

The End of China's One-Child Policy and the Implementation of China's Two-Child Policy 2015-2016 as Response to the International Pressure

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Abstract

The Chinese government changed the family planning policy with one child, or known as the 'one-child policy' into a 'two-child policy'. The new policy allows all Chinese people to have two children. This approach has been taken since the reign of the Communist Party under Xi Jinping administration. In consideration that the one-child policy will bring fatal effects for China domestically and its relationship with other countries. The most influential factor in the decision of the Chinese government to change the one-child policy are the internal and external factors. Internal or domestic factors, such as the demographic and economic instability. External factors or international, their criticisms of international actors associated with the implementation of China's one-child policy who violate human rights.

Keyword: one-child policy, two-child policy, rational actor, internal factor, and external factor.

Abstrak

Pemerintah Cina mengubah kebijakan keluarga berencana dengan satu anak atau lebih dikenal dengan 'one-child policy' menjadi 'two-child policy'. Kebijakan baru tersebut mengizinkan semua penduduk Cina untuk memiliki dua orang anak. Pendekatan ini telah diambil sejak masa pemerintahan Partai Komunis dibawah kepemimpinan Xi Jin Ping. Dengan pertimbangan bahwa one-child policy akan membawa pengaruh yang fatal bagi Cina dan hubungannya dengan negara lain. Faktor yang paling berpengaruh dalam keputusan pemerintah Cina mengubah one-child policy tersebut adalah faktor internal dan eksternal. Faktor internal atau domestik, yaitu adanya ketidakstabilan demografi dan ekonomi. Faktor eksternal atau internasional, yaitu adanya kritik dari para aktor internasional terkait dengan pelaksanaan kebijakan one-child policy Cina yang banyak melanggar hak asasi manusia.

Kata kunci: one-child policy, two-child policy, aktor rasional, faktor internal, dan faktor eksternal.

Introduction

China's one-child policy is the country's official effort to control the number of population. The goals of the policy were to make sure that the population growth did not outpace economic development and to ease environmental and natural resource challenges and imbalances caused by a rapidly expanding population in the Mao Zedong era. The policy only allowed the urban couples to have one child. If pregnancy results in twins then two children are permitted. The strict enforcement of the policy only concerns on couples who live in the densely populated urban areas. Couples living in rural areas are not subject to the

one-child policy. Approximately, one-third of the Chinese population is subject to the one-child restriction.

Until the 1960s, Chinese officials gave couples the freedom to determine the size of their family. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong (1893-1976), families were encouraged to have as many children as possible. Mao believed that population growth can make the country stronger.¹ In 1970 the Chinese government concerned that the increasing of population growth was becoming a significant problem. Government encouraged couples to marry later and have only two children, but this was not a policy mandated by law. Mao Zedong had his own theory that a populous China was a prosperous China, preventing the establishment of 'family planning' programs that were being proposed by others at the time.²

In 1979, three years after Mao's death, the one-child policy was established by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping as an effort to limit the population growth and some of the social, economic and environmental problems that were related with China's huge growth. Between 1949 and 1976, the population in China became doubled, from 540 millions to 940 millions.³ The one-child policy was intended to forbid couples who lived in urban areas to have more than one child or they had to face penalties, such as fees or a reduction in societal benefits. In 1984, the policy allowed many families in rural areas to have second child. When one-child policy was introduced in the 1979, the one-child policy strictly reduced the birthrate.

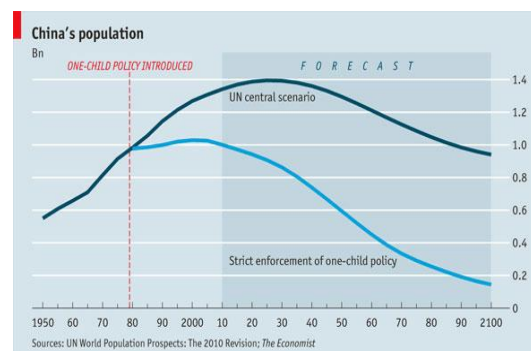


Figure 1: China's population in 1979 until 2010

Source: UN World Population Prospect: The 2010 Revision; The Economist

In 2010, there are 110 million of people aged 65+ from 1,34 billion of total population. By 2050 more than a quarter of the population will be over 65 years old. More than 330 million population aging, (equal 26% of population) and young generations will face an extraordinary burden. China now has been moving toward lessening family planning restrictions in recent years because of some factors, including a looming labor crisis. China's working age population is drastically shrinking. Based on the United Nations projects, China will lose 67 million workers from 2010 to 2030. Meanwhile, China's elder population is expected to rise from 110 million in 2010 to 210 million in 2030.

