Violating the Rights of Humans:

One Child Policy in China (1979)

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*“[All men] are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed”-Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence*

Imagine being in a world where couples are only allowed to have one child, where parents will suffer severe consequences if they had a second. Imagine a world without siblings. Imagine a world where newborn infants are thrown out into the street, due to their gender or disabilities. Imagine a world filled with infanticide, forced abortions, and sterilizations. This is the world Chinese citizens have been living in since the Chinese government established family planning or the one-child policy on September 25, 1979[[1]](#footnote-1). Because of its gigantic population of 1.3 billion, the largest in the world, the Chinese government enforces family planning or the one child policy to slow the population growth. [[2]](#footnote-2)[[3]](#footnote-3) Even though there are exceptions, having children should be a natural and unalienable right that should not be dictated by the government. Yes, the responsibility of the government is to ensure a sustainable population that has an adequate amount of resources, but it also has the responsibility to respect the natural rights of people.

**The Population Boom**

*“The more people there are, the stronger we are.”-Chinese Chairman Mao Zedong[[4]](#footnote-4)*

In 1949, the early years of the People’s Republic of China, the population grew at an incredibly fast pace due to Mao’s government campaigns such as the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward. The national census in 1953 showed the Chinese population had already stood at the large number of 600 million. In 1964, it had increased to 700 million.[[5]](#footnote-5) By 1970 the total fertility rate jumped to 5.8 per woman, and the population reached 800 million.[[6]](#footnote-6)The significant increase in China’s population was due to encouragement by the new government to increase China’s work force.

A large work force had its consequences though. Through the years 1959-1961, there was a severe famine, and many people starved to death. The famine proved that a larger population may be more productive but is hard impossible to sustain.[[7]](#footnote-7) Sensitive to the problems that were caused by the large population, Ma Yinchu (1882-1982), a former president of Peking University, vigorously proposed the adoption of a national family planning policy.[[8]](#footnote-8) In June 1957, Ma gave a speech at the Meeting of the National People's Congress, in which he famously explicated his radical theories about population control. The main bone of his contention was his vigorous defense of birth planning, which he presented in an article called “The New Population Theory" (xin renkou lun).[[9]](#footnote-9) “The New Population Theory” was published in the *People’s Daily* and advocated policies to ensure an “appropriate population growth.[[10]](#footnote-10)” Ma’s opinion greatly clashed with Mao's strong view that population growth would support China's rise. With the subsequent radicalization of Maoist economic policies, Ma faced Mao Zedong's personal wrath. In two years, Ma was removed from all his positions and forced to live in exile. It was only until after the death of Mao that the CCP Central Committee expressed formal apologies to Ma, explicitly stating that historical developments had proven Ma’s view to be correct.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**A New Leader**

*"Learn truth from fact; I don't care if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches the mice."- Deng Xiaoping*

 After the death of Mao, a stocky communist from the province of Sichuan filled his shoes as chairman of the strong but developing nation. Deng Xiaoping had stood by Mao during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and had supported Mao’s views. But Deng had a different vision for China. Discarding the ideas that Mao left behind, Deng started his own reforms. The communes from the Great Leap Forward, those decaying institutions throttling agricultural production, were abandoned. Against Mao’s idea that China should not associate with foreign nations, Coca-Cola was invited to open a bottling plant in Shanghai and the Chinese national airline announced it was buying three Boeing 747s. The era of Deng Xiaoping, with its economic triumphs and its recurrent political tragedies, had begun.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**The One-Policy is Established**

"*We cannot risk the population growing out of control."-* *Jiang Fan, National People's Congress deputy and member of the NPC Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee[[13]](#footnote-13)*

 In 1979, Deng Xiaoping, instituted Ma’s "birth planning" program, limiting married couples to one child. The infamous program is known today as the one-child policy (计划生育政策). According to the policy, each town has a Birth Planning Commission with a Commissioner who monitors birth rates. Citizens who disobey and have two or more children are either cruelly taxed an amount up to half of their annual income, or punished by the loss of employment or other benefits such as health care.[[14]](#footnote-14) The one-child policy is very strict, with a few exceptions to the rule. Such as in rural areas, if the firstborn is a girl, couples may have a second child three to four years after the first one. In addition, if both members of a married couple were only children themselves, the couple may have up to two children. Those who obeyed the policy were offered economic and educational incentives. The policy’s goal was a population growth of zero by the year 2000.[[15]](#footnote-15) But today, with a population of 1.3 billion China’s population is still growing by 0.46% a year.[[16]](#footnote-16)

