child not being allowed to attend school. The government group directly in charge of enforcing the one child policy is The National Population and Family Planning Commission. It is comprised of 300,000 full-time paid family-planning workers and 80 million volunteers. They are notorious amongst the Chinese population for being invasive, nosy and using social pressure in order to meet their goals and quotas. The officials at the top of the family planning commission are in most cases members of the Communist Party. They have broad powers to order abortions and sterilizations and impose heavy fines. Many of the volunteers for the family planning commission belong to neighbourhood, street or village committees whose job it is to dissuade a couple from having a second child in the first place. If their attempts are unsuccessful then community "units" are called into the husband's and wife's work place to pressure the couple, sometimes by reducing wages, taking away bonuses or threatening unemployment. Community units are also called in if a couple is thinking about getting divorced as divorce would mean that both parents could have another child with a second husband or wife. If the mother becomes pregnant then they can be forced to have an abortion or be sterilised after they have given birth. If a second child is born though then they may be denied a birth certificate and proper documentation. Without the correct papers they cannot attend school, find work as adults or do practically anything legally. Despite Family Planning officials being able to order abortions and

sterilisations they do not have the right to seize children. However, this started to become a common occurrence with Family Planning officials taking second or third children away from their homes (sometimes without the parents even knowing). Even though it is illegal the officials will often make out that they have the authority to do so, there have been cases of officials forcing barely literate parents to sign away their children without realising it. However, these abductions aren't always made just so the officials can meet their local population targets but because they can then sell on the children to orphanages who then sell them on to adopting parents (mainly from the United States) for around \$3,000.

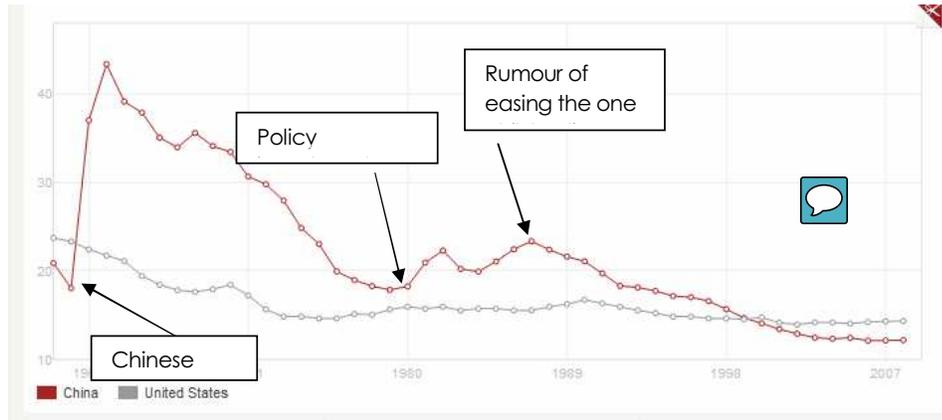
The Chinese government hires so many people to enforce this policy because, in spite of the economic benefits given to those who have just one child, many parents want more children and in some cases need more children. This has become a common dilemma in agriculture and rural communities where it was tradition to have lots of children who would help work the land. Therefore the Chinese government relaxed the laws in rural communities to allow two or sometimes three children per family. However this is now starting to imbalance the male to female ratio. This is down to sons being more useful for agricultural work so if a couple knew that their child was going to be a girl then they would have an abortion and wait to have a boy. Now there are 117 males to every 100 females meaning that now many men struggle to find a wife. Yet there is still discrimination against female babies and they are often referred to as 'maggots in the rice'.

Chinese residents have found ways (or loopholes) through the system, many of them do not want to give up the economic benefits of having just one child so they

just do not register them. There are an estimated 6 million undocumented children throughout China. Many are thought to be girls who were the third of three daughters and are sometimes referred to as 'excess children'. To avoid detection these children are moved around amongst relatives and friends. Parents bribing doctors to document their second child as a twin has also become increasingly common. So common that in the Guangzhou area pregnant women are asked, "Is it you are first child or are you having twins?"

The Chinese government has always justified its policy by saying that controlling China's population serves the interest of the whole society and that sacrificing individual interests for those of the masses is justifiable. Yet many believe that it is a violation of human rights and in May 2007, riots broke out in Bobai and Shabei counties in the region of Guangxi over attempts to enforce strict family-planning policies. These were prompted after a group of government work teams went from town to town fining anyone who was believed to have violated the one child policy.

Despite numerous protests and campaigns against the policy, it has been a success in that it has stopped the country's population getting to a size where its resources cannot support it. Even though the overall population has risen, it is estimated that in the policy's first twenty years it prevented an extra 300 million from being born. The graph at the top of the next page shows the birth rate per 1000 people of China compared to the US; it shows that the policy has had a positive effect at reducing the country's birth rate to that of a MEDC.

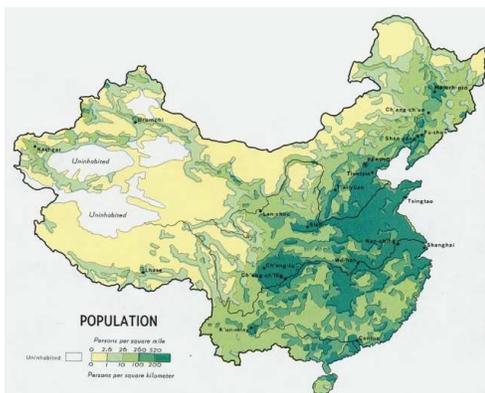


homes being allowed an extra child. There have even been reports of discussions amongst Chinese officials of a possible move towards a two child policy. This suggests that the Chinese government is

China is a huge country but it should be remembered that China's population is almost twice as dense as people might think from looking at a map. The east, which includes the major cities, accounts for only 46% of China's total area but 94% of its 1.3 billion population

more concerned about too few births as opposed to too many. These claims are supported by a survey which was carried out in Shanghai in 2004 . It found that 80 percent of the young people interviewed preferred to have just one child and 5 percent didn't want any children at all. Yet, many mothers still feel that only children suffer from loneliness and have a tendency to become spoiled.

. This explains the seriousness of the



My opinion on China's future is th at they should continue with their policy (as it has obviously been a success so far) but that they should continue to relax the laws and punishments. I also believe that, as population could become a serious issue for other countries in the near future, t hat they should consider introducing similar policies.

situation.

In December 2006, the Chinese government said it had no plans to change its one-child policy and In March 2008, Zhang Weiqing, minister of the National Population and Family Planning Commission said the one-child policy will remain in place at least until 2018. Yet since the mid 2000s there have been many relaxations on the one child policy - such as; more rural communities being allowed more than one child and couples who were both offspring from single child

In conclusion I feel that, despite not always being correctly enforced, the thinking and logic behind the one child policy is correct. I believe it has helped develop China both economically and socially. However, after the way that some individuals have been treated by the enforcement of the policy I feel that the Government might have lost a fair amount of support from its people.

Crediting Sources: www.china.org.ch, www.worldbank.org, <http://factsand>

details.com, www.wikipedia.com,
www.bbcnews.co.uk.