¹Gilles, G. (2015). *China's One Child Policy: Facts & History*. Retrieved from Study.com.

²Ashari, K. (2015). *Kamus Hubungan Internasional*. Nuansa Cendekia.

³Gilles, G. (2015). *China's One Child Policy: Facts & History*. Retrieved from Study.com.

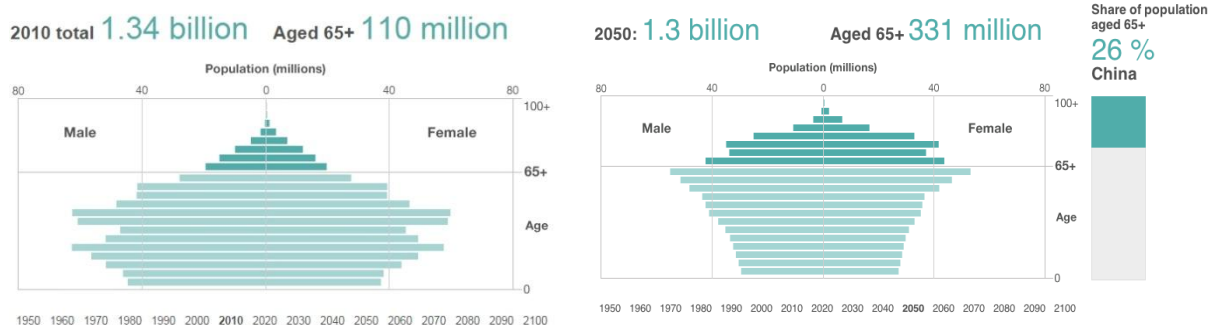


Figure 2: Estimate number of China’s citizen in 2010 and 2050
 Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2010)

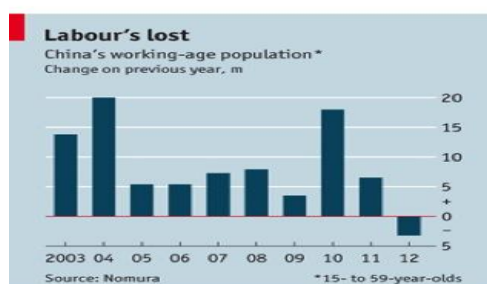


Figure 3: China’s working age population
 Source: <http://hoosinchina.com/2013/05/01/chinas-one-child-policy/>

Based on the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the number of Chinese working-age citizens shrank by 3.45 million in 2012. The NBS criteria for working age is 15 to 59 years old. Many have called for the government to ease the policy even though there is no guarantee that it would solve the working age dilemma right away. This working age problem mainly affects the labor wages. With shrinking supply of labor, the wages will increase significantly and make China a less attractive location for production and investment. In addition, China will face another problem. Working age people who can perform the most physically demanding work are decreasing in size significantly. In the next ten years, it is estimated that the number of Chinese citizens aged 15 to 24 will decrease by 21%.⁴

In 2012, majority of age distribution of population by gender in China is in aged 40-49, with total 65 millions male population. But the female population is under 65 millions. However in 2050, it is estimates that most of population will be aged 60-64 with the decreases of total of male population and total of female population is not much difference than the previous years. Therefore, after 35 years, China’s one-child policy could soon change. China's ruling Communist Party announced that it will abolish the China’s decade old one child policy and allow all couples to have two children. They removed the remaining restrictions that limited many urban couples to have only one child. The family planning policy, which has been eased in 2013, may be removed or replaced with a ‘two-child policy’.⁵

