

POPULATION GROWTH IN BEIJING: TRENDS AND COUNTERMEASURES

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ABSTRACT: Beijing's population has experienced a dramatic increase ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China. Population growth in Beijing can be broadly broken down into three major components: natural increase, immigration, and the growth of floating population. The continuous growth of Beijing's population is closely linked with its centralized multi-function. The comprehensive countermeasures to control Beijing's population growth are proposed, for example, decentralizing economic functions, including developing the suburbs, developing the metropolitan area and creating counter-magnetic centers, reforming the administrative and economic systems.

KEY WORDS: population growth, Beijing population, Urban population

I. INTRODUCTION

With an area of 16,800 sq.km, Beijing is presently the largest one of the three municipalities directly under the Central Government. The area of Beijing municipality, which includes many rural townships and villages, is three times larger than that of Shanghai. Among the total population living in Beijing's administrative boundary, the urban population only accounts for a small proportion. Such an urban population, however, has experienced dramatic increase ever since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. Census data have shown that while the total population for the municipality increased from 4.1 million in 1949 to 10 million in 1988, the urban population has expanded from 1.5 million to 5.6 million. Taking the floating population into account, Beijing's total population would be 11.5 million and the urban population would be 6.9 million in 1988^[1-3].

According to projections, the urban population of Beijing will be about 6.8 million and the total population will reach 12 million by the year 2000. These figures would be 8.8 million and 14.2 million respectively when the floating population is accounted (Table 1). The continuous expansion of urban population has created an increasing burden of the city's limited facilities and infrastructure. Managing the phenomenal growth of Beijing's urban population has therefore become a matter of official concern in recent years.

This paper examines the growth dynamics of Beijing's urban population. We first break down Beijing's population growth into several components. We then examine the impact of Beijing's political and economic development on the growth of its population. This will enable us to identify the underlying force that has shaped the city's ever growing

Table 1 Developing trends of population in Beijing (in millions)

	Total	population	Urban population
1988 (1) permanent		10	5.6
(2) floating		1.5	1.4
(1)+(2)		11.5	7.0
2000 (1) permanent		12	6.8
(2) floating		2.2	2.0
(1)+(2)		14.2	8.8

population. Finally, possible countermeasures are suggested to relieve the severe population pressure of the capital of China. It is our contention that only when the growth dynamics of urban population is well understood can meaningful population control policies be set and carried out effectively.

II. GROWTH DYNAMICS OF POPULATION

1. Major Components of Population Growth

Population growth in Beijing can be broadly broken down into three major components: natural increase, immigration, and the growth of the floating population (Fig.1).

Although several national campaigns for birth control have been implemented since the 1970s, natural increase is still a major factor contributing to Beijing's population growth. Every year, Beijing sees an increase of 100,000 through natural growth, about half of them are urban population^[3]. Unplanned births always occur in the countryside district surrounding the core city. This is associated with low income, low labor productivity. There is also a tradition of favoring male offspring. "Having sons to look after one when one is old", "more sons mean more blessings," and "one lame son is better than nine daughters" are common sayings.

A second component contribution to population growth is immigration. About 50,000 people settle in Beijing every year. Most of them stay in the urban area of the city. These new immigrants include salaried office workers, manual labourers, researchers, graduated students, and the spouses of these new residents^[1-2].

In addition, the floating population of Beijing, which has been increased by more than 100,000 every year, contributes a lot to the city's population growth. Most of the floating population are part-time workers such as construction workers (about 300,000 a year), business and office workers. They also include tourists and medical patients. In 1988 the floating population numbered about 1.5 million, and this figure is expected to increase to 2.2 million by the year 2000.

