

**HOW IS CHINESE SOCIETY AFFECTED  
BY SHRINKING FAMILY SIZE?**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This report is based on focusing on a single variable. Then we assess how this variable interplays with specific other factors. For example, a single variable X relating to family change leads to Y, Z, D, and E consequences.

Single variables rarely have clear and easily identifiable outcomes, however, and there are recursive effects the model doesn't depict realistically with 100% fidelity. Nevertheless use of the model serves the purpose of simplifying cause-and-effect relationships and it is frequently used, despite the possible inelegance of its rendition. It is of course prudent to stress some of the limitations to this way of organizing and interpreting information – limitations shared by other methods too.

We identify the following single variables regarding changes in the family and their possible causes and consequences – what the Chinese in their argot might call The Three Declines.

a. There is decline in family size due to decline in patriarchy – the portmanteau system of disproportionately valuing male status and behavior, which accords to males apparent decisiveness if not also special wisdom in influencing family life and futures.

b. There is decline in family size due to the one-child policy, the ambient social restrictiveness it created, and the related factors which flow from such a major imposition on private life.

c. There is decline in family size due to education – perhaps mainly because there is government emphasis on education which is linked to the industrial modernization of the country. This is likely to require youngsters to leave their natal homes permanently or for substantial periods. These may often be the farms on which they were traditionally to work and exemplify the values of traditional Chinese families.

To which population do we refer?

Not the Chinese elite. There, essentially the opposite of several of the items mentioned above may be taking place. For example, there may no decline in patriarchal values owing to the persistence of Communist party hegemony or at least its formal influence among people purporting to reflect the fine core values of Chinese society. Rather, we are talking about rural families, lower and middle class families in smaller urban areas, and primarily lower and middle class families in major urban areas. Further, we are referring to families about which existing government institutions are able to enforce policies such as the one-child policy.

We note that the one-child policy (OCP) was a means of achieving population goals which by any international comparison seemed plausibly realistic if not essential during a period in which impending world population crisis was a common concern among informed citizens, experts, and NGOs. It was one of the most controversial and complex initiatives of self-described revolutionary zealots. It was meant to confront what was deemed a potentially devastating ever-growing bulge in the population of a country perched on 1/7th of the planet's arable land but with already 25% of its population. So there was a robust geopolitical force involved. It had discernible implications for all of China's neighbors and for the world's supply of food and other resources.

It was very political because it yielded an unusually intimate, actually rather flagrant, and long-lived means for government supervision of private behavior of the citizenry. In a sort of unexpected communist triumph, it added to the kind of control of production and its fruits which had been perfected in Communist Europe: in effect, a new canvas on which to draw a map to the future -- reproduction.

From production to reproduction!

Not only were there practical economic and social results of the policy but it also provided a novel, handy, pervasive, and transparent mechanism for recruitment and evaluation of Party officials. Suddenly there was opportunity to confect a new national bureaucracy managing a huge number of people and utterly beholden to the Communist party. This may have been one of the most significant if tacit consequences of the OCP.

Lo and behold. Herewith was an extensive industry of new business for the cadres. Added to the stern five-year plan emphasis on ever-growing production was now the demand for ever-declining reproduction. Less had to be invested in the

population and yet more surely would be mushroomed out of it. Managers could increase productivity per worker because fewer of them were being born. The Peking Goose could produce golden eggs after golden eggs.

Of course the actual efficiency especially of Chinese state-owned enterprises frequently if not overwhelmingly failed to reflect the benign possibilities of this demographic reverie. So a theoretical coup of central planners may have failed to generate optimum outcomes of the innovative policy. Nevertheless there were clear benefits to the trade in official posts. In the core industry of willy-nilly bureaucratic expansion, female comrades were especially essential to monitor reproductive outcomes.

For example, the menstrual cycles of their charges and their contraceptive behavior had to be charted, often on a city block by block basis, and so might their sexuality in general. The scrutinizers of the bedroom had to provide liaison with the broader party structure. Herewith was a wholly new mandate for governmental intrusion into the lives of citizens. Not only the political or the ideological to say nothing of spiritual experience of Chinese persons were subject to official supervision. Now private sexuality qualified for such official attention too.