⁴Paigelevenberg. May, 1 2013. *China’s One Child Policy*. Market Insights in China

⁵Ide, W. (2015, October 30). *Voice of America*. Retrieved November 2015, from China Debates New Two-child Policy: <http://www.voanews.com/content/china-child-policy-debate/3029621.html>

Beside the domestic or internal reason, the one-child policy cannot escape from the international complaint and pressure such as from Foreign Minister Hillary Clinton, United Nation, some scholars and human rights activists association like Women’s Rights Without Frontier (WRWF) and Human Right Watch that make protests in terms of human right abuse to woman and children. In April 2009, Hillary Clinton made a statement that she strongly condemned coercive family planning in China regarding to a forced sterilization and forced abortion that occur to women in China. In Congressional Hearing, Hillary stated that forced abortion and sterilization practices are absolutely improper and unacceptable in women's rights. It also contradicts with the goals of UN to promote the human rights.

To explain the problems above, the writer will use the first model which is the Rational Actor Model. This model illustrates that the decision makers make an alternative policy to obtain optimal results.

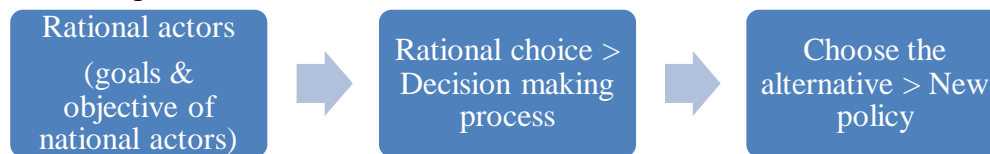


Figure 4: Rational actor decision making process

Each state/government is described as a rational actor who always acts based on the national interest. The actors must have specific goals/objectives, options, and consequences or risk that follow each alternative. Rational actor chooses an alternative that is relevant to the problem by considering the consequences (loss and benefit). Therefore, the actor takes action as the rational choice. Action is chosen in response to the problem itself.

The reforms of family planning policy were decided at the closed-door meeting of 400 top party leaders in the 18th Chinese Communist party's third plenary.⁶ The policy will be improved gradually to promote the long-term balanced development of the population in China. In the 18th Party Central Committee’s Third Plenary Session that was held on November 9-12, 2013, under item 46 of the Decision, Party officials proposed a new exception to China’s population planning policy⁷:

“Continue with the basic national population planning policy, begin to implement a policy allowing couples in which one parent is an only child to bear a second child, adjust and perfect the birth policy step by step, promote the long-term balanced development of the population.”(CECC, 2013)

During that time, the proposed change only stand for an ease toward the family planning policy. The proposal decided the category of families that were allowed to have a second child. A couple can bear a second child if one of couple is an only child. According to the expert, the impact of this policy revision will be dominantly felt by urban couples. It is

⁶Kaiman, J. (2013). *China to loosen one-child policy and abolish labour camps*. Beijing: The Guardian.

⁷CECC. (2013). *Chinese Communist Party Announces Revision to Population Planning Policy*. Congressional-Executive Commission on China.

because rural and ethnic minority couples are already allowed to have second child even before the policy was eased.⁸

In early 2014, Beijing is the first province to ease the rules. 10 months after the government ease the policy all over the country, there was only less than 10 percents (estimated 550.000 couples) of eligible couples who applied for permission to have a second child.⁹ National Health and Family Planning Commission report that there were one million couples applied for a second child in 2014. As a result of the policy eased, China saw 16.8 million new births last few year and more than 470.000 in 2013.¹⁰The ease of the family planning policy did not lead to a significant increase in baby numbers.(Burkitt, 2015)

A. Demographic Disaster

One-child policy is successful in reducing the bombing population during 1970s-1980s, but now the unintended consequence of this policy gives effect and a huge pressure for China. China now faces the rapid aging population, imbalanced population development, and the lack of workforce because the government has enforced family planning policy that reduces the birth rate drastically. Demographics now urge China's once rapid growth.

