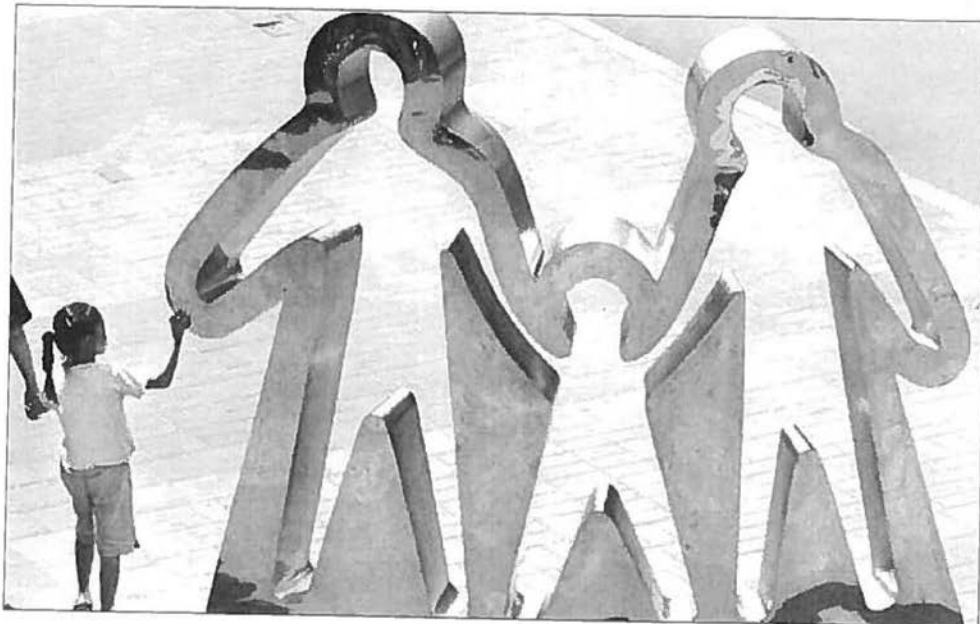


Advanced Higher Geography: Project – Folio

Section B: Geographical Issues

Ageing China; Is the Chinese Government Right to Abolish the One-Child Policy?



(mercatorn.com)

Introduction

The Chinese Government plan to relax the strict enforcement of the One-Child policy to allow for two children per couple, effective in early 2016 (wsj.com). This new policy has seen significant coverage in the media.

The two-child policy ⁽¹⁾ aims to trigger a demographic transition ⁽²⁾ for China. Some of the proposed benefits of the 'Two- Child Policy' can be seen in Figure 1, below.

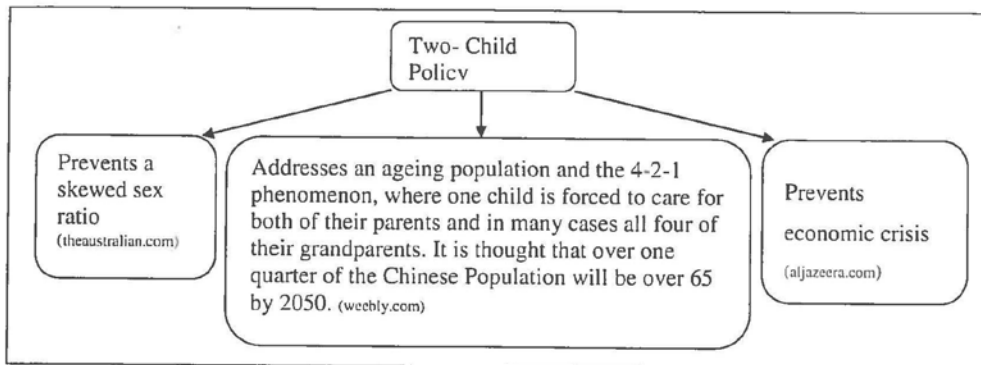


Figure 1: Benefits to the Two-Child Policy in China.

