

CHINESE POPULATION GROWTH AND ITS IMPACT ON ECONOMY (1981-90)

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China is a huge country but its population even huger creating deep and perennial problems for China to feed itself. Its land area of 9,561,000 square kilometres-7.3 percent of the world total is exceeded only by the the former USSR and Canada, overall it is slightly larger than the United States. But China ranks second to none in population in 1983, 102.5 billion people-22 percent of the total on the planet-lived there (exclusive of Taiwan Province).¹ The food problem is compounded the fact that only 1,400,000 square kilometres (around 15 percent) of China's land is arable, with 0.0014 square kilometres of such land per person, China faces food self sufficiency problems more serious than most countries.²

In comparison with the U.S. and Europe, a far higher proportion of China's territory is at high altitude. Chinese schools conveniently divide the country into five relief groupings. First, some 20 percent of the Land consists of high mountain area, with average elevation of 5,000 to 6,000 metres. Forty peaks being over 7,000 metres.³ Area of high plateau account for a further 20 percent, with average height above sea level of between 1,000 and 2,000 metres.⁴ A further 15 percent of territory is classified as mountains of middling range and 10 percent is described as hill country. The remaining 35 percent of China's land area consist of basins, low plateaux and plain.⁵

Rainfall declines markedly from the South-east of the country to the North-west, accounting for the vast sweep of arid lands and sand desert of Xinjiang, Gansu and Inner Mongolia. The huge territories of Tibet and Qinghai also have little rain fall, and can be described as cold deserts'. Across the continent of China temperatures vary enormously, with winter conditions in the tropical area being mild and frost free, while in the North-east the Siberian influence keeps the average to 30°C. Soil slope and rainfall conditions provide the constraining factors on cultivation even where mean seasonal temperatures are favourable.⁶

Economic development by definition implies a gradual replacement of man by machine. A rapidly rising population creates the problem of finding employment for them. In order to raise the level of productivity, man has to be trained to use machines and technology and has also to be given the right value orientation for bringing the right kind of motivation to work.⁷

CONTROL OVER POPULATION GROWTH:

The population of China stood at 542 million in 1949, rose to 725 million in 1965, 963 million in 1978, 1160 million in July 1990 and 1188 million in 1992, that is over a period of a little more than four decades it was more than doubled. The rate of growth, however varied considerably from period to period. The study reveals that the annual average addition to population during 1949-65 was 10.76 million as against 17 million during 1965-78. Similarly, during 1962-75 the annual addition to the population rose to as much as 25.81 million, the total addition in this period being 361.36 million. The average population growth rate over the longer period, however declined from 2.02 percent during the period 1949-73 to 1.38 percent during 1973-88.⁸

BIRTH, DEATH AND NATURAL GROWTH RATE OF POPULATION IN CHINA.

The information concerning the birth rate, death rate and natural growth rate in China during the period from 1981 to 1990 can be had from the table given below:

TABLE—I

YEAR	BIRTH RATE	DEATH RATE	Per (1000)
			NATURAL GROWTH RATE
1981	20.9	6.4	14.5
1982	21.1	6.6	14.5
1983	18.6	7.1	11.5
1984	17.5	6.7	10.8
1985	17.8	6.6	11.2

1986	20.8	6.7	14.1
1987	20.9	6.6	14.3
1988	20.8	6.6	14.2
1989	22.0	7.0	15.0
1990	21.0	6.3	14.7
Total	201.4	66.6	134.8
Average	20.14	6.6	13.48

Source: Hou wenrue, "Population Policy", in Liu Zheng, Song Jian & others.(eds.), China's population: problems and prospects, Beijing 1981 pp-57, 59, 64, China, A statistical survey in 1987, op.cit. p.17 & BR, December 11-17, 1989, P.29, November 12-18, 1990, P-14.

It is evident from the above table that in China birth rate, death rate and natural growth rate on an average are 20.14, 6.6 and 13.48 during the period from 1981 to 1990.

Study reveals that the natural growth rate of China's population declined noticeably by the mid-1990s. In 1975, it stood at 15.8 per thousand as against the peak of 33.5 in 1963. The average for 1975-78 was 13.1 as against 28.1 during 1962-67. Against this background, the performance of the new era is not all praise worthy. In seven out of the following 12 years, the natural growth rate was more than 14 per thousand (000). It declined to 10.8 in 1984 but rose again to 15 in 1989. The birth rate declined to 17.9 in 1979 from the peak of 43.6 in 1963, but it generally remained at a much higher level in the following years. The death rate, which fell to 6.2 per thousand (000) in 1979 from 7.6 in 1971, showed a rise in the following years.