1. Aging Population

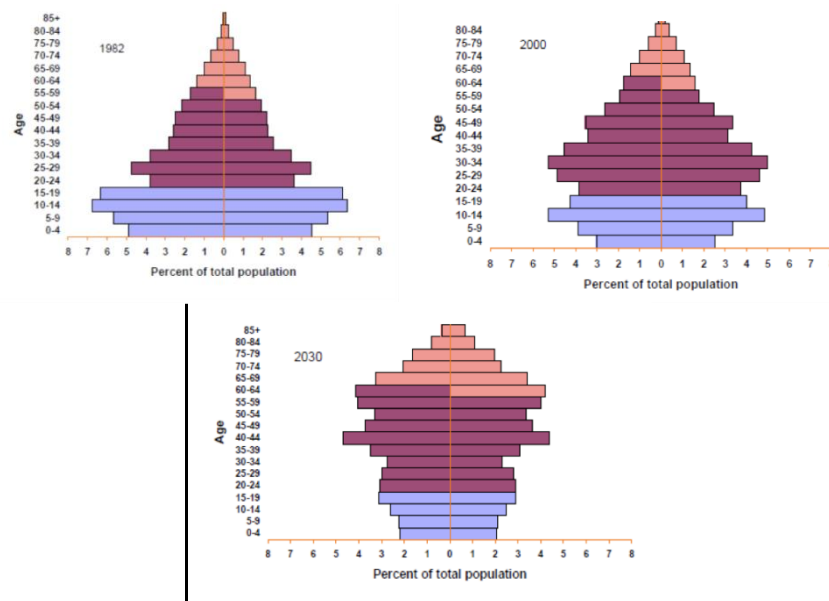


Figure 5: Percentage of total population of China from 1982-2030

Source: All Girls Allowed, <http://www.allgirlsallowed.org/demographic-crisis-china-statistics>

In general, population aging in China is caused by fertility decline, increasing expectancy of life of the elderly, and dynamics of age structure. Figure 5 show the percentage

⁸Ibid

⁹Denyer, S. (2015). *Easing of China's one-child policy has not produced a baby-boom*. The Guardian.

¹⁰Linder, A. (2015). *China will officially end its one-child policy, allowing all couples to have two children*. Shanghaiist.

of China's population from 1982 until the projection in 2030. In 1982, China has a very small number of aging people, while the huge number of productive people aged 20-50 and young generation aged 0-19 share largest number. In 2000, the number of young generation age 0-19 are decrease while the largest number share by productive people aged 20-60. Evidently, the fertility rate declines significantly determined by the government's effort to force one-child policy. It makes the number of young generation decrease significantly followed by huge number of aging population. It becomes the main factor in the changing age structure of the Chinese population. High life expectancy had also been the key factor in population aging.¹¹

The Chinese population size is followed by the high life expectancy of the elder and they share the largest number. Started from 40 years in the 1950s and now the life expectancy of elder reached around 73 years, even estimated to be near 80 in 2050. By 2050, it is predicted that the population above 60 will reach more than 400 million and these aged 80 will reach more than 100 million. It is reported that 37% of Chinese population aged 60+ are still as the workforce even though they are less productive. That occurs because of China lacks the sources of productive labors.¹²

2. Lack of Young Generation

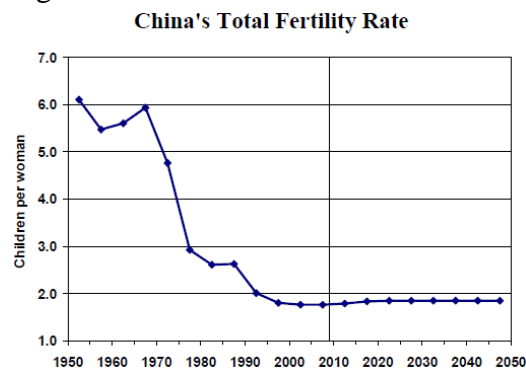


Figure 6: China's Total Fertility Rate
Source: UN, 2009. (Judith Banister D. E., 2010)

In 1950, the number of population aged of 0-4 had the largest amount and it was in the up and down condition during period 1950-1960. But in the early 1970, the fertility rate decreased, even before the one-child policy was implemented. After the one-child policy was implemented, the fertility rate was getting worse. The number of a children decreases over time. It is projected that the 60-64 age groups will have the largest share of population in the next five decades.¹³

¹¹Judith Banister, D. E. (March 2010). Population Aging and Economic Growth in China.

