

POPULATION PRESSURE IN CHINA  
AND THE NEED FOR POPULATION CONTROL

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INTRODUCTION

Population pressure comes into being when a certain social group and its available resources change the rate of proportion between population and resources and hence imbalance the needs felt.

It is proved that human beings when brought nearer and nearer in masses, become more and more dangerous to one another and intensify the social reaction.(1)

The pressure of population is, in most cases, the result of high birth rate and tends to remove woman from labour force. If the birth rate remains high while the death rate is reduced, such as is the case in several underdeveloped countries, the persistence of high fertility increases the dependency ratio in the population. The ultimate consequence of this trend keeps the children uneducated and untrained.

It also "manifests itself in the form of an increase of un-employment, in the lowering of the purchasing power of wages, or in the excessive subdivision of farm lands into ever smaller and smaller allotments".(2)

Through this paper, an attempt has been made to project the population pressure in China and then to suggest measures to control it.

## CHRONOLOGY OF POPULATION GROWTH IN CHINA

According to the third Population Census of 1982, the total population of China was 1.015 billion, 22.6% of the world's total population, making China the world's most populous country.<sup>(3)</sup> This figure increased to 1.045 billion by the end of 1985. (Table - 1) The rural population was 63.4 percent of the total as compared to 80.6% in 1980.<sup>(4)</sup> The population rose continuously in China as is shown in Table 1.

**Table-1**  
SHOWING POPULATION GROWTH FROM 1949 TO 2000  
(Rs. in million)

YEAR	1949	1952	1957	1970	1980	1985	1987	1990 <sup>a</sup>	2000 <sup>b</sup>
POPULATION	541.67	514.82	646.53	825.42	987	1045	1080	1113	1200

### SOURCE:

- i) Wen. Qi. China A general Survey, Beijing 1984, Third Edition, p.14.
- ii) Statistical Year Book of China, 1985, New China News Agency, April 1986, China Economic News, quoted in EIU country profile 1988-89, p.9.
- a) Target under Seventh Plan.
- b) Long Range Target.

The table shows that the population in China has been increasing continuously.

## POPULATION AND GRAIN OUTPUT RELATION

During the period 1949-1947 foodgrains output grew somewhat faster, on the average, than the population. The foodgrains output for 1949 was accepted by Western sources as 108 million metric tons (MMT) and the re-

vised output figure for 1947, as reported by the Chinese, was 275 MMT.(5) Thus the average annual growth rate of food grains came to about 3.8% for the period 1949-1974. Whereas the average annual growth rate of total agricultural production was approximately 3.9% for the same period. Because of the recurring weather cycle, the annual growth rate of output, however, tended to fluctuate sharply. The population growth rate increased rapidly to a rate close to 2.5% annually during the early part of 1949-1947. (6) For the period 1949-1974, the food grains output (agricultural production) has grown somewhat more rapidly than the population, allowing some margin of surplus for a mild improvement in the diet of the average Chinese. But between 1952 and 1978, average nationwide grain consumption declined from 197.5 kilograms to 196.5 kilograms.(7) It rose to 259.1 kilograms by 1988.(8) This was achieved because of more emphasis was by the Government for increasing the out put of foodgrains as indicated in Table-2.

TABLE - 2  
SHOWING GRAIN OUTPUT 1981-1988

	(Rs.in million tons)							
YEAR	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
GRAIN	325	355	387	407	379	391	402	404

SOURCE: Country Profile 1988-89, The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1989, p.29.

The table shows that the output of the foodgrain grew from 325 million tons to 407 million tons during the period from 1981 to 1984 but from 1985 to 1988, it became 379 million tons, about 28 million tons less than that of

1984. The production of foodgrain again rose to 404 million which was lower than the year 1984. Its result was that China could not meet the requirements of the people. It had to import the foodgrain as shown in Table-3.

**TABLE-3**  
**SHOWING IMPORT OF FOODGRAIN 1970-1988**

	(Rs.in million tons)									
YEAR	1970	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
FOOD										
GRAIN	4.9	11.0	14.7	16.0	13.5	10.4	6.0	7.7	16.3	14.0

**SOURCE:** i) Country Profile 1987-88, The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1988, p.27.

ii) Country Profile 1988-89, The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1989, p.30.