As factories had production charts, neighborhoods and communities produced non-reproduction tableaux. Overall, for both male and female careerist cadres, surely an overriding question was: Did the comrades make their numbers? Did those for whom they were responsible comport themselves in the nationally desired manner? Had the party members succeeded at home in reaching the population of the nation?

But this was not trouble-free by any means. If only to judge from the experience of a variety of countries (including this one) in linking private childbearing experience with public policy, the issues of contraception and abortion were surely chronically and privately salient or kept uneasily just below the surface. The medical profession was not immune from perturbation too. From jurisdictions in Eastern China, where sensitive communication was somewhat easier, evidently medical personnel who did not keenly celebrate the party line were assigned to unpopular and unpleasant abortion wards rather than other sites of more cheerful forms of treatment such as maternity.

The aspects of society on which it will be useful to focus are of course rather obvious and they include: Family social influence, family wealth and styles of life, the character of offspring and how this interfaces with the workforce demographics

in their immediate neighborhood, as well as with the educational and social relationships in which they participate. Rural family social influence declined due to a decrease in household family size – smaller families yield less clout. There was both loss of property and decline of patriarchy. In effect there was a switch from the priorities of family and social influence to focus primarily on internal survival and accommodation to reductions and changes in options for style of life.

City wealth either stayed the same or increased due to jobs. With increases options expanded. It has been estimated that financial assets of rural households have declined 40% or more over the last two decades, while the financial assets of urban households approximately doubled over the same period. Today the typical rural household has financial assets equal to half a year's income; the typical urban household possesses financial assets equal to just one year's income.

#### Home and school.

The influence of schooling has been the gradual but progressive separation of children from traditional family values and ways of life. Children go to school 6-7 days per week from dawn to dusk. Familiar but lost ways of life have been replaced by the supposed advantages of expanded work opportunities and materialism. In consequence, increasing numbers of children have departed from rural areas. They have created new urban neighborhoods which have in turn contributed to the development of rural neighborhoods composed mainly of the elderly.

There are other less directly personal issues which people will have to confront too; the military, the medical system, their local and possibly national political encounters, and the all-important links between *guanxi*, corruption, and especially personal wealth and advancement. And hovering over all these decisions is an approach to the massive migration of rural Chinese to cities and those in small cities and towns to larger ones. The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development announced in August 2012 that at least 30 million families – involving some 100 million individuals – have benefitted from the country's subsidized housing projects. In the program prices in housing projects were capped while 4.5 million families were given cash subsidies to help meet rent costs in their new homes.

How in this mix will individuals – to a perhaps unsettling extent subject to the alterable tides of government fiat – be willing and able to choose coercive and lengthy reproductive agendas? Is an historically rapid and populous movement of

people from farms to new and old cities conducive to the confidence and stability which may appear to provide welcoming environments for offspring?

There will obviously be exceptions to our examples because of variances in specific family culture, ethnicity, context, regionalism – and even religion among the relatively few cases of observing Chinese (though this may in effect be a larger population than the Government and even foreign observers assume; certainly the Fulan Gong organization has had some impact on governmental complacency). It is clear that there is a plethora of novel conditions generated by a huge population undergoing historically extraordinary social change.

Many of these pressures require rapid adaptation to new circumstances. For example, traditionally wives are under customary obligation to care for the elderly parents of the husband's family. What if uncomfortable distance and poor transport separates the new couple from the old? What if both husband and wife work in the industries which were likely the lure for movement in the first place?

And how will such turbulence affect conduct and management of the Chinese social structure? Will it present authorities with unusual challenges of maintaining social order and political consent? Does the fact that much migration follows the lure of perceptibly greater wealth supposed to accompany movement to the new China put unexpected pressure on the government to deliver improved conditions? Do recurrent and frequent public demonstrations against one or another perceived inequity or slight reveal the sense of danger citizens perceive between what they learned was right growing up and what they see in their current world? As an example, the Chinese government has announced firm plans for a more severe administration of food safety regulations. This is obviously justified on its own but is it also a response to vigorous public outcry about long-standing lapses in safety, for example even in milk products consumed by infants?

