

# Demographic Change vs Quality of Life in China: A Sociological Appraisal

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## Abstract

Demographic change in any country highly affects its population. China with a current population of about 1.436 billion adopted various policies to balance its population with quality of life including daily livelihood and food per person per day. It adopted industrialization to be able to reach a higher income to maintain its quality of life and facilitate feeding its population. Though China has made increasing policies, yet it is confronting 200 million villagers migrating to cities for urban jobs and the like. China tried to halve its births between 1930-1966. Since 1979 China declared a one-child policy in order to better administer its population vs quality of life.

**Keywords:** Population growth and quality of life. Population control. Socio-economic modernization of China. Migration in China. Sociology.

## Introduction

In its first report on April 28, 2011, China's State Bureau of Statistics reported that China's 2010 census was 1.339 billion. In China, as in other countries, the census takes place every 10 years. The statistics and information obtained from the census in China are very decisive and play an important role in the industrial and agricultural plans and programs of that country. Although China has the largest population in the world, regular censuses are held every 10 years. Realizing the results of the census, the planning machine in that country follows the development plans according to the needs in urban and rural areas in a principled and statistical manner. Thus, compared to other Third World countries, China's population statistics are always systematic and principled in seeking to improve the quality of life of its people. The census data, while comparing many of the obtained indicators with the indicators of previous censuses, also makes it possible to compare and evaluate the demographic indicators of different provinces and urban and rural areas.

Sociologically speaking, quantity of population widely affects quality of life everywhere, especially in China with an immense population of different castes and classes in rural and urban areas. China has made various decisions in different eras to organize its population according to its possessions and policies. The country made unprecedented population before modern technology of family planning was discovered. China had a huge population before its industrial development. Therefore, it is too hard for China to promote its human capital when sufficient infrastructure is not available. Besides, China became aware of its population when it was too late to control it. But, though too late to control, yet progressive policies have highly helped. China's population in 2022 was estimated 1.436.6 billion with 8 births per 1,000 population 7 deaths per 1,000 population, projected population of 1,410 billion in mid 2035 and 1,322.5 in mid 2050, T.F.R. of 1.2 children, and life expectancy of 78 years for both sexes (WPDS, 2022).

### Method of Research

Methodology used in the present article is of qualitative type, in that, various paradigms have been used to find the facts regarding democratic change and QOL during history. Qualitative research usually studies people, events or areas in their natural settings. In finding facts for the research, the researcher engaged in careful data collection and thoughtful analysis of what was relevant. In the documentary research applied for the present research, printed and written materials were widely regarded. The research was performed as a qualitative library-type in which the researcher had to refer to the relevant and related sources. In the current research, various documents were thoroughly investigated, and the needful inferences were made. The data fed by the investigator in the present article is hopefully reliable. Though literature on democratic change and QOL is very limited, yet the author tried to investigate many different resources in order to elicit the necessary information to build up the text.

### Environment and Migration

The subject of environment and immigration was first taught as a course in the International Affairs Department of the University of Paris. This was the first of its kind to examine the complex relationships between environmental change and migration flows. The start of this course at that university has led many researchers to research and analyze the two topics of environment and migration. Because environmental change has inevitably occurred in recent decades, migration has acted as a safety valve, and has helped many people achieve better status by migrating. Natural disasters, violence, environmental degradation and the like, lead to the relationship between the environment and migration, and are subsequently the subject of analysis in this field. As the human population is scattered in different parts of the world today, this has caused the environment to face various dangers and threats in many cases. The mentioned conditions have provided the ground for migration as much as possible. In general, the issue of environment and migration has attracted the attention of many demographic, social and economic thinkers. Finally, increasing global awareness is recognized as a vital dimension of environmental protection (Macionis: 1997), and it itself plays a major role in balancing the environment and migration.

### Population growth and quality of life

China's average annual population growth rate for the past 10 years is 57 percent, according to the report. It is important to keep population growth at this level, over a 10-year period. This has led to a slow and limited increase in China's population. In contrast, following the decline in average population growth in China, living standards have always been on the rise. Following such conditions, personal, social and economic health has improved. At the same time, various natural and human resources are well preserved, so that future generations will not face a shortage of resources in that country. The example of China in other societies should also be considered, and population policies should be developed and implemented accordingly. Under such circumstances, communities can achieve welfare, economic health and social security. Adopting progressive demographic policies has led to an unprecedented rise in life

expectancy in China; the highest is 79 years in Shanghai and the lowest is 69 years in Tibet. This increase in population is due to the improvement of the quality of life in that country. Likewise, declining fertility improves education, increases women's participation in the workforce, improves health and nutrition patterns, each in turn improving quality of life indicators (Dyson: 2010). According to forecasts, the absolute number of elderly people in China will reach 200 million in 2050, and 300 million in 2100. It is a phenomenon that itself requires comprehensive quality of life planning (Zhai: 2010; Zeng: 2007; Wang: 2011).