There are numerous reasons to study this topic:

- 1) China's steady population increase is now declining. The change to the policy may just save China from economic collapse, which will result in a stronger world economy, or it could ruin china, and weaken it.
- 2) China is not alone in trying to remedy an ageing population. Scotland is among the countries with similar problems, and though China's solution is extreme, it is nevertheless a solution: Other nations could use the similar methods.
- 3) China's energy consumption has skyrocketed in recent years due to the increasing population, and because they produce much of their energy by burning coal, any changes to their population will affect the environment and world energy markets.⁽³⁾
- 4) The One-child policy made the Chinese Government look dictatorial. Though the change in policy is a step in the right direction, any limitations that they force on their people will colour the opinion others have of them on the world stage, which may lead to issues with trade and diplomacy in the future.

(1) Coined by the Vietnamese Government, the first nation to use a policy like this. (wikipedia.org)

(2) A model which describes population change over time. (uwc.edu/keith.montgomery)

(3) I know this from studying energy in China at higher.

SOURCE 1

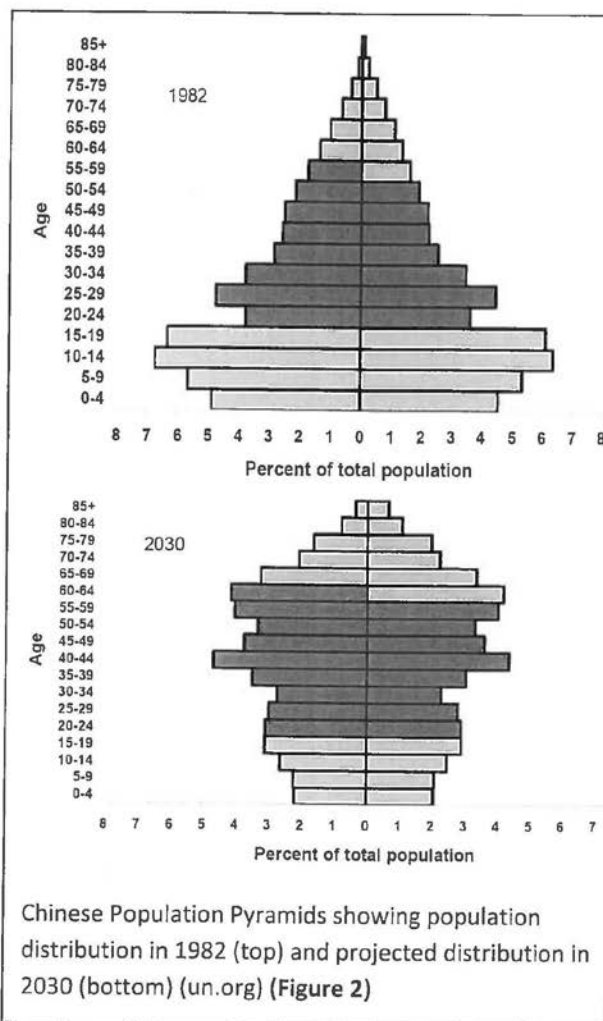
"One Child Policy Statistics"

All Girls Allowed (Charity Organisation)

Summary

Though no author is cited, the source starts off by discussing China's underpopulation. It discusses the fact that the fertility dropped from 5.8 children per woman in 1970 to only 2.7 in 1979- all before the introduction of the one child policy: but it has now dropped to only 1.6, which is lower than the replacement rate ⁽¹⁾. The source goes on to describe how despite a decrease in arable land overall, food production has gone up, and that though energy consumption in the country has doubled from 2000 to 2008, the population only increased by 5%, meaning that this is more to do with affluence than population increase.