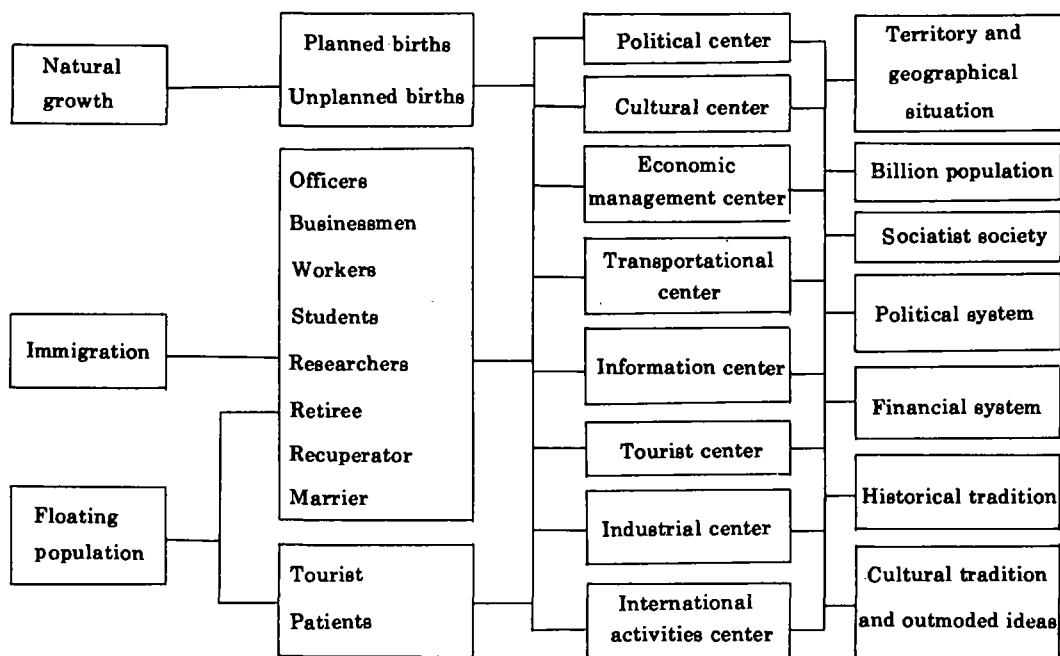


Fig.1 The mechanism of Beijing's Population growth

2. Centralized Multi-functions of the Capital: A Underlying Force of Population Growth

The continuous growth of Beijing's population is closely linked with its centralized multi-functions. As the capital of the People's Republic of China, Beijing is the political center of the country. The offices of the State Council and the Communist Party are located here. Besides, it is also a national center for economic management, information, transportation, recreation, and other cultural, tourist and international activities. Also Beijing has been a center for the country's processing industries. Compared to other Chinese cities,

Beijing has obvious advantages with respect to culture, policy making, finance, infrastructure, availability of goods and material, talented persons, historic heritages, and scenic beauty.

Beijing has 67 colleges or universities (one third of them are national key universities), 500 research institutes, 320 publishing houses, 42 theatres, and many museums, exhibition halls, and libraries^[1-2]. It is the place where writers and artists gather. Beijing is the seat of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, with their numerous affiliated research institutes. It is also the home of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences. Beijing also leads the country in publishing, broadcasting, and television services. Beijing-based newspapers account for one half of the nation's total newspaper circulation.

Beijing is the departure or terminus of three-fifths of our domestic flights and four-fifths of the international flights. There are 80 trains leaving Beijing for many parts of the country every day. About half of the foreign tourists visiting China each year pass through Beijing. The city earns 25 percent of the country's total tourist foreign exchange.

In the past four decades, modern industry has made great strides in Beijing. The annual output value of industrial production in 1949 was 170 million Chinese yuan. By 1988, it had increased to 56 billion yuan, second only to Shanghai^[4]. Beijing employs 1.5 million laborers in such industries as power, metallurgy, coal mining, machine building, motor vehicles manufacturing, chemicals, textiles and other light industry. In recent years, high-tech industry has developed rapidly^[1-2].

3. Formation of Beijing's Multi-functions

The roots of the capital's highly concentrated functions can be found in the city's history, the existing social and financial systems, and the cultural tradition.

3.1 Evolution of the City

With a population of 1.1 billion, China is the largest country in Asia and the third largest in the world. As one of the six ancient Chinese capitals, Beijing became the capital, known as Ji, of the State of Yan during the Zhou Dynasty (1115-1234 A.D.) established its capital here. After conquering and unifying China, the Mongols founded the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 A.D.), and made Beijing their capital, calling it Dadu. When Marco Polo, the Italian traveller, came to the city, he was so impressed by Dadu that he said it was the most prosperous and the largest city in the world, both in area and in the grandeur of its buildings. At that time Dadu had a population of 900,000. The two later dynasties Ming and Qing (1368-1911 A.D.) both made Beijing their capital. So Beijing has many splendid cultural relics, scenic spots and historic monuments. Local tourist agencies urge every Chinese to make a journey to Beijing. This would mean that the capital would have to accommodate 400,000 Chinese tourists each day.

Meanwhile, the county as a whole is in the process of urbanization. Every year about 20 million peasants flow from the countryside into cities and towns, including Beijing.

3.2 Roles in Socialist China

The 1949 revolution accorded China a socialist system which is characterized by a planned economy on the basis of public ownership. The state safeguards the proportional and co-ordinated development of the national economy through a planned market mechanism. In such a system, a city which is a political center must play a comprehensive role. This is unlike many world capitals which serve only as political centers, allowing the economic and information functions to go elsewhere.

In China, a political center also serves as the center of national economic management. Other services such as information, banking, insurance, communication, radio and television broadcasting are also concentrated in Beijing. All economic decisions are made in Beijing. As many as 90 percent of all the foreign organizations in China are located in Beijing. In addition, financing, insurance and wholesaling, which lay dormant before the current reform, are now flourishing in Beijing. As a result, the government departments dealing with economic affairs have expanded in size and increased in number^[5].