During this period, the share of the population (10-14 years) has decreased from 22.9% in 2000 to 16.6% in 2010 in China. The decline in the population under the age of 15 in this country has taken place on the basis of careful and well-considered planning, that is, a stream that has been pre-targeted. China has been looking to reduce its birth rate since 1979. In this way, while solving many problems, it can also solve the employment problem. Thus, during 10 years (2000-2010) the young population in this country has decreased by nearly 0.5 percent. This demographic change has brought with it many welfare facilities, health of life, better nutrition facilities and so on. This trend has been introduced and accepted as part of public culture. Reforming the age structure of its young population also affects other age groups; that is, those who are in adulthood also enjoy these benefits. Demographic reform in China has attracted the attention of many other developing countries. Therefore, any improvement in socio-economic conditions and quality of life is itself subject to demographic reform.

Also, during the same period, the share of the elderly population aged 65 and over has increased from 7% to 8.9%. Demographic indicators are thus interrelated; that is, as the young population decreases, so does the elderly population. Therefore, demographic planners must always consider the various dimensions of demographic change. Thus, demographic studies are recognized as a prerequisite for any development program in countries. China today pursues economic growth in a regular and calculated manner by changing the age structure of its population. During the first 10 years of the 21st century, economic growth in that country fluctuated between 8 and 11 percent annually. This move will have an unprecedented impact on the quality of life of different sections of that society.

Of China's displaced population (2000-2010), about 220 million villagers have moved to urban areas to live and work without being officially registered as urban households. Population pressure itself causes many cases of social, economic, statistical and other disorders. A society like that in China, which has been very serious in terms of registration statistics, has faced many challenges following the increase in immigration during the first 10 years of the 21st century. Therefore, for any balanced economic development in countries, the existence of a system of registration statistics is very necessary and a prerequisite. Among developing countries, China is ahead of other developing countries in terms of registration statistics and job creation in terms of manpower. Therefore, in order to achieve their economic and social development goals, less developed countries should always prioritize registration statistics in their programs.

China today is in a phase of demographic change; that is, it is changing from a rural to an urban community with the goal of a higher quality of life. Improving economic conditions and rising gross national product (GNP) have made the Chinese people enjoy the "population gain" over the past 30 years; that is, they have a higher quality of life (Lewis: 2008). Likewise, that country is evolving from a young society to an elderly one. Because of such developments; that is, demographic and social changes are inevitable for countries, planning systems must always consider the proportions of population, economic proportions, proper use (exploitation) of resources and the like. It is noteworthy that these stages, which are taking place in China today, occurred in the first decades of the twentieth century in industrialized countries. Likewise, this change may occur in the coming years for many less developed countries. What is important is to benefit from the experiences of countries that have gone through these stages.

A preliminary report on China's 2010 census indicates an increase in the country's urbanization ratio; that means more than 665 million people, or about 50% of China's urban population. Thus, in the 10 years from 2000 to 2010, approximately 20% was added to China's urban population. As a result, the Chinese government has placed a lot of emphasis on immigration information in its last census in 2010. The increase in migration, followed by the expansion of urban areas, brings with it many needs related to employment, housing, transportation, food supply, and the like. Therefore, countries (Third World countries) today should be more careful about the spread of urbanization within their communities. This means that population density in urban areas also carries with it many economic, social and cultural complexities. This means that compared to 2000, urbanization in China has increased by about 13%. It is noteworthy that many villagers have also moved from smaller rural areas to larger rural areas that are also more prosperous. Information about China should also be considered by other developing countries. Following their economic and industrial development, countries are generally aware of this phenomenon (migration). In 2010, nearly 260 million people in China lived outside the pre-registered areas. It is also worth noting that despite the very strict and regular registration system in China; that is, the registration of all people in urban and rural areas. In other words, about 260 million people have announced that they are employed in new places. This situation generally occurs in other countries as well, as they do not have a precise registration system similar to that of China. Therefore, less developed countries have to prepare for many of the challenges and contradictions of migration and displacement in the coming years.