### **THE DECLINE IN FAMILY SIZE DUE TO THE EBBING OF WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS PATRIACHY**

There has clearly been decline in the within-family control, influence, and responsibility of head-of family males. A concomitant pattern occurs in the links between individual men in families and the larger village or urban setting in which the lives of people are set. Such decline began with some force perhaps as early as a century ago. We see evidence of protest and consternation about what was characterized even ten decades ago as “the decline of the family.”

Perhaps it is a generic human pattern that regret about the present is almost routinely set aside warm reveries about family life in Once Upon a Time. And family experience is an internationally common template against which impersonal industrial patterns are compared.

But this is no affable fantasy, especially in China. Changes in family experience were firmly accelerated by the drastic anti-familial events in the Mao era. It is worth recalling perhaps unduly dramatized but nevertheless real events in which robust members of the youth wings of the Party were lauded for reviling their traditional anti-revolutionary families, especially members of the bourgeoisie. Such agitation took the form of lawyer-parents parading in dunce caps down Main Street where they were mocked by their own children and those of others. It reflected a striking reality of new forms of familial authority. But it also exposed how supposedly the strongest of ties – those among family members who share genes and formative life experiences -- are vulnerable to coercion of information and the manipulation of social ideas. At least for a time this gives a sharp edge to governments that use propaganda and group manipulation to achieve national goals -- witness the Germans during the 1930s, which was essentially the same story.

This was additionally formalized by the OCP, which was accompanied by changes in the development of educational values. In turn this stimulated the migration of offspring to avail themselves of opportunities for training absent in their communities. As well, the regime permitted the abandonment of collective farms in the countryside. These were converted to the (peculiarly named) “townships” which were in effect once again now family farms. Presumably the choice of a modern go-ahead urban descriptor for the new pattern reflected an official unwillingness to acknowledge with candor that the ancient structure of family could play a respectable role in new China.

Under this “township” system, production increased significantly. Families now received the rewards of their own labor and ingenuity and this accelerated agricultural productivity. At the same time, the structural shift in ownership and hence commitment stimulated population movement to and from newly prosperous and more efficient farms. This further disturbed any traditional equanimity within the family system. It is estimated that implementation of the OCP has led to the birth of approximately 90 million only children the eldest of whom are now in their mid 30’s. Concomitantly it is thought that some 400 million births have been prevented – of persons potentially able to work on farms and other enterprises. This is very many people and no doubt a causative factor along with reduced

fertility of what is evidently a burgeoning shortage of general and skilled workers. Of course this is but an estimate. Many of these potential people may never have been born whatever the policy.

Nevertheless one result has been an increased migration of foreign workers (legal and otherwise) into a country relatively ill-equipped to deal with them, and the development of international communities in various cities – a pattern common to many other countries too. However it can be asserted that the shortage of workers is a special direct effect of the OCP and the inward migration only a secondary effect of the policy. It is likely that neither impact was intended.

Numbers spell out the consequences. Between 2000-2010, 92 million persons aged 15-59 were added to the work force population while 41 million people became aged 60 or older. Between 2010-2020, 1 (one) million workers will be added to the work force and 74 million will become aged 60 or older. Between 2020-2030, 65 million workers aged 15-59 will be lost to the work force while 105 million people will become aged 60 or order. (Note: the source of these figures is the UN in 2007. The 65 million workers lost to the work force between 2020-2030 reflect the decline in the number of younger workers due to the OCP coupled with general reproductive decline.) Interestingly, presumably as a dual international and economic policy, in 2012 China invited 40,000 North Korean seamstresses, technicians, mechanics, construction workers and miners to work in China.

Again, observers of this period may want to attribute the salient changes in family experience to the official OCP. However large changes in the links between landholding and families – two paramount factors of Chinese structure – had surely to generate impact in ramified ways.

### Size.

What are the forms which changes in family size take? What are their effects?

First of all we can begin with the simple fact of numbers themselves. There is almost inevitably going to be decline of individual family social influence because of smaller numbers within families. The rolling ranks of established traditional families will no longer form the central structures of communities. There will be general decline simply because of the decreased number of family members. A commensurate decline in the numbers of female offspring will obviously curtail a family's social influence on matchmaking or current and potential in-laws, and hence on their overall position in any community. Similarly, there will simply be



fewer males to employ in jobs which will inhibit the characteristic intergenerational reciprocity which the workplace makes possible.