¹²Ibid. p. 5-6

¹³Ibid. p. 7

3. Gender Imbalance and 4-2-1 Phenomenon

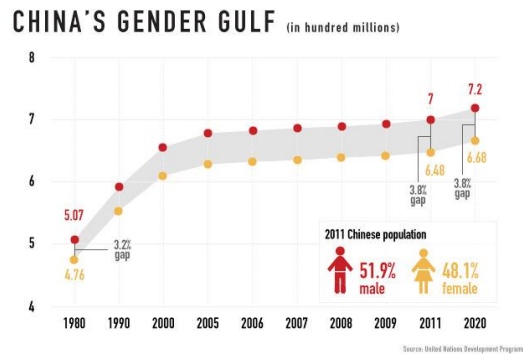


Figure 7: China's gender gap

Source: UNDP. CNN (<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/14/opinion/china-challenges-one-child-brooks/>)

The implementation of one-child policy made a gap between the numbers of male and female in China. In 1980, the gap between male and female was 3,2 percent. It increases until 2011 where the gap is 3,8 percent. The percentage of male population is always bigger than the female population. In 2011, the percentage of Chinese male population is 51,9 percent while the female is 48,1 percent. The gap occurs probably because the parents in China prefer to have a son than a daughter. So, every year there are more baby boys born rather than baby girls. It affects the gender imbalance.

Gender imbalance is related to China's aging population in the future. As a fact that in 2011, there were 34 million more men than women in China. Parents who prefer a son over a daughter will do abortion or infanticide if they know that the pregnancy will result in baby girl. Between 1980 and 2000, it is reported that the estimated number of female babies who have been infanticide from the population is around 8.5 million.¹⁴

According to the UN Population Prospects 2010 revision, China's sex ratio reached 120 male births per 100 female births in 2005-2010.¹⁵ In 2012, there were about 116 boys per 100 girls aged 10-18 in China. Men dominated the population and were more involved in workforce because they faced less discrimination while only small number of women could be involved. It becomes a problem in China due to the gender imbalance impact. Less women in China are not equal with the number of men. It makes a man hard to find a wife.¹⁶

4. Lack of Productive Workers

The economy of China was growing rapidly in 1970s, in the early implementation of one-child policy. It is because in that year's China still has large number of working age population. However, nowadays the situation has changed. The ratio between working age to non-working age in China is in the peak and it persists to decrease in the next decade, along with the number of aging population that increases rapidly, from 12 percent and will become 31 percent in 2050.¹⁷

¹⁴Goodway, F. (2014). *Why Chinese men are the most single in the world*. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/>.

¹⁵Jane Golley, R. T. (2012). *China's Gender Imbalance and its Economic Performance*. The China Story .

¹⁶Judith Banister, D. E. (March 2010). *Population Aging and Economic Growth in China*. p.22

¹⁷Ibid. p.6

5. Human Rights Violation

Every year, millions of forced abortion and sterilizations occur under the one-child policy. In China's majority people, all second child pregnancy without permit from government is considered as illegal. Family Planning Officials state that the pregnancy must be terminated by force. Pregnancy termination methods are often risky and lack of anesthetics and appropriate sanitation. It often causes infections and mothers loss too much blood during abortion and other injures. There are a lot of mothers' deaths caused by the termination of pregnancy.¹⁸ China is having the largest numbers of abortion compared during period 1980-2010. The total number of abortion almost reaches 400 million. National Health on Family Planning Policy reported that more than 13 million babies are aborted in the country every year. It is estimated that 1,500 babies every hour and in average 35,000 babies per day are aborted.¹⁹