Under such policies, the Chinese government has not been able to achieve its desired population growth rate. This prompted the Chinese government to reconsider its demographic policies; in such a way that it can achieve its economic and industrial development goals. As a result, Chinese leaders reaffirmed that rapid population growth was hampering the country's economic, industrial, and social development, and their interest in birth control was rekindled. Thus, with the change of many policies, China in the following years was able to pursue policies in which the population in urban and

rural areas and between different social classes is limited and controlled. Based on such policies, many economic and socio-cultural development plans and policies were implemented in that society, the results of which are rapid economic growth and improving the quality of life in that country.

### Population Control

At the beginning and after the events of 1949, Chinese leaders believed that population growth was a tool for China itself, and soon the rapid results of this growing population became apparent. In 1956, many opportunities were provided to the Chinese Ministry of Public Health to begin efforts to control the population, but these efforts had little effect on fertility. As a result, Chinese leaders reaffirmed that rapid population growth was hampering the country's development and quality of life, and their interest in population control was revived. In the 1960s, the privileges of delaying marriage became stronger in the minds of Chinese leaders. Following this mindset, birth control was established in 1964 in many government offices. In this way, China provided the first steps and the necessary groundwork for birth control; initially, the urban population reduced its fertility rate to an unprecedented rate. Such measures also provided the basis for economic development and progress in that country. It is noteworthy that China's demographic, economic and social planning has been used by many governments today as a model of progress. China's declining fertility rate has led to greater prosperity and per capita income, and thus improved quality of life among its citizens.

This struggle was especially successful in urban areas, and subsequently the birth rate was halved between 1966 and 1930. This change in the structure and fertility of Chinese families has led the government and the planning system to find more investment opportunities in the economic sector. Thus, as fertility declines, countries have more opportunities to implement their economic development programs. Otherwise, a large portion of the nations' wealth would have to be spent on food, education, housing, etc. for the rising fertility index.

Between 1972-1973, the Chinese government mobilized its resources for a national birth control campaign. While the one-child policy in China was announced and implemented in 1979, the necessary groundwork had to be laid before that. By mobilizing its resources in urban and rural areas, and by institutionalizing its birth control policies, the Chinese government was able to create the necessary preparedness among its vast population. Thus, in a serious and continuous form, the national policy of birth control in that country expanded as much as possible. In contrast, other demographic and economic indicators in this country took a positive trend. For example, the life expectancy index of men and women increased, and in contrast to employment opportunities, education, public health, and so on, it also increased. Thus, a great change took place in the demographic, economic and social structure of China, which will affect future generations. It is noteworthy that gender imbalance at birth in China due to sexual preference and sex-selective abortions over the past 30 years has paradoxically hampered the quality of life of young people 20 and older in terms of choosing a spouse and marriage (Li: 2007).

Committees were also set up to oversee birth control activities at the level of various organizations in China. The establishment of such committees was merely to limit births between urban and rural families. It is also worth noting that in the 1960s and 1970s, most of China's population lived in rural areas, and thus the literacy rate was negligible. Therefore, the generalization of birth control was to a large extent a challenging and complex task at the time. As a result, oversight committees generally monitored how birth control policies worked.

This effective and extensive network covered the urban and rural population throughout the country. In this way, to some extent, urban and rural families more or less acquired the necessary grounds to control births. While in urban areas the advancement of these policies was somewhat easier, the rural population was more resilient. At the same time, with the introduction of population policies, as well as the pursuit of continuous monitoring, some birth control was achieved in that country.

In urban areas, public safety headquarters included population control units, and in rural areas, barefoot physicians were responsible for distributing information and prevention tools to council members. As urban areas had more and easier facilities for transmitting information, the public security headquarters undertook this mission. While the rural areas, which were generally more numerous, and very scattered, received the services needed for family planning and birth control only through barefoot physicians (physicians who had undergone intensive and short periods of training), the Chinese government made such efforts. They explained the use of family planning programs to all citizens; that is, the contexts that led to more serious family planning policies in later years.

In 1973, Chinese leader Mao Zedong became aware of the family planning movement in China, and subsequently made a greater commitment to it under his leadership. Hence, Mao himself made a significant contribution to China's demographic reform. In order to advance economic goals, provide food for all, improve the quality of life, and promote health and public education, China had to adopt new demographic policies; that is, the context that led to more economic policies.