Especially among children working elsewhere than home and possibly far from their natal town, there will be decrease in firm parental control and general influence on offspring. This in turn is likely to produce increased vulnerability to political and economic influence – even agitation - among youngsters unmoored from their familiar comfort zones. Now they become subject to the political and economic tides which it is clear the central and other governments monitor very carefully. For men especially, the sexual asymmetry between males and females will present an array of potentially disquieting realities about their own reproductive lives with possibly spirited if indirect political impacts.

Let's review the wealth of families.

Individual rural family wealth has declined more than 40% over the last two decades. Industrialization and modernization have weakened the family and this has been accelerated by increased worker mobility and turnover. Children aren't at home any more to participate in family events, work, ritual support, etc. The result is an increased division between those who have and those who don't. A recent Chinese estimate is that fewer than 1% of Chinese people own 70% of the national wealth. An increasing number of rural people live in poverty conditions – this despite the fact that other statistics show that millions of people have been raised above the poverty level due to industrialization and jobs. But, as noted, the process works both ways.

What of pensions?

The percentage of Chinese workers covered by pensions is 5% by the Civil Service Pension System and 20% by the Basic Pension and Rural System. Sixty-nine percent are not covered by any system. This situation will require future workers to pay additionally to pensions for the increasing percentage of surviving elderly. There are figures from 2005 indicating that for persons aged 60 years and older 37% of urban families and 54% of rural families depend on extended family for support. For persons aged 80 years and older the figures are 60% for urban families and 88% for rural families. The ratios of available working-aged adults (aged 15-59) required to support each elder is estimated as follows: 2010 = 5.4; 2020 = 3.8; 2030 = 2.5; 2040 = 2.0; 2050 = 1.6. Currently the government supported pension plans amount to an estimated value of 1.4 trillion yuan or 222 billion US dollars.

Such projections are almost amusing indications that the planners of the OCP failed to perform the necessary actuarial calculations let alone social ones when they instituted the plan. As in the U.S., where Medicare and Medicaid budget projections ignored greater longevity and increasingly costly medical care among the elderly, failure to include feedback effects of current policies on future socio-economic costs will of course generate ramified consequences of great significance. China is hardly alone in this failure. Nevertheless the existence of the OCP catalyzed its actuarial problem more severely than for other countries which have endured. And of course the sheer numbers of the Chinese experience always lend drama to whatever happens. The upshot of these figures and planning is that wealth shifts loom as major factors in the next 20-30 years.

Economists will have to balance the decline in the number of family members available to produce wealth and changes in the productive system which will permit smaller numbers of workers to produce as much or more than in the past. When farm work was the principal activity, there was relatively little difference in what any pair of hands could produce. The human body, its size, and its fatigue were the major limiting factors. But new machinery, fertilizer in addition to the traditional nightsoil, and more strategic irrigation have sharply escalated the number of people a farmer could feed. For example, by comparison in the US during the last century some 70% of the population performed agriculture functions now performed by 3% of the population with equivalent productive results. Of course the Chinese experience does not compare however it moves in a similar direction.

We can add to the mix of these systematic changes in agriculture as a productive system the decline associated with fewer working bodies in the family. There will be an important intergenerational redistribution of available wealth reflected in payments for the education of offspring. This is by no means cheap in China – it is perhaps comparable in some circles to the US pattern of families struggling to meet anticipated college costs for children. It is decisively not inexpensive for the children of elite families who travel to costly countries elsewhere for their highly desirable and prestigious education. An estimated 75,000 students undertake this each year (probably an underestimate) and some 75% of the students do not return to China at least directly after graduation.

Interestingly, this pattern reflects a general biological process in which reproducers of many offspring at once invest far less energy and resources in each heir than for example with an only child or a pair of them. While this is fairly obvious and elemental biology, in modern complex communities even the difference between

one and two children poses real “investment” dilemmas for parents. The OCP emphasizes the matter rather sharply.