**The Unintended Consequences of the One Child Policy**

**-Gendercide**

*“It is no exaggeration to call this gendercide. Women are missing in their millions—aborted, killed, neglected to death”-* *The Economist's* "Gendercide"

 Even though the policy is effective in decreasing the population growth, it has brought many unintended consequences. One of them, gendercide. For long, Chinese tradition has and still holds that sons take care of their parents, while girls help with the care of their in-laws, making boys favored over girls in Chinese society, especially in rural areas where male labor is viewed as essential for farming.[[17]](#footnote-17) Female fetuses are selectively aborted on regular basis, while newborn baby girls fall victim to infanticide.[[18]](#footnote-18) Due to the preference of boys over girls, China has a significant imbalance of gender[[19]](#footnote-19). For every 100 girls born in China, 119 boys are born. Due to the growing difference in population of men and women, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences predicts thatby 2020,more than 40 million Chinese men of marrying age will find themselves without spouses. The shortage of female spouses will result in an increase in sex crimes such as forced prostitution and human trafficking.[[20]](#footnote-20) Female infants should have the right of living, and men should have the right to spouses. Parents should not live in fear of their daughters getting kidnapped when riding the bus, shopping, or walking to school. Tourism should not decrease because tourist fear the increase of crime rates. Without the one-child policy China will be a safer place for everyone.

**-Orphans**

*“Kind-hearted people, we are abandoning our child not because we cannot care for her, but because of the official one-child policy. Dear daughter, we do not have bad hearts. We couldn't keep you. Friendly people who take her up, we cannot repay the debt in this life. But perhaps in the next life.”-Note pinned to an abandoned female infant*

 A more severe problem that comes with the one-child policy and the preference of boys over girls and healthy over unhealthy is an increased number of abandoned. Apart from abandoning girls, 90-98% of children getting abandoned in China are children with medical needs and disorders. Although many sympathetic couples are willing to adopt and love a healthy baby girl, Chinese institutions are still filled with love-deprived children unfairly born with heart defects, cleft lip and palate, cerebral palsy, and every other sort of medical need possible.[[21]](#footnote-21) No one knows the exact number of infants abandoned on the streets, but it is estimated tens of thousands of unwanted infants are abandoned a year.[[22]](#footnote-22) No child should be discriminated or unwanted because of their gender or disability. No child should feel unloved or unwanted ever. But then again, if a couple can only have one child, it is only naturally for them to want a child that is independent and useful in the future.

**-A Weaker Economy**

*“In 2012 for the first time we saw a drop in the population of people of working age. We should pay great attention to this.”- Ma Jaintang, Chief of Beijing National Bureau of Statistic*

 Apart from harming parents, children, infants, and innocent unborn fetuses, the one-child policy now poses a bigger problem to China and to the world. Due to the decrease in population caused by one-child policy, the workforce in China is dwindling, and a small workforce equals a weak economy. Between the years 2011 to 2012 the population of people of working age had decreased by 3.45 million. It is predicted the Chinese workforce will continue to decrease until the year 2030.[[23]](#footnote-23) Apart from causing the workforce to decrease, the one-child policy is also to blame for China’s rapidly aging population. There are growing calls among officials and academics in China to consider the controversial move as the country’s rapidly aging population puts new stress on its pension program. The Chinese government must consider “deferred retirement,” said Hu Xiaoyi, a vice minister of human resources and social security. China is facing a brewing [pension crisis](http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-08-09/chinas-brewing-pension-crisis). The projected shortfall for future pension payments could reach 18.3 trillion yuan by the end of this year, 2014. People older than 60 already make up 13% of China’s population, and the World Bank estimates that by 2050 they will account for more than a third.[[24]](#footnote-24) The government is responsible for the welfare of its people, and welfare includes social security and pension. The government is also responsible to enact laws to ensure the prosperity of the country. By stopping the one-child policy China can recover its workforce and plan for a brighter future.