After Mao's death in 1976, China's leadership system showed little interest in population control, and was largely hesitant about the fact that population control was a necessity for economic growth and well-being. This situation continued for some time in that society, and thus many previous population plans and programs were suspended. By the mid-1970s, urban families in China had a two-child norm, and in rural areas a three- to four-child norm. As a result, living standards in China's urban and rural areas remained low. It is noteworthy that at that time China continued to be largely based on an agricultural economy. As a result, many per capita and wages in that country were low. From 1979 onwards, the government announced a one-child policy in urban and rural areas, allowing families with a maximum of two children only in special cases. According to this policy, China's demographic and consequently economic and social situation changed so that families with one child found more economic, medical, health

and other opportunities. Also, following the limitation of the number of children in urban and rural families, the opportunity to access education was provided more than ever in the past. Thus, following the one-child policy in China, a kind of industrial-economic revolution emerged in that society, which is still going on. During this transformation, the economic, social, and demographic situation of Chinese citizens changed dramatically. Today, the country has the second highest gross domestic product (GDP) in the world after the United States, that means more than (\$ 5.87 trillion) annually. This economic situation has provided an unprecedented opportunity for Chinese citizens in various fields, that is, with economic, social and cultural facilities different from any time in the past.

The overall goal of this policy was to ensure that China's population did not exceed 1.2 billion by 2000, which in turn promoted and expanded public education. By pursuing population policies in that country, China has largely prevented a small increase in population, and in return has paved the way for a qualitative improvement in its population. In recent years, there has been an unprecedented improvement in the quality of public education in that community, that is, a phenomenon that has further strengthened the economic development of that society. Therefore, by pursuing population contraction policies, the chances of economic improvement and quality of life in a society are provided.

**Table 1: China population forecast between 2100-2020**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>
2020	1.387 billion people
2030	1.393 billion people
2040	1.360 billion people
2050	1.295 billion people
2060	1.211 billion people
2070	1.125 billion people
2080	1.045 billion people
2090	984 million people
2100	941 million people

**Source Science: 2011**

According to the table above, China's population will decrease from 1.387 billion to 941 million over the next 80 years; that is, almost a quarter of the country's current population is declining quantitatively. This in itself contributes to economic development, greater utilization of per capita income (medical, educational, income, food, housing, etc.). Therefore, based on the data in the table above, China has pursued its population policies in a planned and calculated manner over the last 30 years; which is decisive in improving quality of life indicators. In other words, during demographic reforms, socio-economic reforms also took place in parallel, that is, circumstances that affected the situation of individuals and families as a whole. Thus, many items per capita, such as per capita gross national product (income), per capita food, per capita health facilities and the like, improved and increased in some way. In the language of sociology, a set of such reforms is called modernization. However, the less developed countries of the African continent, like China, have not been able to implement the flow of modernization in their countries for the past three decades, or in other words, have not achieved such a situation. Therefore, the population factor itself can play a decisive role in economic and social reforms in any society.

While the demographic factor has played a role in China's socio-economic modernization, other factors such as educational advancement, improving the status of women, and the like have also played a major role in this movement (modernization). Thus, following the decline in the fertility rate in that community, more educational investment was possible, and

consequently women were given the opportunity for more social and economic participation. The set of mentioned trends has led to the modernization of the society in question. It is also worth mentioning that following the acquisition of new patterns in the coming years, other newer forms and patterns will be replaced; that is, what is conceptually called development in economics and sociology.

Reducing the total fertility rate (TFR) from about 2.2 children per woman in many of China's central provinces to less than 1 child in some cities, such as Shanghai and Beijing, has led to varying levels of socio-economic development in that country. Some regions of China that have not easily followed demographic policies have similarly lower socio-economic development; Like parts of western China, eastern China, including Shanghai, which has embraced more demographic reforms, has similarly higher levels of socio-economic development and a higher quality of life. At the same time, more elderly people live in those areas. The increase in old age, following the transformation of the population of China, has made the quality of life of this population problematic. While China in 2010 had a population of 118.8 million people aged 65 and over, the age group in that country was estimated at 100.45 million in 2000. More developed lands with more economic, commercial and industrial attractions generally provide the basis for more urbanization. For example, China, which has been at the forefront of industrial and economic development over the past three decades compared to many other societies, has also seen an unprecedented expansion of its urbanization ratio.

The level of urbanization in China was very low before the 1980s, and relatively little industrial and economic development was reported in those areas. However, following the industrial-economic leap from the 1980s onwards, the urbanization ratio has been declared unprecedented and somewhat uncontrollable by the authorities of that country. The 2010 census confirms this claim. By the late 1970s, only 20% of the country's population lived in urban areas, up from more than 45% in 2009. The process of industrial-economic development of China requires that in the coming years more population be added to the urban population. Therefore, other societies should also be prepared that following industrial and economic development, the expansion of urbanization in such societies is inevitable.