Another contemporary characteristic of Chinese society which affects the economic experience of millions of families is the loss of income due to land confiscated by authorities arbitrarily and unfairly, or because of other constricting patterns of use such as construction mandated by civic authorities.

Of course this is a major source of often bitter antipathy to the powers that be. Inasmuch that many new urban areas have little or no taxing powers, civic revenue derives in large measure from sale of confiscated farmland, at prices generally unfavorable to traditional farmers. It is not eccentric to surmise this produces serious and ramified disillusion with government policy and insecurity about the predictability of important foundations of public and hence private life. Growth of these tensions creates the potential of a turbulent factor in popular political disaffection.

#### The Good Woman of Sichuan.

It is hardly eccentric to opine that the OCP is a policy loathed by many Chinese people who seek to evade its regime. Some 70% of women interviewed about the validity of the restriction reflected unfavorably on it, often bitterly. It is unnecessary to catalogue its endless deprivations of a behavioral and moral character, to say nothing of its consequence for limits on political intrusion on private life. Apart from some NGOs and people committed to zero or less population growth, there is not a groundswell constituency on its behalf.

Nonetheless it is simply prudent if not also somewhat surprising to focus to some extent on the possibility if not likelihood that for countless Chinese – and especially for females - it has been a desirable and useful policy.

The fact is that through *force majeure* it has enabled people to escape the constraints of a formidable regional tradition of service to large family entities. Perhaps the most striking suggestion that this is so is the behavior of countless Asian women in neighboring countries who have departed sharply from what may be viewed as a substantially Asian pattern of life cycle. That is to emphasize that even in Asian communities without a formal OCP reproductive rates are arrestingly low. In such a prosperous and well-established society as Japan, birth rates are insufficient to replace the existing population. In the large cities of South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, and especially in the city-state of Singapore, young women are evidently focusing their attentions on their productive careers rather

than the reproductive. (In Shanghai the birth rate is .67 and in other cities current reproductive rates are approaching 0.50. In effect, this means that nearly 50% of the female population is exercising a zero-child policy let alone a one-child-policy. If continued, this will add significantly to the unavailability of young people to enter the workforce.)

And why not these changes? There has certainly been an increase in a wife's influence on family decisions if only because very many generate significant income. Wives and widows increasingly take jobs to serve as household breadwinners. This provides them some autonomy and authority within the family.

Meanwhile, there is freer choice among offspring regarding marriage which further curtails the power of the traditional kinship regime. There are also increases in depression, alcoholism, and drug use among patriarchs in addition to an increase in depression and suicide among teenagers. Clearly this yields an increased demand for medical services. There is as well an increase in novel family arrangements such as a father who lives in a rural setting while a mother lives in the city with her daughter so she can care for her grandchild. Further, currently 66% or more of elderly family members live with their own children – this can be contrasted to 1994 when 60% of rural wives lived in the home of their parents-in-law.

For both one-child and multi-child families there has been a decline in the importance of the family patriarch and males in general (such as uncles), and there is a corresponding decline in offspring's responsibility to family. In addition, there is evidence of job-sharing, frequent job change, unexpected impacts of female employment while rural males remain the primary source of China's army of migrant workers. It is estimated that unemployed rural males account for 95% of individuals entering the migrant work force each year – a group of some 230 - 300 million souls who have become members of the workforce over the last two decades. Currently (although this number will decline dramatically over the next decade), 13,000,000 rural males enter the workforce each year. One massive and obvious result is a decline of healthy and motivated youthful workers in rural areas. This is not a solely Chinese matter. For example the average age of Japanese farmers is 68 and Ghanaians 59.

There appears to be increased dissatisfaction among all family members except for migrating-away females. There is a discernable increase in prostitution and multiple sex partners due primarily to the large number of unattractive males in the migrant workforce. Increasingly numbers of women are kidnapped for marriage or the sex trade.

We have already noted that changes in the system of family relationships have caused broad deterioration in the efficacy of the family system – for example daughters may no longer accept responsibility for the traditional practice of responsibility for their in-law parents as well as their own.