It goes on to explain how by 2050, one in four Chinese will be over 65, and the population will decline by 20 million people every 5 years, and that as such, China will only have 2.2 working people per every elderly person, shown in figure 2. This will put a massive strain on the country's resources. ⁽²⁾



(1) Foreign Affairs, *China's Dilemma: Social Change and Political Reform*, George J. Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham, October 14, 2010

(2) The Economist, "China's Family Planning: Illegal Children will be Confiscated," *The Economist*, June 21, 2011. <http://www.economist.com/node/18988496>

(3) Figures from China's National Bureau of Statistics, as cited in: Chang, Gordon G., "Is China Running Out of Workers?" *Forbes*, January 20, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/gordonchang/2013/01/20/is-china-running-out-of-workers/>

The report then goes on to discuss the country's labour shortage, and how according to the UN, the country's population will begin to decline in 2030, but according to the Authorities in Beijing, this will happen in 2020. This, paired with the fact that the number of young labourers is on the decline and the fertility rate decline, means that China's working population should have started a decline as early as 2015. ⁽¹⁾

The report concludes on the fact that the skewed sex ratio is leading to more men becoming involved in crimes such as gambling, trafficking, murder and rape, and having a poorer education.

Critique

This article was published by a charitable organisation, so it is likely that the only information provided will portray the one-child policy negatively, so that they can accrue more donations. Some of the photographs included (see Fig. 3) are irrelevant, and provide no benefit other than aesthetic appeal. The organisation is religiously influenced- access to contraception is not mentioned in relation to the decline in fertility rate in China.



Photograph included as a header to *All Girls Allowed's* article about China's Population Demographics (allgirlsallowed.org) (Figure 3)

(1) Figures from China's National Bureau of Statistics, as cited in: Chang, Gordon G., "Is China Running Out of Workers?" *Forbes*, January 20, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/gordonchang/2013/01/20/is-china-running-out-of-workers/>

Source 2

"China Ends One-Child Policy, allowing Families two children"

The New York Times (October 29, 2015)

Summary

Chris Buckley, a journalist at the New York Times, has stated that the Chinese authorities, despite the implementation of the one-child policy demonstrating their authority in the nation, are allowing families in China to have more than one child. Buckley says that this is in response to the skewed sex ratio, replenish the working population and reduce the strain the ageing population has on the country's resources. The author also cites some population experts in China sceptical about the good the new policy will do, and that it will merely prevent the exacerbation of the issues the One-Child policy caused. ⁽¹⁾

The author then goes on to discuss how the Chinese Government relaxed the policy in 2013, allowing tens of millions of couples to have another child. He then states that many people did not capitalise on this, and even now that the policy has been relaxed further, many are still sceptical and frightened to do anything about it. Many even are deciding not to have another child, due to the financial pressure and stress involved with raising a child in such a competitive society.

Buckley then discusses China's dwindling workforce and that one fifth of the population is expected to be over 65 by 2027. ⁽²⁾ He states that the economy may still be growing much more than other Western Economies, but by China's standards, this growth is unusually small, and that China's economy is beginning to weaken.

The report is concluded with a statement from Liang Zhongtang, a retired demographer who has been pushing for the Chinese Government to alter the One-Child Policy since the 1980s, who thinks that the policy's recent change should be more focussed on returning the Chinese their freedom, rather than their economy. ⁽³⁾

(1) Tao Wang, the chief China economist at UBS. (<http://www.economistinsights.com/speaker/4750>)

(2) United Nations Population Division (1950-2015 figures); Kristin Bietsch, Population Reference Bureau (projections for 2015-2050)

(3) Liang Zhongtang, Retired Chinese Demographer.

Critique



Photographs from "*China Ends One-Child Policy, allowing Families two children*", published in the New York Times, depicting a Child just after birth (left) and Children at School (Right). (nytimes.com) (Figure 5)

The New York Times is arguably the most famous journalism body in the western world. This means that either they are reliable all of the time, or they show bias towards the views of western governments. This article focuses only on the negative aspects of the one child policy. Most of the quotations in the article favour the two-child policy, and criticize the one-child policy; especially the article's closing statement, which criticises the decision to introduce the one-child policy. Many images are included in the article, often depicting children going to school, but none of these images have any relevance to the article's content, and are merely there to break up text and distract the reader from the content (See Fig 5).