Keeping this trend in view, the Chinese Government framed various policies to control the growth rate of population in the country.

#### **BURJEONING OF FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMME IN CHINA**

The Chinese Government was conscious of this trend so the family planning was seriously discussed in China at the top echelon of the government as early as 1952 though there was disagreement on the most appropriate strategy.<sup>(9)</sup> At the 1954 National People's Congress, the topic of population was mentioned publicly for the first time. During the Seventh National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, in March 1955, a statement gave limited support to the birth control. By 1956 a recognizable birth control programme began and continued steadily to 1958.

During the 1958-1959 Great Leap Forward Cam-

paign, there was a noticeable absence of family planning publicity.

This programme could not succeed because of the packing educational facilities in rural areas and the peasants did not give any response. For these reasons, the group associated with Mao decided to concentrate on attituded manipulation and the development of a programme better adopted to the rural population.(10)

The period from 1959 to 1961 was of poor weather and of policy difference within China. Any-how in 1962 a new economic policy was formally introduced to rectify the chaotic differences. This policy adopted a modified family planning programme and took into account the successes and failures of the 1954-1957 programme.

For the first time the formal education system was utilized for this purpose. Sex education became part of the public school curriculum, and family planning methods were discussed at the college level.(11) Mobile Health teams were sent to rural areas, and family planning techniques and socio-economic benefits were emphasized. In addition to the contraceptive methods used commonly during the first campaign, the intra-uterine device (IUD) was popularized.

The induction of Socialist Education Movement emphasized the direct involvement of the peasants in the design and implementation of family planning. Because of the emphasis of this movement on the political and economic emancipation of women as well as their involvement in the implementation of planned births, the re-

sponse of women to this new drive was reported to be enthusiastic. Mao and others perceived this response as an indication of future direction for effective family planning.(12)

Though the cultural revolution overshadowed and disrupted the family planning programme, but the programme itself was not abandoned. As a matter of fact, this laid an important ground for future campaign. Then for the 1970's new family planning education programme was inaugurated to accompany a re-organized health care delivery system as the core of China's planned birth programme. (13)

The aims of the planned birth programme since 1971 included (a) late marriage, with the suggested ages 25-28 for men and 23-25 for women in the cities and a year or two earlier in the rural areas; (b) childbirth spacing, with five year intervals after the first child; and (c) the inculcation of small family norms, with two children in urban areas and three in rural areas regardless of sex.

These measures did not bring marked changes and the result was a 50% jump, leading a Chinese commentator to conclude that the country lost control of its population growth (14) and consequently the result was the rising crude birthrate. This brought rapidly rising numbers of total births from 18.081 million in 1984 to 22.576million in 1987, or an almost 25% jump in just three years that led to the widespread impression that the "small hole" opened up by the 1984 relaxation of birth controls was becoming unmanageably large.(15)

Though main purpose of China's birth control policy was to achieve the 1.2 billion goal in the year 2000 yet it was pointed out that China's population passed the stunning 1.1 billion mark in April, 1989. It means that the 1990's would see the addition of at least 140 million to 150 million people.(16) Extending the recent nutritional gains to this huge population increment would be more onerous for China's agriculture than were its notable advances during the 1980's.

## CONCLUSION

The Chinese Government framed various policies to reduce the growth rate of population. The family planning programme was started through out the country but it could not achieve good results upto 1970's due of lack of education in rural areas. After that the one child campaign was started in the country which brought 1.1 billion stunning population in april, 1989. This projects an addition of at least 140 million to 150 million people by 2000. Such increasing number of people would again demand further foodgrain. There are two possible ways to feed the people of the country:

firstly the Chinese Government should popularise birth control methods in the rural areas where majority of population lives; secondly the modern technology should be introduced in the agricultural sector to increase the output of foodgrain; otherwise hand the Chinese Government would face the problem of balance of payments which would further hinder the development of the country in the days to come.

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