One effect of changes in rural economies appears to be that products of the countryside are more avid applicants to the military because of the failure to find other opportunities. There is evidence of a decline in male fertility due to increased stress and tension. Reduced sperm counts correlate with the degree of environmental degradation. There is increased malnutrition and untreated chronic disease among rural-living elderly and their offspring. Medical requirements have increased due to drug and alcohol consumption and depression among patriarchs and an increasing number of rural-living teenagers.

We have also noted a decline in overall family wealth (on average) which has been partially offset by increase in the wealth of offspring. Few rural elderly have pensions while many urban-living elderly do have pensions. This is coupled with an increased motivation of offspring to migrate to obtain employment. This produces considerable activity inasmuch as the current percent of Chinese under age 14 is 16.3%. However there is little migration among those fitting the traditional description of patriarch, but much more among younger females and of course of children to schools.

### **DECLINE IN FAMILY SIZE DUE TO ONE-CHILD POLICY AND RELATED FACTORS**

The OCP has been in effect for urban areas for three decades but generally not in rural and so-called ethnic areas which may produce unanticipated consequences of perseverating impact.

#### A popular policy?

As noted, 70% of women interviewed were dissatisfied with the policy and of course the pressure to produce males has yielded countless abortions of female fetuses and resulting gender imbalances often sharp in various regions and overall. Notwithstanding the many persons who elect to have one or no children, there are efforts to avoid the policy ranging from bribery and deception to official favor. Extreme cases of late abortions compelled by authorities may become publically controversial and call into question the overall character of the Chinese regime.

Similar hostility is already provoked by indications of drastic imbalances of wealth which are readily attributed to direct corruption and collusion between businesses and officials.

It is noteworthy that so far as it can be known the flows of corrupt official and business wealth tend to follow lines of kinship. This is of course the ancient pattern in China with which the revolution has little interfered.

### Who are they?

The one-child experiment has now generated millions of youngsters many of whom are now in the 30's. The character of these people is of course a matter of intense interest to the Chinese and other observers too. What can be said?

The most salient fact is that these people emerge from a community with a sharp pro-male bias. Male children especially receive endless emotional investment and attention – after all two sets of grandparents and one pair of parents produce a team of six attendants for the child. It is said these products become self-centered, cooperate poorly both as children and as young adults, and understandably enough develop a highly favorable view of their own importance – an attitude deemed the “little emperor effect.” They are reported to exhibit relatively higher IQ's than other persons and appear - when and if they do marry – to replicate the one-child unit with which they are familiar and which of course remains the regnant current pattern.

They seem to have less time for their natal families and are considered undesirable for the military because of their surprise at requirements to play well with others. They show more difficulty than usual in meeting minimal performance standards, lack management skills, and are frequently seen as uncooperative and arrogant. Those in business or government organizations have been seen as relatively passive and without edge, though prone to hypochondria especially in the military. They benefit from considerable investment in their education even when they are indifferent students. When they do marry, they display higher divorce rates than children from multi-children families and evidently find it more difficult than the norm to find willing marital partners.

There is evidence of increase in (male) homosexual behavior – less is known about females. There is general increase in prostitution throughout China and no abatement of the traditional lure of concubinage to both male and female participants.

Because of the sub-legal desirability for wealthy Chinese to extract assets from mainland China, an arrangement with women in Hong Kong or other nearby jurisdictions is relatively advantageous for an obvious variety of reasons. Another means of extracting local assets is by sending children to other countries for costly educations, occasionally accompanied by purchase of real estate and other investments. Again, it appears that as many as 75% of such students do not return promptly (if ever) to live and work in China. In any event, their presence abroad offers an opportunity for movement of wealth and establishment of potential refuge in the event of political upheaval. But the investment feature of this should not be overlooked, because not only does the foreign education and travel to it require resources, often necessary too are coaching lessons and expensive courses simply to prepare for successfully securing admission to a desirable college. And at this relatively senior level, there appears to be relative gender equality in investments made in the preparation of male and female students. The net effect of all this on the extant system is perhaps equivalent to the English or North American pattern of elite secondary schools to which youngsters are sent in an effort to prepare them for significant adult positions.