55% of Chinese women have done an abortion. In 2000, more than half of all abortions were a result of sex selection. If couples decided to have a male baby and the result of their pregnancy was a female baby, they would immediately abandon the pregnancy. It is projected that 8 million women (in average) experience abortion every year in China. Compared with other developed country, the abortion rate in China is going beyond 29.3 percent higher than the others. In the population aged 20-29 year old, the abortions rate is above 60 percent. In urban cities like Shanghai and Beijing, the rate of abortion is more than 50 percent.²⁰ World Health Organization research survey and the Guttmacher Institute on sexual and reproductive health also shows the number of abortions in China which is near to 9 million in a year. It is more than a quarter of the 42 million terminations in the world per year. There are about 24 abortions for every 1,000 women aged 15 up to 44 in China.²¹

The others is infant abandonment and children adoptions. In 1995, the Chinese government reported that there were about 40,000 orphanages in China. While in 2009, there were total of 3001 orphans adopted by Americans. During 2011, from the data that was available, it is reported that Americans adopted 2587 children from China. In 2012, it massively increase up to 24,635 children who were adopted. 87 percent children were adopted domestically and more than 3,000 children were adopted out of the country.²²

In this case, Hillary Clinton is the one who strongly condemned the human right abuse against women that occurred under the one-child policy of China. In the United Nation conference that was held in Beijing in 1995, Clinton once gave her speech and expressed her feeling of solidarity toward human rights abuse especially women's rights.²³

“...it is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights. It is a violation of human rights when babies are denied food, or drowned, or suffocated, or their spines broken, simply because they are born girls, when women and girls are sold

¹⁸ AllGirlsAllowed. (n.d.). *Forced Abortion Statistics*. Retrieved March 13, 2016, from All Girls Allowed: <http://www.allgirlsallowed.org/forced-abortion-statistics>

¹⁹ Bohon, D. (2013). *China Reports 336 Million Abortions in Last 40 Years*. The New American.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Batty, D. (2009). *13 million abortions carried out every year in China, newspaper reveals*. The Guardian

²² Ibid

²³ Tyler, P. E. (1995). *Hillary Clinton, in China, Details Abuse of Women*. The New York Times.

into slavery or prostitution for human greed. It is a violation of human rights when women are doused with gasoline, set on fire and burned to death because their marriage dowries are deemed too small. When thousands of women are raped in their own communities and when thousands of women are subjected to rape as a tactic or prize of war." - Hillary Clinton (Tyler, 1995)

Hillary Clinton stated that she could not be denied on foreign policy matters of China causes human rights violations. Clinton criticized Xi Jinping in a UN Summit on September 28, 2015, where Xi Jinping attended. She criticized about the presence of Xi Jinping for hosting a summit on women's rights by calling the presence of Xi Jinping as shameless.²⁴ Clinton criticized Xi Jinping as 'shameless' for promoting women's rights.²⁵ While he was promoting human rights to other countries, his country indeed lacked human rights freedom. That is why Clinton called it shameless. US also criticized the one-child policy that caused a rise in babies trafficking in the country. Olivia Enos from Heritage Foundation Research Assistant states that there are 3,000 Chinese babies adopted in America every year due to the strict policy.²⁶ Human rights based on the United Nations Declaration is the rights and freedoms of life that every person is at liberty on the basis of their humanity.²⁷ The one-child policy indirectly caused a human rights violation and led to the changing of the gender roles in society which may include the women and children rights issue.

Human rights abuse under one-child policy also contradicts with the "Agreed Conclusions" of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW). In March 2014, WRWF had an opportunity to present about forced abortion and gendercide in China at the UNCSW. WRWF praised the following language from 2013 "Agreed Conclusions" which is stated:²⁸

"point 34. The Commission urges government, at all levels, and as appropriate, with the relevant entities of the United Nations system, international and regional organizations... to take the following actions: ...condemn and take action to prevent violence against women and girls in health-care settings, including forced medical procedures, or those conducted without informed consent, and which may be irreversible, such as forced hysterectomy, forced caesarean section, forced sterilization, forced abortion, and forced use of contraceptives..."-UNCSW.²⁹

²⁴Bloomberg. (2015). *Chinese President Xi Jinping 'shameless' for hosting summit on women's rights, says Hillary Clinton*. Bloomberg News.