**-Forced Abortion and Sterilizations and Infanticide**

*“[Forced abortions, sterilizations, and infanticide goes] against the norms of civilized society. There is no essential difference between our society [and the] slaughter in Iraq, Libya, Syria…Auschwitz or the Japanese gas chambers”-* *Chinese Blogger Zhao Chu[[25]](#footnote-25)*

Forced abortions, sterilizations, infanticide are by far the scariest side effect of family planning. Apart from the fines collected for illegal second children, the Chinese officials have gone to extremes to decrease the population growth, such as the using the illegal practice of forced abortion, sterilizations, and infanticide. Even though these cruel acts have been ruled illegal, the awful persistence of forced abortions, sterilizations, and infanticide in China are caused by a contradiction in the Chinese system and in the one-child policy itself. The senior leadership in Beijing may set the national policy, such as today's relaxation of the one-child policy, but its local and provincial-level officials are the ones who choose when, whether, and how to actually enforce those policies. If those mid-level officials want to do things differently, such as continuing to use forced abortions to control birthrates, even though Beijing banned that years ago, they often do. Here's the contradiction in the one-child policy: Chinese officials want to keep down the birthrate, which is why they enacted the policy in 1979 and have kept it ever since. They hand out target birthrates to provincial and local officials, telling them they'll be judged on how well they meet the goals. But they also to forbid state officials from enforcing the policy with forced abortions and sterilizations, which are rightly loathed as horrific human rights abuses.[[26]](#footnote-26) But without these methods how can they expect the local officials to meet those target birthrates? As long as the one-child policy is in place, forced abortions, sterilizations, and infanticide will continue. China will continue to ignore its responsibility to ensure the happiness of citizens and continue to violate the rights of humans until the one-child policy is stopped once and for all.

**Children under the One-Child Policy**

*"We also conducted personality surveys and we found that those born under the one-child policy were less conscientious, slightly more neurotic and significantly more pessimistic than those born before."-a BBC study*

As the one-child policy continues to rule over China, parents and children are feeling the pressure to be the best. Being the only child is hard, being the only child of tiger-moms comes with backbreaking pressure to be number one. Children that were under the pressure of a tiger parents are tend to develop more aggression, anxiety, depression, and social skills.[[27]](#footnote-27) Along with the authoritarian-type parents being an only child does not help the psychological state of Chinese children. These unsocial, depressed children are the future of China. Do you really want these children to be the new China?

**China without Family Planning**

Sure the one-child policy successful in decreasing the population, but was the decrease in population really necessary? With Deng Xiaoping’s numerous economic reforms before family planning was established, China was already getting back on its feet.[[28]](#footnote-28) With the increase in economic productivity a large workforce was actually needed. Along with the need of a larger workforce, new farming techniques allowed farmers to harvest more crops and therefore China was and is actually capable of feeding a large population. And if there was a famine or a shortage of food, with the power of transportation food could be imported from other countries. As for the shortage of land, many young adventurous Chinese scholars immigrate to other countries to study and live and raise a family.[[29]](#footnote-29) But one things for sure, without the one-child policy the problems listed above would not be at large. Would China have survived without family planning? I guess we will never know, but it certainly could not be any worse than China today.

**Conclusion**

*“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness”-Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence*

Even though China continues to ease the policy by adding more exceptions every year, as long as the one child policy is in place, government responsibilities will be ignored and human rights will be violated. Men will not be able to find wives, children will lose the right to have siblings, and orphans will have the sense that they are unwanted. Seniors will not be able to retire and receive the pension they deserve.[[30]](#footnote-30) Children will have added pressure to be the best. Mothers will be forced to go under the knife. It is time to redefine the line between the responsibilities of the government and the rights of the people. Listen to the cries of the people and stop this madness.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Appendix A:



*China’s population increased rapidly until 1979 where population growth slowed because of family planning.*

*“Demographics of China.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 24 Mar. 2014. Web. 25 Mar. 2014.*

Appendix B:



*Ma Yinchu the father of the one-child policy.*

*Ma Yinchu. Ma Yinchu, Shanghai. Wikipedia. Web. 30 Dec. 2013.*

Appendix C:





*Posters encouraging the one-child policy.*

*Deng. One-Child Policy. N.d. One-Child Policy, Bejing, China. All Girls Allowed. Web. 28 Dec. 2013.*

*Irvine. China’s one child policy. China one child policy to end, China. Accuracy in Media. Web. 30 Dec. 2013.*

Appendix D:





*There is a significant imbalance of gender and China has a rapidly aging population.*

*China,” The World Factbook. CIA. 2013. Web. 30. Oct. 2013.*

Appendix E:





*In order to meet their population targets, population officials use illegal methods such as forced abortion to keep the population growth down.*

*Hoffman, Matthew. “Gruesome photos of forced abortion in China confirmed authentic Chinese express outrage. LifeSiteNews. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Dec. 2013.*

Appendix F:



*The easing the one-child policy will not stop the violation of human rights, only stopping it will.*

*Ertelt, Steven. "China's One-Child Policy Turns 33 as Forced Abortions, Female Infanticides Continue." LifeNews.com. 25 Sept. 2013. Web. 30 Dec. 2013.*

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