UPDATE: China Braces for Baby Boom Under New Two-Child Rule

Part I

1) List 4 things that China’s One-Child-Policy has been blamed for.
   1- 
   2- 
   3- 
   4-

2) What is the current population of China? _________________________________
   When did the One-Child Policy begin? ____________________________
   According to Communist Party estimate, how many births did it prevent?

3) Explain the original goal of the One-Child-Policy?

4) How did some couples get around the One-Child-Policy laws?

5) Why don’t some Chinese couples want to have a second child? Explain in detail.

Part II

6) Give 3 detailed reasons why the Communist Party altered the One-Child-Policy?
   1- 
   2- 
   3-

7) What happened to China’s labor force in 2012?

8) Explain why did many couples avoid pregnancy in 2015?
PART I Thursday, October 29, 2015

BEIJING (NBC News) -- China announced Thursday it was reversing its one-child policy, a controversial rule implemented 35 years ago aimed at taming its exploding population.

While the policy has been blamed for forced sterilizations and abortions, China's gender imbalance, and child trafficking, the government's decision to end it is largely symbolic. Here's what you need to know about the change, which will allow all married couples to now have two children and is expected to be approved by the country's parliament in March.

At 1.4 billion people, China is the world's most populous country. The one-child policy was introduced in 1979 with the goal of relieving the strain the population was putting on demands for water and other resources. According to the government, about 400 million births have been prevented thanks to the one-child rule.

The policy has been a cornerstone of the Chinese Communist Party, and has had a huge impact on Chinese society, economy and identity. But exemptions, especially in the last five to ten years, have watered it down. Rural residents and ethnic minorities have long been allowed to have more than one child without penalty — if their firstborn was female. More recently, in 2013, couples who were each single children themselves were allowed to have two children.

As the middle class expanded and as incomes grew, many couples developed the means to give birth outside China, from as close as Hong Kong to as far as the U.S., spawning the birth tourism industry. In this sense, the Chinese Communist Party's decision to eradicate the one-child policy was long overdue. And the Party was aware.

Economics is key to understanding why China has decided to forego a longstanding policy that has been, ultimately, too successful: It's resulted in a shrinking population. One of the challenges that has contributed to pressure for the country to transition from a low-end manufacturing giant to a consumer-led economy is because it hasn't been able to sustain a cheap labor pool. There simply aren't enough young people to reinforce the labor pool for factory work in unskilled jobs.

Second, the aging population there has no safety net. Despite its communist badge, the Chinese government does not look after the elderly. The burden of taking care of the elderly has fallen squarely on the shoulders of their offspring. With each couple bearing only one child, that child now is solely responsible for caring for both parents instead of sharing the burden with siblings.

Many couples simply can't afford to have another child. In 2007, NBC News interviewed couples for a story about family planning and asked them whether they would want to have more than one child. Many said they did not. Raising offspring in cities like Beijing or Shanghai was already very expensive, and those parents wanted to give the very best of everything to the one child they had.

Minor relaxing of the policy in 2013 were greeted with a similar response. "We lack a safe social net to support a family with two children," Wang Tao, a 35-year-old Beijing native, told NBC News in 2013. "China doesn't provide a pension or free education."

Demographers said the change might not be able to reverse the declining fertility rate. "The good news is, it is here. The bad news is, it is too little, too late," Cai Yong, a sociology professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, told the Associated Press.

China is the biggest source of adoptions for families in the U.S. who are adopting internationally. According to the State Department, from 1999 to 2013, nearly 72,000 babies were adopted into the U.S. from China. Of those adopted, 88.9 percent of the children were female — a reflection of Chinese families' centuries-long preference for sons.

PART II Monday, January 4, 2016
UPDATE: China Braces for Baby Boom Under New Two-Child Rule

BEIJING, China (NBC NEWS)---When Zhou Meifen gave birth to her second child not long after 12:01 a.m. on New Year's Day, she dodged a $12,000 birth control tax by just a few minutes. The 36-year-old interior designer from Wenzhou in China's Zhejiang province was one of the earliest beneficiaries of the new law that took effect on January 1 which allows couples to have two children instead of one. If her baby had been delivered during 2015, she would've faced the hefty bill.

The country is expected to welcome as many as eight million extra new babies each year after the abolition of the controversial one-child policy, ushering in a new era of brothers and sisters for Chinese families. China's Health and Family Planning Commission says 90 million couples now qualify for a second child under the new rules.

The one-child policy was in place for more than three decades in China to control population growth. It also spawned the abuses of forced abortions and sterilizations and led to more boys being born than girls. Experts predict that the two-child policy will boost the number of new babies born in China every year from 16 million to somewhere between 20 million and 24 million — almost equivalent to the population of Australia.

Despite being the most populous country on earth with nearly 1.4 billion people, the Chinese government abandoned the one-child policy in October over fears of a demographic crisis caused by an aging population, shrinking labor force and gender imbalance.

"It's hard to say if the policy has come too early or too late," said Professor Du Peng, a population expert at Renmin University. China's new policy "won't solve all problems but it could help adjust the population structure and ease the pressure of aging," Du told NBC News.

China's labor force began to decline in 2012, worrying worried government planners with the prospect of fewer and fewer wage earners supporting the ever-expanding elderly population. China's Health and Family Planning Commission projected that the two-child policy will add 30 million extra people to the workforce by 2050.

All beds at Beijing's leading maternity hospital are booked out until July. Maternity hospitals in the capital can accommodate 260,000 pregnancies annually but the number of births this year is expected to exceed 300,000, according to the state-run People's Daily.

Many Chinese couples also avoided pregnancies in 2015 — which was the Year of the Sheep and therefore considered unlucky. While some are predicted a national baby boom, birth figures are likely to vary by region and economic circumstances.

A survey conducted by the Fujian Health and Family Planning Bureau showed that about 40 percent of married couples in the region were planning to have a second child. However, in Shanghai — where the cost of living is much higher — only about 25 percent of couples were planning to grow their families, according to a Liberation Daily report.