²⁵Bartley, A. (2015). "Shameless": *Hillary Clinton, Human Rights and China*. Counter Punch.

²⁶Siggins, D. (April 1, 2014). *Critics blame China's one-child policy for rise in trafficking of babies*. Washington D.C: LifeSitenews.com.

²⁷Powers, A. (2012). *China's One Child Policy: An Inquiry into Human Rights*. 2.

²⁸Littlejohn, R. (2015). *China's One Child Policy Turns 35 — Open Letter to Xi Jinping*. Women's Rights Without Frontiers.

²⁹Ibid

These Agreed Conclusions recognize that all forms of forced medical procedures are a form of violence against women. Moreover, it prove that an international actors are against such procedures regarding the action of violence toward women and girls.

Although today the one-child policy has been changed into two-child policy, the human rights activists are not too excited. They think that the massive abuses such as forced abortions and gendercide will still continue under the two-child policy. The activists think that this policy must be abolished, not just changed. Littlejohn from WRWF stated that the international actors need to keep giving the pressure until China abandons all coercive population control.³⁰

Bill Donohue from Catholic League stated that Chinese government only concern in reducing population when one-child policy was first implemented. Uncontrolled population made government afraid that it will harm the economic and environment of China. However, actually the case is there are many morality abuses, such as force abortion. Chinese government never realized that it will bring extra disadvantages. This problem must be concerned by the human rights groups such as the United Nations and Amnesty International as well as women's and children organizations. They need to deal with the morality and issues of a one-child policy, not just keep quiet with all of the morality abuses that happen.³¹ William Nee from Amnesty International stated that the move of China to change the one-child policy is not enough. He stated that when the second children are allowed, it means there will be no allowance for the third. Abortions will keep on going in the citizens. Human rights activists consider it as unnecessary action.³²

Conclusion

The government decide to change the one-child policy into two-child policy. The implementation of two-child policy was started from January 2016. Two-child policy allowed all eligible couples in China to have a second child. Before the China's Congress and Communist Party under Xi Jinping administration announced this new policy in November 2015, the relaxation of the one-child policy has been performed since 2013. The relaxation allowed couple to have a second child if the couple themselves is the only child in family. But this relaxation is also followed by certain regulations. Government of China eased the family planning policy based on several important reasons that approximately will be faced by China in the future.

In the case of family planning of China, government considers that the one-child policy cannot be implemented anymore because it has fatal effect for China's future. One-child policy was changed based on internal and external factor. China now faced rapid population aging. By 2050 more than a half of the population will be over 65 years old and young generations will face an extraordinary burden. One-child policy also decreased the number of young generation. It set off the shrinking workforce that influence the economic growth. Others are gender imbalance, gendercide, 4-2-1 phenomenon, mother deaths, women

³⁰ Ertelt, S. (2015). *China Not "Ending" Human Rights Abuses, Forced Abortions Will Continue Under Two-Child Policy*. Beijing: LifeNews.com.

³¹ Ibid

³² Taylor, A. (2015). *Why critics are not satisfied with the end of China's one child policy*. The Washington Post.

and babies trafficking and even huge number of abortion and infanticide. It brings so much attention from the group of international actor regarding to the human rights issue.

Beside the internal or domestic factor, the pressure from external also becomes consideration. There are so many pressures coming from the international actor, both from individual and group of human rights activists. They condemn the implementation of family planning policy of China. The reason is that the family planning in China violated the human rights, especially women and children rights.

Finally, the Chinese government must have well-thought about the decision to implement the two-child policy and not to abolish the family planning policy. However, the family planning has become the basic national policy of China since a long time. Chinese government had thought carefully and meticulously by considering the risks that could occur anytime. Chinese government promise that they will provide more efficient health-care for citizens. Although there are so many pros and cons both from domestic and abroad, the Chinese government came to the decision that they will implement the two-child policy as the best alternative to deal with demographic disaster and to stabilize the economic. As a result, two-child policy is considered to be beneficial for the sustainability and development of China in the present and the future.

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