3.3 Economic Functions

In China, most sectors of the economy, except industry, are nonprofit or low-profit ones, and some even need to be subsidized by the state. Thus, industry provides the main source of income for large cities. As a result, Beijing had to adopt a policy of "industry support". At present, the main indices used in economic planning are total output value of industry and agriculture. The long-term goal of China is to reach four times the 1980's total output value of industry and agricultural by the year 2000. The main task of every city is to attain the targeted volume of industrial output. To achieve the goal, Beijing has to expand her industrial base. without an industrial base, the ever expanding city would be unable to cope. The industrial population in the city accounts for more than two-fifths of the total population, and this is a telling indicator as to how much Beijing has expanded.

As the political center, Beijing tends to receive a large share of investment in goods and materials, and it has a better infrastructure, which means that it can attract more firms and workers. For example, the infrastructure of Beijing is twice as large as Shanghai, and one-and-a-half times as large as Tianjin; yet the number of telephones and the amount of road surface per capita is double that of Shanghai and Tianjin.

3.4 Cultural Function

China has had a centralized government for over 2000 years. The idea of "capital first,"—that the capital should be superior in every way to other parts of the country—is deeply rooted in people's minds. The United States has hosted the Olympic Games several times, but never in Washington D.C. China, however, has chosen the capital as the site for both the Asian Games and the Olympic Games. Beijing claims to have the country's biggest theatre, stadium, library, university, bank, wire service and so on. All these demand a large

investment and add to the expansion of the city^[6].

There is also a movement of population for reasons of marriage: women flow from the countryside into the city, first to the outer suburbs, then to the inner suburbs, and then to the proper. Good living and cultural conditions attracting the desire to improve their psychological factors also play a role. Most of these women are in the child-bearing years, which has significant impact on population growth^[7].

III. COMPREHENSIVE COUNTERMEASURES

Ever since the 1960s, the government has successfully regulated the growth of Beijing, and as a result Beijing has not suffered from the vicious cycle of population growth that has characterized the capital cities of many developing countries. Nevertheless, the main means used to control urban population growth has been administrative, including household certificate regulation, birth control, sending the youth to the countryside, and relocating factories to the interior regions of the country. Some policies adopted have been self-contradictory. For instance, the government restricts the increase of population on the one hand, but it arranges new construction projects that has lead to population growth on the other. To control more effectively Beijing's population growth, we suggest that a set of comprehensive countermeasures have to be employed (Fig.2).

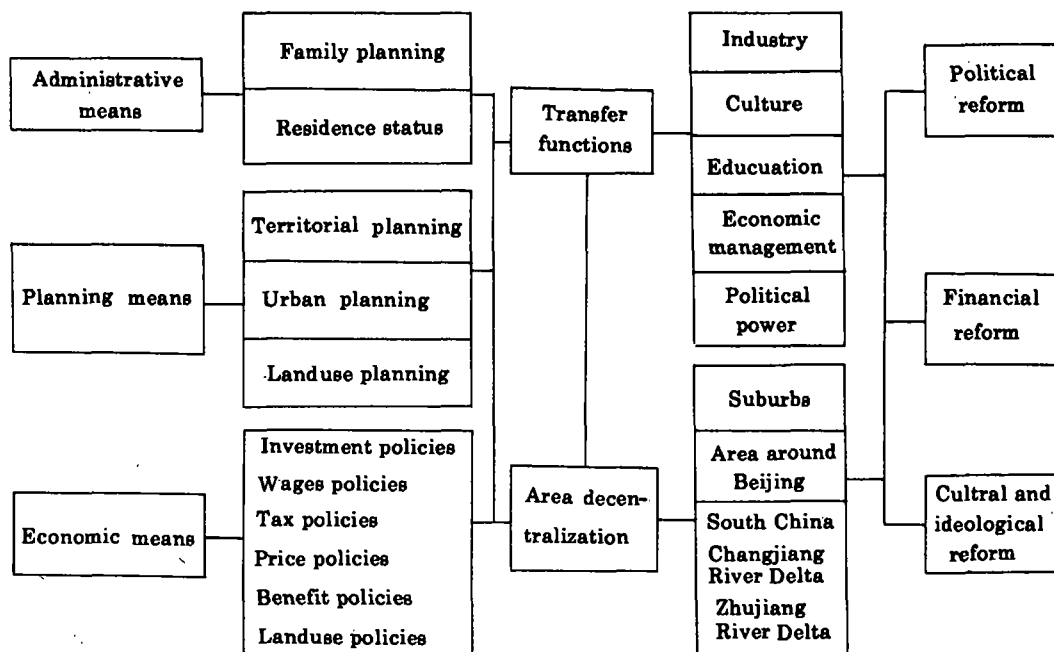


Fig.2 Comprehensive countermeasures to control Beijing's population growth

The first means would be administrative. The socialist system makes it possible to control population growth through administrative means. Between 1950 to 1963, the annual birth rate in Beijing was 36 per thousand persons. After family planning was introduced, the birth rate decreased to 14 per thousand^[3]. Administrative means were important in the past, and they are still important today.