This level of performance in population control may not appear satisfactory from the angle of land - population ratio and the objective of modernisation, but in relation to other developing countries performance it was an extraordinary feat. In 1989, except Sri Lanka, no other low income economics had such a low birth rate and the natural growth rate. For India, the birth rate in that year stood at 31 per thousand and the natural growth rate at 20.⁹

POLICIES AND MEASURES

In China population policy passed through number of phases. There was strict government ban on sterilisation and induced abortion. The second phase started with the beginning of planning and continued till 1965. In 1957, at the third plenum of the eight central committee, Mao Zedong proposed a ten-year programme for family planning. The population problem became grave in 1963, with the natural growth rate soaring to 33.5 per thousand, the highest level recorded after 1949. In 1964, the state set up a family planning office to take charge of family planning matters. This laid the organizational basis for earnest implementation of family planning throughout China.¹⁰

In the new era, after the death of Mao Zedong the Chinese constitution of 1978 explicitly stipulated that "the state advocates and encourages family planning". For the first time, family planning was clothed in a legal form and became one of the fundamental duties of all citizens. At the third session of the fifth (NPS) The Chinese economy, changes and challenges in the post-Mao Era published by sterling publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993, pp-203 in 1980, Yaoyilin, the then vice-premier, exhorted that "family planning should be regarded as a highly important strategic task on which not the slightest slackening is to be permitted". In the same year, the new marriage law included the injunction that husband and wife are bound to practice family planning."¹¹ In 1971, these were summed up by the slogan, 'Late, sparse and few' Young men were called upon to marry late and the married couples were told to postpone child-bearing as long as possible. The emphasis was however, on few birth", since this would directly lower the number of births in the immediate future. It was at first recommended that two children would be the most suitable norm and later most two, at best only one! The target set was that 80 percent of couples in the cities, and 50 percent in the rural areas should have only one child.

During 1980, at the third session of the fifth NPS, came general call for 'only one child per couple'. This was motivated by a number of circumstance. First, there was the need for realising modernisation and substantially improving the people's living standard

by the end of the 20th century. It was thought that this objective could be achieved only through the adoption of one child per couple and keeping the population within 1,200 million at the end of 20th century.¹² The second factor was high percentage of younger people in composition of the population 1979 census placed the 0-14 age-group at 36.8 percent the total population, and of the 0-30 age-group at 65 percent.

It was stated in circular in March, 1982, 'Among government cadres, workers and urban residents, each couple shall have only one child, with the exception of those who for special reasons have obtained permission to have more than one child. In rural areas, couples should limit themselves to single child, but some couples may be given permission to have a second child if their requirements can be justified or account of practical difficulties which can be examined and approved.'¹⁴

In 1984, there has been substantial relaxation in the one child policy. By the end of 1988 peasant families with only daughter had been permitted to have a second child after an interval in 18 provinces, including Anhui and Liaoning.

In the suburban areas of Beijing, Shanghai and Tanjin, the one-child norm has remained in effect for the majority of peasant families.¹⁵

For encouraging couples to have only one child, the government supplemented ideological education with economic and administrative measures. The economic measures consisted of rewards for those who had only one child, couple with sanctions taken against further births. Initially, there were great variations in the incentives provided by different areas, but gradually it was more or less standardised. Nationally, the prescribed economic measures provided single. Children and their families with preferential treatment in such matters as admission to kindergartens and schools, medical services, job opportunities and allocation of urban housing and of building lots in the country side. Families that exceeded their quotas were disciplined by having their incomes curtailed through an excess child levy. Around 1982 the regulations provided for a 5 to 10 percent deduction from the total income of couple for periods ranging

between 10-16 years. In some areas, the levy was graded so that the parents of a fourth or fifth child paid higher levies. Some of the families were also not eligible for additional housing space in the urban areas or for new housing sites and additional private plots in rural areas. Finally, parents who rejected the single-child family policy were not entitled for promotion or for bonus for a number of years.¹⁶

To persuade families to accept the new norms and take practical steps to implement the policy, each family was visited individually by members of the local family planning committees of the urban neighbourhood. The Chinese family Planning Association, founded in 1980, also played an important role. The Association had 20 million members by 1989. Through 'the five olds'-old party members, old cadres, old model figures, old workers and the elderly- efforts were made to drive home to every one the public and personal interest of family planning.

CONCLUSION:

The above study reveals that in China birth rate, death rate and natural growth rate on an average are 20.14, 6.6 and 13.48 during the period from 1981 to 1990. The natural growth rate declined remarkably by the end of 1970s from the high level that existed around the mid 1960s. The birth rate declined from 38 per (1000) during 67 to around 18 during 1978-79. The performance of the new era is, however, not at all praiseworthy. The natural growth rate has shown a clear rising tendency.

Study further reveals that China's population policy passed through number of phases and it was only from the early 1970's that a consistent policy towards greater control was followed. The specific requirements became more and more severe over the years, and in 1980 came the call for 'only one child per couple'. To implement it, ideological education was supplemented by economic and administrative measures. Economic rewards were used along with severe penalties for non-adherence. Massive educational campaigns constituted an essential part of the measures. Study ascertained that the progress in adoption of birth control measures was, however, not up to the desired extent, as there are still many formidable problems that need to be solved. The poorly educated still regard a large

number of children as a blessing and 20 percent of China's population are still illiterate. The rural production system greatly contradicts the population policy implementation of a reward and penalty system is also more difficult rural areas. Violation of the marriage law is quite a frequent occurrence throughout China.

In the light of above conclusions it is suggested the following measures must be taken for improving the quality of population:

- 1) Of particular importance is the close attention must be paid to eugenics.
- 2) Chinese Marriage law stipulated that marriage between off springs of lineal relatives and of collateral relatives with in three generations are for bidden.
- 3) Marriage is also for bidden between people who have contracted leprosy or medically uncurable diseases.
- 4) Wide publicity must be given to the deplorable consequences of marriage between near relations.

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