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Governing China's Population: From Leninist to Neoliberal Biopolitics By Susan Greenhalgh and Edwin A. Winckler

Since the 1970s China has experienced one of the fastest fertility declines in recorded history: the number of children per woman has dropped from just under 6 to 1.2. At the same time China's sex ratio at birth has soared to 120 males to 100 females, one of the highest in the world. What political processes underlie these shifts? What is the significance of these transformations for the PRC regime, Chinese society, and China's place in the world?

Based on internal documents, long-term fieldwork, and interviews with a wide range of actors, *Governing China's Population* (by Susan Greenhalgh and Edwin A. Winckler, forthcoming in September, 2005) takes a fresh look at the tortuous history and contentious politics of China's population policy.

Inspired by the writings of the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, the book analyzes the gradual "governmentalization" of China's population after 1949, a remarkable buildup of capacity for governance by the regime, the professions, and individuals. The Mao era first placed the goal of slowing population growth on the political agenda. The Deng and Jiang eras furthered this policy by giving population control a central place in China's new program of national systemic reform. This involved the use of "hard" birth planning techniques, such as compulsory sterilization and forced abortions.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, political tensions between regime and society have eased somewhat, as popular fertility culture has begun to converge with state birth propaganda. The authors show that, "China's people have become increasingly preoccupied with producing world-class persons: good scientific mothers, exemplary children, and globally competitive workers."

Since the turn of the millennium the regime has initiated a gradual shift toward “soft” neoliberal approaches and has begun expanding its birth program to deliver social services. Neoliberalism recognizes the need for government to regulate social activities. “However, it requires that intervention be as limited and indirect as possible, in the mode of central banks adjusting interest rates to regulate complex economies.” Population, once a lagging sector in China’s transition from communism, is now helping lead the country toward more modern forms of governance. According to the authors, how far the PRC will go in implementing this market-oriented approach remains to be seen.

The book documents the vast social suffering and human trauma that China’s population policies have created, especially during the Deng era. Yet Greenhalgh and Winckler argue that power over population has also been positive and productive, promoting China’s global rise by creating new kinds of “quality” persons equipped to succeed in the world economy.

Overall, this wide-ranging account vividly conveys the voices of the Chinese who have engaged in this giant project of social engineering in different ways—as policymakers and implementers, propagandists and critics, compilers and resisters. *Governing China’s Population* illuminates the far-reaching consequences of deep state intrusion in reproduction. This book will appeal to China watchers everywhere—generalists and specialists alike.

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