

One-child China is a success, says Labour aide Adair Turner

By [DAVID DERBYSHIRE FOR MAILONLINE](#)

UPDATED: 02:53 EST, 22 September 2009

China's one-child policy - which has resulted in forced abortions, infanticide and compulsory sterilization - has had a 'positive impact' on the country's economic performance, one of Labour's leading advisers says today.

Lord Turner, head of the Financial Services Authority, claims the laws on family size played a crucial role in China's economic take-off and allowed the country to develop without 'severe political and social tensions'.

But human rights campaigners criticized Lord Turner for appearing to support the draconian laws, claiming they had led to untold misery for women and children.

The former director general of the CBI Adair Turner argues that there is a pressing need to stop world's population growing at an 'explosive rate'. 'While there are good reasons for objecting to the enforced nature of the Chinese one-child policy, we should not underestimate the positive impact which that policy has almost certainly had and will have over the next several decades on Chinese economic performance,' he says in the Royal Society journal Philosophical Transactions.

Lord Turner claims the problems of a low birth rate and aging population have been overstated in the past, and singles out China as a positive role model. China's controversial family planning laws, introduced in 1979, are thought to have prevented the birth of up to 400million babies.

Lord Turner plays down the social problems, claiming smaller families have led to increased savings, which in turn have fueled growth.

He says: 'China today simply has more capital per worker - more and better roads, ports, power capacity and factory equipment - than, for instance, all African countries.'

Robert Whelan of the think tank Civitas said: 'It is regrettable that Lord Turner should inadvertently appear to support China's one-child policy as it has resulted in probably the most human rights abuses of any population policy on earth. 'I would also question his analysis that the one-child policy is responsible for China's economic spurt. It's much more likely that economic growth has led to the reduced birth rate.'

HOW THE LAW WORKS

UNDER China's 'family planning policy', couples in urban areas are allowed just one child.

In rural areas they may have a second if their first child was female or disabled. Couples must wait three or four years before having their second child.

Parents who have an illegal child face huge fines and must also pay for his or her healthcare and schooling.

The Chinese government says the policy has prevented the birth of 400million babies, easing social, environmental and economic problems. The country's population has passed 1.3billion and is still growing, but is likely to peak within three decades.

The policy has led to a soaring

abortion rate and accusations of female infanticide.

In 2006, a lawyer was jailed in China for exposing over-zealous health workers illegally forcing women to have late abortions and sterilisation.

Because baby boys are favoured over girls, the policy has skewed the sex ratio. Today there are 118 boys for every 100 girls, and a total of 50million more males than females.

Wealthier parents can screen for the sex of their unborn babies and abort girls. Poorer families who want a boy rely on midwives to dispose of unwanted newborn girls.

However some cities are now easing the laws. In Shanghai, parents are being encouraged to have a second child.

Amnesty International's China researcher Corinna-Barbara Francis said: 'Coercive measures used to clamp down on the growth in population in China - such as forced abortions and sterilizations - are abhorrent and should be stopped immediately.

'Women are not the only ones at risk: those who dare to defend their rights have suffered from human rights abuses as well.

'Amnesty deplores such practices and continues to urge the Chinese authorities to ensure that no coercive measures are used in the implementation of the one-child policy.'

Lord Turner, who has two daughters, is one of Labour's most influential advisers. He set the minimum wage as head of the Low Pay Commission, led the review into pensions and fixed the UK's carbon targets as chairman of the Committee on Climate Change.

Last month he supported the idea of new global taxes on financial transactions, warning that a 'swollen' financial sector paying excessive salaries has grown too big for society.

He said the debate on bankers' bonuses has become a 'populist diversion' and that more drastic measures may be needed to cut the financial sector down to size.