Meanwhile, *en masse* it appears 99% of teenagers are now literate and for what it's worth it seems 60% own cell phones. Right through schooling, females do significantly better than males, and there serious and rather senior discussions in China about equalizing educational opportunities by changing the nature of school or even frankly manipulating results to achieve formal equity. For example, a seemingly major article in a recent Beijing Review articulated this with firmness. It is possible that educational accomplishment of females with their corresponding income and efficacy will cause change in the pro-male cast of traditional society. As well, confidence in certified female reproduction compared with male will further enhance their salience for parents interested in grandchildren.

### **Some Comments**

A few concluding comments are in order. This has been an excursion in seeking an evaluation of what is happening in a vast country through the lens of its experience at the intimate level of families and ongoing life cycles. The Chinese OCP was and is still a dramatically significant initiative in social planning and on the largest possible scale at that. What may such an endeavor suggest about the political future of China and especially how will what happens there affect the military and realpolitikal behavior of China in the context of American military, economic, and geopolitical patterns and goals?

Certainly unexpectedly and perhaps peculiarly, one take-away from this analysis is the normalcy of Chinese life. As has been indicated herein, there is a cinematic view of China which reflects institutions and behavior suffused with legendary and historical myths emphasizing Chinese exceptionalism. The self-serving evasiveness of scholars of the region which emphasized Chinese “inscrutability” was not only potential myth-driven itself, but it permitted appropriation by a self-limiting cadre of intellectual managers of well-considered action about Chinese people and interaction with them. Clearly familiarity with a difficult collection of languages will offer the analysts referred to an understandable impatience with the views of the unlettered. Nonetheless, perhaps insight into China seems more likely to emerge from a documentary than a color spectacle about very-roiled aristocrats.

There are important exceptions to this viewpoint about which more in a moment. However what seems quickly normal is the reiterated subjection of Chinese people to an array of forces and opportunities to which a customary American response would seem relatively familiar. For example, the readiness with which Chinese women have flocked to lucrative factory work will be familiar to women who did the same during WWII and are doing so currently, often creating unexpected changes in traditional families much admired in cultural lore but increasingly rare in statistical terms. At the visual level, the picturesque *hutongs* of Chinese urban life are rapidly disappearing – often willfully destroyed in the name of modernity - to be replaced by internationally normative high rise buildings no more “Chinese” than in Chicago or Sao Paulo.

But of course what remain distinctly and significantly Chinese is its political arrangement and the perhaps mysterious but nonetheless pervasive integration of political process with covert and overt coercion. This is an often frightening integration which is candidly Communist and which was once far more than now regarded as a signal accomplishment of revolutionary world force. The single unadorned building which is the center for allocation of all potent and leveraged jobs in the country is the epicenter of the Chinese regime. Despite internal and external efforts it remains the central source of functionality, privilege, and wealth in the country. The secrecy of the operations of the elite managers of the country’s power structure along with its industrial and business systems is mirrored by a comparable spectacle of secretive dominance in the military, with its inevitably uneasy interaction with political masters for whom the military is at once reassuring but also potentially threatening.



In this especially Communist part of the social system, the integration of private family life with public political activity is most challenging to understand. It is clearly the human default pattern of family members to prefer and support other family members (unless they are of course family enemies). In the Chinese condition such support and its consequences are most challenging to track and understand. For example, once a candidate was recently and secretly advanced as the likely next head of state, suddenly all public references to the ample unexplained wealth of his extended family members disappeared from the public information base. As has already been noted, it appears very often that the routes along which corrupt wealth travel track readily to those of families. Perhaps once upon a time there was that innovative classical Mandarin system of ensuring that high officials did not serve in their natal region so that they would not be tempted by the easy-to-pronounce nepotism of traditional China. However it appears that the manual of operation for this system has been lost, despite occasionally dramatic explosions of rebuke to too-kind family members with access to public assets.

The case should and could be made that a sophisticated kinship chart may provide more effective insight into the operations of specific government or military officials than description of their ideological parentage or their approach to technocratic solutions to human issues rather than coercive political ones. At the same time, the overwhelming centrality of the Chinese Communist Party to affairs of state as well as states of personal being remains a quite colossal feature of that society. There remains much to know and to find out as well as discard.