### Socio-economic modernisation of China

China's socio-economic modernization has been largely based on the plans and administrative system of that country, and has been based primarily on the adoption of a one-child policy in urban areas of the country (Gu: 2007). The population factor or in other words, the decrease in its fertility index gave this society more opportunities to make more investments in various social, economic, educational, civil, industrial and similar sectors.

The process of urbanization has been on the rise since the beginning of China's economic reforms in the early 1980s. In other words, today about half of China's population lives in 655 cities and more than 20,000 towns. What has given rise to urbanization in China is the country's industrial and economic development. The spread of urbanization in that country itself has led to many disorders caused by environmental pollution, the clash of cultures and many class conflicts. China, meanwhile, has high authority to oversee the expansion of cities in that country.

At the same time, between 2000 and 2010, China's urban areas attracted more than 15 million newcomers each year, mostly employed in the industrial and manufacturing sectors; That is, between 2000 and 2010, there were nearly two hundred million cases of population displacement in that country. This means that, according to the sources of the 2010 census in that country, unregistered persons (citizens) were obtained at their place of residence at the time of the census. In general, despite the social, cultural and economic advantages that urbanization brings with it, many negative cases such as environmental pollution, social pollution, anti-social behaviors, etc. occur from it.

Between 2010 and 2000, China's urban areas attracted more than 15 million newcomers each year, mostly employed in the industrial and manufacturing sectors. While China has an exceptional industrial position among developing countries, and has generally been able to use immigrants in the manufacturing sector, other developing countries are not in such a position; that is, new entrants to new urban areas do not find work and employment easily, and as a result, while not using their abilities and skills, in uncertain conditions, it itself provides the ground for many problems and disorders in urban areas.

Economic and industrial attractions in cities, despite the existence of a very strong and serious registration system of that country, between nearly 2000-2010 have attracted nearly two hundred million people (Note: 2010). The implementation of serious demographic policies in places such as Shanghai, Beijing and other parts of the country has led to a greater proportion of immigrants entering these areas (Shen: 2007). The experiences of countries such as China, as far as population and urban planning are concerned, should be used by other communities as well. It is also crucial for the development of urban spaces, the development of progressive population policies, and the redistribution of population for developing countries.

Rural-to-urban migration as a labor force greatly reduces the gap between rural and urban incomes. This means that the significant gap between urban and rural incomes has been recognized as the most important factor in the expansion of urbanization in China in recent years. Not only China, but many other developing societies today face this challenge; That is, a significant gap in income and, consequently, the difference in quality of life in rural and urban areas. According to research, industrialized countries have minimized this income gap as far as rural and urban areas are concerned. Therefore, China and other less developed countries must reduce the gap between urban and rural incomes in their communities if they are to maintain their environmental health, as well as to cope with high urban population density. While this problem has emerged in China today, it will become more widespread and severe in the coming years; That is, what endangers the urban environment more than anything else. While in the past this type of immigration was opposed in China, but following the industrial-economic development of that country, today many laws have been amended, and with recent tolerance by the government, recent immigration has been dealt with. The need for more manpower in workshops and industrial and service facilities has led the Chinese government to ignore many cases of unregistered rural-urban migration between 2000 and 2010. However, its negative and environmental effects can now be observed and evaluated. This phenomenon will have more environmental-social effects in the coming years. In a way, it will largely neutralize the progress and achievements of the economic development of that country.

At the same time, there is a kind of regional inequality in immigration in China. There is less migration in western China, which is more impoverished, while in the eastern parts of China, due to the existing industrial and economic development, there are more incentives to migrate in that region. Because eastern China has enjoyed greater economic prosperity over the past decades due to its vast coastline, and has been more involved in manufacturing, industrial, and commercial trade, it has enjoyed a higher social and economic status. As a result, more immigrants are generally seen in the eastern parts of the country. Western China, meanwhile, is underdeveloped due to its mountainous terrain and lack of access to beaches and open waters. As a result there is less urbanization and a lower quality of life in these areas.

## Conclusion

The article reaches the conclusion that any population change affects quality of life. That is why countries especially the industrial ones began to control their population growth rate in order to have better quality of life. Such an action results in higher life expectancy, especially for women. Population change results in lowering of mortality in various forms and for different age groups. If population is uncontrolled and increased, it is difficult to then stop/ lower it. Now two nations of China and India are in that status. Large countries comprised of various cultures and minorities find it hard to tackle their population size. Number of population makes problems from cradle to grave. Now-a-days many countries are involved with their increasing old population who cannot work, but need care, feeding and nursing in their old age. With the medicines available, people are getting the life chance for many more years. Rural to urban migration as a labor force greatly reduces the gap between rural and urban incomes.

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