Buckley often refers to the opinions of various experts and economists, but they are seldom given citations. This harms the article's credibility. The statistics in the article were produced by the OECD (A credible, independent statistical body concerned with world Population Demographics) and the UN (who can show bias depending on what they want people to think about a country), and can therefore be considered reliable, but many of the arguments about the population are made on the basis of mere predictions for the future: this ruins the credibility.

Though the information in the article itself is up to date, and is therefore likely to be accurate, the bias shown towards the opinions of the western world mean that the accurate information given may only be a small fraction of the facts.

Source 3

"China's one-child policy means benefits for parents- if they follow the rules"

The Guardian (October 25th, 2011)

Summary

Jonathan Watts, a journalist living in China but working for The Guardian, states that the Henan Province in China has recently reached a population greater than any European country, and that since it is such a huge strain on resources like clean water, the one child policy has been very strictly enforced in the area. He includes a quote from Liu Shaojie ⁽¹⁾ justifying these drastic measures, and goes on to explain that the Population Commission claims to have prevented 30 million births since the implementation of the One-Child Policy, which, though implemented for socioeconomic reasons, has also ended up helping the environment.

The author then explains some of the confusion surrounding the One-Child policy, and that many people are actually eligible to have more than one child, depending on where they live, if they are an only child, what ethnicity they are and if the child born has disabilities. He also explains that fines incurred can be easily paid by wealthy families, but in poorer provinces, the fines can potentially lead to homes being repossessed. The author states that authorities see these injustices as an opportunity to improve legislation, rather than a reason to change the entire policy.

The report discusses how the policy, when obeyed, can actually help families, netting them benefits like monthly cash stipends, free homes, free water, priority on hospital waiting lists, pension benefits, and even additional points on their child's middle school exams.

The source finishes on a statement from Zheng Zhenzhen ⁽²⁾, explaining that a change in behaviour rather than policy is necessary, and a statement from the author reiterating that the temptation of benefits is what keeps people in line, as opposed to the risk of punishment.

(1) Liu Shaojie, vice director of the Population Commission in Henan.

(2) Zheng Zhenzhen, a population specialist at the Chinese Academy of Social Science.

Critique

This source is likely reliable. Though, like the New York Times, it is a voice of western media, which often criticizes extreme policies implemented by governments across the world, this article looks at the benefits to the policy. The journalist lives in China, which adds to the credibility of the source, as he is seeing the policy in action first hand. It does show bias towards the benefits of the policy, but still explains the negative aspects to the positive aspects. However, many of the included statistics are not cited or credited to a reliable statistical or demographical body, and as such, they may be inaccurate, or false, ruining the credibility of some of the points made. Additionally, the article was published in 2011, meaning that the information therein is now somewhat dated.

Conclusion

I can conclude that the most reliable source is the Guardian's article. It shows the least bias and explains benefits and negatives to the One-Child Policy. Though there are not many reliable cited sources for statistics, and the information in it is dated, the author lives in China, so the information in the article is first hand, and likely fairly credible. There is no "worst" source, as the other two have their benefits and flaws. The statistics are not only cited, but gathered by reliable statistical and demographical bodies. The other two show bias towards the negative aspects, and especially in the case of the first source, the first two sources may potentially have ulterior motives other than merely informing people.

As for the one child policy, it seems that many Chinese people are not entirely bothered about the restriction, but there is still an issue which remains unaddressed: men are favoured by parents over women. A change of attitude is needed, rather than a change in policy. The impact on resource consumption is a long-term global issue- one policy change, will have minimal immediate impact, but it is still worth monitoring and acting upon to ensure a sustainable future.

Word Count: 1800

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