CHINESE FAMILY POLICY AS A FACTOR OF ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

N. Simkina

V.N. Karazin National University,
4, Svobody Sq., Kharkiv 61022 Ukraine
alex_koyda@list.ru

Abstract: Birth control measures make up the most important direction of social policy in China. Traditional family faces the challenge of modernization and losing its economic functions. In these conditions the faults of family policy, carried out by Chinese government, can have serious consequences. Regulation of family organization structure, inter-family relations has been an important factor of survival and progressive development of Chinese civilization. But experience showed that the character of such external regulation should be preceded from the need to maintain family functional potential in order to let it fulfill its economic functions. Any interference in family has to be worked out and weighted in respect to economy of the state. The case of Chinese family policy demonstrates it clearly.

Keywords: China, birth control, Chinese policy, economic development, Chinese family policy.

Introduction

Scientists all over the world have recognized the inevitability of birth rate decrease due to society economic development. Conversion to a family model with a small number of children is considered to be a logical result of economic transformations, which our civilization goes through. Birth control policy, realized in Asia, is based on this postulate. Nevertheless, the case of China, one of the most progressive Asian countries, demonstrates the limited efficiency of family rude intervention conception. If family policy puts obstacles in the way of its functioning, it should be corrected in the way it was made in China government projects.

The goal of the article is analyzing the role of the family in China economic growth and impact of birth control policy on it. Methods used include general scientific methods like analysis, generalization, analogy, comparison and historical chronology.

Chinese sociologists, economists, psychologists, historians and demographers, dealing with the problems of family institute, discover considerable changes, happening in this sphere during the 30-years-period of reforms. These changes embodied the typical features and tendencies of transition from isolation and backward economic model to openness and prosperity.

Important changes were made in family structure and principles of its formation; the system of family functions transformed as well as matrimonial relationships, which become equitable.

For the last years the most authoritative researchers of China family problems are Din Wen, Sui Qingling, Den Weizhi, Sui Ge, Yu Hualin etc. The works of Domenak J.-L., Hua Shanmin and Fei Xiao Tun are translated all over the world. In post-Soviet area such scientists, as Barluova O., Belaya H., Popova A., Eremkina T., Manukhina O., Chelnokova-Sheika A., investigate the features of China family transformation.

Results

During most of the historical period society position favoured high fertility rate. There existed different mechanisms of marriage and fertility encouragement. For example, celibacy was considered to be a sin and disgrace; numerous descendants were the guarantee of reliable future and well-to-do old age period; the birth of a son was the necessity of clan or family preservation.

Populationism (the adherence to population growth) was the leading course of demographic theory and policy in traditional, feudal and New Time period. The development of demographic thought and demographic policy was defined by mercantilism, reflecting the interests of arising trade capital. By the middle of the XVIII century the economic presuppositions of populationism, connected with manufactory production enlargement and labour force demand, had intensified. But at the turn of the XIX century populationism was shifted by the opposite doctrine, proving the need of population growth restraint.
Intensively realized industrial revolution acted as a precondition for anti-populationism. In the XX century demographic processes were undermined by two World Wars. Demographic situation of post-war Europe was extremely unfavourable in connection with hard losses of the countries-participants of the World War II.

The different case of developing countries was predetermined by essential changes in political map of the world and colonial release of dozens of African and Asian countries. Traditionally high levels of fertility in combination with health-protection-determined mortality decrease entailed population explosion. Fast population growth turned to be a serious problem for developing national economies, gradually getting global forms. Many politicians, social figures and scientists started regarding family planning and birth regulation as the only tool for braking population growth sorting with social and economic transformations and available for pauper post-colonial economies. As a result, more than in 30 countries of the world population control policy have been implemented. One of such countries is China. Comparative analysis of traditional and post-traditional model of family organization in China enables to give the practical assessment to the cardinal changes.

Traditional family organization model was characterized by patriarchy, patrilineality (kinship was traced by paternal line) and patrilocality (spouses lived together or near husband’s parents). It had been forming on the basis of Confucian notion of family and relationships between different categories of relatives, ancestor worship and the concept of filial duty. The Confucian idea of family had not been disputed for more than two thousand years. Nevertheless, the consecrated ideal of multigenerational family could be rarely seen in practice during the imperial era. Such families were supposed to be exemplary. The structure and transformation of Chinese family was defined by the necessity of obtaining economic independence, corresponding to the interests of spouses on one hand and maintaining of patrilineal succession on the other hand.