The second means is economic. It includes investment policies, tax policies, and price policies that will encourage enterprises to move to other places. Wages policies and benefit policies should be used to encourage people to move out of the city.

The third means involves planning. This includes national planning, regional planning, city planning and neighborhood planning.

1. Decentralizing Economic Functions And Population

There are three functions that should be relocated out of Beijing. First, industries which require a large volume of natural resources, such as water, should be moved out of the city. Second, some of the economic managerial power should be transferred to subcenters. Third, some educational and cultural institutes, research institutes and sports facilities should be transferred out of the city. So it is necessary to develop areas to accommodate these relocated functions.

1.1 Developing the Suburbs

The planned area of Beijing's city only covers 750 sq.km. Suburbs and counties account for 95 percent of the municipality's total area^[1-2]. They offer locations for some of the factories and organizations to be moved out of the core city. These suburbs will act as a buffer zone to cushion the influx of population.

1.2 Developing the Metropolitan Area

The Beijing Metropolitan Area, which is composed of Qinhuangdao, Tangshan, Langfang, Baoding, Zhongzhou, Xuanhua and Chengde, can help to share some of the relocated functions of the capital. Each summer, for example, various meetings and political activities are shifted to summer resorts such as Beidaihe and Chengde. Swarms of tourists also flock there. This has helped to relieve the pressure of Beijing.

The Beijing-Tianjin-Tangshan Region covers an area of 52,000 sq.km. "Big at both ends and small in the middle" characterizes the distribution of the cities and towns in this region. About 83 percent of the region's urban population is located in the metropolis of Beijing and Tianjin, with a lopsided population distribution caused by the stronger magnetic pull of Beijing. One fourth of the total immigrants into Beijing comes from Hebei Province. Construction of one or two new cities with a population of about 500,000 can counteract the magnetic effect of Beijing^[8].

1.3 Creating Counter-magnetic Centers

A second or third national economic managerial center needs to be established in the

Changjiang River (Yangtze) Delta or Zhujiang (Pearl) River Delta. Ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China, state plans have favoured north China for industrial development because of the abundant coal and iron resources in the north. Now that the water shortage has become a constraining factor, industry should be shifted to the south. The south has plenty of water although coal and iron are in short supply. Technically, however, the shipment of coal is easier than the transfer of water. Moreover, the demand for coal could be met by nuclear energy.

Since the implementation of the "open door" policy, the potential energy of the coastal area in the south has been largely unleashed. Zhejiang Province, for example, has topped all other provinces in the speed of its development. The Changjiang River Delta is the most developed area in the country, both economically and culturally. The industrial output of the Jiangsu Province and Zhejiang Province and Shanghai Municipality have accounted for more than a quarter of the national total. This has paved the way for the establishment of a subcenter in the south.

2. Reforming the Administrative and Economic Systems

The process of controlling Beijing's expansion also requires reform of the current political structure. In fact, one may say that without reforming the political system, Beijing's expansion would be out of control in the years to come.

China is a socialist country. There are many defects in the current system. The chief ones among these defects are the overconcentration of power in the central government, a serious bureaucratization, and feudal influences that are far from being eliminated. The overconcentration of power is manifested not only in the concentration of administrative, economic and cultural departments and mass organizations in the hands of leading party committee, but also in the concentration of all grassroots power in the hands of leading organs at the higher levels in the capital. The leading organs in the capital are taking charge of many matters which they should not and are unable to handle, or cannot handle efficiently. The way to solve this problem is to decentralize the powers from central government to lower level authorities. In this process, one must expand the power of the major cities, set up second and third subcenters in the south, and give subcenters a greater role in developing a commodity economy.

Meanwhile, new financial resources need to be opened up. Beijing should develop other income-generating activities, including all elements of the market system, such as funds, labor, technology, information, and especially real estate. In this way, industries would not be the sole bread-winner for the city. To achieve a balance development, it is imperative to make the city less dependent on industry for its income.

It is also important to change the outmoded ideas that the political center must be simultaneously an economic and cultural center, and that the capital must be superior to

other parts of the country in everything. Our guidelines for planning and development should be brought up to date to deal with modernization^[5].

Reforming the political and economic structures, reforming the financial structure, and eliminating the outmoded ideas are a gradual cumulative process. There are many obstructions in the process of reform. Consequently, controlling Beijing's over-expansion would be a gradual, long-term process. Even with these countermeasures, it is likely that Beijing will still become the largest city of China in the future.

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