Traditional mode of life in China can be regarded as a toolkit for reconciliation of these opposite family life principles. In this way, every family, embracing three-four generations, was experiencing the influence of tendencies to disintegration and to unity preserving. The internal contradictions of family mode were reflected in some peculiarities of social perception of Chinese people. Thus, Chinese literature propagandized the ideal of the Confucian patriarchal family. Daughters-in-law were invariably depicted as destroyers of family unity. On the contrary, in old novels and belles-lettres of the XX century, portraying the underside of traditional family life (Bursova, 2010). Contradictions and rivalry were adherent to relationships between brothers because of existing of the custom of equal family property division in China. That is the reason why traditional family morals underlined the necessity to be yielding and disinterested in relationships with brothers. Bypassing moral norms, it is worth being mentioned that the difference of Chinese traditional family and its Western analogue is called forth by economic reasons.

D.G. Culp, the author of one of the first sociological works, analyzing the system of Chinese family relations, based on the materials of field research in a village (south-east of China, Kwangtung province, 1918-1919), marks out four types of Chinese family organization: «natural-family», «economic-family», «religious-family» and «conventional-family». But, extracting four sorts of family groups, Culp stresses that Chinese people recognize the only type called economic family (Malyavin, 2001).

O. Lang, defines Chinese family as a group of people, joined by consanguinity, marriage or adoption, possessing common budget and common property. In sinological literature this definition is generally accepted. It reflects such Chinese family peculiarities as common family dwelling and common budget and property.

For centuries the structure of Chinese family organization was determined by the main family economic function, which includes family property generational transmission. This function was interlaced in the system of ritual prescriptions, ethic norms and traditional customs of Chinese society. The key economic feature of family in China is the absence of majort, prevalent in Europe. In accordance with customary rules of succession in China, the head of the family remained to be the owner of his property for the rest of his life. As a rule, the disintegration of extended family was taking place after the death of father-patriarch; the family split into one extended family (one of the brothers, his wife and their children stayed with the mother) and some (corresponding to the number of sons) nuclear families. Paternal property did not pass entirely to the eldest or youngest son, but was divided among the son in equal parts. Daughters had no right of succession, they just received marriage portion while getting married. On the grounds of this, typical Imperial China
family consisted of not more than five-six person. Families of privileged society layers used to be polygamous (husband, wife,concubines,children).

Thus, common family property underlies the family organization. M. Yan emphasizes, that for a Chinese person family is not just a group of people, connected by relations, but also its ownership: land, buildings and material basis conditions of family life. The most important designation of a family lies in procreation (in China it means continuation of patrilineal family line). But, according to the Chinese point of view, it calls for either continuity of sons’ generations replacement or compulsory transmission of common family property, supporting family existence. If father does not leave inheritance for his sons, it means that he does not ensure the course of family life. National Chinese temper, especially the inclination to collectivism and the notion of indivisibility of family property, had left an imprint on this economic basis. The practical absence of private property of family members remained to be the significant feature of family organization even after the fall of the Empire (1911) up to the creation of Chinese People’s Republic.

M. Yan, describing the situation in his naïve village Daidou (Shandong province) signed out, that all of the family possession still belonged to the family, there were practically no private items (Chelnokova-Sheika, 2013).

Nevertheless, the fall of the Empire commemorated irreversible changes in Chinese mode of family life. Civil Code of Chinese Republic (1911-1949) constrained marriage age to 18 years for men and 16 years for women, prohibited close-relatives marriages (for the past thousands of years only namesake marriages were under a ban), bigamy became outlawed (Malyavin, 2001). After the proclamation of Chinese People’s Republic in 1949 the marriage law of 1950 was passed in the first turn. It laid the foundation for democratic (though alien to Chinese temper) basis of marriage and family in Chinese People’s Republic. It included easy marriage entering and dissolving, sexual equality in family, monogamy.

Former family domination in social system of traditional Confucian China constrained market and rational relationships and was also connected with low level of individualism. But in the end of the XX century, along with economic development, the situation changed dramatically; easy marriage became prevalent, most marriages started being mutually conformed by the will of both a man and a woman. The sexual equity of property possessing was claimed. Initially, new family norms remained to be only on paper. But new social-economic processes (industrialization, migration, female labour involvement) weakened traditional Chinese family foundations, paving the way for real transition to posttraditional model of family relations in China. Changes are especially evident in cities, with most people living there, while in the suburbs these processes are less intensive (Barlukova, 2011).

As Chinese economy develops changes of family policy conception takes place. Since the middle of the XX century Chinese government puts into practice the program of “five goods” of modern family. This concept includes respect f towards the elders and compassion towards the younger, harmony in relations between the husband and the wife, neighbor friendship, diligence and thrift in family life, environment protection. This conception incarnate the attempt to adjust Confucian family ideals to modern conditions.

Chinese Communist Party decided to take control over the process of family planning. There started being popular an expression: “Having one child is enough, having two children is the best, having three children is too much”. It was the period when national birth rate reduced from five children per family in 1970 to 2,5 in 1980. Chinese population specialists called this period “gold 10 years”. Finally, in 1979 the policy “1 family – 1 child” is carried out. Chinese People’s Republic citizens were allowed to have the only child in a family in cities, and two children in villages (only if the first child is a girl) (Svistunova, 2002).

In that way, this policy has been carried out for 30 years. It has really fulfilled the proclaimed goal – cardinal stabilization of population growth in China. However, it has also caused unprecedented contradictions and social problems. First, the popularization of limited fertility undermined the foundations of a family and promoted its destruction. Natural for economic growth family transformation was intensified by government measures. In its turn, family destruction entailed the emergence of a range of socio-economic problems:

-the situation of the only child in a family, weakening of intergenerational relations and Confucian ideals devaluation (filial duty) provoked the existence of many old people, not getting support from their descendants;

-the decline of the prestige and family authority called forth its instability, which resulted in rise of divorce rate and single-parent families;
people were repeatedly attempting to circumvent the bans through criminal ways.

Not many people know the fact, that Chinese government left a special area, not affected by birth control policy “1 family -1 child”. It is Ichen district in the central province of Shanxi. Lan Zhuntan, social sciences doctor and scientific leader of Shanghai Social Sciences Academy, proposed to choose this area as an experimental district to investigate society development without birth reduction policy.

The materials of population census show that during the period of 30 years the population of experimental district increased by 20.7%, while in other parts of China in increased by 25.5%.

Moreover, experimental district had the sexual proportion of 106, 1, while in regulated districts it amounted to 117,8 (the normal ratio is 105 boys to 100 girls). It means that in free area this indicator is practically normal, whereas all the rest of Chinese territory has a considerable warp towards male population.

That is the reason why many scientists incline to the idea of damaging character of family policy, clashing with the natural process of population decrease and entailing new problems. The most important negative consequence of such family policy was family failure to fulfill its economic functions.

Discussion

Most critics of this conception underline the deterioration of human capital quality. One-child-family cannot fulfill cultural capital transmission completely. Cultural succession in such a family turns out to be weak in any country of the world, but specific economic mental qualities, which made China a prosperous country, like collectivism, diligence, assiduity, can be cultivated only in extended family. All Confucian principles of old people care are fundamentally destroyed; Chinese upbringing system has lost its advantages because of the only child, growing up egoistic. In China people speak about the generation of small emperors that are not ready for socialistic building. Moreover, small family deprives China of the chance to run family business, though it could be rather harmonious for its economy.

Insurance family function as well as the function of mutual economic support are now undermined. The production function, being weakened by industrial development, has no conditions for its economic recovery on a new level, so family policy, running counter to real family interests (but aimed to fulfill only governmental goals) leads to family functions weakening and destroying, thus, creating new problems. The realization of this fact made the government add some amendments to the population regulation laws. First, there was the softening of the law in correspondence with the province citizens of Beijing can have two children if both parents were the only children in their family). This law has also been softened in Hong Kong and cancelled for foreigners. As for national minorities, it has loyal forms (if the number of people is few than 100.000) or has no force at all (Pochagina, 2008).

But these softening measures were not enough efficient. Chinese people clashed with so many socio-economic problems, caused by family non-fulfillment of its functions, that the government admitted the faults of family policy. Now the only child family policy issue is disputed. The government intends to cancel this law, which encourages most Chinese families. This is a step towards the compromise between family needs and social interests. The case of Singapore can be appropriate. Initially, the policy of population reduction was implemented there, but, having reached its goals, was replaced by birth stimulation measures.

As a whole, in many Chinese researches we find Weber idea of family and capitalist economy disharmony. In fact, family cult could damp down the impact of rational economic imperatives and made necessary redistribution of economic resources. But Chinese family orientation, having many negative consequences for business undertaking, marked by Weber, had also important advantages for economic development. Firstly, family was able to balance government power, acting as a counterbalance for totality of power. Secondly, family orientation aggravated private property motions. Family institute got special consecration in main Chinese religion. Confucian combination of economic activity and family made Chinese capitalism especially steady and prosperous. It was not surprising that economic reformation in China was started with the implementation of family contracts. Researchers of Chinese social life noted, that the specific feature of Chinese life was co-existence of two structures (private capitalistic and tributary-familial). In philosophic heritage of China family and government act as basic and interconnected foundations of society. The power of the state, its stability and welfare depend on the well-being of each family, which is the model of the state. Regulation of family organization structure, inter-familial relationships (with the help of common law and legislation) has been an important factor of survival and progressive development of Chinese civilization. But experience showed, that the character of such external regulation should be preceded from
the need to maintain family functional potential in order to let it fulfill its economic functions. Any interference in family has to be worked out and weighted in respect to economy of the state. The faults of family policy result in deterioration of human capital quality of the country. Chinese civilization with the key role of the family, stand before a challenge of family modernization. The ways of modernization are different, but China will be able to remain a strong and prosperous state only if traditionally considerable role of family is maintained.

References